

TITLE PAGE

Title:

Word and Image - Patrick Cullinan and Judith Mason's *Selected Poems 1961-1994*:
A Case for the Special Edition Artist's Book

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation argues for the past and continuing importance of the special edition book. Focusing in particular on one instance of books/artworks of this sort, the writer, Jane Elizabeth Commin, presents several arguments in order to underline her thesis. In the first place she looks at the history of the institution of the artist's book and *livre d'artiste*. Reviewing the history of such a book, she relates the artist's book to the history of aestheticism as a 19th century artistic and literary movement, and proceeds to show the artist's book is an extreme exemplification of the principle of beauty central to the artistic movement.

In the second chapter she focuses on a collaboration between the English-language South African poet Patrick Cullinan and the equally well-known South African artist Judith Mason. Drawing on interviews with both collaborators conducted by the writer, the dissertation outlines both the artist and writer's perceptions as to their practise and the nature of the collaboration itself.

This chapter is then followed by theoretical excursus in which the theories of the French semiotician Claude Gandelman are outlined in their relevance to the reading of the word/image nexus discussed. In particular, the haptic/optic division Gandelman theorises is shown to be particularly useful in accounting for the unique aesthetic experience generated by special edition books in general.

In the central chapter of the thesis, these relations are demonstrated through a close reading of the way in which the image works with the text and the text with the image in the specific instance of the 1992 special edition of Patrick Cullinan's *Selected Poems 1961-1994* (Johannesburg: The Artist's Press).

The thesis comes to the conclusion that, while the special edition or artist's book is an elite form of artmaking, it nevertheless embodies values which go to the heart of the artistic and literary experience and therefore is in fact a defence of the artistic experience itself.

To support her argument the writer has drawn from interviews she conducted with South African artists and writers, including: Patrick Cullinan, Judith Mason, Pippa Skotnes, Vivian van der Merwe, Fiona Moodie, Lyn Smuts and Gregory Kerr. These interviews are included in addenda at the end of the dissertation. The writer also draws from the work of literary and art critics and theorists, including: R. V. Johnson, Johanna Drucker, Roger Kimball, Roland Barthes, Elaine Scarry, Claude Gandelman, Wendy Steiner, Octavio Paz and George Steiner.

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marks of all of the handwritten comments joining the two¹. As the South African artist and lithographer Lyn Smuts comments: “You give people a piece of copper and a needle and it is like pure handwriting. The difference between personalities, the way they mark that plate, it is truly a handwriting. I know certain people now by how they make marks” (Addendum F: 1). The same goes for the hand holding the lithographic crayon or paintbrush and it is something Mason is aware of and exploits.

Special editions and artists’ books are rarefied objects with a limited audience. The economics of their production make this inevitable. What is special about such books is not only the personal touches, the care and attention to detail put into them, the actual mark of the makers who sign and draw in them making each unique, but also the fact that the book ceases to be merely a text and becomes an art object or sculpture. Mason is aware, in her presentation of Cullinan’s work, of the fact that “books are objects; and at the same time they are ideas and aesthetic forms” (Paz 1992: 108). She emphasises the book as a conceptual artwork, as being both a conglomeration of glue, paper and ink and an entire realm of aesthetic and philosophical exploration.

Many of the writers and artists I interviewed are drawn to image/text relationships because of the mystery they hold and of how they make meaning for us. As children’s writer and illustrator Fiona Moodie says. “It’s a strange process. Quite mysterious. In a way I am quite superstitious. I don’t like talking about it in case it vanishes. It’s like a

¹ In the final pages of *The Selected* Mason sketches figures and shapes in pencil around Cullinan’s printed notes and adds her own comments. Another instance of this handwriting/printed text link is Mason’s presentation of the poem ‘Grammary’ in relation to ‘The Text’, which is explored in Chapter 4.

gift" (Addendum D: 9-10). For some (including Vivian van der Merwe) the two genres can never be joined or held equivalent, and for others (for instance Moodie) the two are bonded such that they cannot be separated. Often the interviewees refuse or struggle to speak about what happens in the art making process in words and text. This seems to be due to a lack of faith in the ability of language to convey what an image embodies, or due to the speaker's sense of his or her own linguistic deficiencies. As Smuts comments "...I'm fitter visually than I am with words" (Addendum F: 1). She adds, "Some of my images are quite subtle...and I think people flounder to say in words what I am trying to say. But I also flounder to say in words what I am trying to say. I mean, that's why there is visual art" (Addendum F: 3-4). Linking images to text can be a risky business and yet, as Smuts asserts, an image can express that which is beyond the scope of language.

Kerr, on the other hand, is an artist with a passion for text and claims that he is "stamped with the Mark of Text" (Addendum B: 1). He writes, "I eat text, ingest it, like the look of it, wallow in making it, lovingly explore its text-ures, contours, typographies, layouts and fonts searching for the distilled Thought caught within those little spermatozoons of power that you are looking at now" (Ibid.). He sees image and text as intricately interwoven and is someone who enjoys linking language to images (in his case, the image often comes first and, as with Lyn Smuts, his own painting "tends to thicken [his] tongue" [Ibid.]). Van der Merwe is also fascinated by both image and text and yet doesn't feel they always connect: "...I think the privacy of visual engagement, the kind of stuff of painting, is for me an entirely other kind of space outside of language, beyond language,

apart from language. If I try to speak of the content of my paintings I come a cropper immediately” (Addendum G: 6).

This dissertation does not restrict itself to a discussion of straight illustration. This would limit the reader/viewer’s perspective on the possibilities for image/text relations. Kerr epitomises the problems with a viewer’s expectations of illustration as an art form when he writes: “I deplore illustrations that do not fit in with my perceptions” (Addendum B: 2). Mason seems to avoid this problem for, as Patrick Cullinan asserts, Mason’s work in *The Selected* is not merely illustration; “[i]t’s of a different order” (Addendum A: 6). ‘Illustration’ as Mason mentions in her interview, implies a formalised or formulaic approach to the text. What she attempts is more intuitive. Her images are not tied to a literal visual rendering of the text, but are more metaphorical. As Van der Merwe says, “...the minute illustration becomes an appendage or a little annotation, marginal and without effect on the thing, it becomes merely a decoration or stylistic appendage”(Addendum G: 2). The reader has no sense that Mason’s images are mere appendages. In order to be successful a work must, “open itself to engagement and response, to engagement and then re-engagement on this new level ad infinitum” (Addendum B: 1). Mason and Cullinan’s dialogue certainly does this. It opens up new ways of seeing both poem and image and even a new order of aesthetic experience (which is my argument), rather than presenting a final view on the subject. The relationship between image and text combine to form a gestalt that encourages precisely the kind of engagement and response and re-engagement Kerr speaks of.

This is not to argue in *The Selected* that the image has equal power divorced from the text as the text has divorced from the image. Poetry, after all, is written to stand on its own. Illustration, by definition ‘to make something clear, especially by examples or drawings’, originates in text and language, in something outside of itself. As Fiona Moodie asserts in relation to her own work, “...the illustrations couldn’t really exist without the story” (Addendum D: 5). The text is crucial and no amount of beautiful illustrations can save a book from failure if the text is flawed or weak:

If the writing isn’t good, the pictures, no matter how excellent, cannot carry the book.... I would even hazard saying that a very good text with mediocre pictures could still make an interesting book. Basically I think the text is more important than the pictures. It’s never the other way around.

Addendum D: 6

This, however, need not always be the case. Pippa Skotnes says of book projects she has worked on with Malcom Payne: “...each contribution should be seen as a discreet contribution in itself, so that the images interpreted their subject in their own way. Each section played off against each other, but there wasn’t any special or privileged relation between image and text, any more than there was between...individual essays” (Addendum E: 1).

Despite her statement above, Moodie does not deny the complexity of images. She explains, “[i]mages are more difficult although you can insert yourself into them. Text is more precise or honest in a way. It is more important, in that it is amazing and subtle” (Addendum D: 14). This dissertation is not out to prove text or image the more powerful. It focuses more on the kinds of relationships that can be built between the two, how they function and how they can enhance the experience of the book for the reader or viewer. As Moodie succinctly puts it: “The pictures are there to get lost in. The text is to point out the direction in which you should get lost” (Addendum D: 12).

Moodie’s concept of getting lost in an image or text implies the reader/viewer’s total involvement in that text or image. In books such as *The Selected*, the image/text relationship is foregrounded to encourage the reader/viewer’s complete immersion in the aesthetics of the text, to induce what Wendy Steiner calls ‘enlightened beguilement’. The pleasure afforded by the text is paradoxical. Poetry and art relate to reality, but are separate from it. *The Selected* is an object geared, through the beauty of its presentation of text and image, through its difference from the world in being image and text, to produce in the reader/viewer a state of aesthetic bliss, but it is through this aesthetic bliss that such a text can impact upon the world. As Vladimir Nabokov explains: “For me a work of fiction exists only in so far as it affords me what I shall bluntly call aesthetic bliss, that is a sense of being somehow, somewhere, connected with other states of being where art (curiosity, tenderness, kindness, ecstasy) is the norm” (Nabokov in Steiner 1995: 209). This dissertation affirms the presence of images in conjunction with text and encourages the discovery of beauty within the relationship that results. As Wendy Steiner

asserts "Outside of Journalism, there is no sphere in which aesthetic value and pleasure are discussed with any regularity..." (Steiner 1995: 7). This dissertation attempts to become space in which such things can be explored and *The Selected* affords the perfect source point from which to do so.

CHAPTER 1

The Aesthetics of the Book: Artists' Book or *Livre d'Artiste*?

Given the role which artists' books have played in most aspects of modern and contemporary art, it is particularly important to recognise them as a form in their own right, not an incidental spin-off of other concerns.

Johanna Drucker vii: 1995

In *The Century of Artists' Books* (1995), artist's book-maker and art academic Johanna Drucker² defends the artists' book as a form in its own right:

There is no doubt that the artist's book has become a developed form in the 20th century. In many ways it could be argued that the artists' book is *the* quintessential 20th-century artform. Artists' books appear in every major movement in art and literature and have provided a unique means of realizing works within all of the many avant-garde, experimental, and independent groups whose contributions have defined the shape of 20th-century artistic activity. At the same time, artists' books have developed as a separate field, with a history which is only partially related to that of mainstream art.

² Johanna Drucker lectures Contemporary Art and Theory at Yale University in the Department of the History of Art. Recent critical publications include *The Visible Word* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), *Theorizing Modernism* (Columbia University Press, 1994), and *The Alphabetic Labyrinth* (Thames and Hudson, 1995). She has been making artists' books since 1972.

Drucker vii: 1995

According to Drucker the increased popularity of the artist's book in this century can be attributed to the flexibility and variation of the book form. Nevertheless, a single definition of 'an artist's book' remains elusive despite its general use and the large amount of work that is identified under that term. Drucker defines the artist's book as one that is created as an original work of art, rather than being a reproduction of pre-existing work. It also integrates the formal means of its realisation and production with its thematic and aesthetic issues. The artist's book is in many ways derived from the tradition of the illustrated book, the *livre d'artiste*, a book type Drucker differentiates from the artist's book.

The *livre d'artiste* was created as a publishing enterprise by figures such as Ambroise Vollard, the Parisian art dealer (whose first productions appeared in the mid-1890's), and Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler (who began publishing approximately a decade later). The trend of the *livre d'artiste* was then taken up by other editors who saw the opportunity for marketing deluxe editions with the added selling-point of the involvement of an art- or poetry-world celebrity³. Nevertheless, the idea of a deluxe special edition predates even the *livre d'artiste*; books with other elements of the genre had long been part of the publishing industry. Such elements include:

³ Kahnweiler, for example, was associated with Pablo Picasso and the other Cubists.

- Large format
- Elaborate production values such as hand-colouring
- Virtuoso printing
- Fine binding
- Use of rare materials, texts or images which catered for an elite or sophisticated market

The *livre d'artiste*, however, took advantage of the expanded market for visual art that had grown in the 19th century. This market was a by-product of expanded industrial growth, disposable income and the development of an educated consumer upper/middle-class. The market for such books was an extension of the market for fine art and the *livre d'artiste* was a commercial opportunity. As Drucker explains: "Kahnweiler was fully aware that he was creating a sideline in books which could be sold on the strength of the popularity and fame of artists whose work he dealt" (Drucker 1995: 3). The book form also gave artists the opportunity to produce work they would not usually have been able to produce themselves, to pursue new media or themes. For example, the collaboration on the work of *The Selected* gives Judith Mason, whose idiosyncratic imagery is almost exclusively animal and human, the opportunity to explore the text as an image, as subject matter in itself⁴. Well-known artists elsewhere in the world who availed themselves of similar opportunities include Pierre Bonnard, Henri Matisse, Joan Miro, Max Ernst and Pablo Picasso.

⁴ Mason involves herself in the visual representation with text in a way a painting would never require her to do.

Drucker sees the genre of the *livre d'artiste* as limited in relation to the artist's book in that it tends to present the text in a more conventional and less experimental way. *Livres d'artistes* "stop just at the threshold in which artists' books operate. First of all it is rare to find a *livre d'artiste* which interrogates the conceptual/material form of the book as part of its intention, thematic interests, or production activities" (Drucker 1995: 3). Artists' books are always self-conscious about the structure and meaning of the book as a form, which is questioned in innovative ways. The *livre d'artiste* tends, on the other hand, to stick to certain publishing conventions. For example, the distinction between image and text is maintained in *livres d'artistes* in that text is placed on the opposite page to the image: "images and text face each other like new acquaintances across the gutter, wondering how they came to be bound together for all time in the hushed, mute, interior of the ponderous tome" (Drucker 1995: 4). *Livres d'artistes* were also mostly initiated by the editor, who contracted the artist and writer independently. Often the artist and writer only met through the arrangement of the editor, or even not at all. Text and image thus tended to work via contrast to one another, unlike in *The Selected* where in most cases they work in harmony.

Often it was a special edition of a famous text that appealed to the buyers of such a book: "Though in general it is the artist's and writer's reputations which sell these books, a rare or unpublished literary text can also be a selling point" (Drucker 1995:4). A similar selling point in the case of *The Selected* is obviously the fact that Mason's illustrations for this project can be found nowhere else. In the case of the *livre d'artiste*, the editor controlled the project and determined its final appearance. All the aesthetics of the book

were, by necessity, tied to the value of the product and its sale. Because of this, such books remained tied to traditional format and materials, rendering them illustrated books rather than artists' books. *The Selected* does not fall into this category, for, while it contains an illustrated text, the illustrations are often self-conscious and aware of the book format as shall be revealed in the discussions that follow.

These stipulations aside, Drucker ultimately acknowledges: "Any attempt to describe a heterogeneous field of activities through particular criteria breaks down in the face of specific books or artists – and this is true with the distinction between artists' books and *livres d'artistes*." (Drucker 1995:5). Fine printing, for example, can be an aspect of both *livres d'artistes* and artists' books. The term 'fine printing' is generally associated with letterpress, handset type, and limited editions. It can also describe carefully produced work in any print medium. One category of fine printing (into which *The Selected* may fit) involves the production of limited edition works for bibliophiles. Such limited editions are often classic texts printed on archival paper and beautifully bound in leather. These books are lovingly produced but are rarely formally innovative or concerned with the book as an artistic concept. While artists' books also tend to be associated with offset or electrostatic processes, they can also use the methods of letterpress, hand binding and relief images (wood or lino cuts or engravings)⁵. Nevertheless, neither methods nor quality of production are criteria for determining whether or not a book is an artists' book, as artists will use whatever they can get their hands on in order to realise their vision (as Mason's inclusion of pencil sketches, oil painting on canvas and gold leaf in

⁵ The ever-widening access to different printmaking technologies has played a part in the proliferation of artists' books (particularly in first world countries).

The Selected indicates). An artist's book has to be more than a beautifully crafted book or it falls back into the category of the *livre d'artiste* or fine print work.

The field of artists' books also relates to other print forms, such as independent publishing, which is: "any publication effort...mounted for the sake of bringing an edition into being which cannot find ready sponsorship in the established press or among commercial publishing houses" (Drucker 1995: 7). Such an enterprise gives the power of book production to anyone with sufficient finances. Such work is often experimental, such as that of the Modernist writers, whose work was originally not well received by established publishers. In fact, most creative writing, whether poetry or prose, is published through independent means by publishers and editors who barely break financially even through the process. Often such projects are funded by outside income such as sponsorship from big business or through the artist's other methods of income⁶. Artists' books also stem from the same impetus as independent publishing; the need to make a voice heard or a vision available that would otherwise have passed unnoticed. This last point is certainly true of *The Selected* which reveals a rare glimpse of a relationship between the works of a particular artist and poet.

Artists' books have also been used as a tool for activist artists. As Drucker points out: "That artists' books can facilitate a change of consciousness is clear, as with any other symbolic form be it poetry, visual arts, or music" (Drucker 1995: 8). Drucker does not, however, extend this into a debate over whether such work can result in the change of

⁶ Artists' books generally also fall into this financial category.

political structures, and indeed it is a debate that extends beyond the bounds of this dissertation. *The Selected* does not have an overtly political aim. Cullinan's poetry, while it deals with its context, is not protest art, and neither is Mason's illustration. The aim of the book seems to revolve more around creating an object of intense aesthetic pleasure and while both poetry and images relate to the world and may affect the viewer, they have (and claim) no literal control over reality outside of the work. The art critic Wendy Steiner attempts to explain this artistic paradox in *The Scandal of Pleasure: Art in an Age of Fundamentalism* (1995):

Because art acts both as a sign of reality and as a self-contained entity, it creates a confusion between meaning and being and has a necessarily ambiguous relation to the extra-artistic world. It appears to provide a particularly intense experience of reality while not belonging to that reality in a straightforward manner. This virtuality in art is essential, no matter how much a given work may tend to diminish one side of the paradox or the other. It accounts for the "power" of good art to make us think and feel intensely, and perhaps to reconsider our understanding of the world in the process. A good deal of our pleasure (and displeasure) in art results from this experience of virtual power.

Steiner 1995: 76

If Cullinan's or Mason's work in *The Selected* acts upon the world, it is surely in this paradoxical 'virtual' way as described by Steiner. The question becomes not the practical

efficacy of the special edition, but rather that such editions contain an implied protest against a world that lives often deliberately without acknowledging the aesthetic pleasures of beauty. It is in this that the politics of such a book lie.

Drucker asserts that it would be hard to find a 20th century art movement that did not involve or exploit some aspect of the artists' book (whether in the form of journals, ephemera, manifestoes or other independent publications). Many mainstream artists (such as Sol Lewitt and Marcel Duchamp) have seen the book as a form to question and not merely as a vehicle for reproduction. Drucker asserts:

It is the fact of this engagement as a major feature of the 20th century which argues for the identity of artists' books as a unique phenomenon of the era. To an unprecedented degree books have served to express aspects of mainstream art which were not able to find expression in the form of wall pieces, performances or sculpture.

Drucker 1995: 9

Sometimes artists make use of the documentary potential of the book form⁷ and at other times they engage with the book as a highly malleable, versatile form of expression. Not every book by an artist is an artist's book (no matter what the artist claims). A mere

⁷ South African artist Pippa Skotnes has done so in editing her 1997 book *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen* (Cape Town: UCT Press), which documents the plight of the Bushmen in South Africa.

collection of images, original or appropriated, does not always fit the criteria, although Drucker admits that the line defining an artist's book can be vague. The reader/viewer has the final say as to whether the book work makes integral use of the specific features of the book form.

"Just as books have served to extend the possibilities of visual arts, performance, and music, they have also offered a unique conceptual possibility to the poet" (Drucker 1995: 10). Artists' books can provide a unique means of realizing particular poems. As Mason plays with Cullinan's text, folding certain pages for instance, so poets can work with sculptural elements of the book⁸. Not every poet is a book artist but, "there are works which demonstrate the ways in which concrete poets have been able to extend the parameters of what a book does as a verbal field in a manner which also extends the possibilities of the way in which an artist's book can function as a poetic text" (Drucker 1995: 10).

Some critics and scholars Drucker invokes, but does not identify, have traced the artist's book back to Ed Ruscha's *Twenty-six Gasoline Stations*. While Drucker acknowledges that this work breaks new ground in embodying and defining an artist's book, she feels it cannot be taken as a single point of demarcation for the history of the artist's book. By the time Ruscha's work was produced in 1962, there was already a historical precedent for such works within Russian Futurism, Surrealism and the American avant-garde in both artistic and literary spheres. Drucker thus sees the artist's book as a phenomenon

⁸ Drucker cites the example of the concrete poets and the work of Jerome McGann, Marjorie Perloff and Jerome Rothenberg as examples of poets who have experimented with the book form.

that originates with many spontaneous points of origin. It is a field that “belies the linear notion of a history with a single point of origin” (Drucker 1995: 11)⁹. Artists’ books have taken every possible form and been part of every possible form of book making and art/literary movement there are no strict criteria for their definition or for tracing their origins. They are an incredibly rich form, “a unique genre, ultimately a genre which is as much about itself, its own forms and traditions, as any other artform or activity. But it is a genre as little bound by the constraints of medium or form as those more familiar rubrics “painting” and “sculpture” (Drucker 1995: 14).

Mason and Cullinan’s collaboration contains elements of fine printing, special editions, and *livres d’artistes*. *The Selected* is certainly a special edition. It contains many of the criteria for this book form in its large format, beautifully bound pages, and through the ‘rare’ images that were commissioned especially for it. *The Selected* also asserts a characteristic of the *livre d’artiste* in that it is a collaboration between two established names in the South African literary and art worlds. Nevertheless, although the book may have been made for profit, it is independently published and was conceived not by a publisher, but by the artists themselves who knew each other prior to the project and collaborated according to their own methods. This characteristic of the book tips the balance of its definition in the direction of the artist’s book, but the characteristic that

⁹ In the middle of the 20th century, however, the history of this form becomes clearer. Drucker gives an overview of the artist’s book’s post-war development. In the late 1940’s and early 1950’s several artists began to explore books in a serious way. These included the CoBrA artists in Denmark, Belgium, and Holland, the French Lettrists and the Concrete poets in Brazil. By the late 1950’s artists working in experimental music, performance and other non-traditional forms took up book arts within the context of Fluxus soon after its first events in the 1960’s. In the 1960’s books as a medium for artists took off as a concept in the United States and Europe: “They fit the sensibility of the 1960s alternative scene, whether produced independently by artists or by galleries as an extension of an exhibition, also giving rise to the

settles the dispute finally is the visual presentation of the text itself. Ironically it is Mason, and not the author of the text, who finally makes this an artist's book. Despite the fact that the text is a reproduction of previously published work, her images are original, specific to the book and her presentation of the text itself transforms the previously published work. It is she who places the images, not in the opposing-page convention, but amongst and around the text. It is also she who brings to the book a self-consciousness, and at times subversion, of its form through her games with text, her deliberate off-set type, backwards print and fading ink. Images spill off the page and pages themselves are folded into paper darts. Drawings are added in pencil and fingerprints abound, becoming traces of her reading presence on nearly every page. Mason's response to Cullinan's text makes us not only aware of his poetry, but of the constructed-ness of the book itself. Her attention to this constructed-ness reveals the artistry behind book-making, and the individual character of each book¹⁰ makes each a unique and precious text.

Many precedents for the conceptual practice of the artist's book form can be found in the work of English artists, William Blake and William Morris, the writings of Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé, the realist novelist Gustave Flaubert and of the poet Edmund Jabès, each of whom have made definitive contributions to the intellectual history of the artist's book. Blake and Morris set precedents for making use of the book as an artistic production. Both were independent artists with a vision of the book as a form that could function as a force for spiritual or social transformation. William Morris's (1834-1896)

hybrid genre of the catalogue as artist's book." (Drucker 1995: 12). From here the artist's book was used by artists in many fields and expanded exponentially as an art form.

¹⁰ There are different drawings and paintings in each of the 40 copies of this limited edition.

work with the Kelmscott press formed (in its format and aims) a response to the effects of industrialisation upon labour: “his sympathies with the conditions which industrial technology and mass production imposed upon the working class formed the impetus for his formulation of an aesthetic which symbolized and engaged in labour practices of pre-industrial craft guilds” (Drucker 1995: 27).

Morris’s sympathies led to his first commercial enterprise in the 1860’s, but it was not until the 1880’s that he became a spokesperson for the socialist movement and wrote essays such as “Useful Work and Useless Toil” which embodied his belief that work that was truly valuable was virtuous, pleasurable and satisfying labour in itself, and not merely a means to a financial end. Not all of his work embodied his radical political stance. His earliest projects were based in fine art and were motivated to embody the teachings of John Ruskin on “the virtues of the Gothic spirit in form” (Drucker 1995: 27). Books only formed part of Morris’s later work, though he had created illuminated texts and designed binding ornaments and page borders in the 1870’s, so his project with the Kelmscott Press was not unprecedented. He was a poet as well as a designer who also collected medieval manuscripts. “The integration of elements in the medieval works, particularly the erosion of clear distinctions between borders and letterforms, illuminated initials and actual images, all served to intensify the thematic content of the text” (Drucker 1995: 28). All of this influenced Morris’s design and he learnt to come to terms with the concept of the book as a whole.

Morris's focus on the recovery of a Gothic tradition in architecture, painting and the decorative arts was influenced by a broad movement stemming from Harold Walpole's 18th century literature. In the 19th century this broad movement came to be known as Aestheticism. It influenced 19th century architecture, inspired the Pre-Raphaelites and transformed book design and the fine press movement through Morris's interventions and the influence of the Kelmscott Press. 'Aestheticism' in general terms means "devotion to beauty, and to beauty primarily as found in the arts and in whatever is attractive in the world around us" (Johnson 1969: 1). In the 19th century, however, the word also came to denote "a new conviction of the importance of beauty as compared with – and even in opposition to – other values" (Ibid.) Aestheticism was a conception of life as art, art for art's sake, and was also a characteristic of painting, writing and criticism. It became "the very attitude which makes the beautiful a universal standard" (Johnson 1969: 4). Well-known exponents of Aestheticism include: Walter Pater, William Morris, Oscar Wilde, John Ruskin, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Edward Burne-Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Walter Pater was the foremost exponent of the aesthetic view of life. He believed that life should be lived in the spirit of art, and was something "to be appreciated for its beauty, its variety, its dramatic spectacle" (Johnson 1969: 19). The aesthete revered art for the beauty it offered in the face of the only truth we can know, that of death. Pater advocated a 'seize the day' approach to both life and beauty: "Of such wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for its own sake, has most. For art comes to you, proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass,

and simply for those moments' sake" (Pater in Johnson 1969: 21). The literary critic Roger Kimball sees Pater's biographer, Denis Donoghue as emphasising "elements of Pater's achievement that anticipate the critical, Romantic side of modernism: the side that exalted art as spiritual armor suited to a secular age and that found expression (for example) in Nietzsche's dictum that 'we have art lest we perish from the truth'. (Or – Nietzsche again – "Only as an aesthetic phenomenon is life and the world eternally justified)" (Kimball 2000: 31).

Pater outlines the role he feels art should play in the world: "What modern art has to do in the service of culture is so to arrange the details of modern life, so to reflect it, that it may satisfy the spirit. And what does the spirit need in the face of modern life? The sense of freedom..." (Pater in Kimball 2000: 41). The link to Drucker is clear. As she has emphasised, the artists' book has in many ways been a vehicle for the expression of that freedom.

What does the cultural tradition we call aestheticism have to do with special edition projects such as *The Selected*? Artists and bookmakers such as William Morris implicitly reveal the connection:

Morris's work embodies, in its enthusiastic recovery of medieval text and his own imitation of these in poetic works he authored, a vision whose aesthetic was linked to a social agenda through the book as an expressive form. Morris expressed his desire for a cheaper and more accessible book, to be produced in

accord with his sensibility, but he realised his works at a monumental scale of production. The paradoxes of this production – the high cost of labour, materials, and the edition – as a vision of labour in an unalienated form is perhaps not so paradoxical if one realises that the myth of the artist as an individual worker with a personal vision and voice is also embodied in these works.

Drucker 1995: 30

The special edition of *The Selected* highlights both the craftsmanship of bookmaking, of poetry and art, but it also becomes a vehicle for appreciating the aesthetics of text and the pleasure reading and looking can offer. Such an object becomes an embodiment of the pleasure of the text and functions to heighten and intensify that pleasure through the gorgeousness of the presentation of the text and of the book itself. Whether the book is a special edition, artist's book or *livre d'artiste*, the craftsmanship and book arts that go into its production result in the book being invested with a special kind of value. In the case of *The Selected* in particular, the artist's book becomes a coincidence between precious and beautiful content and a precious and beautiful object. In such a book a more general principle about art is exemplified. Within it we find a realisation, at peak powers, of what Wendy Steiner again claims for art activity: "Art collapses property and identity, having and being. It is both a commodity and an object beyond price. It is both valuable 'in itself' and as an expression of the culture that produced it" (Steiner 1995: 78).

The creation of the book as a kind of fetish object (an object imbued with the power of art and poetry) has, as has already been suggested, close ties with the philosophy of the 19th century Aesthetic movement. While not an attempt to distance art from life, it surely becomes an attempt to channel into one specialised object the beauty and pleasure that text and image can offer. Like other art-works, it does not openly attempt to depict the world or relate simply to it, but has a unique value in attempting to transform every aspect of the object, be it words, print, images or paper, into an aesthetic experience. It finds its justification in this. As Donoghue underlines:

The arts are on the margin, and it doesn't bother me to say they are marginal....

I want to say the margin is the place for those feelings and institutions which daily life doesn't have a place for, and mostly seems to suppress.... With the arts, people can make a space for themselves, and fill it with intimations of freedom and presence.

Donoghue in Kimball 2000: 41

Special editions and collaborations, such as that between Mason and Cullinan on *The Selected*, take that which is marginalized and make it their subject, thus becoming one of the spaces of which Donoghue speaks. And one of the most foregrounded subjects of *The Selected* is that of beauty. Pater “looked at an object under the sign of pleasure, not of truth” (Donoghue in Kimball 2000: 42-43). This is one of the ways in which we are

encouraged by Mason and Cullinan to regard the artist's book that forms *The Selected*, as an object of pleasure.

CHAPTER 2

The Selected: An Image/Text Collaboration between Patrick Cullinan and Judith Mason

Patrick Cullinan is one of South Africa's foremost poets in the English language. Born in Pretoria in 1932 and educated at Oxford, he has lectured English in university, worked as a publisher, and produced several volumes of poetry including *The Horizon Forty Miles Away* (1973), *Today Is Not Different* (1978) and *White Hail in the Orchard* (1984), as well as his *Selected Poems, 1961-1994* (1994). Michael Chapman attempts to place him in the scheme of South African poetry in *South African Literatures* (1996). Born and raised in the post-colonial ethos of upper-middle-class and English speaking South Africa, and educated in Europe, Cullinan's work often forms a meditative exploration of bitter privilege in a country torn by social injustice and the aftermath of colonialism. Chapman writes that in the 1970's "the fierce political allegiances that were demanded of writers in the state of emergency... had the effect of pushing [Cullinan] towards determined defences of the poetic art as a contemplative calling" (Chapman 1996: 344) and "while Cullinan has felt the need to stress that South Africa is his home, he has utilised local typologies less and less and increasingly devoted his skills to generalised issues of modern unease" (Ibid.). This is a tendency Chapman feels is worthy of criticism, but this is not an issue this dissertation will address beyond discussing the impact of *The Selected* upon the reader/viewer.

Cullinan's work encompasses fascination with history and biography¹¹ and a love of Dante formed during his studies. Through translations of Italian Eugenio Montale and Dante amongst others, Cullinan has attempted throughout his career to expose the South African poetry scene to previously foreign poetic sensibilities, in order to add a more sophisticated layering to poetry written here. Chapman sees such attempts as embodying the "recurrent colonial desire to be international" (Ibid.) rather than seeing his perception that Cullinan no longer "seems to write from anywhere with any completeness" (Ibid.) as a manifestation of the uncertainties of modern existence (which is how Cullinan sees his own work). In 1992 Cullinan said in an interview that the only major development in South African poetry since the 1960's was the move towards sophistication, the movement "beyond the confines of South Africa to experience 'disquiet' as a world condition: a sense of alienation from God" (Chapman 1996: 413). This development does not result in Cullinan's own poetry being without social or political comment upon his immediate environment. As Chapman himself writes: "In Patrick Cullinan's poems... lucid conversational tones, polished and unobtrusive, have the necessary flexibility and ironic insight to address the absurd as well as the everyday aspects of a 'frontier situation' that by 1970, had moved firmly from the veld to the suburbs" (Chapman 1996: 340). Cullinan uses (not without irony) images and archetypes typical to white colonial writing; the domestic garden, the verandah, the sundowners on the stoep, the paranoia and the lives behind burglar bars. Through his poetry, Cullinan seeks a way to be completely part of Africa as a white person¹². *The Selected* gives a broad overview

¹¹ Cullinan wrote a historical biography on the explorer Robert Jacob Gordon (1743-1735).

¹² This tendency leads Chapman to associate Cullinan with 19th-century South African poet Thomas Pringle.

of his work, revealing the diversity of his interests and the seductive and deceptive simplicity of his style.

Judith Mason, in turn, is one of South Africa's most distinguished artists and has been widely exhibited both abroad and in this country. Born in Pretoria in 1938, she studied and later lectured Art History at the University of the Witwatersrand and also taught at Wits Tech art school. In *Painting in South Africa* (1993), art historian Esmé Berman describes her as a notable representative "of the school of thought that sought to realign the relationship between form...and content...in works of art" (Berman 1993: 276). Mason's vision has always been strongly individual and her artistic philosophy has been reinforced by her outlook on religion. She felt that "modern theological thinking had deprived religion of its spirit – nourishing mythological content – that form or ritual was too dominant" (Ibid.). Her painting becomes an attempt to work against this de-mythologizing process.

Mason's art, however, is not solely concerned with religious themes, for she sees myth everywhere around her and in all aspects of life. Mason is known for looking beneath the surface of both the seemingly disgusting and beautiful in order to find the essence of her subjects, subjects that she enhances with her very own, precise symbolism. Mason doesn't avoid the depiction of the ghastly or unpleasant¹³, but as Berman asserts, "her artistic sensitivity, her intellectual honesty and emotional generosity lent a kind of beauty to even the grimmest of her themes" (Ibid.). It is this ability to see and depict the beauty

¹³ Mason's early work has been compared to that of the painter Francis Bacon, who is known for his macabre canvases.

in all things along with the intelligence of her images that makes her art so compelling and disturbing. As Berman summarises, Mason's work is "an expression of intellectual intensity, emotional compassion and profound humanism. Her unusual canvases and drawings are dramatic both in content and in the lyrical tension of their sinuous forms" (Berman 1970: 190). The drama of Mason's images combines and contrasts well with the understatedness of Cullinan's poetry.

The collaboration between Mason and Cullinan came about after they met and discovered a mutual admiration for each other's work. Cullinan was already acquainted with Mason's *A Dante Bestiary* (1990) in which Mason had illustrated creatures from Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, and Mason had always been interested in illustrating Cullinan's poem 'M. François Le Vaillant Recalls His Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa 1780-1785'. Cullinan agreed to let her do so and once he saw the images Mason had produced, he asked her to be involved in the creation of his upcoming *Selected Poems*. Before they did the commercial version, they produced the 1992 special edition, a large, sumptuously illustrated book with heavy fabriano pages encased in an inlaid wooden cover. From this they chose several illustrations for publication in the 1994 Snailpress version.

The production of *The Selected* required both writer and artist to involve themselves in the relationship between text and image. Mason immersed herself in the text before deciding to take on the project. She writes: "I spent three weeks acquainting myself with the text, a lot of which was new to me, and made notes" (Addendum C: 1). She worked with complete artistic freedom on the book. Mason explains, "Stephen [Watson – the

editor] and Patrick dictated the order and I designed the layout within those limitations. This was a stimulating task in itself" (Addendum C: 3). Mason was also given free reign as to where and how she placed text on the pages. Cullinan says: "I never had a word to say about it. She would say to me, 'I've got an idea' and she would go away and come back and say, 'I don't like the idea'. I never even knew what idea it was that she'd rejected. I never interfered once." (Addendum A: 4). Mason, however, approached Cullinan's text with sensitivity towards its nuances and her impact upon it. Cullinan explains:

She also liked my poems, quite a few of my translations, but she said something interesting.... You know, sometimes when a poem is very strong, she didn't want to do it. Not that she would kill it, but it would be too much. It would be like eating too many chocolates. So she'd say, "No, let the text stand."

Ibid.

Mason explains her relationship towards text and illustration in more general terms in 'An Essay on Encountering Dante's Creatures' (Mason in *New Contrast South African Literary Journal* [henceforward *N.C.*] 1990: 12)¹⁴ in which she discusses her decision to illustrate the beasts in *The Divine Comedy*. She found herself at times both fascinated and repelled by this text:

¹⁴ Mason's bestiary of these creatures was an illustration project not unlike the one she undertook with Patrick Cullinan's poems in *The Selected*.

Perhaps it was the relentless pattern of the stanzas on the congested pages.

Perhaps it was the smallness of the print in the mass of erudite footnotes.

Perhaps it was the occasional diagram with no graphic charm whatsoever – but the Divine Comedy seemed very off-putting when I first glanced at it.

Mason in *N.C.* 1990: 12

For Mason, interpreting the text via her own images became a way of making text, which she found unapproachable and overwhelming, accessible both to herself and to the viewer of her work. The process of illustrating becomes a process of experiencing the text – and one that will change the reader's experience of it and facilitate their understanding of it, perhaps bringing the reader closer to its strangeness as well as attuning them to the disquiet caused by it. Mason explains: "My efforts remain a response to Dante rather than an attempt to accurately capture what he may have visualised. There is nothing so private as the mind's eye" (Mason in *N.C.* 1990: 16).

The production of a special edition such as *The Selected* also raises the question of its reception in the market place. Who is the intended reader/viewer? In this case, the reader/viewer is most probably limited to the academic (who has access to the book through a university library) or the collector. One may well ask, therefore, what the social relevance of illustrating poetry or works of fiction in this form can be. The production of the special edition book, *livre d'artiste* or artist's book, seems an arcane, even elitist, act in a modern world of mass communication. How does Mason justify her choice of project

and her interest? She writes, "I think artist's books are a minor art form, a by-way of the two distinct arts. I love poetry and books (as physical objects) and rare or unique documents and I like being part of their production" (Addendum C: 2). This comment, however, belies her deep involvement in the production of *The Selected*, her complex exploration and questioning of the book form through her images, and the power and beauty of the object on which she collaborates. The book is in no way a by-way, but an important crossroads between several different approaches to art-making (poetry, book-making and visual art).

Mason's defence of her illustration of *The Divine Comedy*, with its acknowledgement of the question of its relevance, not to mention its accessibility, could also apply to her project with Cullinan. She acknowledges:

Any attempt to illustrate Dante nowadays provokes cries of boredom or dismay at the pretentiousness of the undertaking. In a world where political conviction has largely replaced religious faith, and where anti-elitism is the war-cry, it does seem quite irrelevant. Why – on a continent torn by very real and contemporary fear, violence, incompetence and dissent – should any artist reinterpret the work of a long dead Italian whose cosmology has been outdated for centuries and most of whose particular judgments may sound primitive to our post-Freudian era?

Mason in *N.C.* 1990: 13

Mason's work with Cullinan belongs to a similarly marginalised enclave to that of the 'long dead Italian', the arena of South African poetry. Her undertaking to illustrate Cullinan's work does not primarily concern itself with popular, political or politically correct comment or imagery. The issues dealt with in Cullinan's poetry are mostly of a personal nature, issues of spirituality, of being human and of relationships. While the political does play a role¹⁵, Cullinan "...has always stood at a certain distance from what is commonly understood to be the heart of the South African matter" (Watson in Cullinan 1994: ix). As Watson points out in his introduction to *The Selected*:

[Although] there are poems of his which...deal with those anxieties which are common currency in the psychic life of South Africans, he has never paid much heed to that indigenous Berlin Wall, supposedly dividing the political from the non-political, which critics have used in the last few decades to separate local poets into good and bad, patriots and traitors.

Ibid.

Cullinan's is not protest or political poetry in the obvious sense, so the social relevance in political terms of producing an edition of 40 books (not all of which have been sold, and thus not all of which are in public circulation) that few are ever going to see, could be called into question. As Moodie comments, "God, when you think of Africa, what is the

¹⁵ Several of Cullinan's poems, for example, '1818. M François Le Vaillant Recalls his Travels To The Interior Parts of Africa 1780-1785', explore aspects of the history of colonialism.

percentage of people who are going to even see a book, my book? It's not water or electricity or food or life support. [Book-making is] quite a selfish activity in a way" (Addendum D: 10). Such projects must find their justification, I believe, in their aesthetic and creative value and not solely for their financial value or direct social impact.

Mason asserts, however, that illustration for special editions such as *The Selected* or her bestiary have personal value for her. Through Dante's creatures (and presumably also through Cullinan's poetry), she, in some way, finds herself: "[W]henever I encounter any of Dante's creatures, I can say, 'Here is one of my coverings. Under this fantastic or odious or graceful mask did my Proteus nature hide itself' " (Emerson in Mason *N.C.* 1990: 13). This, in turn, also forms part of what the artist might help the reader/viewer to discover. To discover that an illustration/text has given a visual as well as verbal definition to one's inner world is surely a liberating and affirming experience. The text and the images the text suggests in the reader/viewer's imagination come to constitute the reader/viewer. In this sense, art is creating the viewer and has an impact on the outside world.

Mason's argument above falls into line with Wendy Steiner's defence of the experience of aesthetic pleasure gained from art, and of art's social value because of it. She asserts: "...all but the most formalist critics believe that language and the arts do have some effect on reality" (Steiner 1995: 61), even if it is not direct or obvious to us. If we agree that "[e]verything that involves aesthetic judgement involves a personal revelation of preference, of pleasure..." (Steiner 1995: 9), then we must agree that *The Selected*

produces aesthetic pleasure. And, if “[b]eing moved by art means having real reactions to unreal events” (Steiner 1995: 77), then those real reactions are manifest in the world and thus affect it. The experience of “the variety of meanings available in a work helps make us tolerant and mentally lithe. Art is a realm of thought experiments that quicken, sharpen and sweeten our being in the world” (Steiner 1995: 8). Mason’s visual experiments with Cullinan’s text do precisely this.

Mason’s other reasons for the apparently strange pursuit of illustrating a text of this kind include her interest in history, particularly that of quattrocento art¹⁶ and her enjoyment of any “philosophical structure” (Mason in *N.C.* 1990: 13). It is debatable as to whether a collection of poetry constitutes a philosophical structure, but a poet’s selected works, by nature of the time span they cover, present a certain personal approach to life (that of the poet), an ethos that could be linked with a philosophical structure. Mason certainly asserts: “I like the layered way Patrick thinks” (Addendum C: 4). She also declares unabashedly that she loves words, “even the rather pedantic and sometimes ludicrous curlienes of translation” (Mason in *N.C.* 1990: 13). This interest in translation partly explains Mason’s interest in Cullinan’s own work in this area, included in his section of ‘Versions and a Diversion’. She adds: “Poetry, especially Afrikaans verse and Dante (in translation) is my preferred reading anyway and Patrick has become my favourite English poet” (Addendum C: 1).

¹⁶ This is an interest that would link in well with Cullinan’s own interest in translating ancient texts and telling historically-based stories in his poetry.

Mason also revels in the text's ability to create entire worlds and lives previously unknown to the reader/viewer. She writes, with Dante's drawings in mind, "Most of all I enjoy the power of the artist at the centre of his universe" (Mason in *N.C.* 1990: 13).

Dante is the artist who creates visual worlds through descriptive text, but Mason is also the artist at the centre of her own universe, for though she responds to texts such as those of Dante and Cullinan, the world she creates is one that extends the vision embodied in the texts alone.

Cullinan has no qualms in acknowledging that Mason's contribution enhances the experience of his text. While he is aware that "there's [often] a very strong case to be made for not putting illustrations in," he also affirms that, "...when I saw what she was doing, it was as though in different mediums we were trying to do something of the same thing...an imaginative accuracy. I think one of the most important attributes of good poetry is accuracy, but imaginative accuracy, resonant accuracy" (Addendum A: 4).

'Imaginative accuracy' is an aptly descriptive term for what Mason and Cullinan have in common. It paradoxically suggests an ability to fully enter into the world of the other (or whatever their subject-matter may be), to understand it and to express it in a new language, to perform a delicate act of translation so that others too may share the vision. The imaginative accuracy of poet and artist combine in *The Selected*, allowing us to journey beyond the bounds of where poem or painting alone could take us, as we shall see in the close analysis of the poems to follow.

CHAPTER 3

Approaching the Image/Text Relationship: Seducing the Senses

How does one approach a text such as *The Selected* to conduct an analysis of the image/text relations within it? In *Reading Pictures, Viewing Texts* (1991), French semiotician Claude Gandelman suggests a focus on “the apperception of texts and pictures” (Gandelman 1991:x), in other words, on the mental process by which a person makes sense of an idea by assimilating it to the body of ideas he or she already possesses. The process of apperception engages both the senses and the intellect, and also functions by association and metaphor, processes closely linked with the intuition and emotions. ‘Apperception’ implies comprehending and internalising the text or image in a holistic way so that they become part of the reader/viewer. “As we read, we converse with authors in our own language and in other languages; some of these authors are alive, but the majority are not” (Paz 1992:111), and so the apperception and creation of poetry and art becomes a communion with human past, with history. The nature of the image/text relationship, as controlled by artists and writers influences our apperception of the art object and has the power to guide or hinder our sense-making. Gandelman explores what happens to the reader/viewer’s senses in the encounter with image/text relationships. His analysis is particularly useful for our exploration of *The Selected* in that he introduces a focus on touching in the exploration of texts and images. This relates to the idea of Cullinan’s text being transformed into a seductive art object. The pleasure of the text is not only visual, but also textural in the artists’ book.

In 'Touching with the Eye', the first chapter of *Reading Pictures, Viewing Texts*, Gandelman focuses on the work of Alois Riegl¹⁷ who was "the first to attempt writing both a grammar of visual forms and a grammar of our perception of these forms" (Gandelman 1991: ix). Riegl puts forward a dichotomy between an *optic* and a *haptic* experience of 'reading'. How do we touch text and read images? Riegl saw that one type of artistic procedure, which corresponds to a certain way of looking, is "based on the scanning of objects according to their outlines" (Gandelman 1991: 5). This method of regarding things he calls *optic*. The opposite way of looking at something is the *haptic* approach, which "focuses on surfaces and emphasises the value of the superficies of objects" (Ibid.). The word *haptical* comes from the Greek *haptēin*, which means 'to seize or grasp', or *haptikos*, which means 'capable of touching' and both of these definitions come into play in a haptic experience or understanding (grasping) of a text or image¹⁸.

Riegl suggests that humans read a picture or image through touch/visual touch (haptically), optically according to the "pure vectorality of outlines" (Gandelman 1991: ix), or by a dialectical combination of the two. Gandelman suggests that this approach fits not only the reading of images but also the reading of texts. As I will go on to discuss, Mason is acutely aware of the optic and haptic nature of text as well as of images and she

¹⁷ Alois Riegl is an art historian who was one of the great precursors of the semiotic approach to the visual arts.

¹⁸ According to this theory the painter's optical look produces linearity and angularity, whereas haptic creativity focuses on surfaces (though artists such as Mason work constantly in both ways). Thus, according to Riegl, "all art forms may be grouped under the heading 'Outline and/or colour in plane or volume'" (Gandelman 1991: 5).

often disrupts the binary opposition Gandelman sets up between them. In some cases¹⁹ she combines text and image into one unit so that we cannot differentiate between them or speak about them separately²⁰. Nevertheless, the terms Gandelman provides enable the reader/viewer to speak “about the relationship between the visual and the textual and sometimes about the equivalence of the visual and verbal” (Gandelman 1991: ix), elements that are clearly manifest in such text/images in *The Selected*.

Gandelman draws on an Egyptian hieroglyph of “the eye that touches things” (Gandelman 1991:1) to embody the haptic/optic dichotomy. This is a dichotomy that has existed through the ages and Gandelman highlights various different art movements that have been either particularly haptically or optically biased²¹. While the touching hand and seeing eye are linked in this haptic/optic experience, it need not be a literal touching that occurs on encountering the artwork: “[t]ouching is the modality of the believing eye; no actual contact with hand or fingertip is necessary” (Gandelman 1991: 3). This makes sense when we look at linguistic constructions such as ‘I was touched by that’ meaning ‘I was moved or emotionally and/or spiritually affected’. Such constructions do not necessarily imply physical contact. The haptic/optic binary thus comes to embody a mind/body binary in that the optic or seeing eye perceives (intellectually) while the hand physically touches the object.

¹⁹ For example, in ‘I Don’t Know if God’ which is discussed in Chapter 4.

²⁰ See *Figure / overleaf*.

²¹ For example, French Realism was optically biased: “For the exponents of this aesthetic current, the ideal was the unmediated capturing of reality, and the eye was the agent par excellence of this sort of touching” (Gandelman 1991: xi).

In the special edition artist's book, the text and image combined open up a much broader experience for the reader/viewer, as I will argue, than when the text stands alone. It is the nature of this experience that I will be exploring in the special edition of the South African poet Patrick Cullinan's *Selected Poems 1961-1991* on which he collaborated with the well-known South African artist Judith Mason. My choice of this work is based upon an interest in South African poetry and art and upon the idea that it is not straight illustration that yields the most revealing relationships between the two disciplines, but rather a collaboration between two very different yet connected visions such as those of Mason and Cullinan. The *Selected Poems 1961-1991* (henceforth *The Selected*) sees Mason choosing a variety of approaches to responding to text both visually and conceptually through image. I will be analysing particular pages and poems that illustrate her approaches. Through this process I hope to reveal not only the various possibilities for image/text relationships, but also expose the ways in which they can lead the reader/viewer deeper into text, image and the book as a whole. I am arguing, therefore, in favour of the contribution of images to poetic works and works of fiction through an exploration of what the image/text relationship can add to the reader/viewer's experience of the text.

The image/text dynamic forms part of both the creation and the reception of the work. In every sense, then, the reader/viewer is myself and the discussion is based upon my personal response to the work. Of course, as the poetry critic George Steiner puts it: "[T]o try and tell what happens inside oneself as one affords vital welcome and habitation to the presences in art, music and literature is to risk the whole gamut of muddle and

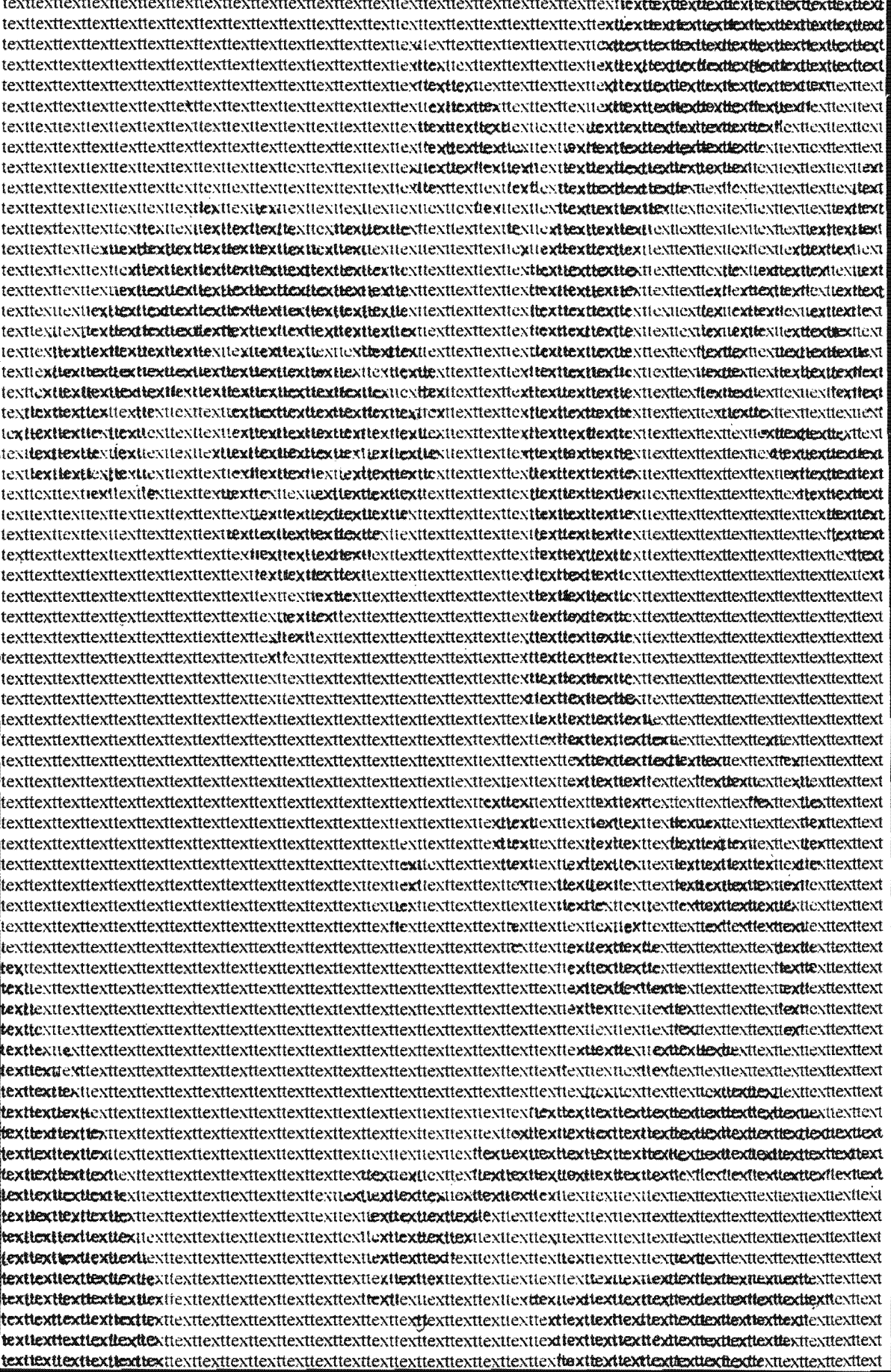
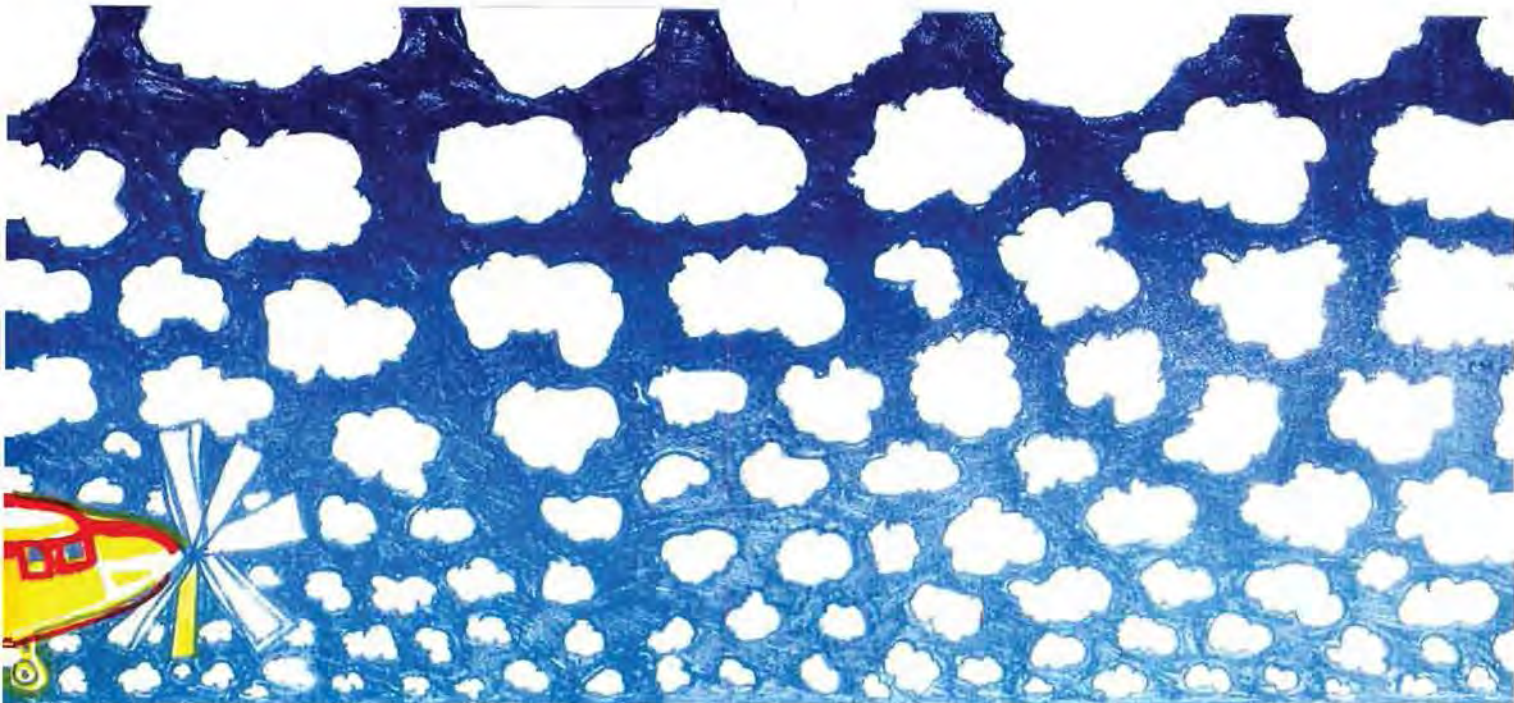


Figure 1: Jane Commin. *Image=Text*, 2002. Text and pen. Life-size.



A shining Palace, a symbol of my love,
My respect for those who live in the North.
It shall cost at least Ten Million Freedoms,
To furnish it will take another Six.

Let it be told in the villages how I pander to my people —
All the bedrooms will be en suite and have telephones,
The swimming pool will be Olympic size,
The bathrooms in marble will have gold taps,
The small private cinema will charm my foreign guests,
And the barracks, tastefully disguised as servant quarters,
Will house a full battalion of Para-Military Police.

Then, every year in Autumn
When the Northern Province is just tolerable after the rains,
I shall come on a State Visit.
I shall come for about three days and thus my people shall know
The Mkulu Kakhulu, Life President,
Thinks of you, cares for his children,
Even those of the North'.

III

Backwards, upon all fours, they have crept from my Presence.
They have made their songs of praise,
Clapping and ululating for a full hour,
Because that is how these savages celebrate.

It is good I have solved their problem.
Their gratitude is touching, excessive perhaps,
(They never know when to stop)
But what did they expect when they came to me?
I am generous, always, to beggars.

But the way their minds work continues to puzzle me.
At times like these I always wonder:
Do my people truly understand me?

Although the terms 'optic' and 'haptic' are useful for describing the kinds of response images and text evoke, it is not entirely clear why they are set up as a binary opposition. Although they can oppose one another, it does not follow that they necessarily do so. The binary opposition also doesn't hold if 'optic' and 'haptic' become synonyms for 'mind' and 'body', as they implicitly do in Gandelman's broader theory. While the two can be in conflict, human beings would be incapable of functioning if their minds and bodies were constantly at odds. Gandelman also seems a little dismissive of the optical eye when he writes: "The optical eye merely brushes the surface of things. The haptic, or tactile eye penetrates in depth, finding its pleasure in texture and grain" (Ibid.). *Merely* brushes the surface of things? In the world of painting and two-dimensional art, surface is largely what the painting is about, the framework from which it operates. It may be a linguistic quibble, but the term "in depth" is bothering. Texture and grain are also part of the surface (although they imply different strata of surface – in order for texture there must be depth). Depth of perception comes from engaging the emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects of the self in the act of physically seeing. What seems to be meant by 'optic' is a focus on shape and composition (of which haptic elements can be a part). This is the root of the problem of setting up an opposition between haptic and optic experience. In many cases the art object invites haptic and optic approaches simultaneously, which are in turn tied up with the viewer/reader's intellectual and emotional responses. Riegl and Gandelman focus largely on the sensory experience of the artwork and less on the emotional and intellectual intervention that forms part of perception.

Mason also finds difficulties with Gandelman's haptic/optic binary. She writes:

I've never accepted this distinction. I don't believe they are binary opposites. I move, as most artists who deal with concepts as symbols do, along an infinite gradation of need and utility which is sometimes haptic and sometimes optic. The distinction may have been valid before post-modernism confused many issues, but for decades I've regarded this distinction as an academic construct of little interest to the practising artist – who does what he/she needs to do at any given time in whatever way seems instinctively best for his/her needs.

Addendum C: 3

Mason dismisses the usefulness of Gandelman's binary opposition for the practising artist altogether. Nevertheless, although the dualism itself is disputable, the terms 'haptic' and 'optic' are useful for a critical discussion about what the artist does and how the reader/viewer perceives. The terms cannot be dismissed from our discussion. Mason does not feel responsible for the viewer's response. She writes: "[I] responded to Patrick's work with seriousness and affection. I cannot concern myself with how the viewer responds for the simple reason that it is not my job to do so" (Addendum C: 4). It is evident, however, that Mason employs both haptic and optic elements in her work in a clear attempt to influence the reader/viewer. An optic response to text would seem to be based on the linear pattern of words on a page (something Mason explores particularly in

'Prehistory, Catembe Ferry' where she disrupts this pattern²²) whereas there are a much wider range of elements that can encourage a haptic experience in an image (different materials or textures, or forms of illusionism where textures are depicted or evoked). The image then has a much wider scope for a haptic response, particularly for one less mediated by intellectual intervention.

Mason's comment (that it is not her job to analyse the response of the viewer) raises an important issue. It is necessary for the purposes of this discussion to distinguish between the process, with which the artist is intimately involved, and the product, with which the reader/viewer or critic is involved. The artist has more time, energy and money invested in the former (although most artists are interested in the reception of their work to a certain extent); the critic more in the latter. While the artist may dismiss Gandelman's terminology, the terms remain elements that come into play in the production of the artwork. The reader/viewer or critic contributes to the meaning-making process by engaging with the text or image and haptic or optic elements influence their response. A discussion of the text/image dynamic must explore both the creation and reception of the image or text.

Gandelman traces the concept of the haptic (the idea that vision is a form of touching) back to the work of Descartes and Berkeley. He explains:

²² 'Prehistory, Catembe Ferry' will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

For Berkeley, there is no vision in the performative meaning of the term – that is, in the sense of seeing as a potentiality of acting over the objects that surround us – without a transfer of the sense of touch to the operations of vision. The locating of objects in the world and their identification – what today is called pattern recognition – and even more so the evaluation of the distance between the observing eye and the points of his focusing on the surface of these objects are synaesthetic operations.

Gandelman 1991: 6

Synaesthesia²³ is the production of a sense impression relating to one sense or part of the body by stimulation of another sense or part of the body²⁴. It is central to our apprehension of texts and images partly because art-making itself is a synaesthetic impulse. As Elaine Scarry writes in *On Beauty and Being Just* (1999) “Wittgenstein says that when the eye sees something beautiful, the hand wants to draw it” (Scarry 1999:3). Beauty induces a synaesthetic response in the artist/viewer that moves from an optic to a haptic base:

Beauty brings copies of itself into being. It makes us draw it, take photographs of it, or describe it to other people. Sometimes it gives rise to exact replication and other times to resemblances and still other times to things whose connection to the original site of inspiration is unrecognisable.

²³ See overleaf on p46 - *Figure 2*: Jane Commin. *Synaesthesia*. 2002.

²⁴ Once again Mason’s use of her fingerprint is an example of something that would stimulate synaesthesia.

Scarry 1999:3

Mason's response to Cullinan's work could be seen as synaesthetic. She perceived beauty within the text through her visual senses (reading/optic) which prompted a response of touch, of making and drawing (haptic):

A visual event may reproduce itself in the realm of touch (as when the seen face incites an ache of longing in the hand, and the hand then presses pencil to paper), which may in turn then reappear in a second visual event, the finished drawing. This crisscrossing of the senses may happen in any direction.

Scarry 1999:4

Mason's response to the beauty of Cullinan's poetry hangs somewhere between being a 'resemblance' and at times being something where the original site of inspiration is less clear. It would also seem that a synaesthetic response (Mason's to Cullinan's poetry) begets more synaesthetic responses (that of the reader/viewer to both Mason's images and Cullinan's poetry – which can even take dissertation form).

Gandelman continues: "The purely optical (without synaesthesia) is only capable of apprehending points on a plane surface" (Gandelman 1991: 6). According to Berkeley visual appearances are flat:

[I]t is only through a transference of the sense of touch to the eye that one is able to locate and identify things and evaluate one's position in relation to them. Purely optical vision by an eye devoid of the synaesthetic sense of touch would be a vision without pattern recognition in which only points, or at best two-dimensional extension, would be perceived.

Ibid.

Berkeley, like Descartes, has a conception of apperception based on a dual axis in which he sees apperception as being divided into, "the optical axis, through which what might be called nonepistemic vision is made possible, and the haptical axis, which in the act of actual seeing is projected onto the other one in an act of necessary synaesthesia" (Ibid.)²⁵. Gandelman further supports the theory of a dual axis of experience through discussing the German psychologist Viktor Lowenfeld's classification of apperception in children, a classification that occurs along lines similar to that of Riegl's dichotomy. Lowenfeld posits two main types of creativity in children: "...the optical and the haptical, the first proceeding through metaphor in its apprehension of things and jumping from one point to another point over the surface of pictures and objects, the second proceeding according to contact with the surface of things themselves" (Gandelman 1991: 9). Lowenfeld's approach thus re-enforces the optic/haptic, mind/body analogy. It doesn't, however,

²⁵ There remains in Berkeley's approach, however, the insistence that the two are binary opposites. Gandelman identifies this same binary opposition, though with different terminology, in Hegel's *Aesthetics*, where the idea of dialogue is also highlighted. Hegel sees the history of artistic genres as the result of "succeeding acts of negation and dialogue between the two poles of the dichotomy" (Gandelman 1991:6). Dialogue between movements and genres, between image and text, has always formed part of the aesthetic experience.

preclude the haptic and optic experience from occurring in conjunction to one another in a single individual, though he suggests that certain individuals lean towards one type of experience more than the other. The child who refers to mainly visual experience is called the 'visual' type and the child who experiences mainly through subjective, bodily and muscular feelings is called the 'haptic' type²⁶.

The introduction of 'metaphor' in this context links the visual with the linguistic or textual and Gandelman also goes on to link the linear-pictorial or optical-haptical dichotomy to the dichotomy between metaphor and metonymy. He bases this link on the work of Roman Jakobson²⁷ who defined the two main types of *verbal* association and creativity in children as metaphoric and metonymic (terms that correspond to the two main axes of language defined in Saussure's linguistics): "...one child will proceed through jumps...from one paradigm to another...while another child will associate through metonymic contact with a syntactic string" (Gandelman 1991:10).

Gandelman translates Jakobson's linguistic focus back to a pictorial one. He likens the (optical) scanning of the picture by the eye, the jump the eye makes from one element to another, to a semantic reading of the picture. This kind of reading sees the picture as a

²⁶ Nevertheless, while children experience in these two ways, South African children's author and illustrator Fiona Moodie asserts that "children like just about anything. Anything. They're so amazingly receptive" (Addendum D: 3). She implies it is their inherent leaning and approach to the image and all experience that stimulates either haptic or optic ways of looking and less the image itself manipulating them to do so. While Lowenfeld's theory helps explore how children perceive, Moodie's comment casts doubts on whether this reflects much on the nature of the image/text relationship that stimulated their response.

²⁷ Roman Jakobson followed the work of the French semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure who was the source of the *Course in General Linguistics* (first published in 1971 by Éditions Payot, Paris).

“reproduction of reality based on resemblance and not as an index, as a sign that reveals a specific genre or technique or the style of a particular painter or school” (Gandelman 1991: 10). In contrast, a haptical reading would focus on the surfaces “and grounds and backgrounds, on the texture, the colouring” (Ibid.) Such haptic touching of the eye of the picture reads the image non-semantically, as “an index of the painter’s hand”(Ibid.) (of the technique or style, signature by mark) rather than as representation. Gandelman thus concludes: “All types of regard, whether of a reader or a painter, proceed along these two antithetical lines. Such double scanning, at once touching and jumping, is perhaps a translation into the pictorial modality of the language dichotomy described by Jakobson” (Gandelman 1991:10). This conclusion of antithesis between haptic and optic experience, as has been previously argued, is not a position this dissertation supports, although it can be acknowledged that there may be tension between the two kinds of experience.

Gandelman finds this haptic/optic tension throughout art history. He sees it in the quarrel between the Neo-Classicists (exponents of pure line – optic) and the Romanticists (who upheld a doctrine of texture and tachism – haptic), in the triumph of haptics in the Impressionist movement and the reappearance of optics in the linearity of pictorial symbolism. Mason’s art also embodies this tension between haptic and optic elements and the artist’s book exists, as Drucker has emphasised, expressly to exploit these elements. Mason is very aware of the book medium, of the book as an object made up of paper, wood, ink and glue. She emphasises these materials and their haptic elements in several ways; by using the paper ground as a colour in her drawings and not simply as a background on which to work, and by folding it at the corners into a dart, which she does

for the poem 'Devils'. The folded paper is incorporated into the shapes of her design in the drawing. It becomes a play on the madness described in the poem, that of someone folding and tearing paper compulsively in a mental institution, but also suggests the madness of bookmaking, of writing and art as mad undertakings. What causes us to create? Cullinan connects the plans to bomb and kill to paper in his poem. Blank paper suggests infinite potential for making or writing. It is like a bomb waiting to explode with life or violence. As Seamus Heaney writes in his poem 'Digging'; "Between my finger and my thumb |The squat pen rests; snug as a gun" (Heaney 1990: 1).

The folded paper also becomes a play on surface, on illusion and reality and on the introduction of a tactile (haptic) experience of the poetry and text. Mason draws folded paper and over this, in each corner, she places a layer of paper that *is* actually folded. By juxtaposing the two she highlights the falsity of the seeming three-dimensionality of her image and also calls into play the struggle of characters in the poem to differentiate between reality (drowning) and illusion (the belief that one can walk on water). The attempt to draw paper on paper is ironic and paradoxical. It seems at first a redundant activity to represent what is already present in reality. The folded paper emphasises the ridiculousness of the endeavour, and yet Mason's drawn paper becomes a pattern in itself, quite other from anything paper-like. The haptic element encourages us to engage with both the literal (denotative) and metaphorical (connotative) implications of the shape and texture of the folds. The idea of synaesthesia is disrupted by the proximity of the drawing and of the actual textured object. The drawing encourages synaesthesia in its

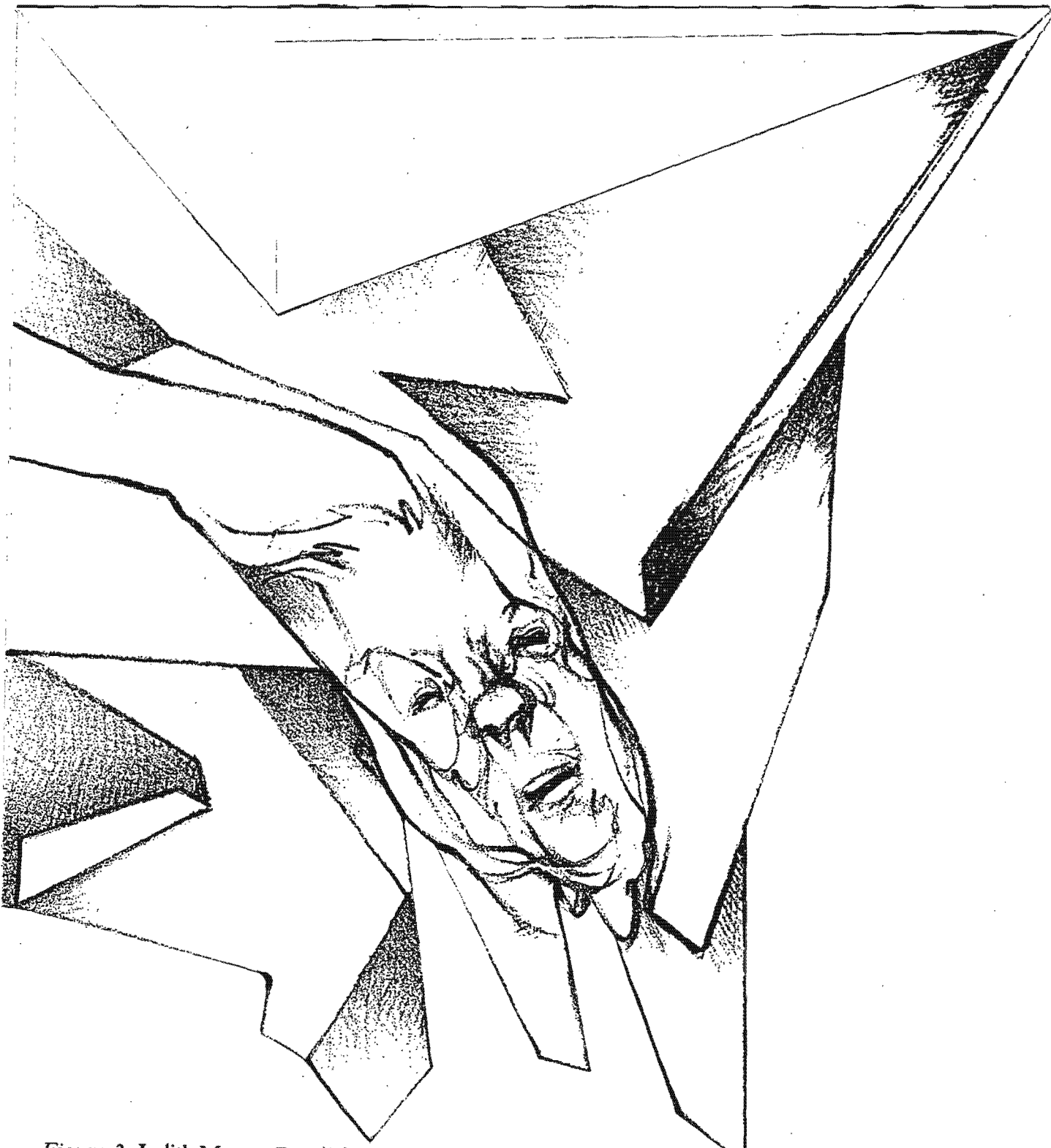


Figure 3: Judith Mason. Detail from the illustration for 'Devils'. 1992. Lithograph, 56 x 38 cm. *The Selected: Section I.*

illusionistic representation of a texture – our eyes here stimulate our sense of touch. The reader/viewer's senses are simultaneously engaged and questioned.

The haptic and optic responses in the reader/viewer are certainly stimulated by visual art, but do they apply with equal power in literature? As Gandelman points out, “[t]he eye does not read only pictures; it also reads texts. The eye does not touch only the texture of painting; it also scans the surfaces of written texts” (Gandelman 1991: 11). We rarely scan texts in a formally perfect manner, from left to right and down to the next line. Gandelman asserts that most people tend to read at differing speeds, with many forward and backward jumps, and so he applies the metaphor/metonymy dichotomy to texts too: “The true decipherer is the person who runs through a text in a jumping “metaphoric” manner, establishing connections between words that are far apart and not necessarily following the order ostensibly imposed upon the eye by the sequential succession of lines” (Gandelman 1991:12).

Although the optic and the haptic (the intellectual and the sensory) are two ways of approaching both text and image, it is by no means certain that text and image are apperceived in identical ways. As Vivian van der Merwe asserts of the production side of image and text, “I’m convinced that when I’m painting (and I often think about how I’m thinking when I’m painting) I don’t think like when I am talking” (Addendum G: 5) and many writers also claim that when they are writing they are not thinking in the conventional sense. We also receive images and text differently, although a haptic or optic response may form a part of the way in which we do so. It is probably truer to say

that the degree to which an image or text invites a haptic or optic response differs from text to text and from image to image. Artists' books such as *The Selected* exploit the optic and haptic possibilities of the book form in order to enhance and heighten the reader/viewer's aesthetic experience. Here too, the body/mind relationship needn't be an opposition. In fact the two combined lead to a third element greatly discussed by artists and poets alike, the element of intuition in the creation and reception of images and text.

While our senses strongly dictate our intellectual and emotional responses to image and text, this does not cover all the elements involved in apprehension and apperception.

What is missing from this discussion is the intuitive response so many poets and writers speak about and experience. Gandelman touches on this in introducing a body/text analogy underlying his optic/haptic theory. He sees the text as mapping the human body of its creator and suggests that "reading texts is similar to reading a giant portrait" (Gandelman 1991: x). Mason, in many ways, reads the body within Cullinan's work, draws it out and imprints it through her image upon the page. She frequently literally imprints her own body, and yet her images are both a portrait of herself and of Cullinan (though in a more symbolic sense). At times her imprint seems bloody, muddy or sweaty, as if she herself were the ink. This gives intensity to her work and relates to Gandelman's comment:

Artistic creation and aesthetic appreciation probably have more to do with tears, sperm, and blood than with rational and controlled thinking. Artistic creation

also has much to do with body vision, with the image of the uncontrollable body that is always in the *Hintergrund* of political, historical, and aesthetic discourse.

Gandelman 1991: xi

Mason's imprints, however, explore both the controllable (her precise line drawing) and the uncontrollable (inky washes) elements of the body. The body lies both within and behind our creation of and response to art, for, as Mikhail Bakhtin asserts; "history is primarily a discourse about the body" (Bakhtin paraphrased in Gandelman 1991:xi). Gandelman further claims that the body dictates our initial responses before social conditioning kicks in. He writes that it is "primarily the innate structure of vision, the inner body vision we have in our cortex, which directs our gaze when we look at things, when we read them, and only secondarily the social categorizations or the political ideologies" (Gandelman 1991: xi). Mason and Cullinan's work appeals to both bodily and social responses, and both responses are necessary to fully enter their work.

The intuitive response is also catered for in George Steiner and Octavio Paz's approaches to art in which they sense the 'other' presence in things, and in which art is a means of communicating with the past, with history and with all that exists outside of ourselves. Mason sees this kind of intuition as playing a large role in her response to Cullinan's work: "I think what I did was an intuitive response to some of the work. 'Illustration' suggests something more formal and comprehensive. All I wanted to produce was an atmosphere which could possibly enhance the enjoyment of the reader without distracting

her from the text" (Addendum C: 1). She believes that her collaboration with Cullinan worked partly because of this intuitive aspect of their relationship and that it was unnecessary for Cullinan to place any boundaries or restrictions upon her work because, "...we are sensitive to each other as people so it probably wasn't necessary." (Addendum C: 2). From their interviews it is clear that Mason did not discuss with Cullinan what he meant in his poems, but worked intuitively with that she saw in them. Intuition, it would seem, springs from relationship, from foreknowledge of what one is dealing with, from prior experience and from immersing oneself in the project. In a sense, Mason loses herself in Cullinan's text and allows it to guide her. Mason's concept of the intuitive draws from both optic and haptic experiences of the world and moves mostly within the sphere of connotations and is behind all our responses to images and text. It becomes that, for her, which goes without saying.

It goes without saying too that the different artists and writers I interviewed would place themselves in differently in relation to Gandelman's haptic/optic theory and respond to different aspects of his body/text analogy. Moodie fits more within the haptic/optic and the instinctive approaches: "I'm not really an intellectual. [Inspiration] seems to come from seeing things, not thinking about them" (Addendum D: 13). Like Mason²⁸, she prefers not to theorise about her own work; "I don't really have any theories. It's just

²⁸ Mason is reluctant to analyse the image/text relationship and its effects too deeply. She re-iterates:

My responses were instinctive rather than academic....I give each job I do my best shot and move on. Providing criticism of my own work after long periods of time is something I cannot afford to do either financially or emotionally. It is the job of the critic or the academic.

what I do and it is what I enjoy doing. I don't really think much about why, or whether I'm changing anything in the world or whether it is important" (Addendum D: 10).

Nevertheless, there are aspects of Gandelman's theory that come into play (and that can be perceived from an analytical point of view) within their writing and images and that form part of their own response to image and text.

Ultimately Gandelman's exploration of our optic or haptic sensory responses becomes an exploration of the pleasure that can be gained from apprehending the image or text. The presentation of the book form in *The Selected*, the wooden cover, heavy velvety pages, the full colour images and the games played with text and image, all serve to heighten the reader/viewer's tactile and visual response to the text. The presentation of the artist's book serves to emphasise the beauty of the text, the text as a whole of which the images are part. Just how Mason's involvement in the project influences the reader/viewer's pleasure in the text through her use of elements that encourage a heightened haptic or optic response, I shall go on to discuss.

CHAPTER 4

Exploring Image/Text Relations in *The Selected*: A Close Analysis

The Selected reveals its own construction and the personalities or marks of those who made it. Both the marquetry on the cover and the quality of printing within allude to a dedicated craftsmanship behind its creation, a craftsmanship that seems, by its proximity to poetry, to reflect on the craftsmanship of writing itself. The book is personally signed and written in by both artist (Judith Mason), poet (Patrick Cullinan) and editor (Stephen Watson) so that their individual handwriting is recorded, their mark made upon a book that is itself a collection of many marks. The imprints of all involved are included in more ways than one (mental imprints and images, physical prints of image and text on page, signatures and body and object prints).

The nature of Mason's aesthetic experience of Cullinan's text is embodied in the nature of her artistic response, which is intuitive, symbolic, beautiful and grotesque. Her work guides us on a visual journey through the book and her images often work through their ambiguity. Mason picks up on and illustrates any ambiguity already present within Cullinan's text²⁹. This ambiguity opens the interpretation of both works to a broader context because it implies added connotations to the poem. Her images work largely through engaging the reader/viewer's powers of association. As Skotnes writes, "[P]art of the fascination of images as an artist stems from their ambiguity" (Addendum E: 1) and it undoubtedly forms part of the viewer's fascination too. Mason thus often keeps images

vague so that the viewer has to work hard to discern the face within the mess of scribbled marks as in her illustration for 'Grammar'³⁰. This intentional vagueness of the image allows almost endless interpretations of the text and image. As Skotnes suggests when she speaks of her collaborations with Malcom Payne on artists' books containing both image and text³¹: "Anything can be subjected to textual analysis and turned into anything anybody wants it to be, so we never proceeded from the belief that images can tell you anything really" (Ibid.). Skotnes is not suggesting the image has no connotations, but she questions the idea that it has a single, fixed meaning. She suggests instead that images "resonate" (Ibid.) in different ways depending on their con(text). Connotation within images, as Skotnes sees it, is open to almost endless interpretation. This property of the image falls in line with Kerr's definition of a good image or text, one in which the play of connotations between text and image constantly generate ever wider circles of interpretation and connotation.

This ambiguity does not mean that Mason's images are inaccessible or technically ill-drawn. One of the reasons her images work so effectively and are so accessible to the reader (without being simple) is the fact that most of the time she refuses to attach them to any historical period. This may seem paradoxical in relation to the fact that many of Cullinan's poems are of their time and place (or specifically historically situated), but such images often serve to extend the relevance of such poems beyond the confines of

²⁹ For example in her response to 'Being Careful', which is discussed on page 109.

³⁰ See *Figure 4* overleaf.

³¹ For example *Sounds and Signatures*.



Figure 4: Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Grammar'. 1992. Lithograph, life-size. *The Selected: Section II.*

their context. In the case of her *A Dante Bestiary* (a response to a text that has itself dated tremendously) she deliberately “avoided using images which tie the drawings to any particular time or place” (Mason in *N.C.* 1990: 15). This seems to be an approach that is continuous throughout her work. Only in poems such as that of ‘1818. M. François Le Vaillant Recalls His Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa 1780-1785.’ and ‘April 1796: Colonel Robert Jacob Gordon Returns from His Last Journey’ (poems entitled with dates) does she add a little authenticating period detail; a ruffled cuff or glass dome. In such cases, the content of the poem explicitly places the context as a specific historical period, but even here the period imagery Mason focuses on does not dominate her illustration and allows the reader/viewer to enter into the text from his or her modern perspective (as does Cullinan’s very personal and often first person approach to the historical characters he is portraying). Both artists encourage the reader/viewer’s identification with the subject matter in this way.

The power of Mason’s images lies also in their ability to set, or sum up the tone of the poem she illustrates. They indicate the underlying themes; the horror, the satirical and the grotesque. Her approach to the grotesque is both sensual and visceral as can be seen in her illustration for ‘The Bestiary’³². In contrast to Mason’s horror images are her satirical images through which a deeply ironic vision is revealed. One such image breaks entirely from any of the styles she employs elsewhere in the book. It is that of ‘Mkulu Kakulu’³³, a poem concerning the former dictator of Malawi, Hastings Banda. Because the tone of

³² ‘The Bestiary’ is discussed in deeper analysis on page 115.

³³ Interestingly this poem is omitted from the Snailpress version of *The Selected*. Perhaps, as Mason’s drastically different visual response to it indicates, it stands out from the body of Cullinan’s work in its tone

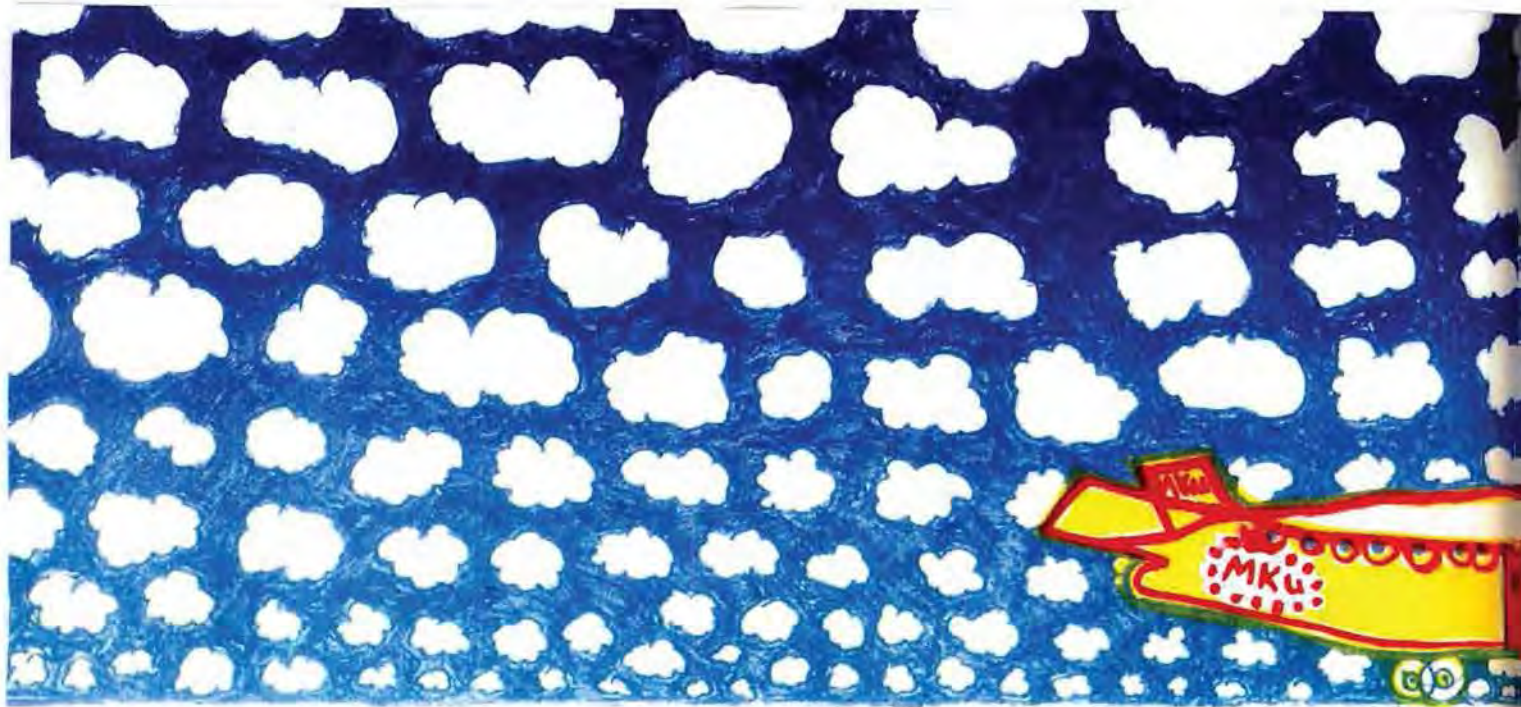
the poem itself is largely critical and ironical (the con-man dictator speaker lies to his people as to his plan's for the country's improvement, then, with mock sincerity, pretends to be upset when people distrust him), Mason employs an entirely new approach, that of naïve or child-like art³⁴. Her bright illustration³⁵ seems to have been drawn with a clumsy hand holding huge primary-coloured crayons; nevertheless, the symbolism within it is far from clumsy.

The bright colours suggest an ideal world, a happy nation, pie-in-the-sky dream-reality in which all the colours are heightened. The sky is the blue of postcard beaches and the visiting leader's plane is parked at the end of a red carpet runway laid out as if for a royal visit. Nevertheless, as the drawing style is mock clumsy, so is the dictator and the vision he feeds his people in the north to pacify them. As Mason's depiction of the private presidential jet emphasises, the changes he offers are useless and merely feed his ego and appearance of empire. The image also connotes those drawings we do as children, in which we imagine our adult selves, jobs and lives. Of course, few of our prophetic drawings are fulfilled and the implication from both poem and image is that this one is no exception.

and subject matter and wouldn't be well integrated into the whole of the Snailpress published work. Watson recalls it being regarded as too politically insensitive or incorrect.

³⁴ As Cullinan remarks, "...she drew this absurd child's aeroplane" (Addendum A: 4).

³⁵ See on page 63 - *Figure 5*: Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Mkulu Kakhulu'. 1992. Colour lithograph, 56 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section II.



MKULU KAKHULU

I

The men of the Northern Province are troubled.
Their hearts are heavy. They have come to see me.

Like all people of that region they are fools, these men,
But they have learned how to cower. They do this correctly.
They know the way to my heart is in the obedience:
That is why they call me Father and kiss my feet.

I give them permission to speak.

'O Mkulu Kakhulu, Life President,
The hearts of your people are heavy.
We, your children of the North, suffer.
We suffer because there is no Development there.
Unlike your children of the South
We have no Infrastructure, there are no factories
For making beer or bread, O Father,
There is no Cash Economy where we come from'.

II

Some say I have no heart.
Some say I have lost all feeling.
Let those who say that know
I was touched by the sorrow of these people.

I decided to help the Northern Province.

'My children, go back to your huts in the bush.
Go back and celebrate, for I, The Mkulu Kakhulu, Life President
Have decided to give you Development:
I shall show how I love my people.

First, a road of tar will go from my Capital
Straight to a place I shall choose in the North:
And there on a hill I shall build

The child-like-ness of the image also symbolises the way the dictator treats his people. He feeds them lies and fantasies because he believes they could not understand or stomach the truth in the same way parents concoct stories of tooth fairies and storks. Nevertheless, a few elements in the image subtly predict danger. The beautiful blue sky is filled with clouds, which, though lovely, mar the perfect field of blue. Also, Mason's simplified perspectival rendition of the runway forms a red triangle reminiscent of the hazard signs that populate our roadways and warn of danger, workmen or falling rocks ahead.

Patrick Cullinan makes some valid points about Mason's response to his work. He admires Mason's capacity for taking a poem, finding a detail or object described within it and transforming it into a symbol for the whole poem. She interweaves complex concepts in seemingly simple images. Examples Cullinan gives are Mason's drawing in the back of his copy of *The Selected* of Narina³⁶ and her buckle, and the toast rack image for 'Sir Tom'. "At the same time," he says, "she's got that very exact eye. She's a wonderful draftsman. I love the way she draws. I love the accuracy" (Addendum A: 2). Esmé Berman agrees, asserting: "Her technique is immaculate: taut line and subtlety of colour sustain the drama of every quarter of the format, and for all the startling immediacy of her images, her paintings possess a sensitivity which makes them pleasing to the eye" (Berman 1970: 191). Mason's power lies in her illusionistic portrayal of the fantastical. Her technique gives substance to forms that exist in most of our minds as abstract

³⁶ Narina is a character who features in *1818. M. François Le Vaillant Recalls His Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa 1780-1785*.

thoughts or fears. Not only does Mason manifest such things in her images, but she does so in a way that is both horrifying (in her accuracy) and yet stylistically beautiful.

Throughout *The Selected* the reader/viewer remains aware of Mason's engagement with the concept of the book, of her interest in the implications of printing and the processes of art making. She reveals her vision of the book as a sculpted object, one that is both constructed, built up of elements that are literally glued and bound together (formed by addition) and also carved out, in that her lithographs and etchings come from a process of reversal on stone or copper plates (formed by subtraction). She links the graphic nature of the mark of the text and the mark of the drawing hand. Her response to 'At Forty Odd'³⁷ and its reflection carries with it her awareness that printing is made up of positives and negatives. Before we have the text, we have the text in reverse. There is always a process behind what we see. So while Mason's beautiful images make us highly aware of surface, of what is in front of us, she simultaneously forces us to acknowledge that which went before and that lies beneath. Despite Mason's repeated assertions that, "My intentions were encapsulated in my drawings and I nodded at, rather than talked back to [Cullinan's] text" (Addendum C: 4), Mason is doing more than creating an appropriate atmosphere through which to approach the poems. Nodding in itself is a part of dialogue, but Mason's images affirm text in more complex ways than this, as can be revealed by analysis of them. Of both Cullinan's poems and Mason's images, one can concur with a remark, from another context, of Elaine Scarry: "[S]omething, or someone gave rise to their creation and remains silently present in the newborn object" (Scarry 1999:10).

³⁷ See Figure 12 on page 78.

The French semiotician Roland Barthes suggests that there should be a grammar that can be learnt in order to decode the formal methods by which connotation (or metaphor) is brought into play in image/text relations. This “ ‘historical grammar’ of iconographic connotation ought...to look for its material in painting, theatre, associations of ideas, stock metaphors, etc., that is to say, precisely in ‘culture’” (Barthes 1977: 22). The source of visual language is thus found in the social history of images and imagination. Mason draws precisely from art images and from history and uses them to create her own, unique images. Because her drawings and lithographs accompany text, she is able to draw on imagery not only from the field of art history or visual history, but also of literary history and the cultural history to which much of Cullinan’s work refers. Mason’s image for ‘Nativity’³⁸, for example, draws, in the pose of the figures (a frontal image of the mother with the child on her lap), from a long tradition of religious art depictions of Madonna and Child. This is a theme that captured many artists through the centuries, including Raphael, Leonardo and Michelangelo. Mason’s image calls into play the entire iconographic history of the ‘Madonna and Child’ theme, as well as the politics that have dictated the nature of its depiction through the ages.

In addition to stock references to art or literary history, Mason constructs her own iconography. Such icons may take art history as their source, but become transformed into personal symbols for the artist. Idiosyncratic and thematic symbols recur in Mason’s work, such as the theme of a certain kind of face and the dome-shape. Cullinan calls this

³⁸ See *Figure 6* on page 67.



Figure 6: Judith Mason. Detail from illustration for 'Nativity'. 1992. Black and white reproduction of colour lithograph, part of double page spread, 56 x 38 cm. *The Selected*.



Figure 7: Judith Mason. Detail from illustration for 'Etruscan Girl'. 1992. Black and white reproduction of a colour lithograph, 28 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section IV.

face Mason's "stock in trade" (Addendum A: 12). For 'Nativity' "Judith has done this face, this wonderful Madonna. She uses such themes over and over again, but all slightly different...in a totally different context" (Ibid.). The different context is 'Etruscan Girl'³⁹, a poem about Cullinan's daughter, Sarah, who was killed in a motorcar accident. Sarah, poignantly, becomes the Madonna of 'Nativity'. The visual association of the Madonna with Sarah suggests a relationship between the two women. It suggests that they share common characteristics, perhaps those of beauty and serenity. The repetition of such themes and signs is useful. Once familiarized with them, the reader/viewer finds it easier to 'read' and understand Mason's images.

Her icons, however, are often layered and complex. For example, Mason's drawing of an Ionian dagger is an example of an image that refers both literally (denotatively) to a dagger and figuratively (connotatively) to a murder. Mason is drawn to constructing icons as the images for 'Being Careful', 'The Bestiary' and 'Johannesburg 1902' testify. She asserts:

I am an icon-maker type artist – the central image filled with symbolic implications is what appeals to me. I tend to think metaphorically as a rule. I am a symbol maker or a symbol user rather than an abstract artist or a naturalist. If I wrote I'd be a poet or an essayist rather than a journalist or a novelist.

Addendum C: 3

³⁹ See *Figure 7* on page 68.

NUNC DIMITTIS

It was strange what worried him —
 The distorted bodies
 Of people in cartoons:
 Somehow the joke was lost
 When a head grew fatter
 Than its trunk, and it was strange
 What he remembered now:
 There was a farm
 Where hunting birds as a boy:
*You could shoot
 Right up to the trees but there
 We left them, that
 Was their sanctuary.*

He loathed past battles,
 Never talked of the wars
 He fought in, except
 To condemn all waste. At times
 He hated misery so much
 He would not face it
 For a son or brother,
 But smiled then at servants
 Or called a large black dog
 To jump on the grass
 Outside his window.
 His strength went then.

Yet, having so much
 Natural affection, it seemed
 In the photograph of his mind,
 A summer's evening, where
 Sons and servants, jumping dogs,
 Could make this moment, dying,
 Much less final:
 The wars were all over
 And men were sane,
 And the birds flew, safe,
 Into the trees.

Figure 8: Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Nunc Dimittis'. 1992. Text, 28 x 38 cm. *The Selected*. Section I.

Mason's response can also involve the use or transformation of traditional or commonly accepted symbols. An example of this is 'Nunc Dimittis'⁴⁰ which is simply framed in a black band of mourning, an extension of the traditional black band worn around the arms of the bereaved to indicate their loss. The poem within becomes the arm of the speaker, poetic life within a death symbol. When Mason links image and text in her description of herself, she situates herself amongst the connotative⁴¹ or the imaginative and abstract as opposed to the denotative, literal and realist tendencies. In this sense her art can be linked with Byzantine art; "[T]here is so much about [Byzantine iconic art] which is definitely not didactic, but highly considered in terms of engaging the searching of spiritual consciousness through playing with iconography, with icons and shapes and things"(Addendum G: 4). Paradoxically, however, Mason's icons come to connote the real (or the denotative) as well as the metaphorical aspects of life much as an expressionist painting denotes real suffering or pain through the visual distortion of objects.

Where does Judith Mason's work lie in relation to connotation and denotation? She often moves between the two, particularly in her object printing. While her images are coded and laden with different levels of signification, her thumbprints both *are* themselves and allude to themselves. In this sense, parts of her images are not coded, but once again, they become iconic.⁴² Some thumbprints function within both camps, being both thumbprints

⁴⁰ See *Figure 8* on page 70.

⁴¹ This is terminology from Roland Barthes in 'The Photographic Message', an essay in *Image-Music-Text* (1977). The term 'connotative' is analogous for 'coded'. It means that something signifies several different things at once and on different levels (i.e. the sign has both literal and figurative meanings).

⁴² "In semiotics, a sign that resembles what it represents is called an 'icon', and the special feature of an icon is that it also signifies itself" (Wendy Steiner 1995: 76).

and used for shading or to allude to ideas involving thumbprints (murder/culpability) and not just to thumbprints themselves. Sometimes her prints function as texture, with her palm prints becoming a moth wing or a moon surface. Nevertheless, we remain aware of their origin: the body.

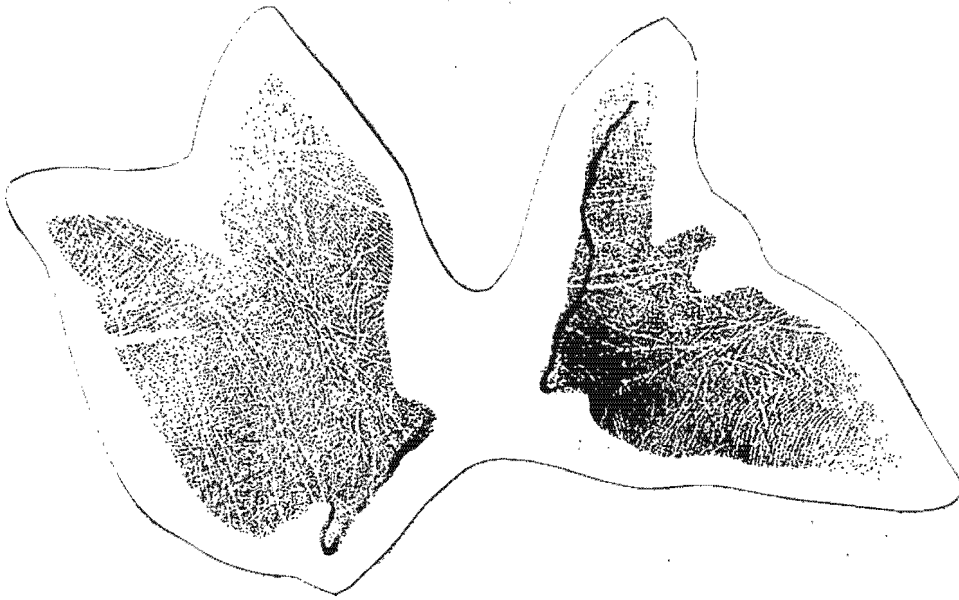


Figure 9: Judith Mason. Detail from the illustration for 'Moths'. 1992. Object print, life-size. *The Selected: Section I*.

Mason is also aware of the two worlds from which such a book draws and engages both the literary and visual structures. She often calls our attention to either the linguistic or visual history behind a colour, word or sign. At times she focuses more on the linguistic structure and at other times on visual language. Her fascination with the idea of the 'imprint' and with printing methods is a way of combining the two, for printing is a medium that encompasses both text and image. Mason asserts; "Printing methods fascinate me and I wanted the reader to be conscious of the lithographic and other

printing processes” (Addendum C: 1). Most of her images in *The Selected* are lithographs, but Mason also imprints in an even more literal sense by using object prints. She carries the world into her studio to ink it up and lay it out for us. Her body is also imprinted on the page, her palms, fingers and feet becoming rocks, moons, moths and planets. These combine with another kind of body print, the mark or line that she makes with her hands and a pencil. Her images literally become a map of herself as well as a symbolic way of imprinting her psychic world upon the page. The only moments she introduces objects that are not printed into the book are the oil painting on the first page and the addition of gold leaf to ‘A God Unknown’⁴³. Otherwise the text and image are on one plane in the literal sense that as you run your hand over the paper you feel their ink in the same way. No one thing is raised above the other creating a textural difference or ridge. The visual and linguistic structures are in harmony with one another on a haptic and optic level.

Mason’s use of gold leaf in ‘A God Unknown’ involves the application of a technique and material that, because of its history, particularly links the image and text. It is a visual structure that invokes both the literary and the art worlds. Gold leaf was particularly prevalent in a religious context and was used to illuminate medieval texts as well as in didactic art in Early Christian churches⁴⁴. It was used most famously (in the art world) in

⁴³ See overleaf on page 74 - *Figure 10*: Judith Mason. The first two pages of the illustration for ‘A God Unknown’. 1992. Lithograph and gold leaf, double page spread, 56 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section I.

⁴⁴ Early Christian churches, such as Sant’ Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna (see *Figure 11* on page 76), were filled with didactic mosaic images in order to communicate the story of Christ to the largely non-literate members of the congregation.

A GOD UNKNOWN
From the Italian of Dante Alighieri

*Giant horn of flame
in black of hell
that stooped and flickered,
murmuring, and as
wind took it
jumped erect and roared
in speech, a tongue
of fire that flickered
in eternity, speaking
these words:*



I
Caught by a woman's art
I lived that year,
that year or more
upon her island,
held in her arms,
bewitched by art,
held by flesh until,
sated, one dawn I woke
and launched my ship
upon the deep, set out
upon my journey, cleaving
the wine-black sea.

Nothing could hold me back,
nothing could stop me:
no thought of family —
wife, father, child —
could draw me home.
There was
only the power within me,
the spirit
driving forward, a greed
to know the world —
all evil, yes, and all
the good of Man.

And so we went:
one ship alone
and those few men
who never left me:
and sailed out through
that Middle Sea:
saw countries, islands
floating past —
Sardinia went, Morocco,
until our ship
reached Spain at last.



2

We were old men now, slowing
with age, as we came
to that narrow strait
where a god
has set his sign:
pillars of rock
that men should go
no further. But I
sailed onward, passing
Seville upon my right,
while to the left
Africa began
to drop from sight.

And here I spoke
these words to my men:
*'Brothers, you
who never doubted,
who stood with me,
faced danger times
beyond your counting,
Look ahead now, look,
for we have reached
the West. Give me
what little time
we still have left
to honour life,
to be the first
to look upon
a land without people,
the first to see,
the first to know
a world
beyond the sun.*

*Think of the seed
from which you have come:
you were not made
to live like brutes
but to follow
that spirit within you,
to face
whatever waits ahead
with what you know,
with what you are,
accepting
whatever you will find
with courage'*

the rich and ornate Byzantine mosaics of the Emperor Justinian and his wife Theodora at San Vitale in Ravenna⁴⁵. Gold leaf became an essential ingredient in religious imagery such as the depiction of radiant auras and halos. It appears in church altarpieces around the world and has been used in the illustration of sacred and ecclesiastical texts. Gold leaf also has other formal implications. The preciousness of the material suggests the preciousness of the message of the image and poem. To place gold in a context is always to ascribe value to that context, whether to connote financial or spiritual value. It is an element that particularly engages the sense of touch in that it is smoother than the page surface and reflects light.

The radiance of the gold leaf in Mason's image, while it invokes this iconographic history, is ironic. The 'God Unknown' is a god of storms, one who destroys. Mason's illustration has him blowing gales across the sea. The golden egg-like shape, that rises (or sinks) on the horizon, evokes many things. Its ambiguity of form allows it to become many of the objects and events mentioned in the poem. It is the golden hull of a sinking ship. It is the sun or moon, the North Star slowly vanishing on the journey south. And yet, it is also an egg, a seed, new life, a kernel that carries a story that grows into a poem and an image. The gold (a pure element that does not rust or corrode, but that leads to downfall when humans obsess over it) embodies a paradox prevalent too in the rest of the image. It is not clear at first glance before reading the text whether the image is one of creation (God breathing life into the world) or of destruction. It becomes both together and Mason's use of this material picks up on this ambiguity and encourages us to

⁴⁵ See *Figure 11* on page 76.

meditate upon it. Mason, in short, invokes a visual structure or tradition and then disrupts or questions it.



Figure 11: *Empress Theodora and Retinue*, c.547. Mosaic. San Vitale, Ravenna.

Mason also plays with the textual implications of imprint throughout *The Selected*, most clearly in her presentation of 'Grammary'⁴⁶, which will be discussed later, though often she alludes to a linguistic structure only to disrupt it. In many cases text becomes one of her drawing materials much like crayon, ink or paint. She allows the text to become a formal aspect of the image and in many cases text becomes the image itself. This serves

to confuse the line between the separate structures of text and image. For example, underneath the poem 'At Forty Odd'⁴⁷, Mason places the same poem mirror-reflected in a paler grey colour like a muted shadow. Not only does this conceptually evoke the images of the poem, both of water and of reflection (reflection in water or reflection in meditative thought), but it also speaks of sense and non-sense. Why, she is asking, does the one collection of signs and shapes convey meaning to us and the other not? Like the semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure⁴⁸, Mason presents language as a system of signs that are in many ways quite random in their relationship to the things they signify. This is a case where a poem Cullinan himself is not that fond of has been transformed. He says: "I think [as it stands in the book] it is the nearest reflection almost exactly of the poem" (Addendum A: 15). The addition of Mason's visual elements intensifies the power of Cullinan's texts, even changing the poem in the view of the poet.

Similarly in 'Prehistory, Catembe Ferry'⁴⁹ the text, drunken like the speaker in the poem, runs off the straight lines and flows askew across the page. Although the text is printed type, the reader is encouraged to treat it like scrawled, drunken handwriting. This is another play on the handwriting/type binary that Mason explores in 'Grammar' and its relationship to 'The Text'. An image that works in a similar way is the typesetting for 'I don't know if God'⁵⁰. This poem is presented like a badly registered print in which one of

⁴⁶ 'Grammar' is discussed in detail on page 128 and can be seen in *Figure 31* on page 129.

⁴⁷ See *Figure 12* on page 78.

⁴⁸ The French semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure was one of the first to set up a course in general linguistics. Central to his teachings and research was the recognition that 'the linguistic sign is arbitrary' (De Saussure 1983:67). The relationship between a word (the signifier) and the thing it alludes to (the signified) is seen as random.

⁴⁹ See *Figure 13* on page 79.

⁵⁰ See *Figure 14* on page 81.

AT FORTY ODD

Alone at midday, lozenges of light
 Broke loose inside the pool and down his skin
 The water crackled. The sun so quick, white
 Glazed the river: in that shock his twin
 Flashed clear, then shivered out of sight.
 They dived and met: smiling, each sank down
 To clouds of cold and sand. It was like night,
 Dream deep. As still as fish they lay as one.

So deep below him is that time and gone —
 I see him floating, caught between two weirs,
 Drifting between vague limits, losing one
 And moving fast up on the other. He
 Floats alone at forty odd. Does he see
 His shadow swim below: the dream he fears?
 His shadow swim below: the dream he fears?
 Floats alone at forty odd. Does he see
 And moving fast up on the other. He
 Drifting between vague limits, losing one
 I see him floating, caught between two weirs,
 So deep below him is that time and gone —

Dream deep: as still as fish they lay as one.
 To clouds of cold and sand. It was like night,
 They dived and met: smiling, each sank down
 Flashed clear, then shivered out of sight.
 Glazed the river: in that shock his twin
 The water crackled. The sun so quick, white
 Broke loose inside the pool and down his skin
 Alone at midday, lozenges of light

Figure 12: Judith Mason. Illustration for 'At Forty Odd'. 1992. Text, life-size. *The*

Selected: Section I.

PREHISTORY, CATEMBE FERRY.

Prawn-juice, sweat,
blood-bright piri-piri —
flies loop and wobble,
land upon the bread.

Fly high
Old Fly, we're canned
on vinho verde.
And someone said:

*One of the crew fell over,
got chopped in the propellor.*

Hazy, LM city
floats across the bay:
balloons and pops. The ferry grinds
toward the khaki shore.

They're always pissed on payday.

Stand. Up now.
Cackle. Belch. Tip to cuddle and
helping hand. We'll make it
to the jetty:

*They're drunk, I tell you,
the whole weekend.*

And from the deck
we see it floating,
face down, dipping
in tepid water.
Lights out, dead drunk,
it leaks pink blood and,
as the ferry goes forever,
rolls against our backwash.

Figure 13: Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Prehistory, Catembe Ferry'. 1992. Text, life-size. *The Selected*. Section II.

the plates have not been properly lined up. The result is two layers of the same poem overlapping badly so that it becomes difficult to read. Mason comments:

I think it is genuinely witty in that it plays with the printing process, the fallibility of God, and with the reader who has to do a double-take after thinking he is looking at a typo. Gus Ferguson [of Snailpress] wanted to add a non-errata slip to the paperback edition!

Addendum C: 1

This combination of text effects and images makes up part of Mason's visual response to the text in *The Selected*. She writes: "I thought the mix of archaic forms (foot, hand) and the games with text ('Grammary', 'Prehistory, Catembe Ferry' and 'I don't know if God') would weld text and image together in a stimulating way" (Ibid.).

Of course, it is unfeasible to say whether the text or the image is formally privileged in *The Selected*. The role of text in relation to image varies. While Mason's images immediately catch the reader/viewer's attention, our focus doesn't remain upon them indefinitely. They draw the reader into the text, as does the clarity and simplicity of Cullinan's text itself. On the one hand, the text must be privileged in that it came first and in that the images spring from it, but the images are also privileged in that they are our guides through and to the text. Ironically they can even overwhelm a weak poem and comment by contrast, much like a virtuoso performance of a technically weak piece of

I DON'T KNOW IF GOD...
From the Italian of Eugenio Montale

I don't know if God ever realized
 that the vast machine he'd made
 had a basic error, that there was in fact
 a miscalculation
 at the heart of the universe.
 I mean, look how long it took to build
 and how quickly it destroyed itself.
 There must have been something wrong
 right at the beginning:
 disaster happened and then
 there was emptiness again. No,
 I don't think he ever realized.

Figure 14: Judith Mason. Illustration for 'I don't know if God...' 1992. Text, life-size.

The Selected: Section III.

music⁵¹. They are what we encounter first in our visual scan of the page. Sometimes, however, areas with no illustration become breathers for reader/viewers, allowing them to immerse themselves in the text without visual aid. Also, while Mason's illustrations may contrast to one another, they are rarely in contrast to the poem and are not meant to play off against the poem. She wishes them exist as an extension of or in harmony with it. Skotnes saw the role of images (mostly photographic illustrations) in her book *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen* (1996) as being to "distract your attention away from the essay in order to see how it might resonate among the pages of the book" (Addendum E: 1). However, Mason's aim is never to distract the viewer from the text, but rather to lead us to it.

While *The Selected* is in one sense a collaboration between an artist and a poet, it also exists as Mason's response to previously published work and despite what Mason may say to the contrary, it does show Cullinan's poems as apperceived and mediated by Mason. This influences the reader/viewer's approach to the text. Mason's images guide the reader/viewer through *The Selected*. While there is an index that indicates the division of the book into four sections (organised in time-spans along with a section called 'Versions and a diversion' that focuses on translations), there are no page numbers. The only indicators of a new section are blank pages with section headings. The reader/viewer comes to know and navigate through the book by its images and the memory of their order and proximity to other images or text. The images lead the reader/viewer by reminding him/her at a glance of the title or subject of the poem on that page.

⁵¹ The experience of a stunningly illustrated poem can be doubly overwhelming (as in 'A God Unknown').

HONEY

And the quarrel
and the mess:
bees deep in their hive,
deep in their honey.

THE ASTROLOGER

Look! I have a drink in my hand
and the afternoon to lean against.

I possess nothing.

My thoughts possess me.
All day I have worked
on columns of prediction
that will colour the life
of a housewife over the hill.

I assume she is the Gemini
who will meet a stranger
and find happiness
after a quarrel.

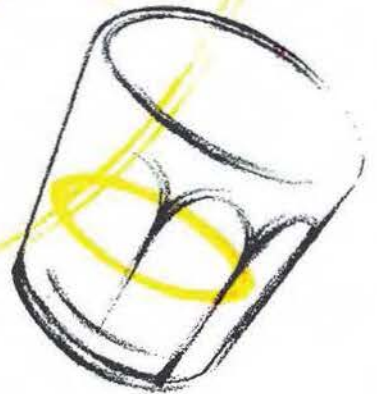
She will be
a little short of money
but truly astonished
by the stranger.

Go well my thoughts
I do not possess you.

Ah! And as the light goes
starlings whistle from the gutter.

Abracadabra!

And now the evening star.



Whether or not Mason responds visually, there remains the issue of the proximity of texts to one another and the relationships this creates. In a sense, Mason, along with the editor, curates the book as if it were an exhibition. When Mason does add images, it is important and significant where on the page she does so in relation to the poem. Sometimes images surround poems, sometimes they stand alongside them, and sometimes they become the poem. She works with the themes already set up by the editor and poet's grouping of poems into sections and further emphasises themes by weaving poems together with her images⁵². The placing of her images is done with sensitivity to what the text is saying and to what Mason wishes to say in response, how she wishes to engage the reader/viewer.

The presentation of 'The Astrologer', 'Honey' and 'That'⁵³ is an example of Mason's care and consideration over the syntax of combined elements. She focuses on the layout of the poems upon the page and draws them into relationship with each other through her use of colour and shape, creating a blend of image and text. While 'Honey' and 'The Astrologer' float on the left hand page, 'That' faces it on the right. The left-hand poems are layered over Mason's images and stand out strongly against the delicate yellow line drawings. The yellow is thematic as it is both the colour of honey and is traditionally the colour stars, moons and suns are depicted. Beneath 'Honey' stands the outline or pattern of the hexagonal honeycomb. This pattern links up to the circular shape below 'The

⁵² Mason emphasises, for example, the thematic relationship between 'The Text' and 'Grammary' (see *Figure 31* on page 129), as well as between 'Honey' and 'The Astrologer' (see *Figure 15* on page 84) through her use of images.

⁵³ See *Figure 15* on page 84.

THAT

I

I am
astonished at the subtleties
of green, of colour
this year brings.

God knows,
standing on this hill,
there are shades
I cannot name, words
not found. I can say only
the trees are somewhat dark,
the vines a lighter
green, that God
stands for what
I do not know and cannot
apprehend: faith
become a pinch of air, the gap
between my thumb
and index finger, out
of all this light
one millimetre: sensing
that high trust
as if it were
an uncontrollable fit
of sneezing which
does not happen often in
the busyness, the smallness
of a life.

II

I feed,
feed on the green
and try to name
the rich vocabulary
of tones, to touch
long glossaries
of colour.

Once I saw
a cobra rise and heard
it click among
these vines: a picture then
of fury in a garden.
It oddly seemed
to satisfy a need
for simple, consonant,
symbolic things,
a killer swaying
under buds of grape,
until its mottle
coils were lost
within the green, forgotten
till I need
a serpent in my mind,
another millimetre.

III

Speak! I say,
and in the evening
The Lord walked
in the garden and
there was that
business
of a man, a woman
and some fruit,
not to mention snake
that coils between
thought and sense,
that clicks along
the vine of memory.

If only seeing,
seeing this,
was all believing:

there is no burning bush
unless it burn, green
within my mind, green
within my naming,
unconsumed.

IV

In truth I know.
I know The Lord
did speak as He
speaks always:
I hear because
I am
as unconvinced,
as diffident
as Moses hearing
riddles in
a wilderness:

I am,
He says,
I am that
I am.

Figure 15: Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Honey', 'The Astrologer' and 'That'. 1992.

Colour lithograph, 56 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section IV.

Astrologer'. Mason's neat geometry of hexagons contrasts with the poem's 'quarrel' and 'mess'. This concept of pattern and geometry, the way in which the part (hexagon) belongs to the whole (honeycomb) thus bleeds into the subject matter, alluding to the mathematical calculation (alignment of planets) involved astrology's 'columns of prediction'. The circle below the second poem seems to be both a compass and an astrological chart, which is also neatly and pristinely rendered. Along with the small flower next to it (which echoes the circular shape), the circle and hexagon both (like Cézanne's sphere, cylinder and cone⁵⁴) reveal the magical 'Abracadabra' order at the heart of the seeming chaos of the universe.

'That' on the opposite page formally contrasts 'Honey' and 'The Astrologer'. While in their case the background was coloured, it is the text itself in 'That' which is coloured a gentle green. The reversal between text and image is emphasised by the line drawing's similarity to the line of text. The text in 'That' becomes the drawing and yet line remains foregrounded. The green starts off strong at the beginning of the poem, but fades towards the end. While the green suggests the thematic gardens and trees and lush vegetation Cullinan describes, it also contrasts with the reds and golds and yellows of Moses' burning bush that spoke the words "I am that I am". The yellow speaks to the green as its flame-opposite, the flame that Cullinan does not see. The green and yellow, however, combine in their allusion to the mysteries of nature, of honey production and plant growth. Through formal and symbolic devices, Mason plays with syntax, highlights the relationships between the poems and draws them into a conversation that could go

⁵⁴ The French Post-Impressionist painter, Paul "Cézanne remarked in one of his letters that nature reveals itself in the forms of the cylinder, the sphere and the cone" (Fleming 1995:572).

unnoticed without her intervention. Syntax in *The Selected* is thus not simply the relation of images to one another, but also that of different texts to one another and of texts to images. This leads to a complex layering of relationships.

The concept of proximity between text and image, proximity of both meaning and of spatial relations is also highlighted in *The Selected*. Barthes claims that the "...effect of connotation probably differs according to the way in which the text is presented. The closer the text to the image, the less it seems to connote it..." (Barthes 1977: 26); or, in other words "...the connotation of language is 'innocented' through the photograph's denotation" (Ibid). Cullinan's text is rarely 'innocented' by Mason's images because she works mainly within the connoted sphere. She more often illustrates the ideas and not the objects he mentions. For example in 'Again'⁵⁵, Mason does illustrate the 'two fish' Cullinan mentions, and had her drawing been simply two fish, then that line of text would have been innocented. Instead, however, it is expanded, because the fish are made up of footprints and become more than just fish. The resulting visual/verbal pun (soul/sole) expresses the sentiments Cullinan evokes in the poem, but is in no way a repetition of his words or imagery. While Cullinan's vision is specific and includes the first person 'I', Mason's image extends to the universal, speaking about everyone who has soles and soul and feels sole. Mason's approach to images in this regard can be likened to Moodie's towards text:

⁵⁵ See *Figure 33* on page 143.

I suppose what I am trying to do now is to not put in the text what you can see in the pictures, but what you can't see from the pictures and more of it, to somehow fill out the characters. The pictures are there to get lost in. The text is to point out the direction in which you should get lost.

Addendum D: 12

Through the analyses that follow it will become clear that Mason's visual response to Cullinan's text in *The Selected* falls into three main categories:

1. The creation of a visual image in response to the text (straight illustration): the drawing or illustration of ideas referred to or inspired by the text, where the text is placed in, on, or around the image designed for it.

2. Playing with the text itself (text effects): altering the layout of the poem, its colour, text size or shape, the font used, whether the text is italicised, bold or in handwriting. Mason is most interested in this. She writes: "I take pride in the fact that some of the devices, e.g. over-typing, paper darts, wayward type-setting etc., are to my knowledge original and make the book, as a physical object, entertaining to page through" (Addendum C: 6).

3. Non-response: the choice not to alter the text or its layout and to add no images.

As Van der Merwe indicates, illustration in itself, the juxtaposition of image and word is already dramatic: "It's quite a Dada, surreal thing to do, to make those contextual shifts and it's quite subversive, in a way, exciting and creative"(Addendum G: 6). The choice not to respond is ambiguous and Moodie seems to describe Mason's approach as well as her own when she says: "I'm only interested in something that tells of an emotional state or a universal truth. I'm incapable of illustrating a story that doesn't mean anything to me" (Addendum D: 7). It is unclear, however, whether Mason was interested in all of Cullinan's poems or merely those for which she provided images. As previously mentioned, Mason left some poems bare because she felt they spoke for themselves or because images would detract from the text. This is a particularly delicate issue surrounding poetry. As Moodie asserts: "I think that text and illustrations can work together fantastically. Often pictures are simply not necessary with text,...with the best poetry for example. The images are built up in your mind while you are reading poetry. Illustration would be too particular, too explicit.... Often it is just superfluous" (Addendum D: 11). Nevertheless, there must be cases where the lack of graphic response suggests the illustrator's lack of fascination with the poem. Another reason for non-response is the issue of balance between text and image within the book as a whole. As Moodie says, "In some books the pictures are virtually the text. I prefer books with a balance in text. I'd rather have more text than pictures [in children's books] actually, which is becoming very unfashionable" (Addendum D: 12). Mason is sensitive to this balance, which must also dictate her non-response to certain poems.

The analyses that follow by no means cover all the images in *The Selected*. The poems have been chosen because they have been raised with particular interest in the interviews with Mason and Cullinan, or because they stand out in the book as examples where the image/text relationship has been unusual, or where the image particularly enhances the reader/viewer's apperception of the text, allowing the poems to be relished.

*1818. M. François Le Vaillant Recalls his Travels to the Interior Parts of Africa 1780 -
1785*⁵⁶

The story of M. Le Vaillant extends over four pages, the first two of which form a double-page spread. The poem is divided into two sections and Mason fittingly creates one look for the first section and a different one for the second. In Part I the scene is Le Vaillant's drawing room in France where he reminisces about his travels from the safety of home. Mason's image reflects this setting through her depiction of Le Vaillant's bird collection and the warm cosiness of the colours, but while the poem begins and ends in Le Vaillant's home (with flights of memory and fancy in the space between), Mason's images for Part II, images of memory and fantasy, never return us to Le Vaillant's France. Mason's use of the dome-shape, which links her images through continuity of shape and format, is the only allusion that could be said to do so. The birds referred to in the poem are drawn in glass domes and the two segments of Part II are also enclosed in domes in which the text floats as if in a vacuum⁵⁷.

⁵⁶ See overleaf for illustrations:

Figure 16 (on p 91): Judith Mason. Illustration for Section I of '1818. M. François Le Vaillant Recalls his Travels to the Interior Parts of Africa 1780-1785'. 1992. Colour lithograph, 56 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section II.

Figure 17 (on p 92): Judith Mason. Illustration for Section II of '1818. M. François Le Vaillant Recalls his Travels to the Interior Parts of Africa 1780-1785'. 1992. Colour lithograph, 28 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section II.

Figure 18 (on p 92): Judith Mason. Illustration for Section II of '1818. M. François Le Vaillant Recalls his Travels to the Interior Parts of Africa 1780-1785'. 1992. Colour lithograph, 28 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section II.

⁵⁷ Cullinan describes the birds in a cabinet, not in domes. He says:

[Mason] comes up with these extraordinary birds as they would have appeared in his cabinet. I never thought she would choose that image. And anyway, Judith does not depict them in the cabinet. They are in these domes. And these domes have a way of recurring in her work.

1818. M. FRANCOIS LE VAILLANT RECALLS
HIS TRAVELS TO THE INTERIOR
PARTS OF AFRICA
1780 - 1785

I

At home in the damp hills of Champagne,
I take my warmth at the fire. Official
And unofficial birds stare glassy-eyed
From cabinets, uncurious now
And oddly meditative. As flames rise a glow
Lightens their wing feathers:
They seem to move but stand rock still.
They are not and I am not
In Africa now: yet we remain, we are
The artefacts of that long journey,
Survivors of a narrative —
A story that I chose to tell, solid
In parts, deliberately vague
In others. I had no choice, I found
A normal country, rather like paradise
In places, a garden
Camouflaged by scandal,
Darkened by a kind of history.

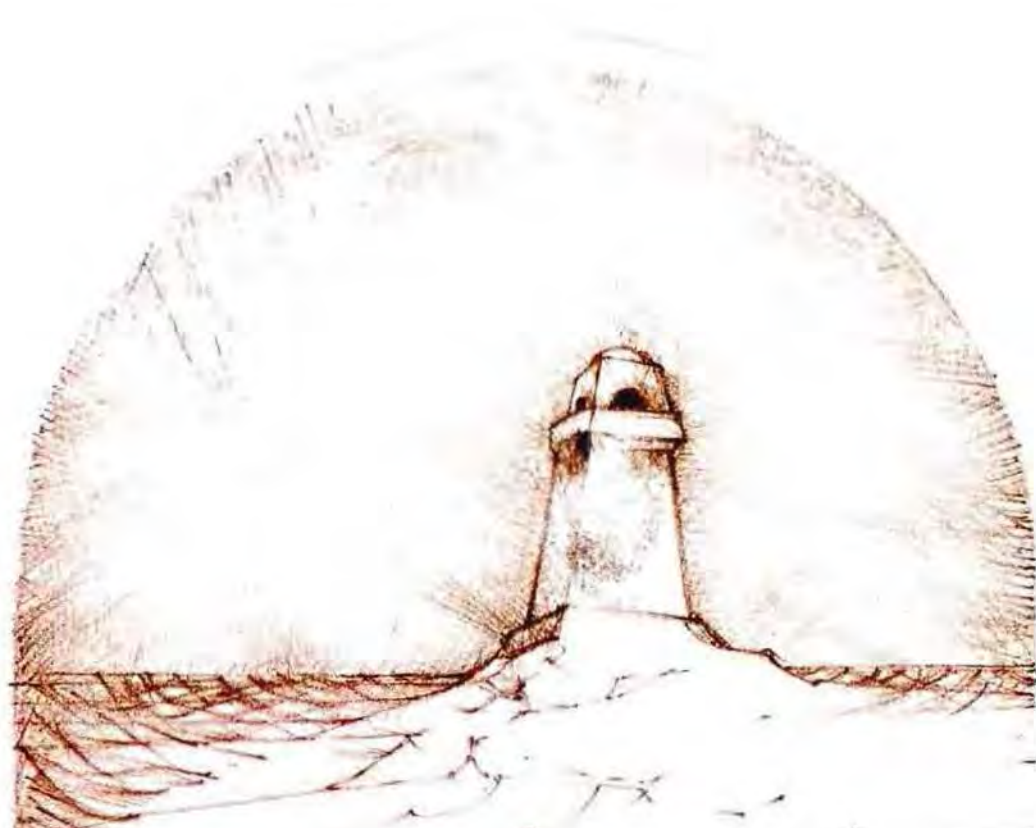
So from the very start, exploring,
Plume-hatted among the hordes,
I sought what had been lost and what I found
I made my own: birds, animals, a cave of leaves,
And men. My friends became the fearful tribes,
Unwanted half-breeds, and, by letters
From the wilderness
A lonely savant at the Cape. Only
The Colonists were not to be endured:
Vicious at times or just plain boring, sly —
Certainly not schooled enough
To leave the wild unploughed,
Brandy-sots who could not comprehend
Rare sensibility, true Pride.



But I was clever, had a way
Of getting what I wanted: that trick —
Of loading my fusee
With powder, wax and water
To bring a warbler down,
Immaculate
And flat on earth —
Before I broke its neck
I named the bird
And it was mine.

I had a method, yes, because I found
Buffon's stale categories a bore.
My method was to educate,
Delight, attract:
As in the breed of *Drongos*
The species multiply — *Drongri*,
Drongear, *Drongo Moustache*,
Drongo Fingab, and finest of them all
Disporting on a bough
Le Drongo à Raquettes.

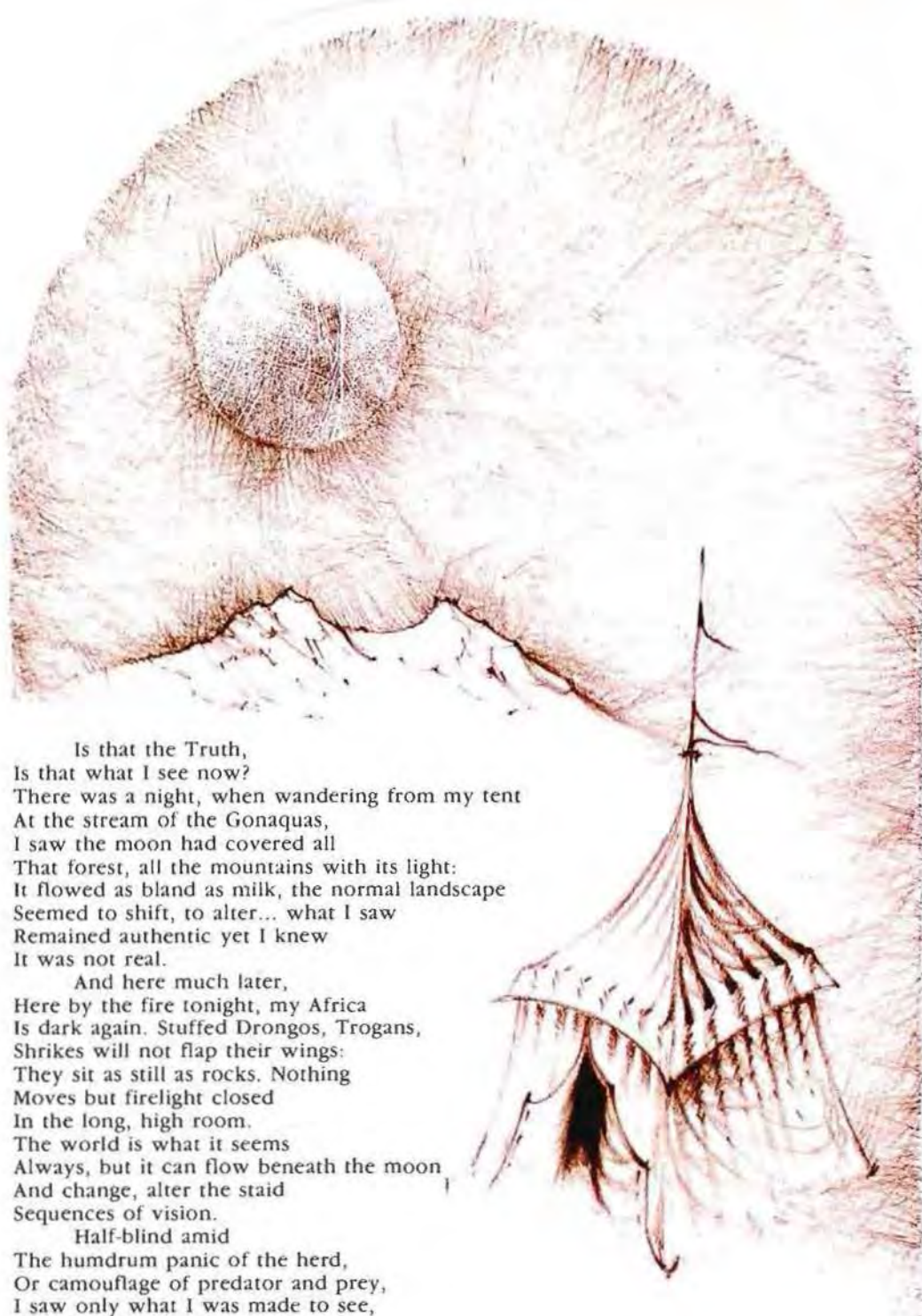
To crawl to no god, command no slave:
This was the ordinary
Guide of my life — but given a want
Of Civility, common
To that land, good manners helped.
Narina stank of grease but liked
A buckle, most of my toys
And understood the gallantry,
The camouflage of teasing which
Hid the method. Item:
For the King of France: the Pelt
Of one Giraffe or Cameleopard —
Chased in the Canton of the Boshmen —
Beyond the Gariep.



II

So, in the end, it all went well enough.
A King and an Emperor both
Admired my great bird book.
The one has lost his head, the other
Studies seagulls on a lonely rock...
And walking in this room today
A true Apostle of Jean Jacques,
By private conversation,
Step by step, deferring, said
What I have written nicely balances
The Good with Evil, Nature with the Perfidy
Of Man.

Is that enough, is that
What I was looking for?
I said and say again:
The Fabulous was quite destroyed
And in its place I set the Truth.
I made a country real, a normal place,
Romantic, I agree, and odd but
Savage the right way at last. I showed
There were no Giants, club-footed or one-eyed:
Who now denies that Pigmies are small men?
Monomotapa, Vigite Magna have disappeared
From the maps, and where I travelled
That continent it is not dark.
I say the best minds of the Age
Have made my Africa their own: my Truth
Feeds their Imagination. I have shown
That men in skins move in a certain
Landscape, are men like us, have names:
Confused, they love and hate.



Is that the Truth,
Is that what I see now?
There was a night, when wandering from my tent
At the stream of the Gonaquas,
I saw the moon had covered all
That forest, all the mountains with its light:
It flowed as bland as milk, the normal landscape
Seemed to shift, to alter... what I saw
Remained authentic yet I knew
It was not real.

And here much later,
Here by the fire tonight, my Africa
Is dark again. Stuffed Drongos, Trogons,
Shrikes will not flap their wings:
They sit as still as rocks. Nothing
Moves but firelight closed
In the long, high room.
The world is what it seems
Always, but it can flow beneath the moon
And change, alter the staid
Sequences of vision.

Half-blind amid
The humdrum panic of the herd,
Or camouflage of predator and prey,
I saw only what I was made to see,
Could comprehend.

Do all
Travellers into darkness know,
Their eyes half closed,
Exploring they betray themselves,
Betray what they have found?

In using this glass dome (an image carrying overtones of waxed flowers and rare species of bird and butterfly trapped in glass domes on the mantelpieces of Victorian drawing rooms), Mason implies that the poem itself is a kind of specimen of Africa, just like the birds. Through the poem *Le Vaillant* himself becomes a specimen like his collector's item book, an oddity of the past preserved in the structure of the poem. Mason thus briefly highlights the irony of discussing the collector's item within what is ostensibly a collector's item itself, an illustrated book of selected poetry. Cullinan also enjoys such ironies. This is the kind of poem he has most wanted to do: "an ironic look at an historical figure, but with admiration and, of course, a little scepticism" (Addendum A: 1). This scepticism is particularly highlighted in Mason's approach to the images for Part II.

Mason's background colours in Part I (orange, yellow and brown) suggest the fire Cullinan mentions and echo the impression he gives that the birds are alive through the vibrant warmth around them. Mason emphasises this further by paying close attention to the eyes of the birds, in which light, momentarily deceiving the speaker into thinking it is the light of life, reflects in glassy eyes. The colours also suggest Africa. They are the natural colours of the landscape and of cave paintings. The scene itself is cave-like through the dark and oppressive, rocky-textured roof above the domes. Nevertheless, this scene is removed from Africa. The speaker and his birds (and Cullinan's poem) are cut off from their natural environment by the glass bubbles. The dome thus comes to represent the Victorian interest in capturing scientific and empirical evidence of the world in order to understand it, of categorising specimens and filing them into a pre-existing

system of thought. Sadly, capture becomes a form of death. The process kills the thing it purports to study and preserve.

In this way, the poem obliquely refers to the attempt to capture and categorise Africa through the process of exploration and colonisation and links it to the idea that Le Vaillant's birds are literally captured through his part in that process (whether or not he is consciously aware of his involvement). The domes thus also come to represent the imposition of Enlightenment thought upon Africa and become a socio-political comment on the poem's content. The irony here is doubled in Cullinan's knowledge that Le Vaillant created birds out of the leftover fragments of other specimens; "When [Le Vaillant] got back to Paris and started to put the birds into his book, all sorts of bits and pieces were left over so he made up birds. So we are talking about fairly unofficial birds. That's what I was getting at" (Addendum A: 15). The birds are as unreal as Le Vaillant's memories and experience of his journey.

The images of Part II are land and seascapes also contained in domes like trapped memories, an association that is heightened by their monochromatic, sepia colour reminiscent of faded black and white photographs. They are drained of colour like fading memories. Mason also places her palm print in each image, the imprint of the self within the memory (the image) and upon the act of remembering (the poem). It is a reminder of the filtering consciousness that mediates our experience of the memory and poem.

The first dome contains a lighthouse surrounded by a lonely sea and sky. The image forms a response to both the Emperor who loved Le Vaillant's book and to the philosophy that follows. The Emperor now:

Studies seagulls on a lonely rock...
 And walking in this room today
 A true Apostle of Jean Jacques,
 By private conversation,
 Step by step, deferring, said
 What I have written nicely balances
 The Good with Evil, Nature with the Perfidy
 Of Man.

Mason illustrates the lonely lighthouse from which the seagulls are studied and uses it to comment ironically on the allusion to Rousseau. In her image man and nature are not balanced. The unruly sea dominates, and sea and sky claim most of the picture space and thus the reader/viewer's attention. Man's 'perfidy' or breach of faith in the image becomes the lighthouse itself, the attempt to control or imprint the human presence upon the landscape. This imprint of the self upon the landscape is also present in Mason's own handprint upon the tower. The literal imprint alludes to the symbolic one. Strangely, no light escapes the tower. Where a guiding light should beam there is only darkness. Mason once more takes an ironic stance on the belief that it was possible to bring 'enlightenment' to Africa, an action also ironised through the poem itself, in which the

speaker sought, in reversal, to bring enlightenment to Europe about Africa (despite his own distorting influences upon the 'truth'). Mason draws attention to such ironies, highlighting the paradox of Le Vaillant's words 'In its place I set the truth' and 'That continent is not dark'. The lighthouse also seems to represent Le Vaillant's idea of himself as a guide to later travellers into Africa. Cullinan's speaker writes; 'My truth feeds their imagination', and the imagination is traditionally represented by Promethean light. It is thus fittingly ironic that the lamp is broken or inactive.

The last image shows a lonely tent in a desert with a mountain and moon in the backdrop, illustrating:

There was a night, when wandering from my tent
 At the stream of the Gonaquas
 I saw the moon had covered all
 That forest, all the mountains with its light:
 It flowed as bland as milk, the normal landscape
 Seemed to shift, to alter... what I saw
 Remained authentic yet I knew
 It was not real.

Mason highlights the speaker's strange logic by illustrating man's failure to bring light while nature (the moon) can. Nevertheless, Le Vaillant denies the truth revealed by nature in this moon-moment and substitutes his own truth. In an echo of this, the text in

Part II looks like it has been written onto the landscape in the same way Le Vaillant has 'written' the landscape through words. Both suggest an imposition. Ironically, as with the dark tower, the tent doorway also leads inwards to darkness. Humanity seems to live in darkness. The tent is also linked to the tower in its fragility in the face of the elements. It is exposed to and overpowered by the landscape. All human spaces in the illustrations to the poem are dark, even the cave-like room in Part I with its rocky ceiling. This imagery alludes to Le Vaillant's awareness of his own blindness of vision. He, in many ways, lives in darkness.

Each of Mason's images for this poem embody loneliness and contain isolated objects in vast landscapes which are in turn trapped in glass domes. The images are bereft of human presence, the landscapes uninhabited, emphasising that Le Vaillant is not there, 'not| In Africa now'. He is lost in the Africa of his thoughts. While Le Vaillant constructs a reality as he constructs his fake birds, Mason too accentuates the constructed-ness of the reality she presents on the page by leaving in her mark-making signs of the process of drawing. Mason's palm print upon the moon, once more a symbol of Western civilization's attempt to imprint the self upon nature (as Le Vaillant does by capturing and categorising nature), also reveals Mason's printing process. The poem ends:

I saw only what I was made to see,
 Could comprehend
 Do all
 Travelers into darkness know,

Their eyes half closed,
Exploring they betray themselves,
Betray what they have found?

Le Vaillant's betrayal of Africa is perhaps his (mis)representation of it to Western audiences, his attempt to make it fit into Western categories. But the question the speaker asks is one that applies to all forms of representation, to both poetry and art. It is the question of whether art (words, poems, brush-strokes) can ever represent reality, or whether a poem or painting (or memory) is actually divorced from the world, becoming a world unto itself. The speaker in the poem finally seems to conclude the latter. Thus Le Vaillant's book, his exploration, does not reveal any truth about the nature of Africa, but is in fact an exploration of Le Vaillant himself. But if Le Vaillant's own vision deceived him, are we to conclude that Cullinan and Mason's visions are also untrustworthy? Mason, through her very truth to the process of image-making, through the traces she leaves of each stage of image creation, suggests that all visions are ambiguous.

Mason's attempts to capture landscapes in glass domes are a fitting metaphor for the craziness of the imperial and empirical endeavour in Africa. The doomed arrogance (as judged by modern standards) of colonisation lies in its attempt to control, classify, objectify and own. It fails because it cannot halt time and make the world static. The desert in the glass dome also brings to mind another image, that of the hourglass and the sands of time. Although these 'hourglasses' are never moved in an attempt to preserve

the past, Le Vaillant's memories slip through his own fingers, like the desert sands
Mason presents to us.

April 1786: Colonel Robert Jacob Gordon Returns from His Last Journey.

On this double-page spread the 'Gordon' poem falls onto the right hand side under a diagonal that cuts the composition dramatically in two. Above the diagonal floats a mountain landscape with a moon in a black sky and a large hand in a lace cuff. Below the diagonal stands what looks like the decoration on a fretted musical instrument that we learn from the poem is a lute. The shape of the lute and the strange shadows and dark shapes that form the decoration on it are reminiscent of the shapes formed by a sundial, bringing to mind the concept of time: time spent waiting or journeying, time spent away from home or spent waiting for the loved one's return (concepts also evoked by the poem). The diagonal also forms the single string of the instrument being plucked so that music sings Gordon's travels into being.

As within the structure of the poem, the diagonal divide creates the contrast between home (as represented by the hand and instrument) and travel (as seen in the landscape) and, as with the poem's structure, 'home' dominates compositionally. Mason writes that the drawing for this poem is one of her personal favourites, "because it expresses the baroque and domestic environment [Gordon] experienced, and reminds one of the fun he had before his deeply tragic end" (Addendum C: 2). Home is depicted as a very happy place for Gordon by both image and text, but the divide between home and travel is important. The speaker cannot have both of these things at once and the poem signifies a choice that has been made between them. The lady's hand is wrinkled, suggesting that



Figure 19: Judith Mason. Detail from the illustration for 'April 1786: Colonel Robert Jacob Gordon Returns from His Last Journey'. 1992. Lithograph, 56 c 38 cm. The Selected: Section II.

her wait for her husband has not been a short one. It is also laden with rings, suggesting wealth and privilege. Her ornate cuff indicates the same, but there is an interesting play on the wealth of the image and the cheapness of the paper doily that went into its object-print construction. The cuff is not solely a cuff. It also becomes, through Mason's fluid mark, the 'waterfall' of the poem. Both wife and waterfall are images the speaker seeks at different times, objects of desire.

Once again, Cullinan is fascinated by the image Mason chose to highlight: "[Mason] took...the 18th century woman plucking at an instrument, and that again was an astonishing thing" (Addendum A: 3). It is astonishing perhaps in that while home is a strong theme in the poem, the woman who creates the home is marginalized in both the poem and the mind of the speaker where she is given no real identity. Mason picks up on this and uses her illustration to comment. Mrs Gordon's hand is cropped so that it is dislocated from her body and from her person. The hand is thus strangely agent-less. While this Rodin-like device accentuates the action of lute playing,⁵⁸ the hand also seems to comment upon the status of women in the era in which the poem is set. Woman is presented as entertainer, as an object of soothing beauty, but Mason's headless image suggests that she is also presented as being without a mind or her own source of agency. The fact that her thoughts are not taken into consideration by the poem's speaker is thus noted and pointed out to the viewer through the illustration.

⁵⁸ French sculptor Auguste Rodin's armless sculpture, *The Walking Man* (see Figure 20 on page 103), is famed for its accentuation of the motion of the legs and torso in walking. This was achieved by the removal of the superfluous detail of limbs not engaged in the action.

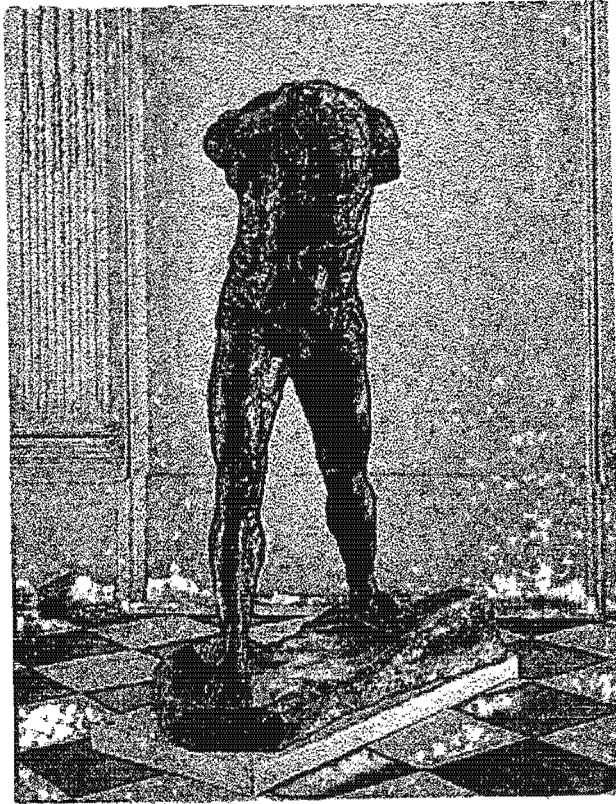


Figure 20: Auguste Rodin. The Walking Man. 1900-1907. Bronze sculpture, 213,5 x 71,7 x 156,5 cm. Musée Rodin.

The stark black and white of the image creates a striking visual contrast between the light of home and the darkness of the world beyond. The dark night sky also emphasises the 'last' in Gordon's 'last' journey, the black suggesting a premonition of death. The graphic black and white nature of both text and image results in a smooth integration between the two. The images seem to moderate the movement of the poem. Cullinan spends few words on home and wife (although he creates great emphasis upon them in a short space) while Mason devotes more visual space to that concept. The image focuses

on home and rest, despite the speaker's focus on his travels and the justification for them. Mason also emphasises and illustrates more graphically the opposition between the lives Cullinan describes. The image plays out the tension between these opposites, a tension that balances on a lute string. Mason focuses strongly on the role of the woman, on the unspoken story in the poem. She hints that there might be something interesting behind the image of the woman who waits. What did she do all that time her husband was travelling? Through Mason's image Mrs Gordon becomes like Odysseus' wife Penelope, not weaving, but luring her husband back with her siren song.

Two Mares

'Two Mares' is placed beneath two exquisitely simple line drawings that appear back to back along the fold of the book. They too recall Auguste Rodin's sculpture *The Walking Man* (1900-1907)⁵⁹ in that all extraneous detail is omitted, leaving only enough to describe the movement and relationship of horse and rider. The poem makes up an opposition, one horse versus another in the owner's affections. Mason reverses the usual confrontational face-to face meeting of opposing forces and depicts the horses turning their backs on one another, a formal decision which, while symbolising the horses' rejection of one another, also heightens the eroticism of both poem and image by the multitude of buttocks that this pose reveals.

The textual description of the mares and the visual and tactile appreciation of them are deeply sensual. It seems from the poem that it is the act of riding that gives pleasure and so again Mason highlights that act by the absence of arms heads and individual features of both rider and horse. Individual identity is not as important as the depiction of the contact of skin upon skin, the sexual connotations of which are heightened by the fact that the riders are naked upon the beasts. The visible clefts on both man and horse suggest a physical similarity between the two, which illustrates the poem's suggestion that the man and horse have some physical and spiritual connection when they ride, that they become more like one another through the act. In this beautiful movement – man astride mare – the two become one fluid being.

⁵⁹ See *Figure 20* on page 103.

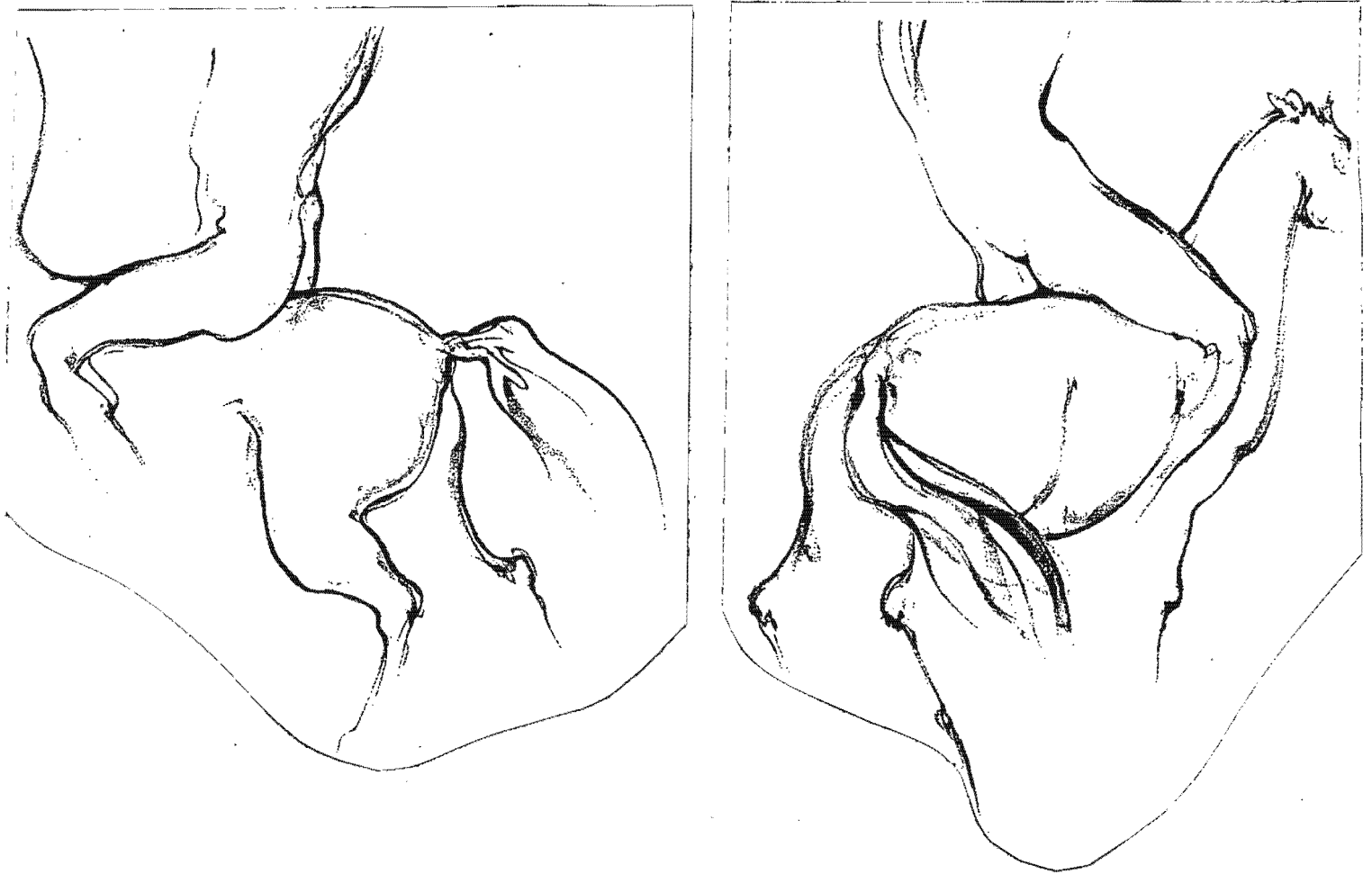


Figure 21: Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Two Mares'.1992. Lithograph, 56 x 38 cm. *The Selected*. Section III.

But what is the effect of the mirror image, the rider and horse on the opposite page? Because there are no distinguishing features on either horse it becomes difficult to tell the two mares apart. Is Mason suggesting that there *is* no difference between the two? Perhaps she is suggesting that it does make no difference and that the man loves riding (the sensation the horses provide him) and not the individual horses. Her illustration would then become merely be an expression of the joy of riding and not an expression of making a choice. While this is a valid suggestion, the simplicity of such an answer does not fit with Mason's layered approach to illustration throughout the rest of *The Selected*. There remains, however, another possible meaning to the image. Mason could be giving the speaker the answer he longs for. There are not two riders (as the poem indicates) but one. Mason's image expresses the speaker's fantasy, for, in it, he simultaneously rides both mares, something that is physically impossible but the symmetry of which prevents him from having to choose between them.

Mason's art makes the speaker's dream come true and she heightens the fantasy of it by including the sexual element (ever present in fantasy). Phallic imagery abounds in legs, tails, sinewy horse's necks and headless, armless torsos. Riding is also often used in literature and art as a symbol of the sexual act as can be seen in Peter Paul Rubens' painting *Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus* (c.1618)⁶⁰. In depicting the relationship between man and mare this way, Mason exposes and highlights the undertones of desire

⁶⁰ See the use of horses as phallic imagery in Baroque artist Peter Paul Rubens' painting, *Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus* (see Figure 22 on page 108). In this work, the rape (or sexual abduction) is not actually depicted, but rather implied through the presence of the animals and their riders.



Figure 22: Peter Paul Rubens. Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus. c. 1618. Oil on canvas, 2,21 x 2,01 m. Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

that lie beneath the speaker's declared feelings for the horses. She brings to light his unconscious feelings and expresses them through her line and form.

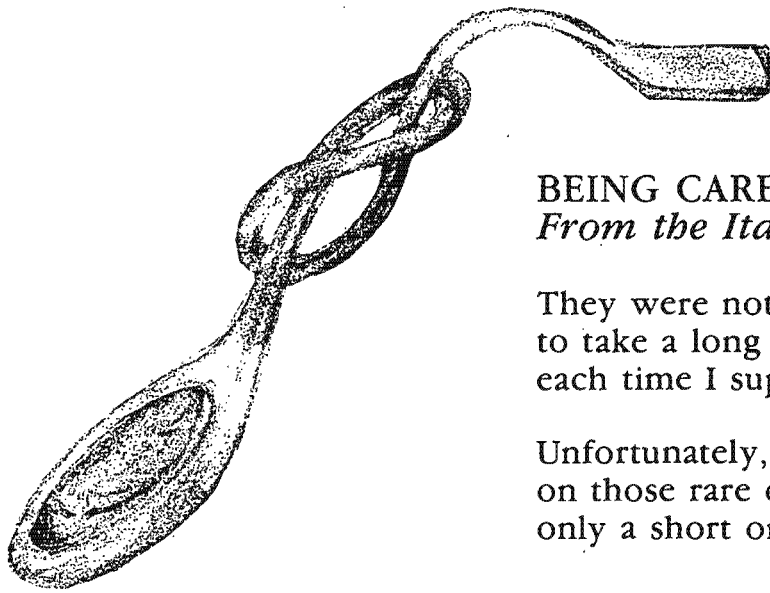
Mason also exposes the egotistical tone of the speaker within the poem through accentuating the rider's legs and riding itself as an act in which the rider's ego asserts control. This becomes a visual version of the speaker's words, 'under my knees' and 'I mount the best in the land'. Nevertheless, she also undermines this idea of the rider's control. In the image the speaker is not necessarily dominant. There is no passivity in it. All is awirl. The man is carried, transported and rider and horse collaborate in the action. Mason's illustration for 'Two Mares' picks up on elements of sexuality and desire that are only suggested in the poem and brings them out so that our experience of them is inescapable.

Bogdanus of Alexandria and Being Careful

In the cases of 'Bogdanus of Alexandria' and 'Being Careful', both the poems and the images Mason provides for them complement one another. Both objects she draws are man-made, metal, thin and phallic instruments or utensils. The objects also contrast one another, appearing at opposite ends of a binary. One, the spoon, is an instrument of nourishment, and the other, the dagger, is an instrument of death.

'Being Careful' is the closest Mason seems to come in *The Selected* to straight illustration and yet, as with the spoon in her image, there remains a twist. While the poem speaks of needing a long spoon (presumably a long spoon would be preferable in that it would enable the user to keep their distance from the devil at the dinner table), but only having a short one available, Mason explores the unasked but encouraged question of "Why?" Mason's spoon is paradoxically both long and short (it has been tied in a knot). The image thus suggests various answers for the enigma of the poem. Why was only a short spoon available?

Mason's answer holds numerous possibilities and variations, but her main humorous response to the question is that it is because someone intervened and sabotaged the spoon, twisting things in the Devil's favour. Who did this, she doesn't indicate, but the question extends the frame of reference of the poem to a deeper analysis of good and evil, and of how they manifest themselves within people. The reader/viewer could respond: the Devil did it, or God, or other people who have reason to fear or hate or love the reader/viewer, or even that the reader/viewer himself or herself, through in-built



BEING CAREFUL
From the Italian of Eugenio Montale

They were not wrong, warning me,
 to take a long spoon
 each time I supped with the Devil.

Unfortunately, however,
 on those rare occasions
 only a short one was available.

Figure 23: Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Being Careful'. 1992. Lithograph, life-size. The Selected: Section III.

weakness. The answer chosen reveals much about the readers/viewers' approach to life. In this way the image adds to the poem and encourages an interactive solution through the reader/viewer who must furnish image and text with his or her own questions and answers. The image also picks up on Cullinan's humour, emphasises the trickery associated with the Devil, and provides possible explanations.

'Bogdanus of Alexandria' appears on the lower half of the opposite page while a haunting line drawing of an Ionian dagger floats above the poem. The Ionian dagger is an image that reveals Mason's interest in historical research and accuracy. Cullinan remarks;

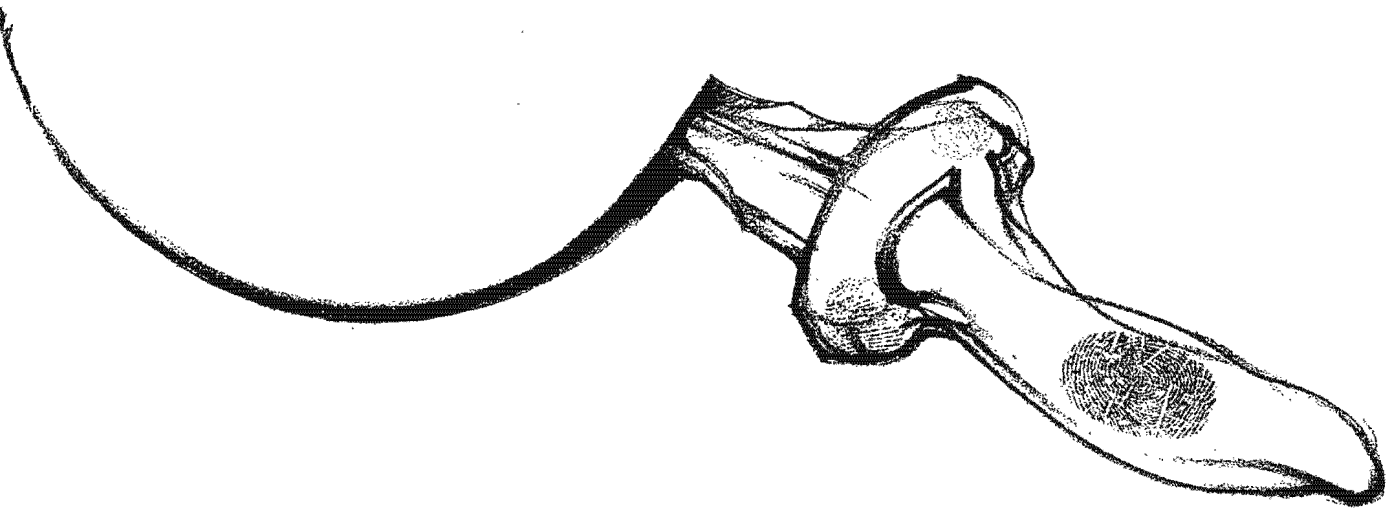
"I don't know where she got it from, but I've never seen a dagger like that" (Addendum A: 4). Such attention to detail is part of what makes Mason's images believable and compelling. The composition of the drawing is ambiguous, reminding one at once of a crescent moon, a curved blade, and the suggestion of a full, white circle (in a play on positive and negative space). The way in which the line is drawn causes ambiguity over whether the curved black line is the object or whether the white shape above it forms the object. This formal device suggests (in the same way that the poem plays on the word 'seemly') that things are not always what they seem. In fact, the image suggests an even more violent action. At first glance (before reading the poem and discovering the dagger is a curved Ionian one) one might assume that the dagger is in fact straight like the hilt. The drawing then gives the impression of the blade being hidden behind a slice of flesh, and of the curve as a horrifying smile-shaped wound, a gash such as that inflicted in the cutting of a throat as described in the poem. Even if we dismiss this idea as far-fetched, the shape of the dagger's blade certainly echoes that of the smile-shape left in the flesh after the delivery of the fatal throat wound. Through this formal device, shape and composition the smile, death and instrument of death merge into one symbolic image, which then operates on several different connotative levels while also denoting the dagger of the poem:

...he himself cut his master's throat.

Pointing a chased, Ionian dagger,

he smiled as the blade went in,

enjoying both irony and reason,



BOGDANUS OF ALEXANDRIA
With apologies to C.P. Cavafy

'There are certain things you learn from the start,
from a very early age:
correct dress, a certain tone with slaves,
absolute fidelity to the great masters of Greek'.

Bogdanus heard and Bogdanus smiled,
never showing the irony he felt:
that a petty despot, a King of Asia Minor
(and only one quarter Greek)
could give him, an Alexandrian,
lessons in right conduct,
the niceties of Attic taste.
Even if his post was that of court pimp,
pandering to deviate and sensual desires,
from birth he had known what was seemly,
known better than any what was right.

And later when the slaves rose at his bidding,
he himself cut his master's throat.
Pointing a chased, Ionian dagger,
he smiled as the blade went in,
enjoying both irony and reason,
so correct in the formal,
the exquisite Greek manner.

Figure 24: Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Bogdanus of Alexandria'. 1992. Lithograph, life-size. *The Selected*: Section III.

so correct in the formal,
the exquisite Greek manner.

While Cullinan links these images, the contrast of violence with the smile is particularly powerful when they occur in a single visual image or object. The smile is an ironic one, but the word 'irony' also conjures the idea of iron, metal and blades – so, here too, smile and blade are linked and the pun is played out in the drawing. Mason's fingerprints upon the dagger heighten the gruesomeness of murder. They function both as shading and as signifying the bloodstained fingerprints of the culprit left on the handle. The dagger is immediately announced as a murder weapon, except, as the poem shows, the culprit owns and does not deny the act.

As the poem exults in the beauty of the formal, so the drawing echoes this sentiment in its classical simplicity and balance and in its clear, pure lines. The drawing once more reflects allusions within the poem and extends them. Mason's image becomes a symbol for the whole, for the entire poem.

The Bestiary

The image Mason produces for Cullinan's poem 'The Bestiary' is perhaps one of the images most closely linked in *The Selected* to the images she produced for her bestiary of creatures from Dante's *Inferno*. I would suggest that she has drawn from her own creatures and bestiaries to illustrate Cullinan's poem. The title of the poem has wording in common with that of Mason's bestiary and it is likely that the dream-like nature of the poem and of Dante's vision further link her approach to this illustration. In *An Essay on Encountering Dante's Creatures*, Mason discusses how Dante uses beasts in his text and how he drew from other bestiaries available to him at the time. She describes how Dante saw the role of his beasts: "They are symbols or metaphors – never merely creaturely. As Claude Levi-Strauss once said, animals are not only good to eat, they are good to think with" (Mason in N.C. 1990: 14). This metaphorical approach to beasts is explored in the poem and taken even further in Mason's visual response.

While Mason's image for this poem is situated below the text, the image is shared (by nature of its centrality upon the page) by the other poems surrounding it, 'The First, Far Beat' and 'The Dust in the Wind'. The subject matter of each poem links with the image, which suggests the idea of disturbance, of a strange presence that has the power to move or alter our environment or us. The image is surreal, a Butcher Boy⁶¹ juxtaposition of animal and human figures in one being. The drawing technique is loose and gestural, as if

⁶¹ South African sculptor Jane Alexander's well-known sculpture the *Butcher Boys* [1985-6. Mixed media, approx 2,5 x 2,5 m.] forms part of The National Gallery's permanent collection in Cape Town and combines elements of human and animal forms. The *Butcher Boys* have humanoid bodies and the heads of fantastical animals.

THE BESTIARY

Awake,
we all have masks for this —
but the dream's a bestiary:
asleep, we comprehend
animals suddenly.



Figure 25: Judith Mason. Illustration for 'The Bestiary'. 1992. Lithograph, 28 x 38 cm.

The Selected: Section IV.

the image was out of focus or the creature moving when captured by the artist (who can leave us only an impression of a sudden glimpse of a vision). It thus becomes difficult to describe exactly the relationship of the eyes to the nose, or where the nose ends and the teeth begin. In this way the image becomes layered, opaque, inexplicable and dream-like.

Mason chooses to focus on the animal's face. She could have focused on the body of the animal, for Cullinan does not explain what form his dream vision of animals takes. The choice of the face, however, relates to a mask, and to our own 'masks', the identities behind which people hide and which constitute them. It is difficult to know if the face shown is a human mask (the face of an illusion) or the face of a real animal. The ambiguity of the features and the meaning behind them is heightened by the fact that Mason uses very little shading and barely defines the form. This also makes the image spatially difficult to read. This spatial ambiguity is reminiscent of the strange spatial relationship between objects we experience in dreams⁶². The image seems to float on the surface of the page confronting us with its two-dimensionality, just like a mask does when we look behind it.

The image is also violent with its huge devil- or goat-like horns and gnashing teeth, both of which indicate the power of the beast. Ironically, Mason seems to reverse the poem in that the gaze of the animal is confrontational, uncompromising and dispassionate, with the cat-like slit eyes also suggesting distrust of the viewer. Thus it seems more that asleep, animals comprehend *us* suddenly. But this face, as has been suggested, reveals

⁶² Such spatial relationships are perhaps best represented in the paintings of the Surrealists; Dali, Ernst and Magritte, and of De Chirico, a precursor to Surrealism.

more than simply what seems. If we look closer at the Early Cubist-type relationship of the features to one another and explore how the face is fragmented, we notice that it is actually comprised of two faces viewed from different angles and layered upon one another. This layered vision is reminiscent of Pablo Picasso's painting *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J.)* (1907)⁶³. The nose Mason depicts joins to the right horn to form a line drawing of a human profile, which is combined with the frontal face of the beast. Again, in one symbolic image, Mason takes the poem to a possible conclusion, interpreting Cullinan's moment of comprehension in a unique way. Through her juxtaposition of images, Mason suggests that this dream comprehension of animals involves the reader/viewer becoming the animal (accessing the animal within him or her). The distinctly human nose (the point at which the two images link) seems, after all, to be the clue. It is not a beast upon which the viewer gazes, but a human.

Mason's image is thus deceptively simple, in order to accompany a deceptively simple poem. As Cullinan remarks;

She just drew that...and that's enough. I mean it's a really simple little poem and I wouldn't have chosen it. But she chose it...because it was, of these ones on this page, one that she felt...could be enhanced by an image. And if you listen to it, it is a little bit short on much other than just mere fact.

⁶³ In Pablo Picasso's pre-Cubist painting, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J.)* (1907) (see Figure 26 on page 119), the features of the woman on the bottom right are drawn as if seen from two different angles simultaneously.



Figure 26: Pablo Picasso. *Les Femmes d'Alger (O Version O)*. 1935. Oil on canvas, 243,9 x 233,7 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss bequest.

Addendum A: 5

Although the poem is short, Mason finds much in it to inspire an illustration that is multi-layered. This illustration is the kind of image for which Mason is famous – one of her surreal tours de force. She seems to particularly enjoy portraits in which the animal or the ugly, the disturbing and the subconscious, the things that lie beneath the surface of appearances, are exposed upon the surface of the body or face. Such figures tend to be strangely inhuman. This particular image clearly reveals her interest in the beasts of Dante's *The Divine Comedy* and echoes the kind of images she produced for her bestiary. She believes this text has had a strong influence over her images and her imagination and claims that after reading it, it remained in her mind for a long time: "Enchanted and exasperated I have remained, the images creeping uninvited into my work from time to time" (Mason in *N.C.* 1990: 12). The image she produces for 'The Bestiary' is one such instance.

One of the most fascinating things about Mason's work is how she manages to represent the grotesque and aspects of horror that are present in our world, even within the everyday. An image such as that accompanying 'The Bestiary' is an expression of human fear, the animal nature that is part of humanity and expresses itself as a malevolent presence within human actions. As previously mentioned, Mason is famous for such images and has had a mixed response from viewers and critics because of it. She writes, "When it is not being called trite, my work has been described as ugly, death-centred and occasionally Satanistic" (Mason in *N.C.* 1990: 16). The 'The Bestiary' image would be

considered horrific were it a photograph of a beast, but somehow rendered more palatable by taking the form of a drawing. As Moodie says of pornography in French graphic novels, “I found it interesting that what wouldn’t be acceptable in a photograph is somehow made more acceptable by the fact that it has been drawn” (Addendum D: 7). How much more horrifying Mason’s images would be considered were they photographic? This phenomenon seems to relate to Barthes’s idea of ‘coding’ and to the popular idea (correct or not) that photographs are uncoded while other images are mediated (coded). Drawings are not literally reality and their media (lines, splotches) declares that. Nevertheless, Mason’s drawings sometimes have such power as to horrify us although we know they do not depict empirical reality.

How does one go about depicting something as complex as evil or the darker or more perverse sides of human nature? Such themes come up in Cullinan’s poetry time and time again in poems such as ‘Devils’, ‘At Forty Odd’, ‘Filippo Argenti’, ‘Mkulu Kakhulu’, and ‘The Age’, to name only some of the ones that Mason has provided images for. This depiction of darkness was something Mason also had to grapple with in her bestiary of Dante’s creatures: “I have had to struggle hard to find formulae for describing horror without sliding into the clichés of the horror comic” (Mason in *N.C.* 1990:16). In *The Selected* Mason does this in a variety of ways. She creates a child-like image of dark and considered naiveté for ‘Mkulu Kakhulu’, but mainly she works with the distortion of facial and anatomical features (as in ‘Devils’ and ‘Filippo Argenti’).

FILIPPO ARGENTI
'Via costà con gli altri cani'

I say there are no more stars.
I say the sun has gone.
Shit covers my eyes.

I bite myself.
Doubled up, I thrash in slime.
But I remain.

And you,
You who break the light,
You who make a shadow,

Know: I never had pity for others
And here
Have none for myself.

I am Filippo.
Show me the sun.
Show me the stars.



Figure 27: Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Filippo Argenti'. 1992. Black and white reproduction of colour lithograph, 28 x 38 cm. The Selected: Section II.

In the case of 'Filippo Argenti' Mason's method is once again Rodin-like in that Mason lets her materials (seemingly dripping ink and scratchy crayon) and her distortion of form speak for themselves. The figure seems to drip or slide off the page. This simplification is reminiscent of Rodin's hunch-shouldered sculpture *Balzac* (1897-98), which is formed of lumps of clay with seemingly clumsy gouges for features. Mason's distortion of the body also recalls Rodin's *Gates of Hell* (1880-1917) ⁶⁴ where figures melt into one another and



Figure 28: Auguste Rodin. Balzac. 1897-98 (Cast 1954). Bronze, 2,8 m x 122,5 cm x 104,2 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

⁶⁴ See *Figure 29* on page 124.

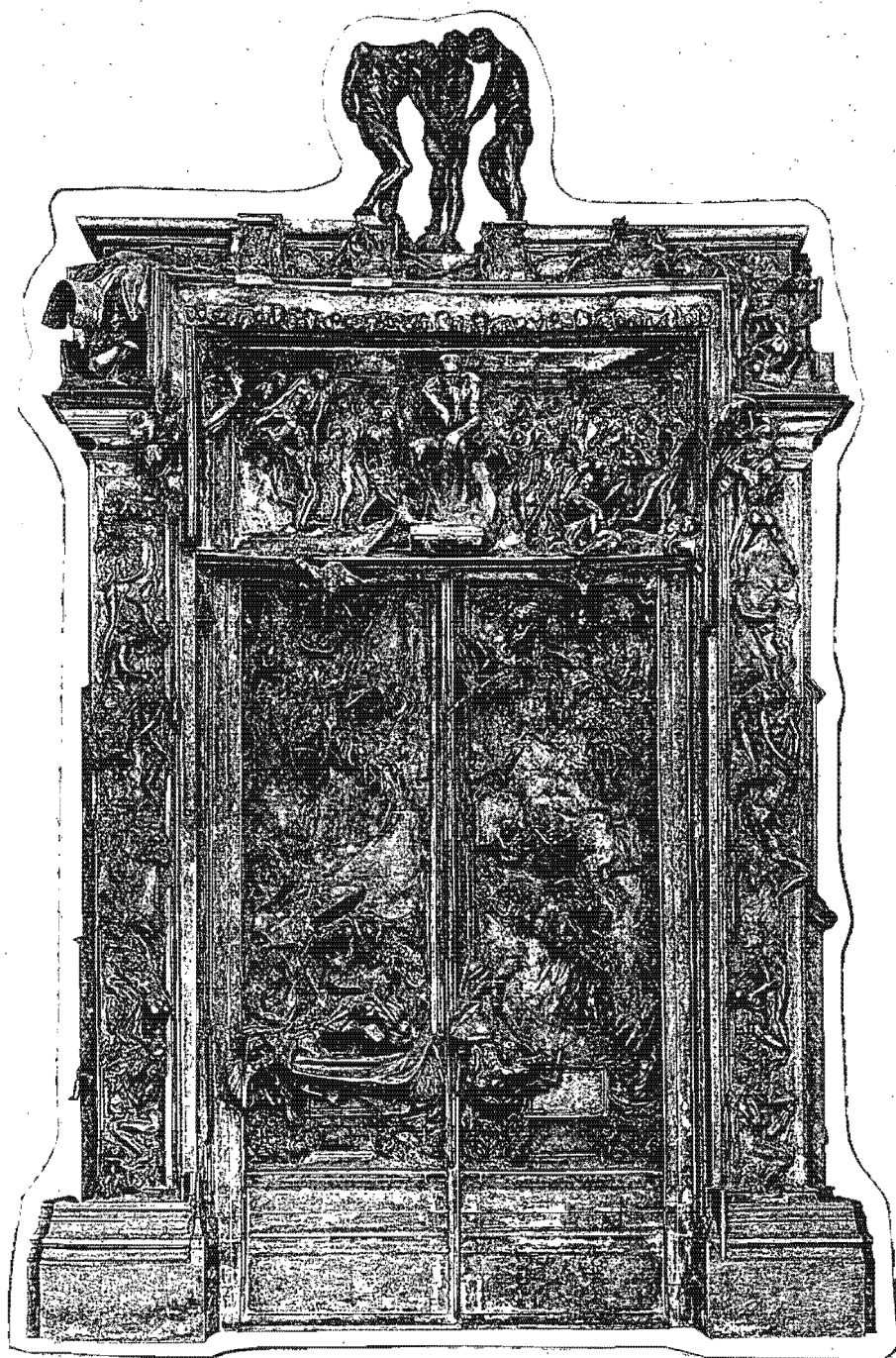


Figure 29: Auguste Rodin. *Gates of Hell*. 1880-1917. Bronze, height 5,49 m, width 3,66 m, depth 2,9 m. Rodin Museum, Philadelphia. Gift of Jules E. Mastbaum.

into their ground. The Argenti head lies hunched over one of the shoulders while the other, like a hunchback hump hovers above it. Here, Mason manoeuvres the body into a position impossible in life to emphasise that this body is in most senses not alive, it is in hell.

One of the things Mason also does in order to avoid clichés of horror is to use bone: “I often use relics and bits of bone and anatomy in my work, but these remind me of the complex oddness of the universe as much as a bunch of cut flowers would, and are to my mind utterly free of ghoulishness and morbidity” (Mason *N.C.* 1990: 16). Her transformation of such imagery means that relatively ordinary objects (e.g. a skeleton, bones, a buck) become “stripped of mundane associations and presented as haunting, expressive symbols of mortality” (Berman 1970: 190). The image Mason produces for ‘The Age’ is an example of this. Cullinan has personified the age as a beast, and Mason brings it to life (or death) as a mangy and decaying buck. It is half-alive and half-skeleton. It turns its head backwards not to stare ‘at the tracks of your feet’ but at the trail of slime, of life fluids flowing from where its feet once were instead. The poem itself is horrifying, but Mason takes the image further, by showing the beast without feet at all. The beast starts off solid at the head, but becomes skeleton and then mere fluid, disintegrating towards its tail and legs. Nevertheless, while the image is horrifying, there is an incredible pathos about it. The beast’s dark, animal eye does not comprehend its predicament and the broken and bare ribs are vulnerable and exposed. The beauty of the image, however, lies not in the subject matter itself, but in how Mason draws it. It is rendered with a confident yet sensitive line and an eye for pattern (white bone on grey

background). It is difficult to compare bones to bunches of flowers, but a drawing can be beautiful in its own right. It is Mason's drawing here that is beautiful while its subject matter remains horrifying.



Figure 30: Judith Mason. Illustration for 'The Age'. 1992. Black and white reproduction of colour lithograph, 56 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section III.

Mason also employs other techniques in order to depict the horrific. She points out that she tends to use “a very cool line and infer rather than belabour facial and other details” (Mason in *N.C.* 1990: 17). The result is (as we can see from ‘The Bestiary’) a dream-like image, one that in its incompleteness allows the viewer’s imagination to complete it. This kind of imagery seems to embody the defining voice Paz sees within all art and poetry, a voice that is “[h]eretical and devout, innocent and perverted, limpid and murky, aerial and subterranean...” (Paz 1992:151). Poetry and art become methods of communicating with history, with the dead, with the other side of things. Mason’s images work as illustrations in that they allow the reader/viewer to dream outwards from the text (which forms a starting point for the imagination). The images are not categorical in what they represent. There is enough ambiguity in order to activate the reader/viewer’s imagination (an imagination mediated by the reader/viewer’s personal and cultural history). Moodie writes of her own work: “If I have a philosophy...it is that I do believe that children should dream. It is an important part of their life really. It’s the one time when you can, when anything is possible. I hope that my pictures are a sort of springboard to the imagination” (Addendum D: 10). Mason’s strange and darker images allow adults to carry on dreaming and function as a springboard to the adult imagination and unconscious.

Grammary

'Grammary' is the only poem in *The Selected* that is printed in handwriting and not type. It is difficult to tell whose handwriting it is, for while the book is covered in notes and comments in both Mason and Cullinan's original pencilled handwriting, *this* handwriting does not obviously correspond to theirs. The poem covers an entire page and is placed opposite 'The Text'. The two relate as a contrasting of texts – one handwritten (and yet litho printed) and the other in italic type. Mason has made the text itself the image in 'Grammary', a choice that highlights the visual contrast between the two poems, a contrast that is echoed in their titles (both of which refer explicitly to language) and also in their content; the focus upon a text personified, and the allusion to grammar in the word 'Grammary' (or more specifically to incorrect grammar, to confusion)⁶⁵. On this double-spread the texts illustrate themselves and the act of apprehending the image is more intellectualised. The reader/viewer must find and decode the image, as it is less explicit than others Mason has created.

A central image that relates to both poems, through the play on opposites it implies, is that of the moon (the only shape that is drawn upon the double spread). 'Grammary' is printed in golden beige, but a huge circle (or moon) overlaps the text and is also gold beige. Where it does so, the text becomes the cream colour of the blank page in a colour reversal. This is a play on dark and light, on positive and negative space (as in the shape of the Ionian dagger), and on reversal, all concepts picked up on in 'The Text':

⁶⁵ In 'Grammary' the sentence structure is grammatically incorrect, although ironically the meaning is clearly put across.

THE TEXT

*A story at first made up
by a mother for her child.
The cook heard it,
brewing a broth, and the next thing
it was scuttling round the market,
a small but growing larger
uncatchable rat.*

*Some years later (3 to 900)
The Fable Man was hunting
and put it in his bag
and everywhere the children heard it
(again and please again).*

*Soon, quite soon, it
began to sing and dance
moon upon moon upon moon —
it had clothes in its cupboard
and puns up its sleeve,
at least six hats and
not all of them funny.
Some said when it laughed
it was crying
but most said it was
the other way round.*

*Wise men and things began
to hang around it,
to hang upon it, to make
their lives from it,
its wizening. O
and it grew so very old —
its nose was in its chin,
the eyes fed-up and weepy.
The stomach rumbled,
the brain forgot to remember
almost everything except
that once it had been told
to a child. Then it knew,
at last, it had died.*

Figure 31: Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Grammary' and 'The Text'. 1992. Colour lithograph and text, 56 x 38 cm. The Selected: Section IV.

Some said when it laughed
 it was crying
 but most said it was
 the other way round.

The circular moon and its light and dark relationship with the text of 'Grammar' plays on 'the other way round'. The moon also becomes a visual pun on 'round' and the circle shape involved in the visual image of reversal.

Mason plays with our preconception that handwriting is more personal than the printed text, for while it is indeed an individual's handwriting, it is also printed, a lithograph, from which many identical copies have been made to form a series of books. But there is yet another twist: this is a limited edition, a special artist's edition that is not going to be mass-produced, and which does retain (especially via the oil paintings, pencilled-in signatures and different comments in each book from poet and artist) a certain kind of individuality in that no two of the books are the same. Mason once more reveals her fascination with the print so evident in the thumb, palm and object prints that pepper this lithographic book. What does it mean to make an imprint and how do imprints of text and image make imprints on the minds and hearts of the reader/viewer? There are different kinds of imprints. Mason highlights here the difference between original and copy, but also the places in which the two are difficult to discern from one another.

Mason's play on the printed text/handwriting binary opposition recalls the kind of discussions about text raised by Derrida in his essay *Signature Event Context* (1998) in which he plays off the written against the spoken word. Traditionally the spoken word was seen as purer than the written word because the person speaking was present in what was said. Written text was seen as distanced from the presence of the speaker, in that the speaker could be removed from the text, even die, and the text would live on with the possibility of the speaker's meaning being mis-interpreted. Nevertheless, there also remains a certain level on which the written word has been given primacy, particularly in legal matters. Our signatures represent authenticity. Our handwriting becomes a means of identifying that which could come from us and from no other. Derrida, characteristically excluding any notion of fixity that could be carried by either printed or written word, claims (contrary to traditional belief) that "[b]y definition, a written signature implies the actual or empirical nonpresence of the signifier" (Derrida 1988:20). This is partly because, for the signature to function as a sign of identity (of our presence) it needs to be repeatable: "In order to function, that is, to be readable, a signature must have a repeatable, iterable, imitable form" (Derrida 1988:20). The signature's repeatability denies its individuality, the presence of ourselves within it. Derrida concludes therefore that presence and absolute meaning (transcendent meaning/God) are deferred from both writing and speech. There thus can be no authenticating handwriting or signature. Mason calls this paradox to our attention by placing handwritten (printed) text next to type (printed) text. She asks us to determine if text is any more authentic or personal than the other. Is the message of the one any more meaningful because it is presented in a different medium? Is this something we can answer? Her implied question playfully

extends towards another binary, that of word/image. Which medium is most effective? Which medium conveys more? The answer lies on the double-page spread. Meaning is, in this instance, best conveyed by a combination of the two.

Despite Mason's use of text echoing the theoretical implications of Derrida's printed signature (at the conclusion of his essay on the irrelevance of such a signature), Mason paradoxically also suggests a belief in a presence or a message that *does* abide in art, one that Derrida cannot believe in. Her illustration shows not the inauthenticity of words (written or spoken), but the fact that they are one of many mediums through which meaning *can* be conveyed. She demonstrates this through her response to words, via visual art, showing that what Cullinan expresses has been conveyed to and internalised by her. Her images form the proof of this process. But because Cullinan's work has come through her, its presence or meaning has been added to or expanded. She also shows, Derrida-like, that we ourselves *are* the text both in that we are part of the construction of meaning in our reading or viewing of the poem, and in that we are more likely to respond to the one medium than the other. This seems to correspond with Derrida's opinion that, "writing, if there is any, communicates, but certainly does not exist" (Derrida 1988:21). Meaning may not reside solely within the text or image itself, but the text or image certainly provides several doors, from which we choose and through which we journey. We find meaning in the gap, in the interaction between things, in the mystery of what happens between viewer, reader and page. The real artwork lies not simply the object itself, but the act of interpretation and interaction that occurs between it and the individual consciousness apprehending it.

On another formal level, the play on dark and light in the poem/image also becomes the game of hide-and-seek and a hint to the reader to look deeper into the image/text relationship to seek out levels of meaning. Just as the concept of the moon blinding the sky suggests the speaker's difficulty in perceiving the environment, so the reader/viewer has to look harder to read the handwriting. Sight is called into conscious play. This hide-and-seek analogy also works for 'The Text'. The poem is also a game, a literary game in which a text becomes personified and yet the subject matter is to some extent hidden. The content of this poem presents an interesting problem for Mason. How do you illustrate or draw a text? What are the features of a text? Where in the poem are they hidden? Again Mason's Derridian play with text and her play on dark and light come into their own. She cannot draw a portrait of a text in a literal sense as a text (in the case of this poem) is an abstraction, but she can play with ideas about texts. Her image operates through a form of synaesthesia. She engages both haptically- and optically-based sensory experiences in order to stimulate the intellect and imagination (if these could be called senses). Mason's illustration for this poem thus incorporates the poem's relationship with the entire double page spread, with the handwriting and the printed type, and with the blank page itself. She contrasts 'The Text' to the poem and illustration upon the opposite page, by building a relationship. In this sense 'The Text' is illustrated through Mason's corresponding illustration for 'Grammar'.

But how does the presentation of 'Grammar' work for the poem 'Grammar' itself? The circle/moon seems again to be the key. As Cullinan writes, 'a full moon |blinds the sky',

the full moon is not only present, but also absent. Blinding the sky could mean that the moon makes the night sky seem even darker in contrast to the moon's brilliant, blinding, luminous presence (like the sun). The moon thus blinds the viewer, who would no longer be able to perceive it. Because of this the moon itself becomes a blind moon, a dark moon, an absence. The moon's darkness is represented as a shadow, as a hole in the page. This sense of absence is also found in the poem:

known is this:

my only known,

and it is gone.

The moon comes to represent this 'only known' that is gone. It simultaneously relates to the death of 'The Text' on the opposite page, and becomes a moon of mourning.

Cullinan's response to Mason's illustration is to reverse the idea of the moon blinding something else to being blind itself. He comments:

So that's a blind moon. [Mason has] blinded it, but I could not think of it as an illustration in a sense that it's going to help you in any way to.... It is something apart from the poem, but it can be that you afterwards associate the poem in a different way from the way you did.

It is difficult to agree with Cullinan. In this case the illustration *is* the poem and cannot stand apart from it. He may be correct in saying that it does not help us understand what he, Cullinan, meant by the poem, but it does reveal other things within what he wrote and that form part of our linguistic heritage that affect and remain part of what he is conveying (such as the issues about writing and spoken language that Derrida is famed for raising). Nevertheless, his ellipsis here is the closest he comes to saying that an image perhaps obstructs what he meant through the poem. He seeks to disassociate the poem from it, so that the image stands alone. This is, of course, impossible, as image and text are one. Almost in confirmation of this, the moon of the illustration (through the play on positive and negative space) seems to devour the text of 'Grammary', to swallow it up. Perhaps Mason is commenting once again that art, like texts, exists for consumption by the reader/viewer.

Sir Tom

‘Sir Tom’ also appears as a double-page spread⁶⁶ and reflects the previous page (that held ‘Grammary’ and ‘The Text’) in its colour-use and play on positive and negative space. Here ‘solid’ shapes (objects depicted) are left the colour of the blank page, while the space around them is filled with block grey-blue colour that grades lighter and lighter towards the top of the page – giving the impression of a permeable atmosphere. The poem itself extends across the upper-middle section of the spread and the images crouch at the very bottom of the page, falling off into the space beyond the frame of the book. Mason cleverly uses space here to create the impression of a child’s view of the world. Both the young and the senile lack the strength or height (adult chairs not offering enough support for babies) to reach up and touch the poem, to be much more than eye level with the tabletop. All we see of Tom and the little boy are the tops of their heads barely reaching the table – which gives a sense of their being overwhelmed by a world that is huge, both physically and metaphysically beyond them. This is also echoed in the effect of the vast expanse of open space that dwarfs the figures and emphasises their vulnerable, unprotected heads.

Mason’s image functions as illustration in the sense that she forms a visual characterisation of the two main characters of the poem (child and grandfather). However, she illustrates in a non-literal sense too; in echoing the poem’s stress on the similarities between man and child. Both appear as dislocated round heads without the

⁶⁶See on page 138 - *Figure 32*: Judith Mason. Illustration for ‘Sir Tom’. 1992. Black and white reproduction of colour lithograph, 56 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section IV.

power of limbs or grounding bodies to grant them physical agency; both have very little hair (the child's is not yet grown and the old man is balding); both squint with the effort of trying to comprehend the world; and both are made vulnerable through their sky-exposed heads and grotesque distortion. Mason insists, "When I distort an image it is intended to provoke compassion rather than censure, to trigger pathos rather than revulsion" (Mason in *N.C.* 1990: 16). In a sense though, the poem's content encourages us to experience both pathos and revulsion and both can also be found in her image. Mason adopts some formal devices to direct the image towards pathos; for example her 'solid' figures are ethereal line drawings on a space that emphasises its absence of colour (in other words, negative space). Her humans become translucent shadows-in-waiting, while "doom's blatancy" hovers in attendance. Both are already part spirit. Death is drawn into their being. The white bleached paper of their faces also suggests the white skulls the old man sees.

In choosing to distort both characters, Mason comments on the horror of the child's experience of the old man, and also on the grotesqueness of the old man's experience of the child. Mason's depiction of the two characters as physically similar echoes their similarities as emphasised by the poem; both fail to comprehend the consequences of their actions, both have a distorted view of the world which is self-centred, both are childlike and both are led sobbing from the table. The two figures face each other – but evidently fail to see and understand each other. A vast white table and a toast rack (a symbol of this traumatic memory) stand between them. They gaze at each other across generations (symbolised by the family table and its traditions) forever separate yet bound

to the table — for all his children and their children
had paused and now were watching — took off the covering
napkin, drew out a piece and lavished it in butter,
nimble slicing off the crusts. Hovering

behind us I heard Jim, the oldest servant there,
just barely whisper 'shame', though why he said this I
did not understand quite then. A square of soft, warm
butter-sodden toast filled the middle of the plate. 'Why,

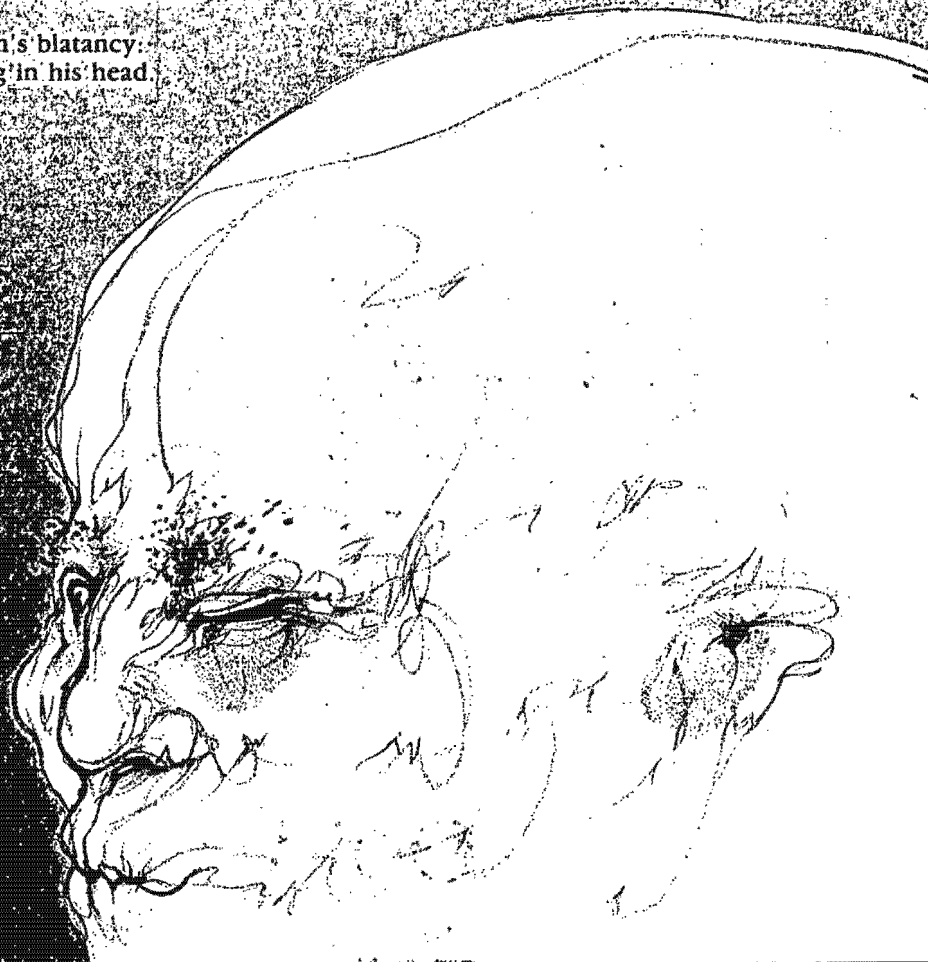
close your eyes, my boy', the old man said, 'Open
wide!' I made my lips into an O, smiling to the giver.
Eyes shut, I turned towards grandfather,
trusting. Into my throat he jabbed a long coarse sliver

from the crust. It rasped and burnt my skin. I gagged
in panic and could not scream while still he stabbed and bent
it down into my throat. Some uncle (or my father, was it?)
pulled him gently off. Choked with shock, I was quickly sent

or carried from the dining room and put upon
a couch in the small parlour. At the table old Sir Tom
stared at his family. Rightly, they had always known
children never should presume or, if they did, learn that from

such babies must come men. But strangely, now, the old man broke,
gasping into tears. He said he saw white skulls and not
their cosy, smiling faces. Blue-eyed, haggard, he too was led
sobbing from the table. Perhaps, at last, he'd understood

how sick he was and old, hearing Doom's blatancy,
the awful nonsense raving, Hell seething in his head.



by this event. They loom at each other in a kind of standoff. The child's mouth, placed between two pudgy cheeks, is open like that of a hungry baby bird, a demanding and threatening creature, not quite human. The old man is silently reserved and fearfully watchful.

Cullinan is fascinated by Mason's choice of the toast rack as a symbol for the experience described in the poem.

Now, how the toast rack could become that trap is really what interests me...
It's not that she's just an illustrator. This is a work of art. But it wouldn't have been there except for the poem. In a way, the point is made that the poetry stands and it has produced a wonderful image. And the wonderful image has produced the poetry, even turned it around in a way.

Addendum A: 8

Before we read the poem and hear about toast it is not obvious what the rack is. No toast rack is mentioned in the poem, so this is a symbol Mason has created herself. She has manipulated and simplified the shape and positioned it so that it seems to float in the space above the table. Her distortion accentuates the spikes and curves of the rack so that it looks somewhat like a row of croquet hoops. It reminds Cullinan strongly of a trap (perhaps a spring coil); the spikes certainly suggest an instrument of torture, which seems

to be the point: that which should bring pleasure (shared toast between grandfather and grandson) brings only pain. Mason writes:

The 'Sir Tom' image appealed to me because of the pathos and cruelty of the incident [Cullinan] describes – a monstrous little domestic drama. I wanted a banal image rich with menace and the toast-rack morphed into a diabolical 'knuckle-duster' device from the Moghal period that I once saw at the Delhi Museum.

Addendum C: 3

Mason injects in an element of history that extends the reference of the poem by invoking an entirely different tradition of violence from that of the poem's South African context.

As with 'The Bestiary' Mason's images accentuate the beast, the animal instinct within humans; the hunger of the child and the fear and lashing out of the old man. The horror of the experience of the poem is played out in the drawing, the violence of which (the ugly mask-like faces and the spike between) causes the reader/viewer to recoil. The illustration causes this reaction even though it does not directly depict the moment of violence (to have done so would be redundant as Cullinan already describes it with such force).

Mason works with the power of suggestion and lets our imaginations work through the horror Cullinan's words evoke. A visual depiction of the 'rape' would diminish the power of the poem. Mason's image is very clearly symbolic. While Cullinan describes a table

laden with food, Mason's is bare save the rack, perhaps suggesting the barrenness of the old man's life and his 'awful nonsense raving'. The image reveals the power of simplification. Mason takes only a few images from the poem and condenses them. After experiencing the combination it is certain that should we see the image again it would recall in us not only parts of the poem, but the whole.

Again

Mason's deceptively simple illustration for 'Again' is another of her object prints. Two footprints (two right feet) lie curled around the poem, encircling it protectively, but on reading the poem these feet are transformed, becoming symbolically layered through the pun on the words sole/soul. With the help of this pun and a few strategic pencil strokes from Mason, the feet are transformed into two fish. The personal and intimate tone of the poem is played out in the fingerprint-like nature of the footprint, in the lines that identify this as one person's imprint and no other's. Mason has literally imprinted herself onto the page, which is in many ways a metaphor for what Cullinan is doing through the poem. Both marks are intense and in many ways private. The footprint also brings to mind mud, the dark print or spoor we leave with our feet, echoing Cullinan's allusions to 'ancient' primeval mud. The suggestion of our dangerous origins and evolution is also neatly embodied in Mason's iconic image that, in one moment, seems to chart human evolutionary development from sea creature into amphibian into an erect two-footed being.

Mason also cleverly contrasts the 'hands' mentioned in the poem by substituting them with her feet in the image. The composition of the poem and image is circular. The feet make up a yin-yang shape (accentuated by the simple black white colour of the image) in which the poem sits centrally in a moment of balance. The fish-feet are also surreal in being an unlikely merging of two usually unconnected things and in this way they are indeed 'dream' creatures as Cullinan indicates.

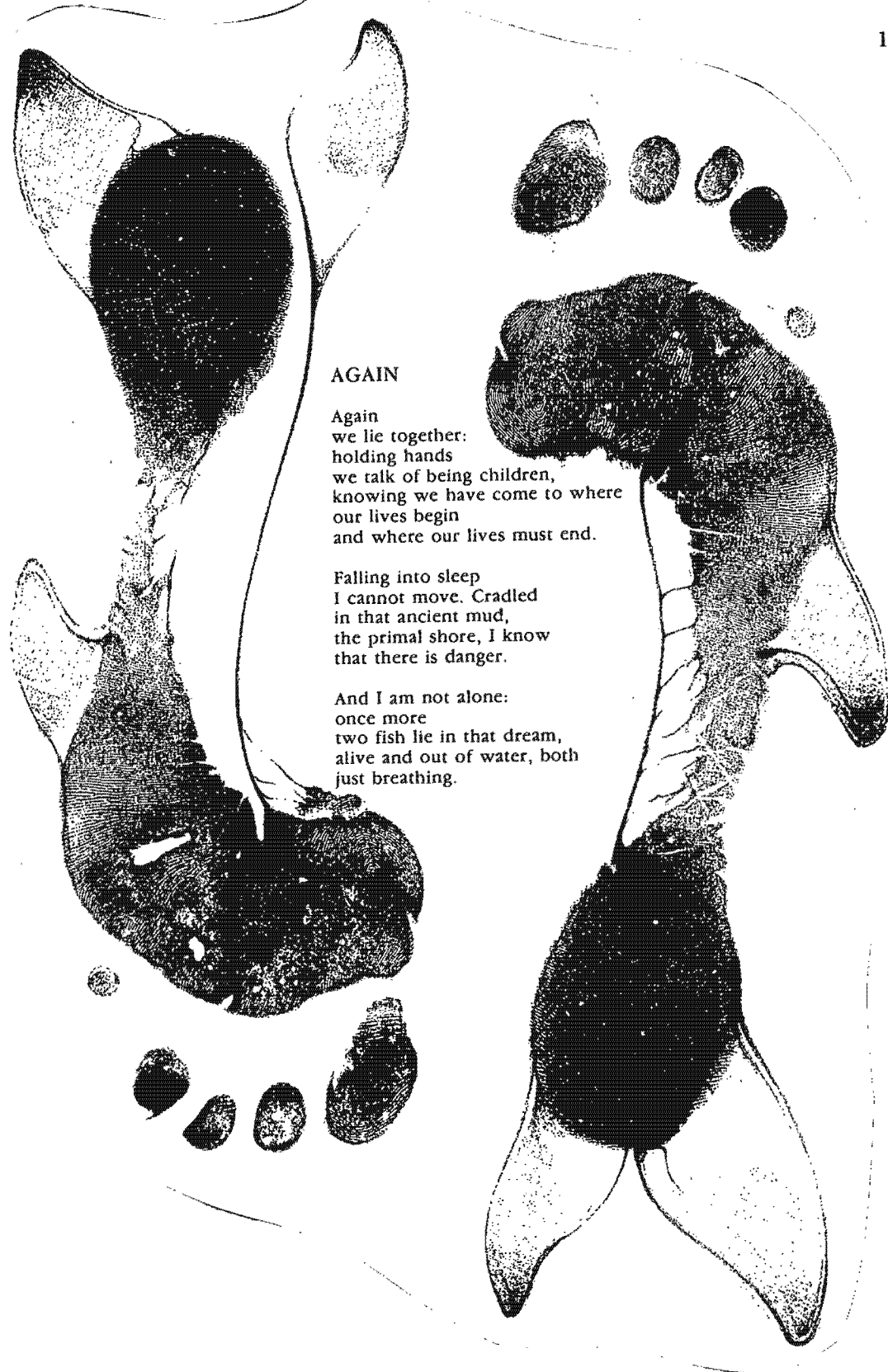


Figure 33: Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Again'. 1992. Lithograph, 28 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section IV.

The object print also beautifully encompasses this moment in human life where ‘our lives begin |and where our lives must end’. For many of us the first painting or drawing we were helped to make in playschool was an imprint of our tiny hands and feet. These adult feet refer to that first poster-paint imprint. But the poem meditates on lives ending too, and thus on thoughts of death. These are also embodied in the pun: the (immortal) human soul is symbolised by the sole (a fish), a pun that functions as a religious symbol of the spiritual in many faiths⁶⁷. Both are then embodied in Mason’s image the soles of the feet, which also bring to mind journeying through life. Sole (alone) also contrasts with the image of a pair; with the idea of being solitary and yet simultaneously bound to someone else. This is emphasised by the fact that the feet are not a pair, but the imprints of two right feet. Mason’s image, simple though it seems, encompasses the many layers evoked by the poem and once more unites them in a single iconic image.

⁶⁷ This is a metaphor that has been used for centuries by many religions, particularly that of Christianity in which the secret code sign for Christ was that of a fish. “The fish was one of the earliest symbols of Christian art, because the letters of Gk. *ichthys* were taken as an acrostic for *Iēsous Christos Theou Hyios Sōtēr*, ‘Jesus Christ, of God the Son, Saviour’” (Douglas 1962: 425).

Johannesburg 1902

Cullinan makes some paradoxical comments about Mason's image for 'Johannesburg 1902'. Again he feels a relatively "funny little poem" (Addendum A: 16) has been enhanced by her image. He remarks that while "Judith also went for a fairly conventional look at it," somehow "one feels it is not so obvious as the twin swimmer poem ['At Forty Odd']" (Ibid.). The 'conventional', more figurative approach hides a complex layering of connotations that come into play through her image. It is not an image that one understands at a glance, while one can understand that of 'At Forty Odd' in such a way (which is what makes that illustration so effective for that poem).

Cullinan's poem is simple but layered. It deals mostly with memory and change, with time passing, with the return to a childhood home after an absence and some growth. Nevertheless, the return is hopeful and the speaker does not dwell on the destruction of the war mentioned, only on its strangeness and sense of dislocation from reality (illustrated through the appropriation by grown men of a little boy's toys). The father returns like Noah's dove with a symbol of hope, not an olive branch, but a wagon full of cherries. It is a bountiful and hopeful image. Mason, however, does not choose to illustrate the poem through dwelling on the obvious and inviting image of a wagon full of cherries. She focuses on the discordant aspects of the poem, on the hidden, on that which has been stolen.

Gramary.

It is the children in the dusk:
are not what were:
bone and spirit.

Where I am I do not know
and where I go to I
cannot see.

It was the children playing
in the dusk,
(not this dusk) those

other children, not us and now.
Under the trees enormous
the voices seek and hide,

seek and hide.
Known is this:
my only known,
and it is gone.

A full moon
blinds the sky.

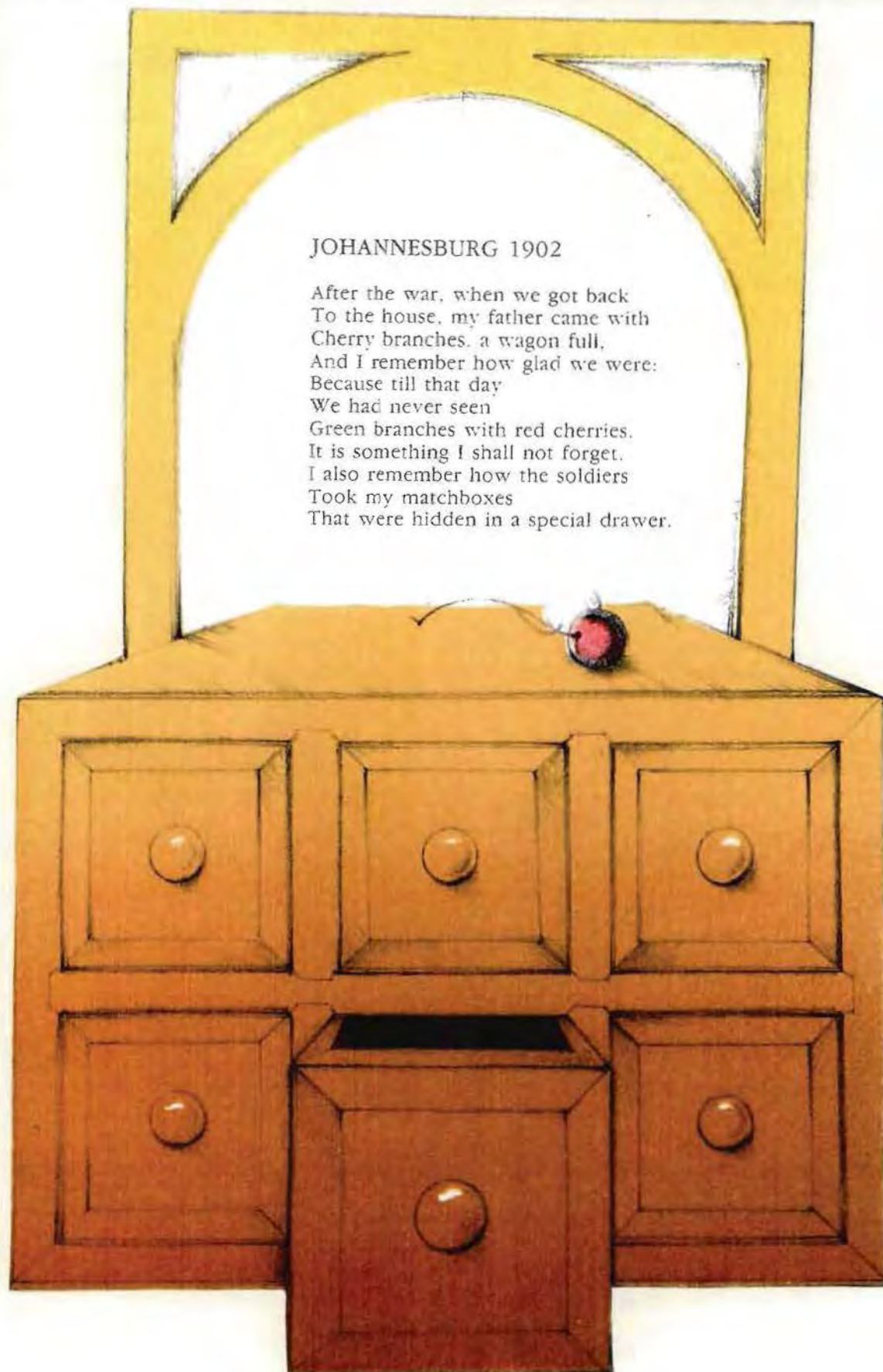


Figure 34: Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Johannesburg 1902'. 1992. Colour lithograph, 28 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section I.

Mason frames the poem both literally and figuratively. She places it iconically in the very centre of the page with an almost symmetrical image enfolding and enclosing it. The image alludes to both the drawer and cherries mentioned in the poem, but it speaks symbolically more clearly about Cullinan's theme of memory. The poem is placed on or in (an ambiguity which adds to the depth of the relationship between image and text) the mirror of an old farmhouse dresser. It is not clear whether the poem dwells within the mirror's reflection (on another level of reality), in this world, or on the very surface of the glass (the division between reality and its opposite, between conscious and unconscious).

This positioning of the poem within the image speaks not only of the content of the poem itself, but explores the nature of poetry and art in a much broader context. The poem within the mirror evokes the age-old definition of art's status as a mirror-reflection of life, its Platonic status as mimesis. Mason thus frames the poem within the context of western art and thought, of art as imitating life, but she simultaneously looks at 'reflection' on a different level, as being part of the process of memory and meditation. The poem in the mirror is thus both art and life, as well as being a reflection, a shadow of the past. Mason's mirror symbol calls to our attention the constructed-ness of poem and image, the fact that they are not real in a literal sense. We are made aware that the page itself (the complete arena of the 'artwork') functions as a mirror. Both page, text, and image combine to help us 'reflect' upon our world and ourselves.

Thus the poem is doubly framed, firstly by the mirror-frame Mason provides, and secondly this frame is echoed by the 'framework' of the book itself, the shape of the

page. It is a play within a play. Text and image do not overlap in a literal sense, but because of how Mason has placed it within the image, the two combine metaphorically through alluding to both one another and an art and text world that exist outside of one another too. In this instance, the image functions as a metatext, adding a wider context to the text, through which new and unplanned (by the poet) connections can be made.

The dresser contains six drawers and the central bottom drawer is left open – left so by the soldiers finding and taking the matchboxes. The bottom interior of the drawer is in complete darkness, suggesting not only that which is ‘hidden’ but also reflecting the mirror image. The drawer becomes a door into another world, representing the speaker’s glimpse into actions that occurred in his absence, a glimpse into the world of a soldier. Again, the drawer functions like the poem itself, which is also a door into another world (although it is a created, and not necessarily a historical, one), the world of a child glimpsing the world of a soldier. The drawer and mirror also suggest access to the unknowable, the contents of the darkness and the other side of a mirror reflection, the full extent of the unconscious, and perhaps also how the memory works, all things that are hinted at in the imagery of the poem. The image has the effect of extending the scale of the poem, of widening its sphere of reference by alluding to these things without the limitation of having to define them in words.

A single red cherry rests on the dresser top. It is the only object in the image that is not placed symmetrically, and it refers neatly to the poem in suggesting nature’s ability to disrupt the manmade, to disrupt symmetry. The cherry branches in the poem represent the

beauty of the unexpected, the hope that appears, proof that life exists in our absence, the continuation of nature in the face of man-made conflict and war. Strangely the reflection of the cherry is white and not red. Its paleness suggests the unreality of memory, reflection and art (both poetry and painting). In life the cherry's reflection would be red. In Mason's image it is not. She disrupts our expectations just as the cherries do in the poem. The cherry's presence thus also accentuates the contrast of manmade (dresser) and nature (fruit).

While the style of the dresser dates back to 1902, it is also an accessible image for a modern audience. This suggests the timelessness of the object and also of the poem's ability to access or represent an experience of a child in a different era in a way we can relate to it. Also, while the reflections in the mirror may change, may reveal soldiers, children, or the reader/viewer, the dresser itself remains an artefact by which the reader/viewer can measure how little the farmhouse changed while the family was away.

It is interesting that Mason introduces an entire dresser and does not focus simply on the single 'special drawer'. In this way she creates a wider context for one of the images of the poem. She also comments ironically on the child's vision. All six of her drawers are identical and yet this one is 'special'. 'Why?' She seems to ask. She accentuates (alongside Cullinan's text) that children see the world in a very special way, that a drawer can be special to a child for secret and personal reasons. In this case the drawer contains something precious to the child, once matchboxes and now a memory of them. Children do not assign value to things according to their monetary value, but because of their

emotional significance. This is what the poem does in affirming the value of two fleeting images, that of the cherry branches and of the lost matchboxes. Cullinan asserts it is in these moments, in these fleeting images, that memory is created. They are the hooks onto which our emotions link and which cause us to remember. Van der Merwe uses a hook analogy in order to describe how good illustration affects the viewer/reader. Illustrations, like the fleeting images of memory, "stir non-semantic aspects of consciousness into action, and create triggers and hooks onto text or even vice versa"(Addendum G: 7). Mason's image here creates hooks or links that lead us back into the poem itself.

The mirror image suggests the idea that the act of 'reflecting' on a poem or on an image is an act of self-reflection. Nevertheless it also (through its constructed-ness) paradoxically asserts that what we see is a reflection of life and not life itself. Mirrors are also part of the process of measuring time, tools that help us monitor the process of our own ageing. In their reflections we watch our wrinkles appear, our faces change. Mason suggests that this mirror reflected the return of the family after a passage of time, and that the poem itself is a reflection on the same return. Of course what we see in the reflection is also subjective, as is memory, and this memory is further disrupted and distorted (as mirrors can distort their reflection) by the knowledge that this is not a real memory, but one that the poet has invented or imagined. While Mason's image speaks of the idea that "Poets have been the memories of their peoples" (Paz 1992:115) in relating poetry and memory, it also acknowledges the unreal nature of memory. She seems to say that any memory is constructed, all memories unreal, in that we impose our subjectivity upon the reflection. We see what we create and not necessarily what is there. She highlights this

idea of construction by leaving her drafting lines in the drawing, the mechanical lines of linear perspective. These lines reveal what began as the Renaissance obsession with creating the illusion of three-dimensionality upon a two dimensional surface. Mason points out that drawing, poetry and memory are all illusionistic.

The image, lacking a context, floats in the centre of the page. The dresser is disconnected in a white space and stands upon no solid ground (not even the illusion of one). Through this Mason suggests that the poem's content is a fragment of memory that is disconnected from someone's life story or from a wider context. Mason has limited her colour choice for the illustration to a woody beige and red. The colours also have a connection to the poem, the beige suggesting the colour of the wagon and the matchboxes (as well as the khaki of soldiers' uniforms); the red suggesting blood, a symbol of both life and war (death).

Something else Mason does to accentuate the constructed-ness of poem and image is to distort the image, to draw the reflection 'incorrectly'. Instead of drawing the reflection of the tabletop in the mirror in an illusionistic way, she draws it as if the tabletop itself extends into the space behind the mirror, as if it were a window-ledge outside a window frame we were looking through. In this way, the dresser once more becomes a doorway into another world, a world in which the poem seems to exist or float. Again Mason asserts that art provides a glimpse into another world, into what it was like in a past we can only experience through art. Mason's image thus responds to the poem on many levels. It responds on the literal level of illustrating the imagery Cullinan uses, of

providing imagery for what he means in a figurative sense, but it also responds to art itself, extending our experience of the poem in a way that illustrates most clearly how art begets art. Mason's work responds to and comments on the poem, talking back to it and highlighting and expanding the concepts the poem triggers.

CONCLUSION

The full effect of the image/text relationship in *The Selected* and the advantages of it can be highlighted by comparing the work under discussion with Cullinan's *Selected Poems 1961-1994* that was submitted for general publication through Snailpress in 1994. This book is far more typical of the kind of use of images found within a book of poetry produced for a wider audience. Only seven or so of Mason's images are used and they are placed in a more subordinate relationship to the poems and to the book itself. Her images are generally separated from the poems for which they were intended and thus, though still powerful, often float out of context. They provide more a general feel for the book than a direct or particular response to parts of the text. None of the images appear in colour besides that on the cover (the image of Cullinan's daughter, Sarah) and Mason's imprint is nearly lost⁶⁸.

The face of 'The Bestiary' appears on the title page, and images accompany each of the pages announcing a new section (of which there are four, laid out much as in the special edition). The images have been chosen for their particular power (as being the stronger or more decorative images of the collaboration) and to create a specific mood for that section. The image for 'The Devils' introduces Section I, Section II is associated with the illustration for 'September at the Tuileries', Versions (III) is accompanied by the skeleton from 'The Age' and Section IV is introduced by the Madonna and Child of

⁶⁸ A circular palm print disappears on the back cover below the image of the poet.

‘Nativity’. In addition, the image of a sort of grenade-sundae from ‘The War’ acts as a filler on two otherwise empty pages.

Mason enjoys both forms of the book. She feels both stand and work well as what they were intended to be:

I like the way Gus Ferguson makes books – he has a very special sensibility. I enjoy the look of the Snailpress book. I am egalitarian by nature and appreciate mass-produced books in the same way that I am grateful for prints of, for example, oil paintings. The one thing does not diminish the other.

Addendum C: 3

This may be so, but the images work differently in the two books and the ‘look’ of the Snailpress book certainly marginalizes the images. The role of Mason’s work in the Snailpress book is more decorative and the drive of the book is to showcase the poetry rather than the art. The result is that Mason’s art is sidelined and left without a context. The images, while powerful, are all the more mystifying because they lack the context of other images. They still, however, add to the book, hinting, because of the strange mood they introduce, at hidden layers to Cullinan’s poems and leading us deeper into them. Nevertheless, the dialogue between image and text in the Snailpress version is indirect. Nowhere in the book does an image appear next to or in the context of a poem. The power and potential of the image is often compromised in books for many reasons.

Decisions to subordinate images are often financial (a book has to be kept down to a certain number of pages and colour images are expensive) but they are also tactical. This is Cullinan's *Selected Poems* and the text should be the focus. Cullinan very likely would prefer the reader to approach his work uninfluenced by Mason's or anybody else's, to come to it fresh (as far as that is possible). Nevertheless, we are taken far deeper into his work in the special edition by the presence of Mason's images relating to his text.

What do Mason's images ultimately do to Cullinan's poetry? What do they say about spaces where images end, where they cannot go? What do they say about the things they cannot express or about the things text cannot express, or about areas of overlap between textual and visual arenas? Cullinan answers:

The lapping and overlapping and underlapping...are subtle and it is difficult for me to say anything except that when I read this poem ['Nativity'], I think of this image. In a way it's completely unlike the theatre. I can't stand the theatre because it acts out things I want to think about in my mind.... I find it a sort of rape of my imagination. And in contrast, here [with Mason's work], I feel I am enhanced by this image. Or rather the poem is, not me.

Addendum A: 12

Cullinan doesn't believe that Mason's images change how he sees his poems, though they "enhance" (Ibid.) them. He adds, "Sometimes I read a poem and I won't remember her

image at all” (Ibid.). Cullinan seems to mean this in a positive sense. He qualifies this statement when he talks about the kind of illustration that dictates the way the viewer should respond. He explains:

...an image can actually change the way you think about a text or poem, in a somewhat or slightly sinister way. In other words you have been influenced by the image. Now, I don't feel this has happened here [in Mason's work] because I originated these things with other images in my mind and I would never have chosen that...toast rack. To me that was inspired.

Addendum A: 14

Mason herself asserts ‘enhancing’ rather than ‘sinister’ aims and plays down the power of her own illustrations:

There are things I would like to do again, or in a different way, but books are produced in a time limit and one has to make choices as well as one can and then go for it. If I had been aware of acting in detriment to a poem during the process I would have removed the image.

Addendum C: 2

Such a comment presents the text as terribly vulnerable to the power of images while paradoxically attempting to present images as subservient to the text in this project, which is, as I have shown, not always the case.

While, as was previously mentioned, Mason's images form a method of navigating the book, they also form something like a musical score to instruct us how to read the poems. If, as Paz asserts, "In all written forms of poetry, the graphic sign acts as a function of the oral sign" (Paz 1992:139) it is also true that in *The Selected*, the image acts as a function of the graphic sign. Very often the image alludes to words and concepts that should be emphasised when reading the poem. Mason's 'poetical score' also acts as a function of the oral sign in suggesting the tone in which the poem should be read; satirical, humorous, pensive or sad. Paz goes on to quote Mallarmé's prologue to 'Un coup de dés': "The retreats, advances, prolongations, and fugues of the poem, and its very layout, become a musical score for anyone who cares to read it aloud" (Mallarmé in Paz 1992:140). Likewise, Mason's dashes, lines, curves, planes of colour and splotchy thumbprints, alongside Cullinan's marks, provide a score for our mental, emotional and intellectual experience of the poem, for our abstract and more than abstract response to it. Mason herself sees her images functioning in a similar way. She writes, "I think the drawings serve as background notes, like a guitar accompaniment while the singer expresses his ideas" (Addendum C: 1). Once again, though, she underestimates their power. It is perhaps more apt to see *The Selected* as a duet between poet and artist, where each take turns to be the tune or the harmony.

Other artists also invoke musical metaphors to explain image/text relations. One of Lyn Smuts' only forays into placing text in one of her prints was the illustration of a musical text. Her comments on that experience also affirm the idea of image as a score, although she is doing something different:

It is the only thing I have where writing is incorporated into the 'text', but that worked very well then...it goes towards a sort of music manuscript. It looks like musical notation. If I had to do something with text, then I would go that way, through the interest in music.

Addendum F: 2

Skotnes also invokes the musical when she suggests that images "resonate" (Addendum E: 1) differently in different surroundings and Van der Merwe also speaks of music in relation to art and illustration, in connection with the spaces between text and image:

Painting [or visual art] is an activity that harnesses parts of our brain, or potential of our brain, where language can't cope.... If you look at poetry/literature in the twentieth century, where people try to push language to its expressive limits, I think eventually they get to a point where language actually falls silent, where it stops working as language and becomes something other than language.... I think when you push language expressly into those limits where it no longer functions you reach... a kind of semantic, semiotic silence. There is no language. I think that's where... the

disciplines like painting begin, in that kind of silence, beyond that. I think that's where physics and music certainly begin. Visual creative intelligence (and it functions by God knows what kind of rules if there are any) functions in a way that is very unlike language. Language in its own right functions very differently from painting. In this sense I don't think the two meet, although one can try to work with analogies and take ideas like 'visual metaphor' and apply them to this kind of space between. I'm convinced that when I'm painting... I don't think like when I am talking.

Addendum G: 5

Here music is used to emphasise how unlike text and image are, but nowhere does Van der Merwe suggest that they shouldn't enhance or accompany one another.

Images and books and texts also affect poetry in another way. Mason's images and the creation of this book transform poetry into a thing that can be possessed as an object, an object that lives through the transforming power of illustration in the form of the artist's book itself (in a sense, the word made flesh, or at least, organic):

All the arts, painting and sculpture in particular, being forms, are *things*; they can be kept, sold, and used as objects of financial speculation. Poetry, too, is a thing, but a thing that amounts to almost nothing; it is made up of words, it is a puff of air that takes up no room in space. Unlike a painting, a poem shows no figures: it is a verbal incantation that provokes in the reader or hearer a spray of

mental images. Poetry is heard with the ears, but seen only with the mind. Its images are amphibious creatures: both forms and ideas, both sounds and silence.

Paz 1992: 155

Poetry itself is synaesthetic in that it stimulates other senses if we could call them that (the spiritual, intuitive and intellectual senses), through stimulating hearing and vision, but Paz seems to underestimate visual art. He presumes that the painting is figurative and doesn't allow for visual comment on texts such as Mason's implicit one on 'The Text' or for abstract art that in many senses 'shows no figures'. The text/image relationship opens up more options for the apperception of the text. It means that poetry can be seen with the eyes as well as the mind. The images remain 'amphibious creatures'. Mason works with forms (as in the poem on *Le Vaillant*), ideas ('Grammary'), sounds (as implied by her punning in 'Again') and silence (in the poems she leaves image-less). Her work serves to make poetry manifest in the form of a beautiful object, without pinning it down.

Cullinan's and Mason's collaboration results not only in a book, but in a book that becomes an extraordinary art object. Many artists go even further to produce objects/books that play on some of the image/text relationships Mason hints at. Skotnes was working on an example at the time of her interview where each graphic component is the actual object, the actual visual part of what is on it⁶⁹.

⁶⁹ This relates to Mason's games with colouring and playing with text (for example in 'That') so that the text emphasises the graphic.

I *do* write, on horse skeletons, which I've written a whole book on. And for me it's a book. It's got a spine. It's got pages and a bibliography and it's got many, many of my words on it.... And so there the text is important, although I realise... there is a lot of variety in the handwriting. I can't imagine anyone is actually going to read it. So by advance, the production of the text has been compiled with a lot of reading and information, and though it's been put on there, I know that there will be no-one that will ever read this. I don't think it's big enough. Only the bigger words will be read. And it hasn't even been illustrated because I haven't made pictures for it, but the combination of the text and the actual object is what I work on.

Addendum E: 2

While the text is important, relevant and well researched, its main purpose seems to be to invoke the idea of text. This is where the boundaries of text become ambiguous. While it certainly isn't read, by the same token, it doesn't simply function as decoration alone either. Nevertheless, the fact that someone wrote it gives it validity as a text. As Skotnes explains, "[T]he text for me refers to the activity of writing rather than what it is saying" (Addendum E: 3). Cullinan's text is certainly meant to be read and Mason's images aid this. Skotnes' object works differently. The object is meant to be apprehended and the text aids this. Nevertheless, Skotnes' object echoes Mason's playful attitude towards text. She speaks of the attitude of most artists towards text within their own work:

I think artists view their work as being more powerful in many ways than text, as though text is being a servant to what they are doing. Basically it's just visual matter. It's just an interesting combination of black and white, black across a white page. They are also referring to a body of knowledge. And I think people play with text now. I mean, people seem to think that a lot of what is understood as being real, or what does signify is not in the realm of text anymore. It is now somewhere else.

Addendum E: 2-3

This dissertation argues that that 'somewhere else' is within relationships between things, such as between text and image. Despite her playful approach to the text in a fine art context, Skotnes is still "not sure that a single image can compete competently with an entire book" (Addendum E: 4). Text clearly still has its power in certain forms and while Mason also plays with the text, in no way does she see the text as subservient to her aims in this project (though, again, whether her images are always subservient to the aims of the poet and his text remains debatable).

At the heart of this dissertation is a defence of all art, of poetry, illustration and of the art object (particularly the rare or special edition book). The question has arisen as to the social validity of such projects in the light of a modern world where to communicate generally involves technology. Why do painting and poetry and books such as *The*

Selected endure and why should they be written about in Masters degree dissertations?

Kerr attempts to explain:

The question [of whether you can justify art in a modern world] suggests that the business of making art/image is the production of art/image. In fact it has to do with the Will to Form. The product is vestigial; the impulse is to make. It could be with a computer or whatever, but if it is paint you like, or charcoal, that is what makes the process. I go on breathing even though there are machines that can do it for me.

Addendum B: 2

For Kerr, the aim of art is personal, creative, and often self-oriented. He differentiates between production (in a market economy sense) and creation (in a spiritual, holistic sense, as in the creative work of nature). Art is not a product, it is a process, although sometimes art objects such as this book result from that process. The exploration of such a book and its reception by the reader/viewer, however, can take us back to the creative process and reveal something of how we come to make or apprehend texts and images. Van der Merwe feels the defence of art, poetry or illustration of the kind in *The Selected* begins with defining it:

If you define illustration...as a product of a technological culture, then you immediately run into problems, because then you are subjecting fine art and

illustration to the laws and rules that govern technological progress. In other words, the wheel had to be invented before they could go to the moon. You can't reverse those things. There's a very particular kind of scientific rationale and logic, according to which our technological sciences evolve. I don't think the same thing applies to the creative problem of how one goes about making art or illustrating things. If you look at film, it's probably the most exciting expressive medium and I think technology has given us a whole lot of stuff. I think film adds to illustration rather than replaces it. A lot of people have the idea that film has now replaced it, like people in the 1870's thought that the camera was going to replace the paintbrush.

Addendum G: 4

As Wendy Steiner aptly explains just what it is about artworks like *The Selected* that cannot be replaced by technology:

Art occupies a different moral space from that presented in identity politics, because art is virtual. We will not be led into fascism or rape or child abuse or racial oppression through aesthetic experience. Quite the contrary – the more practised we are in fantasy the better we will master its difference from the real. What we need is a situation in which art and the life of the mind can be enjoyed with a knowing pleasure, one that thrills to every richness art can offer, yet does not shrink from the issues art can raise.

Steiner 1995: 211

The special edition and the artist's book remain because they in no way compete with other modern media, and because they recall an older way of bookmaking, an era of illuminated manuscripts and craftsmanship. They embody an approach to text that no mass-produced book can imitate, an approach that has the reader lingering over text and images that offer more with each reading and gaze. As close textual analysis has revealed, they are geared to encourage an aesthetic response and the complete immersion of the reader/viewer within the experience of the text. This property encourages the reader/viewer's meditative return to the text time and time again. A defence of such artforms becomes a defence of the humanities and all they stand for. Paz reminds us that "[i]n the time before time, poetry and religion, science and magic, song and dance were one and the same thing" (Paz 1992:79). *The Selected* is an object in which different media, art forms, modes of expression and levels of communication come together to engage with the reader/viewer in a new and powerful way.

To register an aesthetic meaning is a public act of remembering, a tiny piece of the complex process by which works enter into a culture and unfold in the history of interpretation. To succumb to art, and yet to know that its power lies in the process of surrendering, is not to undermine, but to value both art and audience.

Steiner 1995: 92-93

This dissertation thus attempts a different kind of synaesthesia. Through looking and touching both image and text, we are opened up to the old poetry Paz speaks of, to engage with a wider and more holistic vision of art and its interaction with all aspects of life. The presence of the image alongside the poetic text in *The Selected* enhances the reader/viewer's experience of the poem and engages parts of us that language cannot reach. To return to Moodie's assertion: "The pictures are there to get lost in. The text is to point out the direction in which you should get lost. You can't really have one without the other..." (Addendum D: 12). The images encourage our immersion in the text and through surrendering ourselves to the relationship between text and image, we are empowered to discover that which exists beyond ourselves in a far deeper and more complex way than if we encountered text alone. Not only that, but the image/text relationship can enhance the power of the image and text art forms to act upon the world:

For art's devotion to reality is paradoxical. It serves to open thought rather than to close it down. It helps us entertain possibilities – enriching or threatening – which may 'bring newness into the world'.... It appeals to our freedom and individualism and the process to our investment in activities. It may allow us, in our timid fashion, to indulge a certain taste for the sublime.

Maintaining an openness to such contradictions, instabilities, and psychic challenges is a test of each person individually and of the culture as a whole.

Steiner 1995: 211-212

The Selected forms one such text and this dissertation is an attempt to remain open to each of the things Wendy Steiner mentions. I hope that my own enjoyment of the text has become clear through my own engagement with Mason's complex and lovely images and that my own surrender to their beauty, to the art of image and text combined, in some way facilitates that of the reader/viewer of this (my) image/text.

- Figure 7* (p 68): Judith Mason. Detail from illustration for 'Etruscan Girl'. 1992. Black and white reproduction of a colour lithograph, 28 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section IV.
- Figure 8* (p 70): Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Nunc Dimittis'. 1992. Text, 28 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section I.
- Figure 9* (p 72): Judith Mason. Detail from illustration for 'Moths'. 1992. Object print lithograph, life-size. *The Selected*: Section I.
- Figure 10* (p 74): Judith Mason. First two pages of the illustration for 'A God Unknown' 1992. Colour lithograph with gold leaf, 56 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section III.
- Figure 11* (p 76): *Empress Theodora and Retinue*. c.547. Mosaic, San Vitale, Ravenna.
- Figure 12* (p 78): Judith Mason. Illustration for 'At Forty Odd'. 1992. Text, life-size. *The Selected*: Section I.
- Figure 13* (p 79): Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Prehistory, Catembe Ferry'. 1992. Text, life-size. *The Selected*: Section II.

- Figure 14* (p 81): Judith Mason. Illustration for 'I don't know if God...' 1992. Text, life-size. *The Selected*: Section III.
- Figure 15* (p 84): Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Honey', 'The Astrologer', and 'That'. 1992. Colour lithographs, double page spread 56 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section IV.
- Figure 16* (p 91): Judith Mason. First double page spread for '1818. M. François Le Vaillant Recalls His Travels to the Interior Parts of Africa 1780 - 1785'. 1992. Colour lithograph, 56 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section II.
- Figure 17* (p 92): Judith Mason. Illustration for '1818. M. François Le Vaillant Recalls His Travels to the Interior Parts of Africa 1780 - 1785'. 1992. Colour lithograph, 28 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section II.
- Figure 18* (p 92): Judith Mason. Illustration for '1818. M. François Le Vaillant Recalls His Travels to the Interior Parts of Africa 1780 - 1785'. 1992. Colour lithograph, 28 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section II.

- Figure 19* (p 101): Judith Mason. Detail from the illustration for 'April 1786: Colonel Robert Jacob Gordon Returns from His Last Journey'. 1992. Lithograph, life-size. *The Selected*: Section II.
- Figure 20* (p 103): Auguste Rodin. *The Walking Man*. 1900-1907. Bronze sculpture, 213,5 x 71,7 x 156,5 cm.
- Figure 21* (p 106): Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Two Mares'. 1992. Lithograph, double page spread 56 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section III.
- Figure 22* (p 108): Peter Paul Rubens. *Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus*. c.1618. Oil on canvas, 2,21 x 2,01 m. Alte Pinakothek, Munich.
- Figure 23* (p 111): Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Being Careful'. 1992. Lithograph, life-size. *The Selected*: Section III.
- Figure 24* (p113): Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Bogdanus of Alexandria'. 1992. Lithograph, life-size. *The Selected*: Section III.

- Figure 25* (p 116): Judith Mason. Illustration for 'The Bestiary'. 1992. Lithograph, 28 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section IV.
- Figure 26* (p 119): Pablo Picasso. *Les Femmes d'Alger*. 1907. Oil on canvas, 243,9 x 233,7 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest.
- Figure 27* (p 122): Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Filippo Argenti'. 1992. Black and white reproduction of a colour lithograph, single page 28 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section II.
- Figure 28* (p 123): Auguste Rodin. *Balzac*. 1897-98 (Cast 1954). Bronze sculpture, 2,8 m x 122,5 cm x 104,2 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- Figure 29* (p124): Auguste Rodin. *The Gates of Hell*. 1880-1917. Bronze, height 5,49 m, width 3,66 m, depth, 2,9 m. Rodin Museum, Philadelphia. Gift of Jules E. Mastbaum.
- Figure 30* (p 126): Judith Mason. Illustration for 'The Age'. 1992. Black and white reproduction of colour lithograph, double page spread with poem 56 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section III.

- Figure 31* (p 129): Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Grammary' and 'The Text'. 1992. Colour lithograph and black and white text, 56 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section IV.
- Figure 32* (p 139): Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Sir Tom'. 1992. Black and white reproduction of colour lithograph, double page spread 56 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section IV.
- Figure 33* (p 143): Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Again'. 1992. Lithograph, single page 28 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section IV.
- Figure 34* (p 146): Judith Mason. Illustration for 'Johannesburg 1902'. 1992. Colour lithograph, single page 28 x 38 cm. *The Selected*: Section I.

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LIST OF ADDENDA:

Interviews conducted by Jane Commin

ADDENDUM A: Interview with Patrick Cullinan

ADDENDUM B: Interview with Gregory Kerr

ADDENDUM C: Interview with Judith Mason

ADDENDUM D: Interview with Fiona Moodie

ADDENDUM E: Interview with Pippa Skotnes

ADDENDUM F: Interview with Lyn Smuts

ADDENDUM G: Interview with Vivian van der Merwe

pictures there, you will see how stylised the figures are. See how, in fact, European they are. That classical sort of...

Contra-posto stance?

You know what it's called, yes, but there it is. There's Narina, they are meant to have been drawn under the regis of Le Vaillant himself, according to one account. That's what he said she looked like.

Judith had a look at that, and she went up to Botswana, where one of her daughters was working in a Bushman community, and she drew this [*indicating an image on his study wall*]. That's what she looked like. Semi-true to what she would have looked like. See "Narina for Patrick with love and respect Judith" [*written on the drawing*]. You see what she's done, that funny belt with the buckle? It is a direct reference to a line in my poem. Now that image didn't go into the book. It was done later, after the book, but just to give you some idea of how she works. That's one way of how she works. The line goes something like, "She liked a buckle and other toys of mine."

At the same time, she's got that very exact eye. She's a wonderful draftsman. I love the way she draws. I love the accuracy. But it's an imaginative accuracy. I think that's about the most telling thing about what she does.

What was your favourite image that she produced for you?

I don't know that one can say.

Or maybe the one you feel works best with the text?

Well, I would say the Le Vaillant, certainly. It's going a long way. This is an interesting one. Here's more Le Vaillant.

1818. M.Francois Le Vaillant Recalls his Travels to the Interior Parts of Africa 1780 – 1785.

I

At home in the damp hills of Champagne,
I take my warmth at the fire [years later after he's returned from Africa]. Official
And unofficial birds stare glassy-eyed
From cabinets, uncurious now
And oddly meditative. As flames rise a glow
Lightens their wing feathers:
They seem to move but stand rock still.
They are not and I am not
In Africa now: yet we remain, we are
The artefacts of that long journey,
Survivors of a narrative –
A story that I chose to tell, solid
In parts, deliberately vague
In others. I had no choice, I found
A normal country, rather like paradise
In places, a garden
Camouflaged by scandal,

Darkened by a kind of history

And here she comes up with these extraordinary birds as they would have appeared in his cabinet. I never thought she would choose that image. And anyway, Judith does not depict them in the cabinet. They are in these domes. And these domes have a way of recurring in her work. Here, again, you see [pointing]. And she uses thumbprints and fingerprints a lot.

I just want to find you the bit about Narina.

[The quote he is referring to reads:

Narina stank of grease but liked
A buckle, most of my toys
And understood the gallantry
The camouflage of teasing which
Hid the method.

Section I of the poem.]

Were there images that you thought didn't work so well?

Um, I'm too lost in admiration really. This is a poem I wrote about Colonel Robert J. Gordon and I wrote a long book about this chap, another explorer [The poem concerned is in Part II of the *Selected*, 'April 1786. Colonel Robert Jacob Gordon Returns From His Last Journey']. He had a beautiful wife. If you go to the castle, Colonel Gordon was a stout soldier-like man (somebody said) and his wife is *absolutely beautiful*. I've fallen in love with her, but as they say, it's a hopeless passion. [*There is a portrait of her on the walls at the Castle of Good Hope.*] She talks about playing the harp and things.

There are more important things
Than discovery:
Drinking late with friends,
Dancing, talk –
Listening to my wife
Play on her lute.

And of course she [Mason] took this whole thing of the 18th century woman plucking at an instrument, and that again was an astonishing thing. You, know he went up to the Orange, and if you go up that way you'll see how those wonderful mountains are, the ones that are hidden in the river itself, so that you've got a mountain in a river, and you can only just see the top of it. You come over the landscape, you know, marvellous stuff.

I'm jumping a bit now, because I can't think of anything I really dislike here.

This is a poem about South Africa today [I am unsure which poem he was referring to]. And this is a poem about an Italian, a very proud Italian nobleman, who appears in Dante's *Inferno* [Patrick points to 'Filippo Argenti' in Part II of the *Selected*]. I think I mentioned him the other day. We did. He's the one who got shoved back into the shit. And Dante said to him, 'Get back amongst the dogs' or 'Via costàcon gli altri cani' and shoved him back in.

Here again, a poem about Paris, French poets.

And this is one about Mkulu Kakulu ['Mkulu Kakulu': Section II of the *Selected*.], it's about the big dictator of Malawi and it's a satirical poem, so she drew this absurd child's aeroplane. This is quite an obvious poem, I suppose. I haven't put it into my *Selected*.

Here again is a very erotic poem about two mares ['Two Mares: From the Provençal of Le Comte Guilhem de Poitiers' Section III of the *Selected*.], but it's also from a very, very ancient...made in about 900 or 1000 A.D. Provençal. But again, I don't know Provençal. I cribbed it from a French thing. And again, you know, the sort of eroticism of the mares and the man riding them. In fact he has two mares and he doesn't know which one to pick. He has to choose. Again from Dante, Ulysses.

How do you feel her images interact with the text? Did you give her free reign as to where the text is on the page?

Absolutely. I never had a word to say about it. She would say to me, "I've got an idea" and she would go away and come back and say, "I don't like the idea". I never even knew what idea it was that she'd rejected. I never interfered once. She also liked my poems, quite a few of my translations, but she said something interesting. I don't know whether it is a question you were going to ask. You know, sometimes when a poem is very strong, she didn't want to do it. Not that she would kill it, but it would be too much. It would be like eating too many chocolates. So she'd say, "No, let the text stand".

And then she used to do this sort of thing. [Shows the text fading from black to grey, or in green].

Okay, so was that her playing with the text?

Yes, that was her. You've seen this before?

I've seen the book before. I had a look through Stephen Watson's one. I was very interested in the way the text was moved around, mirror reflected.

That's right.

What do you feel her images add to your writing? What do they say that maybe the poem can't say?

You know there's a very strong case to be made for not putting illustrations in. And I'd never thought of it before. But when I saw what *she* was doing, it was as though in different mediums we were trying to do something of the same thing...an imaginative accuracy. I think one of the most important attributes of good poetry is accuracy, but imaginative accuracy, resonant accuracy. And she...her line is so beautiful. This is a dagger, [Points to an image accompanying 'Bogdanus of Alexandria: with apologies to C.P. Cavafy' in Section III of the *Selected*.] a Grecian dagger. I don't know where she got it from, but I've never seen a dagger like that.

And this is a wonderful little poem that I translated from Montale, 'Being Careful', ['Being Careful: From the Italian of Eugenio Montale' in Section III of the *Selected*.] there's this spoon [Mason has produced an image of a spoon tied in a knot which is thus shortened although it originally had a long handle].

They were not wrong, warning me

to take a long spoon
each time I supped with the Devil.

Unfortunately, however,
on those rare occasions
only a short one was available.

The thing is it is very difficult to say. It's just, my admiration for her work is met with the feeling that she's the only person in South Africa that I think I would want to illustrate my work. I mean, if you said, "I can get you anyone you like". I can't think of anybody else.

Have you worked with other people on collaborations or had them illustrate your work?

Not that I can remember now offhand. No.

What would be your take on images disappearing from works of adult fiction in modern times?

That they are not there anymore? You mean like Dickens had illustrators and Sir Walter Scott and people like that?

Yes.

Frankly I don't know. But I think, probably, quite a lot of... I mean, for instance people like Baudelaire liked to have their poems illustrated. And you know there are some amazing Baudelaire illustrations.

Some of that poetry lends itself more to accompanying images.

Yes. In a way it does because it's not the tyranny of "Look", he said, "there goes a ship in the sea" or something like that.

You know, this is called 'The Bestiary' [Section IV of the *Selected*]. She just drew that [*Indicates an image*] and that's enough. I mean it's a really simple little poem and I wouldn't have chosen it. But she chose it, she told me, because it was, of these ones on this page, one that she felt that in fact could be enhanced by an image. And if you listen to it, it is a little bit short on much other than just mere fact.

Awake,
we all have masks for this –
but the dream's a bestiary:
asleep, we comprehend
animals suddenly.

And it is like that. Why am I dreaming about animals? They don't come up. I don't think about animals much. But in my sleep they often come. I've written quite a few things where animals recur in my poems and really I'm not a great... I'm not a zoologist. I don't know much about animals. Except for when, for historical purposes I've done some research on them.

So would you call what Judith is doing illustration or is it of a different order?

It's of a different order, I think. I'll show you the one that...you know this is interesting too. A lucky, lucky thought that she put into this poem. You wouldn't think it, but it's a full moon. It's not the colour of the moon. It's about children playing in the dusk, and memory ['Grammary' Section IV of the *Selected*.].

It is the children in the dusk:
and not what were:...[I can't read it here].
bone and spirit [yes]

Where I am I do not know
and where I go to I
cannot see.

It was the children playing
in the dusk
(not this dusk) those

other children, not us and now.
Under the trees enormous
the voices seek and hide,

seek and hide.
Known is this:
my only known

and it is gone.

A full moon
blinds the sky.

So that's a blind moon. She's blinded it, but I could not think of this as an illustration in a sense that it's going to help you in any way to.... It is something apart from the poem, but it can be that you afterwards associate the poem in a different way from the way you did. I'll show you now.

This is the one I wanted to show you ['Sir Tom' Section IV of the *Selected*.]. Now this is an amazing one. This is a poem about my grandfather. I got into big trouble for this. And it is about a little boy who thinks he's his grandfather's favourite. I don't know if you know this poem or if Stephen told you? No? Okay. See that there, the thing that looks like a trap? Do you know what it is meant to be?

No.

Not what it is meant to be, what it is symbolic of? It's a toast rack. And the reason it lives...the boy sits next to his grandfather and it's one of these big family pre-war lunches, with the uncles all in their best clothes, dressed up, and the old boy sits at the end. And he's a very well known man. He's been knighted. He's called Sir Tom and he sits at the end of the table, but he's retired...

No longer seen at office or the club, 'he was retired':
flailing around his Randlord house each day he'd
light his high Victorian lamps in every room

to search for mambas, or he'd plead

for 'sweeties' from his own black cook, who shyly wept
to see his master so demeaned. He'd slaver
at his neighbor's fence and shout that there were diamonds
in his rockery....

The man is off his head. But at the table this sweet boy, he [little me]

He squeezes...

... my puny chin
with his gross hand, while all around us aunts
and uncles kept on smiling: awkward, docile, prim, as course
would follow course, borne by servants

older than Igoli. They'd dodder on from place to place
with plates of sugared pumpkin, beans or yellow rice.
All style and energy were broken in that room. All style,
all energy was broken in that room, the curtains drawn
against the post-noon sun....

It hushes down. And then he turns to me and says, 'My darling boy what would you want?'. I
wanted toast and so some toast is brought. So:

... The old man winking
to the table – for all his children and their children
had paused and now were watching – took off the covering
napkin, drew out a piece and lavished it in butter,
nimble slicing off the crusts. Hovering

behind us I heard Jim, the oldest servant there,
just barely whisper 'Shame', though why he said this I
did not understand quite then....

And he takes this toast and he says, "Close your eyes" and instead of putting the lovely bit of
toast in, he puts these cut off bits and jams them down my throat.

Oh no!

Ja.

... it rasped and burnt my skin. I gagged
in panic and could not scream, while he stabbed and bent
it down into my throat...

[They pull him off.]

... Some uncle (or my father, was it?)
pulled him gently off. Choked with shock I was quickly sent [into the parlour or something].

[Rightly the others (that's all the family) had known that:]
 ... children never should presume or, if they did, learn that from

such babies must come men...

[And then it ends up like this.]

... But strangely, now, the old man broke,
 gasping into tears. He said he saw white skulls and not
 their cosy, smiling faces. Blue-eyed, haggard, he too was lead
 sobbing from the table. Perhaps, at last, he'd understood

how sick he was, and old, hearing doom's blatancy:
 the awful nonsense raving, Hell seething in his head.

It's a sort of symbolic rape if you think about it. Now, how the toast rack could become that trap is really what interests me. That's why I think she's such a brilliant; she's a brilliant artist. It's not that she's just an illustrator. This is a work of art. But it wouldn't have been there except for the poem. In a way, the point is made that the poetry stands and it has produced a wonderful image. And the wonderful image has produced the poetry, even turned it round in a way. I so respect what she did.

Have you ever written anything in response to an image?

Ah yes, plenty. Here... 'The Bowl of Tulips' [From Section IV in the *Selected.*], an erotic poem. These are all love poems. But this [Patrick indicates 'To Have Love' from Section IV in the *Selected.*] is an image that has been anthologised a lot this one. [*Interestingly neither of these two poems written with an image in mind have been illustrated by Judith Mason.*]

To Have Love

To have love and then lose it:
 the white hail in the orchard
 lying with the leaves it has stripped
 and the storm moving away.

Now that white hail in the orchard was there outside my room in my imagination. And when I lived in the Eastern Transvaal, you get the hail there. And there was an orchard, an old boere orchard outside my study there and I was going through a divorce... so that was an image that I suddenly saw that had something to do with what was happening to me.

Here, if you have seen old Seventeenth or Eighteenth century maps of Africa, which they call Azania, or parts of it are called Azania. And these scrolls that they have with dolphins and whales or other strange people like Indians and really Negroid Negroes and people with one eye and that sort of stuff. Yes, images I find are usually... I don't think I consciously ever had an image that I thought somebody else had used. I might of course. You can't always guarantee it.

But here is 'Again' [Section IV of the *Selected.*]

Again

we lie together:
 holding hands
 we talk of being children,
 knowing we have come to where
 our lives begin
 and where our lives must end.

Falling into sleep
 I cannot move. Cradled
 in that ancient mud,
 the primal shore, I know
 that there is danger.

And I am not alone:
 once more
 two fish lie in that dream,
 alive and out of water, both
 just breathing.

It is this transition from the sea to the land, but again it's an image that, it's a love poem. [*Judith illustrated this with two foot prints or soles that are turned into fish.*] Love poems are about loss, more than they are ever about actual enjoyment. It's true.

Why did you choose words in your life, to work in the sphere of texts?

I started poetry when I was, I don't know, about ten or eleven. It came with such sort of tremendous force for me. And I've read it all my life and practiced it all my life. But curiously enough, I don't think I wrote a good poem until I was about thirty. I tried very hard. But I did an enormous amount of work unintentionally in a way, in that I wanted so badly to write a good poem, something that I could publish. I practiced every kind of form and type of poetry, formal and informal, that I could, and I built up an enormous kind of, I don't want to call it so much expertise but it was a store which didn't gel until I reached the stage of about thirty, I think. There were hundreds of them.

And here, you see, again, another strange image...honey. Well, here's the honey hive [Patrick indicates 'Honey' in Section IV of the *Selected*.].

And here's a poem about an astrologer [*'The Astrologer'* in Section IV of the *Selected*.]. Incidentally I saw it had been translated into Afrikaans and that it's gone into some Kerk woordeboek/ verseboek. I don't know which one it is. [Laughs.] And it's meant to be a highly whimsical poem. It's not meant to have any kind of... well, I think it's quite fun but that's about all. See:

Look! I have a drink in my hand
 and the afternoon to lean against.

I possess nothing.

But you see how she blended it with this one here [*'Honey'*]:

And the quarrel

and the mess:
 bees deep in their hive,
 deep in their honey.

On the aspects of love.

And the green in the next poem? Text being a different colour is very interesting.

It is interesting because this is a poem about God... and not God. I mean, is there God? And it starts off this way:

I

I am
 astonished at the subtleties
 of green, of colour
 this year brings.

God knows,
 standing on this hill,
 there are shades
 I cannot name, words
 not found. I can say only
 the trees are somewhat dark,
 the vines a lighter
 green, that God
 stands for what
 I do not know and cannot
 apprehend: faith
 become a pinch of air, the gap
 between my thumb
 and index finger, out
 of all this light
 one millimetre: sensing
 that high trust
 as if it were
 an uncontrollable fit
 of sneezing which
 does not happen often in
 the busyness, the smallness
 of a life.

[And then it goes on about the green:]

II

...I feed,
 feed on the green
 and try to name
 the rich vocabulary
 of tones, to touch

long glossaries
of colour...

So did Judith choose to print it in green or did you?

Yes, she did. It was absolutely her choice. And look, it starts off dark green and goes lighter. It shades off and it ends up, you see, with 'I am' again.

I am
He says:
I am that
I am.

That was in the burning bush. But there was no burning bush I say here.

III

... If only seeing,
seeing this,
was all believing:

[That's that scene, the magical green and the snake comes into it here]

there is no burning bush
unless it burn, green
within my mind, green
with my naming,
unconsumed.

IV

In truth I know.
I know The Lord
did speak as He
speaks always:
I hear because
I am
as unconvinced,
as diffident
as Moses hearing
riddles in
a wilderness:

I am
He says:
I am that
I am.

Marvellous stuff they wrote in the bible. A wonderful book.

I've also had a very long acquaintanceship and love of the Italian language and this one is just a nativity scene that came to me after I'd been in Italy. I remember I hadn't been writing anything for some months in that part of my life. I was fairly prolific and I got back and I wrote this ['Nativity' in Section IV of the *Selected*.] in London, when I stayed with a friend coming back. And again, you know, Judith has done this face, this wonderful Madonna. She uses such themes over and over again, but all slightly different. I'll show you that face just now again, and that baby comes in (I'll show you that too) but in a totally different context.

Do you feel that there are spaces where images end, where they cannot go, things they cannot express and that there are things that text cannot express? How do you feel they [text and image arenas] overlap here?

The lapping and overlapping and underlapping if you like are subtle and it's difficult for me to say anything except that when I read this poem, I think of this image. In a way it's completely unlike the theatre. I can't stand the theatre because it acts out things which I want to think about in my mind. You'd think that I'd say that about films, but it's different dramatically in films. But I don't enjoy going to the theatre. I find it a sort of rape of my imagination. And, in contrast, here [with Judith's images], I feel that I am enhanced by this image. Or rather the poem is, not me.

Do you think the images change how you see your own poems by that happening, when she creates an image and you re-look at a poem and it has changed the way you see it?

Not really. I think 'enhance' is a word I would use. Sometimes I read a poem and I won't remember her image at all. Here, this whole image of the baby being born ['For Rebecca Born At Midwinter' in Section IV of the *Selected*.], the umbilical cord and all that sort of thing, is also something very much a part of Judith's stock in trade. It's like medieval art and renaissance art, you find things there. And you know they had books that they used to take them out of. If you were doing a crucifixion and you wanted a hare, you'd just look through this book and say, "I'll have that one".

Like stock pictures in graphic design?

Absolutely. I've got a book on it and that's what they did. But this ['For Rebecca Born At Midwinter'] is important; it's about my granddaughter getting born. She's just a little bit younger than you are; I take it [*Laughter*.] Anyway, Rebecca. She was born in mid-winter.

And there's that face again [in the illustration for 'Etruscan Girl' in Section IV of the *Selected* Which has the same face as the Madonna.] and that's about my daughter, Sarah, who was killed in a motorcar accident, but again it is a Madonna. You can see that. And there are no words for that.

And the colour that she's chosen here, was that...

Ochre colour.

...alluding to Etruscan vases? It's used a lot in art.

Yes. It is a clay image. I've got a note about it here.

There's Narina. [A pencil sketch at the end of Patrick's personal copy of the book]

There's Marina... the real Marina. I forgot she'd done that. I asked her to.

She drew that in?

She drew that in.

It's beautiful.

And she did it in all the books. And Gordon, my traveller, anatomised all his animals, and sent them back to the great encyclopaedias that were coming out in 18th Century France during the enlightenment. The first really scientific enquiry into birds and animals and plants were done at that time. That's why it was the age of enlightenment. Gordon was wonderful. He never shot animals except for science. He was a very unusual man for his age. But isn't that a beautiful image? [Indicates a drawing Judith has done at the back of his copy of the book, an image of a giraffe, the lower half as we would see the animal in life and the top half as an anatomised skeleton.]

Gorgeous.

Sort of anatomised and given its coat.

So this is quite an extraordinary book in the sense that she's made images for you and then she's actually literally drawn in images as well.

Yes, well, she did as I said for all the books. Each book has its own...

... drawing and oil painting. Yes.

By the way, if you want to know, if you want to look at another copy, there is one in UCT library. I think it's probably in special collections or whatever you call it. She's just used this image again in another painting she's doing which I haven't seen yet. [Patrick begins to read from 'For Rebecca Born At Midwinter'.]

... the men at battle, grinning,
who learned the dialect of death...

I wrote this poem about Rebecca, and Rebecca, being my genes, she would then have this Irish inheritance built in. It was not her fault. [*Laughter.*] But I tried in the poem to explore that idea:

Into each trick
of your head
deft heiress, into
each cry
or reaching out
your fingers make,
each glance that blurs
about our awe,
come the centuries:
the spirit and mortality,
the virtue of our kind,
come random through

the strict inheritance,
the wide
deep ending of our past.

I watch you now and watch
how once a saint bent with your knee,
ghost-cosseted: and I may feel
the mad or innocent
throbbing in your pulse
or think that one who paints
an orange beast upon a rock
lingers in your smile. Newly-born,
here are those they hanged [this is about the Irish]
and those who brought the harvest in:
the men at battle, grinning,
who learned the dialect of death,
who now lie buried, blank
beneath the peat or bush.
It was for you the women died,
Who, starved, and sick with hate,
have you for triumph now, you
once more their birth. Here
is ghostly policy and rage,
the labour and the knowledge.
O small thing, made, that lies
within your mother's arms,
you are the coming from, and all
that is to be.

She picked that up and did an illustration of that poem, but it's different at the back of other people's books. If you turn to the back there is a whole history of the book.

Are there any artists or writers who have collaborated on projects or books you know of where images and text have come together, that you have been interested by or that you feel have worked well together? It could even be childhood books.

Yes, sure. Grimm's fairy tales and Alice. Alice was wonderful.

What did you feel you responded to in the images from Alice?

Perhaps that feeling of being, in a sense, forced to think about Tweedledum and Tweedledee, through the images there, and not to have thought them out yourself first. In a way that's how an image can actually change the way you think about a text or poem. In a somewhat or slightly sinister way. In other words you have been influenced by the image. Now, this I don't feel has happened here because I originated these things with other images in my mind and I would never have chosen that rack, that toast rack. To me that was inspired. And to make it look like that... absolutely wonderful.

Now someone looking at or reading this book, how do you feel people respond? People respond differently to images and text. How do you see that? What are the responses?

I would hope that, yes, that they would respond and see it as an enhancing experience rather than a sinister one. This is that Le Vaillant with those birds again you see, because what he did is he made up the birds. He was the first man to write about the big birds of Africa. It was a great work. I once had a copy. I heard the other day it had been sold for an unbelievable sum of money. I sold it when I was broke. Anyway, it is a great, rare book. The first rare book of Africa. When he got back to Paris and started to put the birds into his book, all sorts of bits and pieces were left over so he made up birds. [*Laughter.*] So we are talking about fairly unofficial birds. That's what I was getting at.

This is a poem about Venice ['Venice' in Section IV of the *Selected* which is illustrated by a simple, yellow line drawing of a broken column.], which is death. Venice is death. You know, it is famous for being the city of the dead. The dying city. The drowning city. Have you been there?

No.

Well go there. It is the most beautiful place you will ever see in your life. Absolutely beautiful. But when you think about it, it symbolises death. It was one of the greatest commercial cities in the world, the hub of Europe in fact at one stage, commercially speaking. That's why it was so rich. But now it's only tourists that go in there. Most Venetians can't afford to live in it. They live on the mainland. They come across, serve the tourists and go home. But it is a place that makes you think of death. *Death in Venice*, that wonderful book. They made a wonderful film of it too. I saw it as a juggler.

Oh, and this one here, ['At Forty Odd' in Section I of the *Selected*] is a funny sonnet I wrote and I don't know why, it's not even one of my favourite poems at all, but she took it. It is about doubles. She loved it. She made it double here. [*Indicates how 'At Forty Odd' is mirror reflected on the page.*] You saw that in Stephen's book.

Yes, I did.

So deep below him is that time and gone –
I see him floating, caught between two weirs,
Drifting between vague limits, losing one
And moving fast up on the other. He
Floats alone at forty odd. Does he see
His shadow swim below: the dream he fears?

Now that...

That's where text becomes image.

Precisely.

It is the image. It needs nothing else.

She did a painting for it too. I don't particularly like that painting. I think [as it stands in the book] it is the nearest reflection almost exactly of the poem. You see, take for instance, this is another one here, which you could say isn't really...that's my Eastern Transvaal one ['Spring Burning' in Section I of the *Selected*.], the firebreaks, and they always do it at this time of year, as the rains come. You burn your grass so that you can grow green. So that's the firebreaks.

But this one I like. Now this is a funny little poem, a sort of farm poem. The image Judith made is not what I saw when I... Johannesburg '92, it's after the Boer War ['Johannesburg '92' in Section 1 of the *Selected*.]

After the war, when we got back
To the house, [They left the house. They went down to the Eastern Cape... the family.] my father
came with
Cherry branches, a waggon full.
And I remember how glad we were:
Because till that day
We had never seen
Green branches with red cherries.
It is something I shall not forget.
I also remember how the soldiers
Took my matchboxes
That were hidden in a special drawer.

You know, it's a funny little poem, but people like it for some reason and I was persuaded to put it in. And Judith also went for a fairly conventional look at it. Somehow one feels it is not so obvious as the twin swimmer poem [Judith has done an old Afrikaans dresser, with a drawer open.]. I mean this is also something that she does quite a lot of.

This is about my father. I wrote it when he was still alive [Laughs, because it is about his father's death.]. 'Nunc Dimittis' [in Section 1 of the *Selected*.]. Judith just put a black band and that's it. [The poem is enclosed in a black frame, a band of mourning. Mason has taken a traditional symbol of grief and extended it.]

But these are inspired, these moths. She also didn't choose to do a very obvious poem, one of the very, very anthologised ones. She didn't really want to illustrate those ones. The one is about exiles, but being in exile at home as it were. And the other is a sort of poem about a millionaire, who my mother-in-law used to work for. [The poems concerned are 'Exiles' and 'The Garden' in Section 1 of the *Selected*.]

And the cover? Did you have a say in the cover?

Now this cover, you see every book is different, but each cover is hand made. It's called marquetry, inlaid wood. The pattern is the same in all the books, but each bit of wood is different, it's going to have a different grain. That spot won't be there on all of them. The only thing that really stays the same is the actual paper itself and the binding. Otherwise each book is different. Every one of the forty odd.

They are beautiful. Thank you so much for showing me.

It's a pleasure.

ADDENDUM B:

Interview with Gregory Kerr (artist and academic)

Conducted via email: 9-7-2001 to 23-7-2001

1. *What is your relationship with text (on a personal level)?*

In my other, even more recondite life, I am officially a hermeneuticist and am therefore stamped with the Mark of Text. I eat text, ingest it, like the look of it, wallow in making it, lovingly explore its text-ures, contours, typographies, layouts and fonts searching for the distilled Thought caught within those little spermatozoons of power that you are looking at now. I mix metaphors for breakfast and spit them out half baked onto this screen (Editor's note: clearly our boy has not yet had breakfast.)

2. *How do you feel your work relates to text?*

Inasmuch as what one does in the making life is bound into the carnival of ideas, streams of consciousness, sub-consciousness, self-consciousness, so the painting and drawing locks in to the little head novels. I am a verbal person and don't mind the business end of verbalising the spatial processes as far as this can be done (taking the heresy of paraphrase into account), so much visual stuff bumps into an ongoing process of articulation. To what extent this becomes text depends on the demands made of me. Perhaps I have to write a little blurbette for a book, in which case I try to summarise something of the verbal interactions. Not easy, often abandoned. Usually text is distilled in the naming of the work – a summary of processes of thought. Others find these titles odd. But all they have to be (the texts, that is) are labels for the public: what they might be for me are reminders of a host of thinking, writing, jotting, ah-ha'ing while riding my bicycle.

3. *Do you ever couple your work with text (explanations, titles, exhibition catalogues etc.) and if so is it written by you?*

OK, some already answered above. Explanations demands a response. There is a profound difference between an explanation, which is I think quite an inappropriate word for engagement with the art-relevant material, rooted in instrumentalism, epistemology, deductivism and therefore quite fascist perhaps, and explication or interpretation. The former assumes a final word on the subject, a key to unlock the arcana of the work, the latter take poetry to poetry, bounce against the enigmatic surfaces of the image, make new nuances, possibilities, without trying to establish a closure, a Gestalt that will as it were close the file on the work. The work must (and this is hermeneutic) open itself to engagement and response, to engagement and then re-engagement on this new level ad infinitum. The degree to which any work can sustain this reflexive relationship between art work and receiver/s, allow for change and development (as opposed to change and decay, the deflation of meaning, bathos... e.g. the work of say Jim Dine for me...) is my yardstick for the ultimate quality of the work. Pant, pant. Phew. Sheet, how did we get into THAT?! I'll leave it though, so that you can find out from what kind of Gormenghastpiranesi academic landscape I come....

Yes, I do sometimes try to explicate. I do sometimes try to help someone see into the work. Not always useful, can be confusing. Titles especially. My advice for those who are not initiates is, let it be. I can write on any art work and make a point of sorts, I suppose. It is just my own work that tends to thicken my tongue. This may be a Bad Sign for the credibility of what I say about other art...oh dear.

4. *Have you ever done any illustration/ book covers?*

Done two dedicated illustrated books – of poems, including a cover in the case of Graham Walker and then images in Sue Clarke's False Bay Cycle. In Graham's case, a fairly straightforward portrait of the artist on the cover then some typical stuff from the '80's of mine... figures done in charcoal, in landscapes, or domestic environments, all dealing with the same kind of psychic landscape that one gets in poems. Dunno what I mean really. In Sue's case I never really latched onto the link between what I wanted to draw and what I was reading of her poems. Ultimately each person is in his or her space. I have a big problem with doing art that is thematic. At the moment have to make a painting that responds to a show on Frontier art at the George VI gallery in P.E. Am hornswoggled at present. What I want to do is ladies looking out of windows, bus suddenly I am confronted by a pyramid, Sir Rufain Donkin, some amaXhosa, some guys in britches, a fort.... Am I to do these or what? Eventually all will settle down and I will do a lady looking out of a window. Perhaps the landscape will include a pyramid, Sir R...

Oh, I have had a couple of paintings – done entirely separately to the novels – chosen as covers for books. Generally well-received they are, being sort of brooding and enigmatic and atmospheric and blahdi blah. Eleanor Baker, *Die Nes* and *Verbeelde Werklikheid* I think are the titles.

Another thing that could be of interest in your research is the odd relationship that exists between the text and the image of cartoons. I am a secret cartoonist and have often mused on the little space that this conversazione of picture/idea occupies in the psyche. Never put the matter to the philosophical point, however.

5. *What do you think of the relationship between text and image (in art and in literature) in a world where books of fiction increasingly lack visual images?*

This is a very broad question. Depends on the book, the art, the age group. I deplore illustrations that do not fit with in with my perceptions. Do not ever illustrate a P.G. Wodehouse novel. My image of Jeeves is totally personal and your illustration will piss me off. William books have to be illustrated by Thomas Henry and *Alice* by Tenniel.

This, I suppose, raises the issue of what constitutes the artwork in each case. For me, the *Alice* artwork is inseparable from the illustrations – specific, sequential illustration – that inform the text as much as the text informs them. My understanding of *Alice* is this holistic amalgam of fictions. To substitute the images with anything else would be to violate the integrity of the artwork. Same with some old books where the engravings (old editions of *Coral Island* spring to mind) have achieved the same patina as the text. I can remember being annoyed when I discovered an edition of *Coral Island* that was identical with the one I read as a child but that had a cover on it (mine was coverless) that was not consistent with the illustrations in the book. Violation!

6. *How do you justify art/image making (fine art) in a world of image technology/ advertising/ computer design etc.? (Do you?)*

Yes I do. The question suggests that the business of making art/image is the production of art/image. In fact it has to do with the Will to Form. The product is vestigial; the impulse is to make. It could be with a computer or whatever, but if it is paint you like, or charcoal, that is what makes the process. I go on breathing even though there are machines out there that could do it for me.

7. *Why did you choose to focus on fine art and painting instead of the language side of things? Do you feel you chose one over the other or are there times when there is a reversal of which takes precedence? I guess the question is how did you become an artist?*

The fine art thing is focussed on the manufacture of discernable things and therefore easier to define as part of what one does. The writing is persuasive, organic, integrated. I am often urged to make the writing artefactual but don't have the concentration, the confidence or the sense of objecthood necessary to make a thing out of writing. Would like to. Became an artist because I didn't quite know what else to do except be an English teacher. And yes, the two urges swap places all the time.

8. *Do you ever relate the act of markmaking in art to the act of writing? If so how and why?*

Love ink and pens on paper. Am a long-term stationerophile. It makes a difference whether you are doing this keyboard thing or writing with a loved fountain pen to a special person.

9. *How do you feel your artwork relates to illustration? How do you feel about illustration as an art? Have you done any and how did it make you feel?*

Have a phobia about illustration – part of a modernist training – but my work is quite descriptive and can be used in a general way for illustration of a sort. The book covers and some of the poetry stuff is typical. When I have had to knuckle down to doing a very specific piece of illustration (like for an education text, flyer etc.) I hate it and usually give up.

10. *Do you ever place text in your work (drawings and paintings) and if so, is it single words, sentences or nonsensical?*

Yes. Have done. Stopped doing it in the nineties. Always to set off a chain of responses or make a scene clear (e.g. 'EXIT' painted in a movie theatre scene). Have done some drawings made entirely of text, just writing stuff and letting the calligraphy make the drawing. Quite decorative, not heavy. In 1983 I did a series of works around the death of Marat and wrote a lot of stuff on those drawings and paintings. All tied up with the metaphor I was constructing between Marat as doomed ideologue and the South African situation. It was my only 'political' work and it was meant to be direct and didactic.

11. *Has your work ever been linked to text to its detriment (i.e. bad criticism, write-ups, mis-spelt titles or text that mis-represents your work)?*

Yes. Anyone who has ever had anything to do with the Press will know that there is absolutely no connection between what you may have said or wished to say and what actually appears in print. It's a mug's game for artists especially, because everyone who annexes one's work in words (committing with effervescent abandon the Heresy of Paraphrase) will make a royal cock up of the explication. Or, worse, make you out to be some kind of creative oddity, hippie, driven soul or somesuch popular zongo when all you were doing was fighting the good fight with a brush and canvas.

12. *What writing are you involved in and does it relate to your painting? If so, how? Have you ever conceived of projects that combine the two?*

I am writing to Jane. This takes up all of my present time. It does, however, like all of my writing, include the whole gamut of whatever else I do. I am painting next door and the odours of grating

teeth and fusing creative synapses waft in through the door. I cannot paint today. I will write to Jane. I told you last time I think that combinations are things that can be overt, deliberate, where one conspires to put text into pictures, pictures into text..., but also implicit. I am a verbal person who paints so the work is always a combination on some level.

13. Are you ever inspired to paint by text/poetry, or are you more influenced by visual stimuli? Do you ever find subject-matter in texts, novels or books?

Yes. I am often moved to make certain kinds of image as a result of the stream of consciousness. The s of c is stimulated frequently by stuff that I have been reading. I have just finished a collection of A.S. Bayatt short stories and I know that the spareness of her writing has made the painting I am working on more Matissean than it may have been otherwise.

14. How do you relate to poetry? What are your favourite poets and writers and why?

I relate warmly, emotionally, atavistically to poetry. Oh, I could name a thousand of my favourite poets and writers but don't know where to start. Hopkins, Dylan Thomas, R.S. Thomas, Philip Larkin, Mayakofsky, Lorca, Celan, Hardy, Yeats, Yeats, D.J. Enwright, Adrian Henri, Brian Patten, Roger McGough, e e cummings, Gasho, Issa, Lawrence, and a host of local poets who should be better known. Writers, ah, ah. Depends on what I've been reading, so A.S. Bayatt, then Ann Michaels or course and some of the classics.

Jane Austen would go with me to a desert island.

15. Is there any art exhibition or book or work of any kind that sticks in your mind because of its interesting manifestation of the relationship between text and image? What was your favourite picture book as a child/adult?

Will have to think about this. Maybe off the cuff exhibition at Michaelis by Lindy Sales. A voyage of discovery. Do you know her work? I was her external examiner and I was probably a bit embarrassing in my excessive love of the stuff. My favourite picture book as a child was *Ferdinand the Bull* (that was Terrifico). As an adult, *Peter Plunker*, *Flying Tailor*. If you can find a copy of the latter, let me know.

ADDENDUM C:

Interview with Judith Mason (artist)

Conducted by Fax: 9-1-2002 to 12-1-2002

1. *How did your working on the special edition of Patrick's 'Selected' come about? What was it that moved you to want to respond visually to his work?*

Patrick had seen 'A Dante Bestiary' and asked me if I would consider illustrating Selected Poems. I spent three weeks acquainting myself with the text, a lot of which was new to me, and made notes. I then decided that it was worth a try. Poetry, especially Afrikaans verse and Dante (in translation) is my preferred reading anyway, and Patrick has become my favourite English poet.

2. *Would you call what you did in that project 'illustration' or is it of a different order? How would you describe what you did and what kind of a process is it?*

I think what I did was an intuitive response to some of the work. 'Illustration' suggests something more formal and comprehensive. All I wanted to produce was an atmosphere which could possibly enhance the enjoyment of the reader without distracting her from the text.

3. *How do you see the relationship between text and image in this work? What do you feel it does to Patrick's text when your images are placed with or within it? What kind of dialogue is set up?*

See above. I think the drawings serve as background notes, like a guitar accompaniment while the singer expresses his ideas.

4. *Are there instances where your images are critical or ironical towards the text? Can you explain which and in what way?*

No – or at least I am not conscious of any such intention. I wanted the drawings to serve the work, not to intrude an expression of my own. As a lover of poetry, but neither a scholar or a critic, I either take it or leave it. My attempt to provide a graphic counterpoint to Patrick's verse suggests that I 'took it'.

5. *It seems to me that you concentrate on and play very much with the idea of the 'imprint' in the book. It is filled with footprints, palm prints, finger prints and object prints as well as with the imprint of signatures, texts and lithography. Is this a theme for you? Can you discuss what you are doing with this idea?*

Printing methods fascinate me and I wanted the reader to be conscious of the lithographic and other printing processes. I thought the mix of archaic forms (foot, hand) and the games with text ('Grammar', 'Prehistory, Catembe Ferry', 'I don't know if God') would weld text and image together in a stimulating way.

6. *Do you have favourite images from this project and if so why are they your favourites? Is it because they work well with the text or because they can stand as works in their own right?*

My favourite is the type-setting for 'I don't know if God'! I think it is genuinely witty in that it plays with the printing process, the fallibility of God, and with the reader who has to do a double-

take after thinking he is looking at a typo. Gus Ferguson wanted to add a non-errata slip to the paperback edition!

I also like 'Devils' where the paper itself becomes a paper dart, and the drawing for 'Robert Jacob Gordon' because it expresses the baroque and domestic environment he experienced, and reminds one of the fun he had before his deeply tragic end.

7. *Are there images or things you did with the text that you feel worked less successfully? What are they and what do you think it was that caused them to be less successful?*

I find the drawing for 'Spring Burning' is banal and 'Laura' is technically bad because the 'touche' I used on the bread didn't print well. I also dislike the crass stars behind the Madonna in 'Nativity'! They should have been smaller, less obvious, less U.S. flag, and integrated better with the background.

8. *Were there instances in which a favourite poem co-incided with a favourite illustration?*

'Etruscan Girl', 'Again' and 'Honey' and 'The Astrologer'.

9. *How do you feel text and image work together in the book? What do your images provide a reader/ viewer that the text cannot give? In what ways do they say the unsayable and where do the boundaries of your images lie? Where do you feel images cease to operate or lose power in relation to the text?*

My responses were instinctive rather than academic. I cannot begin to tackle this question. I give each job I do my best shot and then move on. Providing criticism of my own work after long periods of time is something I cannot afford to do either financially or emotionally. It is the job of the critic or the academic.

10. *Do you feel you have illustrated anything to the detriment of the text or poem?*

Very probably, but not intentionally. There are things that I'd like to do again, or in a different way, but books are produced in a time limit and one has to make choices as well as one can and then go for it. If I had been aware of acting in detriment to a poem during the process I would have removed the image. In fact I scrapped a number of solutions to problems in production and cost the printer a lot of time.

11. *Were there any cases where Patrick intervened or placed restrictions on your response to his work? Did he give you any framework or boundaries within which to work?*

Not to my recollection, but we are sensitive to each other as people, so it probably wasn't necessary. The order of the poems was set by Stephen and Patrick.

12. *Are there any writers or artists who collaborated on similar projects who have inspired you?*

Not that I know of.

13. *What do you feel is the rôle of the art book or special edition in the scheme of literary and artistic things?*

I think artist's books are a minor art form, a by-way of the two distinct arts. I love poetry and books (as physical objects) and rare or unique documents and I like being part of their production.

14. How do you feel about the use of your images in the 'Selected' published by Snailpress for general consumption? Do your images play a different rôle here and if so, how?

I like the way Gus Ferguson makes books – he has a very special sensibility. I enjoy the look of the Snailpress book. I am egalitarian by nature and appreciate mass-produced books, in the same way that I am grateful for prints of, for example, oil paintings. The one thing does not diminish the other.

15. Patrick is fascinated by the image of what he sees as a toast rack you created for 'Sir Tom'. How did you come to that image and how do you see it?

The 'Sir Tom' image appealed to me because of the pathos and cruelty of the incident he describes – a monstrous little domestic drama. I wanted a banal image which was rich with menace, and the toast-rack morphed into a diabolical 'knuckle-duster' device from the Moghal period that I once saw at the Delhi Museum.

16. Do you feel that your images here work mainly within the symbolic or metaphorical arena? It seems to me that many of the images ('The Bestiary', 'Being Careful', and the Ionian dagger) are very iconic.

I am an icon-maker type artist – the central image filled with symbolic implications is what appeals to me. I tend to think metaphorically as a rule. I am a symbolmaker or symbol-user rather than an abstract artist or a naturalist. If I wrote I'd be a poet or an essayist rather than a journalist or a novelist. (See No 19.)

17. How did you decide on layout or groupings of poems? Did you deliberately set up dialogues between pages on double page spreads or between the preceeding or following pages?

Stephen and Patrick dictated the order and I designed the layout within those limitations. This was in itself a stimulating task.

18. To what extent do you feel the creation of images here is a personal act of translation or transformation, a filtering of the poem through your consciousness and onto the page in visual form?

I can't answer this.

19. One of the theorists I am reading (Gandelman – 'Reading Pictures, Viewing Texts') divides apperception and creativity into two approaches (which he sees as existing as binary opposites), namely a visual or optic approach (one which is concerned with line and surface in the image) and a haptic or tactile approach. Do you feel this makes sense? Where would your images fit within such a paradigm on a scale between optic and haptic?

I've never accepted this distinction. I don't believe they are binary opposites. I move, as most artists who deal with concepts as symbols do, along an infinite gradation of need and utility which is sometimes haptic and sometimes optic. The distinction may have been valid before post-modernism confused many issues, but for decades I've regarded this distinction as an academic

construct of little interest to the practising artist – who does what he/she has to do at any given time in whatever way seems instinctively best for his/her needs.

20. *How do you think the viewer responds to your work? What would you like the reader of your art to come away with? What were your intentions in creating images for Patrick's poetry? Are you talking back to his text?*

Can't answer this except to say that I responded to Patrick's work with seriousness and affection. I cannot concern myself with how the viewer responds for the simple reason that it is not my job to do so. My intentions were encapsulated in my drawings and I nodded at, rather than talked back to his text. I take pride in the fact that some of the devices, e.g. over typing, paper darts, wayward type-setting etc., are to my knowledge original and make the book, as a physical object, entertaining to page through.

21. *What is the thing you enjoy the most about responding visually to a given text? And to Patrick's work in particular?*

I like the layered way Patrick thinks. I respond to everything I read visually. This book allowed me to explore this particular text. Good luck and warm regards, Judith.

ADDENDUM D:

Interview with Fiona Moodie (children's book writer and illustrator)
21-8-2001

1. *Could you give me a little bit of background on your life and work and how your interest in working with both text and images together came into being?*

It began in childhood. As a child I was always turning everything into stories. I was very lonely. I grew up on a farm and my older brother and sister had left home already. They were at boarding school, so I was on my own. After school I didn't see friends, because it was on a farm and you just couldn't, so I spent a lot of time on my own and I think that that was partly why I just made up stories the whole time. Also I always loved drawing. I *loved* drawing, so it was sort of natural to illustrate stories. I was also influenced by my teacher. We had a very good teacher, Mrs Wilson (she was Irish) and she was very strict, probably incredibly un-P.C., (she used to put dunce's caps on people and did dreadful things), but I was lucky, because I was a favourite, and she really encouraged me. I think it started there. I remember writing a composition when I was seven years old, on what you want to do when you are grown up and I actually said that I wanted to write stories and draw pictures to go with them. It really began a long time ago. I did live in a dream world and some people actually did think that I wasn't all there. And I wasn't, because I was elsewhere, and always drawing.

Have you kept your drawings from then?

Some of them. The teacher, in fact, she died a few years ago, she had kept some from then and my mother has them now. They are nothing to write home about, I don't think, but I suppose it was important that I was encouraged.

And did you write your stories down?

Um yeah. At least once a week we had to write what she called a composition. She would give us about five, sometimes quite complicated, words. We would have to weave those words into a story. It was a good training I think. I don't think they do too much creative writing now. I'm always fussing about my own children, that they should make them do it, because it is quite a difficult thing to do in the beginning, but then it sort of exercises some part of your brain.

I think I'm almost afraid to write creatively. I've been taught to write analytically but...

Yeah. And then once you haven't practised using that part of your mind, it's really quite difficult, though not impossible, to get it into gear again,

2. *What would you say were the things, images, artists and writers who inspire/ inspired you in your creative journey?*

From early childhood I was lucky to be surrounded by books. My parents bought me lots of books. My mother was always taking me to the library, which I remember as a very exciting event. There was no T.V. or anything so going to the library was really the Best Thing [*laughs*] of the week. So books... and also nature. Because I was alone, I spent a lot of time walking round the farm and feeding the calves (because there were cows on the farm in those days) and so I'd walk down to their stables and be with horses and animals and dogs always... and I suppose just observing nature a lot, because, being on your own you just do. You look at what's around you. So it was reading and nature I suppose, those two.

Do you want to know the books that inspired me?

Yes. Anything that stood out for you.

I have written down here. *The Wind in the Willows*, with the drawings by E.H. Shepherd, (he did the original ones), was very influential. I loved those. And *Winnie the Pooh*, he also did those. Edward Ardizzone, I don't know if you know his books, *Tim and Lucy*. I don't think I found one here. They were fantastic stories too. Also very sketchy [illustrations] with really quite dull colours, rather obscure colours, sort of pale greys and greens and things. Today, although I think they're still being re-published, I don't think they would never have got published first time now, because people think children really want bright colours. But they were fantastic stories and very sketchy drawings. There would be a little picture and then the text would be around it. The text and the drawings were very much integrated, ... sketchy, black ink, and then these colour washes, but very lively and the stories were very adventurous. You hardly ever saw the parents of this boy. He was always getting into the most amazing difficulties, like being lost at sea, and generally sort of helping a ship get back into harbour. There were a lot of sea things. He had this girlfriend Lucy, who was very resourceful and lovely. They were fantastic. You should try and find them.

And the pictures, the Arthur Rackham pictures, I think. There were quite a few books illustrated by Arthur Rackham. There would be block text, and then a separate picture covered with special paper.

Someone else I interviewed [Vivian van der Merwe] mentioned his work and said how they loved it as a child.

Yeah. I've got a book of it. Very intricate, very English. Also quite subdued colours, the colours of the English countryside, but really technically quite amazing. And I suppose also I liked them because they had a lot of dragons and princesses and things like that and were romantic.

The Water Babies, Charles Kingsley and Jessie Wilcox-Smith. I thought they were incredibly sexy, I suppose because the babies are naked.

There's an older version of this book with very Victorian illustrations.

Yeah. I think that may have started the fascination with under-water themes for me.

Snugglypot and Cuddlepie, which are Australian. They are gumnut babies. I suppose that also fascinated me because I could identify with little fairies in trees and things that I saw about me. These are absolutely lovely, based on those are bansias which are aliens here. They are like hakias that they hack out, that those creatures [in the book] are based on. I think they are the devilish ones. That also was an influence.

Madeline, the books. They were fantastic books. Also, I was interested because yesterday I thought I'd just make a pile of these things [Fiona's favourite childhood books that she showed me], they belong to my children now, and I see that really the books that I liked the most had quite sketchy illustrations. It was really the story that was the most important thing.

They made a movie of Madeline didn't they?

Yeah. I haven't seen the movie and I don't know whether it's faithful to the book. She's based in Paris, in an orphanage where she is looked after by these rather sweet nuns.

And *Babar* [*The Elephant*], also the same thing, not highly technical, not highly decorative drawings and yet when I started doing children's books, I was more drawn to being more decorative, and sort of flashy in a way. Now I think I am getting back towards this sort of thing [*Babar simplicity*], telling the story as simply as possible and trying to become as expressionist as possible in the sketching, not even doing pencil sketches first, even if it makes it very messy. Sometimes you can't do that. Sometimes you have to because you've got to fit into a space. But I am trying to do pen and ink straight off and become much more free.

Straw Peter – you must have come across *Straw Peter*. My father thought that the book should be banned. It's German, and I think it was because it was German and we'd just come out of the war so.... They are cautionary tales, written originally in German but translated into English. The main character let his nails grow too long and this dreadful creature comes along and just snaps off his fingers with a pair of scissors, and this boy [*indicates in book*] gets into trouble for beating the dog and drowns and floats away. All dreadful things. Harriet who wouldn't eat her soup, no, Harriet and the matches. She plays with fire and she just ends up as this little pile of ashes.

This is totally traumatic!

Absolutely. As a child I was totally fascinated. This is quite interesting. These boys [*in the book*] make fun of the black boy, and so this god-like creature dips them into a pot of ink and they come out black themselves, but they don't even realise it. Here the hunted hare turns on the hunter. They are morality tales. This one is more amusing; fidgety Phil who wouldn't sit still and he pulls the whole tablecloth. It's a lunchtime disaster. Everything is on the floor and it's total chaos. They are quite simple and quite cruel, but they were totally fascinating to me as a child.

These kind of things too, *Miel*, which is a French one, in the very simple, expressive pictures and not much text. That was very appealing as a child. But in fact, children like just about anything. Anything. They are so amazingly receptive. And I speak always from a children's book illustrator point of view, that's my line, so I'm not really talking about adults at all. I've seen that, the children, having my own children, that you can give them anything and they will be absolutely fascinated, which also is quite scary because they are fascinated by really bad things just as much as by good things. I think one should try and maneuver their tastes as much as possible, hopefully away from the kind of easy stuff on television, too much Walt Disney, (the googly-eyed characters) and the Japanese animation at the moment. They have these people...

Ja, the Manga style.

...with these huge eyes, glossy, shiny stuff and unbearably cute. I think it has an influence on the whole way that they...but of course it's too late. I'm fighting a rear-guard battle. It is ridiculous of me to complain, because there is no way that I can influence them. But at least with the children that I've come across or been in contact with, I hope that I've tried to push other things as well.

Especially the reading aspect.

Well, yeah. But when I was little there was no T.V. at all.

I didn't like *Alice in Wonderland*.

Me neither. It freaked me out.

[You didn't?] It freaked me out also. I didn't like the story, because she was so out of control. It was frightening.

She couldn't be certain of anything. It really bothered me.

Yeah. I also found her quite cold. She found herself in these really quite disturbing situations, the Queen who was throwing the baby around and shouting. It was disturbing stuff.

I was also disturbed by the illustrations to Rudyard Kipling's 'Just So stories'.

Yes.

They were very distorted images.

Ones that he did? Because he did some. The black and white ones?

Yes. I was very frightened.

There was a funny monster who came out of the sea with a round head, like a sort of bald head.

It might just have been a whale. I re-looked at them recently and they were actually beautiful. As an adult I thought they were fantastic, but as a child...

Yeah. Sometimes things that are aesthetically pleasing to an adult might absolutely not be to a child. It's interesting.

I think in 'Alice in Wonderland' I missed the cleverness of the text as a child.

It's very grown-up. And Tenniel who illustrated them initially, the black and white, I mean, they're fantastic, but I think also for a child they were too finished, maybe too precise or something. I remember not liking them at the time, though I appreciate them more now.

The Winged Rabbit is probably quite kitsch, but, he lived under the trees, those tiny little rooms and houses under... I think those might possibly appeal in particular to girls, you know the tiny little domestic scenes in the folds of tree trunks.

And also Beatrix Potter. I did love Beatrix Potter. I think I learnt a lot of vocabulary from Beatrix Potter. If you look now at her books, and I've also had occasion because of my children to read them again, she uses quite long words, like 'soporific'. Remember the cabbages were soporific to the bunnies? Then the child will say 'What's "soporific"?' and they learn. Nowadays editors are terrified of long words, whereas a long word dropped into the text here and there is a very good idea. How else are you going to learn? And of course her illustrations were completely wonderful and the size of the book was fantastic, though the text wasn't integrated so much. The text was on one side and the picture on the other, but it worked incredibly well.

You had the little ones?

Mmm. And that's how they were in those days.

Ja, my Mom had the whole collection.

Yeah, so did I. I've got re-published ones and the old ones.

Did you formally study text or images?

No. I didn't go to art school. In a way I am quite glad that I didn't because I would have probably gone to Michaelis, to UCT. At the time Michaelis was, I don't know what it's like now, but it was incredibly theoretical and I think that my bent and my leanings towards illustration would have been beaten out of me. It would have been so theorised and so forth that I would have been terrified of putting pen to paper. My line is just not grand fine art. I know. Illustration is definitely my calling, so I'm quite glad about that.

I attended art school for a while in Paris. I was very lucky. I had to work at the same time because it was financially difficult. I also bluffed my way into a post-graduate art course. It was just such a bluff it was incredible. It was a very good art school. It's got a very good reputation and I think that they had a certain quota of overseas students and I think I got in that way, because I really wasn't up to scratch. Once I was in the class I realised that I wasn't up to scratch. Everybody was so much more advanced that I just didn't attend classes. I just used to go to cafes and chat to people.

Well it was probably as worthwhile an experience as the other.

Yes it was. And then I met illustrators and was invited to go to the Bologna Book Fair, which was especially children's books. And that was the really the crucial part, meeting overseas illustrators. They had quite a big influence on me. I was taken up by a Czechoslovakian art editor from a publishing house, who looked at my portfolio and said "This is all rubbish", but nicely. But there was one thing that I had done oddly. It was a book about apartheid. It was a sort of myth, not black and white people, but night people and day people who had this huge battle. He liked that and could see that there was something. He took me under his wing, and in more ways than one [giggles]. And I ended up living with him in Paris and in Italy, being quite influenced by the Eastern European way of illustrating. So, in a way I think that was quite a good thing. Otherwise I would have been very precise and English. The English have a completely different way of doing things, sort of realistic and precise. Now I'm getting them both together in some way.

Do you think you have been influenced at all by African images?

Yeah, I think so, but not in a way that you would really see. The things that I like about African art and especially sculpture are the old things, the simplification. There's this big shape with a few details inside it. That's sort of what I strive for. I think I might have been influenced in the way of composition, by Africa, but not so that you would know.

3. Did you consciously move towards using the text and the image or was it something that just happened in your life? [Did you study text and images at all, or research them consciously, or was your movement towards this area more a natural flow of practical interest in it?]

No. It was just what I wanted to do. Right from the beginning I wanted to have both, because the illustrations couldn't really exist without the story. I find looking at a blank page incredibly terrifying. And when you are a Fine Artist, that's what happens all the time and you've constantly got to question why you are doing it. And I find that really quite terrifying. Whereas, I'm not

happy unless I'm working, unless I'm painting really, or drawing or whatever. I've got to do it, but I need a reason to do it as well, and I suppose I was a bit frightened. I don't want to lead the terrifying plumbing-the-depths life that I imagine that you would have to do to be a proper Fine Artist. So, yeah, illustrations was absolutely logical and the text, I've always wanted to do that, although I got side-tracked at university.

What did you do at university?

I did a B.A. in French and English. And then the only thing that was left was to be a teacher. I didn't go to art school, which was what I wanted to do, because I was sixteen when I left school, and my parents didn't want me to meet a whole lot of... they were convinced I was going to be led astray by dodgy bohemians, which I was eventually anyway, but maybe it was better that it came later. So then the logical thing was to do teaching and I did a teacher's degree, but I was not patient, not good for that. I don't think I would make a very good teacher at all and anyway after university I left and traveled round Europe. I did teach English in Madrid, for a bit, but that's different teaching English as a foreign language. It was just a way to be there and to make money to travel.

4. And what does text or writing embody for you as separate entity from image, or do you not separate the two? [What does text, writing embody for you?]

Text is terribly important. If the writing isn't good, the pictures, no matter how excellent, cannot carry the book. It's a symbiosis that only really works if both are equally important. Although I would even hazard saying that a very good text with mediocre pictures could still make an interesting book. Basically I think the text is more important than the pictures. It's never the other way around. There's a book here I did last year. I did it on condition that I would be able to re-write the text. Initially that was why I did the book. It is about the story of Atlantis, which appeals to me. I like the drama of them all being sucked under the sea, this great civilisation, because of their pride and vanity. And then the story carries on in a rather bizarre way. This young woman carried on the story and gave it a sort of Walt Disney ending, which wasn't too bad because it had some nice things to illustrate also, and because I like doing underwater scenes it appealed to me from that. She makes them turn into mermaids and carry on living under the water. So I did the book, and it involved an amazing amount of work. It had to be very decorative. Because of all the characters, all the people, it had to have lots of people in it. That's terribly time consuming, especially since my eyes are going funny. I had to wear very thick magnifying glasses and it gave me headaches. So I did an enormous amount of work on the book and then for one reason or another the text remained as it had been in the beginning. As a result, I hate that book and I don't give it to people as presents, even though I've put so much work into it. It's self-published by the person who wrote it and the text horribly defaces the pictures as far as I'm concerned. It's done in a fancy way. It's got fancy curly bits and stuff. The cover is foul and this was because of a bad co-operation between writer and illustrator, one that went totally wrong. I'd never, ever do something with her again. And the lay-out artist in Johannesburg misconstrued everything, which is why the cover page is so dreadful.

Anyway, so that was an example of a book where the illustrations are really quite good, being totally ruined by the text. If it had been the other way around it probably would have survived, whereas it's a horrible travesty [*laughs*]. So I think that basically words are the most important. You [*me*] come back and forwards to this issue of pictures.

When you asked me about influences, I'd like to respond a bit more to that. I was always interested. I must have looked at thousands of children's books and then later especially in France

where they are hugely popular, at adult comic books called Bon Designée which I find fascinating. They are brilliantly drawn often, and they borrow a lot from cinema. They have cinematic angles, close-ups etc. They are frequently quite violent, sometimes pornographic. I found it interesting that what wouldn't be acceptable in a photograph is somehow made more acceptable by the fact that it has been drawn. I mean from a pornographic point of view. Even when it remains quite shocking. And I find that fascinating. There the text is really minimal and in fact I would say that probably the pictures are really the most important.

Do you ever look at Bitterkomix?

Yes. I was just going to ask you. I sort of studied at Stellenbosch with those guys.

Konrad Botes? Fantastic. Absolutely cutting-edge. I think that's great. And there the visuals carry most of the weight.

Writing for a children's picture book, the text has to be honest, concise, careful, entertaining if possible. Those are the minimum requirements. The story has to resonate. It can be very simple, but it should embody some sort of truth. I'm not into those books, I don't think they do them so much any more, but there was a period of these absolutely dire books about *a trip to the supermarket with mummy*. It was supposed to be important for the child's development. I just find those hopelessly boring. I'm only interested in something that tells of an emotional state or a universal truth. I'm incapable of illustrating a story that doesn't mean anything to me. I can't do it. It has got to resonate for me.

Things like rhythm and rhyme. Do you use those?

Yeah. I think the book is in German there [*points to the pile*], I've always liked to put songs and little bits and pieces like that into the things that I've written, especially because those are the things that you can't get into the illustrations and children like that stuff. When I'm writing, they come quite spontaneously, and somehow when you are writing for children especially.

5. Was making images and writing text something you have always done? How do you feel the relationship towards or between the two in your life (the primacy of one over the other, if there ever was primacy) has changed over the years?

Initially I mostly illustrated other people's texts. That's how it worked in the beginning and it usually works like that with an illustrator. Actually, not so much any more, but that's how it worked for me. The very first book I illustrated was a book of German stories from a religious publishing house in Dusseldorf and they were quite depressing. I was only allowed to use black and white. They were really very distressing to illustrate. I found that very difficult, but because they were paying me and I was starting out I just did the work. I found more and more that I was re-writing other people's texts, which can be complicated and insulting to the writer and you get into trouble. But often people write (and this is a huge thing) and I am often given stories, because people know I am an illustrator and they are trying to get published. One of the big faults is that they write too much text and for a picture book, the text is usually minimal. You have to cut down. People just often overdo the writing, and I also quite like that. I like editing. I like re-writing. It got quite complicated. I was probably a difficult customer for some writers. Some of them have never written anything again or been published again, so...

[I crack up]

No, I mean it probably tells that they needed that. In the beginning I found it easier to read a story, not to make it up myself, because the images would spring into my head while I was reading. If I made up a story and then put pictures to it, it was somehow more difficult. It's a funny thing. Obviously when you are thinking up the story, the story comes in words, and then you've almost used up your creative possibilities on thinking of the words, so in the beginning I would try and find stories all the time that would somehow spark off images. Often I would take traditional folk stories. *Beauty and the Beast* is one of the better known ones, but mostly I will try and find fairly obscure ones, because you don't want a glut of *Cinderella*'s. Because I am interested in languages, they would be Italian or French. I then condense that or sometimes adapt them. The main images from the story would already be sitting in my head, and then I would do the text and then put them all together.

Do you find with stories that you may have known from childhood, that those images took years and years to develop in your head?

I think that they probably had been there. I don't know how visual other people are. You have probably got a very visual outlook because you did Fine Art. To me, everything is very visual. Sometimes when I was reading the whole picture, the whole composition, everything, I could see exactly how it was. Then the struggle is, of course, technically to get that down. I would choose stories because they were visually appealing to me. While I was reading, ready-made pictures would fall into my hand. Usually about four pictures per story would appear easily and would be quite clear, the colours and everything. Then the complicated bit is to fill in the action, all the other gaps, where you have to because you are telling the story. But sometimes those are the very difficult ones, because they may be a boring bit of the story and you have to try and make that image visually exciting. That's where probably a lot of people who are very artistic can't manage to follow through doing a picture book, because of those boring bits in-between. It is a skill that you develop. Always in a story there are those bits that are just filling-in. A bit like shots of getting in and out of cars in movies, getting from A to B. That's why I think a lot of people just don't follow through. They can't. The sometimes boring necessity of continuity, getting the character to wear the same dress throughout, all that stuff.

6. Do you arrange images around text, or text around images? How does that work? [How do you set about creating a book? What comes first? Images or text or both together? Tell me about your working process.]

Mostly I do the pictures in frames and the text is something quite separate on the page opposite. Or sometimes there will be just two pages, an open spread of just image. That's really because up until now I have put pictures on exhibitions. I belong to a group in Italy. There's a travelling exhibition which goes all over the place. It's quite nice to have that on a catalogue. So there's that reason, and also I just find it aesthetically pleasing. It's easier to do a framed picture, but I don't think that it is necessarily the best thing for a children's book. In fact there is a very strong school of thought, that the more that the text and pictures are integrated, the better it is for the child. People can be really schoolmistressy about that sort of thing, they feel so strongly about it. Recently, the book that I like the best, *Noko and the Night Monster*, that one has the text intermingled with images. Although the pictures are framed, the text is somehow more close to the pictures, and it may be that I am moving right out into having no frame around... maybe. Like *Babar* also. The text was hand written, and the pictures, they didn't have a frame round them. They were sort of dotted about all over the place. It is as children, and as I used to illustrate things as a child, it is as children do things. They write a bit and they put a picture. And it is probably so. Maybe I am moving towards that.

Lately I have been writing and illustrating my own stories, for the first time since childhood. I was blocked against writing my own stories. I couldn't make up my own stories. I just couldn't. I was the chief storyteller at boarding school. I started when I was eight years old and until about standard six, every single night I had to tell a story. If I didn't then they'd throw pillows at me.

Like Scheherezade.

Ja. And I was very sort of feeble. I wasn't good at games and I was skinny and I suppose I would have been ignored altogether if I hadn't had this capacity so it was quite important. Then I suppose my life started changing. I stopped telling stories in about Standard Six. Or maybe it was the layout of the dormitory or something. I think we probably each got our own cubicle and I stopped telling stories. After that I just didn't, they didn't come to me. But it's odd how, you know, what I was talking about before, that brain thing. I think because I had to tell one every night, it was sort of sorted out, and I can't remember any of them now, but there are girls who were at school with me then who still remember some of them. They had very neat endings. I remember once abusing that power to tell stories, where I wanted to make everybody cry. It didn't come naturally out of the story. I started the whole story off thinking to myself, "Yeah, I am going to make them all cry this time". And I just pulled out all the stops. It was sort of like a YOU Magazine story... the leg came off, and then the mother died, and then the father fell down the stairs and all that sort of stuff. I did get them all howling and weeping. It was totally easy. Shame. We were all little boarders far away from our parents. I remember feeling absolutely guilty afterwards. I'd abused that capacity. It's a funny thing. It was too easy. Interesting. I didn't write that down [*in her notes for the interview*]. I don't usually tell people about it.

So... lately I've been writing my own stories. For *Noko and the Night Monster*, again the pictures come first, or at least the characters. I found the characters first just from drawing. I wanted to do animals behaving like people, because also I've gone towards animals, not dressed up in clothes or anything, because there are so many P.C.-ness now that you've got to have a white child, a black child, the mother has got to work and the father's got to be washing dishes. It is terribly inhibiting, but I've found that if I draw animals then that avoids all those problems. And because I am in Africa, I wanted to do African animals, so I got that. I knew that I wanted a porcupine at least, and an aardvark, because I find them appealing. So the characters came first and the peripheral characters too, because I wanted to draw a pangolin. So I did little sketches of them and then maybe their surroundings. They are a series now which is being published in America. It's unfortunate, but you have to be published in America if you are going to make it. My main publisher is in Britain, but if they don't get the Americans then they don't get enough money back from printing. They have to print x amount and the Americans take a lot. So it's very boring but you've got to. And there's a strong bible-belt there. You can't offend. You can't have a mermaid without a top on. I love doing mermaids, but they've always got their hair strategically placed. You can't show a nipple or anything.

So then the stories sort of build themselves up around the characters and it's very satisfying when the story falls into place. But it's difficult getting there. Sometimes you walk around for days with just threads of the story disconnected in your head. You just have different threads of situations maybe, and very often situations that you would like to illustrate, like a dark wood for example or a monster. Sometimes then I have to sit down and make the story appear by making a sort of rough book and starting off with the characters just doing something... anything. Then the story just carries on from there. Sometimes you will scrap the beginning, but you've got the thread of the story. In fact with *Noko*, it started with just the characters doing things in my head, and I was taking the dog for a walk, went to the park and sat on a bench and thought "Okay, you've got to make this all come together" and the story just sort of fell out or fell in. It's a strange process.

Quite mysterious. In a way I am quite superstitious. I don't like talking about it in case it vanishes. It is like a gift. It's nothing to do with you in a way. And yet, because it gives me such pleasure, that's why I'm scared that it would go away, because I do it because I like doing it. It's a very selfish existence. I just do what I want to do.

So you will have to do things over and over, and sometimes cut things out. And then, of course, right at the end you've got the publisher to cope with. They always have ideas too and usually... always I've done something too long and they've got to cut out some pictures and it breaks your heart. Maybe the way the story goes, the pictures that have got to be cut out are the ones that you really liked.

How flexible do you find yourself being about those things?

Very flexible, because I've learnt to respect the editors, mostly. If I really don't agree with them, I put my foot down and they would always say "That's fine". But I've come to realise that other people often know better. It's funny. When you start off you think that you always know better. It's a thing that happens. You grow more humble as you grow older. Very often input from somebody who is experienced is terribly valuable. You can't always see it yourself. In fact, there are hardly any changes, like that last book, the *Noko* one, the one I'll be talking about most because it's fresh in my mind, the editorial input and that sort of thing, I had to leave out a picture, because of the length. You can only do twenty-four pages because of costs. You've got to get the story into twenty-four pages, so they had to leave out a picture, which I was a bit sad about, but I got them to cut a bit of it out and use it on the title page. They used my idea for the end pages. I disagreed with them about the cover and they took my suggestion. The rest was just a couple of words here and there, where I'd maybe repeated myself or something like that, and their suggestions were always the right ones. And I've just done another book with them, with the same characters and it was exactly the same thing. Minimal interruption and their input has been the right suggestions. It's fine, and it's nice sitting down with them, although that doesn't happen often, because they are in London, although it happened in June. But it's really exciting. They are terribly slow and terribly careful. When you think of how the books just get read once and tossed aside, it's an amazing amount of work that goes into this. Perhaps it isn't important, but that's how I think it should be.

7. Do you have any of your own theories or philosophies on the relationship between writing and text, or know of any theories of other writers/ artists/ philosophers that make sense to you?

I don't really have any theories. It's just what I do and it is what I enjoy doing. I don't really think much about why, or whether I'm changing anything in the world or whether it is important. I don't imagine that it is important. Not really. Not in the long run. God, when you think of Africa, what is the percentage of people who are going to even see a book, my book? It's not water or electricity or food or life support. It's quite a selfish activity in a way. I'm completely absorbed and happy doing it and I think I am very lucky to have this all. If I have a philosophy, I suppose it is that I do believe that children should dream. It is an important part of their life, really. It's the one time when you can, when anything is possible. I hope that my pictures are a sort of springboard to the imagination. But that's not really a philosophy.

I've read Bruno Bettelheim who wrote *The Uses of Enchantment*. He's a psychiatrist actually, but a writer as well. He was in Auschwitz and he became very famous for his writing. That was terribly interesting, but it wasn't really about illustration so much as about why fairytales are important to children. He looks at how some fairytales at some periods in some circles are regarded. They were seen as quite corrupting in a way or as unimportant or not having any

relevance to childrens' lives, old fashioned. He was pointing out how psychologically they have enormous relevance. Like the step mother doesn't stand literally for the step mother. It's the Mother who the child sometimes sees as a wicked god... and oh... the competition between daughters. It's just put out in a very clear, graphic way in a fairytale and it sort of explains things to children. And these things are not always very nice, for example *Hansel and Gretel* and putting the witch into the oven and all that sort of stuff, and she was going to eat them.

Many of them have been cleaned up by Christianity.

Yeah. And we need all those things. Children kind of search those things out. They search out horrors in a way, but they've got to be, like when we were talking about *Alice in Wonderland*, it's got to be bounded, it's got to be a fairytale, it's got to be put properly. It is a very delicate thing and *Alice in Wonderland* somehow oversteps those bounds in some kind of way, whereas Cinderella with the wicked stepmother somehow was acceptable.

I suppose there is so much depth to them.

Yes.

I read a book about fairytales with a Jungian reading, which described the balance between yin and yang, light and shadow and anima and animus etc. Once somebody broke it down like that it suddenly made so much sense.

I think it does.

They become an exploration of the darker side of life.

Yeah. It's part of life and children know that life is not always sunny. I suppose they need to know that you can get over the dark side and that it's not going to draw you down.

8. Do you feel that writing and visual art are diametrically opposed, or that they work together? What are their individual areas of potency and power. Do you feel these areas overlap and if so, where and in what kind of way? In other words, do you feel images illustrate text only or that they ARE text in some kind of way?

By the way, I thought your questions were very interesting. I enjoyed them. I think that text and illustrations can work together fantastically. Often pictures are simply not necessary with text (I'm not talking about only children's books in response to this question), with the best poetry for example. The images are built up in your mind while you are reading poetry. Illustration would be too particular, too explicit. It would take something away from it. It is like seeing a film of a book that you have enjoyed. Often it is just superfluous. Children's picture books are different, obviously. I was quite interested in that children are now learning to read much more through a kind of process of... well it's different to the way... well you are so much younger than I am, I don't know how you learnt to read, but I learnt with phonetics. It was all A, B, C and then putting them together and that sort of thing. Now they learn mostly through looking at picture books and making up the story. Then they slowly start to recognise words. It's a very hit and miss kind of way of doing it. Sometimes I think it's not quite the right way to do it, but it's much more fun. And so picture books have become really quite important in that process. I know about this because Anna and Clara, my daughters, they used to come home when they were little every day with a different book and you would have to sit with them and read. They would sort of tell you what the story was, pointing to each word, but they wouldn't really know, they were often really

looking at the pictures and listening to the story. Then they would try for themselves and slowly they'd just pick up words, but it means that their spelling isn't brilliant.

Well we have spellcheck. We don't need to spell anymore.

I suppose so. I mustn't be so boring and old fashioned, because... yeah.

No I agree with your point of view. I find it very strange, but people don't feel they need it.

No, they don't. Sean, my husband, is a consultant doctor and he has, he teaches at UCT, he lectures, and he says that the standard of writing is just appalling. Anyway. I suppose if you've got a machine to correct it for you, then... well.

So now pictures are terribly important to reading and teaching in school, because the pictures help tell stories. Generally speaking in the picture book the text doesn't mention too much what can be seen from the picture. That's the way it works. You don't say "The old man was wearing green trousers" when it is obvious in the picture. The text is pared right to the minimum. In some books the pictures are virtually the text. I prefer books with a balance in text. I'd rather have more text than pictures actually, which is becoming very unfashionable. There is less and less text and more and more pictures. I know that when I was reading books with my children I often longed for more text because it would spin out the book. They always wanted more story anyway. They wanted to know more about the characters, like what they ate for breakfast. They wanted details. They wanted details to go in the pictures and in the text. I suppose what I am trying to do now is to not put in the text what you can see in the pictures, but what you can't see from the pictures and more of it, to somehow fill out the characters. The pictures are there to get lost in. The text is to point out the direction in which you should get lost. You can't really have one without the other or it is somehow unsatisfactory, I think.

9. Have you worked with other writers and artists on books, either contributing text alone or images alone? How did that feel? Do you prefer one over the other or is that a simplistic question?

10. Have you illustrated other people's work? If you did, how do you feel you were relating to the text presented? [Fiona combined the answers to these two questions]

Yes. *The Wonder Shoes*. Impossible author got in the way. You have to feel free to interpret. I put her story into where I was living (a Welsh village) and she wanted it set in Czechoslovakia.

Jan Mark chose me and liked what I did – said it reflected precisely the mood. Humour important.

The Unicorn and the Sea was written for me by a Prof. of Medieval Literature in Venice. I asked him at a dinner party for a story involving a unicorn, a small girl, the sea, sadness becoming happiness and a quest. I re-wrote it but he didn't mind.

11. Can you talk about the rôle you feel illustration plays in a modern image-frenzied world? How do you explain the vanishing of images from works of adult fiction?

I think our bank of images has so widened with T.V. etc. that illustrations simply aren't necessary in adult fiction. We have all seen photos of Budapest, or the Bahamas, of polo-players or chefs at work or whatever – economics also – you'd need to pay the illustrator!

On the other hand Sebald – introduces drawings and photos into his books to great poetic effect.

Kon-Tiki – what a fantastic book/

12. How do you feel readers/viewers respond to text and images? Do they do so differently? If so, how?

People respond more quickly and easily to images, definitely. There is a fascination, and emotional response.

13. In your work, how is the image laid out on the page in relation to the text? Are you the person who makes those decisions about layout? Does the text form part of the image? Is there ever any text literally within your images?

I'm not always responsible. The editor has a big say. It is thought better for the child to have text and image more integrated. These things are fashions. I prefer to have boxed images and keep the text quite separate, as I sometimes use the images in exhibitions. But layout of text is always important visually, for example in *Noko and the Nightmonster*.

14. What is the creative project that you are most proud of, or feel is a really interesting exploration of what can be done with artwork and text?

Noko And the Nightmonster.

15. What was your favourite book as a child? How did the relationship between image and text work there?

Probably *Babar the Elephant*. The text and image were totally integrated there and the books were huge. The size of the books was appealing to me and you could immediately understand the image because of its proximity to the text.

16. What do you choose to read at this point in your life?

Henry Green autobiography, Chinua Achebe, Dostoevsky (one a year). I try to re-read one of the classics regularly. *Pack My Bags* (1940's) and *A Moral History of the Twentieth Century*. I also read Jim Crace and Primo Levi. I read poetry often while I am cooking. Also, *Shadow Bird* by Willem le Roux.

17. What gives you inspiration for your work?

Anything, everything. I'm always thinking "I must do something with that", usually in response to visual stimulus – a porcupine skull, a flower, a child's toy. I'm not really an intellectual. It seems to come from seeing things, not thinking about them. Although I have to think about the story and it's not enough to be decorative, there must be an idea behind the pictures.

Also folktales of all kinds, Italo Calvino, Angela Carter, twentieth-century fairytales, all fairytales. I spend a lot of time in the children's section of the library.

18. Do you feel that the art world (in the sense of exhibitions and happenings and performances) or other social manifestations of the text/ image relationship (such as theatre, film or spectacle of any kind) have an impact on what you do?

Not really, not especially.

19. Do you do other writing other than children's writing (such as poetry, journalism, essaying, short stories, novels, diarising)? How does this differ from other kinds of writing? Does it have a relationship with images or does it exclude images?

No, just letters. Sometimes with drawings.

20. Do you find images more honest than writing (or is that again a complex issue)?

Images are more difficult, although you can insert yourself into them. Text is more precise or honest in a way. It is more important, in that it is amazing and subtle.

ADDENDUM E:
Interview with Pippa Skotnes (artist and academic)
15-5-2001

Are there any people or artists/ writers who collaborate and work in the whole image/text dynamic that have inspired you?

Malcom Payne and I collaborated together where the idea was to publish artists books. *Sounds and Signatures* is one of them, and another one is one that Malcom did. They were both structured around the same principles, and the attitude that each contribution should be seen as a discreet contribution in itself, so that the images interpreted their subject in their own way. Each section played off against each other, but there wasn't any special or privileged relation between image and text, any more than there was between say individual essays. So, that is how that worked, and a lot of the stuff we did there worked in that same kind of way, but it wasn't as though, you know, words and images had a special connection with each other.

So it wasn't illustration?

It wasn't illustration at all or it tended not to be. I mean we are also very aware of the fact that a pile of bricks can be made to mean as much as anything. Anything can be subjected to textual analysis and turned into anything anybody wants it to be, so we never sort of proceeded from the belief that images can tell you anything really, but that they might resonate.

So that was that. In *Miscast*, in the book, I had a parallel text running all the way through which was largely visual, because it was pages of text that were rendered visual. I suppose the intention there was to distract your attention from the monologue, in the sense of the way in which each essay was made, to distract your attention away from the essay in order to see how it might resonate among the pages of the book. So in that sense it was a sort of distracting.

Would you say that the text in the exhibition worked the same way?

No. I think the text in the exhibition worked very differently because the images, at least, you know, I thought a lot of those images quite beautiful images, even photographs, which, although the content was horrible, were beautiful photographs. The body casts, which again were sort of reminiscent of piles of dead bodies, were actually quite beautiful objects and I thought were powerful aesthetically...romantic even. So the texts that I used there were chosen for their contrasting value, instances of commandos, commandos doing raids and the horror in the presence of those images. I think they were definitely meant to play against each other in a way that they weren't in the book. So, you know, you should be standing there feeling something on an emotional level, if they are looking at the photographs... I think with the text on the floor, had there just been text, there wouldn't have been the same emotion as the combination of image and text. You know, people had a problem with walking on images, so there the interplay between text and image is quite important in a way that it wasn't in Stephen's poetry collection. It is different from writing a poem. Those images were really just illustrations. They work much more traditionally though they were really a response to his poems.

Have you ever worked with Stephen or with any other writers where the writer would respond to your images?

No. I'm not sure how that would work, because in a way I think, well, for me, part of the fascination of images as an artist stems from their ambiguity. In a way, working with an author,

you know, from the other way around, more in terms of working together would be like authorising, and often more interesting.

Do you write at all outside of academic writing?

Creative writing? I might have if I hadn't taken what I'd written to Stephen, but no not really.

I'm just thinking of people like William Blake really who had a whole concept of art and writing unified in his work.

Ja. But William Blake's images depended very much on his text. They were sort of secondary.

Are there any illustrations or texts where images have been involved that you have been particularly moved by? Childhood books?

There's somebody whose work I have been very impressed by and who has been an influence, and that is Pete Beard who is actually a photographer. In fact he's quite old now. He was a very glamorous New Yorker who went to live in Kenya and photographed...and beautiful women...He made these diaries, which are extraordinary objects. But I think, you know, the text there is almost irrelevant really. He's published a book. A book called *The End of the Game* that was a big inspiration to me, in the way images worked with text. I think it was really a coffee table book...extraordinary. And then some of his other diaries. But again, they are not the traditional text and image. I mean you couldn't analyse that text in the kind of terms of visual art.

And other people?

Well I suppose...the positions there, where the pages are written on long strips of vellum where actually...width, so the image is the object itself. It is not an illustrated object. I mean each component, the graphic component is the actual object, the actual visual part of it is on it. I mean I suppose that's what I do. I *do* write, on horse skeletons, which I've written a whole book on. And for me it's a book. It's got a spine. It's got pages and it's got a bibliography and it's got many, many of my words on it [*Laughs.*]. And so there the text is important, although I realise, particularly if you look at this [*Pippa points to a horse skull she has been covering with miniscule text.*], there is a lot of variety in the handwriting. I can't imagine that anyone is actually going to read it. So by advance, the production of the text has been compiled with a lot of reading and information, and though it's been put on there, I know that there will be no-one that will ever read this. I don't think it's big enough. Only the bigger words will be read. And it hasn't even been illustrated because I haven't made pictures for it, but the combination of the text and the actual object for me is what I work on.

How do you feel in general about using text in visual art, appropriating it or placing it in paintings and sculpture? For some people that's a bit of a taboo.

Ja, it used to be in the old days, but I can't remember why it was in the old days. I think it used to be because people were always terrified of their work being described as installation art. But I think artists have a, there's a kind of reversal in the sort of vanity that a certain person that is attracted to those two disciplines has. I think artists view their work as being more powerful in many ways than text, as though text is being a servant to what they are doing. Basically it's just visual matter. It's just an interesting combination of black and white, black across a white page. They are also referring to a body of knowledge. And I think people play with text now. I mean, people seem to think that a lot of what is understood as being real, or what does signify is not in

the realm of the text anymore. It is now somewhere else. But I don't think there is the same insecurity about text.

Do you feel that when you put text like this [pointing to horse's head once more] into or onto an object, that it excludes the viewer in the sense that they are not going to read it or they may not understand it?

No, because they can read it. It is not like a book but they will certainly understand it. Surely. No. I think the text for me refers to the activity of writing rather than to what it's saying. I think in particular these days it's more interesting to me that I've spent all that time writing than actually what I've written, although it's important to me what I've written too. The intention is that they would contemplate the act of writing rather than seriously trying to really read.

So for you writing is more interesting than reading?

No, that's just in the context of this project.

How do you feel about projects like films where texts have been appropriated or drawn from? There is a craze of film adaptations at the moment.

Well, I think it's purely a form of entertainment. It's hardly...you know, I think it's a very pleasurable thing to go and watch a film, but I don't think it is interesting as an art form. I'm sure it's very articulate and there is a lot of artistry involved, but I certainly don't think it's...

The books that you have worked on have been in collaboration with other artists as well as writers?

No.

All artists?

No. I mean, it's mainly Stephen [Watson]. With Stephen there is this interest in his work so I naturally respond to it.

Does Michaelis have a course in illustration?

No, but we have a course in book art and students do produce books. All the third years do bookwork courses and produce some text with it and some wonderful things. Some people do go on to make books. We had a masters student who was interested in the printed book and it was fabulous. In fact it was on show here last week. The interesting thing there is that her book there is almost exclusively visual, but is in the format of a coffee table book.

How do you feel about the relationship between fine art and text in the sense that fine art always seems to have to have a title or caption? It gets text put with it. Do you feel that that is a trap for visual art?

You mean that artists title their works?

Or that you may or may not be forced to title your work, or put it in text form, or have someone else explain it in a catalogue?

Um...ja, I don't know. I mean I am interested in the context of something and I usually provide the context for something. We have a journal called [didn't catch its name] in which artists can write about their work. Some people don't, like Jane Alexander will never write a word about her work because she just has it titled or untitled. Other people analyse their own work.

I do like to write something because I like to provide a context.

What do you feel about writing about art from the point of view of art historians and academic writing about art?

Art history can be dull boring analysis of other people's work, which I find uninteresting.

So in that case the text doesn't add anything to the art?

Well, it does, but it is what it adds that is relevant. I mean Art generates an industry of people who feed off it

When I started thinking about this initially I noticed that in bookshops, other than in non-fiction, within fiction and the novel, it seems we started off, centuries ago, with images in our texts and it was a very important part but in our world today it is very separate or not included in the text. Why do you think this is?

I think it is because images play such a different role now in the way they are used. Everything is imaged now. We are almost overloaded, advertising, television, everywhere. When Charles Dickens wrote there were these engravings that illustrated his work. Those were the images of the time, but then photography came around and...

I'm not sure that a single image can compete competently with an entire book. I don't know.

How do you feel about illustration as an art?

Well, I have children and illustrations are absolutely wonderful for children, but these books really end at a certain age (or children's interest in them ends). At that age children progress to having a demand for more sophisticated text and images drop away. But I mean, my child will spend ages looking at those images and get carried away, but really visually there is very little it is offering.

Where do you feel images cease to operate, or where they lose their power in relation to text?

I think there's an interesting book called *On Beauty and Being Just*, by Elaine Scarry. She talks about beauty and encouraging and nurturing it and the desire to protect it. Maybe those are emotions that certain images can generate. The way she describes it is a very interesting way of describing the way we see things, the wonder of the visual... maybe that's part of what she's saying. Maybe we are also being led by a text to do that.

In your exhibition (Miscast) you combined images and text. How did you come to that text and how did you go about creating the exhibition? Did the images come first, or the text, or was it not so simple a process? What spoke to you in your research and planning for that exhibition image and text-wise?

Historically I had the text first and then started finding images to work with it. A process like that is about curation really, but I can tell you if I had all that stuff without pictures it would have made a lot less impact.

Do you think when we are children growing up we respond more to the visual than to language? I mean we are taught both language and visual language in a sense. How do you think that works?

Well, I don't know. Children are quite indiscriminating really. I think discrimination is something we get taught. How often do children get taught how to notice things? They like to play with colours and images, and depending what environment they grow up in they are taught to discriminate.

ADDENDUM F:
Interview with Lyn Smuts (artist)
22-5 2001

Why did you choose to work in printing? What drew you in that direction?

I actually specialised in sculpture as my major, but then I started doing printmaking and I simply fell in love with copper, the metal and acids and the processes. And then I think very often sculpture and graphics are very compatible. I'm very comfortable in both fields and I think it's fascinating because of the black/white relationship and it's very abstracted, because you don't embrace this whole world of colour, which you certainly do with sculpture. Also it sends you in a certain direction. You know, the moment you take a job it sends you in that direction as well. So I did less and less sculpture and more and more etching.

I was thinking of printing and the black and white and its graphic nature is very much like writing in a sense.

I think they work together formally, yes. Of course you think as an artist because you did art as well. Did you do graphic art?

We did Design in first year as a subject, but studying at Stellenbosch, I was in close proximity to a graphic department, which was quite exciting.

Because you know, I do workshops occasionally. At the moment I am doing a workshop on Saturdays. They are mostly young professionals. You give people a piece of copper and a needle and it is like pure handwriting. The difference between personalities, the way they mark that plate, it is truly a handwriting. I know certain people now by how they make marks. It is fascinating.

Would you say that your work has a relationship with text at all? Do things you read ever inspire you or is it more visual inspiration that you work from?

It is very much both. In terms of being inspired or of finding a starting point, it is very often what I read, or even from conversation, but less so contact with other visual people, strangely enough. That is so often a source or point of origin. I read quite a bit, but I probably don't read in as structured a way as I should, but I find the connotations so rich anyway.

Do you write at all? When you exhibit your work, do you put text with it?

The most difficult thing for me is titling and description. I'm very poor at having to write explanations of my work. So, in that sense no. I am really a visual person, but still it is very important to get the right titles and names, because you can kill something with the wrong title. So for me that's always an absolute agony, but I feel it is important. I have to go through days of thinking.

No that's true. Words can limit.

That's the thing. And I'm fitter visually than I am with words. I don't write at all. I've never tried to write. There's that old English school that, people just assume naturally that if you do art you can write as well. I find people are often surprised that I don't fit into that.

Do other people ever write descriptions for you or have you ever asked someone else to put a piece of text with an exhibition or in a catalogue?

I have been on the point of asking Deon Joubert, this friend of mine to please help me and verbalise what I try to do, because I do think I shoot myself in the foot through not doing a good job myself. What I found very informative always is for instance if I had an exhibition and I ask someone to open it, and I choose usually, carefully in the sense that it is someone that I feel is compatible with the way I see the word or whatever or can work out my different feel. And usually that's an immense struggle and usually what is said at the exhibition is very exciting for me. They give a reading of how they see it, they add from their disciplines and so on, so I find, and I always keep those notes, use them and so on. And then, it has happened once or twice that people have written a poem about something, now that you mention it, that they get from the images... *[I couldn't hear someone's name at this point]*, she's an Afrikaans poet. I mean she wrote a beautiful poem about one of my prints, so that kind of thing is exciting. Hennie Aucamp used some images of mine to illustrate one of his books of poetry as well, so we thought it would be compatible.

So you have done illustration?

No, not really. Years ago I illustrated a series of articles on the history of music for someone. And then when Hennie Aucamp approached me, he already had one print in mind that he had seen to put on the cover, then, yes, for him I did three tiny little illustrations or etchings, so that's really all.

Have you ever put text into a print?

Just the one. I started once when I was at Caversham Press. He was busy with a whole project of songs and the visual representation of songs that he made up into little books. And I started one I chose to do, because it was 'Nkosi sikelel i', to illustrate it with lyrical landscapes. I started with a song, and did two sort of panoramic landscapes on the song. The idea was that it was a snake form, that you print it and fold it as a concertina. And we did it, but it felt unfinished, and it *was* unfinished and I wasn't very happy, but we just left it. So the book was never completed. But then I brought the prints home and I added a copperplate over them with the first line of 'Nkosi sikelel i'. It is the only thing I have where writing is incorporated into the 'text', but that worked very well then. But it goes towards a sort of music manuscript. It looks like musical notation. If I had to do something with text, then I would go that way, through the interest in music.

Are there any books that you have been particularly drawn to in your life, that have had images in?

Well there are two here that I think are very successful. The one is that tiny little David Hockney with the fairytales. The other is the one I told you about that Andrew Stêr illustrated, Greek poetry, which is the Greek Afrikaans translation. I used these with the jewellery students. They came for printmaking and they knew much more about metals than I did, so they could do anything. They couldn't really draw very much, so they usually snarled up a bit on the drawing side after a while, but I mean technically they could do anything and I gave them a project where they made little I.D. books, and the leaves of the books were copper plates. And they had to make a little I.D. book of about ten pages, but TINY. So they ended up etching or cutting or burning or whatever the outer pages in copper and made ten little pages that sort of represented their identity in the middle. But no text, not written language. They were exquisite. They could do anything these people. I mean some made the hinges and had a little hinge at the back. It was just beautiful.

It was so nice, we even had an exhibition of them in the library, but then they each took their own books home. That was making books, but we skipped the text.

[Talking about the Hockney and other book.]

The prints themselves are large. I've seen some of the prints in the original. I wonder if there was a larger book as well.

But it is beautiful this size (about 10cm by 6cm), so delicate and precious. I was thinking printing comes from a long history of text in a sense, newspapers and illustrations. Those illustrations in newspapers originally were prints. How do you relate your work to that kind of history that printing has?

Hmm. That's quite a loaded question, in the sense that I suppose you've gone through art school, so initially you approach it from an art making view, rather in the tradition of art printmaking, whereas the whole tradition of printmaking is extremely interesting. The way apparently that etching and copper plates came into being was through suits of armour. That was actually the beginning. And to see how the designs developed, moving to colour and to print and so on, it is a fascinating history. But I think printmaking has such a funny role at the moment also with history... it's very interesting. To say that you work on this medium to enable you to make large editions of something is sort of so silly in our age of what we have and our images. So this is a very exclusive, almost elitist activity to be busy with. And apparently at the moment now the most interesting thing, or the technique that gets the most attention is the monoprnt. You only get one. Because the whole thing of the multiple is just so silly. It's been taken over by technology. So it's quite difficult in a way to sort of place oneself, because I am very aware of the fact that if I use copper and so on, it's really quite a strange thing to be doing. Art materials. It is such a struggle to get the right stuff. It's quite elite in a way. And yet on the other hand it's still a general enough thing, you can still circulate an image or text quickly and in a cheap way. Sorry what was the original question? *[Laughter]*.

How are you relating your work to the history of printing?

Ja, you see, there maybe I never tried specifically to link my images with the tradition of books. Not consciously through reading, although I am sure it has influenced me. But I guess I have never been that interested to such a degree in that link. The special edition books by artists, while I admire them incredibly, I've always been very aware that it's a tiny and exclusive and difficult market and I suppose in a way I have been, I have always felt the need really to make a living also from what I do. And that is sort of a really, I don't think you do it for the money. There also can't be too many collectors in this country. Worldwide I am sure there are. I suppose in a practical way, that's how I see it.

I think Art in general is becoming more and more like that, sort of exclusive.

Yes, yes.

Has your work ever been linked with text to its detriment? Have people written things about your work, critics, or titling that has gone wrong? I mean has anyone written something about your work that you feel has been so completely off track?

No, I have actually been very lucky. I've been very lucky with reviews and so on. I just often think that people just, when they write something about it, there's a chance they'll miss the boat

anyway. Some of my images are quite subtle anyway and I think people flounder to say in words what I'm trying to say. But I also flounder to say in words what I am trying to say. I mean, that's why there is visual art. But otherwise I have been fortunate. I had one experience a long time ago. It was interesting. I was quite upset at the time. I opened a magazine, just an ordinary woman's magazine and lo and behold one of my etchings was used, full page, a sort of a woman with a child on her lap and two children still inside her body, an etching that I had really just done and I had sold about half of the edition, and nobody asked me my permission. I didn't know where they had got it. I found out eventually but they had just reproduced this image with my name, not the title of the print, just my name and 'etching'. And then the article was "My husband is impotent" next to it [*bursts into laughter*]. It was just the strangest sort of experience to open this magazine and here work was being used without my permission in such a strange context.

What happened there was that the gallery that had one of these prints at the time just gave it to the magazine when they came and said, 'Here, use it. Go ahead'. So I actually went to an attorney and said I want an apology from the magazine and they must pay out the cost of the edition because people have now already bought that print and that wasn't the context that they bought it in. And so there, that was an unfortunate experience of a magazine coupling my image with their misplaced text, I thought, because this image was about the internal development of the woman through stages in time.

It showed a complete lack of respect for the visual artist, from the gallery, from the magazine, so there I was really upset. What happened in the end was that the gallery really just apologised profusely, though she said that usually artists are so glad for any exposure in a magazine that usually they would thank her for it. And then the magazine paid out the entire edition, I think, and also printed an apology in the magazine. People sort of noticed that and said "Oooh, sy's kwaai né?" but I thought really that I had to do that just to stand up for art. And that was the one bad experience.

And I think reviews and so on can be very influential and certainly published text can ruin you obviously, in terms of ruining your ego. And I have been very fortunate, although the country is a bit of a minefield in terms of political correctness and everybody positioning you in certain ways. And also the writers about art being also just as careful about who they write about and so on so it's all a bit um...ja, it's more than complicated. Here in this country it's highly complicated.

So have you been influenced by texts in that way where someone has written something about you? Have you ever responded to it in your art?

No, I don't think so. Not usually no. I really do work with the stuff that interests me and then obviously. Oh I'm sure if one constantly had negative text or reviews or whatever about one's work, the different aspects of one's work, one would think very hard about the material, the writing. But in the end I think, one is a certain kind of person. At my stage of the game, I mean, I'm fifty now, I know what I am interested in and there are things that are less interesting for me. I know sometimes that in a way it is a limitation as well, but you know, I must do stuff that I really find unbelievably interesting. And usually, interestingly enough, with that also, one can't continue without any reaction. It is a conversation. Art is a dialogue. If I had absolutely no reaction to my work at all, I think, I would actually stop, because this is a conversation that goes in several directions. But I've always had enough reaction to be able to continue. I must truly say that printed reaction is getting less and less important to me, you know, because one also, after you've been at it for a while, people start knowing you, so they'll walk up to you and say things, which is possibly of more importance in the end.

And the text, the printed text can be incredibly positive, and encouraging, or it can be very bad if it is negative. If it's just a misunderstanding of what you are doing, then I just ignore it completely because I feel a motive reads very clearly in a work of art. The artist's motive reads immediately. If there's an ulterior motive, a crit, or a position on what's out there in the world it also reads so clearly one can't, well, how do you say anything? I don't know. Would you say you can always read the motive of an artists work? I always imagine that I can immediately see that the artist was really exploring something here or they are too self-conscious or they lied or were a little bit dishonest here.

I think in a way, it is easier to perceive those things in visual art than in text.

Are you more of a visual person?

I think so. I'm trying to find out.

I'll walk into the room and see something visual, I think I can perceive immediately. Or if there is something that disturbs me about how the work has been approached then I, well, you catch it up like that [*snaps fingers*].

How do you come to your subject matter? What is it that inspires you?

You know it really comes from everything, because it's of course one's whole personality and response to things that come one's way. I suppose I have always been very interested in space basically. But also the incredible power of the land, so you could rather say land and space, rather than land only, which strange connotations.

And then, just the human condition, things that worry me, things that are fraught and powerful in some situations that, an entire era or a trouble or a tension that I probably just see encapsulated one day in a visual moment, something very simple like a woman bending over or a woman on her hands and knees in the grass or something that will seem to me to be a strong visual moment. So it is from what I see around me. You see when one has been working for a long time, the threads start coming through very clearly (its taken thirty years) and now suddenly when I look back I see that through all my work in the last thirty years there has been an interest in sound in various ways, and it has changed. Sometimes I haven't really noticed it, but then sometimes it has been very prominent, for example when I made some sculptural tubes that played notes. At other times it has been very much in the foreground. Sometimes in the landscapes and so on, it is really looking like musical notation, so it is also there. So these themes are there and they keep on coming through and often you realise that you are actually working on some of the basic themes or the intuitive themes. But if you say to me, 'Exactly where does it come from?' well it comes from so many things, you know, the sound/ signs that you grow up with and probably medical conditions, your personality, things that you don't even realise that you are picking up through your life. So obviously now I'm not an intellectual artist in the sense that I will take a specific era or whatever and then react to it consciously. I don't work like that really. I'm much more intuitive.

That taken into consideration, are there any texts that you feel have influenced, not necessarily your art, but you're life, and then the things that you draw from in your art?

I think of course the bible in my mother tongue [*Afrikaans*] is unbelievably powerful. I do think that that's the root of poetry in a sense. I am quite sorry for children who receive that kind of basic spiritual/ poetic training in a second language. Your mother tongue sounds are quite

powerful and move you very differently. And because one usually gets the bible or whatever, very early on, those things are very important and powerful. And I have sometimes referred back to those images, like some women carrying things on their head, that's the pillar of smoke from the bible. This is why I am doing it; because when I see them I am probably thinking of the pillar of smoke, of the move of people in distress into freedom. So those things are certainly ingrained themes. That one is a very powerful one.

Did you have an illustrated bible as a child?

Ja.

Because you know, when I think of certain of the stories, I have these pictures that go with it.

Absolutely. So influential. So I think that influence would be the main one. And books in our house. And definitely we grew up with music. The music is written and the child can enter it. That plays a huge role, and obviously a child immediately knows your playing. You go immediately through to the spiritual. That's quite a sophisticated link immediately.

It [reading music and then playing it] is so direct, as you say, that it is almost a code for making art, in a sense, although you have to insert yourself into it. Whereas with text is more internal in the head, your responses. With music, your response is the music.

But if you think of that code, nobody says to you that's what's happening here, you sit in front of the piano and you start reading and playing. That's quite an intuitive thing. And then the illustrated bible. I love poetry. I don't know it as I should know it, but when I was young, you know, we were all in love with Breytenbach when he was in prison, [laughter] but I don't like him now. But you know when he was about your age, he was gorgeous. He was totally beautiful and then his early writing, his early Afrikaans poetry, nothing topped it. It was good. Ja, so I loved those.

And his art work? Have you seen much of it?

[Laughter, slightly derisive.] No. I've always thought that that's much the lesser side of him, from what I saw, but I realise his career in Europe is very different from what he was doing in his early years. And now the etchings and stuff, I didn't go and see his last show, but I saw the residue of it, I didn't see much that I liked.

ADDENDUM G:
Interview with Vivian van der Merwe (artist and academic)
20-3-2001

What role does something like illustration play for you?

Years ago before I went to university I had this thing about illustration and at Michaelis, when I got to my second year and wanted to make the choice of illustration, exactly that year illustration fell away. It is interesting how illustration still gets tagged on to graphic design or sometimes to fine art as a little realm that rather strange bookish people do things in. It's weird how illustration still suffers, or is still stigmatised in the same way. I think the thing that I realised, the reason for wanting to do illustration was because I've always had an interest in language and literature and poetry. I spent my teenage years obsessively reading hundreds of books. I mean literally hundreds of books. I think I've always hoped for a sort of marriage between text/language and visual art. It's just a very, very complex symbiosis and the more I think about it, the more I consider it, the more complex the idea becomes of the nature of the relationship between language and visual art.

In one way I increasingly suspect that the twain shall never ever meet. In another way I do think they interact and serve each other. Language is arguably a form of making things knowable, visible, communicable, blah blah blah. One can also argue that visual art is a form of encoding stuff, visual codes etc. I don't know. If forced to choose, I think the way in which our brains work when dealing with the visual image is just completely different to how our brains work when they are dealing with communication and language. To me that is the final, wonderful paradox there, that fairly awkward relationship.

I've been reading about semiotics, Roland Barthes and a bit of Derrida. It all focuses on issues about the text and language and seems to mostly exclude visual language from the scheme of things, unless it is included in the sense that there is nothing outside the text, where the text is everything. It's not like art or the visual has a special place in that scheme of things and that kind of bothers me.

I had a long talk with Johan Degenaar years ago. One of the words that became very fashionable at Michaelis in the late 70's was 'visual metaphor'. It suddenly became a sort of catch-all term that everyone used, especially people who wanted to seem smart or very clever. In crits or discussions of art, wherever someone seemed lost they'd resort to talking about 'visual metaphor'. I always found it an uncomfortable term but didn't challenge it in case I seemed stupid. Eventually I summoned up the guts and asked someone to please explain, "Treat me like a silly person who knows nothing and tell me what you mean by 'visual metaphor'". The answer that came was incredibly confusing and unconvincing. I much later spoke to Johan Degenaar about it and said to him that I thought the concept of a 'visual metaphor' was an oxymoron, and that to call the metaphor visual, is in fact to deny a great deal of what metaphor is about. So I never use 'visual metaphor' because it seems such a vague, wishy-washy, oxymoronic term.

Do they mean sign or signifier?

Symbol, sign, signifier, signified. It seems to me there are people who like to get philosophical, who use those kinds of words completely interchangeably. I mean to say, it's 'visual metaphor' on Thursday, symbol on Friday.

But it's quite nice in a sense that artists or people who make art end up saying "Well, language shmanguage".

On one level yes. But on another level I think if people want to be taken seriously, they tend to use big language. It suddenly sounds academically or philosophically respectable. And I think when people do use language, or abuse language in that kind of way, then they mustn't expect to be taken seriously. So I think, yes, that whole issue around visual image, visual thinking, visual processes and language/linguistic processes and semiotics and semantics... as soon as we institutionalise those issues and begin to theorise about them, and art people do theory about that stuff, you often get a very diletante-ish kind of appropriation of what seems to be, what feels to be, kind of appropriate, or necessary to philosophy. I think that's often bugged me about relationships between language and something like painting. That's where my own dynamic of 'shall the twain meet?' started. I haven't written terribly much in the past couple of years, but I used to write a lot, but another thing that happened is that when illustration wasn't an option, fine art illustration, I went on to paint. I did English until I think my second year as my BA subject, but dropped it because I found travelling between Michaelis and upper campus compromising. I was in a very awkward position, by the way, because it meant not doing a degree. I ended up not doing a BA but by some miracle got accepted into Masters.

Have you always separated your poetry and writing from your painting or drawing?

Shew. I've never actually thought of the act of making poetry as distinct from painting or drawing in that direct sense, but now that you pose the question that directly...

I mean someone like Gus (Ferguson) obviously combines some of his own illustrations with his poems.

Ja, I think in my kop they have a completely different chemistry.

So, when you think of illustration or when you wanted to do illustration, I mean doesn't that term in itself make you feel limited? When I think of illustration it's like, oh well, I'm illustrating the text, I'm making the text clearer, whereas I think in fact illustration is doing so much more.

Ja, one of my great heroes, very privately, for reasons that I often can't explain is William Blake. If you look at William Blake academically, formally and intellectually he's actually entirely eccentric. Formally and artistically he's really no great master, but on another level, and that's where Blake becomes very interesting to me, and that's why it's essentially a very private feeling I have for him, where Blake was a real visionary, in an absolutely correct sense of the word, is the way in which he used his art, his visual art, and the way it sits in relation to his text. Some very amazing stuff is happening there. Often the text almost starts to serve the image. It's a real discourse without putting the one superior or the one as taking precedence. That's something I really admire.

Ja. I think it's problematic in English departments that you are taught Blake and you have his poems typed out on the page, while that is not how they were conceived. They were within a plate and within images and if the poem is about the tree, his image of the tree was the poem as well. It's the separation that bothers me.

I agree with you. I think that the minute illustration becomes an appendage or a little annotation, marginal and without effect on the thing, it becomes merely a decoration or stylistic appendage.

Can you think of a great illustration, something that stood out for you?

Apart from Blake (I think he really is amazing) also some of the British illustrators from that time.

What about books that struck you particularly in childhood and images that stood out for you?

There is one that still lives with me. My children love it. It's an Arthur Rackham, the story of Undine. There are millions of European variants on the story of Undine, and even a ballet. It's a children's story and yet it's in contrast to the whole crux of the modern social distinctions of what had been made for children at the time. This book wasn't conceived in that kind of way. When I re-look at it now, it is graphically interesting to my consciousness.

Illustrations that freaked me out completely, inspiring really existential angst and yukkyness were those of the Dr Seuss books. I mean they were a grill from day one. As a kid I can actually see these illustrations, the illustration of the little man with the funny stripy woollen cap that you always see. There was a hill and water in the background... the typical Seuss illustrations. The colour tapped some seriously deep existential nausea in me. The colour was the lithographic colour simplification that you get in that kind of illustration, and it was the synthetic feel of the colour. It embodied some seriously un-appetizing, inhuman, awful synthetic sense of colour. And then there was the way in which he tended to create caricatures.

The weird thing is that, you know, when you are small, you don't think critically, you can't think self-objectively or competently. That stuff really messed with me. Yuk yuk yuk. When I think back and I think what it was about those Arthur Rackham illustrations in the context of the story that I found so compelling compared with the kind of repelling of the Doctor Seuss illustrations, I think it was something fundamentally that they were not simplistic (the kind of children's illustration which assumed that children need to be given little bites of information – that whole kind of assumption that child art is only primary colours and children are so dumb, that children are less sophisticated than adults in the brain. They're not, though they may not be able to articulate it).

I suppose Arthur Rackham, (and by the way he was very unfashionable if you spoke to any person in graphic design or the field. If you said 'Arthur Rackham' they looked at you with great contempt... 'Ag shame man') grew out of that wonderful generation of European illustrators.

How do you feel about other relationships between visual image and text such as film adaptations of novels? Are there any that have excited you?

I've only really seen three films made from novels and none of them were good films. They got bad reviews and were rather opportunistically using the novel as a kind of low budget script.

Obviously in art the bible is a big text, which is used and illustrated, not necessarily in conjunction with the present text but through cathedrals and through the whole renaissance. How do you see that form of illustration?

Byzantine art is something I have a deep love for. If you look at Byzantine aesthetics, if you look at the complex relationship between East and West that was formed during that time, and you look at surfaces and the way in which the rationale of the world, which was very much from Persia with the mathematics and trigonometry and that kind of thing, you find there was a phenomenal marriage of east and west and of reason and intuition in Byzantine art.

My own painting has always been influenced by or sometimes pays tribute to Byzantine art. If you look at the way in which the structure of things, the architecture of space and colour and shape, you notice Byzantine art is driven by religiosity and a spiritual sense of the universe and the world. It is probably one of the greatest moments of Biblical illustration ever. I don't think it's been seriously looked at by scholars. It's one of those less popular moments in art history.

What do you make of (aside from the didactic aspect for the masses who don't have access to a text, or to reading) this impulse to illustrate and to make something else of that illustration than visually manifest the text?

Again I think Byzantine art does that so supremely. In one aspect, Byzantine taste was just so exquisite, for example those mosaics at Ravenna and San Vitale. If you look at those places even on a completely secular level, they are indisputably beautiful. Even people who have never been to the west or even know what Christ means, will walk into these places and be opened to sheer beauty, so on a secular level those are very wonderful bits of art. They are beautiful. They are visually engaging. When I put that in context of Byzantine worldviews and of Christian Byzantine world views they almost triple in beauty. That's where you find that they aren't narrowly didactic. Sure, here and there you will see a picture of a scene from the old or new testament or whatever, but then there is so much about that art which is definitely not didactic, but highly considered in terms of engaging the searching of spiritual consciousness through playing with iconography, with icons and shapes and things.

In a modern context of illustration, what function does illustration serve? If we have the photograph, why do we have the impulse to illustrate? What do we (as in fine art) feel that illustration is adding to a text?

One has to define how one sees illustration. If you define illustration (and the same applies to painting) as a product of a technological culture, then you immediately run into problems, because then you are subjecting fine art and illustration to the laws and rules that govern technological progress. In other words, the wheel had to be invented before they could go to the moon. You can't reverse those things. There's a very particular kind of scientific rationale and logic, according to which our technological sciences evolve. I don't think the same applies to the creative problem of how one goes about making art or illustrating things. If you look at film, it's probably the most exciting expressive medium and I think technology has given us a whole lot stuff. I think film adds to illustration rather than replaces it. A lot of people have the idea that film has now replaced it, like people in the 1870's thought that the camera was going to replace the paintbrush.

I think in a lot of ways film replaces text.

The politics of film has also really compounded and complicated things. It is something Derrida spoke about that time he visited here (Stellenbosch) at the time of the closing of the TRC hearings. UWC brought him out for a kind of final talk and then the philosophy department here somehow or other managed to muscle in and got him to come here. It wasn't on his itinerary. We were very lucky. Unfortunately most of the people who came to the session hadn't been to the sessions on the TRC and the whole discussion focused on what had happened there. But Paul Cilliers chaired the session, and Paul tried to steer the questions away from the TRC (because it had been dealt with). At the very end someone asked a question about music and opened up the issue of the creative arts. Derrida said that film is something that he is terrified to try and deal with because, someone once offered him a hand in making a movie or in collaborating (as

Umberto Eco did in *The Name of the Rose*) and he said he actually found the medium of film very exciting, but the politics of film actually militate against all that potential.

The capitalist, market economy politics?

It's just that to make a film costs an awful lot of money, and there's a whole procedure around the distribution of film, the production of the film, the making of the film.

A final question, and quite a big one. I've been reading Steiner and his writing on the 'real presence' in art. I'm wondering if you could say something about what you feel is the presence within the visual arts, that is not in the text, that illustration or visual art gives or provides that a text can't provide? Why would we illustrate if there wasn't something the text was unable to say?

You mean are they (art and language) unique and why?

Well obviously they are unique, but there are places where they overlap and it is the spaces between that interest me. What can provide that part of the bridge in art that the text needs it to provide (for the two to overlap)?

I think painting is a good analogy here. Painting is an activity that mentally harnesses parts of our brain, or potential of our brain, where language can't cope. I think if you take language, and I'm thinking very much of George Steiner also, (his images of language and silence, which have such wonderful integrity) who talks about pushing language to its limits. If you look at poetry/literature in the twentieth century, where people try to push language to its expressive limits, I think eventually they get to a point where language actually falls silent, where it stops working as language and becomes something other than language. It becomes little shapes arranged on paper and simply ceases to function as language. I think when you push language expressly into those limits where it no longer functions you reach a kind of silence, a kind of semantic, semiotic silence. There is no language. I think that's where, I've always been convinced, and it's something I feel very strongly about, the disciplines like painting begin, in that kind of silence, beyond that. I think that's where physics and music certainly begin. Visual creative intelligence, (it functions by God knows what kind of rules if there are any) functions in a way that is very unlike language. Language in its own right functions very differently from painting. In this sense I don't think the two meet, although one can try to work with analogies and take ideas like 'visual metaphor' and apply them to this kind of space between. I'm convinced that when I'm painting (and I often think about how I'm thinking when I'm painting) I don't think like I think when I'm talking.

It's far more abstract thought?

Yes, autism is a very interesting thing as well in that regard, or take idiot savantism, some psychological anomalies.

So that's almost saying that the intellect is not involved?

Well I suppose a different form of thinking. I suppose intellect tends to tie up with deductive kinds of thought. I also get very nervous when people play the two (visual art and language) off against each other and say that they like language better than painting, or that painting is better. That's very silly and simplistic. It never will work that way, but I don't think that kind of weird autism if you want then, or necessity of painting, I don't think it is any less complicated than literature, or composing music.

And as a viewer of illustration and books, how do you feel they speak to the reader?

I think they stir non-semantic aspects of consciousness into action, and create triggers and hooks onto texts or even vice versa. It's quite a surreal thing to do, to judge the position of an innately visual thing alongside an innately semantic and semiotic thing. When you think of certain poets who write very visually, their literature evokes strong visual images, whereas other poets evoke far more abstract concepts. That's a very interesting kind of range of possibilities, a kind of non-visual poetry versus more-visual poetry. One of my favourite songwriters is Tom Waits. His songs are unbelievably visual.

Yes, they form a whole narrative.

They have tremendous pathos. They are like a little play, a theatrical event. They evoke visuals for me all the time.

I find T.S.Eliot incredibly visual. Poems like Ash Wednesday carry these very surreal images for me.

Do you also mean something like the shift between the visual and the text?

I was thinking that painting can never really escape text, just from the point of view that you always have to have a title attached to a painting. Even if it is untitled, you go to the gallery and see a placard on the wall reading "untitled number 5".

The only kind of philosophical, semantic or semiotic ideas that I have about painting are so completely private and idiosyncratic that they don't make sense. They make sense to me, but not to others.

Dream truths.

Ja, you know, and I mean spiritual things. Maybe it sounds arrogant but I almost feel that no one else can feel them.

Or that they wouldn't be true for other people?

Ja. It doesn't matter. But I think the privacy of visual engagement, the kind of stuff of painting, is for me an entirely other kind of space outside of language, beyond language, apart from language. If I try to speak of the content of my paintings I come a cropper immediately.

How do you react to students coupling fine art with text, or placing text within art? How does that work for you (when sometimes the text becomes an illustration of the painting)?

Well, on one hand it would be very naïve attempt for someone to literally put content or text into his or her art. Some people think, because I'm putting text in, it's becoming profound. On the other hand, it becomes fascinating when text becomes visual and yet carries associations of textual signification. The text is then a signified and a signifier in a work of art. It's quite a Dada, surreal thing to do, to make those contextual shifts and it's quite subversive, in a way, exciting and creative.

I was kind of thinking of Lynette's (Lynette Bester) boxes from her fourth year, and the way she played with text.

Yes. I think it is a particularly sophisticated thing to do. It requires a high degree of literacy, quite a sophisticated awareness of the meaning of text. At times it's almost exclusive to its detriment.