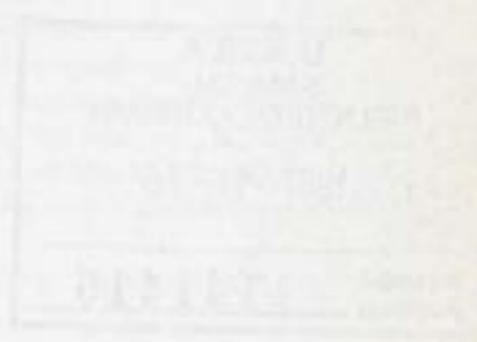


The poetry of
B.W. Vilakazi

D.B.Z. NTULI



J.L. VAN SCHAİK

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1-14

15-57

58-97

150-187

188-240

Contents

1 Introduction	1
Biographical notes.....	2
Critical views.....	6
Scope and approach.....	11
Conclusion.....	13
2 Formative influences	15
Use of traditional poetry.....	16
Use of traditional prose narratives.....	29
Influence of <u>English poetry</u>	33
Biblical influences.....	47
A synthesis.....	52
Conclusion.....	56
3 Themes – Factual and concrete	58
Historical poems.....	60
On nature.....	82
Conclusion.....	97
4 Themes – Abstract concepts	98
On inspiration.....	98
Death.....	110
Philosophical poems.....	122
Nostalgia.....	127
Committed poetry.....	133
Conclusion.....	148
5 Imagery	150
Simile.....	151
Metaphor ✓.....	160
Personification.....	170
Symbolism.....	175
Conclusion.....	187

6 Form	188
Parallelism, linking and refrains	189
Rhyme	203
Rhythm	220
Stanza forms	232
Conclusion	235
7 General conclusion	236
Bibliography	241

1 Introduction

Benedict Wallet Vilakazi is the best known of all Zulu poets. He was the first Zulu to publish a collection of poems in book form. His poems are found in two volumes: *Inkondlo kaZulu* (abbreviated Ink.) first published in 1935, and *Amal' ezulu* (Ama.) first published in 1944. These books contain a total of 41 poems.

Vilakazi's poems are read widely among the Zulus. His books have been prescribed very often in schools and universities. This prescription has helped in exposing the poetry to almost every student of Zulu literature.

The readership of Vilakazi's poetry was further increased by the publication of *Zulu Horizons* (Z.H.), an English rendering of Vilakazi's poems by F.L. Friedman. She made this rendering from the literal translations of the Zulu poems by D. Mck. Malcolm and J.M. Sikakana. This publication has enabled even the non-speakers of Zulu to appreciate Vilakazi's poetry and offer criticism of it.

The generally favourable acceptance of Vilakazi's poetry is an indication that it has special merit. Various critics have commented briefly on this man's work in reviews, articles and theses. But we do not yet have any full-length analysis. The present study, therefore, is an attempt to assess this poetry more fully in order to examine the degree of Vilakazi's success.

Biographical notes do not always help critics in making a reliable evaluation of an artist's work. In fact a critic may be prejudiced by his knowledge of the writer's life history and he may arrive at incorrect interpretations of the work under scrutiny. In the case of Vilakazi, however, we feel we must include some biographical data because these help to clarify what would otherwise be obscurities in his poetry.

In this introductory chapter we shall give a sketch of Vilakazi's life history especially in so far as it is relevant to his creativity. We shall proceed to refer briefly to the general critical views which have appeared from time to time since the publication of the first volume. These reviews will not be dealt with at length here. They will receive fuller attention in the body of this

work. It is from these views that we shall determine the scope of this study.

Biographical notes

Vilakazi was born on the 6th of January 1906 at Groutville Mission. He was given the pet name of 'Bhambatha' because 1906 is the year when a man called Bhambatha led an unsuccessful rebellion against the Poll Tax Law. Vilakazi's parents, Mshini and Leah, were both Christian converts of the American Board Church. (By the time of his death, i.e. 1933, Mshini was a Roman Catholic.) Benedict was the sixth in the family of seven children.

He grew up at Groutville, which is near Stanger, the place where Shaka had one of his kraals known as Dukuzu. It is not strange, therefore, that we find poems on Groutville, Stanger and Shaka: for example 'Ngomzomdaladala kaGrout' (Ink. p 51), 'Ugqozi' (Ama. p 1), 'UShaka kaSenzangakhona' (Ink. p 40).

Like other boys he herded cattle. This must have given him a good background to the pastoral and traditional practices of his people.

His schooling career started in 1912 at the Groutville Primary School. Although he is said to have played truant at times, his progress was not hindered. After passing Standard Four he went to St. Francis College, Mariannhill. Here he did Standards Five and Six and a teachers' certificate (T 4).

During his student years at Mariannhill he was secretary to Father Huss. Commenting on the importance of these years, Nyembezi says:

It was probably this association more than any other single factor or influence upon him that made Vilakazi long more and more for distant educational horizons.

(Nyembezi, 1962 (c), p 14)

There is evidence of his deep attachment to this institution in his long poem on the 50th anniversary of Mariannhill, i.e. 'Isenanelo eminyakeni engamashumimahlanu' (Ink. p 82).

He taught first at Mariannhill. Later he chose to go and teach at the Catholic Seminary in the rural area of Ixopo. He preferred this quiet place to one in an urban area. When he was at Ixopo he became interested in private studies and got encouragement

from the Catholic priests to study Latin. His constant association with the Catholic priests instilled high ideals in him. Dhlomo remarks:

These contacts had profound influence on Vilakazi as artist, scholar and believer.

(Dhlomo, 1952, p 30)

By this time he had been converted to Catholicism and was even contemplating taking up holy orders. There are some who think the poem 'Cula ngizwe' (Ink. p 35) is a prayer to the Holy Spirit written at the time of the poet's conversion to Catholicism (Z.H., p 30).

Vilakazi went to teach at Mariannhill again. In 1933 he left Mariannhill for the Ohlange Institute. The early thirties were significant years for Vilakazi's development as an artist. Of the period when Vilakazi was at Mariannhill and later at Ohlange, Dhlomo says that it

... seems to have affected his soul deeply and produced attitudes that were to colour the rest of his life. First, he was married, (1932) then his father died, (1933) and, last, he lived with boastful African graduates from Fort Hare who despised anyone who had no university qualifications.

(Dhlomo, 1952, p 30)

During this period he was studying for a B.A. degree with the University of South Africa. He completed his degree in 1934 with a distinction in Zulu. In 1935 his *Inkondlo kaZulu* appeared. In this book we find the poems in which he expresses his grief about the death of his father. The poems are 'Sengiyokholwake' and 'UNokufa' (Ink. pp 34 and 72 respectively).

Vilakazi wanted to proceed with post graduate studies in Zulu. He enquired whether Prof Doke of the Department of African Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand could not help him. Coincidentally this happened to be the time when this University wanted a Black assistant. Vilakazi was appointed in 1936.

Vilakazi's arrival in Johannesburg was a remarkable experience. He had to adjust himself to a new environment. He faced this with courage because he felt he was an ambassador for his people and had to represent them well. His first impressions

and experiences in this city are reflected in poems like 'Wongitshele mntanomLungu' (Ama. p 8).

Describing Vilakazi's reactions to city life, Dhlomo says that they

... must have been those of a shocked and disillusioned man. He found a sophisticated African Society little interested in academic degrees as such, but in talent and achievement in all walks of life. A talented jazz band leader or a successful business man were ranked higher than an unproductive graduate and were more popular and respected.

(Dhlomo, 1952, p 30)

The poet expresses this disillusionment in his poem 'Imfundo ephakeme' (Ama. p 6) in which he notes how prosperous other people are in comparison with those who aspire to higher education. It is consoling to him to remember that his devotion to materially less rewarding academic pursuits is a special calling whereby he will be enabled to record events for posterity.

During his years as language assistant at the University of the Witwatersrand he continued with his studies. In 1936 he passed the B.A. Hons. degree. He obtained his M.A. degree in 1937 with a dissertation *The conception and development of poetry in Zulu*.

The next few years were not happy ones for Vilakazi. He lost his brother, Ephraim Mandlakayise in February 1940. In 1942 his wife Fanny (born Nxaba) died. He married Emily Phoofole the same year. When his second volume *Amal' ezulu* appeared in 1945, it contained a long touching poem, 'Nayaphi?' in which he mourns the death of these two beloved ones.

In 1946 Vilakazi was awarded the D. Litt degree for his thesis *The oral and written literature in Nguni*.

Vilakazi died on the 26th of October 1947 after a short illness. He was survived by his second wife and five children from his two marriages.

In the above account we have referred only to the poetic publications of Vilakazi. He also wrote three novels: *Noma nini* (1935), *UDingiswayo kaJobe* (1939) and *Nje nempela* (1943). *Noma nini* won a prize in a competition organised by the International Institute of African Languages and Culture.

These novels are of an appreciably high standard especially because of the masterly use of the language found in them.

There are many instances where his prose becomes highly poetic. The general criticism levelled against them is that they sometimes include unimportant incidents. We feel Vilakazi is better as a poet than a novelist.

Vilakazi worked with Doke on the compilation of the monumental *Zulu-English dictionary* which was published in 1948, a year after Vilakazi's death.

The critical articles written by him include 'Some Aspects of Zulu Literature' (Vilakazi, 1942, pp 270 - 274).

This information about Vilakazi gives us a picture of a gifted and hard-working man. He was ambitious and had set definite goals for himself. Dhlomo confirms this when he says that Vilakazi

... intended to follow up the D. Litt degree by a Ph. D at Cambridge or Oxford ... he had planned to publish two books at least each year ...

(Dhlomo, 1952, p 30)

He hoped to make his time the 'Vilakazi Age' in Bantu literature. He also wanted to enter the academic fields which seemed to be the monopoly of White scholars. It is likely that some of his dreams might have come true if he had lived longer.

We get another side of Vilakazi's personality from these words by Dhlomo:

... he was often haughty, aloof, cold and deliberately rude to many highly-placed Africans against whom he had a grudge, although he was warm, sociable and friendly to the rank and file.

(Dhlomo, 1952, pp 30 - 31)

The haughtiness and rudeness mentioned here could be exemplified by Vilakazi's contemptuous and personal attack on Dhlomo for his article on literature. Vilakazi openly said that the article was a display of Dhlomo's ignorance (Gérard, p 235).

Vilakazi's concern for the development of his people is evident from the words of his colleague, Prof. Doke:

Vilakazi ... was obsessed with a great desire for the intellectual uplift of his people ... He believed his people were capable of rising high in intellectual achievement and he devoted his energies, not only to himself, but to the self-effacing and unselfish end of encouraging and advising many a budding Bantu author ...

(Dr B.W. Vilakazi, p 187)

Doke makes another interesting observation that Vilakazi did not take part in agitation and political affairs. Dhlomo agrees with this although he mentions that Vilakazi did take an interest in local African politics. He openly supported Mr A.W.G. Champion and Chief Albert Luthuli against their political opponents.

We cannot doubt his concern about the humiliation and frustration of his people. Although he may not necessarily have experienced the many hardships himself, he identified himself with the less-privileged who could not voice their grievances. This involvement of the poet is most evident in his poems in *Amal' ezulu*, for example, 'Ngoba ... sewuthi' and 'Ezinkomponi' (Ama., pp 19 and 60 respectively).

We did say earlier that we need not always depend on the knowledge of the writer's life history in order to understand him. We have seen that in the case of Vilakazi there is an interesting association between his experiences and his artistic product. The things which moved his heart deeply were recorded in poetic language. But his sense of observation and his imaginativeness elevate him to a spokesman for the underprivileged, not only of his own race, but of any nationality. This gives his work universal relevance and appeal.

Vilakazi's life history, therefore, shows us the development of the man as a poet, and it provides us with valuable background information which throws light onto his work.

Critical views

Here we wish to refer briefly to some critical opinions which reviewers have already expressed on Vilakazi's poetry. We shall not make any thorough appraisal of these views here because that will be done in more detail in the chapters that follow.

After the publication of *Inkondlo kaZulu* in 1935 Taylor wrote an interesting review. He refers to the fact that prior to the publication of this book, *izibongo* were the main type of poetry among the Zulu. He notes the importance of Vilakazi's contribution and says:

Mr Vilakazi in the richness of his Zulu vocabulary, in the truly African flavour of his imagery and in the exuberant extravagance

of his description is a true descendant of the imbongi. But the background of his thought is not that of the imbongi.

(Taylor, p 164)

Taylor further refers to the fact that Vilakazi is influenced by education and European culture. He does not succeed much with rhyme. But the poet does not deserve to be condemned for this because he is an experimenter who should not be criticised for small failures. Taylor feels that Vilakazi's talent is revealed chiefly in the emotional content of the poem. He exemplifies this by giving his translation of the poem 'Impophoma yeVictoria' which he regards as remarkably observant and artistic.

Taylor has good insight into Vilakazi's poetry. His remarks are balanced. He takes into account both the inner and the outer forms of poetry. We shall elaborate more fully on his observations and statements when we get to the sections where these are relevant.

Commenting on *Inkondlo kaZulu* Nyembezi says:

I find that the poems in *Inkondlo* lack sustained balance. They are not of the same standard.

(Nyembezi, 1961, p 66)

This is not surprising when we remember that these poems were written before Vilakazi matured as a poet. He had not decided on a specific pattern to follow. In the preface to this anthology Gumede attributes this lack of balance to the fact that the poems were written at different times over a long period (*Ink.*, p vii).

Critics are unanimous in praising the second volume, *Amal' ezulu'* as an improvement on the first one. In the introduction of his review of *Amal' ezulu* Jolobe says:

Throughout the writer has reached and maintained a high standard. The lyrics at the beginning of the book reveal the feelings of the author in beautiful language...

(Jolobe, p 127)

Jolobe says that the poet's powers are displayed most vividly in descriptive poems. He cites 'KwaDedangendale' as one of the poems in which Vilakazi succeeds in painting a series of mental pictures. Jolobe finds the protest poem 'Ezinkomponi' moving. In his concluding paragraph he says:

The book is a worthy successor to *Inkondlo kaZulu*. Firmly and consciously the author has widened the scope of Zulu poetry and in doing so he wins for it the universal stamp.

(Jolobe, p 127)

It is clear that Jolobe wants to give a positive picture of the book to the reading public. He avoids everything which might be interpreted as an adverse advertisement of the book.

We do not agree with his interpretation of the poem 'UMamina' which he regards as an elegy. To us this is a love poem. On the whole we feel that this review gives us the main points about the book. A prospective reader is made keen to take a closer look at the work.

It is Cope's opinion, too, that *Amal' ezulu* is a more advanced volume than *Inkondlo kaZulu*. He remarks:

Here Vilakazi expresses a deeper philosophy and emotional experience, employing the fullness of the Zulu language to do so.

(Cope, 1974, p 57)

The scope of Cope's review is limited because he has to give only a brief summary on each book he mentions. He does not provide examples to illustrate his statements. We find such comments a good starting point for a student who wants to go deeper into Vilakazi's poetry.

A fairly long discussion of Vilakazi's poetry is found in R. Kunene's dissertation (R. Kunene, 1962). He divides the poems according to their sources of inspiration into imitations of Western poets, poems of foreign inspiration and original poems. This is not a foolproof classification. He says, for example, that the poem 'Sengiyokholwa-ke' is a translation of an English poem of the 16th century, but he does not give us the title and the writer of the English poem. At another time he says that the poem 'Ma ngificwa ukufa' is Vilakazi's original work while this is clearly an adaptation of Dunbar's 'A death song' (Hughes and Bontemps, p 42). Otherwise Kunene offers penetrating views on Vilakazi's poems. He points out general strong points and weaknesses. This critic finds Vilakazi's work highly commendable, and he places this poet above all his contemporaries and successors. Kunene's critique could not be more detailed because it was only a section of a chapter in his dissertation.

Over the past forty years all critics have acclaimed Vilakazi as the leading Zulu poet. (See Malcolm, 1949, p 38; Bang, 1951, p 524; Nyembezi, 1961, pp 7 and 8.) As recently as 1974 Cope says:

Vilakazi is still the most successful Zulu poet to write in the Zulu language.

(Cope, 1974, p 64)

This is so in spite of hundreds of poems found in many good anthologies which were published after Vilakazi's books, especially in the sixties and early seventies.

It is regrettable that no critic has undertaken a thorough study of the works of established poets like J.C. Dlamini and O.E.H.M. Nxumalo. Such a study would clarify for us as to what it is that Vilakazi has got that the other prominent poets lack. The many critiques on Vilakazi's work amount to comparing this poet with himself only. This may easily result in the danger of speaking highly of a poet merely because he is 'traditionally' spoken highly of.

We have noted the unanimity of the critics regarding the supreme position of Vilakazi among Zulu poets. Some critics have tried to look at Vilakazi as a world poet. Commenting on the literary output up to 1942, Vilakazi said that Zulu had not produced any work of the first rank (Vilakazi, 1942, p 274). This was despite his own books which included his first collection of poems. This indicates that Vilakazi was aware that none of his own works could be regarded as a classic. Of course we cannot always expect an artist to give a reliable evaluation of his own work. If he underestimates his product, that may be due to his modesty or his failure to appreciate his own greatness.

We have mentioned earlier that Vilakazi's ambition was to make his period the Vilakazi Age in literary history. It is Dhlomo's opinion that Vilakazi did not succeed in this:

But it is doubtful if the present will be called his age for time was against him, but in favour of his equally determined rivals. True genius and the highest quality only can defy time, as in the cases of names like Keats, Shelley, Schubert and others.

(Dhlomo, 1952, p 31)

In a subtle way Dhlomo expresses a viewpoint that Vilakazi does not match the dexterity of the great poets who died young. In Dhlomo's view Keats and Shelley who died at the ages of

twenty six and thirty, respectively, achieved more in poetic creativity than this Zulu poet who died at the age of forty two. It has been said repeatedly that Vilakazi used the poetry of Keats and Shelley as his models. While Vilakazi's success cannot be doubted it is clear that his work did not equal that of his masters both in quantity and quality. But it is not very fair to compare him with these English poets. They had the advantage of an established tradition in the writing of poetry. He had still to experiment. On top of this he could not devote his energy to creative work because his attention was all the time divided among many serious projects. It is fruitless to speculate what heights he might have attained if his activities were not so diverse.

In his review of *Zulu horizons* Bernstein regards this book as a translation of a Zulu work of classical standard. He adds that Vilakazi

... might perhaps be termed the Bailik of Zulu literature. Not that he comes anywhere near Bailik in depth, rich, epic power or lyric sensitivity; nor in South African terms, did he reach the stature of Roy Campbell. He was, however, a pioneer of Zulu poetry, and, as such, has his own special place in the hierarchy.

(Bernstein, p 45)

In an almost similar vein Le May praises *Zulu horizons* and further says:

This is not to suggest that Vilakazi will ever be read as widely as Homer and Omar and the rest of them. He wrote in the modern idiom, but he does not qualify as a modern poet with pistol-shot imagery.

(Le May, p 10)

We accept such criticisms only on the basis of a trust that the critics arrived at them after considering their opinions objectively. Since these comments appear in short reviews we cannot expect them to be as detailed as we would have liked them to be. However, they do add some light regarding the position of Vilakazi as a poet. Because of their inconclusive and challenging nature, they justify a serious study into aspects of this man's work.

Scope and approach

This study aims at examining some statements and observations that have been made about the poetry of Vilakazi. Some of these statements have been referred to in the foregoing subsection.

In the foreword to *Zulu horizons* Friedman divides Vilakazi's poems into praise poems and lyrics:

The former ... are essentially tribal in character; the latter were for Vilakazi deeply influenced by the great English Romantic poets ... and thus belong much more to the tradition of the nineteenth century ... But despite this influence, the majority have an unmistakable Zulu flavour.

(Z.H., p XI)

In the second chapter of this study we shall examine the various formative influences that played on this poet. We shall attempt to assess to what extent the poet was influenced by the traditional Zulu literature. We shall also discuss evidence of European and Biblical influence found in his poems.

The best method to adopt in such a study is to compare the specific poems written by Vilakazi with those which he is alleged to have imitated. We shall have to work out the extent to which Vilakazi succeeds in adding his individual touches to the material he borrows from other sources.

Jolobe says that the poems in *Amal' ezulu* are

... lyrical, descriptive, heroic, protest and elegiac.

(Jolobe, p 127)

In the third and fourth chapters we shall look into the types of poems Vilakazi wrote. We shall concentrate on the content of his poetry. We shall inevitably have to consider the common ideas and themes and assess the degree of Vilakazi's success in handling them.

Nyembezi refers briefly to the beauty of the imagery and symbolism found in Vilakazi's poems (Nyembezi, 1962 (c), pp 70 and 72). It is generally accepted that the main difference between poetry and prose is that poetry depends much on associative language. Poetry uses more of the metaphoric and

symbolic language than prose. Our task in the fifth chapter is to examine Vilakazi's poetic language. We shall concentrate on the use of figures of speech. We shall discuss a number of examples of these figures of speech in the light of theories with regard to their effectiveness.

The discussion in chapter six is prompted by Taylor's remarks about the use of rhyme and rhythm in Zulu poetry. He says Vilakazi

... attempts rhyme, but with limited success, as Zulu syllables, invariably, ending in vowels, do not present the variety of sound and tone that makes successful rhyming possible. Even the forms of English rhythm that he uses do not supply a perfect medium, for Zulu accents and stresses refuse to be bent into conformity with the beat of the music.

(Taylor, p 164)

There is much controversy about the nature of Zulu rhyme and rhythm. Here we must discuss some of the theories that critics have advanced and then see what Vilakazi has done in this respect. Our discussion in this chapter will include other external poetic features like parallelism and stanza forms.

The seventh chapter will be a general conclusion which will contain the main findings and observations made in this study.

This study has no pretensions of being exhaustive. It is obvious from its scope that the study is a general one which touches on a number of issues. It should be taken as a preliminary discussion aimed at stimulating a more intensive investigation into individual aspects of this poet's work.

Vilakazi was himself a critic of poetry. In our discussion we have to refer now and again to the theories he advanced about poetry. We then must see how he put these theories into practice and whether they did help to elevate his poetry.

We are aware that some critics feel that in assessing African literature we must use a kind of African standard and approach because other yardsticks will be inappropriate. Iyasere, for example, has this to say:

To assess a work by standards that are alien to it is only to judge one system of values by another, which inevitably leads to a mutilation of the art.

(Iyasere, p 109)

In his article of 1942 on Zulu literature Vilakazi says:

We have no critical opinions of men of taste and knowledge, whose qualifications today enable them to judge a work by certain positive standards.

(Vilakazi, 1942, p 271)

Remarking on this statement, Bishop says:

Vilakazi's comment is interesting from another standpoint as well. He laments a lack of critics rather than 'certain positive standards'. His standards are undoubtedly those of white South Africa, if not of the entire Western literary tradition.

(Bishop, p 65)

Bishop further indicates three major stances by African critics with regard to Western literary tradition: complete reliance upon it, avoidance of it, and a synthesis of Western and African elements.

We concur with the view that a foreigner may look at a work of art with preconceived ideas which emanate from his particular theoretical background. Such a critic may condemn the art which, to him violates some principles. But we know also that great art has a universal appeal. It conforms to some general universally accepted precepts. If it does not meet these basic requirements, its appeal is limited. After applying the universal yardstick, the critic proceeds to examine the finer peculiarities which are distinctive of the specific culture or environment.

We can illustrate our point with *izibongo*, a specific type of traditional poetry found among some African tribes. We confidently call this poetry because it has universally acknowledged components of poetry like imagery and symbolism.

Although Vilakazi's poetry has traditional traces, it is essentially patterned according to Western styles. The poet himself was brought up in the Western way of education. Therefore, it is not improper to depend mainly on the Western approach in the criticism of Vilakazi's poetry. We trust this will not blind us in appreciating the traditional elements which give a local tinge to the work.

Conclusion

This first chapter gives in broad outline what our aim in this

study is. While the life history of Vilakazi clarifies some points with regard to the background which inspired the composition of certain poems, it simultaneously suggests directions of study which might be followed by a student of poetry. Most of these directions, however, are suggested by the brief critical accounts which have been published on the poetry of Vilakazi. We shall attempt to look more closely at these issues and directions in the chapters which follow.

2 *Formative influences*

It is common knowledge that an artist cannot work in a vacuum. For him to produce anything a number of influences work on him. In the first place these influences are his experiences which he expresses in the medium of his choice. In the second place he is influenced by the models of expression found in his cultural and artistic environment.

Vilakazi grew up among a people who had their own traditional type of poetry, *izibongo* which was the main established form of poetic expression. It should not surprise us, therefore, that he had to draw from this poetry in making his own compositions.

Oral traditional narratives also provided Vilakazi with much that he could use to enrich his work.

As a student, Vilakazi came into contact with European poetry. He must have been impressed by this form of poetry too and decided to use it.

To a lesser extent we find evidence of the influence of the Bible in Vilakazi's poetry.

It would be wrong of us to conclude from this that Vilakazi's work is worthless because he took over so much from his predecessors. No artist can claim to be completely independent and original. As Garrison puts it:

If originality were defined as the creation of entirely new products or ideas, without dependence upon the work of others, few if any of the world's masterpieces could be termed original.

(Garrison, p 576)

We should point out that originality as such should not be overemphasised because it is not an aesthetic criterion. A piece of art can be poor despite its claim to originality.

In this chapter we shall not merely give evidence of Vilakazi's indebtedness to various sources. Our task is to assess whether Vilakazi did anything positive with that material. We shall endeavour to determine to what extent he conforms to the Classical approach to imitation which, in the words of White,

... insists that imitation is not enough, and demands that individual originality be shown by choosing and using models carefully, by interpreting borrowed matter, and by improving on these models and that matter.

(White, p 18)

Even today we uphold this view. Horn stresses it when he says of Bracht:

... hy beweer dat 'n digter alles mag oorneem uit die werk van 'n ander digter solank as die groot lines, die geheel, en die lang asem van die werk sy eie is...

(Horn, p 26)

Having looked at the influence of the traditional and foreign works on Vilakazi we should further consider whether this combination of forces did succeed in producing an interesting new type of poetry.

Use of traditional poetry

The two main types of traditional Zulu poetry are the *imilolozelo* (lullabies) and *izibongo* (praise poems). What is generally known as *imilolozelo* includes other types of poetic pieces like refrains from traditional narratives, dialogues and bird songs. Mzolo classifies praise poetry into two main categories: the individual praises of kings, chiefs, heroes and warriors on the one hand, and the praises of clans (*izithakazelo*) on the other (Mzolo, p 73).

It is interesting to note the ideas and features which the different types of oral poetry share. They have versions which are the result of the fact that different individuals cannot recite these poems in exactly the same way. Nor can the words and lines¹ always follow the same sequence. The dialogue 'Mfaz' ongaphesheya' (Woman over yonder), for example, occurs with its variations in Zulu, Xhosa and Swazi. Theunissen recorded five versions which had slight differences in the names used in them (Theunissen, pp 11, 25, 38, 41, 61).

Ziervogel remarks that some formal aspects in *imilolozelo* remind one of *izibongo* (Ziervogel, p 28). These similarities are

1. We use 'lines' because the recorded versions are arranged in verse form.

not confined to features like repetition. There are even expressions which the two types of poetry share. We interpret this to mean that the traditional poet felt free to borrow suitable expressions from a different category of poetry to embellish his composition.

We can exemplify this by referring to the *umlolozelo* 'Nantiya' (There it is) which has these lines:

Lapha kungemunga,
Lapha kungemtholo.

(Theunissen, p 32)

(Where there are no mimosa trees,
Where there are no cat-thorn trees.)

This expression occurs in the praises of Cetshwayo and Zulu, son of Nogandaya as:

Uzulu ladum' obala,
Lapho kungemunga, kungemthole.

(Nyembezi, 1962 (b), p 83;
Cope, 1968, p 179)

(Storm that thundered in the open
Where there was neither mimosa tree nor cat-thorn tree.)

The stylized expression '*lapho kungemunga (lapho) kungemthole*' could have originated in either the praises or the *umlolozelo*. The likelihood, though, is that the composer of 'Nantiya' borrowed this expression from the praise poem because it has significant meaning in *izibongo*. In *umlolozelo* it is just a literal adornment with no deeper poetic value.

We find many similarities in the lines of the praise poems of different people. In *izibongo* such similarities may be due to the fact that a son may inherit the praises of his father or his forefathers. Similarity in the praises may also be due to the identity in personality, deeds and conditions which prevailed during the times of the people who share the particular praises. In some cases the later bard retains the exact wording of the praises taken from earlier works, probably because he feels no improvement can be effected to the lines from the earlier works.

Izithakazelo, too, share popular catching expressions which need not really apply to all the clans.

We have referred to the situation within the various types of traditional poetry in order to show how freely the material

moved from one poem to the other. Once a traditional poem has been composed it becomes a fund from which anyone can draw whatever sounds impressive or is applicable to his personality or deeds or circumstances.

It is probably in this spirit that Vilakazi borrowed so freely from the well-known praises. He sometimes transferred portions into his poems without changing them at all. Some sections are altered in the new poem. In other poems he only employed the style of *izibongo*. We shall have a look at all these instances.

Use of corresponding portions from *izibongo*

Sometimes Vilakazi uses well-known praises in his own compositions on those people to whom the praises belong. The most conspicuous example is found at the beginning of the poem 'UShaka kaSenzangakhona' (Shaka of Senzangakhona). The poem begins:

'UTeku lwabafazi bakwaNomgabi,
Betekula behlezi emlovini,
Beth' uShaka kakubusa, kakubaNkosi,
Kant' ilaph' ezakunethezeka.'

(Ink., p 40)

(The joke of the women of Nomgabi,
Joking as they sat in a sheltered spot,
Saying Shaka will not rule, he will not be king,
Whereas it was the time in which he would prosper.)

This serves as an appropriate introduction to the poem on Shaka. Vilakazi has put this stanza in italics and within quotation marks to indicate clearly that it is not his own composition. In actual fact there was no need for this since anyone acquainted with Shaka's praises knows these lines. As Tillotson puts it:

Why insist that you are quoting when everybody knows it?

(Tillotson, p 175)

The praise stanza in question was, in fact, taken over by Shaka from Phakathwayo's praises which went:

UTeku lwamaWeya¹ namaNcwane,
Betekuya ngay' uSondaba,
Bethi kayikubusa kayikuba nkosi.

(Cope, 1968, p 143)

(The joke of the Welas and Ncwanes
Joking about Sondaba -
Saying he would not rule, he would not be king.)

In Phakathwayo's praises the stanza has three lines – the statement the extension and the development, but without any conclusion. Shaka's bard, Magolwane, perfected this to a classical example of the typical Shakan stanza with a contradictory conclusion.

Vilakazi may have felt that Magolwane's stanza had reached such perfection that it could not be improved upon. He transplanted it wholesale, as it were, to the beginning of this poem.

We can regard this beginning as a kind of salutation as Vilakazi approaches the great king. After this salutation Vilakazi uses no further excerpts; he must begin quickly with the purpose of his visit.

The rest of the poem is not a fully-fledged praise poem although here and there we come across lines which echo the style of *izibongo*. From the *izibongo* tone found at the beginning, we experience a sudden, rather jerky, transition to the second stanza where Vilakazi addresses somebody else whom he informs that he is about to express his own ideas about Shaka. He addresses this other person for the next thirty lines before going back to Shaka. This makes the quoted praises appear like an appendage which does not fall smoothly into line with the rest of the poem.

Another reader may suggest that the opening *izibongo* should not be read as part of the whole poem. They should be taken as a brief elaboration on the title of the poem. This might justify the use of the praises, although we would still feel they do not harmonise so well with the next stanzas.

From the third stanza to the end of the poem Vilakazi addresses Shaka and relates to him the highlights of his career as king.

1. The Qwabe use the *thefuya* form whereby *y* is substituted for *l*; hence *amaWeya* for *amaWela*, and *tekuya* for *tekula*.

Mzolo observes that the feature with the royal praises is that they are *about* these kings and chiefs and are not directed to them (Mzolo, p 89). We do agree that *izibongo* are outwardly indirect utterances about the people who are being praised. We wish to suggest that even though the *imbongi* does not address the king as a second person, the address is directed to the king indirectly. It is meant for the king's ears. The *imbongi* might be employing the normal method of showing respect by speaking to a senior person as if you were speaking about someone else. Although it is not common, we occasionally come across the second person absolute pronoun '*wena*' (you) in *izibongo* (see e.g. Nyembezi, 1962 (b), pp 22, 26, 112, 151). Vocatives are many even in the praises of kings. But nowhere do we find the use of the third person pronoun '*yena*' (he/she).

The recurrence of vocatives and the second person absolute pronoun in Vilakazi's composition makes the poem a direct address to the king. This is against the accepted rule and is Vilakazi's adaptation.

In his poem Vilakazi employs rhyming couplets which are arranged in stanzas of mostly ten lines each. Almost all the lines have eight syllables each. The regularity of the patterns found in this poem departs from the more free and spontaneous presentation of *izibongo*.

The *izibongo* are grafted with more finesse in the poem 'Phezu kwethuna likaShaka' (On Shaka's grave). This also is not a praise poem in the proper sense of the word. The poet expresses his delight at the recently built monument in honour of Shaka. In many stanzas the poet addresses Shaka directly. We admire the poet's ingenuity in introducing praises of relevant people. Sometimes the poet mentions a person's name, adding the relevant praises immediately. At other times he only inserts the praises, expecting us to know to whom he is referring.

Vilakazi refers to Solomon by only including his praises (Stuart, p 142) in this poem:

Ukhombise umhlaba wonke,
Nkayishan' enkulu kaMenzi-
Udumo lwawoyihlomkhulu...

(Ink., p 59)

(You have shown the whole world,
Great Nkayishana of Menzi-
The fame of your forefathers...)

Reference is made to Shaka by the mere inclusion of his known praises (Nyembezi, 1962 (b), pp 21 and 22) in the following lines:

Nant' izwe selibuyelana,
Selizibonel' imiloyo
Ayikhuluma mhla esefa
Osixhokolo siseNkandla,
Bangamtshela nazibuko
Bamweza ngelicons' amathe...

(Ink., p 59)

(The land is now coming together,
It now sees for itself the misfortunes
He spoke of when he died,
He who was a pile of rocks at Nkandla,
They did not tell him the right ford,
They made him cross by the bloody one...)

Although Vilakazi did not put these excerpts from *izibongo* in quotation marks he cannot be accused of claiming their authorship. The fact that he does not even say directly whose praises these are is an indication that he takes for granted that readers will immediately recognise them, otherwise it would be impossible to follow the poem.

This poem has no artificialities. It is written in free verse, hence the ease and beauty with which the excerpts from these *izibongo* are incorporated into it. The praises add a measure of authenticity to the poems where they occur. One feels the poet has good knowledge of the subject he is handling.

Known praises allotted to other people

In his poem 'Aggrey weAfrika' (Aggrey of Africa) Vilakazi expresses his admiration for this Ghanaian intellectual. For the poet, Aggrey is a hero who deserves praises in the Zulu way. Using Cetshwayo's praises the poet says to Aggrey:

Magwaz' eguqile njengethole.

(Ink., p 69)

(He who stabs while kneeling like a calf.)

This is exactly how Cetshwayo is praised (Cope, 1968, p 223).

Cetshwayo got these praises after following his witch doc-

tor's instruction that he should literally kneel on Mbuyazi's shield when the regiments of the two princes were fighting. Cetshwayo's victory is attributed to this action. Aggrey did not literally do what Cetshwayo did. Vilakazi wants to convey that Aggrey struggled hard for his success. In Vilakazi's mind Aggrey's heroism is equal to that of Cetshwayo's. The difference is that these two triumphed in different fields. Since there was already a good line in Cetshwayo's *izibongo*, Vilakazi felt he could use it in the poem on Aggrey. In Aggrey's praises this line is more poetic because it has no literal application. The kneeling on the shield is metaphorical.

In Cetshwayo's praises, just like in Vilakazi's poem, use has been made of a rich simile. The calf could be taken to symbolise youth and freshness. These qualities are an asset to these men who have a future to face. But they will face their future with optimism because they have already proved their competence.

At some places Vilakazi alters and adapts the lines he borrows from *izibongo*. Shaka inherited these praises from Senzangakhona:

Inteth' egolwe nganti zamkhonto kwaMalandela...

(Nyembezi, 1962 (b),
pp 13 and 20)

(The locust which was caught with spear shafts in Malandela's land.)

This resulted into the line which Vilakazi uses in the poem on Aggrey:

Inyon' egolwe nganti zamkhonto...

(Ink., p 67)

(The bird which was caught with spear shafts...)

We note an interesting development in this 'catching' imagery. In Senzangakhona's praises the above line is followed by another related line, a kind of a conclusion:

Yath' ukusuka yajubalala.

(Thereafter it flew away.)

We do not find this line in Shaka's praises, probably because Shaka would not easily flee from his adversaries.

The imagery based on the *izibongo* line is developed further in Vilakazi's poem:

Bayichamisel' emasimini
Kungesiwo lawa kagampokwe.
(It was hatched in the fields,
Not these of cotton.)

In the first place Vilakazi changes the locust found in *izibongo* to a bird. He does this in agreement with the bird imagery found in the preceding stanza and in the other stanzas in the poem.

One reader may complain that the verb '-gola' is used chiefly, if not only, in the sense of catching a locust, as the traditional bard used it. After using the bird image earlier in the poem, the poet may have felt it wise to be consistent: so he substituted the bird for the locust. After all, he could not be confined to the limited meaning of the verb. Moreover the uncommon usage adds freshness to the expression.

No one can query the reference to the spear shafts in *izibongo* because the spear was the main weapon of attack in olden days. The use of the spear shafts in *izibongo* is of literal application. Still, the line is undoubtedly poetic because of the occurrence of the words in uncommon grammatical construction. In normal speech 'nganti zamkhonto' would be 'ngezinti zemikhonto'. In 'nganti zamkhonto' we find a contraction reminiscent of the axiomatic negative. No negative is implied in this line. The poet used this construction for the sake of economy.

Strictly speaking the pursuit by people carrying spears has no literal application to Aggrey. All it may mean is that he went through difficulties before reaching the top. That he was caught by spear shafts is, therefore, only symbolic of his bitter experiences, and it has more poetic significance than is the case with the original *izibongo*.

Are there other reasons why Vilakazi changes the locust found in the original praises to a bird? We have said above that the bird imagery is used much in Vilakazi's poem. The bird occupies a higher status than a locust in our minds. It belongs to a higher class in the animal kingdom. It is more difficult to catch than a locust. To the one who catches it it is of more value than a locust. It can also fly better than the locust used by the kings' bards. In fact, in another stanza Vilakazi says that this bird is an

eagle, one of the most powerful birds. Like the eagle, Aggrey flew to great heights in the academic sphere.

It is striking that Vilakazi should consider Aggrey as a bird whilst Senzangakhona and Shaka are referred to as mere locusts. Does Vilakazi think Aggrey is a better man than the kings? Taylor makes this interesting remarks about Vilakazi:

He is not concerned with warlike prowess. Aggrey is a greater hero to him than Shaka.

(Taylor, p 164)

The validity of this statement is doubtful because Aggrey is mentioned only in this poem, while Shaka features in eight of Vilakazi's poems.¹ By using the locust image the bards were not belittling the kings. They were looking at the kings through the contemptuous eyes of the enemies who thought that these kings were like fragile insects who could be easily disposed of. On the other hand Vilakazi looks at Aggrey with admiration and considers him to belong to a higher class than that of insects. He is not comparing Aggrey with the kings.

From the discussion we have seen how Vilakazi's poem benefited from the good qualities found in the original *izibongo* line, and how he manipulated the original image to produce a line of higher poetic merit.

Use of *izibongo* imagery in different context

We have instances where Vilakazi uses ideas and images from *izibongo* in the poems not quite related to praising anyone.

The poem 'NgoMbuyazi eNdondakusuka' (On Mbuyazi at Ndondakusuka) is a narrative on the battle between Cetshwayo and Mbuyazi. In this poem we find the lines:

Ngaphoth' intamb' ende
Eqond' ezulwin' emathongweni...

(Ama., p 56)

(I plaited a long rope
Towards heaven to the ancestral spirits...)

1. 'KwaDedangendlale', 'Imifula yomhlaba', 'UMamina', 'NgoMbuyazi eNdondakusuka', 'Ngomzomdaladala kaGrout', 'UShaka kaSenzangakhona', 'Khalani maZulu', 'Phezu kwethuna likaShaka'.

These lines occur where the poet describes his imaginary journey to the world of the dead in search of the body of Mbuyazi which he could not find on earth. These lines are inspired by those found in the praises of Senzangakhona:

Owaphoth' intamb' ende,
UmntakaJama,
Wayiphotha yafik' ezulwini
Lapho nezithutha zakoMageba
Zingayikufinyelela...

(Nyembezi, 1962 (b), p 14)

(He who plaited a long rope,
The child of Jama,
He plaited it and it reached heaven
Where even the ancestral spirits of Mageba
Could not reach...)

According to the belief of the Zulus the ancestral spirits dwell underground. As spirits they should have no difficulty in reaching heaven. In this instance they could not succeed. In Senzangakhona's praises our main attention is drawn to the rare feat executed by Senzangakhona in gaining victory in a difficult situation. This is a reference to one complete episode. In Vilakazi's poem the rope features in only one in a series of stages taken by the poet in his search. The whole journey to the stars is one of Vilakazi's most vivid fantastic stories. This particular step of climbing up the plaited rope adds to the beauty of the whole spectacle.

In this example we find *izibongo* lines well adjusted to fit into the new environment so that they are not easy to recognise as a borrowing.

Sequels to known praises

Under normal circumstances the *izibongo* recount a person's deeds and attributes up to a specific point in time. Further praises are added according to additional exploits or revelations about the person. After a person's death we do not expect further additions since he is no more there to hear them and he is not capable of further deeds which can be a basis for addit-

ional praises. In short, as a rule, the *izibongo* of dead people are static. It is unlike *izithakazelo* about which Mzolo observes:

Although clan praises may be regarded as static, there are slight indications here and there of additions in recent times...

(Mzolo, p 75)

We can attribute the dynamic nature of *izithakazelo* to the fact that the praises of the prominent members of the clan will keep on being added to those of the earlier members.

Apart from using well-known praises of kings and chiefs who feature in his poems Vilakazi also composes his own additions. We find this mainly in his 'UShaka kaSenzangakhona'. In one place Vilakazi praises Shaka:

... wena Thol' eleqa
Phezu kwamany' uwaheqa.

(Ink., p 43)

(You calf who jumps
Over others and slashes them.)

We do not have such lines in Shaka's praises. This is Vilakazi's own contribution. We are reminded of this line from Shaka's original praises:

Ilemb' eleq' amany' amalembe ngokukhalipha.

(Nyembezi, 1962 (b), p 19)

(The hoe which surpasses other hoes in sharpness.)

Although the basic sense of these lines is the same, Vilakazi's composition is different. The image of the triumphant calf reminds one of these lines from Dingane's praises:

Ithol' elinsizwa lakokaDonda
Elihambe liwakhahlel' amany' amathole.

(Nyembezi, 1962 (b), p 50)

(The hornless calf of Donda
Which goes about kicking other calves.)

Could it be that Vilakazi composed these new praises for Shaka after being influenced by Dingane's praises? This would be regarded as the influence of a later composition on an earlier one. Under normal circumstances this is unacceptable. It can occur only in cases where a later poet looks at a number of

people and discovers that an earlier person also deserved the praises composed later for someone else.

We see modern touches in Vilakazi's composition. He deliberately adorns his lines by using a rhyme scheme: both lines end with '-eqa'. The use of rigid rhyme schemes in *izibongo* can be an interesting development provided the poet does not force certain words to appear at the end of the lines simply for the sake of rhyme. In the case of the above quotation from Vilakazi's poem the word '-heqa' is not a happy choice. To '-heqa' means to slash or cut with the side of an instrument. A beast is not capable of slashing. It can only gore by means of the sharp tip of the horn. If Vilakazi was not so preoccupied with rhyme here he would have used an appropriate word like '-gwaza' or '-hlaba'.

The use of rhyme in the praises composed by Vilakazi is seen more clearly in these lines:

Wena nkom' ekhal' igwazwa,
Wangakhal' ukuhlakazwa;
UMzizim' ongamathunzi
Ogwaze wafuz' impunzi
Ngokubalekel' inxeba
Elavuleka lamceba.

(Ink., p 51)

(You beast who cried when you were stabbed,
You did not cry when you were destroyed;
The dark one like the shades
Who stabbed and was like a duiker
By running away from the wound
Which opened and betrayed him.)

We admit that the fourth line in the above excerpt is not easy to follow. If it means that Shaka was stabbed the word 'Ogwaze' should be in the passive, 'Ogwazwe'.

What is of interest to us here is that Vilakazi composes praises which relate to the assassination of Shaka by his brother and Mbopha. This episode could not be added by Shaka's bard. The praises composed by Vilakazi are a sequel to the original ones composed before the death of Shaka.

We note that in this composition Vilakazi has borrowed a line from Shaka's *izibongo*. The full line is:

UMzizim' ongamathunz' ezintaba.

(Nyembezi, 1962 (b), p 27)

(The dark one who is like the shadows of the mountains.)

Vilakazi cut this line to end with '-thunzi' for two reasons. '-thunzi' rhymes with '-mpunzi'. Like the other lines in the poems, this one too had to have eight syllables. (The '-M-' of 'UMzizima' is not regarded as a conspicuous and independent syllable within the poetic framework.)

We cannot ignore the other possibility that Vilakazi used the line 'UMzizim' ongamathunzi' from the praises of Dingane which have exactly the same line (Nyembezi, 1962 (b), p 46). Vilakazi's lines from 'UMzizim...' to '... lamceba' may then be a reference to Dingane's action after taking part in the assassination of the king. This meaning would come out clearly if the initial vowel in 'UMzizima' were read with the rising tone of the copulative. Vilakazi would then be describing the restlessness of Dingane after the murderous act. As a praise this could also be regarded as a sequel to Shaka's *izibongo* because the whole event happened too later for inclusion by Magolwane in Shaka's praises.

We feel that such sequels are a proof of Vilakazi's creative ability. We accept this development. By the time we get to these sequels the poet has sufficiently prepared us into appreciating that he considers Shaka as being alive again even after his initial physical death. Shaka can still be praised by the modern poets. These poets can even include events which took place long after the king's death. In fact, these poets are free to add their own ideas and opinions. R. Kunene remarks about this:

If a poet of the modern literary tradition uses a traditional theme he often adds his own ideas about the hero of the poem. These ideas are inevitably echoes of another era different fundamentally from the ideas of the olden times.

(R. Kunene, p 195)

In the above discussion we have noted with appreciation the various ways in which Vilakazi uses *izibongo* in his compositions. We remarked about the richness which Vilakazi has added to some of the praises. We expressed our admiration for Vilakazi's imaginative power evinced in the creation of new praises which are a sequel to the original ones.

Use of traditional prose narratives¹

Apart from basing his poetry on some aspects of *izibongo*, Vilakazi borrows freely from traditional oral stories. He sometimes makes very brief allusion to these tales probably because he knows that the mention of characters and actions will remind the readers of the full stories. On such allusions Edwards says:

Deliberate and calculated allusiveness is only possible when the audience or the reader has some literary education, whether this is traditional or obtained through study.

(Edwards, p 61)

Folk tales

In Zulu folklore there is a tale of Nanana, a frog, whose children were swallowed by an elephant. Their mother rescued them by cutting open the stomach of the elephant. We are reminded of this tale in Vilakazi's 'NgomBuyazi eNdondakusuka' (On Mbuyazi at Ndondakusuka):

Umlethil' emachibin' ezindlovu
Ezithath' abantabakaNanana
KaSelesel' owakh' endleleni,
Ebhidle ngabomu ngokwethemba,
Ethemb' ubungqamungqosho.

(Ama., p 54)

(You brought him to the lakes of the elephants
Which took the children of Nanana
Of Selesele who built on the path
And did it deliberately because she relied
On her cunning.)

In his poem Vilakazi uses the refrain found in the tale:

UNanana kaSelesele
Owakh' endleleni ngabomu
Ngoba ethembe ubungqamungqosho.
(Nanana of Selesele
Who deliberately built on the path
Because she relied on her cunning.)

(See one version,
Callaway, p 332)

1. We have adopted W. Bascom's blanket term 'Prose narrative' under which we have folk tales, myths and legends.

This poem has a firm historical background, but the poet includes many fantastic episodes. Right through the poem we suspend our disbelief to accommodate what happens in the realm of fantasy. Even the inclusion of portions from folk tales is not out of place. The helplessness of Mbuyazi when he was under the spell of Cetshwayo's witch doctor is very well compared with the defenselessness of the frog's children when the elephant swallowed them.

In his 'Imifula yomhlaba' (The rivers of the world) Vilakazi only alludes to this tale when he says:

Ngathungath' umkhondo wendlela
Ngaye ngabon' emachibini
Abantwana bakaNanana...

(Ama., p 37)

(I looked for the way
Until I saw the lakes
Of the children of Nanana...)

In this poem the poet describes a long imaginary journey which takes him to the various rivers of the world. He even gets to this lake where the children of Nanana lived. This must indeed have been a long journey because it even took the poet to the legendary world. But again the whole background of the poem puts us in a frame of mind to accept and enjoy such diversions into the imaginary world.

Myths

According to Zulu folklore death resulted from the delay of the chameleon in delivering an important message to human beings that they would not die. The chameleon was feasting on the *ubukhwebezane*¹ berries when it was overtaken by the swift lizard which told the people that they would die. In his poem 'UNokufa' (Death) Vilakazi writes:

Wawunjalo kusemandulweni
Mhla uNkulunkul' ethum' unwabu
Lwalibala, lwaficwa intulo
Eyakhweca isisu yelula
Imilenze, yamemeza ngezwi
Yathi: 'Kuthiw' abantu mabafe.'

(Ink., p 81)

1. Mauve berries of *Lantana salvifolia*.

(You were like that even long ago
When God sent the chameleon;
It delayed and was overtaken by the lizard
Which drew its stomach in and stretched
Its legs, and shouted with the voice
Saying: 'It is said that people must die'.)

The inclusion of this tale in this poem is not of much poetic significance. All that the poet wants to say is that he must accept death because God sanctioned it. We appreciate a flash of the poet's imaginativeness in the vivid description of the lizard; but apart from this there is little originality in the handling of this portion from the myth.

In the poem 'UMamina' (Mamina) Vilakazi borrows only the idea of the eating of the berries from the myth:

Sihlale phansi kwenhlalamagwababa
Sayikha sesula ngobukhwebezane
Ye! Sengishilo ngobukhwebezane
Ubudlile walibala wakhohlwa...

(Ama., p 50)

(We sat beneath the *inhlalamagwababa*¹ tree
We picked its fruit and then ate the *ubukhwebezane*
Yes! I've said it, the *ubukhwebezane* berries,
You ate them and delayed and forgot.)

The poet draws our attention to the berries by repeating 'Ngobukhwebezane'. (This repetition is itself typical of that found in traditional poems.) To the poet Mamina is like an ancestral spirit he was able to kidnap after she had eaten the berries which, like those eaten by the mythical chameleon, have the potency of delaying one. The poet feels he could not have won the affection of this woman by his own efforts. Some magical powers had to come to his aid. Just as the chameleon could not nullify the order that people would die, Mamina cannot undo the bond of their love. This allusion to the myth is used with more creativity and subtlety here than is the case with the story told in the poem 'UNokufa'.

Let us look at another example. The Zulu explain one of the marks on the moon as a woman carrying firewood. She was

1. *Bridelia micrantha*

pinned onto the moon by God because she collected firewood on a Sunday, the day on which God had told man to rest. This myth was obviously fabricated after the advent of Christianity to warn people to keep the Sabbath day holy. Vilakazi refers to this woman in two of his poems. In 'Nayaphi?' (Where did you go?) he writes:

Nenkosikaz' ethwel' izinkuni
Phakath' endilingeni yenyanga
Ngayiqhweba ngayibuza.
Yangifulathela othulini lonyezi,
Yabhekuzaya yaba phambili njalo.

(Ama., p 18)

(Even the woman who carries firewood
In the sphere of the moon,
I beckoned to her and asked her.
She turned her back to me in the dust of moonlight,
And she quickly proceeded on.)

In 'NgoMbuyazi eNdondakusuka' (On Mbuyazi at Ndondakusuka) Vilakazi approaches the same woman:

Ngabon' indingilizi kaNyezi.
Ngaphakathi kwayo ngabon' umfazi
Ethwel' inyanda yezinkuni.
Naye ngambuza, wanek' izandla,
Wangikhomba phambili kwaMthala.

(Ama., p 56)

(I saw the sphere of Moonlight.
Inside it I saw a woman
Carrying a bundle of firewood.
I asked her, too, she spread out her hands,
And showed me to go ahead to the Milky Way.)

In 'Nayaphi?' the poet describes his fruitless search for his wife and brother who are dead. He has searched in vain for them on earth, and he now directs his effort towards the firmament. The same is the case with regard to 'NgoMbuyazi eNdondakusuka'. The poet's only hope is that he might find Mbuyazi's body somewhere among the stars.

Our normal conception of the mythical woman on the moon is that she is embedded there and is motionless. Her presence there is only to serve as a warning to those who may break

God's commandment. To the poet, however, she is still alive and she keeps on walking around with her bundle of firewood on her head. In these highly imaginative descriptions an otherwise 'fossilised' being suddenly explodes to life again.

In both poems the poet approaches the woman optimistically, but each time she does not offer any positive clue. At one time she simply ignores the enquirer and walks away without giving a reply. Is this probably because she is still bitter about her condemnation, or that as a cursed person she is completely useless to everybody? However we look at this question we find the use of this mythical woman very interesting and adding an air of allusory aesthetic bliss to these poems.

Vilakazi has a peculiar method of using material from traditional narratives. He uses this material allusively, and takes for granted that his readers will remember the sources. Vilakazi also uses the narratives at the places where he describes some imaginary journey in search of something. The poet introduces folklore characters when he has already fabricated the proper milieu in which the otherwise unreal phenomena are acceptable. On the whole the narratives are handled with commendable imagination and originality.

Influence of English poetry

We have discussed how Vilakazi's poetry is influenced by *izibongo*. Although *izibongo* are a highly developed form of traditional poetry they are limited in scope to the descriptions of deeds and other attributes of people or objects of praise. Bang points this out:

The innermost feelings of sorrow, joy, love, hate and ecstasy do not find expression in the *isibongo* (sic) nor are social conditions criticised or praised. Scenic nature is never eulogised.

(Bang, p 523)

This state of affairs changed when the Zulus came into contact with Western poetry which abounds in models which focus the emphasis on the expression of a poet's personal sentiments and convictions. The range of the Zulu's expression was thus widened. What Moloi says for Southern Sotho is also applicable to Zulu:

Personal sentiments, philosophies of life of different men, the desires and dreams of individuals have become common poetic subjects in ... anthologies. Elegies, satires, odes, sonnets, etc. have been composed ... European poets have been emulated.

(Moloi, p 12)

Some critics have observed that it is not all the European literary periods and movements which provide models for Zulu poets. R. Kunene, for example, remarks:

It was Romantic poetry of the 18th Century that had the most marked influence on Zulu poetry ... First and foremost, it was Vilakazi, the first great modern Zulu poet, who popularised pieces of poetry from the 18th Century Romantic poetry.

(R. Kunene, p 202)

A remark like this may make one conclude that Vilakazi deserves no praise because he depended on foreign writers. There have been conflicting views regarding a poet's use of material from a different language. There was a time when Roman writers accepted a Latin adaptation from Greek as a new piece of work. The first adapter was accorded honours almost equivalent to those accorded the writer of the original work. Those critics felt that there was no harm in following foreign models closely because to achieve perfection one had to emulate perfect models. We regard this as an extreme viewpoint. We accept Antonio Minturno's contention that it does benefit a writer to follow foreign artists of high repute. He makes an important conclusion to this issue by saying that a poet

... must make the result his 'very own'; he must so naturalize his borrowed flowers 'that they appear to have grown in his own garden, not to have been transplanted from elsewhere.'

(White, p 25)

We wish to consider the various ways in which Vilakazi used the poetry he is alleged to have borrowed from the Romantic poets. Some views have been expressed in this regard. While Jabavu feels that *Inkondlo kaZulu* attains to the rank of a classic, he adds:

It is English influence *in excelsis*, by reason of its outright imitation of English modes (metres long, short and common; all varieties of stanzas, elegiacs, sonnets, rhymes, and even the

heroic couplet reminiscent of Pope and Dryden) all punctiliously observed. Even the titles remind one of Keats in disguising their subject, ensuring that *ars artem celare est*.

(Jabavu, p 11)

The above quotation emphasises the similarity between Vilakazi's poems and the various outward forms used by the European poets. Vilakazi copied these forms consciously. He believed that Zulu poetry should be decorated with rhyming schemes and stanzas. He felt that a start could be made by relying on the patterns found in Western poetry. These patterns could be perfected by generations to come. The use of these modes should not be an end in itself, for

If we imitate the form, the outward decoration which decks the charming poetry of our Western masters, that does not mean to say that we have incorporated into our poetry even their spirit. If we use Western stanza-forms and metrical system we employ them only as vehicles or receptacles for our poetic images, depicted as we see and conceive.

(Vilakazi, 1938, p 127)

We cannot get far by merely detecting similarities between poems. If we concentrate on similarities we may condemn a good poet who uses only an idea or a line from another work. We should rather use these similarities only as a starting point, and then study what else the second poet does with the material he got from his predecessor.

With regard to Vilakazi's poetry we shall analyse the way this poet manipulates the ideas and themes which seem to have been taken from Western poetry. Our discussion will range from the examination of isolated lines and ideas to adaptations and translations of English poems.

Transfer of isolated lines and ideas

A poet may be so highly impressed with a striking expressive line in a poem that he cannot resist using that line to enrich his own composition. We are aware here that chance may play a part. When poets independently write on the same subject, the ordering of ideas may be more or less similar. But in some cases the lines in the two poems are so identical that we feel the

probability is high that the poet who wrote later used the expression from an earlier model.

It has been said that Keats is one of the poets who influenced Vilakazi. Reference has been made to the similarity between Keats's 'Ode to the Nightingale' and Vilakazi's 'Inqomfi' (The Lark). It should be noted that *Inqomfi* is not exactly the same bird as the nightingale or the lark. These birds have one thing in common: they can sing.

The general tone of these poems is similar. Both poets apostrophise as they admire these musical birds. There comes a point when the poets feel that their admiration has reached the highest unbearable pitch. They tell the birds to go away. Keats says:

Away! Away! for I will fly to thee ...

(Read and Dobrée, p 684)

The same idea is expressed by Vilakazi in these words:

Suk' uphele phambi kwami
Funa ngimpampe nami nawe ...

(Ink., p 15)

(Go away completely from [before] me
Lest I fly with you ...)

Although the two poets are expressing the same idea here, there is a difference in the words they use. Keats's 'Away! Away!' is very economical. It is a more forceful command than Vilakazi's long sentence found in the first line. We feel, though, that Vilakazi has an edge over Keats when we get to this second line. Vilakazi does not use '-ndiza' which is a direct equivalent of Keats's 'fly'. He uses '-mpampa', which, apart from the basic idea of 'fly', also means to move or wander about in an uncontrollable state as if one is possessed.

It is also remarkable that Keats says he will fly *to* the bird whilst Vilakazi will fly *with* it. It seems as if Vilakazi has a stronger urge which does not drive him only to the bird but makes him wish to join it in its flight.

There is a purpose in the use by Vilakazi of two disyllabic words at the end of each line. This adds rhythm to these lines. The rhythm is further defined because of the similarity in tonal patterns, i.e. each word has a high-low tonal pattern.

It is clear, therefore, that although a casual look at these lines

gives us an impression that they express the same idea, in the finer analysis they are not carbon copies of each other. What one poet lacks in one respect, is compensated for by other poetic devices.

In a remark about 'Inqomfi' Taylor says of Vilakazi:

His appreciation for sound and its values comes out clearly in his poem to the Lark (Inqomfi) which is reminiscent here and there of Shelley, in its ideas not in its music.

(Taylor, p 165)

R. Kunene puts it very categorically that this poem is an imitation of Shelley's 'Ode to the Skylark' (R. Kunene, p 207).

Vilakazi and Shelley do share a few ideas. In one stanza Shelley says:

Thou lovest – but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

(Read and Dobrée, p 680)

And Vilakazi puts it:

Unothando kodwa alukagazingwa lusizi.

(Ink., p 17)

(You have love but it has not been singed by sorrow.)

Elsewhere Shelley says:

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?

(Read and Dobrée, p 679)

Vilakazi uses the same idea of the fountain:

Lesi siphethu siqhunyiswa yin' ingom' emnandi?

(Ink., p 17)

(Why does this fountain produce a pleasant song?)

There is more similarity where the two poets compare the bird to a love-sick girl. In the ninth stanza Shelley says:

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace-tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour

With music sweet as love, which overflows the bower.

(Read and Dobrée, p 679)

Vilakazi puts it in these words in the fourteenth stanza of his poem:

Unjengentomb' engenasoka elal' igquma
Ith' ithulis' unembeza lapho izigquma
Ngomcabang' ongumzwangedwa ngoba iseyodwa.
Ukuntela nokuklolodela ngeke kodwa
Kuyinik' ukujabula...

(Ink., p 17)

(You are like a girl without a fiancé who sleeps mourning
Thinking she is quieting the conscience by covering herself
In secret thought because she is still alone.
Joking and jeering cannot, however,
Give her happiness...)

These lonely girls differ in many respects. Shelley's girl resorts to music in order to allay the feelings of loneliness. Vilakazi's girl, on the other hand, is so helpless that she can only groan. The groaning of Vilakazi's girl strikes a discordant note here because it cannot be associated with the sweet melody made by the bird.

We feel there is sufficient evidence that Vilakazi did get inspiration from Shelley's poem, hence the occurrence of a number of similar ideas. The sequence of these ideas is not the same in the two poems. Our view is that Vilakazi had read Shelley's poem and Shelley's ideas were recalled at random when he (Vilakazi) was writing his poem.

In the same poem, 'Inqomfi' we find more evidence of the impact of Keats's poetry on Vilakazi. At the beginning of this poem Vilakazi says:

E! Sesizwil' imloz' emnandi, phezu kwalokho
Esingakayizwa injengompe luconsela
Phezu kway' indimi...

(Ink., p 14)

(We have heard sweet whistlings but
Those we have not heard are like nectar dripping
Onto the tongue...)

These lines echo those in Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn':

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter...

(Read and Dobrée, p 686)

In this oblique type of imitation we find an excerpt from one poem appearing in another poem treating a different subject altogether. In his poem Keats writes about the imaginary melody made by the flutist engraved on the urn. On the other hand Vilakazi is referring literally to the melody made by the singing bird. Borrowed lines usually acquire new freshness in a new environment. The same can be said of these lines taken from Keats.

One common feature these lines share is that both poets have made use of enjambement. Apart from the general similarity in the idea, there is little else that is similar. The very opening of Vilakazi's line is striking. The poem opens with great excitement embodied in the use of the interjection 'E!'. The reading of this line would demand the use of a high pitch to convey the ecstasy experienced by the poet. Keats's lines carry a simple statement, and they would be read more calmly.

Vilakazi's utterance is on a more personal level. It is based on first hand experience, hence the use of the first person plural concords. What Vilakazi says sounds more convincing. It is not a generalisation like that in Keats's statement.

An important point of difference in these lines is that Vilakazi uses the imagery of nectar or juice trickling onto the tongue, instead of Keats's straightforward 'sweeter'. Vilakazi has enriched Keats's simple expression. It is striking that Vilakazi compares good music to juice. In other words he manipulates his metaphor because normally we expect the auditory stimulus to be perceived by the auditory organ instead of the gustatory one. The poet may have felt that it would be less impressive if he had likened good music to another pleasant sound. We admire this metaphorical transformation of melody to juice and the ear to the tongue. Any incongruity is eliminated by the fact that we use the same word '*mnandi*' for expressing our approval for good music and sweet juice. The verb '*-zwa*' which Vilakazi uses has more semantic overtones than 'hear' used by Keats. It can refer to the perception of sound, taste and touch. Keats's word is limited to the auditory sense.

This discussion of the examples of isolated lines and ideas used by Vilakazi from Keats and Shelley shows that the similarity between them is very superficial. In spite of the borrowed ideas Vilakazi gives his bird a typically South African background. He does this by incorporating Zulu traditional beliefs

about the behaviour of the bird, like the belief that the different styles of the bird's flight are of portentous consequence to the onlooker. The poet does all this in an effort to make a new poem from what he has gleaned from other artists.

Adaptations

One of Vilakazi's most popular poems is 'Ma ngificwa ukufa' (When death overcomes me). There is an acknowledgement to the effect that this is an adaptation of Paul Dunbar's 'A death song'. We shall look at some sections of these poems.

The first stanza of Dunbar's poem reads:

Lay me down beneaf de willers in de grass,
Whah de branch 'll go a-singin as it pass.
An' w'en I's a-layin' low,
I kin hyeah it as it go
Singin', 'Sleep, my honey, tek yo' res' at las'.'

(Hughes and Bontemps, p 42)

Vilakazi uses this stanza to write as follows:

Ngimbeleni ngaphanzi kotshani
Duze nezihlahla zomnyezane,
Lapho amagatsh' eyongembesa
Ngamaqabung' agcwel' ubuhlaza.
Ngozwa nami ngilele ngaphansi
Utshani ngaphezulu buhleba:
'Lala sithandwa, lal' uphumule'.

(Ink., p 37)

(Bury me beneath the grass
Near the willow trees,
Where branches will cover me
With leaves full of greenness.
I, too, will hear, sleeping below
The grass whispering above:
'Sleep, darling, sleep and rest'.)

Dunbar's poem has a rhyme scheme *aabba*. Vilakazi's poem also has two rhyming couplets. We are aware that Vilakazi's rhyme is not perfect. The first couplet ends in different vowels, i.e. *i* and *e*. In the second couplet the consonants in the final syllables are the same in all other respects except that they differ in that the first one is unvoiced and the second one voiced. Structurally

this is the only similarity we find in these poems. Otherwise Vilakazi tends to add a few more details in his composition. This accounts for the fact that Vilakazi's poem is about twice that of Dunbar's in length.

For rhythm Dunbar depends on the employment of the trochee. For variety he makes the second couplet in each stanza shorter by reducing the number of feet from six to four. Vilakazi, on the other hand, uses lines of ten syllables each right through his poem. The syllabic 'm' is not regarded as an independent syllable. The length of the lines and the tendency to lengthen the penultimate syllables of the words retards the pace of movement of this poem when one reads it, and this agrees with the calm and reflective tone of the whole poem.

A look at the occurrence of Dunbar's ideas in Vilakazi's poem shows that Vilakazi did not just cling to the original poem. Let us examine the ideas we find from the last line of Dunbar's second stanza to the fourth line of the third stanza:

An' de chillen waded on dey way to school¹

Let me settle w'en my shouldahs draps dey load²

Nigh enough to hyeah de noises³ in de road;

Fu' I t'ink de las' long res⁴

Gwine to soothe my sperrit⁵ bes' ...

This is how these ideas appear in the third stanza of Vilakazi's poem:

Ngiyeke ngifel' ezindleleni

Zabantwan' abafund' isikole¹

Njengob' amahlomb' esehluleka

Yimthwal² ebengisindwa yiyo.

Iyona imisindo³ yabantwana

Eduduza imiphefumulo⁵

Elel' ukulal' okuphakade⁴.

(Ink., p 38)

(Leave me alone to die on the paths
 Of school children¹
 Since the shoulders now fail [to carry]
 The burdens² which were heavy on me.
 It is the noises³ of children
 Which comfort the spirits⁴
 Which sleep the everlasting sleep⁵.)

It is only in passing that Dunbar mentions the school children (see no. 1). Vilakazi makes this the kernel of the whole poem as he expresses his wish to devote his life to the service of the school child. We like the way Vilakazi compounds Dunbar's idea creatively to produce a new shape.

Vilakazi's last stanza has many lines which cannot be deduced from Dunbar's poem at all. This stanza of nine lines is the longest in Vilakazi's poem. It is only the last line which Vilakazi borrows from Dunbar's poem again to secure a unifying conclusion: '*Lala sithandwa, lal' uphumule*'.

A closer scrutiny of Vilakazi's choice of words reveals to us the poet's talent. For Dunbar's 'Bury me' Vilakazi could have used a direct equivalent '*Ngingcwabeni*'. But he chose to use '*Ngimbeleni*' for a good reason. The verb '*-ngcwaba*' means burying a dead thing which is expected to rot. On the other hand '*-embela*' is more euphemistic. It also implies burying something which will be of use even though it is buried. Burying may be done merely to preserve the thing for better use at a later stage. Vilakazi's word is very appropriate here because its implication is that the burial of his body will not be the end to his existence. It will merely be a passing phase leading to a better (spiritual) existence.

We see in this brief discussion how much Vilakazi has done to Dunbar's poem. He has added his own innovations to the original simple poem. With regard to this poem, it would be difficult to support R. Kunene's contention that all imitations do not come anywhere near the original in merit (R. Kunene, p 207).

We welcome such an adaptation because it is tantamount to the composition of a new poem.

Translations

Views differ with regard to the value of a translation. One writer may translate a poem because he feels he cannot transform the ideas into a better original poem in his own language. Another may translate in order to improve his own style of writing. H. Blair supports the latter view:

I know no exercise that will be found more useful for acquiring a proper Stile than to translate some passage from eminent ... authors into our own words.

(Free, p 676)

It should be remembered, however, that any translation is to some degree an adaptation because the words in two languages which look the same superficially, may differ with regard to finer nuances. A translation will therefore, be better or poorer than the original depending on the words the translator chooses.

There is one poem which Vilakazi has translated in full from English to Zulu. It is Joseph Cotter's 'And what shall you say?' to which Vilakazi gives the title 'Wena-ke uyothini?'

Cotter's poem reads:

Brother, come!
And let us go unto our God.
And when we stand before him
I shall say -
'Lord, I do not hate,
I am hated.
I scourge no one,
I am scourged.
I covet no lands,
My lands are coveted.
I mock no peoples,
My people are mocked.'
And, brother, what shall you say?

(Hughes and Bontemps, p 135)

And Vilakazi's translation reads:

Woza-ke mnewethu,
Masiye kuNkulunkulu wethu!
Lapho sesiklele phambi kwakhe,
Ngokhuluma ngithi:

'Nkosi kangizondi muntu,
 Kepha mina ngiyazondwa;
 Kangibhambi muntu ngemishiza,
 Nokho ngidunjelwa yimivimbo;
 Kangiqhwagi ndawo zamunju,
 Okuncane kwami kuyaqhwagwa;
 Kangizibhinq' izizwe zabanye,
 Esami sibhinqwa yizo zonke'.
 Nqitshele mnewethu!
 Uyothini wena?

(Ink., p 93)

(Come, then, my brother,
 Let us go to our God!
 When we stand in a line before him,
 I shall speak and say:
 'Lord, I hate nobody,
 But I am hated;
 I do not flog anybody with sticks,
 But weals are swelling on me;
 I do not seize anybody's place,
 A little that is mine is seized;
 I do not mock anybody's race
 Mine is mocked by all of them'.
 Tell me, my brother!
 What will you say?)

There is very little that Vilakazi does with Cotter's poem. He extends the Zulu version slightly to fourteen lines by breaking up the last line of Cotter's poem. Vilakazi's last line stands out conspicuously and seems to add more emphasis to the question being asked to the 'brother'. Vilakazi effects very little variation to Cotter's expression. One such variation is Cotter's 'I am scourged' for which Vilakazi only refers to the swollen weals ('*ngidunjelwa yimivimbo*') which are the result of scourging.

It is true that Cotter's poem has no pretensions of reaching sophisticated poetic heights. Probably Vilakazi feared that by deviating much from the original poem he might be destroying its deliberate simplicity and appeal.

There could be an argument that Vilakazi should have added more of his individuality in this translation without distorting its basic message. We agree with Dryden's view that a translation should not end at merely supplying equivalents of words:

The translator (if he has not lost that name) assumes the liberty, not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion.

(Jensen, p 65)

There is no reason, from the literary point of view, for translating if the product will be nothing more than a copy of the original.

Poems of foreign inspiration

Referring to Vilakazi's poems which are influenced by English models R. Kunene says:

Some, only derive their inspiration from English poems and are therefore not exactly imitations.

(R. Kunene, pp 205-206)

Kunene explains this by saying that in such poems Vilakazi has his own original ideas, but one can trace the source of inspiration for the poems to some known work.

There is a danger in attributing a poem to foreign inspiration on the grounds that its title or theme is identical with that of a poem published earlier. The writers of the two poems may have written quite independently of each other. They may have noticed a similar spectacle to which they responded in a similar way.

One of the poems which Kunene says is of foreign inspiration is 'UNokufa' (Death) which, he claims, was inspired by Thomas Gray's 'Elegy written in a Country Churchyard' (Read and Dobrée, p 450). Both poets are writing on death which is a common theme in poetry. The evidence that Vilakazi had read Gray's elegy is this reference to Gray:

NawoGray abake bakubona
Behleli ngasemathempeleni ...

(Ink., p 80)

(Even Gray who saw you
When he was sitting near the temple...)

Gray's poem belongs to the descriptive impressionistic type. The poet records a number of general ideas which come to his mind when he looks at the graves. Vilakazi's poem is more

localised in that it centres around the death of his father. Vilakazi's poem has its peculiar grandeur which results from the poet's ability to handle personification with vividness.

Kunene further says that Vilakazi's 'We Moya' (O Wind) and 'Ukhamba lukaSonkomose' (Sonkomose's [beer] pot) are respectively inspired by Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' (Read and Dobrée, p 693) and Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' (Read and Dobrée, p 686). This is probable because, as we have seen earlier, some of Vilakazi's poems have lines and ideas taken from the works of these English poets. But again Vilakazi's poems are his own. He sees the beerpot, for example, as symbolic of a link between him and the traditional past, especially that of his family. Keats, on the other hand, concentrates on the significance of the engravings on the urn. Each poem follows its own directions and has its own beauty.

According to Kunene 'Ngomz' omdaladala kaGrout' (On the old Village of Grout) was inspired by Oliver Goldsmith's 'The Deserted Village' (Davis, p 179). Goldsmith's poem was inspired by the nostalgia and despondency which he felt when he looked at the ruins of Auburn, the village of his birth. On the other hand Vilakazi has some pride when he looks at Groutville, the place of his birth. His pride emanates chiefly from the fact that Groutville is situated near where Shaka lived. A large portion of the poem deals with Shaka's heroic deeds. Again each poem has its own merits.

We feel there is little point in refuting or accepting that such poems are inspired by English examples. It is impossible to find a theme that has never been written about in one way or another. It would be a futile exercise to give a detailed comparison of Vilakazi's poems with the English ones which are thought to have influenced him.

Even if we accepted that these poems were of foreign inspiration, Vilakazi would still be held fully responsible for their merits and discrepancies. He had to present the material of whatever origin afresh in his own distinctive way.

In this discussion we have noted that Vilakazi is most successful in using isolated lines which he borrows from Western poets. He is good at adapting the material creatively. There is little to praise in the full-length translation which he makes. On the whole, however, we feel that Vilakazi benefited from the

English poets. He made a great success of this borrowing, hence Jabavu's conclusion:

If the influence of English on Bantu Literature will inspire further classics ... then its continuation is worth while.

(Jabavu, p 26)

Biblical influences

In the biography of Vilakazi we indicated how he was associated with Christian institutions at Mariannhill and Ixopo. We do not expect these contacts to have left no mark on his work.

According to Stallknecht's observation:

Perhaps the most frequently recurring literary influence on the Western world has been that of the Old and New Testament.

(Stallknecht, p 121)

Friederich supports this view by supplying examples to show the importance of the Bible in the emergence of the world's greatest literary works. He concludes:

... it would be quite impossible ... to ascertain in detail the Christian elements in modern literature ...

(Friederich, p 34)

Biblical influence is evident in Zulu poetry. During the early stages of modern education among the Zulu, missionaries played an important part. In the school much emphasis was laid on the reading and study of the Bible. This accounts for the abundance of Biblical stories and excerpts in Zulu poetry.

Images of Biblical origin

In his poem on death (UNokufa) Vilakazi says to Death:

Udosi lwakho ngiyalwazi lonke
Lwaqala lwaphelela kimina ...

(Ink., 79)

(I know all about your sting
It all went into me first...)

We associate this sting of death with the famous Biblical quotation:

Kufa! Luphi udosi lwakho?

(I Corinthians 15:55)

(O death, where is thy sting?)

In this Biblical line St. Paul asks Death a rhetorical question. He is, in fact, telling Death that its power is of very minor and transient significance. In reality St. Paul gives a picture of a mere blank. Death is supposed to have a sting but the sting is not there anymore.

Other earlier users of this Biblical idea pose the question about death's sting in the same manner as it is done in the Bible. In his 'The Dying Christian to his soul' Pope asks:

O Death! where is thy sting?

(Heath-Stubbs, p 119)

Even Henry Lyte asks the same question in his famous hymn 'Abide with me':

Where is death's sting?

(Bonner, p 460)

Someone may argue that Vilakazi borrowed this sting-of-death idea from Pope and Lyte because when he started writing, the works of these people were already in circulation and he could have read them. But we feel he took it straight from the Bible because in this poem we also find references to Christian practices like the administration of extreme unction to a dying person.

To Vilakazi the sting of death is a reality because he has seen it operating in his family. He does not say it is non-existent. Vilakazi's sting is active. The poet gives us a new picture of the sting piercing into the flesh. But the poet has not been killed by this sting. The sting has worked on two planes. By killing his father who died literally, it also 'killed' the poet mentally because of the sorrow he experienced.

We applaud the poet for adding his own dimensions to the original image.

Poets like to philosophise on the brevity of human life. It is common for them to compare life with beautiful things which

vanish suddenly, like flowers. Dreams also feature prominently in this regard. When Vilakazi writes about the instability of life in his poem 'Okomhlaba kuyadlula' (Wordly things pass by) he says:

Njengephupho olizw'ulele, ulalele
Kodw' uvuke selishabalele njengomoya...

(Ama., p 6)

(Like a dream which you get in sleep, while listening
But by the time you wake up it has vanished like air...)

In the Psalms we get a fleeting allusion to a dream at waking up:

Njengephupho ekuphaphameni...

(Psalm 73:20)

(They are like a dream when one awakes...)

We are aware that in *The Tempest* Shakespeare says that man is just like a dream:

We are such stuff
As dreams are made of...

(Craig, p 17)

But the reference to the fact that a dream disappears when one wakes up is closer to the Bible than to Shakespeare.

Vilakazi does not stop at comparing life to a dream. He uses this idea as a basis for the development of further ideas around sleep and dreams. Sleep even takes one to the land of the ancestral spirits which, to the poet, seems to be a reality or the destiny of man's dreamlike existence.

The Biblical images used by Vilakazi can only be recognised by a person who has come across their counterparts in the Bible. It would be unwise to be very categorical about their origin since their universality extends beyond Biblical periods and context. Be that as it may, we appreciate that in each case Vilakazi uses the Biblical idea as a nucleus which he develops to a new whole.

Biblical allusions

Here we wish to look at the allusions to stories or situations found in the Bible. The mention of certain names in such allu-

sions makes it clear that Vilakazi wants us to know that he is making reference to what we can find in the Bible about those names.

In his poem 'Inkelenkele yakwaZhosa' (The calamity of the Xhosa) we find these lines:

Zamandikikazi akaXhosa
Aphupha njengoJosef' eGibhithe,
Kepha won' ephupha imbubhiso...

(Ink., p 4)

(Of the Xhosa diviners
Who dreamt like Joseph in Egypt
But they dreamt of destruction...)

Here Vilakazi is obviously alluding to the Biblical story of Joseph whose interpretation of Pharaoh's dream was a useful warning to the Egyptians to conserve sufficient corn for the coming seven years of famine (Genesis 41). Vilakazi only touches on an aspect of this story because he takes for granted that his reading audience is acquainted with the details. Unfortunately there is a factual error in Vilakazi's lines because he says that it is Joseph who dreamt, while, in fact, it is Pharaoh. The poet's inaccuracy counts against him because it makes the parallel he is trying to draw unacceptable.

The general milieu of Vilakazi's poem tends to reject this reference which is taken from a completely different background. The reference sounds contrived. The allusion, therefore, is more of a liability than an asset to the poem.

In the poem 'Phezu kwethuna likaShaka' (On Shaka's grave) Vilakazi asks Shaka:

Kanti nawe wawusukholwe
Kuyena uSimoni Pita,
Owahamba phezu kolwandle
Elangazel' iMvan' eNgcwele?

(Ink., p 64)

(Did you also believe
In Simon Peter
Who walked on the sea
In his eagerness for the Holy Lamb?)

This excerpt is based on the occasion when Simon Peter walked on the sea water to meet Jesus Christ. He hesitated when his

faith diminished and began to sink (Matthew 14:22-23). Again Vilakazi presumes that a person reading the poem knows Peter's story. We feel the allusion is anachronistic when we consider the fact that the poet is, in fact, addressing Shaka who was not a Christian and therefore may not have known about Simon Peter.

There is no certainty that the missionaries who were in his land had told him the stories taken from the Bible. The only defence for this oversight might be that the poet is now addressing the spirit of Shaka. As a spirit, Shaka's knowledge transcends all limitations. But still the allusion makes an ugly protruberance from the poem.

A reader of today has no difficulty in recognising the sources of the allusions used by Vilakazi. Vilakazi meant them to be recognised. But we feel that the function of these allusions is marred by the inaccuracies and the fact that they do not fit nicely into the traditional backgrounds into which they are transplanted.

Biblical story

Apart from using Biblical expressions and allusions, many poets retell the stories found in the Bible. We get such a story in Vilakazi's 'NgePhasika' (Easter). The poet mentions a few main points about the life of Christ, i.e. His sojourn in Egypt when He was a baby, His lack of interest in worldly riches, His humility and His crucifixion.

In this poem Vilakazi is not just telling the story for its own sake. He uses the story as a platform from which he can express his discontent about being discriminated against as a result of his colour. Christ who went through much humiliation and pain should understand the poet's plight better; so the poet appeals to Christ to assist him in enduring the hardships of life.

In the poem there are lines with poetry of the highest order. We find this, for example, in the stanza where the actual nailing onto the cross is described:

Lapho bekubethel' ogodweni,
Usungulo lungenamahlon' okungena
Lubhoboz' inyam' emanzi luyibhanqa
Nokhun' olomil' olungezwa zinhlungu,
Kuyampompoza kweyam' inhliziyo.

(Ink., p 2)

(When they nail you onto the log,
The nail without shame entering
And piercing moist flesh and binding
It with the dry wood that feels no pain,
There is bleeding in my heart.)

Such details are not found in any of the versions of Christ's crucifixion. They emanate from the poet's own imaginative ability. The poet introduces effective contrast between soft moist flesh and hard dry wood. These two things are not meant to be put together. They form a gruesome sight. The total picture presented here is one of Vilakazi's most vivid images.

We appreciate the way this poet uses the Biblical story as a springboard from which he can proceed to his creativity. The poet has discovered new relevance in the suffering of Christ. He makes us look at the story from a new angle.

The Bible did not have as much obvious influence on Vilakazi as did traditional and Western poetry. We feel that the poet did not benefit much by using allusions from the Bible. But other expressions and images become part of the new poem where they are used. The story of the passion of Christ is well adjusted for a new purpose in Vilakazi's poem.

A synthesis

We have been discussing various sources which Vilakazi used to form his poetry. One may wonder whether there is any way in which these different sources contributed in producing a distinctive type of poetry which Nyembezi anticipates when he says:

I think that a blending of the style of the *izibongo* with European forms might produce some interesting new forms which might be a valuable contribution.

(Nyembezi, 1961, p 9)

Our opinion is that Vilakazi did make a start in this direction. We have discussed the use of known *izibongo* in poems which are not fully *izibongo*. But we have many other examples where Vilakazi uses various types of parallelisms and repetitions in non-*izibongo* contexts.

New *izibongo* as introduction

There are poems which open with *izibongo* although they later on develop into lyrics. The opening stanza in the poem 'Woza Nonjinjikazi' (Come Nonjinjikazi) reads:

Woza wena Nonjinjikazi!
Woza mshikishi wendlela,
Wen' olunyawo lumbaxambili,
Lwalukwe zisinga zensimbi
Zikhwela, zeqana, zehlana
Phansi naphezu kwamathafa:
Wen' owathath' obabamkhulu
Wababhungula nakalokhu;
Sathi sibabuza waziba,
Washushubeza ngejubane
Sengath' uvalwe nezindlebe,
Utshobebe unotshobela.

(Ink., p 22)

(Come, you Nonjinjikazi,
Come you riddler on the way,
You whose foot is two pronged,
It is clamped with iron braces
Which rise and descend over one another
Up and down the plains.
You who took our grandfathers
You made them leave their homes;
When we asked about them you ignored us,
You went away at a fast speed
As if your ears were closed,
And you disappeared out of sight.)

In this stanza the poet addresses the train. He gives a brief description of the parts of the train which are of significance in this poem. In the typical *izibongo* style the poet first identifies the subject of praise by giving its name, i.e. 'Nonjinjikazi'. He has coined this name to imply the length of the train and also the noise it makes. The augmentative suffix adds the idea of massive size (hence the translation 'Monster of steel' in Z.H. p 19). The poet gives the train yet another name, 'mshikishi wendlela', a composite noun typical of *izibongo*. Each of the absolute pronouns in lines three and seven is followed by a relative construction which is itself extended to a long description. Such constructions abound in *izibongo*.

From the seventh line the poet starts to give a subjective comment on the hazards brought by the train. It made people desert their homes (and go to work in the cities). After this first stanza, the poet gradually abandons the *izibongo* and expresses his sentiments. He even paints a brilliant picture of sunset:

Kumnandi ukuba sendaweni
Enjenga lena laph' ilanga
Seliyoshona liyinhlamvu
Yomlil' obomv' ukhanya
Kwanga uvivi lokusa.
Ngiyalibona lelilanga
Eliphelezelwa ngamafu
Akhanyis' okwensimb' ebomvu
Ivutha phakathi kwelahle -
Linendingilizi yomqhele
Ocwebezelis' okwegoli
Lawobabamkhul' eAfrika.

(Ink., pp 22-23)

(It is nice to be at a place
Like this when the sun
Sets like a ball
Of red fire which glows
Like early dawn.
I see this sun
Which is accompanied by clouds
Which shine like red-hot iron
Burning among coal -
It has a circular crown
Which glitters like the gold
Of our forefathers in Africa.)

The sight of the glowing sun at sunset shifts the train to the background. The poet proceeds to the central theme of his poem. He expresses his regret that the Black people do not benefit from the wealth which is produced from the gold mines. It is only in the last stanza that he mentions the train again. He tells it to go away because he is still engrossed in serious thought and does not want to be disturbed.

It is clear, therefore, that the poet did not really want to write a praise poem on the train. The praises are a suitable introduction and they blend beautifully with the rest of the poem which is essentially lyrical.

Izibongo style in non-*izibongo* context

In 'Inkelenkele yakwaXhosa' (The calamity of the Xhosa) we find an example of *izibongo* style well used.

Ngalalelisa ngezwa ukukhala
Kwakho wena mntwana ongenacala;
Ngalalelisa ngezwa ukukhala
Kwakho wena ntombi nenkehl' emsulwa;
Ngalalelisa ngezwa ukukhala
Kwakho wena salukazi osele,
Kwaduma kwabikel' izinkanyezi.

(Ink., p 7)

(I listened and heard the cry
Of you, innocent child;
I listened and heard the cry
Of you, innocent maiden and betrothed woman;
I listened and heard the cry
Of you, old woman who are left behind,
It resounded to the stars.)

These lines are found in the narrative poem of what is usually known as the 'National suicide of the Xhosa'. The lines are not used in praise of any character. The repetition of the whole or part of the alternative line is common in *izibongo*. In the praises of Dinuzulu, for example, we find these lines:

Wamshaya phans' uMcwasimbana kaMaphitha,
Akwaba ndaba zalutho.
Wamshaya phans' uXukwana kaMaphitha
Akwaba ndaba zalutho...

(Nyembezi, 1962 (b), p 123)

(He defeated Mcwasimbana of Maphitha
And nothing happened thereafter.
He defeated Xukwana of Maphitha
And nothing happened thereafter...)

Such repetitions have a cumulative and magnifying effect. The repetition of 'ukukhala' in Vilakazi's poem augments the crying so that it develops into a crescendo with a tumultuous climax implied by the last line. This development towards a climax is also implied in the progression in the stages of growth from a child to an old woman. The last line, too, is put in the style of concluding lines in *izibongo*.

The poet's emotional reaction is very clear in this poem. He is moved to great pity by the death of so many innocent and helpless people. He directs the spotlight to the crying of children and women of various ages – the people who are regarded as defenceless. We, therefore, find signs of the poet's emotional involvement in this otherwise historical poem, and the poet did not use the *izibongo* style at random. The style is of functional value.

Vilakazi does demonstrate that it is possible to combine the various styles of traditional and Western poets to compose something fresh. We have noted the effect of using the *izibongo* style even in those poems which have nothing to do with praising as such. Of course this poet did not use the *izibongo* style in all his poems. With regard to some poems, we cannot agree more with Beuchat when she says that Vilakazi

... has been able to convey his feelings of frustration, of longing for the past, his aspiration and deceptions, in a style of his own, which is not that of the traditional poems, and not that found in any European form of poetry either.

(Beuchat, p 12)

The copying of various styles by Vilakazi was not done in vain. It shows the way to aspirant poets who might develop this synthesis to some sound form of poetry.

Conclusion

Generally speaking Vilakazi makes a success of borrowings from different sources. He always tries to give the borrowed material a touch of his individuality. We do find a few exceptions to this as we have seen, for example, with regard to some Biblical allusions.

It is clear that Vilakazi was experimenting in a number of ways. In places he tried to introduce rhyming schemes to basically *izibongo* lines. We doubt his success in this regard because in some cases words sound forced and artificial. But we feel the use of *izibongo* and *izibongo* style in free verse is a success. The *izibongo* fit smoothly in the pattern of the lines which are not organised into strict forms.

It is significant that most of the examples of these formative

influences are taken from the first book, *Inkondlo kaZulu*. This indicates that in this book Vilakazi felt the need of leaning on reliable supports. In the second volume he had gained sufficient confidence to stand on his own. This gives us a picture of a poet who was gradually developing to greater independence.

3 Themes – Factual and concrete

It is not always easy to classify a writer's poetry into clear-cut types. In her foreword to *Zulu horizons* Friedman says:

It should be clearly understood that Vilakazi's poetry falls into two distinct categories: the praise poems and the lyrics. The former ... are essentially tribal in character; the latter were for Vilakazi deeply influenced by the great English Romantic poets. (Z.H. p XI)

She further adds that most of the lyrics which belong to the tradition of the 19th century have an unmistakable Zulu flavour.

In the previous chapter we pointed out how Vilakazi makes a combination of the *izibongo* mode of expression with modern styles to give this 'Zulu flavour' to his lyrical poems. We further noted that even those poems which sound like *izibongo* at the beginning sooner or later discard the *izibongo* tone and assume a more individualistic tone typical of the lyrics. This makes it difficult to make clear-cut divisions of Vilakazi's poems according to types.

Praise poems themselves are not easy to put into a watertight compartment. They combine elements from other types of poetry. Cope observes:

The praise poems are therefore eulogies combining some of the qualities of both the ode and the epic. Those of the eighteenth century tend to be more lyric and ode-like and also more personal, and those of the nineteenth century tend to be more heroic and epic-like and also more national.

(Cope, 1968, p 35)

We do not get much help from Bernstein's observation:

The tribal poems, written in declamatory style, apostrophise Zulu heroes and great events.

(Bernstein, p 46)

The declamatory style Bernstein mentions here is not limited to Zulu heroes and events. It is used even in those subjects which have very little to do with traditional tribal life.

The mixture of the various styles in one poem makes it unwise to discuss the poems on the basis of whether they are *izibongo* or epics or lyrics.

Jolobe (p 127) suggests that the poems in *Amal' ezulu* can be divided into various kinds, i.e. lyrical, descriptive, heroic, protest and elegiac. This classification can be followed to a limited extent because it combines poetic types and poetic themes. Elegies and protest poems, for example, can actually be considered under lyrical poetry because they deal with the poet's emotional reaction to some situation. The category of descriptive poetry that Jolobe uses is also too broad because descriptions can be part of the poet's style found in different types of poems. We are aware that some people attach special qualities to the descriptive poems. Brooks and Warren who divide the poems which they discuss under narrative and descriptive poetry, say that the descriptive poems:

... give us the more or less vivid and recognizable impression of some natural scene or natural object – a register, rendered as accurately as the poet could manage, of the impression he himself had received through his senses or had imagined.

(Brooks and Warren, p 77)

If we make this descriptiveness a category we might find ourselves including too many kinds of poems together. We should rather reserve the word for use wherever the poet's descriptive genius is significantly manifest.

For the purpose of a detailed discussion of Vilakazi's poetry we shall not consider the poems under the broad categories like the lyric, the narrative and the dramatic. We shall rather put them under the main themes. We use 'theme' in a wide sense to include the subject matter and the underlying idea in the poem.

In the present chapter we shall discuss the poems based on historical subjects and those dealing with natural phenomena. These poems deal with factual and concrete phenomena. Historical facts or descriptions of nature are more prominent than the underlying themes. Abstract themes will be dealt with in the next chapter.

We should emphasise that our main aim in these chapters is

to analyse the poems, and not so much to classify them. We use the classification merely as a framework within which to analyse.

Historical poems

In this sub-section we shall take a look at some of Vilakazi's poems which are written on historical figures, places and events. About historical poems Baar says:

It is necessary to say the poetry of history, if such a phrase is to be meaningful, must keep intact the integrity of historical truth. When it does not, it damages the reputations of deserving men and perpetuates an erroneous account of historical events.

(Baar, p 542)

It is important to remember that a poet writes on historical subjects as a creative artist and not as an historian. While the poet must unquestionably lean on historical facts his duty is not to produce an historical text. His task is to offer us a new view of the historical subject. In his own way he gives his individual interpretation of, or reaction to the particular aspect of history. He is free to draw from his imagination for fictitious details provided they harmonise with his poem. In assessing historical poems, therefore, our main task is to evaluate the success with which the poet introduces what comes from his imagination. There may be differences of opinion regarding where exactly we should fit some of these poems. One poem can easily be put both under historical figures and historical events (e.g. 'Khalani maZulu' and 'UAggrey weAfrika'). Another may be put both under historical places and historical events (e.g. 'ISenanelo eminyakeni emashumimahlanu'). We prefer to put a poem under a specific sub-category because we feel that the elements of that category are more prominent in it than those of the other categories.

Historical figures

There is hardly any Zulu poet of note who has not composed a poem in full or in part on the great Zulu king, Shaka. Most of the poems on Shaka applaud his valorous deeds and his ability

to unite the different tribes into one Zulu nation. Shaka's name appears in a number of Vilakazi's poems.

Vilakazi's longest poem on Shaka is entitled 'UShaka kaSenzangakhona' (Shaka of Senzangakhona). The whole poem is in praise of Shaka. The poet refers to many historical facts whose authenticity we need not query. An insignificant point which a scrupulous reader might question is the statement that Shaka's mother, Nandi, was beautiful:

Lokh' unyoko eyinkani
Ngobuhle . . .

(Ink., p 42)

(Because your mother abounded
In beauty . . .)

Bryant (p 49) quotes Isaacs as stating that Nandi was a masculine and rather 'savage' woman. But this is a minor point which we need not elaborate on.

We remarked in the previous chapter that we do not regard this poem as a fully-fledged praise poem although many of its parts are written in *izibongo* style. One of the points of difference from *izibongo* is the frequent coming to the fore of the poet himself. He does this in the first three stanzas which are a preamble to the poem. He tells his audience that he wants to dress himself properly in readiness for praising Shaka. In stanzas 22 and 23 he again shifts Shaka to the background and invites other modern writers to compose poems on Shaka. From the 24th stanza to the end he writes on Shaka again.

We feel that the unity of the poem is marred by the erratic sequence in which the poet's ideas are marshalled. The introduction of the address to Shaka is full of references to his popularity and success with women (stanzas 5, 6, 8, 9). Then an account is given of the men who fled from Shaka's fierce rule (stanzas 12, 13, 14). Shaka's death is mentioned in stanza 16. After this the poet goes back to recount some of Shaka's deeds before his death. Modern days and modern writers feature in stanzas 21, 22 and 23. And again reference is made to Shaka's death in stanza 25. This is followed by the mention of some of Shaka's enterprises and the fact that he introduced a short stabbing spear for use in his army. His death is again alluded to in the final stanza.

In the unwritten traditional *izibongo*, events are not necessar-

ily presented in their chronological order. But we cannot condone this rather haphazard arrangement of ideas in written work because the author had a chance of rearranging the work so that it could form a properly balanced unit.

The poetic level of this poem fluctuates. The narrative in the stanzas on the fleeing of various leaders (stanzas 12 and 15) is essentially prosaic. The richness of expression is praiseworthy especially where the poet employs *izibongo* style. His expression is enriched further by the lines he borrows from the original *izibongo* of Shaka. In the previous chapter we applauded this poet for the creativity evinced in the composition of additional lines which are a sequel to the original *izibongo*. We consider the typical *izibongo* images as being well employed, like in the following lines in which the buffalo image binds the stanza aesthetically:

Zath' inyathi zijamile
Nezwe likhandanisile
Ligwel' iziqhanazana
Ezimfuphi nezindana,
Njengamanqe zigijima
Zishiy' imiz' ivuliwe
Namanxulum' eshisiwe,
Ngob' inyath' isijamile
Emazibukwen' imile.

(Ink., p 51)

(The buffaloes stood threateningly,
And the land was full of
Those who were fleeing,
The short ones and the tall ones,
They were running like vultures
Leaving their homes open
And their villages burnt down
Because the buffalo stood threateningly
At the ford.)

Even in the original *izibongo* Shaka is likened to different fearful animals like the elephant and the lion. Such animal images are well used to portray this king.

A question might be asked why Vilakazi wrote another *izibongo* for a person whose traditional praises are already the best in the Zulu language. One of the clues is provided by Cope when he says this about the praise poem:

The object of the praise-poem is to light up different facets of the chief's personality, and this is sometimes most effectively achieved by reference to historical events.

(Cope, 1968, p 35)

One wonders if Vilakazi was aiming at lighting up other facets which Shaka's bard omitted. The historical data included in this poem reveal nothing new about Shaka in addition to the known fact that he was a tough ruler.

The most conspicuous item added by Vilakazi is found in the long references to the romantic side of the king's life, and these references are made more prominent by being placed at the beginning of the poem. This alone cannot be regarded as the purpose for the composition of the poem because it does not occur elsewhere in the poem.

At the beginning of the 4th stanza Vilakazi praises Shaka for working for the unity of the tribes. Other poets use this as a central theme, but Vilakazi does not develop it any further.

Vilakazi probably wanted to introduce new trimmings to the known *izibongo* style. He attempts the rhyming couplet right through the poem. It is doubtful whether he succeeds with this device. In the first stanza, for example, he writes:

Ungilibazise ngeze.
Ngiboshw' ukuba ngifeze
Inkondlo yethole lika-
Phunga noXab' elafika
Ngokubelethwa ...

(Ink., p 40)

(You delay me for nothing.
I am bound to finish
The poem on the calf of
Phunga and Xaba which arrived
By being carried ...)

The coupling by rhyme of the first two lines has nothing to do with the meaning of the lines. The first line completes a thought from the preceding lines. The second line begins a different idea. For the sake of rhyme the poet even breaks the word 'likaPhunga' into two parts so that '-ika' may appear twice at the end of the lines. This forces words to create artificial patterns, and it does not contribute towards the elevation of the standard of the poem.

Our view is that although this poem has brilliant lines, its greatness is marred by a number of discrepancies. The historical subject itself is great but its treatment has flaws.

Shaka is the central figure again in the poem 'Phezu kwe-thuna likaShaka' (On Shaka's grave). The poem opens with great excitement as the poet tells people to rejoice, for a stone has been laid in honour of Shaka. After this the poet recounts the deeds of Shaka as he did in 'UShaka kaSenzangakhona'. The poet expresses his pride that he inhabits the same land where Shaka lived. Finally he praises Shaka for having prepared his nation to accept modern education.

Here we get the common picture of a belligerent king, but there is nothing more we learn about Shaka. The poem tends to be long-winded without saying anything substantial.

This poem is written in almost the same way as 'UShaka kaSenzangakhona'. Here Vilakazi has abandoned the fancy couplets and also the rigid rhythm used in the earlier poem. This one reads with more ease. There are impressive constructions which add beauty to the poem, like these linkages in the following lines:

Ikhwezi lifana noShaka
Yen' obikezel' ukusa,
Nokusa kwa leth' ukufunda,
Imfundo ya leth' inkanyiso...

(Ink., p 66)

(The morning star is like Shaka
Who foretold the coming of dawn,
The dawn brought education,
Education brought enlightenment...)

Apart from these links there is appreciation for the metaphorical use of the morning star and dawn. Vilakazi sees Shaka as a link between the 'dark age' of the Zulu nation and the era of enlightenment. It is such masterly touches which often rescue those of Vilakazi's poems which are not of a particularly high standard.

It was king Solomon, the son of Dinuzulu, who played a part in the erection of Shaka's monument. Vilakazi tells us about Solomon in the poem 'Khalani maZulu' (Weep you Zulus). In an excited tone the poet calls on the Zulu regiments to wake up and join those who are mourning the death of Solomon:

Mabutho kaZulu vukani nonke,
Nibuth' izihlangu nilalelise!

(Ink., p 24)

(Zulu regiments arise,
Collect your shields and listen!)

After this he cools down and scolds the Zulus for engaging in domestic fights. The poet becomes taken up too much with other historical details before telling us about Solomon. Later on we learn more about Solomon as a person. He is praised for his role in encouraging the establishment of educational institutions and for what he did in order to have Shaka's monument erected. The poet seems to see some identity between Shaka and Solomon because both of these kings wanted the Zulus to be united. The death of Solomon means the end of this ideal and the whole nation must weep. As we have said the poet refers at length to historical events preceding the reign of Solomon. This tends to obscure the man who should be in the centre of the poem. Instead he becomes a vague figure in the background. Because of the poet's failure to establish a feeling of intimacy between Solomon and the reader, the reader is not sufficiently motivated to respond to the poet's plea that there should be mourning.

On the other hand we note that the emphasis in this poem falls on the poet's contention that the suicidal tendencies of the Zulus make them look like an accursed nation, hence the premature loss of promising leaders like Solomon. It seems it is more for this than the death of their king that the Zulus must mourn. At the end the poet becomes hysterical as he calls on the Zulus to weep. In the last stanza he repeats the word '*Khalani*' (Weep) and '*izinyembezi*' (tears), for example:

Khalani kuze kuzw' izulu
Ekuseni nasebusuku,
Khona kuyokusa kugcwele
Izinyembezi zamathongo,
Zivuthuke phezu kotshani!
Khalani njalo zinkedama,
Senibaningi niyadida!

(Ink., pp 30-31)

(Weep until heaven hears
In the morning and at night,
So that by dawn the tears
Of the ancestral spirits will be full
And they will drip onto the grass!
Weep all the time you orphans,
You are many now, you are confusing!)

The poem has many great lines and these include excerpts taken from the known *izibongo* of kings. The *izibongo* style is used with great success. We find this in different types of repetitions like those of names and places. In the following lines the repetition of the verb 'Wazizwela' (He tested for himself) at the beginning of alternating lines and the occurrence of names at the end of each line create an effective structuring pattern:

Wazizwel' amandl' uCetshwayo.
Edudw' umnumzan' uSihayo,
Wazizwel' amandl' eSandlwana.

(Ink., p 26)

(He tested his strength, Cetshwayo,
While being encouraged by Sihayo,
He tested his strength at Isandlwana.)

We also get highly inspired lines like in the following excerpt where the poet refers to the positive reaction of different people to the erection of Shaka's monument:

Ulwandle lusukume phansi
Lwakhothamel' idwala lelo,
Kwazamazam' umhlaba wonke.

(Ink., pp 28-29)

(The sea stood up
And bowed before that rock,
The whole world shook.)

Although this poem does not present the image of Solomon as clearly as that of Shaka where the latter is depicted, it has its own good points which make it an acceptable endeavour.

Another fairly long poem on an historical personality is 'Aggrey weAfrika' (Aggrey of Africa) which is a tribute to the memory of Dr James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey. The poem highlights the impact of Aggrey's visit in 1921 on the Blacks of South

Africa. He told them to develop a love for learning and not to be ashamed of the colour of their skin.

The poem opens with the praises of Aggrey. Then reference is made to Aggrey's challenging speech which encouraged the establishment of many institutions of learning (stanzas 2 and 3). In the third stanza mention is made of his death. The fourth stanza mentions his birth and marriage. The two last stanzas deal with Aggrey's reception in South Africa and the hope that young Blacks will aspire to educational heights.

It is clear that historical facts and narrative are not the main concern of the poet. They are subordinate to the presentation of the central theme. But here, too, we feel that a more chronological ordering of incidents would lend a better structure to the poem. The establishment of educational institutions as a result of Aggrey's influence, for example, would be a suitable climax if it were presented towards the end of the poem. The defiant remarks made about him on his arrival in South Africa (stanza 5) should come before his speech mentioned in the second stanza.

The poem is essentially speculative and didactic. The poet urges his Black friends to seek education and ridicules those who have an inferiority complex about their colour:

... ngombal' omnyama

.....
Esilwa sifun' ukuwususa
Ngokubhix' ibumba likamlungu
Elenz' umunt' afane nekhonde
Lon' elilunguz' emagatsheni
Livez' ubuswan' umzimb' ungekho...

(Ink., p 71)

(... about the black colour

.....
Which we try hard to remove
By smearing on the Whiteman's clay
Which makes a person look like a baboon
That peeps through the branches
Showing its little face without a body...)

While we enjoy the humour in these lines, we feel that the poet's didacticism is rather too explicit. It does not help this poem which has large portions of straightforward prosaic narration.

The poem is not without some sparks of the poet's creative genius. In some places the poet is highly imaginative. One of these is where he dramatises what happened when Aggrey proposed to the lady who eventually became his wife:

Wath' ukuyibona wathi: 'S'khihli
Kangisakudluli ntombazana,
Nezwi lakho limnandi limtoti,
Woza nami siye leAfrika.'
Kwab' ushaye phansi mfo kaAggrey,
Intokazi yathintith' ilokwe,
Yafulathelis' imicabango
Wena wayidoba wayahlula.

(Ink., p 70)

(When you saw her you said: 'S'khihli
I am not passing you by, girl,
And your voice is very sweet,
Come with me to Africa.'
The son of Aggrey found it difficult,
The lady shook her dress
And turned her thought against you
You coaxed her and won her.)

Unfortunately the whole stanza in which this episode is described is of little significance to the poem. Its omission would not affect the poem adversely. One might even venture to say that its omission would leave us with a more streamlined piece of work.

The poet makes up for these flaws by employing other devices. The praise poem style at the beginning of the poem is used with great effect:

Intaka yeziduli zeAfrika
Eyendule'izizw' ezimnyama
Ngokuhluk' ezikhoveni
Ezihlal' entshonalanga...

(Ink., p 67)

The finch of the hills of Africa
Which set an example for the black nations
By being different from the owls
Which live in the west...)

The poetic value of this *izibongo* portion is that it introduces the

bird image which is the main unifying factor in the whole poem. In the second stanza we find the lines:

Nathi siyizona izinkozi,
Sekusele ukuba singandiza.

(Ink., p 68)

(We also are eagles,
All that remains is for us to fly.)

In the last stanza he says:

Sikhoselise-ke nathi sonke
Ezimpikweni zokwazi kwakho...

.....
Lezo zinkoz' owazibonayo

.....
Sezelule izimpiko zazo...

(Ink., p 71)

(Shelter all of us too,
Under the wings of your knowledge...

.....
Those eagles which you saw

.....
Have stretched their wings...)

This unifying bird image which dominates this poem is well selected to represent the potentiality of the people of soaring to educational heights which are as limitless as space above the earth.

In the poems discussed above we have noted how Vilakazi handles his material on the personages who really lived. Sometimes he uses historical facts to outline the character of the hero of the poem. In other instances, like in the poem on Aggrey, a minimum of historical fact is used because the poet wants to concentrate on just one detail which is of importance to his theme.

We have further remarked that the poet does not take much cognisance of the chronological sequence of the events surrounding the main character. This is probably because in all these poems the poet addresses dead people. The spirit views the earthly life as a whole whose treatment need not be guided by the laws of chronological order. It is our view, however, that adherence to such an order would raise the artistic standard of these poems.

Historical places

Vilakazi wrote two long poems, on Groutville (Ngomz' omdaladala kaGrout) and Mariannahill (Isenanelo eminyakeni engamashumimahlanu). Both of these places are famous centres of Christian activity. They were also important to Vilakazi as he was born at Groutville and educated at Mariannahill.

At the beginning of 'Ngomz' omdaladala kaGrout' the poet apostrophises this village:

O Groutville, mz' omdala kaGrout!

(Ink., p 51)

(O Groutville, old village of Grout!)

The poem is dominated by a mood of melancholy. The glory of the past will never be revived because life has been drained, as it were, from this place. The place is great because it is where Shaka once lived. When Shaka predicted at his death that the Zulus would not rule their land, a curse fell on this area. Even when Grout had introduced education he passed away before the new traditions could be firmly established. The poem ends on a note of optimism that God will help toward the improvement of the lot of the people. After all, some of them have already advanced appreciably educationally.

We expect the poem to concentrate on Groutville. But from the end of the third stanza the poet branches off and starts addressing Shaka. Shaka begins to dominate the scene as long references are made to his deeds and death. The poet's attention now drifts between his address to Groutville and recounting the historical events connected with Shaka. About half of the poem deals with Shaka and this destroys the balance between the main subject, the village, and the minor one of Shaka which should have been mentioned in passing as a means of illustrating a certain point. Other historical details about Dingane's flight to Swaziland after the assassination of Shaka (stanza 5) divert the poem further off the tangent.

There might be an argument that it was not the intention of the writer to dwell on the village as such. He was using it merely as a basis from which he could express his nostalgia for the unimpeded splendour which the Zulus seem to have lost for good. The first three stanzas treat this theme explicitly. But our feeling is that the impact of the poet's message is attenuated by

the shakiness of the foundation from which he is working. In the third stanza, for example, the poet mourns the poor state of affairs at Groutville. And in the same stanza the poet boastfully states:

Konje ukhon' umuz' ongashingiphala
Ngoba uthi won' unganywe ngangcono
Amathongo angadlula okaMenzi?

(Ink., p 53)

(Is there any village which can boast
That it is guarded by better
Ancestral spirits than the son of Menzi?)

This statement cannot be regarded as irony meant to underrate the power of Shaka. So why does this place lose its liveliness despite the patronage of the best guardian? We cannot explain this contradiction.

The poem does have a few good points. In the mind of the poet Groutville is like an old person – unfortunately this personification is not fully developed. The poet uses an appropriate description: 'Mvot' ozisini', meaning that Groutville is like a person who has lost some of her teeth because of old age. While Groutville is considered with respect for her role in the past, she is no more effective now; she has lost her 'bite'.

We find vivid, though isolated descriptions, for example:

... (iziziba)
Laph' izinsizwa namagawu bezothi
Zingene ngenhloko zidl' umtshuzo
Kuhle kwezingxangxa namadwi.
Amagagasi abengelutho, noma
Bewasika abesikeka dweshu.

(Ink., pp 52-53)

(... [the pools]
Where the young men
Would enter headlong and dive
Like frogs.
They defied the waves
And cut them neatly.)

We like the blood and fire image when the poet describes Dingane after the assassination of Shaka:

Inhliziyo nezandla zakhe zigcwele
Lonk' ihlule legazi lomnewabo,
Izandla zivuth' amalangabi, zasha...

(Ink., p 56)

(His heart and hands full of
All the clotted blood of his brother
His hands emitting flames, burning...)

Dingane thought he would be happy after Shaka's death, but he suffered severely. His suffering is compared to that of a person whose hands are burnt by fire.

The poem is written mainly in free verse which makes the narrative flow with ease. One wonders why the poet ever attempted a rhyming scheme in the second stanza. The last seven lines of this eleven-line stanza read:

Ikubhozomela, ikwenekela phansi.
Nanka amasim' omhlanga elucansi,
Esikaza nomoba ay' ashay' eMvoti
Omanzi anehlimbithw' angan' amtoti,
Agudle njengomqhumo wasemthimbeni
Ephahle la nangal' amanzi nob' ephandle,
Kuhelisene kuyolwandle njengomthimba.

(Ink., p 52)

(It attacks you and spreads you out on the ground.
Here are the fields of reeds looking like a mat,
Next to sugar cane which grows up to Mvoti river
Whose water is muddy but nice,
It grows along the river like a bridal party,
It grows on either side of the water
Forming rows to the sea like a bridal party.)

The stanza is adorned with rhyming couplets. This rhyme, however, is abandoned in the last three lines. The impression we get is that the poet wanted to use these couplets as he had done in some of the historical poems. For some reason he decided to abandon this. He left the poem looking like a piece of sculpture with only a small portion well polished, and leaving us with a puzzle as to why he took the trouble to rhyme and then abruptly gave it up.

The few good points in the poem do not help much in making it a success.

Now a look at the poem on the 50th anniversary of Mariann-

hill, 'Isenanelo eminyakeni engamashumimahlanu'. At the beginning the poet declares that he has been asked by some authorities to write this poem. In the very first stanza he gets to the crux of the matter. He introduces school children who move in great numbers to spend years of study at Mariannahill. The second stanza presents yet another group of people, the nuns and monks, who leave their homes to serve for a lifetime at this institution. The third stanza takes us back to the period before the founding of this institution. The poet presents an imaginary congress of the Zulu and German spirits who resolve that the Zulus must be converted. At this congress Father Francis is appointed to take a lead in this venture. The fourth stanza paints a vivid picture of the main physical, linguistic and spiritual features of the people Father Francis was going to serve. In the fifth stanza an imaginative description is given of the geographical location of Mariannahill and how Father Francis won his first converts:

Wabon' uKhofi kaManganga,
Wamephuc' umutsha wakhe
Wawusulel' ezaleni ...

(Ink., p 85)

(He saw Khofi of Manganga,
And took away his loin skin
And threw it on the rubbish heap ...)

The next seven stanzas enumerate different prominent people who either worked at Mariannahill or studied there to become prominent members of society. The thirteenth stanza contains the poet's pledge to perpetuate the motto of Mariannahill, '*Ora et Labora*'. In the concluding stanza the poet promises to return as a spirit to guard this place and inspire scholars to write. We find a much better systematisation of ideas in this poem. For example, at the beginning of the poem and at the end the poet clamps his piece with imaginative scenes of the spiritual world.

Like in the poem on Groutville, here, too, the picture of the place itself is not distinctly delineated. This is not felt as a serious omission because the writer's main assignment is clearly to exalt the institution for what it has accomplished over the period of fifty years. This is the reason for the poet's concentration on the products of the place, the highly reputable people who are found in different walks of life.

The middle of the poem is rather crowded with names which may have very little meaning to a person who did not live during the times of the poet. One might query why Vilakazi included so many details which will only worry other readers. Stageberg and Anderson state that a poet writes in the first place for his contemporaries who should be conversant with the cultural and historical details which he includes in his work. They conclude:

If, then, the reader's experience does not include the knowledge necessary to a full understanding of the printed words, he must acquire the missing information before he can have a meaningful poetic experience.

(Stageberg and Anderson,
p 229)

Generally a poem whose meaning can be arrived at only after strenuous research into names of people and places mentioned in it becomes obscure. It becomes more frustrating to a reader who has no way of getting to the locality where the poem is set and make investigations. Although Daiches says this in a slightly different context, he has a point when he states:

A work which continues to be dependent for our appreciation of it on historical background – a work, that is, that does not light up in itself, as it were, as soon as our attention has been drawn to the proper way of looking at it – cannot be a successful work of art...

(Daiches, p 265)

We do subscribe to the view that a work of art should light itself up so that it can offer some enjoyment, no matter how limited, to its viewers. Of course the fullest appreciation can be arrived at by those who are able to get the background information about all the otherwise obscure features of the work.

While the background information on the various names used by Vilakazi helps to clarify certain points, the beauty of the poem does not depend solely on this information. The names are presented in well-manipulated poetic language. So, for example, we are given a clue that the four young men who appeared in Francis's dream made use of their intellectual potentialities to rise to the top:

Ephusheni lakhe wezwa,
Wabon' izinsizw' ezine
Ziba zinde ngamakhanda ...

(Ink., p 85)

(In his dream he heard
And saw four young men
Whose heads grew long...)

In stanza 8 we find the lines:

Nawe ntokazi kaHwanqa
Uyintwasahlobo njalo ...

(Ink., p 87)

(And you daughter of Hwanqa
Are always spring ...)

Even if we do not know exactly who the daughter of Hwanqa was, the poet indicates that somehow she brought new life and hope to the people. The metaphor of spring has been used beneficially.

The very variety of people mentioned makes interesting reading. Each person is an individual with his own peculiarities. Some descriptions, while picturesque, have an interesting tinge of humour which borders on caricature. Khathi, for example, is described:

... Nenkinsela yakwaKhathi
Ezimbulunga ngamehlo
Njengesikhohlokhohlwane
Esigagul' inkulumo
Odengezini lwemfundo.

(Ink., p 86)

(... With Khathi the great man
Whose eyes were big
Like those of an owl
Who spoke expertly
As he was next to the potsherd of education.)

Here and there the poem employs *izibongo* style with great effect. The following quotation is reminiscent of *izibongo* where we get a stanza with a statement which is extended, developed and concluded:

Kwaqhamuk' uPelepele
Omehl' anjengomthakathi
Othakath' umfan' ekhanda,
Wathakath' okaWeseli,
Wathakath' okaGumede,
Baphenduk' amalangabi.

(Ink., p 86)

(There appeared Pelepele
Whose eyes were like a witch
Who bewitched a boy in the head,
He bewitched the son of Weseli,
And bewitched the son of Gumede
And they turned into flames.)

Although there is no direct explanation about each of these people, we deduce from the context that Pelepele taught Weseli and Gumede. The effectiveness of his teaching is compared to that of the magical powers of witchcraft. The boys were transformed into new beings and their dynamism is metaphorically likened to that of fire.

It is such skilful use of metaphor and symbolism that makes this long poem a pleasure to read even to those who do not have full knowledge of the actual facts regarding historical figures and places.

Vilakazi's poems on historical places do not dwell on the description of the places themselves. They rather deal more with the significance of the places among the people. The poet may have realised that this significance is of more literary value than the descriptions. We have noted, especially with the poem on Mariannhill, that many names of people and places which are included do not hinder us from enjoying the work because the poet has employed the best of poetic language right through. Such a poem is a piece of art and not a dry factual description of such a place.

Historical events

Here we shall consider those poems which were inspired by well-known historical events.

The poem 'Inkelenkele yakwaXhosa' is based on the story of Nongqawuse who told her people to destroy their livestock and grain because the ancestral spirits would provide the Xhosas

with new possessions and the Whites would be swept into the sea. On the fixed day nothing happened. Misery and death befell the Xhosas.

The first two stanzas of the poem give a brief background to the incident. In a few lines the writer presents the setting, the key characters and the main issue of the poem. One is immediately gripped by suspense emanating from the awareness of the extensive consequences of whatever will be the final outcome of Nongqawuse's dream. In the next three stanzas the poet describes the preparations made by the old men in anticipation of the rejuvenation. The poet selects the people of this age group because the reception of new life will be the most exciting experience for them. Among other things they will again go through the bliss of courtship and love. From the people the poet makes our gaze shift towards the empty cattle kraals and then the feasting vultures and other carnivores (stanzas 4 and 5). The seriousness and irreversibility of the situation is implied here. After this the poet presents the tension and turmoil as people gradually realise that they have been deceived. The climax is reached when there is wailing and dying because of despair and starvation. Only a few people can be saved from this catastrophe. The last five stanzas consist mainly of the poet's comment on the situation. He points out among other things that despite the calamity which the Xhosas caused themselves through their credulity, there have emerged educated people.

The narrative section of the poem has been handled with commendable imagination. Historical information itself is minimal and the story is the poet's reconstruction of what happened.

The suspense created at the beginning of the poem slackens as we read on because of much foreshadowing. We get these lines, for example:

Kepha won' ephupha imbubhiso. (Stanza 6)

(But they dreamt of destruction.)

Ilanga lakhwel' umango walo
Liyilokhu lisineke njalo. (Stanza 11)

(The sun ascended its steep ascent
Grinning all the time.)

These are indications that what people are expecting will not happen. The reader's curiosity does not flag completely because his interest is not so much on what the conclusion will be. In such a case, as Brook and Warren put it:

We are interested not merely in getting the information about the conclusion, but in following the process by which the conclusion is reached... just enough to make us experience the central feeling and grasp the central meaning of events.

(Brook and Warren, p 328)

After all, even the reader who starts reading without the knowledge of any historical background can see from the title that the end in this story will be disastrous.

Nongqawuse herself does not feature directly in the narrative portion. The poet presents the contrasting moods of the different people; the optimism of the old folk, the scepticism and impatience of the young ones, and, finally, the grief of everybody.

The poet's descriptive ability is evident in lines like the following:

Kwaphum' ixheg' eselibhinca nhlanye,
Lathath' ubhoko ladondolozela
Liqinis' imisiph' emilenzeni;
Lagcob' amafuth' ezimvub' ekhanda
Khon' izinwele zizobuyelana;
Laqal' ukuphoth' amadev' angwevu.

(Ink., p 3)

(There emerged an old man who ties his attire sideways,
He took a walking staff and supported himself,
He strained the sinews of his legs,
He smeared hippopotamus fat on his head
So that his hair could keep together
And he started twirling his grey whiskers.)

Apart from its vividness this description contains irony and humour. The old man is not aware that he is preparing for just the opposite of a rebirth. He strikes a comical figure in his enthusiasm, but this humour is indeed a laugh with a tear.

Direct speeches and dialogue give life to the characters. Dialogue raises the poem to real drama in the eleventh stanza:

Kwezwakala omuny' ebuza ethi:
 'Kodwa nith' ikhona into ekhona?'
 Abanye babik' indlala nokoma,
 Amaqhalaqhala athula duya.
 Kwavela ishing' elithize lathi:
 'Ngikhombise, uphi uNongqawuze
 Ngincame ngizizwele ngesijula?'
 Kwahlokom' izwi labadala bathi:
 'Thul' umsindo mfana kaNobani,
 Uxosha amathongo...

(Ink., p 6)

(Someone was heard asking:
 'But is anything going to happen?'
 Some complained of hunger and thirst,
 The boisterous ones kept quiet.
 One ruffian said:
 'Show me, where is Nongqawuse
 So that I may stab her with a spear?'
 The voice of the old ones shouted:
 'Keep quiet, son of So-and-so,
 You are chasing away the ancestral spirits'...)

In the following excerpt we find good use of the imagery of the worm, a brief, implicit personification of sleep, detailed personification of hunger and the use of ideophones to form a good couplet to conclude the episode:

Wen' owaz' umnyundu oncel' igazi
 Usungene ungasenakuphuma,
 Kanjal' usizi nesililo sabo
 Abezwakala kude mini leyo
 Phakathi kobusuku makhashana
 Ubuthongo busonge sonk' isintu,
 Indlala yabavinga labo bonke
 Abalula nabayincekenceke
 Yabasonga inqwaba ngelokufa,
 Abasinda abakwaluvaywana,
 Abathi besuka bathi shelele
 Kanye nelanga lapho kuthi zibe.

(Ink., p 7)

(Like when the worm which sucks blood
 Has entered and will not get out,
 So was the sorrow and lamentation of those
 Who were heard from afar that day

In the middle of the night when
Sleep had wrapped all humanity.
Hunger chopped down all those
Who were light and weak
And wrapped them into a bundle with death,
Those who escaped were cowards
Who decided to steal away
After sunset.)

The last-mentioned stanza takes the narrative to its climax and conclusion. The portion after it can be regarded as an epilogue. It extends over 63 lines (about a third of the whole poem). This is made up of the poet's comments about the calamity. The poet gives a good description of the ghosts of Tsili and Nongqawuse, and a list of Xhosa personalities. While this is not irrelevant we wonder if it would not be more effective if it had been reduced. We feel that there is very little poetic significance in the many names which appear in the 17th stanza. We feel this is a weakness in an otherwise good piece of work.

The year of the calamity of the Xhosas, i.e. 1856, is also the year of the battle between the sons of Mpande: Cetshwayo and Mbuyazi. Ndongakusuka was the battlefield. This battle is described in the poem 'NgonMbuyazi eNdongakusuka'.

The poem opens dramatically with Mbuyazi shouting commands at his soldiers:

'Phambili maqhaw' amakhulu!
Neno Mantantashiya!
Sondela kimi mnewethu!
Khona zigqoza...'

(Ama., p 52)

('Advance you great soldiers!
This side Mantantashiya!
Come near me, brother!
Get to them Zigqozas...')

Without any dallying we have been plunged into the middle of a turbulent situation. Mbuyazi's speeches which spread over four stanzas are punctuated by the poet's remarks. The poet is an onlooker and describes in three-line stanzas the progress of the battle. The drama is enhanced by the onlooker's use of ideophones and war cries:

Kwathi klebhu, kwathi mbo

.....
Wezw' ushibedabe, sabanikwa.

The first line above describes the attacking while the second one contains words which the warriors utter as they attack.

In the 10th stanza the poet summarises the fact that Mbuyazi was defeated because of the effects of the charms of Manembe, the witch doctor who supported Cetshwayo. We feel that the poem would have been a concentrated and dramatic masterpiece if the poet had ended here. It would leave us with a clear picture of an ambitious man who is crushed to defeat because of his attempt to contend with supernatural powers for which he is ill equipped. The poem continues to embrace the poet's fantastic journeys in search of the bones of Mbuyazi. The poet is carried away by his imagination to the moon and the stars and even to the land of the ancestral spirits. His search is fruitless.

The latter portion of the poem is one of the most picturesque fantastic descriptions in Vilakazi's poetry. Although we enjoy following the poet on his 'journey' we keep on asking ourselves why he takes all his trouble of looking for Mbuyazi's bones. The poet has not indicated that there was any bond between him and Mbuyazi, nor has he shown that the Zulu nation lost something as a result of Mbuyazi's death. From the poem there is nothing much we learn about Mbuyazi except that he encouraged his soldiers to fight on, but he was defeated. He does not win anybody's respect or sympathy. We see no justification for the poet's sentimentalism.

In this poem we appreciate the poet's ability to capture the drama and the atmosphere of the incident. But we feel that the details he adds after the conclusion of the historical episode are too lengthy and unwarranted. They spoil the poem.

In this discussion we have noted how Vilakazi usually uses historical facts only as a starting point. His historical poems show his creativity very clearly. Unfortunately most of his poems lack balance because of the inclusion of too many details, admittedly of highly imaginative nature, but which could have been omitted or condensed for the sake of brevity and concentration.

On nature

It is not easy to describe some poems as nature poems because poets include natural phenomena in many of their works. Most of Vilakazi's poems get their poignancy from his adept use of scenes from nature to clarify certain points. However, we do get poems specifically on natural objects and phenomena. These poems generally describe these objects as clearly as possible. Lord Byron gives a warning about such descriptions:

Descriptive poetry has been ranked as among the lowest branches of the art, and description is a mere ornament, but which should never form 'the subject' of a poem.

(Cowl, pp 108-109)

Brooks and Warren share this idea, and they add:

A mere listing of qualities gives a rather flat description; it may be accurate but it does not stir the imagination.

(Brooks and Warren, p 92)

Such comments indicate that in such descriptions we expect to be given a new view of the object. In other words the poet should provoke certain responses to the known natural phenomenon.

In this sub-section we wish to examine some of the poems on nature in order to appreciate whether the poet did succeed in giving us this new view. We shall divide these poems into those dealing with known scenes or landscapes and those dealing with natural objects and phenomena.

Scenery

We have already discussed some of Vilakazi's poems on known towns or settlements. Vilakazi also wrote landscape poems. His 'Impophoma yeVictoria'¹) is on the Victoria Falls found in Rhodesia. The poet apostrophises the waterfall and praises it for its unchanging beauty. The poet's admiration is arranged in

1. According to R. Kunene (p 206) part of this poem is a translation of L. Sigourney's 'Niagara Falls'. We tried in vain to find a copy of Sigourney's poem.

stages. He first admires the waterfall from a distance and tells it to flow on for ever:

Gobhoza kuze kube nini manzi...

(Ink., p 18)

(Flow for ever, water...)

He finds the waterfall peerless among other things like the sea in that it never tires. Then the poet seems to be getting closer to appreciate the freshness of the leaf which draws its nourishment from the life-giving waterfall. He sees birds which clean themselves with the water. Eventually he seems to be touching the water:

Kuyinjabulo ngisho ukuthinta

Umphetho...

(Ink., p 20)

(It is a joy even to touch

The edge...)

Further details reveal themselves. The different distances from which the poet has been studying the waterfall convince him that he can never do justice in his attempt to describe this glorious sight. The full worth of the waterfall can only be appreciated by those who visit it and submit themselves, as it were, to its charm.

This is one of Vilakazi's best-written poems. The poet makes effective use of personification. He even gives the waterfall a name, Dumase or Roarer:

Zibek' indlebe phezu kwezwi lakho

Dumase, ngathi zithi: 'Hamba njalo

Wen' ovaletisi' ungavalelisi'.

(Ink., p 20)

(They listen to your voice,

O Roarer, as if they say: 'Go on always,

You who says farewell but do not go'.

We note that the poet concentrates on the waterfall itself and does not give a description of the wider landscape where the waterfall is found. The description could apply to any waterfall. One is inclined to agree with the view that Vilakazi never actually saw the Victoria Falls (Gérard, p 243). R. Kunene makes another observation:

After reading the poem we still have no idea of the waterfall, except in a vague sort of way.

(R. Kunene, p 206)

The poet could have easily broadened his focus in order to include some distinctive features of this waterfall. But we feel that his purpose was not to give an accurate sketch of the spectacle. The waterfall had a deeper meaning to him than its beautiful appearance. To the poet the waterfall is not only the epitome of unrivalled beauty. It also generates hospitality and reassurance which gives weary onlookers peace of mind:

Uphumuz' imiphefumul' ehlwelwe,
Eyimihambima ingenandawo
Yokubeka nohlangothi...

(Ink., p 21)

(You give rest to those overtaken by dusk,
Who wander and have no place
To sleep...)

It is the permanence of the waterfall which makes a deep impression. Now and again the poet points out that the waterfall has been there from eternity. The concluding lines read:

Dilika njal' uzubikele bonke
Abenzalo yeAfrik' abezayo!

(Ink., p 21)

(Flow always and report to all
The coming generations of Africa.)

The poem has pronounced religious undertones. From the first stanza the poet says that the waterfall was given all its good qualities by God:

UNkulunkul' ogcobe isimongo
Sekhanda lakho...

(Ink., p 18)

(God has anointed your
Forehead...)

To the poet, therefore, the waterfall has been specially created by God to symbolise utmost consistency and stability. The waterfall is a visible representation of these qualities which are normally associated with God. Towards the end of the poem the

poet admits his inadequacy in describing in the language of mortals the glory and supremacy of what the falls represent:

Kunjengomfanekiso wesilima
Uma ngiling' ukuchaza phansi
Ngalolusib' olugcobhoz' uyinki
Isimo sobukhosi nesobuhle ...

(Ink., p 21)

(It is like being a fool
To try and explain in writing
Using this inkpen
The glory and beauty ...)

When we read this poem we feel that the poet uses the waterfall as a starting point. There is more to the waterfall than the water.

The poem which gives a more detailed description of a natural scene is 'KwaDedangendale' (The Valley of a Thousand Hills). The poem starts on a nostalgic note as the poet says how he misses the freshness of his home environment and the beautiful scenes one finds there. The poet opens a wide screen which gives one a panoramic view of the landscape. He leads us steadily from point to point on tour, as it were, of this beautiful land. He shows us the undulating hills, the murmuring rivers, the rolling grass plains, the singing birds, the sweet-scented flowers and many other beauties of nature.

Among all this splendour is human life - courting couples and busy herdboys. Even the sunset and the starry night are a joy to perceive when one is at this place.

The poet is enraptured by complete bliss at the sight of this 'paradise' where everything seems to be in its perfect condition:

KwaBuhlebungayindawo

(Ama., p 27)

(At Beauty-does-not-go-away)

Everything around him has so much beauty, harmony and luxuriance that he feels this is the most ideal place to aid his creativity. The fertility of the place will stimulate him to write and he will be in a position to communicate with the spirits which will enable him to record important facts about the life and philosophy of the Zulus:

Ngiph' indaw' enjenga lena
Wena Thongo likababa,
Lapho ngiyoba namandla,
Ngiqoq' umqondo kaZulu,
Ngiwuvalel' embizeni.

(Ama., p 29)

(Give me a place like this
You spirit of my father,
Where I shall have power
To collect the thoughts of the Zulus
And close them up in a pot.)

The poet's descriptive ability is most evident as he presents scene after scene in very vivid sequences. In the following few lines he depicts a simple but clear scene of night time. The poet's delight at watching the night sky is obvious:

Ngalala phansi kwenyanga
Ngibeletwe ngumhlabathi;
Isiphuku kungutshani,
Ngacamel' esiqundwini.
Ngashayana nengqimphothwe
Ngibukel' izinkanyezi
Ziphuma zishon' enzansi,
Nomthal' uguquka nezwe.

(Ama., p 29)

(I slept below the moon
And was carried on the back by the earth
The grass was my blanket,
A tuft of grass my pillow.
I slept on my back
And watched the stars
Rising and setting down there
And the Milky Way turning over the land.)

Most of the descriptions are highly imaginative. In the following lines he describes his experiences in the foggy forest:

Ngidakwe ngaphuphutheka
Ngaze ngaficwa yinkungu.
Ngiphakathi namahlathi
Ngahlangana nezimfene,
Zangethusa zingikhuza.
Ngalalela kud' ongoqo
Benikezelan' igama
Abalacula ngokuhlwa.

(Ama., pp 28-29)

(I got drunk and floundered about
Until I was caught by fog.
In the middle of the forest
I met baboons
Which frightened me by crying out.
I listened to the distant button quails
Relaying their song
Which they sing at nightfall.)

Apart from such beautiful descriptions we note that this valley has a particular meaning for the poet. He wishes that the fertility and productivity of this place could have a counterpart in him so that he can thrive even in hard and unfavourable conditions:

Imikhambathi yakhona
Nasebusik' iyathela,
Kant' imith' iphundlekile,
Kayinamandl' okuvuka.
Yebo, nami ngiyothela
Ngigcwal' amajikijolo...

(Ama., p 27)

(The camelthorn trees of that place
Bear fruit even in winter,
Whilst other trees are leafless
And have no power to wake up.
Yes, I also shall bear,
And be full of berries...)

The poet feels that the productivity of the place should be copied by man who should be productive at all times.

The poem does not just end at presenting scenic beauty. It has further applications. Now and again the poet expresses his admiration for the practices found among the people who still follow the traditional ways of doing things. The beauty, fertility and potency of this place symbolises the richness of the life of his people. The poet has a fear that all this is dying away, and he wishes that the little that is still there be preserved for posterity.

Objects and other phenomena

Sometimes Vilakazi selects a natural object and weaves his

poem around it. We have referred to the poem 'Inqomfi' (The Lark) which, as we remarked, has resemblances with the poems of Keats and Shelley. We did point out that this poem is not a translation of any of the English poems.

The poem is divided into three portions. In the first section the poet starts by expressing his joy at hearing the bird's song. Then he describes the bird flying, its eggs, a scarlet patch on its breast and the interpretation of the various styles of its flight. The first section ends with a stanza in which the poet compares man with the lark, saying that unlike man this bird is oblivious of all the solitude and anxiety about its future.

The slow rhythm of the first portion resulting from long lines of up to 16 syllables each changes in the second portion as the lines become shorter and consist mainly of 8 syllables each. This suggests the change of mood from steadiness to agitation as the poet implores the bird to fly away because it is exposed to danger. This section also ends on the note of the poet's yearning for some qualities which the bird has.

In the third section the poet returns to the rhythm used in the first section. The poet elevates the bird above other music makers and commends it for its undying and unprejudiced love.

One wonders why the poet divides his poem into these three 'movements'. He might be attempting a triad which is traditionally made up of the introductory part (the strophe) the middle (antistrophe) and the conclusion (the epode) (see Kreuzer, pp 228 and 229). But we doubt his success in this regard. The last stanza in each of the first two 'movements' feels like a good conclusion. In the second portion the poet refers to the setting sun, an ideal atmosphere for ending this poem:

Nant' ilanga selishona.
Nawe shona...

(Ink., p 16)

(The sun is setting now.
You must also disappear...)

One feels the poem is approaching its neat conclusion as the lark is about to stop its song. But the poem still proceeds and the poet adds other descriptions found in the third section. The third section ends rather abruptly.

The second portion also feels like an afterthought which the

poet decided to insert in the middle of the poem, only to interfere with the flow with which the poem might otherwise be read. This section might be more appropriate if it were added to the end of the whole poem.

Most of the descriptions tend to be prosaic. Yet here and there we get striking imagery. In the following lines, for example, he gives an imaginative description of a flying bird which leaves behind it an imaginary route shaped like a rope:

Dweb' umoya lowo uwudamuz' okwamanzi,
Weluk' intambo ende uyobon' amakhosi -
Iyilokh' isuka phansi, ngaphandle ingaminzi . . .

(Ink., p 14)

(Fly through the air and cut it like water,
And plait a long rope and go to see kings -
Let it start from the bottom without sinking . . .)

This is a good description of the bird's swift and graceful movement as it leaves the earth and flies away.

Here are lines in which the poet expresses the fascination 'experienced' by other natural phenomena at hearing the lark's music:

Njengoba ngibek' indlebe nawo wonk' umhlaba,
Nolwandl' olugubhayo, namaza, naw' umoya -
Sekuthe khemelele nakho kubek' indlebe,
Kudingiswa ongandile umlozi lowaya.

(Ink., pp 16-17)

(As I listen, the whole earth,
The sea which tosses about, the waves and the wind -
Are all listening in amazement,
Surprised by this rare melody.)

A touch of personification turns other natural objects into an audience which is enchanted by the performance of this 'soloist'.

The poet's attitude to the bird is poorly defined. In a number of places he seems to be full of admiration of this musical bird:

Tshiloza uzixinge njalo nyoni yesikhotha!

(Ink., p 14)

(Sing and dance always you bird of the tall grass!)

Unothando olumangalisayo...

(Ink., p 17)

(You have wonderful love...)

But this positive picture is tarnished by negative implications found in lines like these:

Ngibek' indlebe kuwo wonk' umlozi wezinhlungu
Ezizwiw' umoya nomphefumulo wodwa wakho.

(Ink., p 14)

(I listen to the melody of the pain
Which is left only by your spirit.)

Ukuba nguwe ngingefise...

(Ink., p 15)

(I do not wish to be you...)

Despite this inconsistency regarding the nature of the poet's emotions, we still deduce that he feels the lark lives a better life than human beings. It does not suffer strains of planning ahead for the future. It does not live in fear of death nor does it have any conflicts like human beings:

Uthi noba ulele nob' uquvil' ubungazi,
Ungacabangi ngekusasa nangalangashona.

(Ink., p 18)

(Even when you are asleep or awake you don't know,
And do not think about tomorrow and sunset.)

The general impression we get from the poem is that the poet resents the fact that man derives little contentment from life because he is always engaged in physical and mental activities. These activities are connected mainly with man's effort to solve problems which he anticipates in his future. The poet does not say that man must be like this lark. He merely points out in which way the lark is better than man. Man cannot improve his position. He has to accept that his miseries are an integral part of his existence.

In the poem 'We moya' (O wind) the poet expresses his views on the air or wind. He wonders where the wind originates. He then calls it to come and keep him company.

This is a light poem in which the poet personifies the wind as he speaks to it, for example:

Ngiyalangazel' ithuba
Lapho ngiyokukubamba
Ngifisa ukukuphamba
Ngiqonde ukukukhuba.

(Ink., p 12)

(I long for a chance
When I shall catch you,
Wishing to trick you,
Aiming at tripping you.)

R. Kunene feels that this personification is ineffective because of its inaccuracies:

Such personification sounds rather ridiculous because of its inconsistencies with the subject. It is unthinkable, for instance that the wind could be tripped even in its personified form.

(R. Kunene, p 210)

While we appreciate this view we feel there could be an argument that in this particular stanza the poet has presented the wind as a man who can be caught or tripped. The catching and tripping become more acceptable when we give them less literal application. But even at a literal level the wind can be blocked with obstacles which hinder its smooth movement.

It is from the 9th stanza that another dimension is added to the otherwise simple description of the wind:

Laph' umphefumulo wami
Uphelelwa abangane,
Ihlamuka njengekhwane
Nemihlobo yonke yami.

Ngibe ngisaphume phandle
Wen' unamathele kimi...

(Ink., p 13)

(When my soul
Loses friends
And like the reeds
My relatives disappear.

When I go outside
You cling onto me...)

We do not really expect this invisible and intangible element to

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Ngibe ngisaphume phandle
Wen' unamathele kimi...

(Ink., p 13)

(When my soul
Loses friends
And like the reeds
My relatives disappear.

When I go outside
You cling onto me...)

We do not really expect this invisible and intangible element to

be a valued companion to a bereaved person. It is from this point that we are aware of the ambiguity of the word 'umoya'. It can mean both the wind and the spirit. The idea of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, comes up and one feels that now the poem has a two-pronged development. The line:

Uw' esizwa ngaw' iconsi...

(Ink., p 13)

(It is through you that we get raindrops...)

literally means that the action of the air brings about rain. The rain and the resultant flourishing of plants can also symbolise the spiritual productivity which the Holy Spirit brings about.

The last stanza reads:

We moya! Leth' ukukhanya
Kwenhliziyo yam' enhlanye
Ngife kanye nawe kanye.

(Ink., p 13)

(O wind! Bring light
Into my heart which is askew
So that I may die with you.)

Literally the wind cannot bring light to anything. It cannot bring light to the heart. The very last line is open to two interpretations. The poet may be feeling that when the wind subsides he will be lonely again. In the religious sense it can mean that the poet wishes that the ties between him and the Holy Spirit could not be severed until his death.

The contention that reference is made to the Holy Spirit towards the end of the poem may be criticised for being too subjective because the correspondence between the wind and the spirit cannot be traced right through the poem. It is possible that the poet started the poem on the wind without using the wind for any symbolic representation. The wind may have acquired symbolic significance later in the poem. Such levels of interpretation that one arrives at when studying this poem show that it is not so simple after all. It has a richness which can easily elude a casual reader.

Vilakazi again leans on nature for comfort in the poem 'Cula ngizwe' (Sing that I may hear). Here the poet invites the wind, the bird and the flower to sing for him in order to detract his attention from his loneliness.

Ngifis' ukukhohlwa yizinhlungu
Zezifo, nezwe nayisizungu
Sokusala ngedwa.

(Ink., p 36)

(I wish to forget about the pain
Of diseases, the world and the loneliness
Of remaining alone.)

This is one of those poems in which the poet uses his imaginative description with great effect. His best stanza in this regard is that in which he addresses the flower:

Vul' amehlo ngibon' izindebe
Zamaphethel' akho, zihlebe
Imfihlo yothando olusha
Olufana nolwezinkanyezi
Zilinde bonk' ubusuk' ikhwezi
Elibik' ukusa!
Ngenjabulo engenasiqalo,
Zisukume zishiy' ubuhlalu
Bazo etshanini.
Bheka, nant' ilanga likhanyisa
Namazolo liwacoshisisa,
Kuvuk' izimbali.

(Ink., p 36)

(Open your eyes that I may see the lips
Of your edges, which may whisper
The secret of new love
Which is like that of the stars
Waiting the whole night for the morning star
Which heralds dawn.
With joy which has no beginning
They stand up and leave their beads
On the grass.
Look, the sun shines
And picks up the dew
And flowers wake up.)

Using personification, the poet injects life to the different natural objects. This life and activity is extended with ingenuity from the flower, to the stars, to the sun and back to the flower. All these are joined together with almost imperceptible links to form a beautiful chain. Coincidentally the chain is suggested by

the arrangement of the rhyming couplets which, in the last lines, are punctuated by short rhymeless lines of six syllables.

The poet is in his common mood of dejection from which he can be rescued by the soothing sound made by natural phenomena. The poet takes us in two stages from the wind and the bird which can make soothing sounds, to the 'music' of a flower. When the poet asks the flower to sing it is clear that he equates the harmonious colours of the flowers to musical harmony. From the singing flower we are compelled to go back to the singing wind and bird, and we realise that the music these two make is something higher than the audible sound. Because these three things make a similar type of music, they need not be regarded as three separate entities, but they are one element which gives invaluable spiritual sustenance to the poet.

The poem displays the sedative effect of nature. There is no loneliness in nature. The interdependence of the breeze and the tree, the bird and the leaves, and the flower and the bee, is almost symbiotic. Each partnership has for unknown ages been mutually beneficial, but the partners' interest in each other is as keen as ever. Their response to each other is as enthusiastic as ever. The give and take relationship of the stars and the morning star; the stars and the dew; the dew and the sun and the sun and the flower - this relationship is symbolic of solid spiritual love.

No matter from which angle we approach the poem we encounter the spiritual element. It is this spiritual element pervading the poem which makes some people consider the poem as being of religious value. In Friedman's English rendering the poem is introduced with the words:

This poem is believed to have been written at the time of Vilakazi's conversion to Catholicism. It is a prayer to the Holy Spirit for comfort and reassurance in the discovery of 'new love'.
(Z.H., p 30)

In this rendering the word '*Moya*' is given as 'Spirit', and '*Nyoni*' as 'Paraclete'. We consider this to be an unfortunate interpretative type of translation which introduces the reader directly to the second level of the meaning of the poem. We feel that the Zulu version is still richer because it enables the reader to enjoy the beauty of the poem at its literal level, and further affords him the aesthetic pleasure of reading the implied spiri-

tual meaning from whatever religious background he approaches the poem.

The use of the religious concepts of 'Spirit' for the wind and 'Paraclete' for the bird leads us to a blind end because there is no theological equivalent of 'Mbali' (flower) which we find in the third stanza. The translator has rendered 'Mbali' literally as 'Flower' which is out of step with the translations in the first two stanzas. The translator gets into further difficulty when she must render the lines:

Cula leyongom' engenamagama,
Wena Moya nawe Nyon' ekhala
Itshiloza phansi kwemibala
Yezimbali ezingenamagama!

(Ink., p 37)

(Sing that song without words
You Wind and you Bird which sings
Beneath the colours
Of nameless flowers.)

We do not accept that the Spirit can sing among flowers as birds do. In the English rendering that idea is discarded altogether, and we get the lines:

Sing to me your wordless song
O Spirit, O blessed Paraclete! -
Soothe me to sleep among the flowers
Whose colours are countless,
Whose names are unknown!

(Z.H., p 31)

We have indicated that we do not completely dismiss the interpretation of the poem on religious grounds. But we feel we ultimately reach the spiritual level from the level where we consider nature as the core from which is radiated the waves of soothing solace needed by the poet. Of course the religious awareness of the poet may make him consider all the natural objects as agencies through which God can give him peace of mind.

There may be an argument that the different views we have considered above are far-fetched because they are not obvious from the poem itself: they are influenced by our knowledge of the circumstances under which the poem was written. We feel

there is no harm in presenting these many possibilities in an attempt to have a better understanding of a great poem like this one.

The poem 'Ukuhlwa' (Dusk) describes the fear that one experiences after sunset in a township. A cloud of gloom looms over the place, and this is an ideal time for thugs. All the other people must rush home.

The poet selects his images discreetly without any affectation:

Izintaba sezithibe amathunzi,
Ilanga selibomvu njengesibhuda.

(Ama., p 13)

(The mountains now have shadows,
The sun is as red as ochre.)

The shadows of the mountains portend all that is associated with fear and uncertainty, while the red, 'dying' sun brings to mind the blood that we fear will be shed at night.

The poet effects a good contrast between the disappearance of the swallows and the appearance of the bats:

Izinkonjane sezicashile...

.....
Phezulu ngibon' amalulwane.

(Ama., p 13)

(The swallows have disappeared

.....
Above I see bats.)

Happiness disappears with the disappearance of those beautiful birds which normally herald the happy season of summer. People should now expect all the ugliness which is symbolised by the bats. With the bats the evil people of a dubious nature will emerge to molest the innocent inhabitants of the township.

Some of the most significant lines are:

Lapha kakukho tshani...

.....
Lapha kakukho mfula...

(Ama., p 13)

(Here there is no grass...

.....
Here there is no river...)

The grass and rivers are a sign of normal flourishing life. This place has none of these. In the line:

Kuphela kuyaphethuzela

(Ama., p 13)

the poet uses '*phethuzela*' to describe the milling about of people who are returning from work. This word is usually used to describe the confused movement of maggots. The poet uses appropriate images to illustrate his point that nightfall at this place is most unwelcome because it precedes misery. At the back of his mind the picture of this nightfall is in sharp contrast with another nightfall, probably in a rural area where this time of day brings much-needed rest.

In a simple manner the poet succeeds in using the picture of sunset to show the tension which people have to put up with in a civilised and modern, yet 'lifeless' society.

From this discussion we see that Vilakazi's compositions on natural phenomena do not end at merely cataloguing various parts or qualities of what he sees. He rarely gives detailed descriptions, but we cannot doubt the symbolic significance of the visions he presents to us.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have observed that the poems based on history and nature share a common feature in that the poet merely uses these as a background against which he can express other less obvious ideas. We do not get a single poem which ends only at giving historical facts or natural description. In all cases the facts and descriptions are used as a starting point from which different views on the significance of the poems can be developed.

4 Themes – Abstract concepts

In this chapter we wish to deal with the rest of the themes we did not cover in the preceding discussion. We again use the word 'theme' in a broad sense. We shall discuss poems on inspiration and death. We shall endeavour to analyse Vilakazi's conception and description of these things. Under 'philosophical poems' we shall consider the poems in which Vilakazi approaches his subject philosophically. In other words we look at such topics from the poet's particular manner which we consider as giving an abstraction of the concepts. The poems on nostalgia and commitment do not analyse these concepts. They contain the poet's regret about conditions which he feels are not what they used to be, or what they are supposed to be.

Here, again, we wish to stress that we cannot make watertight categories of the poems. Under the poems on inspiration, for example, we shall discuss the poem 'Inyanga' (The moon) which also falls under nature poems. We put it here because we feel the value of the moon features prominently as a source of inspiration.

On inspiration

Vilakazi wrote a number of poems on the power of inspiration. We shall discuss what the poet considers to be the sources of his inspiration. We wish to discuss these sources under three types: spiritual sources, human sources and nature sources.

Spiritual source

In his search for inspiration the poet often makes an appeal to the spirits. In 'Ugqozi' (Inspiration) he presents his imaginary experiences when he enters Dukuza, one of the royal places of Shaka. His meeting with Mnkabayi, Shaka's aunt, results in his acquisition of great power to compose poetry.

The poem contains properly ordered narrative. This is a beautifully streamlined story which works smoothly towards

the climax when the mission of the poet has proved to be a great success. He now has inspiration in abundance:

Namhla kangikwaz' ukuthula noma
Lapho ngilele ngikwesikaBhadakazi,
Ngivuswa nguMnkabayi ethi kimi:
'Vuka wena kaMancinza!
Kawuzalelwanga ukulal' ubuthongo.
Vuk' ubong' indaba yemikhonto!
Nank' umthwal' engakwethwesa wona'.

(Ama., p 2)

(Today I cannot keep quiet even
When I am asleep at midnight
I am woken up by Mnkabayi saying to me:
'Wake up you [son] of Mancinza
You were not born to sleep.
Wake up and sing praises to the story of the spears!
That is the burden I have given to you'.)

It is interesting to see how the poet who gets to Dukuza empty-handed ends up with such plenty. Vilakazi has reinforced this idea by using the stanzas which develop from a short one of 5 lines to the long ones of 7 lines.

The prominent character in the poem is Mnkabayi. We feel that the poet has used her to represent other ancestral spirits who help in granting the poet's wish.

Apart from acknowledging the help of the spirits of the known ancestors, Vilakazi believes that there is a special spirit responsible for giving inspiration to the artists. This concept is foreign to the Zulus. Vilakazi got it from Western poetry where we often find reference being made to the muses, the goddesses to which inspiration in various arts is attributed.

In 'Ithongo lokwazi' (The spirit of wisdom) the poet expresses his concern that the Zulus who are found all over the country have forgotten the good things of the past. He appeals to this spirit to enable him to record what the coming generation should know:

Ngiphe, ungcaphunele namuhla
Kuleyo ndebe oyigcin' ethala lobuzwe,
Ikhono lokugcoba phansi lokhw' engikuzwayo,
Ngibekel' izimfaba nezinkedama zikaNdaba.

(Ink., p 39)

(Give me, scoop up for me today
From that ladle which you keep on the national shelf,
The skill to write down what I hear
And preserve it for the poor orphans of Ndaba.)

Towards the end of this poem which is simple and straightforward, the poet presents the images of plenty. People do not make use of all the abundance which is in store for them:

... kulawo magobongo
Nezimbiz' ezithule, zingakathintwa muntu?

(Ink., p 40)

(... in those calabashes
And full pots which nobody has touched?)

The poet looks at this spirit with Zulu eyes. That inspiration which the poet asks for is preserved in typical Zulu vessels, *amagobongo* and *izimbiza*. At the end he associates this spirit with a known Zulu:

Ngiyacela Thongo likaNdaba!

(Ink., p 40)

(I ask, Spirit of Ndaba!)

Unlike in Western culture, the Zulu muse is conceived of as a male spirit, and it is connected with a known person. Vilakazi does not use Ndaba's spirit consistently as a kind of a muse responsible for knowledge or inspiration. We are left with an impression that this spirit does not specialise, but among its functions, one is to help those who seek insight into their problems.

The poet's supplication and selflessness suggests that his request has a good chance of being granted, because, after all:

Udum' akulwami, kodwa ngolwakho wedwa...

(Ink., p 40)

(The fame is not mine, but yours only...)

The poet's humility before the spirit reminds us of what he says in his 'Imfundo ephakeme' (Higher education):

Ngingazange ngizisukele ngibhale,
Ngibeleselwe yinina mathong' ohlanga...

(Ama., p 8)

(I did not just write on my own,
But was pestered by you, ancestral spirits of the nation...)

In many compositions in *Amal' ezulu* Vilakazi abandons localism and tribalism and looks at inspiration with a more universal eye. In 'Mbongi' (The poet) he speaks about the poet in a wide sense. He praises the poet for his ability to use the language that moves the heart and mind of man. He points out that the poet's scope is not confined to time and space. To illustrate that the poet was in existence from time immemorial, he makes use of convincing personification of the stages through which the world has passed:

Mbong' ubong' umhlab' usakhasa,
Wakhula won' umhlaba wema,
Wadlubulunda ngaphambili...

(Ama., p 3)

(Poet, you sang praises when the world was still crawling
The world grew up and stood up,
And it ran fast forward...)

He says that the poet is sent by the ancestral spirits to do all this, but does not specify to whom those spirits belong. When Vilakazi composes he feels it is not himself who speaks:

... ngabe nguwe Thongo likaMbongi?

(Ama., p 3)

(... is it you, Spirit of the Poet?)

He gives a general name, Mbongi, to the person he considers to be the earliest poet whose spirit gives inspiration to all his successors. He is grateful to this Mbongi for guiding him: but since the poet feels confident as a poet, he wishes to be left alone to develop his own style:

Ngidedele ngibonge, ngivul' indlela nami kwaMhlaba.

(Ama., p 3)

(Allow me to compose and open my way on earth.)

Although this is not expressed explicitly, we feel that here, too, the poet regards the spirit as masculine because in Zulu society the bards, *izimbongi*, are males. The name 'Mbongi' is for a male person; it cannot be given to a female.

The universality of the spirit of inspiration is clearer in the poem 'Umthandazo wembongi' (A poet's prayer). When he calls the spirit 'Dloz' *elisezulwini* (Spirit who are in heaven) he is addressing God. God is not like the rest of the spirits who are underground, as is indicated in the poem 'Imfundo ephakeme' where Vilakazi says:

Amathong' abeke nezihlangu,
Alalele ngaphansi komhlaba...

(Ama., p 8)

(The ancestral spirits put down their shields
And listen [while] underground...)

God is the Creator of man, and the Zulus too are the product of His hands:

Esiyimisebenzi yezandla zakho...

(Ama., p 4)

(Which is the work of your hands...)

Vilakazi indicates here that this Supreme Spirit which inspired foreign musicians like Schubert, Beethoven and Chopin can inspire his own people to rise to be great artists.

An interesting feature of the poet's broader outlook is that he does not pray for his own poetic effectiveness. He has in mind other artists who are in a different field of artistic expression – music.

This is also a fairly simple poem. We are impressed by the *izibongo* style in which the poet begins his poem. He praises God with an effective use of the eagle image to underline His power and supremacy:

Wena Lukhoz' olubuthise
Amaphiko emafini!

(Ama., p 3)

(You Eagle who have gathered up
Your wings in the clouds!)

This style fits well here because the poet prays to God in the manner in which the Zulu poet does his work.

In most of the poems in which Vilakazi attributes inspiration to some spiritual source he elevates the spirit and humbles himself. He regards himself as a mere tool through which the spirit can work.

Human source

The poem 'UMamina' (Mamina) is one of Vilakazi's most controversial pieces. In the view of Jolobe:

The poem *UMamina* in which is lamented the death of a friend is one of the most powerful elegies in a Bantu language. In it the writer has exploited the mythology of his people to good purpose and he reveals himself unmistakably (sic) as a lover of nature.

(Jolobe, p 127)

When we study this poem we fail to find any implication that this is an elegy.

We appreciate the viewpoint expressed in *Zulu horizons* that this poem is 'an ode to the muse' (p 110). Wainwright accepts this interpretation:

'UMamina' is the culmination of Vilakazi's search for inspiration... The protagonist begins his invocation to Mamina, the muse, in a watery place. This is an obvious place to start because spirits are normally found near pools and rivers.

(Wainwright, pp 50-51)

We feel we could start analysing this poem from the basis that it is a love poem. In fact the poem has echoes of the great Biblical romantic poem, the Song of Solomon. Vilakazi says:

Woza Mamina,
Woza selul' izinyawo siye laphaya,
Laphaya la kulihlane khona...

(Ama., p 42)

(Come Mamina,
Come let us go there
Where it is a wilderness...)

In the Bible it reads:

Woza wena othandiweyo wami siye endle...

(Song 7:11)

(Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields [wilderness])

While Vilakazi says that Mamina is his only wife:

Uyinkosikazi yenhliziyoyami wedwa,
Uwedwa ekujuleni komphfumulo...

(Ama., p 43)

(You alone are the wife of my heart,
You alone are in the depth of my soul...)

Solomon puts it:

Amakhosikazi angamashumi ayisithupha ...
Kepha ijuba lami, ophelleyo wami munye nje.

(Song 6:8-9)

(There are threescore queens ...
My dove, my undefiled is but one ...)

Referring to the time when he misses Mamina, Vilakazi says:

Ngiyakucinga ngikuphuthaza,
Izandla zami zibamb' umoya nobala.

(Ama., p 43)

(I search for you and grope about for you,
My hands hold air and nothing.)

Solomon uses the woman's words when she misses her lover thus:

Ebusuku embhedeni wami
Ngamfuna othandwa ngumphefumulo wami;
Ngamfuna kepha angimtholanga.

(Song 3:1)

(By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth;
I sought him, but I found him not.)

It is very likely that Vilakazi had read the Song of Solomon and some of its lines returned unconsciously when he wrote his poem. The tone of both poems is very similar. Vilakazi's poem is only less sensuous than Solomon's.

It is particularly in the first stanza that we feel Vilakazi is addressing a loved one in the physical sense, and not a spirit. It is, of course, possible that the woman addressed may only exist in the poet's imagination. We find many descriptions which are consistent with the physical nature of a human being, for example:

Ngiyawubon' umzimba wakh' usuluza ...

(Ama., p 43)

(I see your body swaying from side to side ...)

Wangibuka ntomb' enzimakazi...

(Ama., p 44)

(You look at me, dark-complexioned lady...)

Ngiphenduke ngelul' isandla

Ngikulolong' emagxalabeni.

(Ama., p 49)

(I turn and stretch out the hand,

And stroke you on the shoulders.)

Such descriptions do not tally with the ethereal nature of a spirit.

The poet does not say that Mamina is a muse. He is so impressed with her perfection that he feels she can be equated to the spirits:

Wen' engibon' ukuth' ungomunye

Walemingwi yamathongo...

(Ama., p 49)

(You who I see [think] are one

Of the spirits of the ancestors...)

The verb '-bona' in the above excerpt has some ambiguity because apart from meaning 'to see', it also means 'to think' or 'suspect'. Later on the poet asks Mamina:

'Uthi awuyen' omunye wamathongo?

Mhlawumbe ulahlekile...

(Ama., p 50)

('Aren't you one of the ancestral spirits?'

Perhaps you got lost...)

The poet elevates his lover because she is such a source of inspiration to him that she seems not to be a human being but a spirit. It is through her support that he feels he ranks amongst the best composers of poetry.

In the other poems the poet has been attributing the power of inspiration to the spirits. Now his lover is also the source. This means that there are qualities she shares with the spirits. Towards the end he actually addresses Mamina as if she were a spirit. This is probably why some people regard the poem as being directed to the spirit.

It is granted that here Vilakazi makes an imaginative concrete

representation of a spiritual being. But we are still of the opinion that one should start interpreting from a literal or basic meaning. By immediately starting on a higher level of interpretation much of the beauty of the poem is lost. Progressing from the lower groundwork to a higher plane affords one the aesthetic pleasure of discovering for oneself this transition from a simple interpretation to a more complex one.

The poet does not give details about the personality of Mamina, or how exactly she has helped him. In fact, in the whole poem the poet engages in a monologue, and there is no reply from Mamina – possibly an indication that her actions speak louder than words.

This is one of the most descriptive of Vilakazi's poems.

Apart from giving vivid descriptions of Mamina's physical appearance, the poet compares her to a number of things. In the following lines she is compared to a fresh flower:

... ngikufanisa
Nobuhle bemiqumb' eqhuma
Kusihlwa yangiwe ngamathons' amazolo.

(Ama., p 44)

(... I compare you
To the beauty of the buds which open
In the evening and are kissed by dewdrops.)

Her presence on earth is a surprise because, like a star, she belongs somewhere higher than this earth. Note the use of personification:

Laph' ungishayel' amagekle,
Kwawakazel' iziwa zavul' amehlo,
Zababaza zivul' umlomo zingawuvali,
Zibon' inkanyez' iwel' emhlabeni.

(Ama., pp 50-51)

(When you played the flutes for me,
The cliffs echoed and opened their eyes,
Their mouths gaped in surprise
When they saw a star fallen on earth.)

The poem ends on a high note when the poet feels his association with Mamina has elevated him as well so that he now wishes to go to the land of the spirits where he will be in a better position to appreciate the intricacies of love:

Woza Mamina,
Ngizwa ngifikelwa yisizungu.
Lomhlab' angiwuzw' awunasiphephelo.
Ngidonse siye kwelakini, Mamina,
Siyoquekeza lemfihlo yothando ngiyazi.
Mamina, ngiyazi njengamathongo.

(Ama., p 51)

(Come, Mamina,
I am overcome by loneliness.
I feel this world is unsafe.
Lead me to your land, Mamina,
Where we shall open the secret of love
So that I may know it, Mamina, like the ancestral spirits.)

This is indeed a highly inspired piece of art.

Nature source

There are things in nature which are a source of inspiration to the poet. We mentioned in our discussion of 'KwaDedangedlale' that Vilakazi feels that beautiful scenery is conducive to writing on the philosophy of his people. In other words the beauty of nature that he sees is an inspiration to him to write.

In the poem on the moon ('Inyanga') the poet starts by expressing his admiration for the moon. There is little description of the moon itself, and this comes in the third line from the end of the poem:

... ngikubone uliqand' elimhlophe...

(Ama., p 15)

(... I see you being a white egg...)

The rest of the poem is an appreciation of the help the moon gives to mankind.

At the beginning of the poem we find these lines:

Nyanga, muhlelezi womnyama,
Wen' owaditshaniswa nenyanga!
Yathi yon' ithwal' izikhwama,
Yetsheth' izimpondo nemigodla,
Wena wawenyuk' uy' ezulwini.

(Ama., pp 13-14)

(O Moon, you beauty of the dark,
You who are associated with the medicine man,
Who, when he carried his bags,
With his horns and satchel on his shoulder,
You were ascending up the sky.)

Commenting on these lines R. Kunene says that the poet:

... makes an unfortunate comparison between the pure celestial beauty of the moon with the mundane character of a medicine man ...

(R. Kunene, p 215)

We agree that this is a quaint comparison because there is little association between the moon and the witch doctor, except for the homonymous connection. This, too, is faint because the two words differ in tone, i.e. *inyàngá* for the moon, and *inyàngà* for the medicine man. Apart from this, a person whom we normally associate with undertaking nocturnal errands is the wizard, 'umthakathi'.

From the fourth stanza we find more interesting ideas when the poet has discovered the worth of the moon. It is a source of inspiration to poets:

Ufunz' izimbongi ngamazwi ...

(Ama., p 14)

(You feed poets with words ...)

In the fifth and seventh stanzas he asks the moon to inspire him too:

Nami ngifunze Nonyezi ...

(Ama., p 14)

(Feed me, too, Moonlight ...)

Ngiphakele nami kuleyondebe ...

(Ama., p 15)

(Dish out for me too from that ladle ...)

When the poet uses the moon to symbolise a source of inspiration, he makes us look anew at an earlier stanza where he says:

Wen' omuhle ebusuku
Laph' abanye bemathunz' amzizi,
Uhlangane nabo bakusinde.
Kodwa wena ma uqhamuka,
Kuqin' amadola ngihambe.

(Ama., p 14)

(You who are beautiful at night
When others are mere shadows,
And when one meets them one fears them.
But when you appear
I get courage and proceed.)

This could be interpreted to mean that when the poet gets discouraged and does not see his way clearly in what he is doing the appearance of the moon clears the way for him. There can be speculations as to what source of inspiration this moon symbolises. A reader with a Christian inclination for example, may associate the moon with Christ, and say that the poet is praying for guidance from Him. This idea may be supported by Vilakazi's statement made in 'NgePhasika' (Easter) where he says to Christ:

Inyanga nguwena...

(Ink., p 2)

(The moon is you...)

Whatever interpretation we make, it is clear that whenever the poet looks at the moon, its full significance dawns anew. He becomes aware that it is not just an item of nature, but it has power to inspire. That is the power he wishes to have. The poet has a combination of reverence and affection for the moon. If it were possible he would even embrace it in order to derive from it as much as it can offer him. But alas, it is beyond reach:

... ngibheke
Phezulu, ngikubone uliqand' elimhlophe,
Ngikhothame. Ngabe ngiyakwanga.
Pho!

(Ama., p 15)

(... I look
Up, and see you being a white egg,
And bow. I wish I could kiss you,
But then!)

In his poems on inspiration Vilakazi expresses his reliance mainly on the spiritual world. His attitude towards the spirits is that of reverence and humility. He feels that all the glory that may be accorded him for his work should be passed on to these spirits. Even the human being and natural phenomena which inspire him seem to be a symbol of some spiritual being.

When the poet is dead and has joined the spirits he will in turn inspire other young writers. We find this idea in the poem on the 50th anniversary of Mariannhill:

Siyobuya njengomoya
Wamathongo namadlozi
Sifukamel' isikole.
Lapho wena mfana uzwa
Umoy' uwahlaz' ihlamvu...

.....
Yebo kobe kuyithina...

.....
Bosukuma mfan' uvuke
Uthath' usib' oluloba
Umcabango nezindaba
Esiyokunika zona...

(Ink., pp 92-93)

(We shall return as the spirit
Of the ancestors
And protect the school.
When you boy hear
The wind shaking the leaves...

.....
Yes, it will be us...

.....
You must wake up, boy,
And take the pen to write down
The ideas and stories
We shall give you...)

Death

Vilakazi liked to write on sad themes. Remarking about this, Malcolm says:

He is preoccupied with the subject of death and writes several elegies, in which some of his most poignant lines occur.

(Z.H., p XIV)

In a number of poems Vilakazi mentions death in one way or another. This ranges from common generalisations about the inevitability of death to the more personal experiences about the death of the people who were close to him. Nyembezi observes:

Perhaps it should not surprise us that Vilakazi thought and wrote so much on the subject of death. It has even been suggested by some that his preoccupation with death was itself an indication that he would not live long. With the death of those near and dear to him it was not surprising that he should have thought of his own death...

(Nyembezi, 1962 (c), p 12)

In this discussion we shall first attempt to work out the way Vilakazi conceives death. Then we shall have a look at the poems in which he refers to his own death, and later those in which he composes on the death of other people who were close to him.

The nature of death

Because death is an invisible phenomenon, poets use many devices to present it as a concrete image. Most of the poets personify death. Cemane refers to this personification of death when he writes:

Izimbongi zisebenzisa ukwenzasamuntu lapho zikhuluma ngokufa ngoba zikhuluma nakho njengesitha esilwa nazo, isitha esiletha usizi. Ngokusebenzisa lesisifengqo izimbongi ziphumelela ukujulisa imizindlo yazo ngokufa...

(Cemane, p 23)

(Poets use personification when they speak about death because they address it as an enemy which fights them, an enemy which brings sorrow. By using this figure of speech the poets succeed in thinking deeply about death...)

In his 'UNokufa' (Death) Vilakazi uses this personification extensively. He describes his journey in search of death. Eventually he finds it:

Ngakufumanisa uhleli
Komkhul' umnyama namadodakazi
Enzalo yesisu sakwakho,
OKhalisile noMzondwase,
Bebek' izandl' ezihlathini...

(Ink., p 75)

(I found you sitting
In great darkness with the daughters
Of your stomach [womb]
Khalisile and Mzondwase¹
Who had their hands on their cheeks.)

According to the poet, death has qualities of a woman. She even has daughters. The picture of the mother, however, is vague. The little description we find is that of the daughters who support their cheeks with their hands. This is normally taken as a sign of mourning.

Later, in the same poem, the poet adds another description of death:

... wen' omehlo
Ahlal' ebheke ndawonye njalo,
Wen' obuso bungabhekekiyo.

(Ink., p 76)

(... you whose eyes
Are always directed at one place,
You whose face cannot be looked at.)

But even this description does not clarify the picture much. Possibly the poet does this deliberately because death has no definite features.

We are given a clearer picture of the action of death in the following lines:

Wangena ngonyawo walusonga,
Waboph' ifindo ngasokhalweni,
Wagwegwesa wathint' izinwele
Zafongqeka, wangen' engqondweni
Wayisanganisa wayishiya.
Was' uqhela uya kud' ubuka
Wenamile ngomsebenz' omkhulu
Owawuzela lapha kwaMhlaba.

(Ink., p 77)

1. *Khalisile* means 'She who has caused crying'.
Mzondwase means 'The hated one'.

(You entered through the foot and folded it,
 And tied a knot around the waist.
 You went round and touched the hair
 And it was crumpled up, and you entered the brain
 Confounded it and left it.
 Then you retreated and stood to look
 Happily at the great work
 For which you came here on earth.)

While the picture of death itself is indistinct, we can clearly visualise the movements of this 'human being' as she hovers around the dying person. This personification, however, is not fully consistent with a person's behaviour. The entrance of the human being through the foot and the head distorts the image because the 'person' is suddenly transformed and reduced into a mere thing which can enter a human body.

It is remarkable that Vilakazi presents death as a female. In 'Okomhlaba kuyadlula' (Wordly things pass by) he uses the female name, 'Nokufa':

Laph' uNokuf' esefikile,
 Exegisa yonk' imithambo...

(Ama., p 5)

(When Death has come
 And loosens all the veins...)

We normally associate a woman with charm, love and tenderness. A woman who already has grown up daughters should be more motherly and sympathetic. One gets a feeling that Vilakazi's woman acts out of character.

We associate death with a man, a soldier, as we find him in these lines from the same poem, 'UNokufa'.

Ith' imp' iphakwa wen' ubuhoxa
 EsikaMhlangana noDingana.
 Ugwaz' abangenasiphephelo...

(Ink., p 74)

(When the army goes out you withdraw
 Like Mhlangana and Dingana.
 You stab those who have no refuge...)

The 'deeds' of death are likened to those of Mhlangana and Dingane who withdrew from the army in order to go and

assassinate Shaka. We feel it would be better if the poet had made death a cruel 'man' in his poems. This would tally with the descriptions of the actions of death.

Like many other poets, Vilakazi says that death is a coward:

Mamo, uligwala weNokufa!

(Ink., p 74)

(O, what a coward you are, Death!)

He says this because death usually takes people by surprise and kills even those who are not yet expected to die.

Another physical quality that the poet gives to death is the presence of wings:

... ngakubona
Welul' izinsiba usondela.

(Ink., p 76)

(... I saw you
Stretching your quills and approaching.)

The poet conceives death as a special human being with wings. Death can fly. This idea of death's ability to fly has not been fully developed because the poet does not describe this 'man-bird' in flight. Nor does he mention the wings of death anywhere else.

This poem is one of Vilakazi's longest pieces. Like other long poems, it starts on a high note and has admirable imaginative descriptions. Later on the poet is carried away uncontrollably so that he keeps on adding new ideas on death without any proper pattern. So, for example, it is towards the end of the poem that he refers to the myth regarding the origin of death. One feels that this should have come earlier in the poem. When the poem eventually ends, one feels the end comes abruptly because the poet could have easily continued to add other points about death.

Death in 'UNokufa' looms above every man. It is invincible and man is helplessly exposed to it.

The brutality of death is vividly portrayed where the poet describes people dying. In 'Sengiyokholwa-ke' (Then I shall believe) he describes the expression of pain on his dying father's face:

Ngabon' unyinyiphala kwaphel' ubuqhawe.

(Ink., p 34)

(I saw you wincing and your bravery vanished.)

In 'Imifula yomhlaba' (Rivers of the world) we are given another picture of a dying soldier:

Yawobabamkhulu befa
Bemanangananga yinhlamvu,
Bengomothel' emahawini.

(Ama., p 35)

(Of our forefathers dying,
Their bodies riddled with bullets,
Clutching their shields.)

In the other poems the poet uses another popular conception of death as gentle sleep which enables one to be relieved of the hardships of this life and to cross over to the land of ancestral spirits. We find this in his 'Ezinkomponi' (In the mines):

Ubuthongo bokulala ngingavuki
Ngisingethwe yizingalo zawokoko...

(Ama., p 66)

(The sleep which will make me sleep and not wake up,
And be embraced in the arms of my ancestors...)

In his poems Vilakazi emphasises man's powerlessness before death. The poet personifies death and this helps the reader to imagine this otherwise abstract phenomenon. We expressed our doubt about the choice made by the poet of the image of death, a woman, which does not fully convey the brutality poets often associate with death.

The poet's death

Vilakazi has not written many poems on his own death. He refers now and again to it in poems on other themes. This reference is usually made at the end of the poem. At the end of 'We Moya' he wishes that when the wind subsides he should die too:

We Moya! Leth' ukukhanya
Kwenhliziyo yami enhlanye
Ngife kanye nawe kanye.

(Ink., p 13)

(O Wind! Bring light
To my heart which is askew
So that I may die with you.)

At the end of 'Imfundo ephakeme' (Higher education) he says that people will debate about his books, but by that time he will be no more:

Kuleyonkathi ngiyobe sengafa.

(Ama., p 8)

(By that time I shall be dead.)

Towards the end of his poem on Mariannahill he says:

Nathi ngokwethu sokhonya
Noma singezwiwe namhla.
Siyokhonya size sife...

(Ink., p 91)

(We also shall bellow
Although we are not heard today.
We shall bellow until we die...)

It seems as if whenever he finishes writing a poem, to him that symbolises the end of his life. In the last two excerpts above we get an impression that the poet is disappointed that his efforts are not fully appreciated by his contemporaries. He feels he will not get the praises he deserves during his lifetime. The only consolation which gives him some cheer is that his contribution will be acclaimed after this death. In the last excerpt above he uses the word '*-khonya*' (bellow) to imply that the people think he is making empty noise and they ignore the might of the bull from which that noise comes. He seems to be looking forward to his death as it will bring about the realisation to his people of the value of his works.

The full poem which Vilakazi wrote on his death is 'Ma Ngificwa ukufa' (When death overcomes me) which we have discussed in part in the second chapter. In this poem the poet describes the peaceful natural environment he wishes could surround his grave. The most significant stanza is the third one which begins:

Ngieyeke ngifel' ezindleleni
Zabantwan' abafund' isikole...

(Ink., p 38)

(Leave me to die along the paths
Of children who attend school...)

Here he pledges his devotion to the uplift of school children. He feels he will die a happy death if he will still be working for the cause of learning. Those circumstances of his dying dispell all fears of death. Death will only supply him with the much-needed repose, and he will enjoy the sweet lullaby sung softly by the grass:

'Lala sithandwa, lal' uphumule.'

(Ink., p 38)

('Sleep, darling, sleep and rest.')

In this poem Vilakazi says that he will hear the whisper of the grass:

Ngozwa nami ngilele ngaphansi
Utshani ngaphezulu buhleba...

(Ink., p 37)

(I shall hear sleeping beneath,
The grass whispering above...)

In other words death will not have brought complete annihilation to him. He equates death with simple sleep after which one can wake up and feel refreshed and ready for further fuller existence.

While his death is always uppermost in his mind the poet is aware that he cannot avoid it. He is determined to work hard in the field of his vocation despite the lack of appreciation by his people. When death does come it will be welcome because it will give him rest.

Death of others

The death of Vilakazi's father features prominently in his poetry. The narrative portion of 'UNokufa' recounts how Vilakazi fetched his father from the hospital and how he eventually died at home.

There are two other poems on his father's death: 'Sengiyokholwa-ke' (Then I shall believe) and 'Sengiyakholwa' (Now I believe). In 'Sengiyokholwa-ke' the poet expresses his inability to accept the passing away of his father when everything else in

the universe seems to be unaffected. The poet knows that the death of his father is a reality because he actually witnessed it. To him everything should have come to a stop that day because he lost somebody he loved so dearly. He does not understand why nature's splendour was not affected.

This is one of the poems in which the poet makes reference to nature for different effects. He brings together almost all the main items of the universe that give joy to the heart, from the celestial bodies to the terrestrial phenomena. This is not just put together at random. It is used to agree with the story of how his father died. In one place he makes the fading away of the stars coincide with the dying of his father:

Ngenkathi kufiphal' izinkanyezi, nawe
Ngabon' unyinyiphala kwaphel' ubuqhawe...

(Ink., p 34)

(When the stars faded away
I saw you wincing and your bravery vanished...)

As we read the poem we become more and more aware of how these natural things give sustenance and meaning to the poet's life in the absence of his beloved father.

There is another implication here that by refusing to accept his father's death the poet actually believes that it is only the body which has died, the man himself is as indestructable as the beauty around him (poet).

The beauty the poet sees in nature is further underlined by the use of a rhyme scheme, especially the couplet. This rhyme tallies with the harmony which the poet sees around him.

Another interesting feature is that the first two stanzas have six lines each. The third has five lines, and the last two have four lines each. One sees the poem 'dying down', and this agrees with the main idea of dying.

The poem 'Sengiyakholwa' was written when the poet had got himself reconciled to the idea that his father was indeed dead. This poem includes the death of the other members of the family, i.e. his brother, Mandlakayise, and his wife, Nomasomi. Towards the end the poet returns to the death of his father. In contrast with the pain his father feels in 'Sengiyokholwa-ke', in 'Sengiyakholwa' he merely vanishes:

Emva kwalokho waya ngokuya ushabalala,
Nami ngaya ngikubona kancan' unyamalala.

(Ama., p 68)

(After that you gradually vanished,
And I saw you slowly disappearing.)

This gives a picture of someone walking away and disappearing in the distance. His father has not died; he only moved away.

In the last stanza of this poem the poet appreciates the service his father does him by returning in a dream to show him which direction he must take in life:

Uza nenhliziy' enokuphola,
Ungiweza ngamasango namazibuko
Obuhlakani nezindlela zenkalipho...

(Ama., p 68)

(You come in a calm spirit
And guide me through the gates and fords
Of prudence and along the ways of wisdom.)

This is a consolation to the poet. The death of his father is not a complete loss to him. In fact it has an advantage because the father is now better able to help his son to solve the problems of life. One wonders, though, whether the poet is not contradicting himself when he says that in spite of his spiritual presence his father has disappeared *for ever*.

Yebo, manje ngiyakholwa sewafa,
Wanyamalal' ungunaphakade.

(Ama., p 68)

(Yes, now I believe that you are dead,
You have disappeared for ever.)

Vilakazi obviously refers to the physical disappearance of his father. But we can imagine how effective the end of the poem could have been if the poet had substituted 'awufanga' (you did not die) for 'sewafa', and 'Awunyamalalanga' (you did not disappear) for 'Wanyamalala'.

Like in the previous poem, here, too, the poet draws freely from nature to construct his images. In 'Sengiyakholwa', however, the images are more varied and used with more mature dexterity. Referring to the death of Nomasomi he writes:

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

(Ama., p 67)

(It happened like that also with Nomasomi
The stars of the eyes closed,
She went cold and could not warm herself.
I stood, my arms trembling,
I glanced at her face becoming dark,
And its beauty faded away.)

The poet likes to use the stars to symbolise life. In this poem he compares the dying of Nomasomi to the disappearing of the stars. Another good comparison is that between the gradual waning away of life and the disappearing of daylight which is followed by dusk. The poet does not state explicitly that Nomasomi is dying, but we are in no doubt as to what is happening.

It is puzzling why the poet uses rhyming couplets in the first seven stanzas and immediately abandons this embellishment in the last stanza. In fact he uses this rhyme in the stanzas where he recalls bitter memories of how his relatives died. In our view rhyme would be most appropriate towards the end because it is where the poet's equilibrium is restored by his father's constant visits.

The death of Mandlakayise (or Mandlakhe) and Nomasomi is given special attention in the poem 'Nayaphi?' (Where did you go?). The grievous nature of death is slightly watered down by the euphemistic presentation of the passing away of these two people. We find these lines in the first paragraph:

... Wasuka nje
Wanyamalala washiya konke,
Wavakasha noNomasomi.

(Ama., p 16)

(... You just
Disappeared and left everything
And took a visit with Nomasomi.)

The rest of the poem consists of the poet's imaginary journey in search of these two people. Realistic descriptions gradually give

way to the poet's characteristic fantasies which take him to the moon and its mythical woman. Here he gets no help. His dreams play the fool with him by returning his beloved in shapes that melt away, leaving the poet disconsolate:

Ungivakashela kwaButhongo
Umlethe uNomasomi

.....
Ngithi ngiyavuka gubhubhu,
Ngibamb' umoya oqandayo...

(Ama., p 18)

(You visit me in the land of sleep
And bring Nomasomi

.....
When I suddenly wake up
I clutch cold air...)

In this poem we find a clearly defined narrative line. The first stanza tells us the cause of the poet's subsequent journey. The search starts on land and then it is carried on in the ocean, and later it is directed towards the firmament. Even the realm of dreams is of no help. In the last stanza the poet goes back to where he started and asks questions to which there is no answer. Every stage of the search raises new hopes which soon die out, so that optimism and despair form wavelike motions of emotions with ascents and descents.

The emphasis in the poem is not on dying itself. The poem conveys the sorrow and loneliness which is the lot of the person remaining when those he cherished are no more. At the end of the poem there are many questions to which the poet has no answers. This is an indication that it is futile to question death. One must just accept it as such.

Vilakazi seems to be more despondent when he writes about the death of Mandlakayise and Nomasomi. There is no constructive communication which exists between him and these people after their death. Even when they appear in his dreams they only come to poke fun at him. This is not the same with regard to his father who still plays an important part in the life of the poet because when he appears in a dream he advises his son on what to do. One might say that there is some hierarchy in the seniority of the dead. The father is still better able to advise his son than his son's brother and wife. The latter need not make any contribution.

It is clear from Vilakazi's poems that he had many personal contacts with death because it took away so many of his close relatives. His various attitudes towards death are of a mixed nature. He notes its unwelcome violence and cruelty. Because this death is a reality one cannot run away from, he is conscious that his own death will come any time. He will welcome his death if it comes after he has accomplished his goal of service to his people.

It is in 'Sengiyakholwa' that one feels the poet accepts death especially because the dead are, in a sense, alive, and can communicate with those on earth.

In the poems on death we indeed find Vilakazi's most moving pieces which are rich in poetic depth. With the exception of the long-winded 'UNokufa', all these poems are well ordered and are a joy to read.

Philosophical poems

We now wish to pay our attention to a few poems which we consider to be philosophical. Writing on the nature of this type of poetry Read states:

Metaphysical poetry is abstract because, like metaphysics, it deals with concepts. But, as poetry it is no less 'emotional' than lyrical poetry...

(Read, p 248)

He further adds that there is a good measure of logic and reason in this type of poetry and the triumph of reason brings about aesthetic satisfaction.

Poetry has no limits with regard to its subject matter. But whatever the poet writes on he must know that we expect to find poetic elements in the end product so that it is not just a dry treatise on the chosen topic. Emile Lauvrière gives a good warning when he says:

Philosophy, or constructive thought about the nature of life, is a danger when the creative writer regards it as an end in itself instead of a stimulus to his imagination.

(Sansom, p 46)

This means that the argument and the conclusion are of less

important value than the poetic imagination which is a hallmark of any good poetry.

Discussion of poems

In the poem 'Yin' ukwazi?' (What is knowledge?) Vilakazi sets out to clarify the concept of knowledge. He conducts his enquiry in stages. He first asks his friend, then his age-mate, then his mother and finally his father. In the first three stages he suggests what people normally, but wrongly, associate with knowledge, i.e. one's physical appearance, education and eloquence. It is when the poet asks his father, the wisest of the four, that he gets to the essence of knowledge:

'Khuluma kancane
Wenze kakhudlwana.'

(Ama., p 11)

('Speak less,
Do more.')

We note that not one of the first three people replies to the poet. He suggests answers to them because he feels those answers agree with the values or the conception of knowledge that these people have. But these questions imply the poet's rejection of the answers. It is because he is not satisfied that he proceeds to ask other people. It is remarkable that he does not suggest any answer when he gets to the father because he respects the wisdom of the old man.

While the last two lines give the poem a smooth rounding off, they sound like a moral tagged to the end. This tends to reduce the poetic impact the ending might have had if this moral had been more implicit. In this poem the beauty is more in the logical patterning of ideas which culminate in the direct expression of the answer to the enquiry. The design of the poem has some aesthetic quality which makes up, to some degree, for the absence of evocative mental pictures which characterise most of Vilakazi's poetry.

In the poem 'Ukuthula' (Peace) Vilakazi does not give any logical reasoning with regard to the nature of peace. He gives rather an illustration of what constitutes peace.

The poet is sunbathing on the beach with a friend. Other people prefer to frolic around, to talk, to climb trees, to swim

and even to fly. Superficially this place is very noisy, if not chaotic:

Lendaw' igcwel' inhlokomo...

(Ama., p 15)

(This place is full of noise...)

This seems to be contradictory to another statement by the poet:

Lapho kugcwel' ukuthula komhlaba nezulu...

(Ama., p 15)

(Where there is peace of the earth and the sky...)

The poet wants to point out that true peace consists in happiness and love:

Ngiyabathanda, bayangithanda, woz' uzizwele.

(Ama., p 16)

(I love them, they love me, come and hear for yourself.)

True peace transcends the differences of tastes and inclinations. The differences do not form a barrier as these people share a common interest and thus a common brotherhood. This reality of harmony in spite of differences arouses profound thoughts about the possibility of heavenly peace on earth. This didactic element is introduced unobtrusively and the reader discovers it for himself.

The poet's presentation of the abstract concept here is more laudable than in the previous poem because the poet has woven his conclusions into the poem. The poet does not give us details of his earlier search for peace. He only gives us the climax, when he discovers it as demonstrated by this jolly company.

Another of Vilakazi's philosophical poems is 'Umcabango wasekuseni' (Morning meditation). It is said of this poem:

This not very coherent meditation is yet another poetic expression of the tragic truth of mortality, the unequal struggle of life and the equalizing power of death.

(Z.H., p 27)

The poet starts by saying that suffering is not a permanent feature. Then he refers to the fact that man's life is predestined.

In the third stanza he mentions that death befalls everybody irrespective of status.

The poem is said to be incoherent because the poet's mind drifts over a number of problems. It is obviously for this reason that Nyembezi used a shorter version of 18 lines in his anthology *Imisebe yelanga 4*. This version deals with just one concept.

As one reads Vilakazi's poem, one feels it could be divided into separate short poems, each dealing with one aspect of life.

The poem is dominated by the poet's fatalistic view of life which stresses man's helplessness:

Mhla sizalwa sazalelwa
Ubunzima nezimiso
Ezingenakuguquka...

(Ink., p 32)

(When we were born we were born for
Difficulties and courses
Which cannot change...)

All that man can do is to wait for the chance to be victorious as preordained by God:

Nilindele amathuba
.....
Nisukume ngalenkathi
OPhezul' ayimisile
Ngesakh' isikhathi wathi:
'Niyosukuma ninqobe...'

(Ink., p 32)

(Wait for the chance
You will stand up at the time
Preordained by God,
At His own time He will say:
'Stand up and conquer...')

It is not our task to debate about the merits of the doctrine of predestination. What we observe is that the poet does not build his whole poem on this idea. We find little original treatment in the other common ideas like the statement that death makes all people equal.

The idea the poet puts across in good imagery taken from plant life is that there is more durability in what evolves steadily. This idea occurs in the first stanza and also forms the conclusion of the poem. At the end of the first stanza he says:

Nomuthi kakhukhunathi
Unobud' obungayiwa,
UMninimandlawonke
Uyawuboph' enhlamvini
Encanyan' eyisigubhu,
Kuth' izithombo zokhula
Nokuhluma kway' imbuya,
Kusheshe ngommangaliso.

(Ink., pp 31-32)

(Even the coconut tree
Which has amazing height,
The Almighty
Puts it in a seed
Which is small and spherical,
But the plants of weed
And the growth of *imbuya*¹
Are amazingly fast.)

The same idea occurs in a reversed form at the end of the poem:

Yiz' izithombo zokhula
Nameva emihluhuwe
Abhangazel' ukukhula.
Kufik' ilanga lishise,
Kepha leyomith' emkhulu
Iqhekeza njal' ithunzi,
Ingenisa inkanyiso yelanga.

(Ink., p 33)

(The plants of weeds,
The thorny monkey-rope trees
Grow quickly.
The sun comes and burns everything up.
But the big trees
Always spread their shadows,
And through them enters sunlight.)

The poet is probably using these comparative illustrations to support his idea that people must not be in a hurry to change things because such action is destructive. They must be steady and wait for life to take its own course as preordained by God.

The poem is not much of a success because the poet's main topic for argument is diffuse. The logical argument for the

1. *Amaranthus Thunberyii*

poet's thesis of predestination has no firm basis. We expect a poem of this nature to depend on strong original reasoning. We doubt the acceptability of the poet's view that man who ought really to plan his future should wait and take an example from the behaviour of trees which have no thinking faculty.

The brilliant metaphors which one finds here and there in the poem do not help to rescue it from its low niveau.

We have referred to only three poems in which Vilakazi treats some concepts philosophically. There are metaphysical concepts which appear in some of the other poems in which the emphasis, however, is on other themes. Of the three poems we have discussed here, we feel that it is in 'Ukuthula' that the poet handles his concept with commendable skill. The poem 'Yin' ukwazi' has good design but it lacks poetic feeling. On the other hand 'Umcabango wasekuseni' lacks coherence and singleness of purpose and is not a success.

Nostalgia

Olafioye observes that one of the elements of romanticism found in Vilakazi's poetry is nostalgia over lost innocence and natural beauty. He says:

There is an overemphasis on the beauty of the past, now since ravaged.

(Olafioye, p 5)

Nyembezi makes a similar observation:

Vilakazi was gravely concerned that the Zulu heritage would be lost to the younger generations. He refers over and over to the need for preserving those things which are sacred and precious.

(Nyembezi, 1961, p 70)

Discussion of poems

In our discussion of some of Vilakazi's poems we now and again pointed out that he implies his regret at the past glory. We remarked about this in the discussion on 'Ngomz' omdaladala kaGrout' and 'KwaDedangendlale'.

He expresses his disappointment openly in 'Ngizw' ingoma' (I hear a song). He has been looking down upon the music of

the non-Zulu singers, but all of a sudden it moves him because it reminds him of his own traditional music and the life his people used to lead. All this is dying out now:

Ningikhumbuz' okungasekho
Nengingenamandl' okukubamba
Noma sengikhal' ezimaconsi.

(Ink., p 38-39)

(You remind me of what is past
Which I have no power to hold
No matter how I cry.)

The poem has no pretensions of having any extraordinary poetic depth, but it has sparkles of fine constructions such as found at the beginning:

Ingoma yenu ngiqale *ngayizwa*,
Ngayizwa ngayeya ngokungazi ...

(Ink., p 38)

(I first heard your song,
I heard it and despised it because of ignorance ...)

The linking with the words '*ngayizwa*' is typical of the praise poem style. This traditional style appears only at the beginning. Towards the end there is a line:

Nogogo betekula phansi kwemilovu.

(Ink., p 39)

(And grandmothers joking beneath sheltered places.)

This reminds us of Shaka's praises:

Bebetekula behlez' emlovini ...

(Nyembezi, 1962 (b), p 20)

(Joking as they sat in a sheltered spot ...)

The elements of some aspects of traditional poetry seem to be included to illustrate the traditional richness found only in traces – a regrettable state of affairs.

In the poem 'Wo, lelikhehla' (O! This old man!) the poet gives a profile of an old Zulu. Only a few signs show that he is a Zulu, like the dangling empty ear-lobe:

Namhl' iziqhaza zokuhloba
Uzikhiphile wazilahla phansi;
Awazi nalapho zasala khona,
Namanxiwa lapho zawa khona.

(Ama., p 12)

(Today the decorative ear-plugs
You have removed and thrown down;
You don't even know where they remained,
And the deserted kraal-sites where they fell.)

The ear-plugs here symbolise the culture of the Zulus of the times of Shaka. The poet feels that all that was good in that culture is now discarded. The emptiness of the ear-lobe implies that there is no proper substitute for what is lost. Even if one wants to regain it one does not know where to start looking for it.

The heroic past of the Zulus is implied in the fourth stanza where we get an echo of the praises of Dingane which say:

Isiziba esizonzo sizonzobebe.

(Nyembezi, 1962 (b), p 46)

(The pool which is quiet and overpowering.)

Vilakazi says:

... ezizibeni zikaDukuza
Lapho amanzi ezonzobebe khona.

(Ama., p 12)

(... in the pools of Dukuza
Where the water is quiet and overpowering.)

The old man's grey hair is symbolic of his profound wisdom and knowledge of the past. His knowledge is further represented with an appropriate image of a pool whose depth is unfathomable:

Linenzulu lelokhanda lakho!
Ngibe ngiyafak' ubhoko ngizwa
Ukujula kwalo, ngingagquli phansi.

(Ama., p 11)

(That head of yours is deep,
When I put the staff in it to feel
Its depth I do not touch the bottom.)

The poet wishes that the old man could share his knowledge with him who will be able to write it down:

Chathazela min' engizobhala phansi
Okuzwayo...

(Ama., p 12)

(Pour out a little for me who will write down
What you hear...)

Although a lot of the past has been lost, the poet ends on a slightly optimistic note that some traces of it can still be recorded for posterity from the old people who have some information. This is another simple-looking poem with much depth and good use of poetic devices.

The poem 'Ukhamba lukaSonkomose' (Sonkomose's beerpot) describes the poet's reaction to the sight of the beerpot which was once used by his great grandfather. Without giving details about the appearance of the pot, the poet remembers different names of people of his family genealogy. He points out that he feels the significance of the beerpot was not fully unravelled:

Owashiy' uhamba wedwa
Wakhohlwa nokumbulula
Okuphethwe lolukhamba.

(Ink., p 10)

(Who left alone
And forgot to reveal
The secret of this beerpot.)

The poet finds this beerpot to be a symbol of the union that exists between him and his ancestors. Through the pot he can communicate with them. We recall here that according to traditional Zulu religion people used to sacrifice to the spirits by putting beer in a pot for them in order to come and drink overnight. This was done as a token of gratitude for prosperity, or as an offering to accompany a request for blessings to the family. This means that if this pot was used by Sonkomose for that purpose he also communicated through it with his known ancestors. The pot is not used anymore. It is now doubtful if the link still exists.

At the end of the poem we find the lines:

Yeka lawo manz' ampofu,
Qwabe wen' obuwakhonza
Enjengompe lwezinyosi!

(Ink., p 11)

(O that tawny water
Which you, Qwabe, liked,
Which was like the honey of the bees!)

It is easy to condemn this as a low note which praises Qwabe for his addiction to beer. But it must be remembered that beer drinking was often a communal affair. The beerpot would circulate among the participants, and they would all drink directly from it. The pot then symbolised communion and unity among those who were drinking together.

The poet regrets the loss of all those good and meaningful practices which have resulted in the individualistic aloofness which is less conducive to goodwill.

'Izinsimbi zesonto' (Church bells) depicts a conflict in the poet's mind. The chiming of the bells is symbolic of a call to accept Western civilisation. The poet looks at modern life and remembers how this new civilisation has forced him to change to new things and abandon what he values:

Ndabazemkhonto ngikushiyile,
Gudulokubhenywa ngakulahla.

(Ama., p 22)

(I have abandoned my spear,
I have thrown away my smoking horn.)

The poet tells us how he has had to remove his traditional clothes. This symbolises the casting away of old practices and adopting new ones. He feels this change is clumsy. It is tantamount to disarming him so that he cannot defend himself against genuine dangers:

... imamba yemithi
Engiyibone ngaqhaq hazela,
Ngathi ngihlomile kanti ngize.

(Ama., p 21)

(... a tree mamba
Which I saw and shuddered,
I thought I was armed, but I was not.)

The new civilisation seems to have stripped him of his former integrity:

Namhla ngingumngquphane womhlaba.

(Ama., p 22)

(Today I am a simpleton of the world.)

Unfortunately he must reluctantly accept all this because he belongs to a defeated nation:

Mlungu, wahlule wachith' uZulu!

(Ama., p 22)

(Whiteman you have conquered and dispersed the Zulu!)

Despite the loss he has suffered he does realise that the new era has ushered in new developments. It has produced learned people like Champion, Luthuli and Dube.

The poet exhibits a more balanced approach. He has come to realise that the loss of the valued practices is compensated for by the good brought about by the change, so:

Khalani zinsimbi kusemnandi!

Ngizwa izwi lenu libubula,

Libik' umhlab' osuguqukile.

(Ama., p 22)

(Ring on, O bells, it is still nice!

I hear your sound ringing,

Reporting the world which has changed.)

This is one of the poems in which the poet makes good use of the traditional praise poetry style. He makes much use of linking, for example:

Enikhale ngaqale *nganengwa*,

Nganengwa kwafuquza nolaka,

Ngagcwal' umusi ngaze *ngabohla*,

Ngabohla ngahlala phezu kwetshe.

(Ama., p 21)

(You rang and at first I got annoyed,

I got annoyed and was full of anger,

I fumed until I calmed down,

I calmed down and sat on a stone.)

The praise poem style makes some portions of this poem sound like traditional *izibongo*. There is an underlying meaning in this,

that the poet has praise for the symbolic work of the bells. Although he was full of anger, he has discovered that there is reason to rejoice.

In these poems the poet is despondent because the treasures found among the Zulus of the past and those living in rural areas are fast disappearing. He does not give details of what is getting lost, except by implication. He considers this to be a challenge concerning which some positive action must be taken. He offers to play a role in the recording of whatever can still be found. As we have seen in 'Izinsimbi zesonto' he finally realises that he cannot stop the course of events. He must make use of the good things that this new civilisation has brought. One of these is education which will arm him with the ability to record things. In 'Imfundo ephakeme' he says that although it frustrates him that he has not advanced materially like his friends, he is happy when he realises that the ancestors appreciate his effort to preserve in writing what can still be saved for posterity:

Ngikhothe ngadla ngabek' ethala,
Ngibekel' usapho lakwaZulu,
Lusale lukhoth' ezincwadini ...

(Ama., p 8)

(I licked, ate and put away on a shelf,
I put it away for the Zulu children
So that they may lick from the books ...)

Committed poetry

Throughout the ages writers have been found to express their displeasure about certain conditions or practices. There is always an argument as to the degree to which an artist should involve himself with the problems of society. One school of thought believes in the old expression 'art for art's sake', and holds that all other considerations are of little value. Otomose makes an interesting statement about this:

I don't think there is any art for art's sake. I don't think it's possible. There has to be a commitment. Even if you write only to entertain, that's a commitment.

(Lindfors, p 55)

By committed poetry we usually understand the works which are written with the main aim of conveying strong convictions about some issue or situation. We have many poems which prescribe moral codes of conduct for society. These may be purely didactic, aiming at reprimanding or sermonising. But along this continuum of didacticism one may move to the other extreme of poems which protest against some order. Discussing these poems of protest Verschoor says that the aim of the writer is to arouse

feelings of distaste, indignation, scorn, contempt and even hatred for some state of affairs, some aspect of society in which he finds himself.

(Verschoor, p 2)

When the poet exposes the evils or irregularities he notes around him, he wants to arouse in his readers a state of disquietude which will lead to some kind of reform. But in what he says, the poet expresses himself in the first place as an artist. Beeton gives a balanced picture about the question of aesthetics and didacticism:

A man may have good morals to communicate but if he has not the authority of mind and expression to communicate them as an artist he will forever remain voiceless. Conversely, if a man has a splendid 'technique' and nothing worthwhile to say, he is condemned forever to hollow, if pleasant, tinklings, he is condemned forever to play a minor role, even though he may acquire some contemporary glitter.

(Beeton, p 16)

An artist has to acquire proper balance between what he intends to say and how he will say it. Readers are inclined to applaud a writer who expresses their grievances in verse, even though that verse is of little or no literary merit. Such verse is likely to rouse the emotions because of its topicality and bluntness, but it may not last as a work of art. One great danger of its becoming extinct lies in the fact that when conditions change the verse may become irrelevant. Nnolim puts it:

... committed literature has a way of dying a natural death - certain to be dulled and dimmed by the fog of time when the issues it fought over are no longer current. (Nnolim, p 71)

A writer must be aware of this danger and make sure that his poem has something more durable than the theme which may lose its relevance once the necessary reform he advocated has been achieved. We contend that the literature which dies quickly is that which depends too much on its obvious message for whose presentation little skill is employed. Such literature can easily be survived by the 'pleasant tinklings' of the works of art which have no serious lessons to offer.

The protest theme is very popular among the writers in Africa. Many of them ascribe to the view that a writer has a duty to society. Ekwensi, for example, says:

... the role of the writer is dictated by the social and political atmosphere in his country ... if writers were listened to as a voice, the warning voice or the voice of the prophet or the voice which mirrors the time, Africa might benefit.

(Lindfors, p 33)

What we regard as poetry of protest in Vilakazi's work are those poems in which he points out the wrongs in his social and political environment. He writes on what he considers to be an unfair treatment of the Blacks by the Whites. Our duty in this discussion is to assess whether these poems are a work of art or mere propaganda in verse.

Discussion of poems

In some of his poems, Vilakazi just touches in passing on the Blackman's dissatisfaction with the racial situation in his country. In 'Wo ngitshele mntanoMlungu' (Tell me Whiteman's child) he refers to the inferiority complex felt by a Blackman because of his colour and language which are regarded as inferior:

Isikhumba sami siyangiceba,
Ulimi lwami lona luhle
Nom' abanye bethi luyangehlisa.

(Ama., p 9)

(My skin betrays me,
My language is good
Although some say it lowers me.)

In 'Inyanga' it is only in passing that the poet mentions the unfairness of the curfew regulations:

Wen' odud' izithandani
Engizibon' emizin' emikhulu
AbeLung' abayivus' emathanjeni
Abantwana bakaZulu noXhoza
NomSuthu. Ngithi nami ngithi
Ngiyaphuma ngidonswa okudonsa
Umunt' ophila enozwelo lwemvelo
Ngithuke ngikhalelwa zinsimbi.

(Ama., p 15)

(You who encourages lovers
Whom I saw in the big cities
Which the Whites have erected on the bones
Of the children of Zulu and Xhosa
And Sotho. When I also
Go out, being attracted by what pulls
A living person who has natural emotions,
I get arrested.)

In this stanza the poet's protest stems from his observation that the Black lovers are arrested for their natural response to the beauty of the moon. He feels that these regulations are biased because Whites are exempted from such restrictions. What puzzles the poet further is that this discrimination is practised at the very place where his people once lived a normal life without fetters before the Whiteman built the cities. The city itself seems to be an artificial establishment which plays a part in the imposition of unjust limitations to a section of the population.

The stanza is mild protest. The poet has not expressed his objection so bluntly, but he has presented the absurdity of these curfew regulations by using an illustration of how they are applied.

In 'Khalani maZulu' the poet reproaches the Zulu factions for their senseless domestic fights which left them poor while the Whiteman benefited:

Nafa ningashiye mphako,
Nibon' ukuth' amankonyane
Osapho lukaMlungukazana
Asencel' izinkomazana
Ezazimiselw' abantwana
Benzalo kaSenzangakhona...

(Ink., p 25)

(You died and left no provisions
Although you were aware that the calves
Of the children of the Whiteman
Were sucking the little cows
Which were meant for the children
Of the generations of Senzangakhona . . .)

The poet's observation here is that the Zulus gave the Whites a chance to take what was their (Zulus') heritage. The poet uses good imagery of sucking calves. While the Zulus are killing one another, the Whites, like the calves, are busy obtaining the nourishment they are not entitled to. This now means that the Zulus will have nothing to live on in future. By that time the Whites will be strong and healthy. This would not have happened if the Zulus were united and were always on the alert.

The use of diminutives is significant here. In the word '*Mlungukazana*' the diminutive formative implies the contempt with which the poet regards the Whiteman. On the other hand '*izinkomazana*' gives us an impression that even that which the Zulus possessed would not really be sufficient for them. It is tragic that the little that they had was taken by the people who did not deserve it.

While the poet's main criticism is against his own people, there is also an implication here that the Whites slyly took advantage of the disunity among the Zulus and 'stole' the milk from the cows which they knew were not theirs (Whites'). —

In the second chapter we made mention of the poem '*Wenake uyothini?*' which was translated from J.S. Cotter's '*And what shall you say?*' Vilakazi obviously included this poem because of its relevance to the racial situation in South Africa. The poem itself does not specify which race is being exploited and tormented. It can apply to any situation where one race dominates another. The background information we have that Cotter was an American Negro, clarifies the point that here a Blackman expresses his objection to the way he is treated by the Whiteman.

The poet uses concepts from the Christian religion as he imagines how the oppressor will fail to justify his actions before God on the judgement day. Unfortunately the selfrighteousness which dominates the speaker's words is not in line with the

Christian norms of humility and restraint from judging other people.

The piece itself has no poetic depth as it is essentially literal. It has nice parallelisms reminiscent of those found in Biblical poetry, for example:

'Nkosi kangizondi muntu,
Kepha mina ngiyazondwa ...'

(Ink., p 93)

('Lord I hate nobody
But I am hated ...')

These, however, do not elevate this work into worthwhile poetry.

Religious ideas have been used for a better purpose in the poem 'NgePhasika' (Easter). Here the poet is very blunt in stating his complaint:

... umfoweth' omhlophe
Uyangidela, uyangiphundla: ngiyamnukela.

(Ink., p 1)

(... my white brother
Deserts me, strips me: I stink for him.)

It is noteworthy that the poet's bitterness is blunted by the use of the word 'umfowethu' (my brother). This means that the poet still considers his persecutor as a member of his family – a 'blood relative' with whom he differs only in colour.

Reference to this difference in colour is expressed in these lines:

Nami bangithengisa nxazonke zomhlaba,
Ngoba ngidalwe ngabamnyama.
Kangilikhethanga lelibala, ngaphiwa nguwe.
Ngenxa yalokhu Nkosi
Ngibonga wena.

(Ink., p 2)

(I, also, am sold all over the world
Because I was created black.
I did not choose this colour, I was given it by you.
Because of this, Lord
I thank you.)

Here the poet is probably referring to the slave trade in which

the black people were sold. It is only the blackness of the skin which was the criterion used to determine which people could be put up for sale.

The poet seems to be puzzled that the colour given to him by God should be such a liability to him. He does not blame God for this, but says he is nevertheless grateful for it. This gratefulness emanates from the realisation that when God gave him the black colour He did not intend to make him an inferior human being. In other words, the giving of the black colour to the Blackman was not a curse. The Blackman is just as blessed as the other races because Jesus even trod on his continent, Africa:

Sikhunjuzwa wen' uthwabaza
Emhlabathini wezwe lakithi -
Wona lona waBantu abamnyama . . .

(Ink., p 1)

(We are reminded of you when you walked
On the earth of our land,
This very one of the Black people . . .)

The poet feels that the continent of Africa and its native peoples are just as blessed as the other continents and people.

The poet does not want any vengeance for his suffering. In a true Christian spirit he prays that God should open the eyes of his oppressors who do not know what they are doing:

Khanya usus' umnyama phezu kwaMhlaba!

(Ink., p 2)

(Shine and remove darkness from the world!)

There is interesting word play with '*umnyama*' (darkness) which the poet prays should be removed. He uses the stem '*-mnyama*' a number of times when he refers to the darkness of the skin. But he also sees his suffering as resulting from the 'darkness' of the minds of those people who think they are superior just because their skins are not dark. When this darkness has been removed from their minds, the Whites will have a new awareness of the brotherhood of man which transcends paltry colour differences.

The poem ends with a prayer that Christ should help the Blackman to follow the example of His life:

Ngikhumbuze min' engimnyama
Izifundo nenkambo yempilo yakho . . .

(Ink., p 2)

(Remind me who am black
The lessons and the manner of your life...)

Despite the bad things that his 'brother' does to him the poet prays that he (brother) should not be the model. Christ's deeds are the ideal example to be followed.

The poet handles his theme with great nobility, and this is in sharp contrast with what we found in 'Wena-ke uyothini?'

Although the poet expresses his protest very directly, the piece has admirable poetic attributes. The poem is based on Easter, the period when the Christian world remembers the passion of Christ. The sombre atmosphere of Easter agrees with the contemplative mood of the poet as he recalls his own suffering.

Among the well-presented images, we can refer to these opening lines:

Lenyang' engiyibona yethwasa,
Ihlephukile phezu kwamahlombe...

(Ink., p 1)

(This [new] moon which I see emerging,
Broken off above the shoulders...)

The poet is inspired by the sight of the broken moon. This is not as happy a picture as it would have been if the moon were full. The distorted, ugly moon is a good symbol of the unpleasant state of affairs which the poet wants to write about in his poem. Amidst this gloom there is still a ray of hope because the moon is just starting to develop into fullness. There is a note of optimism in the poem that although the racial relationship is not yet what it should be, there is hope that things will improve.

We feel that the poet has done enough to make this piece of protest a commendable work of art.

Another poem which falls under this category is 'Ngoba ... sewuthi' (Because ... you say). Here we have a complaint of a person who feels that he is not regarded as a fully-fledged human being because he always tries to be happy in spite of having to work and live under bad conditions. The application of this poem need not be restricted to a specific environment. The poem can refer to any master-servant relationship in any society. It is again only through our awareness of the poet's

background that we know he has in mind the Black-White relationship found in his country.

The poet does not give details of how he is ill-treated by the person spoken to. All that the poet says is that he is regarded as a mere pole, or a rock or an animal or an antheap:

Sewuthi nginjengensika
Yon' engezwa nabuhlungu.

.....
Sewuthi nginjengedwala
Lon' elingakwaz' ukufa

.....
Sewuthi ngiyisilwane
Esifa kuzalw' esinye.

.....
Sewuthi ngiyisiduli...

(Ama., pp 19-20)

(You say I am a pillar
Which feels no pain.

.....
You say I am like a rock
Which knows no death

.....
You say I am an animal
Which dies and another is born.

.....
You say I am an antheap...)

By all these comparisons the poet emphasises that his tormentor does not treat him like a human being. The series of images presented towards the end of each stanza contrast sharply with the descriptions which precede them of busy and active human beings. A pillar, a rock and an antheap are all lifeless objects. Even the mention of a living thing, an animal, is followed immediately by its death: ... *ngiyisilwane/Esifa*...

The speaker brings out clearly his awareness of being exploited. The amount of work he has to do makes him look like a slave:

... njalo ngakusihlwa
Sengigumul' iketango
Lomsebenz' onzim' emini...

(Ama., p 20)

(... always in the evening
When I remove the chain
Of hard work I do during daytime...)

We associate chains with imprisonment or slavery. The poet here seems to imply that the remuneration the man gets is not commensurate with the amount of work he does.

The speaker's understanding of the laws which govern him is poor, but he feels that they are unfair to him.

Ngingaqondi namithetho,
Kodwa ngizwa ingiphanga...

(Ama., p 20)

(I don't even understand the laws
But I feel they rob me...)

Here, again, we are given no details regarding the laws which the speaker is referring to. He obviously has in mind the laws concerned with the control of his people.

The poet does not say what exactly he wants to have done. We get the implication that he is protesting against the bad working conditions of the Blacks, and also the laws which he feels are unfair to these people. All these should be reviewed. Above all he wants to emphasise that these people should be treated with understanding like normal human beings who have feelings and a spirit.

At the end of the poem he points out that there is a link between him and the ancestral spirits:

... nonyembezi
Olucons' enhliziyweni,
Luwel' ezandlen' ezinhle
Zamadloz' abuka konke.

(Ink., p 20)

(... the tear
Which drops from the heart
And falls into the good hands
Of the ancestral spirits who see everything.)

This clarifies that in spite of looking happy, the Blackman is very bitter about the way he is treated. He does not complain or weep openly; his tears are within, from the heart. In this tear imagery the tear drops into the good hands of the ancestral

spirits. The poet here contrasts the Whiteman's unattractive attitude with the goodness of the spirits. In other words the spirits have a proper sense of justice that human beings lack. It is further remarkable that the ancestral spirits seem to collect the tears in their hands, as if these tears are something precious. Will they probably produce these tears one day as evidence against the people who caused them?

It is a consolation to the poet that there are superior powers which witness what is happening to him. This is probably why he is mild in his protest. He is cool and expresses his bitterness in a slightly satirical tone. He cannot resolve his predicament and trusts that the supernatural powers will intervene and rescue him.

The poet has arranged his stanzas from one with the least number of lines (8) to the other with the highest number (13). This seems to have been done deliberately so that his ideas could range from the simple one to the most important found in the last stanza.

This is a good piece of work.

Vilakazi's most famous poem in this category is 'Ezinkomponi'. R. Kunene says of this poem that it

... is the best of all his poems and the most moving.

(R. Kunene, p 215)

The poet puts together in one poem most of the complaints of the Blackman regarding his life as a worker under White supervisors. The poet puts it clearly at the beginning that he wants to write about the grievances of the Black mine worker:

Dumani mishini ningalaleli
Ukugquma kwezisebenz' ezimnyama,
Ziqaqanjelwa ngamanxeb' omzimba...

(Ama., p 60)

(Roar on machines and do not listen
To the groaning of the black workers
Who suffer from painful body wounds...)

After this the poet puts down his ideas as they come to his mind without arranging them in any specific order.

The mine worker has lost the status of a dignified headman and he has become a mere boy:

Buphelile ubunumzane, singabafana.

(Ama., p 62)

(Our manhood has vanished, we are boys.)

This most probably refers to the common practice of calling Black workers 'boys' irrespective of their age.

What hurts most is that the Blackman is aware that he has helped the people of the other races to acquire wealth while he has remained poor:

... nezicebi engizikhuphule
Zenyukel' endlin' engenhla, zangishiya
Ngixiz' amanzi njengengcuba yenkomo.

(Ama., p 64)

(... and the rich men whom I raised
And they ascended into a higher room, leaving
Me miserably poor.)

The financial advancement of the rich people is compared to ascending to a room situated at a higher level. The person who is instrumental to this rising is left behind poor. The poet uses an appropriate idiom 'ukugxiz' amanzi njengengcuba' (to ooze water like meat of an animal which has died) which is used to refer to the condition of a poor and unhappy person whose suffering is usually caused by some curse from which he cannot free himself.

But even those Blacks who can afford good things are no better because they are frustrated by other restrictions regarding how they can spend their money:

Nom' inkece nginganayo yokuthenga
Ngibuyis' inhlabathi yawobabamkhulu
Kodw' amalungelo kanginawo.

(Ama., p 65)

(Even if I have money to buy,
To bring back the land of my forefathers,
I have no rights.)

The conditions at these mines are not healthy for the workers:

Amaphaphu abo aya ngokugqwala,
Bakhwehlele balale bafe.

(Their lungs gradually rust,
They cough, sleep and die.)

(Ama., p 61)

Note the beautiful use of anticlimax in 'Bakhwehlele balale bafe'. Nobody seems to be moved by this dying. The poet puts this in rhetorical questions:

Uma ngifile khona ngaphansi
Kuyoba nani? Ngingubani nje nempela?

(Ama., p 63)

(If I die underground
What does it matter? Who am I after all?)

A migrant labourer's trouble follows him even when he has left the industrial area and hopes to be welcomed by his family at home:

Ngathi ngiyagoduka nemithwalo
Ngashayw' amahlanga namanxiwa,
Ngenway' ikhanda ngisangene.
Ngabuz' umkami nabakhwekazi,
Bangitshel' umLung' engimsebenzelayo.

(Ama., p 63)

(When I left for home with my bundle [load]
I found harvested fields and deserted kraal sites,
I scratched my head in confusion.
I asked for my wife and in-laws
They told me to ask my White employer.)

This poor man cannot find peace anywhere.

The poet puts it bluntly that all his hardships are a result of the Whiteman's hard-heartedness:

Um' umLung' engenagazi lomunyu...

(Ama., p 64)

(If the Whiteman has no sympathy...)

But the Blackman feels he cannot do anything to improve his position because he is disarmed since the Whiteman defeated him in the past battles:

... noma ngivathazela.
Kuzona lezizingadlwana ngeny' imini
Kwake kwazululeka izijul' ezimbi,
Engazizwiba kwafiphal' umhlaba,
Kwanyakaz' umbuso weNdllovukazi,
Kwancipha abakaPewula, kodwa ngadliwa.

(Ama., p 64)

(... although I walk unarmed,
With my hands one day
I swung effective spears
Which I threw and the earth was darkened.
The kingdom of the Queen¹ shook,
The soldiers of Paul² were diminished, but I lost.)

In spite of his defeat he hopes that the Blacks will one day be in control of things:

Ngiphuph' umhlaba wawokok' ubuyela
Ezandleni zamanxus' amnyama.

(Ama., p 64)

(I dream the land of our forefathers returning
To the hands of Black delegates.)

How will this happen? There is no indication as to the steps to be taken to correct matters. The only trust is that the ancestral spirits will intervene:

Bhekani mathong' aphezulu naphansi,
Ningengilamlele kulengcindezi?

(Ama., p 65)

(Look, you spirits above and below?
Can't you free me from this oppression?)

The poet seems to have lost faith even in these spirits because they do not reply to his prayers:

Ngisebenze ngikhuleka kini,
Ngingatholi nampendul' encane.

(Ama., p 65)

(I work and pray to you
But I don't get even a small reply.)

The poem ends on a sad and pessimistic note. The poet feels the only way out of all these difficulties is to die. He looks forward to happier life in the company of the ancestral spirits.

In a large portion of the poem the poet addresses the machines. At various intervals he commands the machines to roar on '*Dumani mishini*' and the whole poem unfolds against the

1. Queen Victoria
2. Paul Kruger

background of the noise of these machines. Right through he tells these machines of his unhappiness. It is only in two stanzas that he removes his attention from the machines and speaks to the ancestral spirits.

This is one of the poems in which Vilakazi makes the best use of carefully selected imagery. We have an example of superb use of metaphorical language in stanzas 5 and 6:

Ngizwile kuthiwa kwakhala
Imishini kwavela mbib' emnyama,
Emqondweni wayo kuhlwile khuhle.
Yabanjwa yaphendulw' imvukuzane,
Yavukuz' umhlabathi ngabon' igoli.

Yebo, zivukuzil' izimvukuzane
Kwavel' izindundum' ezimhlophe.
Zafukuzela phansi zakhwela,
Namhla zingangeSandlwana.

(Ama., p 61)

(I heard that the machines made noise
And a black mouse appeared
In its mind was darkness.
It was caught and turned into a mole
Which burrowed the earth and I saw gold.

Yes, the moles have burrowed
And white mine-dumps appeared,
They developed from below and grew high,
Today they are like Isandlwana.)

The striped mouse, *'imbiba'*, normally does not burrow the earth and dig up soil. The poet says that this mouse was transformed into a mole which does this work. This is a good illustration of how man who normally works above ground has been made to go underground like a mole. According to the poet the Black workers who go into these mines are ignorant (*'emqondweni wayo kuhlwile'*) and work blindly like moles. It seems they are not even aware of the enormous wealth they are digging up.

The poet further compares the mine-dump to Isandlwana. He does not compare it to other prominent hills or mountains because Isandlwana is of particular significance to the Zulus. It is where the Zulus waged serious battles with the British. The Zulus were later on defeated. So when a Zulu looks at the

imposing mine-dump he is reminded of Isandlwana and his defeat which has resulted in his position.

The poem is full of other impressive literary qualities which make it a commendable work of art.

In Vilakazi's poetry of protest we see the poet adopting a typical Romantic stance of denouncing different forms of human oppression and the consequences of industrialisation. In most of the poems in this category the poet says very bluntly that the Whiteman treats the Black unfairly. But, as Mootry observes:

Vilakazi, possibly because of temperament, carried his art to the level of protest only...

(Mootry, p 112)

All he does is to expose the wrongs that are the cause of the Blackman's hardships. He does not proceed to the level of resistance or revolution that we find in some poems of this nature. He does not suggest what the Blackman must do to improve his lot. He only hopes that supernatural beings, especially the ancestral spirits, will intervene.

We have expressed our appreciation that these poems are of a high literary standard. The application of some of them is wider than the limited South African or Black-versus-White context. They can apply to any society where there is an unpleasant master-servant relationship. This type of relationship will always be found in some cases, which means that such poems will always be relevant. Their survival is further guaranteed by the fact that they are a work of art which will be appreciated even when the conditions the poet is complaining about have changed.

Conclusion

In these two chapters we have attempted to analyse Vilakazi's poetry according to what we loosely referred to as themes. We are aware that there has been overlapping in the discussion of some poems which deal with different themes and thus do not belong to only one category. As we pointed out earlier, our main aim was to make an assessment of these poems, and not so much to indicate strict thematic categories.

This analysis has no pretensions of being exhaustive. In many cases we could only quote a line or two as an example to illustrate a certain point. If we had quoted more examples to illustrate every point our discussion would have been unduly long.

Not all aspects of each poem were mentioned in this discussion. Only the most significant points were referred to. This is why in some poems we touched on things like imagery and rhyme, but did not get into this in others. We shall pay special attention to such aspects in the coming chapters.

We have noted that Vilakazi's poems are not without blemish. It is also clear that despite some of the glaring weaknesses his poetry is of a high standard.

5 Imagery

Writing on imagery Fogle says:

Poetic imagery is to be defined broadly as analogy or comparison, having a special force and identity from the peculiarly aesthetic and concentrative form of poetry. It is to be judged according to its creative power, the connotative richness of its content, and the harmonious unity and fusion of its elements.

(Fogle, pp 22-23)

In the previous chapters we now and again mentioned the occurrence of images in Vilakazi's poetry. This was unavoidable because in the interpretation of any poem we are bound to refer to the comparisons and analogies which the poet uses.

We do note Untermeyer's remark:

Some of the most profound poems do not contain a single image.

(Untermeyer, p 59)

Such poems must depend on other designs and attributes. But it is generally agreed that the main difference between poetry and prose is that in the former we find a more concentrated use of imagery than in the latter.

Some critics consider imagery as a sub-category of symbolism. In Shipley's work (p 408) we find the image as one of the four levels of expression which are manifestations of symbolism. The other approach, however, is the consideration of symbolism under imagery. Heese and Lawton, for example, say:

... we employ the word 'image' as a general term and the words 'simile', 'personification', 'metaphor' and 'symbol' as specific terms indicative of different kinds of images.

(Heese and Lawton, p 62)

Imagery can range from purely denotative descriptions to highly figurative ones. Day Lewis (p 80) points out that we can find an image in a pure description when such a description makes us imagine something more than the factual reflection of

an object. Warren and Wellek agree with this view, but they further point out how an image can develop into a symbol:

An 'image' may be invoked once as a metaphor, but if it persistently recurs, both as a presentation and representation it becomes a symbolic (or mythic) system.

(Warren and Wellek, p 194)

In this chapter we shall discuss all these figures of speech mentioned by these critics under imagery. We shall follow Heese and Lawton's suggestion and consider simile, metaphor, personification and symbolism under imagery. We shall treat simile and metaphor as two separate categories although we are aware of the close affinity which exists between them:

... not infrequently it will be found that in poetry analogy is expressed first as a simile and then as a metaphor, so there can hardly be much difference between the two with respect to their truth-claims or imaginative depth.

(Nowotny, p 51)

We shall now deal mainly with specific lines where these figures of expression occur because the poems from which they are taken have been treated in some detail in the previous chapters.

Simile

It is chiefly through comparison that poets try to make meaningful communication of difficult concepts to their audience. The poet usually compares two things from otherwise dissimilar fields because those things share a common feature. In a simile this comparison is explicitly announced by the word 'as' or 'like', which in Zulu is the prefix '*njenga-*' or similar formatives.

Pierce and Pierce point out the disadvantage of using simile:

Because of its structure, a simile is likely to sound more arranged and formal, less startling than metaphor.

(Pierce and Pierce, p 34)

We expect every poet to demonstrate his ability to put his originality behind such a figure of speech.

Here we shall look at the different types of similes used by Vilakazi in order to assess the degree to which they contribute to the success of his poetry.

Common similes

There are comparisons which have lost their effect through repeated use. Such similes are now felt to be ordinary idiomatic language which any person can use.

In 'UNokufa' Vilakazi says:

Wehlukene njengentshonalanga
Ibuqamama nempumalanga . . .

(Ink., p 73)

(You are different like the west
Is far from the east . . .)

We consider this a hackneyed comparison because it is used frequently in everyday language when one wants to refer to diametrically opposed extremes. (We find the expression used in the Bible: Psalm 103:12). The same could be said of the simile found in 'UMamina':

Uwedwa njengomkhumb' untwel' olwandle.

(Ama., p 43)

(You are alone like a ship sailing in the sea.)

We should remark here that the effectiveness of this simile depends much on the reader's environment and experience. This figure was most appropriate during the days when the ship was a rare sight. The comparison is of little significance to the people who live next to a harbour where they see many ships in the sea.

Some similes have lost their effect because they have been incorporated into the idiom of the language. In 'Ezinkomponi', when the poet says:

Ngigxiz' amanzi njengencuba yenkomo.

(Ama., p 64)

(I ooze water like meat of a dead beast.)

comparison is not conspicuous anymore. All we are aware of is the idiomatic usage of the expression to refer to a person whose misery is unlikely to end.

In Zulu there is a peculiar idiomatic comparison which implies the presence of some quality in abundance. In this expression we compare one thing to a relative, especially the sister and the father or grandfather. We use the sister when we refer to the presence of unfavourable qualities, whilst the father or grandfather is used with reference to some physical magnitude.

In 'Inkelenkele yakwaXhosa' we find this comparison:

... wena salukazi -

Umxhilibana njengodade nje...

(Ink., p 3)

(... you old woman -

Being wrinkled just like my sister¹...)

In 'Wo ngitshela mntanomLungu' Vilakazi says:

Izinsika zingangobabamkhulu!

(Ama., p 10)

(The pillars like [as big as] my grandfathers!)

It is worth noting that in such comparisons we do not really compare the tenor and the vehicle because the vehicle does not have the qualities found in the tenor. The sister or grandfather stands for anything which might have the qualities mentioned in the tenor.

Although such similes have lost their jolting aesthetic shock, they do elevate the poet's speech above the normal literal expression of ideas.

Dominance of undesirable elements

It is granted that comparisons in similes need not be between two exactly similar phenomena. We have to eliminate many elements from the vehicle and leave the relevant ones which compare well with the qualities in the tenor. Sometimes those features which are supposed to be eliminated remain dominant and tend to spoil the comparison.

In 'Isenanelo eminyakeni engamashumimahlanu' the poet compares the hair of Black people to the wool of a sheep:

1. This actually implies 'just like me'.

... ngisho nonwele
Luqoqene njengolwemvu.

(Ink., p 84)

(... even the hair
Was coiled like that of a sheep.)

This comparison gives no problem to the people who are used to black sheep. Otherwise the mention of a sheep's hair recalls a white colour because this is a dominant feature when one looks at a white sheep from a distance. It sounds a bit absurd, therefore, to see a comparison between a Blackman's black hair and a sheep's white wool. What makes this colour dominate above other qualities is probably the influence of the Bible where white things are compared to wool (see Daniel 7:9 and Revelations 1:14).

There may be an argument here that the poet is not comparing the colour, but the shape of the hair. In other words he has got close to both the sheep and the Blackman to compare the shape of their hair – and this makes the simile acceptable. There might be further splitting of hairs as to whether the white colour does not still dominate above the shape.

Such long argument is unlikely in the case of this simile taken from 'UMamina':

Nekhand' elincane elintamo
Njengembumbulu yemamba yehlathi...

(Ama., p 44)

(And a small head with a neck
Like that of the mamba of the forest...)

Here the poet wants to compare the beautiful shape of a mamba's head and neck to that of his beautiful and shapely Mamina. Unfortunately the mention of this snake reminds us that it is highly poisonous. Instead of rousing admiration and affection, such a comparison generates fear and revulsion.

The simile would have been very effective if the poet had intended to imply that Mamina is dangerous in spite of her beauty. But there is no such implication in the poem.

Such similes are not carefully chosen because they lose the desired effect by bringing into prominence the elements which are supposed to be subdued.

Thought and sense domains

Here we wish to consider the similes whose effect depends on whether or not the tenor and the vehicle operate on the same level of thought or sense.

In 'Inqomfi' Vilakazi describes the flight of the larks:

Niqhekez' amaphiko nenz' umlozi kuhle
Kwezinsingizi...

(Ink., p 15)

(You open your wings and whistle like
The ground-hornbills...)

In this simile the poet compares the *flying* of the birds and not the whistling. He is not comparing the birds as such but the way they fly. The comparison does not help to clarify the way the lark flies.

The poem 'Ukhamba lukaSonkomose' has a comparison of things belonging to the same domain of thought. The poet compares beer to honey:

... lawo manz' ampofu
.....
Enjengompe lwezinyosi!

(Ink., p 11)

(... that tawny water
.....
Like the honey of the bees!)

Beer and honey are both taken through the mouth and the pleasurable sensation they give is perceived through the gustatory sense organ. This simile is slightly better than the one of the flying birds. One of the differences between the things compared is that we drink beer whilst honey is eaten. And the taste of these two is different. Beer may have no sweetness at all, but honey is known for its sweet taste. What reduces the effectiveness of the figure of speech here is that the simile 'as sweet as honey' is already in common use.

Such similes are diluted by the presence of too many common qualities in the tenor and the vehicle. The comparison is almost tantamount to putting one thing next to a similar one.

A more startling simile is found when different senses are involved in the perception of a stimulus. We normally expect

the poet to make an acceptable concordance between the stimulus presented in the image and the sensory organ perceiving it. Vilakazi sometimes extends his image over many sense domains: the auditory, the gustatory and the tactile. In the poem 'Impophoma yeVictoria' the poet first uses a simple simile and then a second one which is slightly extended:

Umsindo wakh' unjengoju lwenyosi,
Unjengesandla somzanyan' ekhanda,
Selul' iminwe sithungath' unwele
Silulalisa, siluvusa phansi.

(Ink., p 21)

(Your sound is like the honey of the bees,
It is like a wetnurse's hand on the head
When it stretches the fingers and searches
through the hair,
Smoothing it and raising it.)

We expect the sound of the waterfall to be heard. But the poet presents synaesthetic sense-transference whereby the sound is tasted like honey. In addition to being tasted the sound is felt. The stroking-hand image is both kinesthetic and visual. Although R. Kunene (p 206) says this is a typically African image we feel that it is universal in its application and appeal. The images presented here make the poem very vivid. Almost all the senses of the body are involved in the perception of the pleasure of being near the waterfall.

We see in this brief discussion that similes are more effective when a poet tries to shift away from comparing things which belong to the same domain of thought and which are perceived by the same sense organ.

Simile and context

In 'Khalani maZulu' Vilakazi describes the confused movement of the people:

... wonk' uZulu
Uyanyamfuz' okwezimpehu...

(Ink., p 25)

(... all the Zulus
Mill around like maggots...)

The poem is on the death of Solomon. The use of this reference to maggots is very appropriate here. We associate worms with a dead body. The worms do not live for a long time because the flesh on the dead body soon gets finished. This implies that according to the poet the death of this king means the death of the Zulus because he meant so much to them.

In 'Ezinkomponi' we find the lines:

Sivumile ukuphum' eqhugwaneni,
Sazoluswa njengezinkabi ...

(Ama., p 62)

(We have agreed to get out of the hut
To be herded like oxen ...)

Here the poet does not compare the miners to ordinary cattle or bulls. He chooses to use oxen because the ox has lost its natural potency and fertility. The poet feels that these workers seem to have lost their manhood. The only role they can play is that of perpetual subservience.

The effectiveness of such similes is enhanced by their relevance to the themes dealt with in the particular poems.

Compounded and extended similes

Many of Vilakazi's similes are compounded and extended with great ingenuity. They develop into sophisticated metaphors.

Sometimes the extension is effected by allusion. In 'UNokufa' Vilakazi writes:

Ith' imp' iphakwa wen' ub' uhoxa
EsikaMhlangana noDingana ...

(Ink., p 74)

(When the army goes out you withdraw
Like Mhlangana and Dingana ...)

Here the poet alludes to the episode when Mhlangana and Dingane withdrew from the army that had been sent out to attack Soshangane. The two brothers got a good chance of going back to assassinate Shaka. The poet has not given these details because he takes for granted that they are known. He knows that the comparison clarifies the treacherous ways in which death attacks those who do not suspect any danger.

In the poem 'UMamina' the poet says to this woman:

... unjengobhaqa
Olukhanyisa luxosh' umnyam' exhibeni...

(Ama., p 43)

(... you are like a stalk torch
Which shines and chases away darkness
from the kitchen...)

The simple '*unjengobhaqa*' develops into a metaphor because of the verb metaphor '*luxosha*'. The verb '*luxosha*' first works backwards to animate the otherwise inanimate '*ubhaqa*'. In fact the context personifies '*ubhaqa*' because normally it is only a human being who can chase anything out of the house. In the second instance '*luxosha*' animates the intangible darkness because it is only a living creature which responds by fleeing from an attacker. The total effect of these elements is a mini drama with the torch as the main actor who has to throw out the intruding darkness. The status of Mamina is elevated. She is upright, beautiful and diligent – the epitome of feminine perfection.

In another example the poet uses a combination of two similes to highlight the same action of falling. On the one hand the two similes act independently of each other, and on the other, they interact because of the action they have in common. We find this in the poem 'Sengiyokholwa-ke':

Njengenkanyez' edilika phezulu kude,
Nomzimba wawa njengemithi yezigude...

(Ink., p 34)

(Like a star which falls afar up there
Your body fell like wild banana trees...)

We would probably differ in our response to this comparison. To some the comparison of a dying person to a shooting star may sound far-fetched. Only one man is dying. Why does the poet use the plural 'trees'? It is because in his mind his father was like many people in one. This picture may look confused. Another reader, though, may say the poet chose to use the star because his father was a leader, a star in the family. The falling of the star and trees may also be interpreted to mean that to the

poet both heaven and earth seemed to be dying together with his father. Whatever conclusion we arrive at, it is clear that the death of the poet's father was an unexpected loss.

Vilakazi likes to extend his similes by building a scene around the vehicle. In such instances we find a simile leading to some digressive development of the figurative action or object, and this becomes a phenomenon of aesthetic beauty. In 'Imifula yomhlaba' we note how he extends the comparison of a river to a pot:

Uthunqa njengembiz' eziko
Abantwana beyilindile,
Imilom' isigcwel' amathe.

(Ama., p 39)

(Steaming like a pot on the hearth
When children are waiting for it
With their mouths watering.)

Here we are given an interesting picture of children who watch the pot expectantly because they are already hungry and they hope to get food from it. The river is also a source of life for the people who are settled near it. This is a rich simile.

Other extensions are more detailed and approximate the form of an epic simile. In the poem on Mariannahill we find one simile developing into an episode which, through another simile, develops into yet another episode. Here are those lines:

Ngibhonse njengenkombi
Ibuya iqond' ekhaya
Laph' ilanga lisenzansi,
Linjengezintomb' ezinhle
Zihlab' umshungu ntambama,
Zisuk' eMhlathuze ziya
Zoganel' eMhlathuzane
Zishiy' umbuso kwaZulu.
Bath' abemfundo mangisho,
Mangiland' umkhondo wazo
Lapho zendela ngakhona,
Ngingakhohlwa yiminyaka
Zaphum' emakhay' oyise.

(Ink., p 82)

(I should love like a cow
Returning homewards
When the sun is setting,
Looking like beautiful girls
Who walk in a group in the afternoon,
From Mhlathuze going to
Marry at Mhlathuzane,
Leaving behind all the comfort of Zululand.
The education officials say
I must tell about their trail,
Where they married,
And I must not forget the years
Since they left their fathers' homes.)

Here we find the extension of the first simile '*njengekomazi*' which is a short episode. This episode cross-fades beautifully into another one introduced by '*Linjengezintomb' ezinhle*'. Then follows the description of these girls who go to study at Mhlathuzane (Mariannahill). We admire the development from the fanciful use of simile to a realistic description. We say the latter portion of the description is realistic because the young girls actually left their homes and went to spend years of study at Mariannahill.

Vilakazi's creative power is most evident in such extended similes.

In this discussion of Vilakazi's simile we have seen that this figure of speech is not so effective when the poet compares things from the same domain of thought or sense. We have expressed our appreciation for other types of similes, especially those which are extended in such a way that the simile is used only as an introduction to an impressive metaphor or episode.

Metaphor

Untermeyer places metaphor above simile when he says:

A metaphor is usually more effective than a simile because it makes an instant comparison and an imaginative fusion of two objects without the use of explanatory prepositions.

(Untermeyer, p 225)

Clarifying the difference between a simile and a metaphor Quintilian (Brooke-Rose p 14) says that in a simile we use formulae like: 'A is like B'. In metaphor, however, B can replace A altogether. We may be expected to guess what A is.

Brooke-Rose (pp 5-10) evaluates various ways in which the metaphor has been classified by people like Aristotle (species-genus classification), Quintilian (animate-inanimate classification), and Meillet and Bréal (classification by domain of thought). After this she gives a detailed grammatical analysis of the metaphor.

We shall not follow any specific classification in this discussion. We shall use a number of sub-categories which are relevant regarding the occurrence of metaphor in Vilakazi's poetry. Among such categories are certain grammatical bases which give rise to interesting metaphorical relationships.

Idiomatic expressions

Some of Vilakazi's expressions can be regarded as dead metaphors because they are already part of everyday language. The line in 'Imfundo ephakeme':

Uma ngigogodana nencwadi ...

(Ama., p 6)

(If I scrape out from the book ...)

has lost its original effect because we normally say that a highly-educated person '*ufunde wagogoda*' i.e. he has learned and scraped out everything.

The same applies to the common expression meaning 'to look' '*ukuphonsa amehlo*' (literally: to throw the eyes) which we find in 'Nayaphi?':

Ngiphons' amehlo phakathi

Olwandi' olumagagasi ...

(Ama., p 17)

(I throw the eyes into the middle

Of the sea which has waves ...)

A Zulu is never reminded of the literal throwing away of the eyes.

When something is empty we sometimes use the expression

'ikhamisile' (it is agape) like in the poem 'Inkelenkele yakwa-Xhosa':

Bhek' izibaya nezinxuluma
Kukhamisile...

(Ink., p 4)

(Behold the cattle kraals and large homesteads
Are agape...)

This expression is in common use when the entrance to something is open and there is nothing inside that thing. We get a few examples of synecdoche, a figure of speech whereby we use one word for another, like a whole for a part. In 'Inkelenkele yakwaXhosa' Vilakazi refers to the attire used by some people and says:

Ezazigqok' amaqe zibhinc' intshe...

(Ink., p 9)

(Who wore vultures and girded on ostriches...)

Here the poet means that these people wore things with feathers from these birds.

In 'Ngizw' ingoma' we get the line:

Bebhem' izinyathi nezinkab' ezizimbedula...

(Ink., p 39)

(Smoking buffaloes and oxen which have widespread twisted horns...)

This simply means that these people used horns of buffaloes and oxen as smoking pipes called 'amagudu'. The relative description is formed from the word 'imbedula' which means an old beast with widespread, twisted horns.

The expressions are good because they are a figurative way of saying a thing. But their effectiveness has been reduced because they have become part of the everyday idiomatic language.

We do not expect every single line in a poem to have fresh imagery. Some portions are sometimes prosaic and less poetic than others. Vilakazi was most probably aware that he was using common idiomatic expressions in the examples cited above. Although these metaphors have lost their poetic power they are welcome because they elevate the portions where they occur from being too prosaic.

Copulative construction

In some metaphors Vilakazi makes direct equation of two things by using the identifying copulative. This copulative is commonly used to identify one object with another.

In the poem 'KwaDedangendlale' Vilakazi says:

Isiphuku kungutshani ...

(Ama., p 29)

(The blanket was the grass ...)

In 'UMamina' he says:

Ucash' esikhotheni somlalane;

Umlalane ngumphfumulo wami ...

(Ama., p 45)

(You are hiding in the long, old, dry grass;

The grass is my soul ...)

In such examples the poet explains his metaphor directly by putting the tenor and the vehicle side by side, as it were. Such an explanation is less effective than other constructions unless the poet has enriched his image by employing other devices. The first example above is not so imaginative because all the poet means is that he hides himself under the grass just as he covers himself with a blanket. In the second example the comparison is more sophisticated because of the vast dissimilarity between the tenor and the vehicle. It is difficult to see something small hiding in the long grass. That thing becomes part of the grass, as it were. The poet says Mamina is so close to him that she is part of his being. The success of this metaphor lies in the fact that literally Mamina cannot get into the soul and hide there, while in the first example the poet can actually hide under the grass.

There is an appreciable measure of enrichment in the metaphor found in 'NgePhasika':

Inyang' iphumile, umthal' uqhakazile.

Inyanga nguwena, izinkanyezi zomthala

Yizona zinyembezi zakho nezami ...

(Ink., p 2)

(The moon has risen, the Milky Way shines bright,

The moon is you, the stars of the Milky Way

Are the tears of you and me ...)

By using the identifying copulative the identification of the objects with one another is direct. We can say much about the comparison of Christ to the moon, and tears to the Milky Way. The appropriate symbol for the deity or kingship is the sun. The Milky Way does look like a spray of water. The poet could not present the sun together with the stars because these cannot be seen simultaneously. A justification for the presentation of Christ as the moon is that from the earth the moon is the king of the celestial bodies at night. The stars are its subjects.

These examples show us that although the copulative construction makes the metaphorical relationship very direct, the poet can yet enrich this figure by choosing appropriate images for his vehicle.

Absolute pronoun-vocative-qualificative

In many cases Vilakazi substitutes the absolute pronoun for the tenor noun. In these cases the pronoun is followed by the vehicle which is in the vocative. The vocative is invariably followed by a qualificative. The description tallies with the nature of the noun appearing in the vocative. This helps to present a clear picture of what the tenor is identified with.

In 'Umthandazo wembongi' Vilakazi says:

Wena Lukhoz' olubuthise
Amaphiko emafini!

(Ama., p 3)

(You Eagle who have gathered up
Your wings in the clouds!)

The poet likens God to an eagle. The poet's preference for the eagle here is understandable. While other mighty animals live only on land, the eagle has an added advantage of being able to fly. According to folklore the eagle is the legitimate king of the birds because it flew the highest in the contest for kingship, although the warbler stole the honour by foul means. The poet's eagle is settled with calm. Its wings are folded because it does not need to balance itself by flapping them. This is a good picture of dignity and confidence. The apostrophe and declamatory tone of the verse are typical of the praise poem style. The apostrophe found in this praise has personifying potency. But personification is not so obvious because the eagle has not

been compared to God but it has been identified with Him. The prayer is directed to God and not the eagle.

We find these lines in the poem 'UShaka kaSenzangakhona':

Wena lang' eliphumile,
Kwasala konke komile.

.....
.....
Wena nkom' ekhal' igwazwa...

(Ink., pp 47 & 51 resp.)

(You, sun who rose
And everything was left dry.

.....
.....
You, beast who bellowed when stabbed...)

Shaka is appropriately compared to the sun because he was reigning supreme among the tribes in the Zululand of his days. His effect was felt because other tribes simply 'dried up' when he attacked them. The bellowing beast image is also relevant because it introduces the reference to Shaka's assassination.

The pronoun-vocative-qualificative metaphors involve fuller images because of the qualificative. It is not only the nouns that are identified. We can also trace metaphorical correspondence between the qualities or behaviour of the vehicle with that of the tenor.

Possessive construction

In the metaphors which involve the possessive construction the possessee is usually a metaphorical attribute of the possessor.

In 'Wo, lelikhehla' we get these lines:

Zinesithunz' izinwele zakho!
Zibik' imigwaqo yeminyaka...

(Ama., p 11)

(Your hair has dignity
It gives evidence of the roads of the years...)

The poet has added concreteness to the movement of the years by saying that there are roads on which the old man's years have travelled. In this line the function of the word 'imigwaqo' is to qualify the years. The poet has chosen to use many roads to

imply the various experiences the old man has gone through during his lifetime. These experiences have made this man very wise and enviable.

The qualifying implication of the possessee is clear in this example from 'Inyanga':

Ngibon' ucansi lwamasimu akamoba...

(Ama., p 15)

(I see a mat of sugar cane fields...)

The word 'ucansi' describes the spreading of the sugar cane fields. The word does not create an independent image. The mat is vague as a picture, but its flat quality is woven into the clearer picture of the vast sugar cane fields. This quality adds beauty and deliberate design to the scene.

While the possessee serves the purpose of describing, it is also implicitly identified with the possessor. In 'NgiMbuyazi eNdondakusuka' the poet says:

Amaphik' omnyam' ebaleka

Eshiy' umhlab(a)...

(Ama., p 58)

(The wings of darkness fleeing

Leaving the earth...)

In this example we cannot separate darkness from the wings. Darkness does not possess wings. In other words what was fleeing was darkness itself and not some part or aspect of it. The mention of the wings, however, adds a touch of animation to darkness so that one has a picture of a dark birdlike monster fleeing away.

Darkness features again in this interesting metaphor found in 'Imbongi':

Nalapho kungephuzela khona

Amalangab' omnyama...

(Ama., p 2)

(Where the flames of darkness

Blaze up...)

Since darkness has no parts, the flames referred to here mean darkness itself. It strikes us that the poet has put together two contrasting objects, the flame (light) and darkness. Because of

its visible movements the flame is conceived as having an animate quality. It is this quality that the poet wanted to give to his darkness. This means that when he mentions flames we should eliminate the light and brightness which these flames emit and visualise only their movement. This leaves us with a picture of extreme darkness or what we could describe as 'flaming darkness'.

In these and other examples Vilakazi's metaphors which involve a possessive construction are a very effective way of adding abstract qualities to the images presented to us.

Verbal base

When metaphor is based on the verb, the verb may have an effect of inanimating the animate object or animating the inanimate one. The latter will be dealt with under personification.

In 'Umcabango wasekuseni' we get the lines:

Sizukulwane sosizi,
Nin' enihulelwe phansi
Yizinkambiso...

(Ink., p 31)

(O, generation of affliction,
You who are mown down
By the practices...)

The relative '*enihulelwe*' is from the stem '*-hula*'. The verb '*-hula*' gives us an image of a cluster of grasslike plants which is cut down with a blade. The action takes place with speed and ease, and the plants lie down motionless. This is a good image to illustrate the ease with which these people are incapacitated. Just like plants which can neither flee from danger nor resist being mown down, these people are defenceless. It is interesting that the agent responsible for this cutting down is an abstract concept. The people are 'killed' spiritually by the injustices which they are exposed to.

Vilakazi uses the tree image in a number of places in 'UNokufa'. The dying of girls is likened to the breaking of trees in the following lines:

... izintokazi
... ziphoqoka
.....
.....
Zigawulwa zinsizwa...

(Ink., p 76)

(...the girls [daughters]
...snapping

.....
.....
Being felled down by young men...)

The verb '*phoqoka*' means to break or snap suddenly. In the mind of the poet the dying of these girls is like the sudden snapping of a tree. But '*Zigawulwa*' implies a more gradual process of dying. In this case death is caused by those who bewitch the girls.

It is worth noting that in a number of poems Vilakazi compares man to a tree or some item of plant life. He does this because both man and plants normally grow to maturity, and there comes a time when their life must end.

The verb may assume metaphorical status because of the object or adverb used with it. An example of this is found in 'UShaka kaSenzangakhona' in the lines:

Waw' uZwide eziwisa...

.....
... Wawa izingcezu.

(Ink., p 41)

(Zwide made himself fall

.....
... He fell to pieces.)

The first '*Wawa*' does not necessarily inanimate Zwide. It can mean the literal falling down of a human being. It is the second '*Wawa*' that inanimates Zwide because of the word '*izingcezu*' which follows his name. '*izingcezu*' is a noun used adverbially to describe the action of falling. This description works backwards and makes all the verbs referring to the falling of Zwide add to the image of a clay or glass vessel which falls down and breaks to pieces. Once a vessel has broken like this it cannot be put together again. This is a good description of the collapse of Zwide's kingdom which could not be revived any more.

The inanimating quality of these verb metaphors results from the fact that when the poet uses the verb he already has some metaphorical subject – a nominal vehicle – in his mind. Instead of using the nominal vehicle he employs the tenor with the verb which normally goes with the implied vehicle. The beauty of the metaphor is in the submergence of the nominal vehicle. The vehicle surfaces by implication and combines with the verb to form the desired image.

Metaphor with implicit tenor

There are cases in which the tenor is not mentioned at all. It is replaced altogether by the metaphor. The context tells us what exactly is represented metaphorically.

In 'UNokufa' it is said:

... nom' oklebe
Base bephakuza izimpiko,
Bancel' izithupha beq' ilanga,
Bethi ngeke ngamehlo simbone.

(Ink., p 73)

(... even when the hawks
Were flapping their wings,
And licking their fingers and leaping over the sun
Saying that we shall not see him with our eyes.)

The poet does not say what the hawks represent. He only presents a vivid picture of these carnivorous birds which are a manace to the chickens. It is the context of the poem which gives us a clue that the hawks are the enemies who rejoice in anticipation of someone's death. Like hawks which look forward to enjoying the taste of their prey ('Bancel' *izithupha*'), these enemies probably hope to get a share of the dead man's estate. We do not struggle much, though, before discovering that the hawks are human beings. We get this clue from the words '*izithupha*' (thumbs) and '*Bethi*' (saying or thinking) which we associate with human beings.

The same poem has another example of this type of metaphor:

Ngabona izinsika zomuzi
Ekade ziphase nokababa,
Zinqunyelwa phans' okoqadolo.

(Ink., p 78)

(I saw pillars of the kraal
Which had been supporting my father's [kraal]
[Pillars] Being cut down like black-jack weed.)

Here, again, we are not told what the pillars represent. We can deduce that they stand for something else because literally pillars support a house and not the whole kraal. We soon realise that 'umuzi' in the above context means a family. 'izinsika', therefore, are people. It is surprising that these pillars in which the inmates of the house have so much confidence are broken with ease. This is a good representation of how the strength and reliability of a human being cannot stand the impact of death.

In a very interesting manner the poet concludes his metaphor with an effective simile. Two images are linked together. People are first likened implicitly to pillars by metaphor; later on they are likened to the weed by simile. In fact the simile is used to compare the falling or dying of man to the ease with which the weed can be cut. The passive '*Zinqunyelwa*' implies some vague agent responsible for cutting the weed i.e. the killing of these people. This agent is itself a silhouetted image of a man with a bushknife. He is a representation of the cause of death, which can be an illness or a wizard.

The richness of such metaphors depends on the implication. The picture presented is complete and has a measure of independence. Outside its context the image can be regarded as a symbol which is open to many interpretations.

In the above discussion we have mentioned some of the most common types of metaphors used by Vilakazi. They range from those which are comparatively less effective because they have already been incorporated into the everyday idiomatic language, to those which are more sophisticated. Different effects are achieved by certain grammatical constructions and other methods of implication. It is the variety and combinations of these metaphors that add life to the poems.

Personification

Personification is a special type of metaphor. But we wish to

look at it apart from the types of metaphor which have been discussed.

This is what Kreuzer says about this figure of speech:

Personification is a special form of comparison. It is defined as 'representation of an inanimate object or abstract idea as endowed with personal attributes'.

(Kreuzer, p 100)

Vilakazi uses a number of methods in order to personify. We shall discuss a few examples.

Apostrophe

Vilakazi likes to address various objects as if they were human beings capable of hearing and understanding what he tells them. In a number of poems he gives instructions to these objects. In the poem 'Izinsimbi zesonto' he first speaks indirectly about the bells. Towards the end of the poem he commands these bells:

Khalani zinsimbi ...

(Ama., p 60)

(Roar, you machines...)

Such 'instructions' are repeated throughout the poems.

In 'Woza Nonjinjikazi' he tells the train to come:

Woza wena Nonjinjikazi!

(Ink., p 22)

(Come, you Nonjinjikazi!)

It is remarkable that the inanimate objects which the poet apostrophises make movements. It is probably this movement which makes the poet associate these things with animate objects. He actually elevates the objects further in that by talking to them and giving them instructions he regards them as having the human faculty of understanding. These objects can take his instructions and they also listen to his views about some aspects of life.

The objects which the poet addresses do not reply. They are presented as sympathetic listeners to the poet's comments. One gets an indication that the views expressed by the poet need not

be debated, but should be accepted or pondered on seriously. We could even speculate that the poet indirectly wishes that man could listen to him sympathetically just like these objects.

Human features

In some of his poems Vilakazi gives his inanimate objects physical characteristics which are found in human beings. In his 'Ngomz' omdaladala kaGrout' he says to the village:

'Mvot' ozisini wen' onwele zakho...'

(Ink., p 57)

(Mvoti who are gap-toothed, you whose hair...)

The poet visualises the village as a person who has lost some of his teeth because of old age. Mention is made of the person's hair. The details we are given are too few for us to have a clear picture of this 'person'. The poet may have found it difficult to give other particulars because he could not associate different parts of the village with parts of a human being.

We get a clearer picture of a person in the poem 'Impophoma yeVictoria' in these lines:

UNkulunkul' ogcobe isimongo
Sekhanda lakho ngomudwa wothingo
Lwenkosikazi, nenkung' engapheli
Egubuzele izinyawo zakho.

(Ink., p 18)

(God has anointed your forehead
With a streak of the
Rainbow, and lasting mists
Shroud your feet.)

This description appears in the first stanza. Indeed the shape of the falling water roughly resembles a standing human being. The picture of this majestic 'human being' sticks in our minds as we read through the poem. Here and there the poet adds other details about this 'person', for example:

Kuyinjabulo ngisho ukuthinta
Umphetho weminyibe yesibhamba
Esingamful' ukhalo lweVictoria...

(Ink., p 20)

(It is a joy even to touch
The seam of the belt
Which ties the waist of the Victoria Falls...)

This completes the picture of a human being with the head, the waist and the feet.

Vilakazi usually combines apostrophe with these descriptions and this emphasises the human qualities of the object in question.

Human actions

Inanimate things are sometimes made to do what is normally done by human beings. A simple example is found in 'Nayaphi' where the poet asks the moon to tell him whether it has not seen Mandlakhe and Nomasomi:

Inyanga iphume ngiyibona,
Ngahlunga ngamehlo ngiyibuza.
Yathi ayizange inibone.

(Ama., p 18)

(The moon rose when I was seeing it,
I scanned with my eyes and asked it.
It said it did not see you.)

In this case the moon does not only listen. It shows that it understands what human beings say by replying to an enquiry.

Celestial bodies are involved again in this personification found in 'Inkelenkele yakwaXhosa':

Ilanga lakhwel' umango walo
Liyilokhu lisinekile njalo
.....
Lazi konke okwehlakalayo
Nokuzovela phinde lithi vuya ...
.....
Yaphum' inyang' ihlek' usulu nayo.

(Ink., p 6)

(The sun ascended its incline
Grinning all the time

.....
It knew what was happening
And what would occur but it said nothing ...
.....
The moon rose laughing cynically.)

These objects are not given any physical human attributes, but the actions are typically human. The sun and the moon have been endowed with an insight into the situation and hence, like human beings, they simply mock these Xhosas who are not aware that they are waiting in vain for new life.

It is not only concrete objects which are personified in this way. We have already discussed this impressive personification of death found in 'UNokufa':

Waboph' ifindo ngasokhalweni,
Wagwegwesa wathint' izinwele
Zafongqeka...

(Ink., p 77)

(You tied a knot at the waist,
You went round and touched the hair
And it was crumpled up...)

An otherwise abstract concept is made to perform dramatically like a human being.

In this type of humanisation Vilakazi makes these objects look superior to man. In the example from 'Inkelenkele yakwa-Xhosa' we see how the sun and the moon have better understanding than man. Man is unable to realise that he is being taken for a ride. He does not even see that the sun's 'smile' is only a mocking 'grin'. Because of the superior ability of these objects, one sometimes gets an impression that the poet endowed them with supernatural powers which man does not have.

Human emotions

In 'Inqomfi' the poet addresses the lark as if it were a human being. He brings this lark yet closer to man by giving it human emotions. In one line he says:

Unothando olumangalisayo, alukhethi...

(Ink., p 17)

(You have amazing love, it does not discriminate...)

To the poet the bird has responses which are typical of man.

The technique of emotional humanisation of the inanimate is found in the poem 'NgePhasika' where the nailing to the cross of Christ is described:

Usungulo lungenamahlon' okungena
Lubhoboz' inyam' emanzi luyibhanqa
Nokhun' olomil' olungezwa zihlungu...

(Ink., p 2)

(The nail without shame entering
And piercing moist flesh and binding it
With the dry wood that feels no pain...)

The poet puts it as if the nail had the ability to refrain from piercing the flesh. It should have been ashamed of being party to the crucifixion. In the verbs used there is no causative which would imply that the nail was forced to carry out the cruel deed. The nail did everything of its own volition.

In 'UNokufa' we get this description of death:

Was'uqhela uya kud' ubuka
Wenamile ngomsebenz' omkhulu...

(Ink., p 77)

(Then you moved away and looked,
Rejoicing at your great work...)

Death is not just a brutal monster which kills for no purpose. Like a human being, it is capable of rejoicing at its victory over the sophisticated being, man.

The different methods that Vilakazi uses to personify offer interesting variety in the poet's expression. Apart from this, personification brings objects and other creatures closer to the human being. They are made to belong to his class so that they share with him in his appreciation of his environment.

Symbolism

In his discussion of symbolism Chiari says that one can define symbols as

... a form of indirect, metaphorical speech meant to carry or to suggest a hidden reality.

(Chiari, p 47)

Nowottny tries to make a distinction between metaphor and symbolism by sketching the ways they work:

With metaphor, the poet talks about object X as though it were Y;

he uses Y-terminology to refer to X. With symbolism, he presents an object, X, and without his necessarily mentioning a further object, his way of presenting X makes us think that it is not only X, but also is or sounds for something more than itself – some Y or other, or a member of Y's; X acts as a symbol for Y, or for Y's.

(Nowottny, p 64)

In other words the poet need not say that X stands for Y, but when we read the poem we feel that we cannot stop at the literal level. Something invites us, as it were, to see further significance in what is presented to us.

Skelton (p 92) emphasises that to be regarded as a symbol the object in a poem should have an independent identity. Nowhere should it be described as being equivalent to some abstraction or quality or idea, because once that is done the object ceases to be a symbol, and can be regarded as a metaphor.

Van der Merwe shares Skelton's view:

Dit is in die voelbaar maak van 'n nie-direk benaderde werklikheid wat die funksie van simbolisering lê. Daarom ook dat die simboolsaak in sy eie reg aandag bly eis... Daarom kan die gesimboliseerde ook nie as duidelike ekwivalent langs die simbool geplaas word nie...

(Van der Merwe, p 139)

In this sub-section we shall consider a few conspicuous abstractions which we arrive at when we see images, especially those which tend to recur. Such a discussion is bound to be subjective. A poet may not be aware that his images form a pattern which can be interpreted symbolically. He may not have intended to give any symbolic significance to such images. One reader may see symbolism in a poem in which the other person sees none. There is a danger of reading into a poem symbolism which is not there. But, as readers, it is our privilege to make our own interpretations provided they are not far-fetched. Such interpretations are likely to be influenced by our individual backgrounds and inclinations. So, they are likely to be varied.

Ideas

One of Vilakazi's longest and most difficult poems is 'Imifula

yomhlaba'. When we read this poem we immediately feel that the poet is not just writing on the normal rivers of the world. The rivers symbolise something. The poet gives us a clue:

Njalo ngiye ngiphindele
Emfuleni wemicabango...

(Ama., p 37)

(I always return
To the river of thoughts...)

The next question is what these thoughts or ideas are. Gérard, for example, says:

In 'Imifula yomhlaba' (The Rivers of the World) he (Vilakazi) relives in a dream the occupation of African land by the White invaders...

(Gérard, p 252)

This is just one of the ideas represented by the rivers.

These rivers symbolise the flow of ideas in the mind of man. As the poet gazes at these rivers with his mental eye it occurs to him that he has his own river, the perpetual motion of his mind. This river of ideas has been flowing without a pause from his early childhood, and gives rise to a series of visions.

Looking at the rivers, he thinks back on the battles that were fought on their banks. He remembers how his forefathers were conquered. These forefathers are the source of this irresistible river of ideas. His intellectual ability is a heritage from the ancient Zulus who were killed in a heroic forward thrust, like the surge of the great rivers.

The history of his forefathers keeps him thinking. He feels at home in the facts of this history and in the language in which these facts are expressed. The Zulu language is his best medium of expression. That is why, after he has studied other histories and other languages he comes back to this history and this language:

Ngibuyel' emuv' emfuleni
Wethongo likababamkhulu...

(Ama., p 41)

(I go back to the river
Of the spirit of my grandfather...)

Mthiyane gives a good summary of the symbolism in this poem:

The many thoughts that come and go; the many wishes that never come true, the quiet thoughts, the slow yearnings, the intense burning desires and many other such thoughts that ramify in the mind are symbolised by the rivers...

(Mthiyane, p 8)

Those who have read Skelton's view on the independence of a good symbol may argue that we have no symbolism but metaphor in this poem because the poet says what the river represents. These people might say we have something like extended metaphor here. What makes us feel that the river has qualities of a symbol is that despite its dependence on a clearly defined meaning, its dominance in the poem raises the figure above ordinary metaphor.

Prosperity

Man envies a bird for its ability to fly. The bird's upwards flight is sometimes used to symbolise achievement or success. Vilakazi uses the bird image in his 'Aggrey weAfrika' to signify man's rise in the sphere of education. He says, for example:

Lezo zinkoz' owazibonayo
Zikhula zibhek' empumalanga
Sezelule izimpiko zazo...

(Ink., p 71)

(Those eagles which you saw
Growing and facing towards the east
Have stretched their wings...)

The birds are just about to take off. Taken in isolation, in this stanza we have metaphor referring to the people who are ready to advance educationally.

A more common image to symbolise prosperity is that of the abundance of live-stock. In 'Inkelenkele yakwaXhosa' everybody is looking forward to the appearance of herds of cattle:

Ngitshele! Sekuyiwo yini lawo
Mabutho, nemihlambi...?

(Ink., p 7)

(Tell me! Is it now those
Regiments, and herds...?)

As soon as these people get a supply of live-stock they will feel that they are living a normal life again.

In 'Phezu kwethuna likaShaka' he describes an ideal state of affairs in Zululand and mentions live-stock:

Sibon' okuhl' okuningi:
Laph' amathol' ezikhalela
Nonina beza bekhalima...

(Ink., p 61)

(We see many good things:
Where the calves cry
And their mothers come lowing...)

In these lines he puts it clearly that one of the main signs that everything is in order is the presence of cattle.

A description of live-stock is found in 'KwaDedangendlale':

Lapho ngibheka ngaphansi
Kwemiseng' ebiseduze,
Ngibon' imihlambi emihle
Yezimbuzi neyezimvu.

(Ama., p 26)

(When I look below
The cabbage trees nearby,
I see beautiful flocks
Of goats and sheep.)

The sight of goats and sheep makes this an ideal place to live at.

In many instances where live-stock is described we find that there is an atmosphere of well-being. This is probably because live-stock is a status symbol among the people who depend on pastoral farming. This was more so among the Zulu of long ago where a man's integrity was assessed according to the cattle he owned. In Vilakazi's poetry, whenever live-stock is mentioned it is also implied that people in that vicinity are satisfied.

Hope

It is not easy to separate the symbols of hope from those of new life. One can argue, for example, that the rising sun symbolises

birth. There is little doubt, though, that sunrise is symbolic of hope in the poem 'Umcabango wasekuseni':

Akukho busuku bumi,
Kumelwe kuphum' ilanga.

(Ink., p 31)

(No night stands still,
The sun must rise.)

After the gloom and cheerlessness of the night the sun rises and people are hopeful that everything will be normal again.

In 'UNokufa' the poet says he is happy that he noticed the power of death when he was still strong, and he continues:

Ngibona nelanga lisaphuma
Liqhakaz' ihlobo nobusika...

(Ink., p 79)

(I see the sun rising
And being bright in summer and winter...)

The poet refers to the rising sun after talking about a sad incident. Sunrise as a symbol of new hope is appropriate here because the sun brings light and enables people to engage in their daily activities after keeping indoors at night.

The poem 'Inyanga' describes the help the moon gives man by providing light when there is fear and insecurity as a result of darkness. When the moon rises the poet can proceed with his journey:

Kodwa wena ma uqhamuka,
Kuqin' amadolo ngihambe.

(Ama., p 14)

(But when you appear
I become strong and go.)

Just like the rising sun the rising moon gives new hope to a person who has lost courage.

In some poems Vilakazi uses the star as a starting point for his hope symbolism. In 'Impophoma yeVictoria' he writes:

Nezinkanyezi zesibhakabhaka
Ezikhanyise zilind' imini...

(Ink., p 19)

(And the stars of the sky
Which give light and wait for the day...)

In 'Cula ngizwe' he again refers to the stars which are waiting:

Olufana nolwezinkanyezi
Zilinde bonk' ubusuk' ikhwezi
Elibik' ukusa!

(Ink., p 36)

(Which is like that of the stars
Which wait the whole night for the morning star
Which heralds the dawn!)

The poet puts it as if the stars are aware that their presence is a passing phase. Something more important is still to come. They wait eagerly for the arrival of brighter light. In the second excerpt above, this brighter light will be brought by the sun after dawn.

To symbolise hope, therefore, Vilakazi refers to the light from the sun, the moon and the stars. All these are natural agents which help to remove darkness. The main symbol he uses for hope is the rising sun, and this is very appropriate.

Deprivation

In this category we shall consider the objects which the poet uses in the poems where he expresses his regret that the Blackman has lost much, either materially or spiritually.

The sight of a train reminds the poet that his people have not benefited from the products of modern industrial development. In Friedman's introduction to 'Woza Nonjinjikazi' it is said:

To Vilakazi, the white man's train is a symbol of the migration of his people from their homes to the town where they must labour for the white man. He is haunted particularly by thoughts of the wealth to be extracted by his fellows from the gold mines for the benefit of 'foreign breeds', who are in a position to exploit the back-breaking toil of South Africa's native tribes.

(Z.H., p 19)

The train is mentioned again in 'Ezinkomponi' when the poet says that the machines were brought by it to Johannesburg:

Wathwalwa ngononjinjikazi bezwe,
Bakushushumbisa bakusa laph' eGoli.

(Ama., p 60)

You were carried by the trains of the land
And taken stealthily to Johannesburg.)

The poet chooses to use the verb '*shushumbisa*' to imply that the train did not act openly because it knew it was party to a conspiracy aimed at the exploitation of the Black miners.

The noisy mine machines which are the central image in 'Ezinkomponi' are themselves symbolic of this exploitation. The machines are responsible for luring people away from their homes, but these people do not get their full share of the profits. The machines are mentioned in 'Woza Nonjinjikazi':

Waleth' izihubahubane
Zazovukuz' umhlaba wethu...

(Ink., p 22)

(You brought huge machines
To burrow our land...)

Here reference is being made to the mine machines which get special attention in 'Ezinkomponi':

Even the living quarters of these miners are not an ideal place. R. Kunene observes:

The compounds are symbolic of the suffering of his people...
(R. Kunene p 216)

In 'Izinsimbi zesonto' we come across what we might call variable symbolism. At the beginning the poet regrets that he must get rid of so many things and practices which he values. He blames the bells for this loss:

Leza kim' izwi lenu zinsimbi,
Langigumulis' umutsh' omkhulu...

(Ama., p 21)

(Your voice came to me, O bells
And made me remove my big loin-covering...)

But the picture changes towards the end of the poem when the poet appreciates the influence of these bells. He now becomes aware that in actual fact they symbolise a beneficial change which he must accept.

In these poems the machines, the train and the bells are all new things which were introduced by the Whiteman. They all feature in the poems in which the poet criticises modern conditions which have changed good life patterns of the Blackman.

Adversity

Vilakazi likes to use darkness and shadow images. These often symbolise misfortunes which range from mild adversities to death.

In 'Umcabango wasekuseni', when he describes the unhappy state of affairs among his people he says:

Bhekani nank' amathunzi
Anigubuzele njalo...

(Ink., p 31)

(Behold here are the shadows
Which cover you always...)

In 'UMamina' the poet reaches a stage when he feels that other rivals are a threat to his love. He refers to the shadow and darkness:

Ithunzi lesikhwele langisinda,
Ngezwa ngomnyam' ungithi gumbeqe.

(Ama., p 47)

(The shadow of jealousy was heavy on me,
I felt darkness covering me.)

In 'Okomhlaba kuyadlula' he talks about loneliness and then presents an image of a bird overtaken by darkness:

Inyon' eyodw' ikhala endle,
Ihlwel' ifikelwe ngumnyama...

(Ama., p 5)

(A lonely bird sings in the wilderness
It has been caught up by nightfall and darkness...)

The owl is a well-known symbol of adversity. This bird is said to portend ill-luck or death. The owl is used in combination with darkness in these lines from 'Okomhlaba kuyadlula':

Ngoba nesikhova somnyama
Sinjengedlozi lakwaMhlaba,
Sibik' ingoz' iseza kude...

(Ama., p 5)

(Because even the owl of darkness
Is like a spirit of the earth
It foretells danger which is coming from afar...)

In 'Umcabango wasekuseni' the poet says that the owls disturb the quietness and peace of the graveyard:

Nokuthul' okuphezwa
Zinyoni zemini yodwa
Nezikhova zobusuku.

(Ink., p 33)

(And peace which is ended
By the birds of the day
And the owls of the night.)

Apart from these symbols of misfortune we get others which Vilakazi uses for death. When he uses symbols of death he also gives us an idea regarding his conception of life. The poem 'UNokufa' makes much use of the tree image. The extinction of life is compared to the withering or breaking of the tree. The dying of his father is likened to the withering of a tree in these lines:

Wen' engikubone ubunisa
Umuth' omkhulu wakwaMakhwatha...

(Ink., p 76)

(You who I saw causing
The great tree of Makhwatha to wither...)

In some of his poems he uses stars to symbolise life. The disappearance of the stars represents the waning of life. In 'Sengiyokholwa-ke' the fading away of the stars coincides with the dying of his father:

Ngenkathi kufiphal' izinkanyezi, nawe
Ngakubon' unyinyiphala...

(Ink., p 34)

(When the stars faded away
I saw you wincing...)

In 'Sengiyakholwa' he refers to the death of Nomasomi and then says:

Izinkanyezi zamehlo zacimeza...

(Ama., p 67)

(The stars of the eyes closed...)

The poet uses appropriate images to symbolise different types of adversities. Most of these images have something to do with

darkness which is a conventional symbol of unhappiness and mourning.

Other symbols

There are objects and images whose full significance depends on the understanding of their symbolic nature in a specific culture. There are words and pictures in Vilakazi's poetry which we can appreciate to the fullest if we can see their connection with some aspects of Zulu culture.

In 'Ma ngificwa ukufa', for example, Vilakazi says he must be buried:

Duze nezihlahla zomnyezane...

(Ink., p 37)

(Near the willow trees...)

The drooping branches of a willow tree make this tree a good symbol of mourning. To a Zulu the word '*umnyezane*' calls to mind the garland used to decorate a gallant soldier. Nowadays we use the same word for the academic hood. Our knowledge that '*umnyezane*' also symbolises victory, adds another dimension to the meaning of the poem where it is used. We conclude that Vilakazi may have wished to distinguish himself, obviously academically, before his death.

Vilakazi refers to a number of Zulu articles and vessels. It helps to know the nature and use of these vessels. A few of them are mentioned in 'Ithongo lokwazi':

Kuleyo ndebe oyigcin' ethala lobuzwe...

.....
... kulawo magobongo

Nezimbiz' ezithule...

(Ink., pp 39-40)

(In that ladle which you keep on the national shelf...
.....

... in those calabashes

And pots which are full...)

Mthiyane makes interesting remarks about '*indebe*' and '*igobongo*' which are fresh water containers. He points out that

without water these containers symbolise uselessness and emptiness. Because Vilakazi implies that these containers are full, they symbolise wholeness or intellectual fullness. Mthiyane pursues this symbolism further:

A higher level of meaning would be that what makes man real is that which is in him and is as eternal as water i.e. his soul.

Without this, man is as useless as an *indebe* or *igobongo* without water.

(Mthiyane, p 3)

We could add that all the containers mentioned here also symbolise plenty and abundance. The pot, '*imbiza*', has not been touched yet. Whatever is inside is stored for the benefit of whoever wants to get help.

We have referred to the pot (*ukhamba*) in our discussion of 'Ukhamba lukaSonkomose'. To appreciate what '*ukhamba*' symbolises we must know that the Zulus used it to sacrifice beer to the spirits. We must also know that the practice of these people is to drink directly from one pot. This knowledge helps us to arrive at the conclusion that the beerpot symbolises communion among the living, and also among the living and the dead.

This does not mean that a person who does not understand Zulu practices fails to enjoy the poems. But fuller appreciation is possible to the reader who can get into these finer implications.

We have observed that Vilakazi makes much use of universal and conventional symbols. We have noted, though, that there are symbols whose appreciation needs some background knowledge of Zulu things. Many of the examples we have given do not fully conform to the requirement emphasised by people like Skelton that, to be regarded as a symbol, an image must have no meaning assigned to it. When taken in isolation some of the images we have referred to depend by implication on some other meaning. This means that they can fall under metaphor. In spite of this we feel that most of these images are above normal metaphorical correspondences because of their recurrence and also the fact that at a higher level they imply various abstractions.

Conclusion

We consider imagery to be the hallmark of good poetry. In this chapter we were illustrating how Vilakazi uses various types of images. It is this effective use of imagery that is responsible for the success and endurance of his poetry.

The examples discussed here have been taken from various poems. In the previous chapter we expressed our dissatisfaction about the flaws and the lack of coherence in some poems. Despite these weaknesses those poems are sometimes saved by the adept use of imagery even when this imagery is found in isolated stanzas.

6 Form

When the word 'form' is mentioned, we usually imagine some kind of external shape or structure in which the material we are viewing has been organised. While in some categories of art this form is shape in the physical sense, in the other categories form can only be conceived intellectually.

Regarding form in poetry, Gurrey says:

Form is the shape which the poet's experience takes under the strain of the words as well as the shape which the words take when subjected by the poet to a significant design.

(Gurrey, p 92)

These shapes and designs which Gurrey refers to are manifest in such attributes as rhyme, rhythm, stanza forms and other structural patterns. We shall leave out the other conception of form as an impression which remains in the mind after we have viewed all the aspects of a poem.

Sometimes there is a tendency to discuss structural features apart from other components of a poem. In a well-written poem, content and form cannot be separated. Content determines the form in which it is to be expressed. Form is not just an added casing of the poem. Eliot clarifies this when he says:

To create a form is not merely to invent a shape, a rhyme or rhythm. It is also the realization of the whole appropriate content of this rhyme or rhythm.

(Sansom, p 117)

If a certain form is merely superimposed on some content without other considerations, that pattern serves little purpose. It is only mechanical and ornamental. Hardy expresses his preference for organic form when he says:

The organic form ... is innate; it shapes, as it develops itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its form.

(Sansom, p 117)

In our discussion of the themes of Vilakazi's poems we occasionally touched on some of the formal features, especially where these were significant in the particular poem. In this chapter we shall pay special attention to the various aspects of form with a view to assessing their relevance or otherwise in the poem where they feature.

Here we shall deal mainly with the different types of repetition. We shall first treat repetition which ranges from single words to lines. Thereafter we shall deal specially with rhyme. This will be followed by rhythm, and finally we shall look at some of the interesting features connected with Vilakazi's stanza forms. Most of our remarks on rhyme and rhythm will be based on the performance of several people who were asked to read some of Vilakazi's poems.

Parallelism, linking and refrains

Repetition occurs in various guises in poetry. D.P. Kunene says that repetition may be aesthetic, but there are times when it can be monotonous and unaesthetic:

Typically, an unaesthetic repetition is one that repeats what has just been said, in exactly the same words and without alleviation by incremental elements . . . By contrast, in aesthetic repetition, selected words and/or phrases are repeated while additional ones are brought in as 'incrementing' phrases to advance the narrative, or the syntactical order is reversed to attain emphasis, etc.

(D.P. Kunene, p 68)

Cope discusses the occurrence of a type of repetition called parallelism, which is one of the features in *izibongo*. He refers to perfect parallelism and parallelism by linking, and says:

A comparison between these two types of parallelism shows that perfect parallelism repeats the idea with different words, whereas parallelism by linking advances the idea by means of an identical word or stem or root.

(Cope, 1968, p 41)

Vilakazi uses much of this parallelism in his poetry, especially parallelism by linking. This is most probably the influence of *izibongo*. Nkabinde (p 6) maintains that devices like parallelism and linking are less dependable characteristics of *izibongo* be-

cause they occur in ordinary prose. We observe, however, that their presence is more conspicuous in poetry because they give some structure to the verse.

Parallelism

In parallelism we expect each unit in the first member of a verse to be balanced by another unit in the second member. If this correspondence is found between all the units, we have perfect parallelism. Parallelism is incomplete when some units in the second member have no counterparts in the first, and *vice versa*.

In some of Vilakazi's poems we find instances of simple repetitive parallelism. One unit in the first member is repeated in the second member. The only difference is in the other unit whose counterpart in the second member is not the same word.

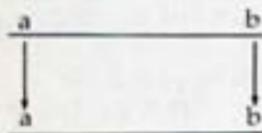
In 'Ngomz' omdaladala kaGrout' Vilakazi writes:

(a) (b) (a) (b)
Zibuk' oNtaba, zibuk' oMqwebu...

(Ink., p 54)

(They look at Ntaba, they look at Mqwebu...)

This gives us the pattern:



the same pattern is found in this example from 'Isenanelo eminyakeni engamashumimahlanu':

(a) (b)
Wabeyazibe bamphehla,
(a) (b)
Wabeyathule bamhlaba.

(Ink., p 84)

(When he ignored them they pestered him,
When he kept quiet they pricked him.)

The corresponding verbs in the members of the last example really mean the same thing. But the way the poet has varied them makes this an interesting repetition used for emphasis.

A more interesting type of parallelism is where some units balance each other by contradiction. The contradiction may be in antonyms or in the general sense of the statements.

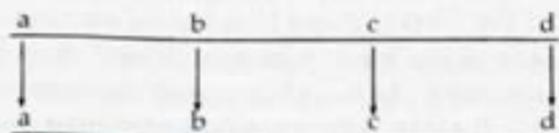
In 'Ithongo lokwazi' we find these lines:

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Ngabheka	phansi	eMkhambathini	wamaXhosa,
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Ngabheka	phezulu	eNtababusuku	yabeSuthu...

(Ink., p 39)

(I looked down at Mkhambathini¹ of the Xhosa,
I looked up at Ntababusuku² of the Sotho...)

Each member has four units, and the pattern is:



The antonyms 'phansi' and 'phezulu' balance each other in the same syntactical position. We have less obvious antonymy between the words in unit (c). Geographically Mkhambathini is situated at a lower extreme of the country, while Ntababusuku is much higher up. Only the first word, 'Ngabheka', is exactly the same in both members. The last two words are similar only morphologically, i.e. locative and possessive, respectively.

Contradiction is not so explicit in the following parallelism found in 'UNokufa':

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(b)
lith'	imiful'	iyolwandle,	wena	
(e)	(f)	(c)	(d)	
Ubuqons'	intab' uy'	oKhahlamba.		

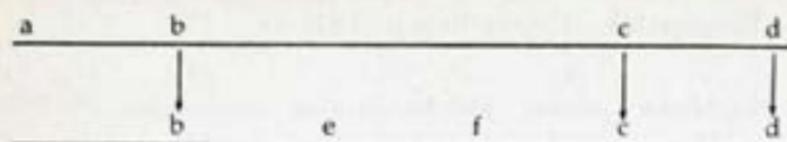
(Ink., p 74)

(When the rivers go to the sea, you
Ascend the mountain and go to the Drakensberg.)

Here the second member actually starts from 'wena' which is the last word in the first line. The word 'wena' corresponds with

1. Table Mountain
2. Thaba Bosigo

'imifula'. 'Ubuqons' intaba' are two new units in the second member. This gives us the pattern:



The words 'Ubuqons' intaba' clarify the point that the '-ya' found in the first member is contradictory to ascending. The flow of the river is always downwards, so the word '-ya' found in the first member is synonymous with 'descend'. The word '-ya' in the second member would be interpreted to mean 'ascend' to those who know that the Drakensberg Mountains are situated at a higher altitude above sea level. 'Ubuqons' intaba' does not really add any new meaning. Although it makes the construction look less contrived, the parallelism would be trimmer without it.

The different types of parallelism are not a common feature in Vilakazi's poetry. But wherever they occur they attract our attention to their aesthetic pattern.

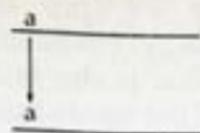
Linking

We have various construction types called parallelism by linking. In this discussion we shall apply a synthesis of the method used by Cope, (1968, pp 42-45) and the linear approach used by D.P. Kunene (pp 68-101). We shall deal only with words, stems and roots and leave out the repetition of formatives. In our use of the linear approach we are, of course, influenced by our conventional way of looking at the words as they appear on a printed page.

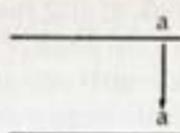
Vertical linking

We propose to use this expression to describe the type of linking where a word in the first line corresponds almost vertically with the one in the second line. This usually happens when similar words (or stems, or roots) appear at the beginning of successive lines (initial linking) or at the end (final linking):

Initial linking



Final linking



An example of *initial linking* is found in 'NgePhasika' in these lines:

Inyang' iphumile, umthal' uqhakazile.

Inyanga nguwena...

(Ink., p 2)

(The moon has risen, the Milky Way shines bright

The moon is you...)

The first line above contains a good example of parallelism between two balanced members. But the word '*Inyanga*' is repeated in its initial position again in the second line. This repetition embodies an extension of the idea found in the first line.

Initial linking need not always occur in successive lines. In 'Impophoma yeVictoria' (Ink., p 18) the verb '*Gobhoza*' (flow on) occupies initial position in the first and fourth lines. It has more pronounced force when it occurs for the second time because of its absence in the second and third lines. There are examples in which this initial word is repeated after even more lines.

To avoid monotony Vilakazi also uses synonyms instead of repeating the actual word found in the first line. In 'Khalani maZulu' he varies the verb '*-khala* (cry) by using its synonyms: '*-lila*' and '*-mbongoza*'.

Khalani nina zintandane,

Nilil' izinyembez' ezinde

.....
Manimbongoze...

(Ink., p 30)

(Cry you orphans,

Weep long [endless] tears

.....
Wail...)

The poet does not change the words merely for variety. There are different shades of meaning implied by these synonyms.

There is some development from the ordinary crying ('-khala') to the serious one ('-lila'), and then to '-mbongoza' which actually means to cry in a loud voice. Linking of this nature becomes functional in such a construction. What is also interesting is that while the semantic sequence of the words builds up towards a climax, the grammatical forms used imply an anticlimax. 'Khalani' is a fully-fledged imperative while 'Manimbongoze' is a request.

With regard to *final linking* there is difference of opinion. Under final linking, Cope gives the example:

UMahlom' ehlathini onjengohlanya,
Uhlanya olusemehlweni amadoda.

(He who armed in the forest, who is like a madman,
The madman who is in full view of the men.)

(Cope, 1968, p 42)

We prefer not to regard this as final linking. We would rather accept the example given by Mzolo. He illustrates final linking in a clan praise where the root of the final word is repeated in the final position of successive lines:

Ngoba uSidinane wayehlaba inkomo *yemithi*
Ethi inkomo *kayimithi*
Umuntu kuphela *omithayo*.

(Because Sidinane used to slaughter a cow in calf
Saying the cow does not become pregnant,
It is only a human being who becomes pregnant.)

(Mzolo, p 99)

Final linking is rare in all types of praises. We find something like it in Vilakazi's poems. In 'We Moya', for example, he writes:

Ngizw' izinkulumo *zakho*
Zingiph' ubuthongo *bakho*
Nenjabul' okungeyakho.

(Ink., p 130)

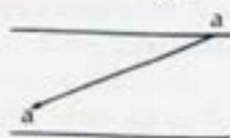
(I hear your speech
Which imparts to me your sleep
And joy which is yours.)

But in such cases Vilakazi repeats the last words for another effect, that is, to manifest rhyme. We feel we should discuss other examples of this type under rhyme.

Oblique linking

This type of linking is also very common in *izibongo*. One word in the first line occurs in a different position in the second line. The corresponding words need not belong to the same morphological category. The link may be forged by merely using the same root.

We prefer to call this linking oblique because it can be represented with lines having a slant from one side to the other. A right-left swing, for example, can be presented as follows:



This is what Cope calls final linking. Groenewald (p 74) and Mzolo (p 100) call it cross-linking. The expression 'cross-linking' reminds us of D.P. Kunene's 'cross-line repetition' (p 75) which yields the patterns:



We suggest that the expression 'cross-linking' should be reserved for the description of linking which results in a pattern illustrated in the last diagram.

When exactly the same word is repeated in successive lines, repetition seems to serve little purpose except for being ornamental. In most of Vilakazi's poems repetitions help to emphasise a certain point. In 'Ugqozi' we find these lines which give us a right-left swing as illustrated above:

Ngam' othangweni ngakhuleka,
Ngakhuleka laze layoshona.

(Ama., p 1)

(I stood at the gate and saluted,
I saluted until sunset.)

The repetition of 'ngakhuleka' gives us the impression that the poet saluted continually over a long period of time. If only one 'ngakhuleka' was used, it might imply that he saluted only once and then waited.

A repeated word becomes more indispensable when the poet has changed its morphological form by using affixes and other devices, and retained only its root. We like the variation in this example of the noun-verb oblique linking found in 'Ezinkomponi'. Latent dynamism in the noun is fully realised in the verb:

Yabanjwa yaphenduk' *invukuzane*,
Yavukuz' umhlabathi ngabon' igoli.

(Ama., p 61)

(It was caught and changed into a mole [burrower]
It burrowed the earth and we saw gold.)

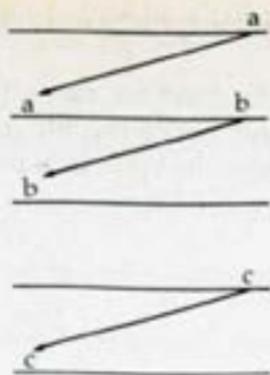
A yet more interesting example of a series of these linkings is found in 'Izinsimbi zesonto':

Kwamazala namalib' *akwethu*,
(a) (b)
Kwethu bekundind' uZul' *ebuka*,
(b)
Ebukana nomtat' *ucwebile*,
(c)
Uyakazel' amanz' *aluhlaza*,
(c)
Uhlaz' olwang' imamba yemithi ...

(Ama., p 21)

(On our dumping grounds and graves,
At our place the Zulus were wandering and looking,
Looking at the clear lagoon
Disturbing its green water
The greenness like the mamba of the trees ...)

Linking here gives us this interesting pattern:



What makes this linking more imaginative is that not one of the words repeated is exactly like the one given at the end of the preceding line. Each word has a measure of independence while at the same time it clearly echoes its counterpart because of the identity in the root.

The repeated word need not always occur for the first time at the end of the first line. The following example is taken from the *izibongo* portion of Vilakazi's poem 'Phezu kwethuna lika-Shaka':

Incwincw' ephuza kwezid' iziziba,
Ingaphuza kwezimfushane...

(Ink., p 62)

(The sun-bird which drinks from deep pools,
 Should it drink from shallow ones...)

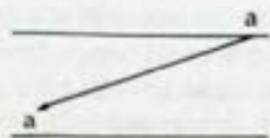
In 'Ezinkomponi' we find these lines:

Phans' ezweni lawobabamkhulu,
Izwe lamathongo ngamathongo...

(Ama., p 65)

(Down in the land of our grandfathers,
 The land of many ancestral spirits...)

These constructions give us this pattern:



and we appreciate the variation in the morphological form of the repeated word.

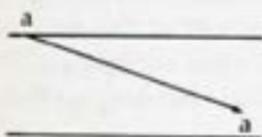
Mzolo (p 101) observes that in Zulu what we call oblique linking is always from right to left and never the other way round. The left to right swing is also found in Vilakazi's poetry, but it is very rare. In 'UNokufa' we have the lines:

*Nganelisiwe ntokazi kaKufa,
Nanamuhla ngisanelisiwe.*

(Ink., p 78)

(I am satisfied, Lady of Death,
Even today I am still satisfied.)

This produces the pattern:



In the following example the repeated word is in the middle of the second line. This is taken from 'Inkelenkele yakwaXhosa':

*Ngezigi zenzliziyo yakhe yedwa,
Igidizela ngezig' ezinkulu.*

(Ink., p 5)

(With the beats of her heart alone,
Beating with powerful beats.)

Now we have got this pattern:



In the last example we can also say that we have initial noun-verb linking between the first 'Ngezigi' and 'Igidizela'. We can associate 'izigi' (footsteps) and 'gidizela' (patter along) with the ideophone 'gi gi' although 'gidizela' is derived rather from 'gidi'.

The repetition of words or stems in various positions in successive lines can result in beautiful patterns. It can give us a network of vertical links, swings from right to left, *vice versa*, and cross-links as in this example from 'Ezinkomponi':

(a) (b)
Dumani kancane *kengilal' ubuthongo*.

(b)
Ubuthongo bokucimez' amehlo.

Ngingacabangi ngelakusasa nokusa.

(b) (a) (c) (d)
Ngish' ubuthongo bokulala ngivuke kude.

(d) (b i)
Kud' ezweni lamathongo nokozela:

(b) (a) (c)
Ubuthongo bokulala ngingavuki ...

(Ama., p 66)

(Roar softly so that I may sleep,

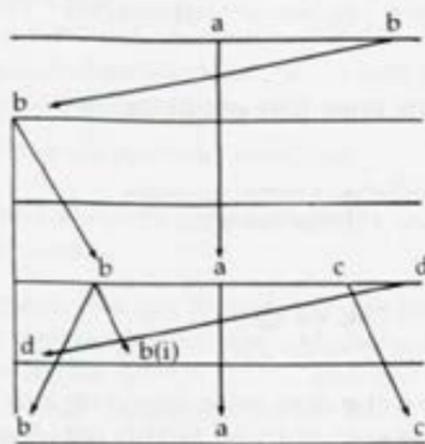
The eye-closing sleep.

Not thinking of the morrow and the dawn,

I mean a sleeping sleep, and then wake up far away,

Far in the land of spirits and of drowsiness:

The deep non-waking sleep...)



The word which occurs most regularly here is '*ubuthongo*' (b). It dominates these lines by its zigzag movement. Its repetition emphasises the poet's great desire for deep sleep. But we note the word '*amathongo*' (b i) in the fifth line. The stem '*-thongo*' echoes '*ubuthongo*' in this line where the latter word does not occur. There is only a remote connection between '*amathongo*' and sleep. We sometimes refer to the dead as people who are in the land of the sleeping. The idea of sleeping is further underlined by '*-lala*' (a) which appears three times, and each time it occurs near '*ubuthongo*'. Because of the repetition of this idea,

we eventually suspect that the poet does not mean ordinary sleep, but death.

We note the right-left swing which links 'kude' (d). Distance is emphasised. It gives one an impression that the poet wants to wake up at the furthest point man can reach – the land of the hereafter.

Vilakazi uses another kind of oblique linking which joins two stanzas. At the beginning of a stanza he repeats the word used at the end of the previous stanza. We find this, for example, in 'Sengiyakholwa':

- Stanza 3:
Kanti sebelandela wena *bengabuyi*.
Stanza 4: *Ababuyi* wena qhawe laseMzwangedwa.
.....
(Ama., p 67)
(.....
They follow you and do not return.
They do not return, you hero of Mzwangedwa.
.....)

In 'Ezinkomponi' we find the same type of linking:

- Stanza 7:
Ningenza ngokuthanda kwenu, *siyavuma*.
Stanza 8 *Sivumile* ukuphum' eqhugwaneni ...
(Ama., p 62)
(.....
You can do as you like, we agree.
We have agreed to leave the hut ...)

Through this type of linking the poet joins one stanza to the next. In other words he effects continuity by linking his ideas in this way.

The different types of linking used by Vilakazi are a joy to behold. Their effect is felt more clearly when we listen to the recitation of the poems. Some of the linkings are for purely ornamental reasons, but others serve the purpose of lending emphasis to the idea, or for providing a line of continuity in the poet's ideas.

Refrains

A refrain is a line or a portion of it which is repeated at regular

intervals. A refrain is most effective if it is used for underlining some idea.

In Vilakazi's poetry we rarely find lines which occur in exactly the same way in the whole poem. He often uses his refrain with variations according to the effect he wants to achieve in that particular poem.

In 'Ma ngificwa ukufa' we find the refrain:

Lala sithandwa, lal' uphumule.

(Ink., pp 37 & 38)

(Sleep, darling, sleep and rest.)

This is found only at the end of the first and last stanzas, and functions to bind the poem together.

Vilakazi likes this type of refrain. In longer poems he uses the refrain in the first stanza, skips some stanzas, and uses it again in the last few stanzas. We find this, for example, in 'UMamina' and 'Ezinkomponi'.

The refrain is used relevantly for dramatic effect in 'NgoM-buyazi eNdongakusuka'. In the first few stanzas the poet opens every alternative stanza with:

Phambili maqhaw' amakhulu!

(Ama., pp 52-53)

(Advance, you great soldiers!)

Whenever we get to this line we imagine the shouting of the army leader as he commands his soldiers at certain intervals. Later on we miss this line and the voice of the leader disappears. This happens when the battle is over. The drama is over, and the poet tells in a cool tone what happened afterwards.

Boulton describes one type of refrain which can be very effective:

... it is that in which the refrain changes slightly for each verse, though keeping some repetition. This is perhaps more satisfying to the modern mind, because it is more logical and also gives us a small surprise each time.

(Boulton, p 91)

Vilakazi achieves variation in a number of ways. An interesting variation is found in 'NgePhasika' (Ink., pp 1-3) where the poet

alternates these two refrains which begin from the penultimate line of each stanza:

Ngakho konke lokhu Nkosi ...
(Because of all this, Lord ...)
Ngenxa yalokho Nkosi ...
(Because of that, Lord ...)

Further variation is achieved through the use of different words in the last line of the stanza, like: '*Sibonga wena*' (We thank You); '*Siyamangala*' (We are surprised); '*Ngizoshonaphi?*' (Where will I go?), etc.

In this poem the refrain emphasises the fact that the poet is making a constant prayer to the Lord. After every statement the poet addresses Him in this supplicatory manner.

In some places the poet retains only the first word of the refrain and the rest consists of new ideas which are, however, an extension of the idea found in the first refrain. In '*Ngoba ... sewuthi*' we find each stanza beginning with '*Ngoba ...*'. Each time '*Ngoba*' is followed by different ideas. More interesting still is the last refrain at the end of each stanza. In the first three stanzas the last refrain starts from the penultimate line with '*Sewuthi ...*' (You say ...) and again new ideas follow and are carried forward to the last line:

Sewuthi nginjengensika
Yon' engezwa nabuhlungu.

Sewuthi nginjengedwala
Lon' elingakwaz' ukufa.

Sewuthi ngiyisilwane
Esifa kuzalw' esinye.

(Ama., pp 19-20)

(You say I am pillar
Which feels no pain.

You say I am like a rock
Which knows no death.

You say I am an animal
Which dies and another is born.)

In the last stanza of this poem the poet introduces '*Sewuthi ...*' five lines before the end of the stanza. This brings a pleasant

surprise to the readers. At the same time it makes us look more attentively at what follows. Indeed this stanza contains the gist of the poem, that the protagonist's suffering is being witnessed by the ancestral spirits who, by implication, will take action one day.

We appreciate the care with which Vilakazi handles his refrains. He offers much variety, and there is always a good reason why he uses the refrain.

We have discussed only a few examples to illustrate Vilakazi's use of repetitions. He uses different and interesting methods of linking. Some are in line with those found in traditional poetry, but others are peculiarly his own. This variety is found also in the refrains in which the poet frequently adds modifications so that the repetition should not sound monotonous.

Rhyme

Composers of traditional Zulu poetry never made an attempt to use rhyme in their poetry. This is obviously because their poems were not written, and there was, therefore, no opportunity to work out schemes whereby endings of the verses could be similar. What we find in traditional poetry is the repetition of whole words or sentences.

Zulu poets introduced rhyme into their compositions after seeing examples of this in hymns and Western poetry. We still have much controversy regarding the suitability of this device for Zulu. In his review of *Inkondlo kaZulu* Taylor (p 164) says that Vilakazi's success with rhyme is limited because of the small number of vowels in which Zulu syllables end. Moreover these vowels do not vary sufficiently in tone.

R. Kunene sees another reason for the unsuitability of rhyme:

End rhyme is unsuitable for Zulu poetry mainly because changes occur chiefly in the prefix rather than in the suffix . . . some poets unaware of this fact have made the most fantastic verbal constructions. They have twisted words, coined them without consideration to their poetic effect merely because they wanted to produce a rhyme scheme.

(R. Kunene, Appendix I, p 15)

Vilakazi, on the other hand, finds the use of rhyme defensible:

Art must have form which is the beauty of the poem; that beauty must give aesthetic pleasure to both the writer and the reader... I believe therefore it is absolutely necessary that, in composing some poems, we ought to rhyme ...

(Vilakazi, 1938, p 129)

It was in reaction to Vilakazi's view that Dhlomo wrote:

Rhyme can be an exacting taskmaster and a cold tyrant. Pre-occupation with technique and rhyme may make for art that is too self-conscious ... rhyme may obscure meaning, stem the even flow of thought, and lead even to artificiality and superficiality.

(Dhlomo, 1939, p 88)

But most of the Zulu poets support Vilakazi and advocate for the use of this device. Masuku, for example, says:

We cannot pretend to be writing poetry when we, in fact, are writing prose. The writing of poetry is both an art and a science. It is necessary, therefore, to follow a constant rhyme scheme even in the writing of poetry in African languages.

(Masuku, p 5)

We subscribe to the view that an artist cannot be limited in the devices he wants to employ. A poet is free to borrow or emulate patterns which are used by other artists in other cultures. Why should there be an objection when a poet wants to decorate his piece with similar endings?

When properly used, rhyme has a regulating effect and indicates audibly that we have come to the end of a verse. We cannot ignore the aesthetic echo effect produced by such repetitions. After coming to the end of a line, we anticipate hearing the similar sound later on. When we get to that sound, it echoes the sound we have already heard. If a poem has a similar rhyming scheme for each stanza, this scheme serves as a device for indicating the units of thought which are found in each stanza. In a description of something formal or harmonious or orderly, a poet can enhance that idea of orderliness by using a rhyme scheme.

What should rather be emphasised is that rhyme should not sound contrived. We should object to the rhyme in which the

poet has forced words into a pattern. But here, too, a poet can deliberately force his words to rhyme if he is handling ideas which are connected with some artificiality.

A poet should be guided by the meaning of the poem. Rhyme is most effective when it is not merely a decorative device but is used in close association with the ideas contained in that particular portion of the poem.

We would be looking at the Zulu language with prejudiced eyes if we considered the limited vowels as a hindering factor. Zulu has compensated for this by having a very wide variety of consonants which a poet can use in various combinations.

In this section we wish to assess the degree of Vilakazi's success in the employment of rhyme. We shall often compare this with his own theories on rhyme and see whether they are effective when applied in this poetry.

Initial rhyme

Before we get to the discussion of end rhyme we wish to refer to a phenomenon found in Vilakazi's initial syllables. He arranges similar syllables in succession and this forms an interesting pattern. This usually results from the repetition of the subject concord. In our case we wish to limit initial rhyme to the phenomenon of repeated initial syllables in successive lines. Sometimes only the consonants are repeated.

In 'UNokufa' we note how the concord changes because of a change in the subject:

Ngashushumba phakathi komnyama,
Ngangena nalo ikhehla ekhaya.
Ngaqalaza ngakubona, Kufa.
Wangena ngonyawo walusonga
Waboph' ifindo ngasokhalweni,
Wagwegwesa wathint' izinwele . . .

(Ink., p 77)

(I stole away in the dark,
And entered home with the old man.
I looked about and saw you, Death.
You entered through the foot and folded it,
You tied a knot around the waist
You went round and touched the hair . . .)

While these repeated sounds are pleasant to the ear, they also carry the narration forward by introducing these consecutive actions, first those of the poet and later those of Death.

It seems as if the poet deliberately uses this type of agreement in the three-line stanzas of 'NgoMbuyazi eNdondakusuka', for example:

Luthuli lwabhek' ezulwini, ☉
Ngacikic' amehlo ngibheka,
Ngabuka kwehl' izinyembezi.

Ngibukile futhi ngema
Ngagem' esiyaluyalwini,
Kwamenyezel' umkhonto.

(Ama., p 52)

(Dust went up towards the sky,
I rubbed my eyes and looked,
I looked until tears fell.)

I looked again and stood
I fainted at the confusion,
The spear shimmered.)

In the first four stanzas this agreement forms a scheme which we can represent as: *abb; aab; abb; aab*. In the last two of such stanzas the poet repeats whole words, but it is clear that he wanted these words to conform to the pattern he had chosen to decorate his stanza.

In the following example from 'Yin' ukwazi?' the third line begins with a copulative formative 'ng-'. This sound agrees with the first consonant of the subject concords which appear in the next lines:

Ngitshele ntanga!
Kuyin' ukwazi?
Ngakuy' esikoleni,
Ngifundane nencwadi!
Ngize ngiphum' impandla
Ngipheny' amaqabunga?

(Ama., p 10)

(Tell me mate
What is wisdom?
Is it going to school,
Where I read books
Until I become bald-headed
Opening the pages?)

In the first three stanzas of this poem we get this *abaaaa* pattern. It is abandoned in the fourth stanza. In these stanzas where this pattern is employed the poet refers to the different superficial qualities which people mistake for the essential attributes of a wise person. These stanzas are fanciful because of the repetition of sounds. But there is no such embellishment in the last stanza where the old man pronounces in a nutshell the essence of wisdom.

Vilakazi's initial rhyme comes very naturally, but it is clear from some examples that it was used deliberately, hence the neat schemes to which it conforms.

Rhyme by final syllable

There are poets who attempt to rhyme by repeating only the last syllable. We get an example of this in 'Ukhamba lukaSonkomo' where the poet writes:

Bath' ukhamb' ulwaludlela

 Wakhohlwa nokumbulula

 Lolukhamb' olwaluwagudla

 Ukuthi kwaMzilikaz' uyadla.

(Ink., p 10-11)

(They say it is the pot from which was eaten

 He forgot even to reveal

 The pot which skirted them

 That he eats in Mzilikazi's land.)

Generally speaking end rhyme is not so conspicuous, and therefore less effective, when it is limited to only one syllable in Zulu. This is because the final syllable is usually short, except in some styles of reciting (especially *izibongo*) when it is long. This form of end rhyme could have some effect when the consonant of the last syllable is a harsh sound like the strident obstruent '-dl-'.

Final syllable and vowel of penult

Inkondlo kaZulu is full of this rhyme pattern in which the poet starts his rhyming elements from the vowel of the penultimate syllable. Vilakazi himself feels this type of rhyme is not very successful as used in one of his earlier poems:

... because I disregarded the penultimate consonant in preference to its vowel and therefore produced the rhyming of final syllables and the vowels preceding such syllable. But this was a mistake.

(Vilakazi, 1938, p 131)

He quotes these lines from 'UShaka kaSenzangakhona':

Wen' obange namahlathi
Abecash' izinyathi,
Wandundulul' amaliba,
Wawamba wawagqiba ...

(Ink., p 47)

(You who rivalled forests
Which had buffaloes
You, who piled graves upon one another,
Digging and covering them.)

Although Vilakazi is unhappy about this rhyme, it is definitely better than the first type which is limited to only one syllable. The vowel of the penultimate syllable is usually the longest and most conspicuous in the last word. In fact, stress is more on this vowel than on its consonant. The articulation of the consonant is comparatively momentary. We consider the vowel of the penultimate syllable to be the best starting point for the rhyming portion.

Penult as starting point

Vilakazi's opinion is that rhyme is best realised when it starts from the consonant of the penultimate syllable. In many of his poems he repeats the consonants in the penultimate and final syllables. We find this, for example, in these lines taken from 'Sengiyokholwa-ke':

Um' ukukhala kwezinyoni zaphhezulu
Nobusuku obuqhakaz' izinkanyezi zezulu
Um' inkwezane yokusa nezinkanyezi
Ezikhanyis' umnyama njengonyezi ...

(Ink., p 34)

(When the call of the birds up there,
And the night which is bright with the stars of the sky,
When the morning haze and the stars
Which shine in the darkness like moonlight ...)

At other times the consonants which occur in the penultimate syllable are not exactly the same. They only share some phonetic qualities. Vilakazi (1938, pp 129-131) suggests a number of consonants which can be regarded as counterparts for the purpose of rhyme, for example *f* and *v*; *s* and *z*; *sh* and *s*; *j* and *d*, etc. Most of these combinations are acceptable, especially those sounds which, apart from the other similarities, are also articulated at the same point. Vilakazi's theory is demonstrated mainly in the poems in *Inkondlo KaZulu*.

In 'Sengiyokholwa-ke' he first illustrates how bilabial consonants 'mb' and 'ph' can rhyme:

Ngawubona kuhle kwephupho bewumboza,
Ngawulindela uya ngokuya uphoza.

(Ink., p 34)

(I saw it, like in a dream, being covered,
I waited for it as it cooled down.)

In the same poem he again shows how effectively the velar consonants 'g' and 'k' can rhyme:

Kwawel' enhlabathini yamagade,
Kwashabalala ungunaphakade.

(It fell on the earth of clods
And disappeared for ever.)

The acceptability of this rhyme is due mainly to the fact that these sounds are articulated at the same place in the vocal tract, apart from sharing other qualities. The sounds 'mb' and 'ph', for example, agree because they are bilabial explosives. Agreement between the sounds is reduced when their place of articulation differs. We find this in 'USHaka kaSenzangakhona' where Vilakazi illustrates his view that

The voice prepalatal suggests rhyming with the voiced *g* in which case I could not hesitate to rhyme the two.

(Vilakazi, 1938, p 130)

In the poem on Shaka we find this couplet:

Yemibuso neyegama
LikaXhosa benoJama

(Ink., p 45)

(Of the kingdoms and the name
Of Xhosa and Jama.)

We feel that there is too little which links 'g' and 'j'. The main factor which they share is delayed voicing. If we accept just this quality as sufficient for rhyme, we could as well consider all the other voiced sounds as possible partners in rhyming schemes.

Vilakazi makes the interesting suggestion that click sounds rhyme well despite their positional differences. He says that the radical and the aspirated forms of the different click sounds are suitable rhymes. So can the voiced click consonants in all combinations. In 'UShaka kaSenzangakhona' we find the lines:

Sikhombisen' amaxoxo
Ezinsizwa zezicoco.

(Ink., p 44)

(We discussed the stories
(Of the men of headrings.)

In 'Sengiyakholwa' he writes:

Ngoba ngizw' insimbi yengelos' incencetha,
Ibavus' ekuseni beyokhuleka beqenqetha.

(Ama., p 67)

(Because I hear the Angelus ringing,
Waking them up in the morning to go and pray.)

As Vilakazi points out, the basic physiological mechanism for the production of the click is the same in all instances. The acoustic effect of the clicking itself is the prominent feature, and all the other phonetic features become subordinate. It is worth noting that although there is variety in the consonants of the penultimate syllable, the vowels of the penult and the final syllable almost always remain the same in both members of the rhyming endings. An investigation could be made into the possibility of extending this variety suggested by Vilakazi to the final syllable. There is an example of this possibility in a couplet found in 'Sengiyakholwa' where 's' and 'z' are put in a rhyming position in the final syllable:

Ngezwi izwi lithi: 'Shayan' ingelosi
Ebusika nasehlobo ikhal' ingalingozi!

(Ama., p 68)

(I heard a voice say: 'Ring the Angelus,
In winter and in summer let it not falter!')

This sounds acceptable to us. Of course we would not describe this as perfect rhyme, but rather as pararhyme because it is not exactly the same sound which is repeated.

We find only a few instances where there is a difference in the final vowels of the rhyming endings. We get this in 'Sengi-yakholwa':

Abanye ngibatshala eMhlathuzane
Lapho befukanyelw' izikhukukazana.

(Ama., p 71)

(I have buried some at Mhlathuzane
Where they are protected by hens [nuns].)

The same poem features this other couplet:

Izibomvu enzansi noMhlathuzane
Ngizibonile zikhanya ziphikisana.

(Ama., p 68)

(The red soil down the Mhlathuzane,
I saw it with contrasting lights.)

This is an indication that the final vowel need not be exactly the same in a rhyme scheme. After all, the last vowel rarely has the length and prominence generally found in the vowel of the penultimate syllable.

We have discussed the different ways in which a Zulu poet can achieve rhyme. As we have pointed out, rhyming schemes need not always be perfect. Slight variations make the rhyming less contrived. It also increases the poet's scope in the use of words because he will be less inclined to force words which otherwise need not belong together.

Formatives, stems and words

Referring to the elasticity of the Zulu language because of the derivatives, Vilakazi says:

The derivative formatives are mostly dissyllabic, and some of them rhyme splendidly. The diminutive formative of nouns and the reciprocal formative of the verb rhyme well; the perfect of some verbs in *ela* rhyme with the verbal applied formatives; the augmentative is the same as the feminine formative *kazi*.

(Vilakazi, 1938, p 131)

Rhyme becomes very effective when the poet has not merely repeated the same suffix at the end of the rhyming words. We find that certain suffixal formatives have been put to good use in 'Cula ngizwe':

Bheka nant' ilanga likhanyisa
Namazolo liwacoshisisa.

(Ink., p 36)

(Behold the sun gives light
And thoroughly picks up the dewdrops.)

The beauty of this rhyme lies in the difference found in the semantic import of the suffixes, i.e. the causative in the first word and the intensive in the second.

There is less appeal in rhyme formed by the use of exactly the same suffix. In the stanza from 'We Moya' Vilakazi uses the locative suffix '-ini' for rhyme:

Ngibe ngisangen' endlini,
Ngikuzw' uthint' ezintini
Nangaphandle etshanini.

(Ink., p 12)

(Whenever I enter the house
I hear you touching the rafters
And also outside on the grass.)

The repetition of the locative idea in these three lines makes this a less imaginative way of rhyming. This repetition is monotonous. Vilakazi uses a number of such suffixes for rhyme, like the applicative '-eka' and the perfect '-ile'.

When a similar stem is used at the end of the line, this sounds more like mere repetition than rhyme. Here, for example, is the repetition of the quantitative '-onke' in the couplet:

Kwazamul' indoda yonke,
Baphelelw' amandla bonke.

(Ink., p 46)

(Every man yawned,
They all lost their strength.)

In 'Inqomfi' we find the lines:

Nant' uphondo lomzingeli
Ungakhohlw' abazingeli.

(Ink., p 16)

(There is the horn of the hunter,
Do not forget about the hunters.)

The repetition of the stem actually means the repetition of the same idea. This may be good for emphasis, but then emphasis may tend to be boring. It is as boring as when every word is repeated. However, we welcome the use of homonyms like these found in 'Inqomfi':

Umlozi wakh' uhlul' abangomel' intomb' empofu
Elandelw' ifunw' abacebile nabampofu.

(Ink., p 17)

(Your music surpasses that of those who sing for the tawny lady
[beer]

Which is wanted by the rich and the poor.)

Here we are delighted by the sound of these similar stems. This is not mere repetition because of the difference in the meaning. The first one means 'tawny' and the second one means 'poor'.

We do not mind even if such homonyms occur in independent words at the end of lines. It is not to the good of the poem, however, if exactly the same word is used for rhyme. In 'Ukhamba lukaSonkomose' we find the lines:

Lungebong' oMkhwethu ngezwi;
'Imband' abayizwe ngezwi ...'

(Ink., p 11)

(It cannot praise Mkhwethu with the voice;
'The beast which they heard by the voice ...')

In 'Inqomfi' the poet writes:

Funa ngimpampe nami nawe
.....
Noma ngimi kude nawe.

(Ink., p 15)

(Lest I fly with you.

.....

Even if I stand far from you.)

In such examples the repeated word is not used for any emphasis. It is clear that the poet repeated it for the purpose of rhyme, but the repeated word does not add any new idea, and the poem seems to be stationary instead of progressing.

In this section we have found that Vilakazi attempts rhyme by repeating formatives, stems and complete words. His rhyme is not successful when the repeated elements have exactly the same meaning. Good rhyme usually results when the words involved have little other likeness apart from that of sound.

Rhyme and enjambement

In enjambement the sense of a line is not completed at the end of that line. The sense overflows, as it were, to the next line. A poet may use rhyme at the end of this run-on line. This creates a problem to the reader because he will not know whether to pause after the last word, or just to read on.

Mayhead gives us a suggestion:

The answer is that as the rhyme is meant to be heard, the reader must linger over it sufficiently for it to make its effect.

(Mayhead, p 125)

★ Mayhead makes an important point when he says that rhyme is for the ear. To be clearly audible the word with a rhyming ending is usually put at the end of a phrase. In Zulu it is when the word occupies this position that, more often than not, there will be length on the penultimate syllable, or in some cases, on the final syllable. When a line with a rhyming word ends in the middle of a phrase, there is likely to be no length on it. In this case the rhyming portion of the word loses its conspicuousness.

Mayhead suggests that we can linger over the last word before we proceed to join it with the next one in the following line. In some cases in Vilakazi's poems it would be wrong to linger over the last syllable because it would tamper with the meaning of the word. In the following example from 'UShaka kaSenzangakhona', Vilakazi broke his word into two so that a portion of it could rhyme with the last word in the next line:

Inkondlo yethole *lika* -
Phunga noXab' elafika ...

(Ink., p 40)

(The poem of the calf of
Phunga and Xaba which arrived ...)

In 'Ngomzomdaladala kaGrout' we occasionally come across rhyming lines like:

Kungaze kuthiwe 'Guga' la kungase
Kwenzeke yini khona lokho uma kuse
Khona ...

(Ink., p 53)

(If they say 'Get old' can this
Happen when there still
Is ...)

We cannot have length on '*lika*-', '*kungase*' and '*kuse*' because we are forced to join these portions with the following ones in the next line. In other words when these lines are read, we cannot 'hear' rhyme. We can only see it on paper.

There are other constructions where rhyme is obscured by the absence of length and the pause when one of the rhyming words is read. We shall mention only a few examples where the last word in a line *must* be read quickly and joined to the next one.

In 'Inqomfi' Vilakazi tries to rhyme '*leyo*' with '*akwaziyo*':

Nami ngifundise *leyo*
Nhlokomo ...

(Ink., p 16)

(Teach me too that
Loud sound ...)

Here we must read the demonstrative pronoun together with its noun. Some people feel that the demonstrative and its noun should be regarded as one word, hence the convention of hyphenation: '*leyo-nhlokomo*' and even conjunctive writing: '*leyonhlokomo*'.

We normally read the noun and its qualificative together without a pause, except when the qualificative is used oppositionally. In the following example taken from 'Cula ngizwe' the possessive is involved. Enjambement reduces the effect of

rhyming 'yizinhlungu' and 'nayisizungu' because each of these words is followed by the possessive:

Ngifis' ukukhohlwa yizinhlungu
Zezifo, nezwe nayisizungu
Sokusala ...

(Ink., p 36)

(I wish to forget about the pain
Of illness, the land and the loneliness
Of remaining ...)

The same dilution is found when the poet tries to rhyme an auxiliary verb with another word. Here is an example from 'Inqomfi':

... Bonke laba funa
Bakhwel' imiqangal' ukwahlula befuna.

(Ink., p 17)

(... All these may
Take their musical instruments in an effort to outclass you.)

Enjambement becomes more of a liability when it does not take into cognisance the fact that some patterns of rhyme must correspond to the meaning of the lines. We expect a rhyming couplet, for example, to be unified by some idea which has a measure of completeness. In 'UShaka kaSenzangakhona' Vilakazi uses couplets like these:

Wena Shaka obufana
Nezazi zanamhlanjena,
Ulwa noqhekeko lwezwe,
Ovimb' endlelen' akhweztee
Phezu kweklwa namateisa.
Waw' uZwide eziteisa
Ngokuziqhalisa phezu
Kwakho. Wawa izingcezu.

(Ink., p 41)

(You, Shaka, who was like
The wise men of today
You fought against disunity in the land,
The one who stood in your way was
Killed with spears and knobkerries.
Zwide made himself fall
By boasting over
You. He fell to pieces.)

The word 'akhwezwe' should be at the end of an idea started in the previous line. But the idea overflows and ends in the next line. The line ending with 'namawisa' should actually be the beginning of a new idea because the poet wants to use 'amawisa' to rhyme with 'eziwisa'. There is a pause after 'amawisa', and 'eziwisa' occurs in a line which begins a new idea.

Vilakazi uses his couplets at random. When the stanza is read it is difficult to make out which words rhyme. We can take, for example, the last couplet. Because of enjambement in the first line, we have no significant length on 'phezu'. We must read it together with the next word 'Kwakho'.

Where enjambement occurs we find that Vilakazi's rhyme is ineffective. It remains a mere decoration which we see on paper, but has very little appeal to the ear.

Rhyme and tone

In stress languages it is not only the sounds which agree in rhyme. There is also agreement between the stressed and unstressed syllables found in the rhyming endings. Of course we can have what can be called 'unaccented rhyme' (Boulton, p 51) in which one of the rhyme syllables is stressed, but the other syllable is not stressed.

In tone languages the most effective rhymes are those which involve not only similar sounds, but also similar tonal patterns.

There is the possibility of having tone rhyme where tonal patterns agree although the sounds may differ. In 'Yin' ukwazi', for example, we find the lines:

Ngiphath' induku,	-uku
Ngiqwal' umgwaqo,	-aqo

(Ama., p 10)

(To carry a stick,
To walk on the road . . .)

A poet can use this as a variation to other schemes. But tone plays a more prominent part when it is used together with harmonising consonants and vowels.

There are examples in Vilakazi's poems where the tonal pattern is the same in the rhyming syllables. In 'We Moya' both the endings have a high-low tone:

Sinuk' iphunga lamakhabe *khábe*
Ephakathi kwezigabe *gábe*

(Ink., p 131)

(We smell the scent of sweet melons
Which are among young pumpkins.)

We get a falling-low tone in the example from 'Ukhamba luka-Sonkomose':

Enjengompe lwezinyosi. -ósi
Ngish' ikholw' elithi, Nkosi ... -ósi

(Ink., p 11)

(Which was like the honey of the bees.
Even a believer who says Lord ...)

Such corresponding tonal patterns seem to be merely coincidental in Vilakazi's poetry. In most cases the rhyming endings differ completely in their tone. In 'Cula ngizwe' we find this couplet where one member ends on a high-low, and the other on a low-low tone:

Mangibe njengophoswe ngekhubalo -àlò
Bese ngilala phezu kwengalo -àlò

(Ink., p 36)

(I must be like the one bewitched
And sleep on my arm ...)

Attempts at rhyme by repeating the same stem at the end do not necessarily result in the similarity of tone. It depends on a number of factors, like the tonal pattern preceding the stem itself, the mood of the word if it is a verb, and whether the word stands at the end of an end-stop or a run-on line. In the following example taken from 'Sengiyokholwa-ke' the first verb is in the indicative and the second in the participial. The tonal patterns differ: falling-high and low-high:

Sengiyakholwa ukuthi sewafa -àfá
Uma ilanga nenyanga sekwafa -àfá

Vilakazi ignores the consideration of tone in his rhyme. We feel that a Zulu poet can explore the possibility of making his rhyme to approximate perfection by taking tone into account. If he wants to be very scientific about it he can study the rules which govern the occurrence and shifting of tone under various cir-

cumstances. If he has a good ear for tone he can rely on the way his endings sound tonetically.

Sectional rhyme

There are poems in which Vilakazi limits rhyme to some stanzas of his poem. In other portions he does not use it. Theoretically rhyme could be omitted with advantageous effect from those portions where the poet refers to disharmony or disorder. This can contrast well with the harmony implied in those sections where rhyme has been used.

In 'Okomhlaba kuyadlula' Vilakazi uses rhyming couplets at the beginning of the first five stanzas. Rhyme is relevant in these lines because here the poet describes singing and dancing, for example:

Huba we Nomkhubulwane
Hub' ingoma yezilwane!

.....
Giya nawe Ntonjambili
Nophakathi kwamabili.

(Ama., p 5)

(Sing, you Nomkhubulwane.
Sing the song of the animals!

.....
Dance you too Ntonjambili
Even in the middle of the night.)

There is no rhyme at all in the last stanza where the poet does not refer to music and dancing. Here the poet reflects on the essence of life. In order to underline the confusion that is in the mind of the poet, he abandons rhyme.

We have pointed out earlier that Vilakazi uses rhyme in most of the stanzas in 'Sengiyakholwa'. We expressed our surprise that he uses this adornment in the sections where he recounts his bitter experience of losing his beloved ones. Rhyme is not used in the last stanza where the poet describes his peace of mind caused by the fact that his father seems to be spiritually nearby all the time. In our opinion it is really in the last stanza where rhyme should have been used. In this poem the use and abandonment of rhyme has no significance. In fact it seems as if

Vilakazi used rhyme here only because this poem is a sequel to 'Sengiyokholwa-ke' in which rhyme is used throughout.

We also mentioned in our discussion of 'Ngomzomdaladala kaGrout' that Vilakazi makes deliberate use of rhyme in the second stanza. He gives us four rhyming couplets (*aabbccdd*). This rhyme is abandoned towards the end of the stanza. Other rhyming lines are scattered about in the poem, but these seem to be there by mere chance. We see no justification for this limited use of rhyme. One gets the impression that the poet felt it would be too strenuous an exercise to work out such couplets for the whole long poem. It would have been better if he had not attempted rhyme at all.

It is clear from this discussion that Vilakazi was experimenting with rhyme. Most of the examples are taken from his first collection *Inkondlo kaZulu*. The schemes used in this book are the basis for his theory of rhyme for Zulu. Some of the methods of rhyming are effective, but others are not. We have noted in particular how enjambement sometimes renders rhyming ineffective because the last word carrying one member of the rhyming portions is not articulated with sufficient length to make the rhyme element audible.

Vilakazi uses rhyme mainly for decorative purposes. There are very few examples where rhyme is used to support the meaning of the poem.

On the whole Vilakazi achieves little success with this device. But this does not detract from the fact that the standard of his work remains high, because, after all, as Nyembezi puts it:

... although rhyme is useful in lending added beauty to a poem by giving it definite form, it is not an essential part of good poetry as indeed, many fine poems have been composed without it.

(Nyembezi, 1962 (c), p 67)

We might perhaps add that many poems are good in spite of the poor use of rhyme.

Rhythm

By rhythm in a poem we generally mean a more or less regular recurrence of time patterns and patterns of successive and positional association of emphatic elements to less emphatic ones.

These patterns include a combination of the various degrees of stress, duration or length and tone. It is difficult to give a fixed description of how exactly this rhythm is achieved because some languages have characteristics which others do not have. While languages like English have patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables, languages like Zulu use patterns of tone and length. In Zulu certain syllables are sometimes articulated with a measure of emphasis. We regard this emphasis as stress, and it normally goes together with length, especially the length of the penultimate syllable. Certain syllables of some words, like the ideophone, can be articulated with conspicuous stress despite the absence of length.

Some critics overlook the fact that languages differ with regard to the operation of prosodic elements. This is why some students of Zulu rhythm use metrical concepts which are rather foreign to Zulu. Vilakazi, for example, says:

Since there are so many derivative words with added syllables, to which scanning cannot apply, Nguni poetry will range between trochaic and iambic metres, plus the devocalised syllables.

(Vilakazi, 1945, p 63)

He then suggests a number of metrical patterns which suit words according to the number of syllables.

Dhlomo accepts Vilakazi's approach:

In Zulu the stress falls on the penultimate. For this reason our poetry can use the trochee in disyllabic, and the amphibrach in the trisyllabic words. I think we can also employ the spondee, and, as Vilakazi ... says, the dactyl, if we break the rule of the penultimate stress.

(Dhlomo, 1948, p 46)

By saying that the rule of penultimate stress should be ignored in order to accommodate metric forms, Dhlomo actually implies the imposition of forms on a language which, in fact, rejects them.

Vilakazi and Dhlomo give examples of words in isolation to show how stressed and unstressed syllables occur. This cannot work out well because penultimate length in the word is usually determined by the syntactical position of the word. Apart from the stress resulting from penultimate length, stress on any other

syllable may depend on the reader's interpretation of the poem, and his individual style.

Lestrade makes an important observation when he says:

Dynamic stress is the basis of Bantu prosody. Each line of verse is made up of a number of groups of syllables, which we shall call here nodes, usually three or four, each node containing one stressed syllable and a ranging number, usually two, three, or four, of unstressed syllables around the stressed syllable.

(Lestrade, p 4)

This is a good starting point which other scholars have incorporated into their study. Moloto, for example, uses Lestrade's method in his analysis of Tswana poetry. He says:

When then, we refer to metrical tendency we mean the arrangement of a verse in nodes or 'verse-feet' characterised by one long penultimate syllable, which may also be preceded by a short syllable or syllables.

(Moloto, p 32)

While we appreciate the view made in favour of nodes, we wish to point out that such divisions are likely to manifest themselves either in slow speech or when a reciter articulates each word in isolation. Moloto maintains that even in fast speech a person who is sufficiently orientated in the language is able to distinguish between these nodes because he can tell in each case where length is.

When we listened to the recitations of poems we could not identify such nodes. According to our observation it is not all the penultimate syllables of the words which have length. With the exception of the length on the penult of the very last word in that line or sentence, all the other words lose their penultimate length. We only hear this length when a word is followed by a pause.

Lestrade gives an example of a three-node line which, according to him, has three stressed syllables.¹ This example is taken from Shaka's *izibongo*:

Utēku/ lwabafāzi/ bakwaNomgābi/

1 We shall use the sign – above the vowels of long syllables, and use nothing for short ones. The stroke (/) indicates the end of a 'node' or 'verse-foot'.

Most of our reciters who did this line from *izibongo* recited it as one unit, and had only one length on the penultimate syllable of the last word. Some added just one more length on the initial vowel of 'uteku':

(-)

Uteku lwabafazi bakwaNomgäbi/

There are many syllables between the two lengths. Because of their number, these syllables cause the interval between these lengths to be long. In some cases there are fewer syllables between the lengths, and this gives us shorter intervals, for example:

Ngäma/ ngababüka/ base becula/

(I stood, looked at them, and they sang.)

It is the intervals in this sense that we would consider to be 'verse-feet'.

In establishing rhythmic units, Qangule analyses lines from the poem 'IGqili' into peaks. He says about these peaks:

A peak is that portion of the intonation of a line of poetry which is said with the tone going higher than the rest. Such peaks can contain one or more high toned syllables ... The peaks coincide with either half-length syllables or full-length syllables. the (sic) peaks needless to say, occur at rhythmic intervals.

(Qangule, p 19)

Our view is that half-length and full-length syllables need not always coincide with high tones. Shall we still speak of a peak even when the length occurs on a syllable with a low tone? Deciding that a certain syllable has the highest tone in a line might be arbitrary, depending entirely on the reciter's mood and style.

Of course it is possible for a poet to arrange his words so that there is correspondence in the tonal patterns of successive lines. Because of the variation of the tone of words, this might be an arduous task which might hamper the spontaneity of the poem. Moreover, it might be too conscious an attempt to get what approximates to the Western metrical system.

We feel that for rhythm we should rather utilise the lengths which are mentioned by the other critics. Normally we shall get

this length and stress on the penultimate syllable just before getting to a pause (long or short). The pause indicates the end of the expression of an idea which has a measure of independence. The intervals between lengths will be determined by the question whether the items in a line should be separated by a short or long pause or nothing at all before the reciter gets to the end of a complete sense unit. This means that we shall have cases where a whole line is a 'verse-foot' because it has only one length. 'Verse-foot' does not sound right for such a unit. We suggest the term 'rhythm segment' when we refer to the interval between these lengths. The occurrence of these lengths at well-regulated intervals, therefore, gives a rhythmic pattern to the poem.

There may be some difficulty with regard to the question of where exactly the end of a segment should be indicated. Les-trade and Moloto indicate the end of such a unit after the final syllable. This is understandable because length on the penultimate syllable usually indicates that the final syllable will be followed by a break, no matter of what duration. The exception here is when the final syllable has an elided vowel. In this case the end of the rhythm segment can be indicated immediately after the penultimate syllable because the final consonant is articulated with the vowel of the next word, e.g.:

Ngizoyishā/ y' ingāne/
(I shall beat the child.)

For consistency we should apply this procedure even with shorter words, like those quantitatives and copulative demonstratives which have inherent length on the first vowel. We shall have, for example:

(Ōnke/ amadōda/ but Ō/ nk' amadōda/
(All men)

An ideophone can be a unit by itself irrespective of length. The ideophone is usually articulated with some emphasis or stress on the initial syllable. This stress can be regarded as a deciding factor. Moreover, the ideophone is usually succeeded by some pause before the speech continues on to the other words:

Isitsha wasiwisa/ *phihli*/ phānsi/
(He made the vessel fall down to pieces.)

There might be an argument here that not all the ideophones have the inherent stress which is equal to that found occurring together with length on the penultimate syllable. This opens another argument whether it is not the pause, rather than the length, which is a better criterion for determining the boundary for a rhythm segment. We get such a pause whenever sense dictates that we must have a break or a caesura between items. We get a final break at the end of a sentence. If we use the pause as our key concept we shall have more agreement because we can use it to mark the end of a rhythm segment irrespective of the presence or position of length in the preceding syllables.

A poet can choose which method to use in order to secure the rhythm he desires. He can arrange the words with long vowels so that they have positional correspondence. He can also arrange his caesurae and line-end pauses so that they come after more or less regular intervals. The end of a sentence is normally accompanied by cadence, i.e. the fall of the voice at a pause. This implies that if sentences are of more or less equal length, rhythmic effect will be realised by the occurrence of these final cadences after certain intervals. Punctuation marks, like the comma, may be used to indicate the position of some pauses, but usually this is unnecessary. The reader can depend on meaning, and make pauses accordingly.

In indicating rhythm segments, therefore, we feel a simpler and more dependable method is that of being guided by pauses. This is the method we shall use in 'scanning' examples from Vilakazi's poems. We shall, however, indicate those vowels which have length although they may precede no pause.

Rhythm in *izibongo* portions

We have indicated earlier that Vilakazi often uses the style associated with the traditional *izibongo*. This is evident in parallelisms like this one found in 'Woza' Nonjinjikazi':

Ngizibòn' ilanga liphúma/
Ngazibòn' ilanga lishòna/

(Ink., p 24)

(I saw them at sunrise,
I saw them at sunset.)

Here reciters use length on '-bo-'. The word 'ilanga' has no

length. Rhythm is achieved on the one hand, by balancing the length found in both lines on the first and last words. On the other hand one could say there is balance between the length of '-bo-' and the final break at the end of the line.

Other reciters use no length anywhere in the middle of the line, except penultimate length in the very last word. In this case the occurrence of pauses at the end of the rhythm segments of equal duration accounts for the rhythm.

Rhythm is also clearly defined in the case of the stanzas whose lines are arranged in couplets. In 'Izinsimbi zesonto' we find these lines:

{ Ngikuoqome njengoMameyiguda
 { Beshikish' indlamu eMsizini;
 { Ngakuoqoma njengoShampeyana
 { Ephehl' umLungu njengobulawu;
 { Ngakuoqoma njengoLuthuli
 { Ekhanyis' iLanga kwabamnyama ...

(Ama., p 23)

(I chose you like Mameyiguda
 Dancing at Msizini,
 And chose you like Shampeyana
 Stirring the Whiteman like watery medicine,
 And chose you like Luthuli
 Lighting up the Sun among the Blacks ...)

In typical *izibongo* style, the initial verb in the first couplet is in the indicative. The initial verb in each of the succeeding couplets is in the subjunctive. In all the couplets the first word in the second line is in the participial.

There are two main patterns here. Some reciters tend to put length on the final syllable of each first verb in each couplet. These people also use penultimate or final length on the second word of the second line in each couplet so that we have a kind of a caesura before the last word. This gives us this pattern:

Ngikuoqome/ njengoMameyiguda/
 Beshikish' indlamu/ eMsizini/

Other reciters do not use length anywhere, except on the penultimate syllable of the very last word of each line. This is done mainly by fast readers. We get this pattern:

Ngikugome njengoMameyigüda/
Beshikish' indlamu/ eMsizini/

We cannot ignore yet another pattern where a reciter takes the whole couplet in one breath, and uses length on the very last word in the couplet.

Each reciter uses his style consistently. This means that in *izibongo* we need not have only one rigid way of establishing where the boundary of the rhythm segment will fall. Of course, there are fairly common styles which give us almost similar segments.

We also get portions which are in straightfoward *izibongo* style, as we find at the beginning of 'Aggrey weAfrika':

Inyoni yeziduli zeAfrika
Eyandulel' izizw' ezimnyama
Ngokuhluk' ezikhoveni
Ezihlal' entshonalanga ...

(Ink., p 67)

(The finch of the hills of Africa
Which set an example for the black nations
By differing from the owls
Which live in the west.)

This section is expanded in the typical praise poem pattern. Nkabinde (p 12) refers to the way a praise name followed by a possessive form of the noun, is expanded by adding a relative. This is exactly what we find in the above lines.

The difficulty in allotting prosodic qualities on such *izibongo* as above is caused by the unlikelihood of the poem being an oral composition. It becomes a question whether we should approach it as we approach the other *izibongo* which were first composed orally before they were written down.

According to Vilakazi himself (1945, pp 58-60) we should have a caesura in the middle of each verse above. On either side would be a breath-group with stressed and unstressed syllables. This is not a reliable method because people differ in controlling their breath. On the other hand Ngubane (p 5) speaks of a 'diastolic foot' of four syllables and a 'variable foot' of a varied number of syllables. There is no evidence, for example, that twelve syllables are recited in one respiration, so that they form a 'primordial breath-group'. Vilakazi himself

says that he got his breath-groups when the poem was recited, not normally, but slowly. This is probably why he came up with so many caesurae which are not likely to occur in normal speech. He even got a caesura after a consonant with an elided vowel:

UNjijyanjiyan' / esemva kwamadoda.

We appreciate Cope's observation:

Many more breaths are taken in praise poem recitation than in normal speech, for the method of delivery demands that the lungs be always fully inflated.

(Cope, 1968, p 30)

But it is doubtful if the breath-groups would be as frequent as those indicated by Vilakazi. What we would accept is that much would depend on where the reciter places his non-final and final cadences. These cadences may occur with a measure of regularity to provide a rhythmic pattern.

In the recitation of the poem on Aggrey, reciters tend to lengthen the initial syllable of 'Inyoni ...'. Some use another length on the penultimate syllable of every line. Yet others do not use this penultimate length, but lengthen the very last syllable of each line, except the last word before the fullstop, where penultimate length is used. With the exception of length on the initial vowel of the first noun, the reciters do not use length anywhere in the middle of the lines. In fact some do not use length anywhere except when they get to the very last word before the fullstop.

The two common patterns we get in the recitation of these four lines are:

Inyoni yeziduli zeAfrika/
Eyandulel' izizw' ezimnyama/
Ngokuhluk' ezikhoveni/
Ezihlal' entshonalanga./

and

Inyoni yeziduli zeAfrika/
Eyandulel' izizw' ezimnyama/
Ngokuhluk' ezikhoveni/
Ezihlal' entshonalanga./

The pauses after every line occur with regularity, giving us a wave-like movement.

As we have said earlier, we are aware of the limited reliability of indicating rhythm segments in such a poem. The best result would be obtained if someone recited these lines from memory, without having been influenced by the appearance of the poem on the printed page. In the absence of such an opportunity we have to use the facilities at our disposal with the hope that they give us a rough picture regarding the rhythm of an *izibongo* portion of a poem.

Equal number of syllables

In his preface to the anthology *Uphondo Lukabhejane Masuku* says:

Even if, in African languages, we cannot make use of a poetic foot as such, it is necessary to make use of a specific number of syllables to the line ... observing a specific number of syllables to the line will give us a scientific form ...

(Masuku, p 5)

R. Kunene, on the other hand, is against this form:

Syllabic metre is unsuitable for Zulu poetry. Many highly poetic forms have to be sacrificed in the process of trying to fit words to it. Poetry tends to be mechanical and artificial.

(R. Kunene, Appendix I, p 13)

In our view there is nothing wrong when a poet prefers to use an equal number of syllables in each line. He may do this when he wants to have a disciplined line for some effect. Of course this is unwelcome if we are made to feel that a word has been forced in order to make the line conform to the required number of syllables. The beauty of the poet's product is in its apparent naturalness even after the artist has worked hard adding here and pruning there.

There is evidence that Vilakazi sometimes deliberately uses an equal number of syllables in successive lines. We can look at 'We Moya'. In this poem the poet uses mainly eight syllables in every line, for example:

Ngiyafisa ukubona
Leyondod' ephfumula
Kunyakaz' ihlathi lona
Limahlamvu khazimula.

(Ink., p 12)

(I long to see
That man who breathes
And the forest shakes,
Which has shiny leaves.)

Among younger reciters there is a tendency to give each line a regular jog-trot movement by using length on every other syllable, thus:

Ngiyafisa ukubona/

This alternation of long and short syllables (reminiscent of the iambic metre) is sometimes heard in the recitation of lullabies and refrains from folktales. It is a deliberate artificial style which ignores the normal rules governing the position of length in Zulu. In the above stanza there may be a longer pause at the end of each line. Because of the regularity in the number of syllables per line, these pauses will occur at exact intervals. This may be nice in a short poem, but the artificiality becomes boring in a long poem like this one which has 13 stanzas.

In Zulu, regularity in the number of syllables per line does not necessarily make the poem rigid or mechanical. Rhythm varies according to the reciters. Some reciters use penultimate length at the end of every line. These read with the consciousness that this is a poem and it should not be read exactly like prose. They ignore the meaning carried by each line. Those who read with understanding see that the first three lines run on. They tend to linger very slightly on the final syllable of each of these lines. Definite length is put on 'ihlathi' and 'khazimula'.

It is clear, therefore, that although the lines have the same number of syllables, there is still sufficient variety to make them sound less mechanical. The words do not always have the same number of syllables, nor do all the lines have a similar tonal pattern. On top of this some lines have enjambement. In such a poem it is likely that most of the lines will be end-stopped. This will create a dominant pattern of breaks which occur with a measure of regularity.

Length of lines

Vilakazi uses lines which differ in length from poem to poem. This is because of the difference in the number of syllables he uses in the lines. In 'Yin' ukwazi' for example, he uses short lines of five syllables in some stanzas:

Ngitshele mngane!
Kuyin' ukwazi?
Ngigqoke kahle,
Ngiphath' induku,
Ngiqwal' umgwaqo,
Ngidl' ezibomvu?

(Ama., p 10)

(Tell me friend!
What is wisdom?
Should I dress well
And carry a stick
And walk on the road
With red clothes on?)

Here most of the reciters use penultimate length on the last word of each line. Each line, therefore, is a distinct rhythm segment because there is a definite pause at the end of each one. Because of the shortness of these units the steady flow of reciting is interrupted. This tallies with the anxious state of the poet who wants to get an answer to the questions he is asking.

Such a stanza contrasts sharply with those which have long lines of up to fifteen syllables. These long lines feature mainly in the poems which are contemplative. In 'Ukuthula', for example, the poet reflects on the essential ingredients of peace, and he uses long lines like:

Kónk' okúhle/ nokuphas' umphefumulo wámi/

(Ama., p 16)

(All that is beautiful and sustains my spirit.)

Because of the length of time taken from the beginning of the line to the final cadence, the pace of reading is retarded. If we have a number of lines of this length we get a slow pace which agrees with the mood of the poem.

We have discussed only a few ways in which rhythm is realised in the poetry of Vilakazi. It is not easy to make a fixed rule on how rhythm is determined in Zulu. We have proposed that we be guided by the position of lengths and pauses. It is the manipulation of these lengths and pauses at desired intervals that results in rhythmic patterns.

Stanza forms

We often consider any group of lines in a poem as a stanza. We sometimes hear people refer to such a group as a 'verse' because of the influence of the use of this word with reference to the group of lines in songs like hymns. We should rather reserve the word 'verse' for the designation of a single line of poetry, or poetry in general.

In Shipley's dictionary a stanza is defined as:

A group of lines of verse (any number; most frequently 4) with a definite metrical and rhyming pattern, which becomes the unit of structure for repetition throughout the poem ...

(Shipley, p 395)

This implies that we should not use the word 'stanza' when there are no rhyme or rhythmic patterns. When these patterns are absent we should rather speak of verse paragraphs. Attenbernd and Lewis say this about verse paragraphs:

Sometimes lines are irregularly grouped so that the divisions correspond to important stages in the development of the narrative or discussion. Such units vary in length and are not marked by any set scheme or rhymes, if, indeed, the lines are rhymed at all.

(Attenbernd and Lewis, p 44)

We expect each stanza or paragraph to imply some unit of thought which is separated from that contained in the other portions of the poem. This is not an independent thought, though, but is a step in the arrangement of a series of ideas which are contained in the poem.

We should also mention a form in which there is hardly any rhyme scheme, and the lines do not have the same length. This is what we call 'free verse', on which Heese and Lawton say:

... it may be defined as rhythmical lines varying in length, adhering to no fixed metrical pattern and usually unrhymed. The pattern is often largely based on repetition and parallel grammatical structure.

(Heese and Lawton, pp 36-37)

But free verse is not just a haphazard putting together of irregular lines. Fraser gives his opinion on good free verse:

What I recognise as good free verse is verse which does not scan regularly but seems always on the verge of scanning regularly; which is neither strictly in pure stress metre, nor stress syllable metre nor quantitative metre nor pure syllabics, but which often seems to be getting near to one or other of these, perhaps attempting to fuse two of them, perhaps deliberately and abruptly alternating between one another.

(Fraser, p 74)

Although some critics (e.g. Attenbernd and Lewis, pp 44 and 52) discuss verse paragraphs and free verse separately, we feel there is much in common between the two. Free verse seems to make use of verse paragraphs.

For convenience we shall employ the term 'stanza' to include even those groups of lines which actually belong to verse paragraphs.

Regular stanzas

There are many poems in which Vilakazi employs the same number of lines in each stanza. In the poem 'Inqomfi' for example, each stanza has six lines. He uses rhyming schemes which are couplets in some stanzas, and the pattern is *abcba*, in others.

In the poem 'We Moya' some stanzas have four lines and others have three lines. The poet alternates these freely and this provides commendable variety.

This is a fairly conventional way of writing poems. It implies a degree of organisation on the part of the poet who must fit each idea into a fixed pattern.

Expanding stanzas

There are many of Vilakazi's poems which are not divided into

regular units. In some cases the number of lines increases so that the last stanza has the highest number. In 'Ugqozi' (Ama., p 1) the lines in the five stanzas increase from five to seven: 5, 6, 6, 7, 7. In 'Ngoba ... sewuthi' (Ama., p 13) the lines increase from eight to thirteen: 8, 9, 10, 13.

The significance of such an arrangement of lines is that the poet's ideas are expressed in order of importance and range towards a kind of a climax. In 'Ugqozi', for example, the increasing number of lines in the stanzas agrees with the fact that the poet's inspiration starts and increases after his visit to Dukuza.

In some cases the very last stanza in the poem has the highest number of lines. 'Imfundo ephakeme' (Ama., p 6) for example, has six lines in the first eight stanzas, but the last stanza has nine lines. Here, too, the main idea is in the last stanza which points out that the poet writes books in order to carry out the instruction of the ancestral spirits.

In such poems the length of the last stanza draws our attention to these sections because usually they carry the gist of the poem.

Diminishing stanzas

In some poems the first stanza is the longest and the last one the shortest. The best example is 'Sengiyokholwa-ke' (Ink., p 34) where we find the number of lines in the stanzas decreasing as we read on: 6, 6, 5, 4, 4.

We have already pointed out that the shape of the poem here tallies with the idea conveyed by the whole poem. The poem 'emaciates' and 'dies out', just as it tells us how the life of the poet's father 'diminished' and disappeared.

Bulging stanzas

There are poems in which the middle stanzas have more lines than the first and the last portion of the poem. This is found in some of the long poems. In 'UMamina', for example, the poem begins with stanzas of six lines. In the middle we get long stanzas of up to twelve lines. Towards the end, the stanzas are like those found at the beginning, i.e. of six lines.

At the beginning of such a poem the poet seems to be cool

and collected. As he proceeds he is carried away almost uncontrollably by the visions and the outburst of emotions. Towards the end he again gains control of himself and cools down, as it were, to the state in which he was when he began writing the poem. This arrangement implies that the most important ideas are not at the beginning or at the end, but in the middle of the poem.

There are very few of Vilakazi's poems which have stanzas in the sense of the definition offered in Shipley's dictionary. Most of the poems contain stanzas of varying length. In other words Vilakazi mainly makes use of verse paragraphs.

An interesting feature is that in many poems the number of lines in the stanzas varies in certain patterns as we read on. These variations are usually relevant to the ideas being expressed. This is highly commendable.

Conclusion

In our study of Vilakazi's poetry we come across a number of definite forms. He gets some of these forms from traditional poetry. Others are a manifestation of an attempt to experiment with Western poetic devices.

Vilakazi achieves limited success with the different ways of rhyming, but from the examples we have discussed we hope we have touched on a number of effective methods for rhyme in Zulu.

It is not easy to say the last word about rhythm. Much depends on the interpretation of the person reciting the poem. Generally speaking Vilakazi uses free verse. This makes the poems read with ease. Rhythm is not rigid despite the dominance of certain paces which result from the different lengths of the lines.

Although in many poems Vilakazi uses formal devices for mere adornment, it is heartening to note that these devices sometimes serve the main purpose of supporting the meaning contained in that portion of the poem where they are used.

7 General conclusion

At the beginning of this study we mentioned that this work would be very general. This is mainly due to the fact that we had to treat a wide variety of aspects connected with the poetry of Vilakazi. A study like this tends to be superficial and does not go deep into each aspect.

Our main purpose was to try and find reasons why Vilakazi is held in such high esteem by many critics. We got some clues regarding his ability from the second chapter where we were discussing the way he treats the material he has borrowed from other sources, like the traditional literature, i.e. *izibongo* and traditional prose narratives. He was also influenced by Western poets and the Bible. We found that in general he succeeds in the way he handles borrowed material. This success is due to the fact that Vilakazi has a way of adding touches of his individuality to what he has taken over from other poets. One of the interesting features is Vilakazi's ability to compose *izibongo* which are a sequel to those of the dead person.

The success of Vilakazi with his borrowings indicates that we cannot discredit a writer for using material from other sources. The main question we must ask is what the writer has done with that material. Sometimes a poet's best pieces can be those which are inspired by other writers. This happens when he has made an effort to improve on the material he has borrowed. If this has not been achieved, borrowing is a futile exercise because it is tantamount to producing mere versions – sometimes poor ones – of the existing work.

Another significant point is that Vilakazi is able to synthesise various styles of traditional and Western art to produce something new. The *izibongo* style is used very well even in non-*izibongo* poems. Vilakazi here indicates to the aspirant poet the possibility of developing a new blend of Zulu poetry.

Vilakazi wrote on several themes. We divided these broadly into the factual and concrete subjects on the one hand, and the abstract ones on the other hand. Under factual and concrete themes we discussed poems on history and nature. Abstract

poems deal with ideas like death, nostalgia and death. We are aware that our classification may be regarded as arbitrary because one poem can easily be put under two thematic categories. But our main aim was to analyse the poems, and not just to provide rigid compartments for them.

It was remarkable that in most cases the poet used his descriptions of different phenomena as a starting point for the expression of deep ideas. This is an important point. Even some of Vilakazi's poems which look simple on the surface have great ideas implied. What raises the worth of such poems is that the poet does not say explicitly what ideas he wants to imply. He leaves it to us to make our own deductions. This is why we have such controversial poems like 'Cula ngizwe' and 'UMamina'. The divergence of views with regard to some poems is usually an indication that there is something in them. We derive great aesthetic contentment from speculating about the real meaning of the poem. We are aware that some students may not agree with what we feel are well-considered interpretations given in this discussion. No one can claim to be able to give a final word about good art. One just gives one's opinion and offers reasons to support those views. This divergence is itself an indication that the poem has a multiplicity of meanings which may all be accepted. While a deliberate effort to be ambiguous need not yield good results, there is a point in Untermeyer's statement:

... readers must have a tolerance for the ambiguous, the more so since the most profound poetry does not yield its complete significance at a cursory reading.

(Untermeyer, p 73)

It is agreed that imagery is the cornerstone of poetry. Vilakazi's imagery is manifest in his simile, metaphor, personification and symbolism. We have noted that Vilakazi's best similes are those where he compares things from different domains of thought and sense. We also applauded him for the way he extends his similes so that they introduce other figures of speech. Vilakazi uses various types of metaphors. He achieves various effects by different grammatical constructions. This variety adds life to his poetry. We also find interesting methods of personification. Regarding symbolism, he uses universal and conventional symbols. He also uses those symbols whose full appreciation demands that the reader must have some

background knowledge regarding Zulu culture. This is understandable because a writer works from his own environment and culture. Even when he has extended his scope to the outside world, the cultural attributes cannot be eliminated. These cultural aspects do not limit the appreciation of his art to locality. They only add special identity to his work.

There is no doubt that Vilakazi is a great poet. We have already expressed our appreciation for his manipulation of imagery. His main weakness is his tendency to drift away from the central theme he is handling, to include much material which could be left out. This is very conspicuous in the earlier poems, especially those on historical topics. Fortunately later poets can learn from the errors made by their predecessors. Taylor puts it well when he says:

But Vilakazi is an experimenter in a new field and is to be congratulated on the large measure of his success rather than criticized for small failures.

(Taylor, p 164)

An attempt was made to analyse the form of Vilakazi's poetry. Much was said about parallelism, rhyme, rhythm and stanza forms. Vilakazi is very successful with his linking and refrains. In this section we referred now and again to Vilakazi's theories regarding rhyme and rhythm. Some of Vilakazi's rhymes are acceptable, but most of them have flaws. However, from the study of the different types of rhyming methods we get an idea as to which methods of rhyming seem to be effective in Zulu. Our observation here is that in general effective rhyme starts from the vowel of the penult. Rhyme is more effective when it is accompanied by similar tonal patterns.

With regard to the analysis of rhythm we feel we should rather move away from the idea of 'verse-feet' because we can have rhythm units which can be much longer than what we normally understand by the word 'foot'. We suggest the description 'rhythm segment'. These segments are demarcated according to the pauses which are dictated by the sense of the sentence.

We have expressed a view that a Zulu poet should not be discouraged from using formal features like rhyme, equal number of syllables in a line and regular stanzas. We reiterate that a poet is free to use any style or form of writing which suits his

particular purpose. However, we object against an indiscriminate use of these devices. We feel that if a poet uses rhyme, for example, such rhyme is of great value if it is not only ornamental, but is somehow relevant to the meaning of the poem. Of course we cannot fight a poet who merely wants to decorate his stanzas for no other purpose. Here, too, we feel that the decoration is best used if the poem is on a pleasant subject. We cannot lay any rule here. The poet himself should use his discretion. What is important, though, is that the poet should not force his words to conform to some pattern, because then his art becomes artificial and mechanical. Here, again, we cannot say this is the rule. One poet can deliberately force his words when he wants to imply artificiality.

In most of his poems Vilakazi uses free verse. Here the poet does not have to impose many restrictions on himself. The style is more in line with ordinary speech, but, of course, it is poetry, especially because of its concentration and abundance of imagery.

Free verse is not completely uncontrolled. It has its rhythm although this need not be rigid and regular. A poet can use rhyme when this comes naturally. It need not form a regular pattern right through the poem. Free verse is the mode used by the composers of *izibongo*. This is why *izibongo* do not have one monotonous form. We do have repetitions, parallelisms and stanza forms, but these are not arranged at regular intervals. We feel this is an ideal form for modern Zulu poetry. A poet does not have to use free verse all the time. He can use other forms when his poem demands to be more disciplined for special effects. We have proposed some of the points to be borne in mind if one wants to use effective rhyme and rhythm.

We wish to repeat that we take this as a preliminary study of Vilakazi's poetry. It only indicates directions which other students can follow and study more thoroughly.

One of the studies which can be gone into is the influence Vilakazi has had on the other poets. Doke (1948, p 159) predicted that future Zulu poets would not ignore the influence of Vilakazi. About a decade later, Nyembezi (1962 (c), p 74) remarked that there were already indications that many Zulu poets were being influenced by Vilakazi. In one of our earlier studies (Ntuli, pp 112-129) we illustrate briefly some ways in which poets model their pieces according to Vilakazi's poems.

Some poets only base their poems on lines and ideas found in Vilakazi's poetry. Others, though, copy his ideas and style too closely and do not make their own contribution. In the present study we could not get into this aspect because we would no more be dealing with Vilakazi's skill as a poet. We would be assessing other people's ability.

Another study which can be carried out is that of the poems which have been composed on Vilakazi by his admirers. In these tributes we notice Vilakazi's indirect contribution by making possible the appearance of so many poems which increase the volume of Zulu poetry. Here a critic might compare these poems and see how much the poets make use of Vilakazi's approach, and whether these poems are worthwhile works of art, or cheap sentimentalism.

Studies into aspects of Zulu poetry are very limited. It is for this reason that we were tempted to digress to supply some theoretical background which is now taken for granted in the study of other literatures. We hope that this theoretical background will be a basis for other students of poetry.

It is our hope that this study will stimulate further analysis of the works of the other Zulu poets. It is only through studies like these that we can eventually have a good idea regarding the important characteristics of Zulu poetry.

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