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Reading Etienne Leroux: a Libretto based on *Seven Days at the Silbersteins* and a Preface

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this Research Report is my own unaided work and no part of it has ever been published.

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C E Lucia

13 February 2006

Abstract

This Research Report comprises the preface to an opera libretto based on the English translation by Charles Eglington (1964) of Etienne Leroux's novel *Seven Days at the Silbersteins* (1962), and the libretto itself. In the preface I discuss the genre of operatic libretto and the literary and personal context in which Leroux worked, by way of explaining why *Seven Days* made such a compelling challenge to adapt as libretto. I consider some of the issues involved in transposing a rambling allegorical narrative produced in Afrikaans in the 1960s in the lineage of the *plaasroman*, into a tighter post-apartheid discourse in English in the 2000s, one that creates space for live music, singing, acting, staging, setting and pre-recorded audio-visuals – some of which take over the 'layered' significations of Leroux's earlier literary discourse. A work of great poetic resonance in the original language (beautifully captured by poet and critic Charles Eglington in translation), this surrealist novel, so rooted in cultural and ideological tropes unique to Leroux's time and yet presented by him as if they belonged to a timeless world, presents opportunities for a new kind of realisation as an operatic text in our own time.

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Reading Etienne Leroux: A Libretto based on *Seven Days at the Silbersteins* and a Preface

Preface

Why a libretto?

The literary genre of operatic libretto is four centuries old and before I thought of writing one myself I considered its extreme familiarity to me as a musical genre: years in the 1960s and '70s attending operatic performances in England where I grew up, followed by years of studying opera history and teaching it in South Africa. The opportunity to write a libretto, which arrived when my husband composer Michael Blake was casting about for someone to work with on a chamber opera project in 2004, was intriguing. Since I had already written some short stories and poems I agreed to 'try my hand', and it made sense for us to work together on this project; for writing opera is not only a collaboration between words and music but a sharing of visions (sometimes made easier by living in the same house).

In (re-)reading Etienne Leroux's *Seven Days at the Silbersteins* together we realised the huge potential for operatic treatment in Leroux's tightly structured surrealist novel (which I elaborate on later); and we saw composing and writing as new ways of 'reading' the text. Leroux's Afrikaans original is well matched in the fine English translation by poet and critic Charles Eglington, that captures every turn of the writing's stark yet poetic qualities. Here is an example from Chapter 3 that shows Eglington's elegant way of interpreting vocabulary and syntax while maintaining the resonance of the original:

> Hy draai die kraan meteens oop, die stoomgesuis oorweldig alles, verdoot alle ander geluide en gaan oor tot die nuwe stilte wat uit die eenklank gebore word. Dis net Jock se mond wat oop en toe gaan. Henry kan die are in sy nek sien swel - sy magtige bors wat dein met die krag van sy onhoorbare krete. Sy oë is na die dak gehef, sy arms gekrom in die lug, sy hele liggaam sidderend in die geluidlose ontboeseming. Vir die eerste ruk is Henry verslae voor hierdie sonderlinge bieg,

> dan begin iets in homself ontwaak, in hierdie oorverdowende stilte – ’n gevoel van ganse alleenheid, asof hy in ’n verlate landskap staan, in die eensaamheid van die wildernis, en in die afsondering van diep binne hom die oerkreet opwel, die verlange, die ontketende protes teen die magteloosheid, die weeklag van sy verlatenheid, die vrye, gans ander formulering van sy diepste begeertes, die ontlediging van sy hart self. Hy voel ’n klammigheid op sy wange en beset dat dit trane is. Hy vee hulle met sy hand af en ontdek in die proses dat sy mond wawyd oop is (Leroux 1964(1962), 51).
>
> He opened the steam-cock suddenly, the rush of steam was overwhelming; it deadened all other sounds and was transformed into the new silence born of the single sound. Only Jock’s mouth opened and shut; Henry could see the veins swelling on his neck and his powerful chest heaving with the force of his inaudible cries. His eyes were raised to the roof, his arms curved in the air, his whole body shuddered with soundless unburdening. For a while Henry was dumbfounded by this singular confession and then, in the deafening silence, something in himself began to awake – a feeling of utter aloneness, as if he were standing in a desolate landscape, in the solitude of a wilderness, and as if from the isolation within him a primordial cry were surging up – a yearning, an unconstrained protest against helplessness, the lamentation of his desolation, the liberated, quite different expression of his deepest longings, the emptying of his heart itself. He felt a dampness on his cheeks and knew it was from tears; he brushed them away with his hand and in the process discovered that his mouth was open wide (Leroux trans. Eglington 1972(1964), 56).

The events Leroux describes in the novel are far from simple, and the detail is replete with Jungian symbolism, as has been well noted (see for example Malan 1978). Eglington’s own poetry plays with such symbolism, which he was thus alert to as translator. Leroux’s fascination with the work of Joyce and Eliot and their “archetypes of our unconscious” (quoted in Barkhum 1969, reprinted in Malan 1982, 56), is clear from his writing, which, perhaps because of its spareness leaves the reader remembering “in seriousness things lightly rendered” (Strong 1969, reprinted in Malan 1982, 84). Here, then, was an opportunity to ‘realise’ the novel in some way, to tease out some of the things implied but not stated (including both seriousness and lightness), to imagine it anew, to fill some of the inviting gaps, to look “behind the author’s way of writing, [and] be able to understand more levels than just the overall semantic one” (Heinrich Goebbels in Gourgouris 2004, 5-6).

The work of the libretto historically

The libretto originated as a poetic rather than dramatic form, owing its genesis to pastoral styles of the late Italian Renaissance. It was from the start a rhetorical mode in which poets such as Rinuccini attempted to capture the spirit of ancient Greek tragedy and composers such as Peri and Caccini simplified the polyphony of Italian madrigal texture to suit the rhythmic shape of verses provided. The fact that words came first in this project and music 'set' them sonically, meant that the libretto at first played an equal if not primary role in opera.

The form of the libretto is related to many similar forms in which the union of words and music is paramount, such as the lyrics of a musical, the text of an oratorio, the words of German, French, English or Afrikaans art song, or the text of popular song of all kinds. A libretto differs from other literary genres associated with music, however, both because it has always been associated only with staged works such as opera or operetta, and because it has been regarded as a free-standing form that can be 'read' separately as a text (see for example Parker and Gros 1997). The name libretto (Italian = 'little book') derives from a 17th-century habit of selling the text at public opera performances in booklet form so that audiences were able to follow the drama, a practice that also promoted further engagement with the work in the public domain after the performance. In the absence of other information such a booklet served as a "cross between twentieth-century programme book and surtitle system" (Savage 1996(1994), 252). The circulation of libretti as texts also meant that over time plots, characters and operatic metaphors created a symbolic language shared between audience and creators, on which composers and librettists could rely for a common understanding of their aesthetic and dramatic aims. Librettos have thus almost always been written with great consciousness of the history of the genre and of previous versions of particular stories (the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, for example).

But it was not only and always an aesthetic form. By the early 19th century opera had become an 'industry', to use Roger Parker's term (2001, 87). The resultant mechanics of

production were "difficult to disentangle from 'the works themselves'", thus music was "regarded more and more as the dominant element [with] the position of the librettist as a literary/dramatic figure experiencing sharp decline" (Ibid). This is what prompted later commentators such as Edward Sackville-West to note that the librettist "had better not be too good a one, for his task is an exercise in humility" (1974(1952), xvi). Great poets have composed libretti (Metastasio for Gluck, Da Ponte for Mozart, Hoffmansthal for Richard Strauss) and so have lesser ones, sometimes referred to – perhaps unfairly – as 'hacks' (Rinuccini, Scribe, Quinault).

An equal marriage between words and music, so much a part of what early 17th-century Florentine opera sought and largely failed to capture, was a chimera pursued relentlessly down the ages, erupting from time to time in treatises or manifestos about the union of drama and music, most famously at the hands of Richard Wagner, who, after composing several grand operas in 'set-number' form, wrote in his 1851 manifesto *Opera und Drama* that his works in future would be simply dramas, since "this at least makes clear the perspective from which they should be received" (quoted in Grey 2001, 388). Nevertheless in realising the conception of his 'total artwork' (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) in practice, Wagner the composer subsumed Wagner the dramatist into music of enormous power and symbolism, articulated particularly strongly through orchestral writing (for example in *Tristan und Isolde* (1856) and *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (completed 1876)). And in rendering the collaboration with a librettist obsolete by writing verses himself in order to attain his goal, Wagner only confirmed the supremacy of music in the operatic debate.

In 1941, when this approach to music drama had itself been rendered obsolete by the modernist chamber operas of Stravinsky and others, Richard Strauss and Clement Krauss collaborated on what was to be Strauss's last opera, *Capriccio*, a *Conversation Piece for Music in One Act*. The story, based on an 18th-century parody by Abbate Giovanni Casti called *Prima la music e poi la parole*, concerns nothing less than the problem of 'which comes first' in opera – words or music – both in the sense of chronology and dramatic and aesthetic supremacy. The problem remains unresolved until the end of the opera

when the main protagonist, a Countess trying to decide between two lovers (a poet and a composer), finally asks her image in the mirror, 'What does your heart say?' Her ambivalence in love is a metaphor for competing genres. "The Countess steps nearer to the mirror: Can you help me to find an ending? The Major-domo enters to say that supper is ready. The Countess smiles at her image – there is no ending. With a curtsy to the mirror she turns away and a soft horn call ends [the work]" (Roth 1958, [6]). Notwithstanding the eloquence of the idea behind this work, Strauss's music inevitably overshadows the text aesthetically. And the ending is poignantly Lerouxian – 'there is no ending' being precisely one of the problems he magically solved in the closing lines of *Sewe Dae.*

Leroux and the Sestigers

Published by Human & Rousseau in Cape Town in 1962, Leroux's novel *Sewe Dae by die Silbersteins* was almost immediately translated into English by Eglington and appeared in 1964 published by Human & Rousseau, and then in 1968 by W.H. Allen in London.

Leroux regarded it, as he had his previous novels, as the first of a trilogy, so the other two volumes followed fairly quickly: *Die Derde Oorlog* 1966 (*The Third Eye* 1968 translated by Amy Starke) and *Een van Azazel* 1968 (*One for the Devil* 1968 translated by Charles Eglington). In 1972 Penguin brought out a paperback English version of the trilogy called *To a Dubious Salvation: A Trilogy of Fantastic Novels*. The second and third novels, although they have some marvellous passages, do not however match the virtuosity of *Sewe Dae*, especially in terms of tension, word usage, rhythmic pace, and the dance between fantasy and reality.

Sewe Dae by die Silbersteins became one of the major talking points of South African literature in the 1960s, winning the Hertzog prize in 1964 despite its provocative subject matter and the 'row' it caused. Leroux was hailed overseas as a "revolutionary new talent

in South African writing" (Malan 1982, 55) and when Charles Malan and H.P. van Coller's bibliography of research on Leroux appeared in 1983 it listed 137 reviews or essays written about the work in the twenty years after it appeared, many of them in international newspapers and literary magazines (Malan and van Coller 1983, 33-50). It was greeted with lavish praise as a novel appearing almost out of the blue, without a very long Afrikaans literary tradition behind it. It was hailed as the first 'Sestiger-roman', the first novel by an Afrikaans writer to achieve international status (in translation), a great moral commentary on the times in which it was written, and a work of philosophy. Some of the overseas reviews from the sixties speak to the odd resonance it made with a readership observing contemporary changes in the country: 'Novel is as strange as South Africa', 'Kaleidoscope farm', 'South African revels', 'Sledgehammer morality novel', 'Telling it in Afrikaans', 'The row over that Silberstein book', and 'Swinging Sestiger' [Ibid].

The reference to swinging sixty-ites may in our own time have become something of a cliché in relation to the avant-garde literary group in the 1960s that came to be known as the 'Sestigers'; but it does place Leroux in a particular context and I briefly reiterate it here from the sketch made by Jack Cope in *The Adversary Within* (1982). During the "bleak period for Afrikaans writing" in the years 1948-60, Cope notes, discussion persisted among young writers "on the need for renewal" (1982, 69). They "wanted a broadening of subject-matter" beyond the early twentieth-century *plaas-roman* or farm novel and "sanctimonious and hypocritical tales of the past". "Sex, the church, colour and race motifs, politics, crime, perversion, social abuses, alienation – a responsible literature could not evade facing every aspect of adult life" (Ibid 74).

The first English-Afrikaans literary magazine, *Contrast*, was launched in 1960 by Jan Rabie and "other open-minded writers and poets", which presented "strikingly novel ad experimental work in Afrikaans (Ibid 99). Regarded by the authorities as too radical, "it was decided to hand over one of the moribund right-wing magazines to the younger Afrikaans generation". Renamed *Sestig*, this magazine was launched in 1963 under a 'mixed' committee that included coloured poet Adam Small (Ibid 100). When the

conservatively-minded owners of the magazine demanded Small's removal, the committee closed ranks and were forced to change the title of the magazine, which then became *Sestiger*. The editors aimed "to create the right climate and conception for their work", which included writing by Rabie, Brink, Breytenbach, Small, Jonker, and Leroux (who had met Brink and Breytenbach in Paris during the 1950s); not taking political risks so much as re-conceiving literary problems, "chiefly problems of form" (Ibid). But as Cope points out, there was more to it than experiments with form:

> At heart, *Sestiger* was a tentative groping towards independence. The younger and more radical followers of the group wished to rid themselves of authority, to speak in their own authentic voice. André Brink desired, among other things, to introduce full and frank sex into fiction, Rabie to carry his skirmishes against racism [into] the hearts of his contemporaries, Ingrid Jonker 'to hide away in the violence of a simple recollection', Etienne Leroux to laugh with the devil at the fear surrounding him. Those on the right, including even adherents of the Broederbond, might drag their feet in public but in the silence of their creative work they could express [at least] a stubborn self-will, displaying what Brink detected as the schizophrenia running through the Afrikaans writers of all persuasions (Ibid).

Brink's aim for the Sestigers in 1964 was in part to develop the language itself including its syntax and word-stock, since it "lacked exact equivalents for expressions in various modern languages including, it was a sobering thought – 'to make love'" (Brink in Cope 1982, 126); but it was also to challenge a variety of stifling social taboos. The question of direct involvement in the political struggle was "passed over in silence", which brought criticism from the left and together with the reactionary response from the right made members of the group feel artistically 'cornered' (Cope 1982, 127). The Sestigers was a loose grouping, then, flourishing for only a few years (1963-65); and although the collapse of the magazine was technically due to the fact that the firm that printed it was taken over by a "big newspaper and publishing cartel headed by Dr Verwoerd" (Ibid, 101), the collapse of spirit was "inevitable from its own inner contradictions" (Ibid). Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this episode is that even in a climate of increasingly harsh censorship (after the Publications and Entertainment Act of 1963 so many books by white and black authors in English were banned that the sixties became "the years known as the silent decade" (Chapman 2003, 246)), "Afrikaans writers

escaped … without a single banning" (Cope 1982, 76). This could be, Cope suggests, because "most of their writing was uncritical and toed the line" in face of Afrikaans "paternalistic strictures"; but because the patriarchs did not feel threatened by their *eie* youth or because the youths' pot-shots were couched in an experimental language more concerned with "honing the vivid world in a climate of banality" than with overt protest (Chapman 2003, 248), censorship did not really affect Afrikaans writing (including Leroux's) until the 1970s, and then only "after much agonising by the Afrikaner-dominated censorship machinery" (Ibid 250). The Sestigers were more the 'naughty boys' of Afrikanerdom than its subverters, Chapman suggests, in a reading that also somewhat diminishes the greatness of Leroux's work, "regarded in Afrikaans literary circles", he says rather grudgingly, "as a major achievement" (Ibid, 249).

But as Chapman also points out, revisiting any writing from this period is an act of recovery that compels us to understand it "in the context both of its own time and our own" (2003, 248). The literary context of the early sixties was a strangely attenuated one, with a riot of English, Afrikaans, and Black writing competing for attention despite South Africa's increasing international isolation, none of it wholly untouched by political events but some of it emerging more out of a new culture of 'literariness' than a spirit of protest. The English Academy was established in 1961 (the Afrikaans Academy of Culture had long been established – in 1919), and although the Afrikaans Writers' Guild only appeared in the early '70s, magazines such as *Contrast* did much to promote new work in Afrikaans as well as Black writing in English. *New Coin* was established in 1964, and the 1960s saw a proliferation of texts that expressed nostalgia for a lost domain alongside a growing sense of present horror: Fugard's *The Blood Knot* (1961), van der Posts's *The Heart of the Hunter* (1961), La Guma's *A Walk in the Night* (1962), Luthuli's *Let My People Go* (1962), van Wyk Louw's *Tristia* (1962), Jonker's *Rook en Oker* (1963), Modisane's *Blame Me on History* (1963), Breytenbach's *Die Ysterkoei Moet Sweet* (1964), First's *117 Days* (1965), Mandela's *No Easy Walk to Freedom* (1965), Nkosi's *Home and Exile* (1965), Clouts' *One Life* (1966), Fugard's *Hello and Goodbye* (1966), Gordimer's *The Late Bourgeois World* (1966) and Brutus's *Letters to Martha* (1968) (see Chapman 2003, 457-60).

Leroux and the novel

This is one of the contexts, then, in which Leroux's work appeared. Another was personal. Born Stephanus Le Roux in 1922 in the Cape into a family firmly rooted in the Afrikaans establishment (his father was "Minister of Agriculture in successive Nationalist governments from 1948" (Cope 1082, 121), his brother-in-law a Supreme Court Judge), Leroux – who Gallicised his name while he was in Paris – led something of a "double life" (Barkhum in Malan 1982, 55): managing his family's 42 000-acre farm at Koffiefontein in the Free State by day, attending the Dutch Reformed Church on Sundays and behaving in every way as a staunch member of his Afrikaans community, while at night "withdraw[ing] into his library, his field of 'special vision', to write" (Cope 1982, 118; see also the biography in Malan and Coller 1983, 20-24). Leroux apparently believed his father was a member of the Broederbond although his father always denied it (Cope 1982, 110). Leroux's world was in the economic and social sense a 'safer' and more protected place from which to launch literary experiments than the world of many of his literary colleagues. But his world also provided the text of his vision, for in *Sewe Dae* as well as other novels, Leroux drew precisely on the material he knew best: Afrikaans culture and letters, business, politics, the church, and law (which was Leroux's early profession), and the world of the newly-mechanised *platteland* farm.

A brief synopsis of *Seven Days at the Silbersteins* would go as follows: Henry van Eeden is brought to the wine estate Welgevonden by his uncle (always referred to as J.J.) in order to be introduced to a potential spouse, Salome. She is the daughter of Jock Silberstein and his wife (always referred to as the slim Mrs Silberstein) who have two other daughters, a mother(-in-law), a number of farmer and artist friends, and a huge number of employees. Salome never reveals herself directly in the novel (thus where she is represented in the text if the libretto it is always as 'Salome'), and Henry is constantly diverted from meeting her by evening entertainments that often end in debauchery, by long-winded philosophical arguments from Jock and other characters, by endless tours around the vast mechanised farm, and by various other events. The novel ends

inconclusively, with a renewal of hope and self-hood in Henry that had been almost obliterated by his seven torrid days spent on the Silberstein estate.

The setting is, in many ways, the plot, and Leroux interprets it through an exploration of themes strongly associated with early Afrikaans fiction such as inheritance, blood ties, and the land. The tradition of such writing goes back to the early 19th century with links to English fictional notions what Malvern van Wyk Smith has called the 'eden wilderness' or 'savage paradise' of settler country, a country that despite its savagery had to be negotiated as 'home' because there was "no real alternative elsewhere" (1990, 10). The distinction van Wyk Smith draws between the discourses of *colon* and settler literature – the one based on a notion of metropolitan belonging elsewhere and the other on accepting the new home – come together in some ways in writers such as Leroux more than a century later, and with different contexts for the metropolitan-rural conflict. The idea of an "unpredictable eden" out there in the landscape in need of penetration and taming, which became "a ruling metaphor for frontier literature" (Ibid) also filters through into Leroux at some level. It's obvious erotic connotations provided a rich source also for exploring 'the Africa within', the "atavistic Africa which becomes also the liberating terrain for the savage within" (Ibid, 28). This psychological use of the 'land' motif, while (in terms of the romanticism of Rider Haggard) remote from the surreal modernism of Leroux, was strongly developed in Afrikaans in the early 20th century through the genre of the *plaasroman* or farm novel, with which his writing has an intriguing relationship.

One of the first writers to turn the English farm novel on its head by writing about the boer not as a simple-minded brutal occupant of land the Britain contested, but as a 'republican Roman' striving to make a legitimate living on his own land, was Olive Schreiner (*The Story of an African Farm*, 1883). She was also one of the first writers to observe the beginnings of a modern industrial state and the conflict between mining and farming, city and country. It is the latter theme that dominates the *plaasroman* and provides what J.M. Coetzee has called the "crisis on the *platteland*" in the late 19th and early 20th century Cape Colony (Coetzee 1988, 78), a crisis portrayed by 1930s Afrikaans

writers such as Malherbe and van den Heever "as a conflict between peasant and capitalist modes of production" (Ibid). What Coetzee says about the way literary characters articulate this conflict introduces the possibility of its continuation in another form in Leroux:

> The figure of the monied townsman, usually a merchant, sometimes and lawyer or doctor, more often than not Jewish, looking for viable farming operations in which to invest, is common … Complementing the figure of the townsman with too much money is the figure of the peasant farmer who has barely emerged into the money economy … and has to mortgage his land [to the townsman] (Ibid 78-79).

In many ways the figure of Jock in *Sewe Dae* is a merger of the two: Jewish, monied, man-of-the-world, but also a farmer deeply attached to his land. And it is the *attachment*, I suggest, that Leroux explores as much the idea of land itself, an attachment that ensures continuity and progress, order, and renewal, even while "based on the myth of the return to the earth" (Ibid 79). In some ways, then, *Sewe Dae* is a reversal of the *plaasroman* crisis: Henry comes as the all-innocent 'townsman' to a wealthy farm in the Western Province, transformed from "the Afrikaans farm of blood and soil into a modern wine estate where *nouveau riche* materialism has run rampant in orgies of parting and in pseudo – or is it meant to be serious? – patter about sin, conversion, and destiny" (Chapman 2003, 249).

The way Chapman calls into question Leroux's tone belies a far larger argument, not only for seeing *Sewe Dae* as farm-novel turned on its head, but, as Ampie Coetzee has shown, for seeing this entire narrative genre as "one consistent statement within the always differing, always changing ratio between power and land" (Coetzee 1996, 129). Land in Leroux's novel is a metaphor for many things: identity (including Jewish, Afrikaner, English, 'Coloured', 'African'), wealth, birthright, political stability, faith, order. The sense of impending apocalypse characteristic of South African writing in the '70s and '80s and foreshadowed here can be seen also as the fear of *loss* of identity, a "dissociation of identity … a disruption of a pretended unity" (Ibid 128). Where Leroux's novel surprises (and perhaps where it most offended in the 1960s) is in its presentation of the 'land question' as a struggle separate from and larger than the ideological struggle of

newly-powerful Afrikanerdom in the 1960s. The farm in Leroux is not a constant, an idyllic alternative to the city, but a topos reflecting the continuities and discontinuities inherent in the larger Afrikaner political project, the South African political landscape, and the shifting, decolonising global economy of the '60s. Hence,

> elements of [Leroux's] narrative became more philosophical, psychological, archetypal. The farm novel was now a peregrination, the initiation of an outsider, a process of individuation; Jungian, allegorical, grotesque. [In *Sewe Dae*] the reactionary nature of the farm novel had changed to a literary intellectual radicalism (Ibid 135).

Leroux's novel can be read, then, not so much as a return to romantic nostalgia or a quest for land as 'meaning' or 'text', as a representation of chaos; or as Ampie Coetzee puts it, "a 'construction of reality' within words merely as signifiers in the present" (Ibid 138-9).

Neither the mechanistic order of the farm and its workers nor the guests and part-goers nor the Silberstein family itself really have anything to offer Henry; but it is the farm that noisily (with its ever-present generator) oversees the destruction of Henry's own barely-formed metropolitan subjectivity, as the novel plays out the reconstruction of Henry's new sense of self in a hostile environment. He also adopts that same sense of attachment, however, that (the reader gradually comes to realise) is not so much embodied in the person of Salome, the woman Henry has come to Jock Silberstein's farm to be introduced to so that he can marry, as the 'person' of the farm Welgevonden, or even, perhaps, the figure of Jock – the unstable patriarch against whom Henry is somehow powerless to rebel. (Both these possibilities are hinted at in the present libretto.) Hence, Henry never actually meets Salome, and by the end of the novel he is reconciled to *imagining* union rather than experiencing its realisation. The lyrical end of the novel is an unexpected five-line 'coda' in second-person voice and a serious tone the belies the satirical lightness of the rest of the work and also stands in sharp contrast to the third-person attached voice of the rest of the novel, where everything had been seen through Henry's (rather short-sighted) eyes. As Salome walks towards him, a small individual figure bursting out of a crowd of 800 wedding guests, Leroux stalls and deflects this climactic and cathartic moment: "In your uniform of the angels you go forward, you raise your hands, and you

wait with complete confidence for the image of truth in the wake of love" (Leroux 1985, 165).

As Henry is introduced to the world of Welgevonden by Jock in their daily sojourns round its depressing farm systems (including a thunderingly loud 'pressure room' where Jock can utter a daily primal scream to keep his fear of chaos at bay – to which the Afrikaans-English extract on pages 1-2 above refers), the dialectics of the novel "thrive on the fat of the land … the Welgevonden wines and brandies all made available by the labour largely of Coloureds" (Strong in Malan 1982, 84). "Die absolute orde" of the farm world, as John Kannemeyer puts it (1962, in Malan 1982, 66), is an order built on the separation of coloured and white girls in the bottling factory "down opposite sides of the same shed" (Titlestad 1967 in Malan 1982, 87) as well as on controlled breeding of stock (the bull Brutus whose colouring is an exact division between red and black). This generates a tension that can only be broken by the chaos of a rebellion by the black workers. Clearly, this anti-*plaasroman* describes not just a wine farm but, as critic C. de Jong puts it, also "een weerspiegeling van de Zuidafrikaanse samenleving en zelfs ook van de gehele wereld" (1965, in Malan 1982, 57).

The symbolic world of Welgevonden

Leroux creates the image of South African society by means of a veritable 'forest of symbols',[1] in which "nothing is quite what it seems" (Cope 1982, 115). These have been well examined in the criticism on Leroux and cannot be done justice to within the scope of the present short commentary (see for example Malan 1978 and 1982, Gray 1973, 142-48, Chapman 249-50, and Cope 110-116). The symbols include a parody of the Old Testament creation myth in the way the novel itself is structured around seven chapters, each constructing a new trial of 'good and evil' for Henry and the last comprising a cathartic resting-point from what has been an exhausting spiritual and emotional labour.

[1] See Baudelaire's poem *Correspondances*, verse 1: 'La nature est un temple où de vivants piliers / Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles; / L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symbols / Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers' (in Parmée 1974, 201).

Symbols of racial segregation and purity abound in references to the division of labour on the farm and cattle breeding; symbols of facelessness and loss of individuality appear everywhere but especially in Chapter 2 where all the 'artists' wear masks; perhaps the references to music, of which there are many, especially during parties or speeches, also serve the symbolic purpose of highlighting the hypocrisy of social intercourse.

The references to music are used, too, with wry humour. Here are a few examples: kwela music is played as the artists' party becomes more abandoned; a group sings a bawdy 'Coloured' song 'Gatiepie van die Gabou' from the musical score "with the insight of cognoscenti" (Leroux 1985, 47); at the multi-racial party in Chapter 4 (itself a 'fugue' on the unlikely subject of 'spiritual rearmament, apartheid, and planning'), "each group [danced] in the pattern of its national costume, kept the differentiated pattern, changed to a chaos of movement, and then ended in complete integration" (Ibid 89); Lady Mandrake's eulogy on her dead husband begins "I wish you could have seen him when he attended the first performance of [Debussy's] *Pelléas et Mélisande* at the Opéra Comique" (Ibid 122); the sadistic eroticism of Chapter 6, a 'Walpurgisnacht', is punctuated with "macabre, progressive jazz"; the almost lilly-white 800 guests at the wedding in Chapter 7 mooch about to "Dreaming of a White Christmas"; and "You'll Never Know" is played by the dance band as Salome appears (or fails to) at the end of the chapter. The whole novel, indeed, creates a constant impression of sound, some of it suggested by such musical references.

In terms of the collaboration between librettist and composer, the novel also offers moments where intertextual references to other operas present themselves, and these may be realised in quotations disguised and overlaid on Blake's musical score (an aspect still to come). For example, Lady Mandrake sings a short eulogy over her husband's body in Scene 5, creating the possibility for an ironic reference to the 'Liebestod' from Wagner's *Tristan*; Black John displays the same hubris in Scene 6 as Mozart's character Don Giovanni does at the end of the opera *Don Giovanni*, which is why in the libretto I have Henry say 'Dites-ti-non! (Tell him No!)' – an allusion to Leporello's frantic advice to Don Giovanni at this point in the opera to reject an invitation to supper in hell; and

'Salome's' striptease dance in Scene 6 suggests a reference to Richard Strauss's opera *Salome* and its famous 'Dance of the Seven Veils'.

Taken as a whole, the novel not only satirises most social institutions of its time, it is also a parody of South African society: "the whole gallimaufry can be taken as a send-up of the South African life style [of the early 1960s] slavishly following American patterns" (Cope 1982, 112). On an even larger scale it is a 'send-up' of modernism and post-war prosperity. The last two points are the theme of Peter Titlestad's interesting (1967) review of the book and the aftermath of its controversy (in Malan 1982, 85-87). Of the novel's dual attack on 'our modern way of life' and 'our African way of life', Titlestad points out that the literary critique of modernism was not new in 1962 since Eliot and Lawrence had already shown us life "dominated, in every aspect, by the machine" (Ibid 85) (as did others such as Chaplin and Lang in movies such as *Modern Times* and *Metropolis*). Even Henry acts like an automaton, and Henry and Salome are "the young modern Everyman and Everywoman" who can't even be condemned, because "they are not properly alive. They belong in Dante's limbo" (Ibid 86). The sexuality, too, that caused such a furore with the Dutch Reformed Church when the novel first appeared, is "automatic, mechanical and dehumanised". All Henry learns from his encounter with the whore in Chapter 6 is technique; "there is no relationship, not even much passion" (Ibid).

Of Leroux's comment on the [South] African way of life, Titlestad observes that he "seems to be arguing that peoples should keep their individuality" (e.g. Jock his Jewishness), yet Henry "belongs nowhere … always dressed in the wrong garb for whatever group happens to be assembled" (Ibid 87). The rich English-speaking Bishopscourt set, the farmers, the artists – all the groups portrayed in the novel are faceless somehow, like "an undifferentiated mass of school-children following the cheer-leader at a sports meeting" (Ibid). The racially mixed party is full of "false bonhomie" while "[w]hite South Africa is further satirised by the way in which the guests at Welgevonden wander about, aimlessly, waiting to be summoned on the gong to dinner by the servant who is not here … Such is Welgevonden, and Leroux is showing us all that is wrong with it" (Ibid).

Leroux inherited his symbolic approach to language partly from earlier South African writing – the farm novel of the 1920s and '30s – partly from the articulation of what Chapman calls the "archetypal and daemonic struggle" that permeates South African English writing from the '40s and '50s (Campbell's *Adamastor* for example; see also van Wyk Smith 1990, 50), and partly from European modernist writing, especially the existentialist novels and plays of Camus and Beckett. These and other writers were eagerly absorbed by the Sestigers during their youthful "sojourns in France" (Chapman 2003, 249), and part of their effort to forge a new kind of literature in Afrikaans was inspired by such writing. The "leap forward" for Afrikaans in the 1960s, as Leroux later put it, was indeed largely made possible by what he called "an enlightened literary thievery over a wide terrain … a piracy in many oceans" (in Cope 1982, 111). Among other lessons Leroux learnt from contemporary fiction overseas may have been a new use of what he called the 'exceptional situation'. Cope expands on this, referring to extracts from Leroux's address at the University of Cape Town in 1973:

> During this time [1960s] he was struck by the idea he heard presented in a lecture that the novel of tragedy is virtually impossible because the heroic image calls for an exceptional situation or *donnée* which does not exist in our rational world. "It goes without saying that the tragic hero employed in a factory simply does not compare with the tragic hero of the classics whose father might have been a god and his mother human". The *exceptional or unusual situation* – this was to become his foundation. Take the established form and restore or alter it like an historical building to conform to modern needs. "Maybe this explains the intertwining rococo aspects, the gothic, Byzantine and even paganish in this private, personal little cathedral I was busy erecting for myself" (Ibid).

Making the exceptional situation tragic in a modern setting thus involved for Leroux both the heightened use of metaphor or symbolism, and the transposition of "the old living metaphors of Olympus" as Guy Butler put it (1953, 6) into a new key.

Not only the symbolism in *Sewe Dae* but also the critical response to the novel in its time reflects the complexity of its message and points to a possibility for multiple interpretations in ours. Leroux himself was aware that his appeal was to "the lunatic fringe" as much as the literary establishment (quoted in Cope 1982, 112). The nudity and

free sex "got Leroux into trouble with the Dutch Reformed Church" (Ibid 115), the way he 'tore into' fixed ideas offended both left and right (Ibid 116), it "made a furore in literary circles [yet] was seen as a great advance in Afrikaans fiction" (Ibid). Jan Rabie called it "the most brilliant and strange … firework display yet in South Africa"; but he also asked, "[h]ow is it that so subtle an observer as Leroux remains so aloof to everyday reality? … one begins to feel the book would have suited the age of dying Rome with rich smart guests devoid of inhibition loafing on some senator's domain" (in Cope 1982, 116).

The award of the Hertzog prize, the highest prize for writing in Afrikaans "unloosed a storm among the upper circles of Afrikanerdom", the synod of the DRC criticising the Academy because "the moral drift of the prizewinning novel [was] repugnant to its Christian and Calvinist philosophy" and provided a "breeding ground for communism" (Ibid). Caught between praise and blame, Leroux was "acutely embarrassed by the row. After all, he was a man of the establishment, a wealthy landowner in good standing with the church and from a sound family" (Ibid). The appearance of the trilogy in English published by such an international publisher as Penguin gave it enormous status in Afrikaans circles: "'n onge-ewenaarde prestasie vir 'n skrywer van Afrikaanse roman" as Malan and Coller put it (1982, 23). There was a filmed version mooted in 1969 which however 'came to nothing' (Ibid 22; see also Barkhum's reference to Leroux's international following "no doubt be[ing] multiplied when Peter Glenville's film version of *Seven Days* is released" (in Malan 1982, 56)). Some critique was levelled: against the two-dimensional characterisation, the tedious length of some of the dialogues (or monologues), the unbelievableness of Henry's acquisition of 'painful knowledge' in the impossibly short time-span of one week (Strong in Malan 1982, 84).

In the aftermath (late 1970s) Leroux's response was increasingly to criticism from the left of his not being politically overt and for the 'whiteness' of the writing. He was, he claimed, "hitting the establishment in the bread-basket all the time", and yet, "none of the other dissidents (Afrikaans and English writers) considered me as one of their own" (in Cope 1982, 119). However hard-hitting, Leroux had earlier acknowledged that his

writing was not 'political': "[I] try to keep my novels free of politics in a narrow as well as a broad sense; even, if possible, free of literary politics" (1973, quoted in Cope 1982, 117); and "as a writer I'm not interested in the weal and woe of the individual or of a particular group. I have a collective fear for human life with the consequence that all [my characters] have become two-dimensional" (Ibid). Critique was renewed in 1982 by a flurry of festschrifts for Leroux's 60th birthday (see for example Grové 1982); but in the present time his work seems less prominent than that of his former friends Brink and Breytenbach. Perhaps because their writing *was* more overtly 'political' and is (thus) now seen as more 'correct', perhaps also because they are still alive and writing - Leroux's legacy has become partly obscured by theirs.

This, however, is perhaps another way in which the novel leaves a space, enabling me as librettist to 'look behind his way of writing' and interpret the novel afresh for the early 2000s. Given that its satire is more general than specific (which is what disturbed the Establishment), its message can perhaps now be applied more widely. As Jack Cope noted in 1982, there was in late 1970s writing a move towards "a more informed realism". Indeed, more *was* known by then – about repression, about state violence, and about the overseas response to this – so the fantasy-world of *Sewe Dae* would arguably not have been so easily hailed (or condemned) in the '80s as it was in the '60s. There was something about its virtuosity, its hyperbolic use of satire, its 'over-the-top' portrayal of the Afrikaner that even Afrikaners in the 1960s were ripe for. The question is, are we ripe for it now, in the early 2000s? A send-up of the Creation myth, of moral smugness, of social hypocrisy, of the elitism of the nouveau-riche, of middle-class values, of the South African life-style?

I'd say so. I'd argue that a depressing amount of the 'gallimaufry' Leroux sent up then is still with us now, in our institutions at every level and even in institutions that did not feature much in Leroux's time, such as radio, television, and the Internet. Most of the strictures that more obviously political writers 'wrote against' in the 1960s are not around any more, but the bourgeois aspirations, the smugness, the hypocrisy, the corruption wrought by fame or wealth, the religious dogma, the class and wealth divides, are. So the

world Leroux captured in *Sewe Dae* and rebelled against can be seen, I suggest, as far less 'of its time' in many ways than other work of the sixties. The characters and even the plot and setting therefore more easily migrate from his time to ours and Leroux's world can be captured for the present time, as I hope my libretto shows, in ways that leaves further spaces – for among other things, music.

Adapting Etienne Leroux' novel *Seven Days at the Silbersteins*

The present libretto follows many previous models of libretti adapted from novels. *In Search of Salome*, as it is tentatively titled, is based on Etienne Leroux' novel *Seven Days at the Silbersteins* in much the same way as Myfanwy Piper's libretto for Benjamin Britten's *Turn of the Screw* (1954) is based on Henry's James' novella, or her *Death in Venice* (1972, also for Britten) is based on Thomas Mann. Adapted as a stage play in the 1980s, the novel has, to my knowledge, not previously been set to music.

In adapting Leroux's novel as not only staged drama but also sung drama, Michael Blake and I decided to add audio-visual media and dance to the usual mix of words, music, and staging, allowing several levels of representation to occur simultaneously and enhancing the possibility for multiple interpretation of readings. My libretto is based on the English translation although some passages may later be translated back into Afrikaans. Leroux's novel is in seven chapters and the opera is in seven scenes (with an interval envisaged between Scenes 4 and 5, making two Acts). The titles of chapters and scenes are the same. The setting in both cases is Welgevonden, the Western Cape wine farm owned by Jock Silberstein although reduced 'on stage' to the farm house, and the few piquantly-drawn characters who comprise his family and friends are accompanied by a constantly changing backdrop (live or on video) of party-goers and farm-workers.

The libretto – like the novel – centres around the visit of Henry van Eeden to the farmstead and his long-awaited introduction to his future bride Salome, Jock Silberstein's daughter. Henry expresses himself in the novel through pages of interior monologue (he

hardly uses direct speech), and yet his voice provides the narrative perspective that holds this rambling, richly discursive novel together. His role is similar in the opera: Henry is the singing protagonist with whom the audience should mainly identify (just as they do with Tom Rakewell for example, in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*), although Jock's singing role will be more or less equal to Henry's. Swathes of religious and political philosophy interpolate the theme of innocence corrupted (in the novel) and also constitute the space where Leroux can express the radical worldview that made him the enlightened 'Sestiger'. In the libretto these themes have to be allowed to emerge through setting and dialogue, with the result that they are implied rather than stated and become more fluid, less 'of their time' and more universal.

Here is an outline of the libretto's main sections, divided into two acts and seven scenes and, according to operatic convention, into 'numbers' within the scenes that constitute different vocal combinations. This has to be the case, for operatic singing is more tiring even than stage acting and allowance has to be made for singers to rest their voices between numbers even if they run continuously, but without this interfering with the flow of the drama.

ACT 1

Scene 1 Dance of the Rich
Scene 1 No. 1 Quintet Mrs Silberstein, Jock, Misses Silberstein, The Duchess
Scene 1 No. 2 Solo Henry
Scene 1 No. 3 Quartet Mrs Silberstein, Jock, J.J., The Duchess
Scene 1 No. 4 Quartet Sir Henry Mandrake, Lady Mandrake, Judge O'Hara, Dr Johns
Scene 1 No. 5 Ensemble Henry, Lady Mandrake, Jock, Mrs Silberstein, J.J., The Duchess
Scene 1 No. 6 Solo Jock

Scene 2 Antics of the Artists
Scene 2 No. 1 Duet Jock, Henry
Scene 2 No. 2 Quartet Jock, Henry, Mrs Silberstein, J.J.
Scene 2 No. 3 Duet Judge O'Hara, Dr Johns
Scene 2 No. 4 Duet Mrs Silberstein, Henry
Scene 2 No. 5 Trio Sir Henry Mandrake, Lady Mandrake, Henry

Scene 3 Ballet of the Farmers

Scene 3 No. 1 Sextet Mrs Silberstein, Judge O'Hara, Dr Johns, Henry, 'Salome', Jock
Scene 3 No. 2 Duet (spoken) Uncle Giepie, Dries van Schalkwyk

Scene 4 Fugue on Spiritual Rearmament, Apartheid and Planning
Scene 4 No. 1 Duet Professor Dreyer, 'Salome'
Scene 4 No. 2 Duet Jock, Henry
Scene 4 No. 3 Quintet Dr Johns, Judge O'Hara, Henry, The Gardener, Lady Mandrake
Scene 4 No. 4 Duet Jock, The Gardener
Scene 4 No. 5 Trio Jock, Professor Dreyer, Henry

ACT 2

Scene 5 Death of a Pagan
Scene 5 No. 1 Solo Henry
Scene 5 No. 2 Duet Henry, Lady Mandrake
Scene 5 No. 3 Trio Henry, Lady Mandrake, Mrs Silberstein
Scene 5 No. 4 Quartet Henry, Lady Mandrake, Mrs Silberstein, Jock
Scene 5 No. 5 Sextet Henry, Lady Mandrake, Mrs Silberstein, Jock, Dr Johns, Judge O'Hara

Scene 6 Walpurgisnacht
Scene 6 No. 1 Quartet Old woman, Granddaughter, Henry, Jock
Scene 6 No. 2 Quartet Dr Johns, Judge O'Hara, Henry, Jock
Scene 6 No. 3 Trio Dr Johns, Judge O'Hara, Henry
Scene 6 No. 4 Duet Dr Johns, Judge O'Hara
Scene 6 No. 5 Solo Henry

Scene 7 The Coming of Salome
Scene 7 No. 1 Ensemble The Duchess, Henry, Jock, Mrs Silberstein, J.J., Dr Johns, Judge O'Hara, The Misses Silberstein, Lady Mandrake
Scene 7 No. 2 Ensemble Lady Mandrake, Mrs Silberstein, J.J. Dr Johns, Judge O'Hara, The Duchess, Jock, Henry, Misses Silberstein
Scene 7 No. 3 Solo and Ensemble Henry + above
Scene 7 No. 4 Duet Jock and Henry

Adaptation from novel to libretto is fairly close, then, on a structural level. What changes most in the adaptation is the way language and mode of discourse are treated in the libretto. Disappearing from the novel and re-emerging in acting, scenery and video are lengthy scenic descriptions and equally lengthy interior monologues that give Leroux's characters motivation for their actions. What has to emerge in their place is a dialogue between singers, articulated in pitches and rhythms that are totally new to characters torn

from their original setting. Of particular concern here is Henry's role: in the novel he hardly speaks, whereas in the opera thoughts have to be put into his mouth as words in direct speech, to sing.

Work of the librettist

With the re-writing of the original words in the actual text of the libretto comes a necessary imagining of staging and music, which also constitutes the work of the librettist. There will be both singing and speaking roles, and at least one major solo dance sequence. There will also be video footage shown on a large screen on one side of the stage, and there will be an audio sound track providing ambient noise that is sometimes referred to in the novel, sometimes imagined. This includes the ever-present farm generator, a constant sinister undertone in the novel and transferring easily to operatic realisation. Thus the libretto as literary text occupies only one role in a rich and fairly unconventional operatic space, giving the vocalists 'words to sing'.

There is nothing new here. Historically, the librettist's job extended far beyond merely providing words for music and often went into the realm of what we nowadays regard as production and direction. Goldoni in 1761, for example, in the course of writing a libretto in which one of the characters himself is a librettist, has that character say that in addition to writing words and stage directions, his job is to "instruct the singers in action, direct the scene, run to the boxes to look after the ladies, attend to the *comparse* [extras] and whistle when the scenery is to be changed" (cited in Savage (1996(1994), 253). My role extends only to stage directions (I hope), including directions for what should be on the audio-visual footage, but what I write also potentially influences the structure of the music because of the way I group lines of text into roles and numbers, so that the opera can be rehearsed and produced coherently. The libretto is thus in many ways the projection of an imagined production – a set of instructions for the future – as well as a literary text for a composer working moment by moment in the present.

Significant collaborative duos come to mind from the history of opera: Dryden and Purcell, Da Ponte and Mozart, Boito and Verdi, von Hoffmansthal and Strauss, Pyper and Britten. There have also been many adaptations of existing fictional works as libretti, for example Scott's *Bride of Lammermuir* (Donizetti's *Lucia*, 1835), Merimée's *Carmen* (Bizet, 1875), and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Birtwhistle's *Gawain*, 1991). The work of mounting an opera is daunting (as the letters of composers often bear out – see for example Verdi's correspondence (Werfel and Stefan 1973(1942)) and much of the correspondence between composer and librettist concerns singers and production rather than text and music. The ideal singing cast has to be imagined in the present case even if a production is not yet on the cards (which it isn't) and the actual singers cannot be secured until the work enters production. In many ways, then, the collaboration is a leap of faith, an imagined work needing realisation in performance.

The way I adapted and shaped Leroux's words for music and staging was influenced by two things: which character the text will be sung by at any given moment, and how different levels of meaning will compete – text, musical connotations, taped sounds, visual images – in ways that they did not in the novel. In the substitution of a loose linear narrative for a more compressed polyphonic weave, surface dialogue inevitably bears the heaviest weight of meaning. Where it had a small role in the novel, dialogue is a major feature in the opera, and also has to resonate with some of what has been cut from Leroux's novel (the descriptions, monologues, philosophy), indicating these in some cases with the lightest possible touch so that the audience can fill in the gaps with the help of sound and image and thus interpret their own meanings. I have used Leroux's dialogue where feasible; but while some words are retained others are substituted, for the purpose of making good lines to sing, for quickening the pace, and for giving direction to the plot. Here is one example, from the opening chapter (scene). Henry van Eeden and his uncle J.J. van Eeden have just arrived at the farm Welgevonden, home of Mr and Mrs Jock Silberstein, Jocks two sisters, and his mother. Henry has been brought to meet his future bride, the Silbersteins' daughter Salome.

Novel: opening of Chapter 1

[Mrs Silberstein:] "J.J.," she said. "At long last. Are you tired? Are you thirsty?" From a table nearby she handed him a glass filled with light white wine. "Someone will show you to your rooms soon. But first a drink. Do you prefer red or white? I've already had too much, but what else is there to do at this time of the evening, when the sun sets and one is overcome with boredom … Is this Henry?"

Henry was introduced to Mrs Silberstein. The Alice-in-Wonderland duchess mumbled something from her chair and he was introduced to old Mrs Silberstein. She seized him with both her hands, pulled him nearer and suddenly let him go. "You are small and thin. I thought you were taller. Runtish little Goy." "Mummy, mummy," said slim Mrs Silberstein, still clinging firmly to J.J. "Jock … Henry," and Jock came forward, six foot four, immaculate in dinner jacket, his face aglow, his hands broad yet soft as he pressed Henry's sensitively as a pianist. "Miss Silberstein, Miss Silberstein," and two mousy little women bobbed up and down on their chairs to one side in a corner, encircled by bottles, enlivened by light wine which they drank like water from goblets.

"Well," said Jock. "Now you have met the whole Silberstein ménage."

"Except Salome," said one of the little women and both of them doubled up on their little chairs with exuberant pleasure.

"That's true," said Jock and put his arm round Henry's shoulder, making him feel like a child being embraced by his father. "Come and sit with me." He peered out of the window. "Is that your car? Beautiful, beautiful." He dug Henry in the ribs and suddenly fell silent.

Libretto: opening of Scene 1

SOUND TRACK For c15 minutes before curtain-up in the lobby and in the theatre: The sound of a car engine - changing gear, accelerating, slowing down, etc. This fades after c7 minutes to the sounds of a party - talk, laughter, chinking glasses, feint background dance music, for c8 minutes. This fades as the house lights go down and a generator noise fades in and softly continues throughout Scene 1.

VIDEO A Western Province landscape of vineyards and mountains with a Cape Dutch farmhouse in the middle distance.

SCENE: the drawing room of Welgevonden

Bluish light filles the stage, while white light comes from a window rear left. Large double doors centre back stage are open for most of the scene, showing a painted view of a wine farm. A server stands against the centre right-hand wall; a small bar in the right back corner loaded with drinks; a small coffee table foreground right with a pair of riempie stools around it. An easy chair foreground left; an easy chair centre left where old Mrs Silberstein is seated. Jock standing stage front and glass in hand, dressed in a dinner jacket. Mrs Silberstein helping herself to a glass of wine at the bar, the Misses Silberstein sitting on the riempie stools sipping their wine and giggling. J.J. and Henry in

casual wear come quickly up the veranda steps and through the door. Mrs Silberstein, lurches forward to meet them, spilling her wine.

NO. 1 (quintet)

Mrs Silberstein: "Do you prefer red or white? I've already had *far* too much … But what else is there to do at this time of the evening … *(wrapping herself around J.J.)* J.J., it's been such a long time … Oh! (*noticing Henry*) … Is this … Henry?"

Mrs Silberstein walks past Henry, ignores his outstretched hand and fetches him a glass of wine. She then begins to sway in a gentle dance with J.J. in the middle of the room, ignoring Henry. Henry walks awkwardly towards the Duchess, to shake her hand.

The Duchess: *(pushes his hand away angrily away)* "Runtish little Goy! I thought you were taller".

Mrs Silberstein: *(still clinging to J.J.)* "Mummy! mummy … shhh… *(noticing her husband Jock, she momentarily stops dancing)* Jock … this is Henry.

Jock Silberstein: *(tall, dressed in dinner jacket, comes forward and presses Henry's hands, then turns and waves his hands towards the riempie stools)* "Miss Silberstein, Miss Silberstein *(two women with wine glasses in their hands bob up and down on their stools, giggling and waving).*

Jock Silberstein: "Well, now you have met the whole Silberstein ménage".

Miss Silbersteins: *(speaking together)*: "Except for Salome! *(They laugh and everyone else joins the laughter, even Henry. Henry moves towards the door, slowly. The soundtrack and video continue as all lights dim except for one on Henry.)*

The work is a chamber opera, with the major solo roles cast for different kinds of voice (Mrs Silberstein is a soprano, The Duchess a mezzo-soprano, Henry a tenor, Jock a baritone). There are minor singing roles that can double up (The Duchess and the Old Woman; J.J., Uncle Giepie, Professor Dreyer and the Gardener; The Misses Silberstein and Mrs Dreyer). The role of Salome is imagined as a non-singing role performed by an actress-dancer. The ensemble has not yet been fixed but will include piano, flute, violin, cello, and percussion. This is not symphonic opera in the Wagnerian tradition, obviously, but chamber opera in the tradition of Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale*, except that the addition of audio-visual media will at times perhaps create an illusion of loudness not coming

from the small orchestra. The sung text should be clearly audible through the overall texture. In writing the libretto, my main consideration was how a literary work that is complete, a fixed text with its own resonances and history of readings (as indicated above), becomes a new work more fluidly placed in a context comprising aural and visual parameters whose combined effect will always change slightly from one performance to another. The text of the libretto is presented here as a text, but the commentary also reflects on the metamorphosis from something 'read off the page' silently to something uttered by opera singers as they move around a stage.

The operatic field in South Africa

The context in which the production will occur is not a major consideration at present, but must be briefly imagined. It is not only a South African one, thus the limitations of the operatic field in South Africa do not necessarily bear on the writing of the libretto. They may however bear on a possible future production in South Africa, where the field of cultural production is tiny compared to countries where opera is still a big 'industry' – the US, UK, Italy, Germany, and Australia. In part due to changes in national arts funding and in part to the re-imagination of opera as vocal extracts (in both national and international media), new performances of a work that one can place in the tradition known as 'opera' are rare. This is thus a difficult and risky field in which to work, and the present effort is something of a gamble. The field of contemporary composition in South Africa, as overseas, is politically complex and artistically unpredictable, and although the present libretto and proposed opera occupy a limited space in it, it will have to be a space that is fought for, not assumed. For composition is a highly contested terrain in South Africa, dominated on the one hand by conservative notions of staged works (the operas of Roelof Temmingh in the 1980s for example or more recently Mzilikazi Khumalo's *Ushaka* and *Magogo*), and on the other hand by radical collaboration such as that between William Kentridge, Kevin Volans and Jane Taylor in *Confessions of Zeno* (2002). It is a terrain in which money is short and cultural capital highly contested.

Layered onto such politico-economic restrictions (the expense of opera and the control of funds), is the fact that the network of debate that should go ahead of such work, indeed to some extent creating the space to make it possible, is largely absent in South Africa. It is thus unlikely that Bourdieu's notion of the restricted field of cultural production would offer what Bourdieu regarded as an advantage: "criteria for the evaluation of its products [achieving] the truly cultural recognition accorded by the peer group whose members are both privileged clients and competitors" (Bourdieu 1993, 115). In terms of the kind of field Bourdieu had in mind in France, here in South Africa the recognition of composers (and librettists) by their peers does not usually compensate for lack of wider exposure or recognition. South Africa offers little, in short, but a limited field in which the politics of artistic competitiveness themselves are what have to be negotiated in order to attempt to mount a production. This somewhat depressing scenario notwithstanding, the artistic challenge of teasing new life out of a wonderful piece of writing by an extraordinary novelist was, in the end, too powerful to resist, and the effort of getting the work produced here or overseas, will continue once the musical score is completed.

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Libretto: *In Search of Salome*

ACT 1

SCENE ONE: DANCE OF THE RICH

SOUND TRACK For c15 minutes before curtain-up in the lobby and in the theatre: The sound of a car engine - changing gear, accelerating, slowing down, etc. This fades after c7 minutes to the sounds of a party - talk, laughter, chinking glasses, feint background dance music, for c8 minutes. This fades as the house lights go down and a generator noise fades in and softly continues throughout Scene 1.

VIDEO A Western Province landscape of vineyards and mountains with a Cape Dutch farmhouse in the middle distance.

SCENE: the drawing room of Welgevonden

Bluish light filles the stage, while white light comes from a window rear left. Large double doors centre back stage are open for most of the scene, showing a painted view of a wine farm. A server stands against the centre right-hand wall; a small bar in the right back corner loaded with drinks; a small coffee table foreground right with a pair of riempie stools around it. An easy chair foreground left; an easy chair centre left where old Mrs Silberstein is seated. Jock standing stage front and glass in hand, dressed in a dinner jacket. Mrs Silberstein helping herself to a glass of wine at the bar, the Misses Silberstein sitting on the riempie stools sipping their wine and giggling. J.J. and Henry in casual wear come quickly up the veranda steps and through the door. Mrs Silberstein, lurches forward to meet them, spilling her wine.

No. 1 (Quintet)

Mrs Silberstein: "Do you prefer red or white? I've already had *far* too much … But what else is there to do at this time of the evening … *(wrapping herself around J.J.)* J.J., it's been such a long time … Oh! (*noticing Henry*) … Is this … Henry?"

Mrs Silberstein walks past Henry, ignores his outstretched hand and fetches him a glass of wine. She then begins to sway in a gentle dance with J.J. in the middle of the room, ignoring Henry. Henry walks awkwardly towards the Duchess, to shake her hand.

The Duchess: *(pushes his hand away angrily away)* "Runtish little Goy! I thought you were taller".

Mrs Silberstein: *(still clinging to J.J.)* "Mummy! mummy … shhh… *(noticing her husband Jock, she momentarily stops dancing)* Jock … this is Henry.

Jock Silberstein: *(tall, dressed in dinner jacket, comes forward and presses Henry's hands, then turns and waves his hands towards the riempie stools)* "Miss Silberstein, Miss Silberstein *(two women with wine glasses in their hands bob up and down on their stools, giggling and waving).*

Jock Silberstein: "Well, now you have met the whole Silberstein ménage".

Miss Silbersteins: *(speaking together)*: "Except for Salome! *(They laugh and everyone else joins the laughter, even Henry. Henry moves towards the door, slowly. The soundtrack and video continue as all lights dim except for one on Henry.)*

No. 2 (Solo)

Henry: Something, something is alive. Except for love.
But why do I need love?
I have God, my fellow man, beauty, order.
If I do not love, I have compassion.
Love is selfish but compassion is divine.
Yes, I have to marry, I have to procreate.
With Salome.
Together we … we will secure the future of mankind.
I … I wonder what she looks like?

As the light on Henry fades he walks out the door at the back. Another light gradually illuminates the Silbersteins on the right side of the stage. They sing rapidly.

No. 3 (Quartet)

The Duchess (sitting on her couch): Goy!
Jock: A pleasant young man.
J.J.: Well brought up.
Mrs Silberstein: Elegant and slim.
The Duchess: Small and impotent.
Jock: He's only twenty-seven.
J.J.: Idealist.
Mrs Silverstein: Innocent as a child.
Jock: He's not ready to marry: his innocence must be destroyed.
J.J.: What better way to lose it than be bombarded by people for a week!?
They chink glasses.
All (speaking): Seven days: that ought to be enough.

Mrs Silberstein links arms with J.J. and goes towards stage right, the others stage left. The Duchess remains on her couch. The stage darkens.

SOUND TRACK Sounds of a large party: talking and laughing, glasses chinking, music.

Video: Crowds of people in a room taking drinks, snacks, talking, laughing.

Henry appears after a few moments, in a tuxedo, smoking. He and the Duchess are alone, so he walks politely towards her. The guests stroll back on stage dressed casually, talking and laughing: Judge O'Hara and Dr Johns, two nymph-like young women, Sir Henry Mandrake and Lady Mandrake, J.J., Jock, and finally Mrs Silberstein. The nymphs surround Henry, touching and kissing him teasingly and laughing. The Bishopscourt set (Dr Johns, Judge O'Hara, Sir Henry Mandrake and Lady Mandrake) approach Henry.

No. 4 (Quartet)

The Bishopscourt set (singing to each other and to Henry all at once in rapid counterpoint):
How do you do. How do you do. Sir Henry Mandrake … Henry … Lady Mandrake, Judge O'Hara … Henry … Dr Johns … Henry … Well. Well … What. What … Whenever we come here … wonderful views … go water skiing … we meet … wonderful wine … tuna fishing … such interesting people … horses are my bag … it's cricket for me ... the latest about Margaret Armstrong-Jones … whatever next … What … speaking of Tretchikoff … you know, the orchid … the drop of water … the essence of modernism … don't you think? … fishing … horse riding … sporting with a young filly … I like to ride her high … I like to drive her hard … hear her panting … whinny … break her in … Ha! Ha! … What. What … first catch the little devil …

No. 5 (Ensemble)

Henry escapes them in disgust. As he walks past the Duchess she grabs his arm.

The Duchess (snarling): Bloody shmok!

A drunken nymph pulls Henry onto the dance floor, teases him with pelvic movements, smears his collar with lipstick.

Henry: Are you Salome?

At first he is mesmerised but then he thrusts her away and passes the Duchess again, who grabs him.

The Duchess (hissing): Nebelah!

Jock: I must say you look rather silly in your tuxedo.

Henry: It was a misunderstanding. Please introduce me to Salome …

Jock *(ignoring him)*: So who do you want to talk to, hey, and what about? Divorce? Servants? Politics? Religion? Death?

Henry: I want to meet Salome …

Lady Mandrake pulls Henry away to dance. Jock calls after them.

Jock: We must talk again!

Lady Mandrake: One mustn't think constantly of death, my dear. Life is so interesting. Take Sir Henry. His health is not good, but do you think that he mopes by himself like you? Look at him!

Sir Henry is with the nymphs at the bar, who are standing together in a group, drinking and teasing him.

SOUND TRACK A generator starts up in the background quietly.

Video: in a large kitchen, maids in starched aprons are bringing in trays of leftover food, dirty glasses, plates. They are shouting and laughing, eating the food, as dishes are gradually stacked in the sink and washed up. The video continues until the end of the scene.

Henry: There is Mrs Silberstein. I must ask her which one is Salome. Mrs Silberstein! Mrs Silberstein!

Mrs Silberstein: Why Henry, you haven't asked me to dance yet. *She leaves Jock and sweeps him away in her arms.*

Henry: Which one is …

Mrs Silberstein *(interrupting him)*: What did you say?

J.J. comes up to them and Mrs Silberstein seamlessly changes partners.

Henry *(calling after them)*: When will Salome arrive, J.J.?

J.J. Really, Henry!

A young nymph pulls Henry towards her and they begin dancing. J.J. sweeps Mrs Silberstein up again and whirls her away.

Henry (to the nymph): Are you Salome?

She laughs and pulls herself away as another nymph approaches and dances in front of him suggestively while the other one laughs. They run off.

Henry moves towards Lady Mandrake, who links arms with him.

Lady Mandrake: You must come and visit us at Shangrila.

Sir Henry appears before them.

Sir Henry: Ah! Yes. You must come and visit us. You and Salome.

Dr Johns and Judge O'Hara join them.

No. 6 (Solo)

Jock: *(his voice booming above all the others)* Dear Friends.

Jock: *(he raps loudly twice with his knuckles on the large table*) Liewe vriende.

The party subsides.

SOUND TRACK The generator stops. The video of the kitchen continues.

Everyone looks at Jock.

Jock: Dear friends, it's perhaps already clear to you that we have not assembled tonight merely for sociable reasons, but that we have gathered to celebrate the union of two young people.

He smiles at Henry, who is now held onto by the nymphs, to prevent him from moving away. Each of them takes it in turns to whisper something in his ear.

Jock: I mean, of course, Salome and Henry.

Everyone nods and begins clapping softly, and laughing.

Jock: On occasions like this it is usual to eulogize the good qualities of the couple, but I am not going to do that. I am going to point out to the young couple the qualities of their good friends. 'Salome and Henry, look around you, and become aware of your friends.'

Everyone smiles at Henry.

Jock (tapping on the table again): A toast. To the happy couple! To Salome and Henry!

Jock lifts his glass for the toast and everyone does likewise. All except Henry (simultaneously in English & Afrikaans):

Salome en Henry! Henry and Salome!

Video: J.J. and Mrs Silberstein are staggering drunkenly down a passage. They fling open a door and begin tearing off each other's clothes. J.J. pushes her against the window-sill and they begin making love wildly, then Mrs Silberstein drags herself away and rushes out of the room. She runs down the corridor towards her room and Jock comes out of it and stands in front of her. As she tries to walk past him he slaps her brutally across the face and knocks her down.

Everyone swarms around Henry and claps him on the shoulder or shakes his hand. One of the nymphs pushes the other one towards him, and he opens his arms to hold her, thinking this must be 'Salome'. But after she has allowed him to embrace her, she pulls away, laughing, and the two nymphs run off. Everyone else pulls Henry in various directions, eventually getting him off the stage in a swarm of people.

Henry (*shouting from just off-stage):* Salome! Salome!

SOUND TRACK
A generator starts up, again, with slow, hypnotic sounds. It continues into the next Scene.

SCENE TWO: ANTICS OF THE ARTISTS

SOUND TRACK
The generator fades out and the following 3 sounds fade in almost simultaneously. All 3 sounds can be on a loop:
1) A lorry or truck starting up & moving off, then returning & stopping
2) voices in Xhosa talking, occasionally laughing.
3) bottles clinking intermittently.
The sound track fades at the beginning of the conversation, but remains at a low level throughout the opening conversation between Jock and Henry.

VIDEO (silent – continuing throughout the scene). A naked model [male or female?] is posing for an unseen artist (behind camera). During the entire scene the camera doesn't move and watches her slight movements, scratches, her occasionally speaking to the artist, occasionally getting up and stretching or walking around. From time to time the artist comes around in front of the camera with brush in hand, to move her arm or head slightly or rearrange the background, and then moves behind camera again.

SCENE: the empty drawing room of Welgevonden

Jock and Henry on the veranda, Jock looking through a large telescope at the distance. He stares attentively for a while and then hands the telescope to Henry, who looks for an while and hands it back. They continue doing this during the following duet.

No. 1 (Duet)

Henry *(sitting down)*: Was that Salome? I couldn't quite see …

Jock: *(standing)* "Perhaps. It's difficult to say. Maybe, maybe not. I didn't take much notice. There is so much you have to learn, Henry. So much to unlearn: your ignorance, your innocence. How old are you, 25, 26? What can you possibly know?"

Henry: I'm old enough to look after myself. Old enough to care for someone else too.

Jock: You can't go through life as you are. It's not that simple.

Henry: I know the difference between good and evil. You think I'm naïve, but …

Jock *(impatient)*: Evil is increasing everywhere, ignorance is growing, life is getting more and more dangerous, even here.

Henry: I'm getting anxious about meeting Salome. I must see her.

Jock: Even Welgevonden is not the same. Not as safe any more.

Henry: Welgevonden is such a huge farm. More like a city. It seems to go on for ever.

Jock: Ah, the old Welgevonden is going, the new Welgevonden is a super-machine, and nobody is indispensable. A new truth, now, is replacing the old. We cannot yet see where we are going. We are only dimly aware of it, a faint glimmer.

Henry *(suddenly standing up)*: Was that Salome? I thought I saw …

They both walk quickly outside.

Jock: Perhaps… I don't know. [*Jock walks quickly away.*] Meet you at the pool. [*Faintly.*] Don't forget to dress up for the party! [*Almost inaudible.*] Fancy dress!

SOUND TRACK The previous sounds fade out and the following sounds fade in:
1) sounds of a swimming pool - splashing water, laughter, voices. Girls shouting the words "Salome! … Salome! … over here! … Salome!" can be heard from time to time.

Bowls groaning with food are brought into the drawing room by black servants dressed in white uniforms, and placed on tables around the room. From outside comes the sound

of a large [slave]bell being struck seven times. Henry enters in evening dress. Jock enters wears swimming trunks and holds an enormous bear mask. J.J. and Mrs. Silberstein enter just behind them – J.J. in red swimming costume holding a donkey mask and Mrs Silberstein in a black bikini holding a cat mask.

No. 2 (Quartet)

Mrs. Silberstein: Did he show you his little telescope?!
J.J.: Where have *you* been?
Mrs Silberstein: Were you peeping at Salome?
J.J. And how is Salome, hmmm??

Jock: Talking of Salome, why do you keep so aloof? I've hardly seen you together. Is that normal?!

Mrs Silberstein: You protect yourself like a silly young girl.

J.J.: Innocence is blindness, Henry. Open your eyes.

Jock: Don't regard me as a Jew, Henry. Or an Afrikaner. I'm a simple renegade. The final surrender will be you and Salome - humanity without the trimmings of race. This grieves old Mrs. Silberstein, of course. You've seen she isn't brimming over with enthusiasm?

Henry: Yes .. I was going to ask …

Mrs Silberstein: Talking of Salome, why do you keep so aloof from her?

J.J. Is that the modern style of courtship?

Jock: Seems a bit sterile to me, and Salome as 'shegal' as you could wish.

Henry: You don't understand. I don't know …

J.J.: There's only one way to know a woman, Henry. Know what I mean?

The room begins to fill up with more people, wearing swimwear and holding animal masks - bears, lions, pigs, antelope, horses, birds, dogs. They all begin to fill glasses and pile plates of food.

Henry: What sort of party is it this?

J.J. *(striking a camp pose)* Artists, sonny.

SOUND TRACK

The swimming pool sounds gradually become more raucous during the rest of the scene, with louder splashes and cries as if people are being thrown in. The generator sounds start up softly, at a different pitch.

The guests begin to clap, then stop.

Jock: *(with a cavernous booming voice)* Welcome, Henry and Salome. Welcome in our midst.

A small reindeer with tiny horns in a silver bikini appears and stands in front of Henry, and links her arm with his.

Jock: How lovely. But where are *your* horns, Henry?

Henry and the reindeer wind their way between the guests. He draws her more closely to him. They try to get out, but are stopped by Judge O'Hara and Dr Johns.

No. 3 (Trio)

Judge O'Hara (COUNTERTENOR): *(very fast)* Ah! Mr. van Eeden, you are probably surprised to see us here? *He bows to the little reindeer then turns again to Henry*. But we of Bishopscourt are not unacquainted with the arts.

Dr Johns (COUNTERTENOR) *(also very fast)*: Jock says that you are interested in the concept of good and evil. Now I must say, for someone of your age, you have rather an unexpected interest in humanity and all its err … ramifications.

Henry nods and draws 'Salome' closer to him, fondling her.

Judge O'Hara: Do you agree with Jock that good and evil balance one another?

'Salome' tries to pull away from Henry.

Dr Johns: But ignorance of good is a cause of evil!

'Salome' tugs herself free of Henry and moves away among the crowd.

Judge O'Hara: If you are perfectly happy why chase after evil?

Dr Johns: There lies the danger!

Henry has caught sight of someone, waves frantically, and makes off towards the back door.

Judge O'Hara: Where are you off to now?

Dr Johns: I am just coming to the most interesting point …

Henry: *(shouting over his shoulder)* Later!

Mrs Silberstein intercepts Henry and takes him firmly off to the sofa.

No. 4 (Duet)

Henry: No! please! …

Mrs Silberstein: Henry! I want to talk to you about Salome.

Henry: It's all we do – talk, talk.

Mrs Silberstein: She complains that you pay too little attention to her, that you are *engrossed* in philosophy.

Henry: It is not me. This philosophising.
She moves her arm round Henry's shoulder.

Mrs Silberstein: There's a time and place for everything, of course, my dear, but … then there's the most important aspect of the man-woman relationship. The erotic. The basic urge.

Henry: I couldn't agree more. But …

Mrs Silberstein: Marriage would be ridiculous without it.

She strokes his arm.

Henry: *(trying to rise)* Please, please. Will you excuse …

Mrs Silberstein: A woman likes to be desired by a man, even if he pretends, on the surface, not to care.

Henry: You think that I don't know this. That I'm …

Mrs Silberstein: It's not that she expects him to jump into bed with her all the time. But she wants to feel, well, that something's there …

Henry: I'm not without experience. You think I know nothing of desire?

Mrs Silberstein: It must have the power to dominate everything else, not so?

Mrs Silberstein chucks him under his chin. J.J.'s donkey's head appears between them.

SOUND TRACK The swimming pool sounds fade and kwela music starts up. The generator continues softly.

The artists pour into the room, together with Sir Henry Mandrake, improvising dances to "Januarie, Februarie", with exaggerated gestures, parodying African dancing and Coon choirs. They frolic around Henry, singing, dancing.

No. 5 (Trio)

Lady Mandrake *(appearing from the garden and joining Henry's group):* Ah. Henry. We feel so at home tonight. Artists are timeless. Don't you think so?

Henry: I don't know what to think. I want to dance, but my partner has … Have you seen …her?

Sir Henry Mandrake: These people know how to enjoy themselves, what?

Lady Mandrake: I just *love* Cape Coloured humour, don't you? So … bawdy. Yet so terribly clever, too, don't you think? And what music!

Henry: I know nothing about music, although I did learn to read it once.

Sir Henry Mandrake: Ah look, Henry, they've noticed you - there's a 'gentleman' in their midst.

Henry: I am getting anxious. She may be in danger. But why am I so jealous? She would not … What's going on over there?

Lady Mandrake: This is an orgy, laddy, why don't you join in? Why don't you go and find Salome?

Sir Henry (*raising his glass*): Ah, yes, to the happy couple! Err … Where *is* Salome?

Jock: *(shouting above the noise)* Ladies and Gentlemen! … Happy couple!

Bouquets of flowers whiz through the air. Everyone applauds, moves towards the exit laughing drunkenly. The stage lights begin to fade.

Henry's voice *(off stage, shouting, gradually fading)*: Where are you! There is no-one! Salome! Where is everyone! No-one answers! No-one!

The lights fade to blackness

SOUND TRACK
The music gradually fades, but the generator continues softly into the next scene.

SCENE THREE: BALLET OF THE FARMERS

SOUND TRACK
Generator sound continues at a low level, together with the sound of bottles clinking, voices in Xhosa, Afrikaans and English shouting and laughing, heavy vehicles moving to and fro, steam hissing. The sound track gradually increases in volume during the opening of the scene.

VIDEO: a field of cattle grazing.

TABLE PLAN

Lord & Lady Mandrake, Judge O'Hara, Duchess, J.J., Mrs Silb, Henry, 'Salome', Jock, Misses Silb, Dr Johns

Giepie Dries

(*a large kitke and large bottle of wine placed in the centre of the table)*

When the lights slowly come up, the guests listed on the Table Plan below walk onto the stage like ghosts, dressed in khaki overalls, carrying stools and a large trestle table which they put down and cover in a white cloth, then they take their places silently. One person places a huge kitke in the middle of the table, another covers it with a cloth, and someone else puts a large bottle of red wine next to it. Henry stumbles in last, blindly, as if groping in the dark. He is still dressed in evening dress. As Mrs Silberstein begins all the characters come to life.

No. 1 (Sextet)

Mrs. Silberstein *(crossly, patting the empty chair next to her)* Henry, you're late!

Henry sits down. The guests' faces swing from side to side of the table as they listen to the conversations.

Judge O'Hara *(raising his glass at Henry)* To Henry! Ever the individualist.
Dr. Johns *(raising his glass)*: Well, God's will be done.
Judge O'Hara: If you ask me, that's illogical.
Dr. Johns: Does God know evil as well as he knows good?
Judge O'Hara: God knows! *(They both laugh.)*

'Salome' helps herself to a glass of wine. Henry lights her cigarette.

‘Salome’: Thanks.

Henry: It’s a lovely evening.

‘Salome’: I hear you and Salome are to get Brutus? Congratulations.

Henry: But I thought you *were*…

Other guests around the table, raising their glasses: Congratulations! Brutus! Congratulations …Brutus *(banging on the table)* BRuTus! BRuTus! BRuTus!

Jock: *(signalling to Dries to stand up)* Ladies and Gentlemen. Dries van Schalkwyk, secretary of the Red-Black Ollenwaar Stud Farmers’ Society, will say a few words.

All the guests: *(banging on the table)* HeyDries! HeyDries! HeyDries!

Jock: Uncle Giepie has raised this bull to the glory of all South Africa. Multicoloured, magnificent, prime meat! A gift to the happy couple. Henry and Salome Silberstein!

All the guests applaud.

Jock: I was there, Uncle Giepie, when Brutus … How much was it? Eight thousand rand? Ten thousand? At the cattle auction?

All the guests applaud.

Jock: Dear friends, observe. The red area and the black area are exactly the same size and the two colours are divided by a straight line. A perfect separation. The slightest mixing ruins the breed.

The guests nod and applaud enthusiastically.

All the guests simultaneously: BRuTus! BRuTus! BRuTus!

All guests: thunderous applause, whistling and the stamping of feet. The back doors swing open, and a young girl dances forward with a huge silver platter on which is an enormous bull’s head, a ring through its nose. She places the platter on the table and dances slowly, discarding her clothes slowly, as the light fades.

VIDEO: a huge bull. It sometimes bellows, but there is no sound.

No. 2 (Duet – spoken)

Uncle Giepie (*stands up and makes this speech which no-one listens to, while the dance and video continue)*: Once again we have here proof of unsurpassable honesty that cannot

be sensed by advance planning in deviate efforts that our policy through proofs established in this creative work of breeding in the form of foreseeable prospects and extension in contrived prospects can be broken down systematically by the calculation of infallible acknowledged powers at our disposal. A balanced, tangible, living, unsurpassable animal as slight evidence in these determinations quoted on the ground of available abilities as positive and negative coupling and gradual development from the source serves as further proof of sources drawn from creation. These determinations adduced, our understanding and available abilities balance in aptitudes on a rock-firm background. And I appeal especially to the young. Through proofs established in the work of creation we have an example of visible consequences from positive and negative couplings. And in conclusion I want to praise my host and hostess and, I think I speak for everyone, bring greetings, red-black greetings from the breeders' association. I thank you.

Dries van Schalkwyk (*interrupts him throughout above speech rearranging guests for shots*): Quiet, please, friends! Into position! Photograph please! Get in line now.

The guests are arranged around the table. The dancer is by now draped across it, naked. Henry takes the cover off the bread and raises it slowly. Someone else raises the bottle, mimicking him. Dries takes photographs, from different angles, people change their positions and expressions as he snaps away. The stage becomes alternately light and dark, as if there are lightning flashes and with each flash the group freezes in a different position.

SOUND TRACK Generator sound continues at a low level, together with the sound of bottles clinking, voices in Xhosa, Afrikaans and English shouting and laughing, heavy vehicles moving to and fro, steam hissing.

SCENE FOUR: FUGUE ON SPIRITUAL REARMAMENT, APARTHEID AND PLANNING

SOUNDTRACK Generator sound continues at a low level, together with the sound of bottles clinking and Xhosa voices murmuring.

VIDEO: A row of African women seated at a long table; and on the other side a row of White women, seated facing them. They all continually put new bottles of red and white wine on the table and take them off, their hands moving in rhythm.

The stage flooded with two colours: yellow on stage right, red on stage left. 'Salome' and Professor Dreyer stand centre stage. A gardener shuffles around at the back of the stage, making movements as if digging, weeding, clipping grass, pruning flowers, lawn-mowing.

THE SUBJECT

No. 1 (Duet)

Professor Dreyer: *(holding a bottle up to the light)* Bright red, bright yellow. Red for Henry, yellow for Salome. Red for the House of Silberstein, yellow for the House of Van Eeden.

'Salome': *(leaning against his arm)* Four days for the good; the fifth and sixth for evil; and on the seventh, good triumphs again.

Jock and Henry enter, and 'Salome' vanishes. Professor Dreyer moves to the back of the stage and busies himself with test-tubes and bottles. He nods at Jock and Henry, who return his greeting.

THE EXPOSITION

No. 2 (Duet)

Jock: Do you like this clean, symmetrical form? Or is improvisation more to your taste?

Henry: I think it's marvellous.

Jock: And in spite of world opinion, it's also the spirit of our time, this separation. I find it rather poetic.

Henry: How do you get the bottles so clean?

Jock: Ah, they are tainted by the dregs – by desire, by fear. But in our case we are purified by blood. This is why your marriage to Salome is so important.

Henry: Yes. But … when will I meet her?

Jock: This will all be yours, Henry, when you marry Salome.

Henry: When will that be?

Jock *(ignoring him, and looking around)*: She was here a moment ago. If you hurry, you'll still find her outside.

The red colour gradually blends with the yellow, diffusing the stage in an orange, flickering glow, like fire.

SOUNDTRACK Generator sound continues at a low level, together with the sound of an isicathamiya choir singing. The volume remains low.

VIDEO A braai: men of all races and attire standing one side cooking meat, women of all races and attire on the other side sitting gossiping. People get up and down all the time fetching drinks, salads, meat.

The gardener pushes on a portable braai, then fiddles with it, trying to get it to work. Professor Dreyer stays in the background, Jock and Henry move to each side, and mingle with guests who slowly fill the stage with wine glasses and plates of food in their hands – Mrs Silberstein, J.J., the Misses Silberstein, The Duchess, Dr Johns and Judge O'Hara, Lord & Lady Mandrake.

THE DEVELOPMENT

No. 3 (Quintet)

Dr. Johns: Ah yes! The national anthem, in all eleven languages.

Judge O'Hara: It reminds one of the Middle Ages.

Henry: It's difficult to explain.

Judge O'Hara: Quite so, Mr. van Eeden.

Dr Johns: But how can he be so neutral? Is it possible, Henry, that you are totally uncommitted, you are looking for nothing?

Henry: I'm looking for Salome. I still haven't seen her yet.

Lady Mandrake: Ah, Henry there you are. Lord Mandrake looks awful, don't you think? *(she leads him to the drinks trolley then notices the gardener approaching them).* Who's that?

Henry: He looks like a gardener.

The Gardener: Where is he? Where's Mr. Silberstein?

THE CONGA (AUGMENTATION AND DIMINUTION)

The two Misses Silberstein begin leading a small conga line which moves languidly round the stage. The Misses Silberstein sing 'la-la' to the conga tune ending each phrase with one of the following: *"Happy! Couple! Halle! Lujah!"... More guests join them.*

No. 4 (Duet)

The Gardener *(to Jock*): Look, please, my baas, please. A man must have a future. Give me a chance, please. I have a wife and six children.

Jock: I don't know… *(He tries to ignore him)*

The gardener: I work hard. Day in, day out.

Jock: Leave me alone! Friends: we are here to celebrate the union ... Henry ... *(Henry comes forward)* Salome ...

The Gardener *(rudely interrupting)*: Mr. Silberstein, Mr Silberstein! Please! I appeal to these people!

Jock strikes the gardener with his hand. A murmur of disapproval round the room. The two start fighting but manage to sing the following duet.

Gardener: All I ask is the right to work ...

Jock: A memorable moment for Henry and Salome ...

Gardener: To make a contribution with the machine ...

Jock: I ask them to take note of their friends ...

Gardener: And to use that knowledge in the work to which everyone is entitled ...

Jock: We will not point out to them their good qualities. But let them try to keep their hearts and minds open ...

Gardener: To analyse everything with knowledge and with the machine, that's all I ask, please, the right to work …

The sound-track gets louder. Everyone freezes their positions, while the flickering orange light continues.

SOUND TRACK Intermittent explosions, interspersed with distant sounds of shouting, screaming, and running to and fro.

VIDEO: A row of men at ease with rifles, who maintain a continuous movement of standing to attention, aiming, firing, and going back at ease, all moving in rhythm.

THE CONGA RESUMES: THE STRETTO AND FINAL SECTION

No. 5 (Trio)

Jock: Give them the vote. It's the awakening of the black man. It's a proletariat on the march. The Church moves slowly, but the Church will triumph.

Professor and Mrs Dreyer come and stand in front of Jock.

Professor Dreyer: Your responsibility, Mr. Silberstein. Your responsibility in regard to a grievous injustice done me.

Jock: Is this the face of evil? Is that the face of evil?

Professor Dreyer: Thugs broke into the laboratory. They ruined my experiment. Your own labourers, Mr. Silberstein. They drank everything. Drank it!

Jock: Not long ago I knew the Devil, but now I no longer know what he looks like.

Henry: We have lived too long in the light and have forgotten the colour of darkness.

Jock: Jesus, Henry, I'm not trying to be funny. Of what use is it to ask questions? A child is dead. And two policemen. Three women and sixteen men.

Professor Dreyer: Persons in your service, Mr. Silberstein! Your labourers. Do you expect me to sacrifice a life's work to barbarians who were allowed to get out of hand?

Jock: Father Kostelanitz was murdered in his church, mutilated and eaten before his bones were burned. Is that done in the name of the Devil?

Professor Dreyer: And may I add in passing that my good wife, Miemie, was raped last night.

Mrs. Dreyer: (*speaking*) Oh, Jock! Jock! God help me. What could I do?

Jock: (*taking Henry's arm and moving away*) It happens every year. She is raped every year, when my interest flags, you know. Was I a little aloof last night?

SOUNDTRACK: Generator sound continues at a high level, together with the sound of bottles clinking and voices murmuring. The sound of a horse galloping closer.

VIDEO: Iraq war scenes (explosions etc.), an atomic explosion with a mushroom cloud filling the sky.

INTERVAL

SOUNDTRACK During the interval, in the house and in the foyer: sound of bottles clinking, voices chattering.

VIDEO During the interval, in the house and in the foyer: a CNN news-reader.

ACT 2

SCENE FIVE: DEATH OF A PAGAN

Scene: the drawing room, tables still full of dirty crockery & glasses from the previous night. Outside the window smoke drifts past in the sky. Jock and Mrs Silberstein are standing like statues, their backs to the room. Henry wanders in, followed by Dr Johns, Judge O'Hara, Sir Henry Mandrake, Lady Mandrake and a few guests, looking for something to eat or drink among the wreckage, muttering quietly to each other in an embarrassed way. One by one they leave the table, to join the others as they move towards centre stage.

SOUNDTRACK: the sound of bottles clinking and voices chattering gradually fades as the house lights go down, and the sound of a generator starts up, very quietly, and continues throughout the scene.

VIDEO: A news-reader on one TV; scenes of riots, shooting, people running in the streets (from various footage around the world), on the other TV.

No. 1 (Solo)

Henry: They are afraid. For all their money, their power, they are afraid. What do they fear? And what is that like, to fear? Am I afraid? I am a little anxious. Yes. Something has taken hold of me, here, here in my stomach. Deep in my body, where I have no control. I sense some hidden danger. But why? why? Surely God will protect me?

No. 2 (Duet)

Lady Mandrake: (*taking Henry aside*) Doesn't Sir Henry look exhausted to you? Doesn't he look ill?

Henry: Perhaps it was the explosions, the riots. We were all affected.

Lady Mandrake: No. I think it is his time. It was meant to be.

Henry: You must not say that!

Lady Mandrake: We are not afraid of death. We have a pact. I will not let him stay beyond his time.

Henry: But isn't it only God who has power over life and death?

No. 3 (Trio)

Mrs Silberstein: (*turning stiffly towards the room and not addressing anyone in particular*) I'm not sure.

Henry: Ah, Mrs Silberstein. Where are we lunching today?

Mrs Silberstein: I'm not sure.

Lady Mandrake: I hear the police have joined the rioters.

Henry: The cooks must be there, too, then.

Mrs Silberstein: That must be why there's no food!

Lady Mandrake: But surely not the Coloureds.

Henry: Thank God for the Coloureds!

Mrs. Silberstein: There is no wine, either.

Sir Henry Mandrake staggers towards them as if he's about to say something and crumples into a heap in the middle of the floor.

Lady Mandrake: (*Raising her empty glass to her husband*) Hasta lamuerte!

No. 4 (Quartet)

Jock: (*turning stiffly towards the room*) What a godawful night. The fires have been extinguished and everything is quiet, but heaven alone knows - it's all gone balls-up.

Henry: (*moving towards the space around Sir Henry Mandrake*) But why do we bear the responsibility?

Mrs Silberstein: Because we have gone too far.

Lady Mandrake (*crouching down and cradling Sir Henry on her lap*): Sir Henry believes in life. He has lived a full life.

Jock: (*moving towards the space around Sir Henry Mandrake*) In a few days everything will be back to normal, but the postmortem is still to come. Whose fault is it?

Henry: We expect too much.

Mrs Silberstein: Why?

Lady Mandrake: This is the end, and I cannot deprive him of it.

No. 5 (Sextet)

Judge O'Hara (*moving towards the group around Sir Henry Mandrake*): Ah! Henry, Jock tells me that you discussed the disappearance of the images of good and evil, last night: those pictures that come into one's consciousness of the indescribable contents that reside in the Collective Unconscious, not so?

Dr. Johns: (*moving towards the group around Sir Henry Mandrake*) Can we also conclude that you and Jock accept a Taoistic view of dualism, the reconciliation of good and evil, as the ultimate attainment?

Jock: A child was shot dead during the riot.

Henry: White or Black?

Mrs Silberstein: A White child.

Lady Mandrake: He is dying and needs no drugs. It is his wish.

Judge O'Hara: If there is a constant movement of the opposites, can the opposites ever unite? If there is constant movement?

Dr. Johns: Perhaps, if I may answer for Henry, only when the image of Satan and Christ are equally strong in the conscious mind.

Jock: It wasn't a White child, it was an albino Black.

Henry: If an albino is born of African parents, is he African?

Mrs Silberstein: I'm not sh …

Lady Mandrake: I wish you could have seen him when he attended the first performance of Pelléas et Mélisande. Gleaming top hat and the white gloves.

Sir Henry, on the point of dying, gazes wildly round the room. His mouth opens and closes, as he calls, soundlessly.

Judge O'Hara: Can opposites unite? Can there be equilibrium?

Dr. Johns: Perhaps, if I may speak for … I think our friend here needs help.

Jock: I pin my hope on someone like you, Henry, who does not seek or decide.

Sir Henry's mouth moves ineffectually. His hands gripped those of his wife. Then slowly his eyes glaze, his head lolls back, his hands drop and his mouth stays open.

Henry: For God's sake, somebody, do something!

A Maid comes in carrying a tray of glasses: red and white wine.

Mrs Silberstein (*taking a glass and indicating the tray to the others*): Do you prefer red or white?

Lady Mandrake: (*oblivious of everyone, gazing at Sir Henry's dead face*) I wish you could have seen him. The young man with the light in his eyes, going from Aswan deep into Nubia, enduring the heat of the desert to see the temples of Philae. Defying the cold to wake in the dawn at Abu Simbel.

Lady Mandrake lays Sir Henry's head gently on the floor and stands up.

Lady Mandrake: Sir Henry will be buried tomorrow. There will be no religious service, and no friends.

Dr Johns and Judge O'Hara leave the stage, followed by Jock, and then Mrs Silberstein. Lady Mandrake lays her shawl over the body of Sir Henry, and also leaves. Henry gives a last look at the whole scene – the smoke-filled sky outside, the dirty cups, the half-dark room, the shapeless bundle in the middle of the floor. As he leaves, the stage goes dark.

SOUNDTRACK: the generator continues into the next scene, joined by the chinking of bottles.

VIDEO: A news-reader on one TV; the scenes of rioting change to scenes from a party on the other TV, most of the guests black, dressed in evening suits or 'traditional', lots of eating, drinking, and dancing.

SCENE SIX: WALPURGISNACHT

SOUNDTRACK: the generator and the chinking of bottles.

VIDEO: The news-reader on one TV continues; the scenes of eating, drinking, and dancing go gradually out of focus on the other, and still slightly out of focus gradually the interior of a small room, seen from above (as in the film *Dogville*) fades in. A young woman is moving about while a young man sits on the edge of an old bed with a bare mattress. She gradually undresses herself, and then comes towards him, almost naked, and slowly undresses him, washes him, and we see their naked bodies moving together on the mattress. This lasts throughout No. 1 (quartet).

Scene: the interior of a shack – corrugated iron roof, old iron bedstead with a dirty mattress stage left, large mirror on the back wall, plastic chairs & table centre right, tea things on a small dresser far right. Like a mockery of the elegant drawing room of Welgevonden. Jock & old woman sitting on the chairs, she knitting a striped coloured garment with enormous needles.

No. 1 (Quartet)

Old woman: Very handy, very handy, my captain. My husband needs the raise, you just don't know. We are the only ones left, to look after our granddaughter. I'm sure my husband will give his best. He lives for his work. He loves it. He may be only the gardener, but he's learning fast. One of these days he will be … Welgevonden will find him worthy. You'll see.

Henry enters from the left, looking dishevelled and dazed, his tie askew, his hair a mess, gasping as if out of breath.

Jock: Ah there you are Henry! Thought for a moment we'd lost you!

Henry stumbles towards them. He sees himself in the mirror as he walks past, and stops, puts his hands to his face in shock.

Henry: (*drawing his hand across the mirror's face*) My face! Once it seemed no more than an empty page but now there is writing, something scrawled across it like a scar.

Jock: Let me introduce you. *Henry turns and Jock introduces him to the old woman, with an exaggerated gesture. Henry holds out his hand to her but she simply nods.*

Henry: Who are these people?

Jock: Now we're just waiting for Salome to join us.

Henry: Salome? In this place? *Henry tries to straighten his tie, and staggers towards the bed in a state of shock.*

Jock: She rides out here every afternoon. Usually drops by for a cup of tea.

Old woman: My grandaughter's off to Cape Town soon. After that, who know, perhaps she'll go overseas. There's rich men she's going to meet in Cape Town.

Henry: I feel myself falling, out of this world, out of grace. My destiny written by a hand I cannot see.

Jock: Look around you, Henry. You can see well enough.

Old woman: Ah here's my granddaughter. I don't think you've met Mr van Eeden.

'Salome' (*entering*): Why, I didn't recognise you (*with a snigger*) Mr van Eeden! *She minces off to make the tea.*

Henry: Salome? (*everyone laughs*)

Jock: Are you mad? Have you lost your reason?

Old woman (*to 'Salome'*): Your grandfather's just got promoted. Not long now, and he'll be running the farm (*laughs*).

'Salome': *Prattling as she bustles with the tea things.* I'm not hanging around. There's a big future. Once you're in Cape Town, you meet the right kind of men. Wealthy men! *She carries the tea tray over to the table.*

Henry: I must get out of here, I can't breathe, I want to get back …

Jock: Where to?

Henry: It's Sir Henry's burial. I may be needed.

Jock: What's the point? Nobody needs us. We're disposable.

SOUND TRACK: a horse gallops past over the sound of the generator, which does not stop.

VIDEO: The scene of bodies moving together continues, very out of focus, on one TV. On the other TV a close-up of boots squishing through a muddy field, squashing everything into the ground.

Jock: Ah, listen, she's gone right past, not going to stop today. Probably thinks it's not safe. Time to leave, then (*he gets up*). Goodbye, goodbye. Come, Henry.

Jock leaves quickly with Henry stumbling out after him, looking back in confusion at 'Salome'

Old woman (*resumes her knitting*): Soon Jock Silberstein won't be the boss of his own property. Your grandfather's got one of the key jobs. They think he don't know, but he do.

'Salome': (*holding the wool for her grandmother*) One fine day, before he knows where he is, he'll have to listen to grandpa's orders. And then? We're out of here! Into the big house. And they can live like us. Let's see how much they like that!.

Old woman: They won't mind giving up the power. It's when they have to give up the money too, that's when they'll squeal.

The both cackle with laughter. The sound gets louder, and is taken up electronically on the sound track.

SOUND TRACK: sounds of electronically processed laughter, later including screams, shouts, moans, above the generator

VIDEO: The scene of bodies moving together continues, very out of focus, on one TV. On the other TV the close-up of boots squishing through a muddy field gradually pans outwards to the sight of a huge black bull, bellowing silently.

Scene: the shabby interior transforms into the drawing room of Welgevonden: the bed is moved almost off stage and covered in a white bedspread, the plastic table & chairs are replaced by the furniture from Scene 1, the tea things on the side table are replaced by a large silver bowl full of gluwein, and silver cups. The mirror at the back becomes the doors opening onto the veranda. Dim lighting. Mrs. Silberstein and J.J. lead in the guests from the right-hand side – Dr Johns, Judge O'Hara, the Duchess, the two Misses Silberstein, and several young women. Henry and Jock come in late, hastily, and after a few seconds 'Salome' slips in last and makes her way to the bed in the corner, where she curls up, watching the proceedings. Her corner becomes completely dark. The guests help themselves to a cup of gluwein and then settle down to watch the 'show', from the back of the stage. A red light begins to glow on the bed, the figure huddled on it is now dressed in a black cloak, completely disguised.

No. 2 (Quartet)

Dr. Johns: Perhaps as a scientist and a jurist it is difficult for us to account for our presence at this sort of – err – gathering.

Judge O'Hara: One must acquire knowledge of good and evil. Knowledge is an extension of consciousness. It leads to the discovery of the self.

Jock: God is the Great Unconsciousness. Heaven and hell lie within.

Henry: If that is so then I am more afraid than ever of what might happen here.

Dr. Johns: Learn to live with the shadow, for after the light of Christ will come the dark of the Antichrist.

Judge O'Hara: Dr Johns and I believe that it is better to see Satan as the people of the Middle Ages saw him – as an external enemy.

Jock: The Antichrist is the dark side taking vengeance, transformed by the complexity of our psyche.

Henry: If the struggle between the great powers is within us, we must embrace evil.

Dr. Johns: Well actually, we agree with you in many respects, except that we regard evil as a negative force, not as the dark side of the Creator.

Judge O'Hara: Remember, Henry, wherever you go, everything happens inside you.

Jock: And that's where Henry's immunity lies. The man who has no fear, knows no desire.

Henry: That is not true! I long for judgment, for salvation. I long for the rescuing ecstasy.

Jock: Then little Henry Faustus, let's see you make a pact with the devil!

SOUND TRACK: sounds of the generator, and fading in over it, acid house

VIDEO: Porn on one TV, violence on the other.

The red light on the bed changes to green. The figure unfurls and Black John shakes off his cloak and stands up on the bed, completely naked, with a long arrowheaded tail, and raised wings. His penis, about two feet long, bouncing obscenely at the guests as he prances around laughing at them. The guests fall to their feet and crawl over each other to reach the central figure. They cry out "grand seigneur", "nostre dieu," "dominus deus," and one by one approach the bed and kiss him in the most obscene manner. As they do he bites each one, and they scream and fall writhing on the stage. Black John leaps off the bed and moves among the guests, lashing out at them with a whip. The guests cry out "Mercy! Mercy! Compassion, Master. Mercy!" Gradually the noise subsides and the stage grows silent.

No. 3 (Trio)

Dr. Johns: It's strange. I am not particularly susceptible tonight.

Judge O'Hara: It's as if … even sin no longer has the, err, impact it once had.

Dr. Johns: Definitely not. To be quite truthful, I find it somewhat dreary.

The green light changes to blue. Black John drags the bed to the centre back of the stage and turns it sideways. He whips the guests towards the front of the stage, where they kneel, cowering. The young girl from earlier in the scene is led in, tied to the bed, her head tossing from side to side. She turns towards Henry and opens her mouth in a silent scream. The guests crowd around, screening her from the audience and struggling to get over each other onto the bed.

Henry: Salome! Salome!

Henry tries in vain to fight his way through.

Judge O'Hara: I am afraid ...
Dr. Johns: Perhaps we're getting old.
Judge O'Hara: It's definitely not as good as last year.

Suddenly different colours flash everywhere, like a disco. Black John leaps onto the bed and whips everyone, laughing grotesquely. He beckons the guests over to the side of the stage, where trays groaning with food and drink are being carried in by waitrons with horns on their heads.

Henry: Dites-ti non! Dites-ti non!

Black John runs and fetches a tray with a jug of steaming liquid, to tempt the crown to follow him. He begins a kind of Conga all round the stage, and the guests together with the waitrons, fall in behind him.

Dr. Johns (*to Henry*): Do you know the procedure?
Judge O'Hara: The recital, the sacrifice, the feast, and then the ...
Dr. Johns: We will have to hurry to get decent seats.

SOUND TRACK: sounds of a party, voices in African languages

VIDEO: violence on one TV, a hospital with children dying, on the other

The light changes to a glowing, hotel buffet orange. The food is demolished by guests, shoving food into their mouths while waggling their hips in time to the Conga. The food and drink are spilled everywhere, the guests talking all the time in a babble among which only the words "Eeesh" can occasionally be heard.

No. 4 (Duet)
Dr. Johns: (*as he pours a glass of steaming brew for Henry*) Strictly speaking, for a witches Sabbath this should be a hellish, undrinkable brew.
Judge O'Hara: And the meal should consist of rotten corpses and garbage.
Dr Johns: No shortage of those, of course, in these times – err, have you eaten?

'Salome' has climbed onto the side table in her wedding dress and seven veils and is doing a strip-tease. "Take it off" shout the guests.

Dr. Johns: This is nothing new.
Judge O'Hara: One can see this at any club.
Dr Johns: The word made flesh?
Judge O'Hara: I find it rather boring.

Dr Johns: I've lost interest in sex.
Judge O'Hara: But not in sects?
Dr Johns: You mean the religious kind?
Judge O'Hara: There's more of that clap-trap than ever before.
Dr Johns: Satan is the ape of God, remember.
Judge O'Hara: Satan is an ascetic. No balls.
Dr. Johns: Satan used to be a freedom fighter.

SOUND TRACK: sounds of a party, voices in African languages

VIDEO: an orgy on both TVs – different scenes

No. 5 (Solo)

Henry: They are racing towards nothing. The shapeless cloud hangs over everything, portending doom. This tension is unbearable, this obsession with the future, this feeling that one might explode before it happens. They race homeward into the night. But nothing of real importance or significance has happened here. There was a sense of disaster, an increasing tension, frenzy mounting - but where was sin?

SOUND TRACK: sounds of a generator continue into the next scene

VIDEO: the orgy dims and the scene on both TVs is the same: a bare lonely mountain with dawn breaking on the horizon

SCENE SEVEN: THE COMING OF SALOME

Sound Track: The generator from Scene 6 gradually changes into the sound of gurgling water and birdcalls (a nature soundscape).

Video: A Western Province landscape of vineyards and mountains, as at the opening of Scene 1

Scene: the drawing room of Welgevonden, in rosy light, with the same arrangement of furniture as in Scene 1. Henry is standing alone at the server, tying his tie, dressed in a dinner suit. He pours a glass of pink champagne, lights a cigarette and stands looking at the view out of the rear window, which is a Western Province landscape of vineyards and mountains perfectly matching that on the video.

The Duchess hobbles in on her stick holding the woollen jacket we had seen the Old Woman knitting in the previous scene, and approaches Henry.

No. 1 (Ensemble - gradually building up from 2 to 10 people)

The Duchess: What are you doing there. Die meshugeneh! Come now, I want to see if this fits.

She seizes Henry, gives him a big kiss, and thrusts the jacket into his arms. Henry holds the jacket up against his body. It is an almost perfect fit. The Duchess goes and sits in the easy chair centre left.

Henry: I think it's going to…

Jock comes bustling in, carrying a large box wrapped in brown paper.

Jock: Well, Henry, are you ready for your presents?

Henry: Do I have any choice?

Jock laughs and gives Henry the box and then goes to help himself to champagne. Henry takes off the brown wrapping to reveal a large TV set in a box. He takes it out of the box, places it on top and pretends to switch it on.

The Duchess: Does it work?

Before Henry can answer, Mrs Silberstein comes in carrying a large pink blanket wrapped in clear plastic with a big pink bow round it, which she thrusts into Henry's arms. He puts the jacket on top of the TV and puts the blanket next to it.

Mrs Silberstein: I couldn't remember if you prefer red or white! Pink is awfully vulgar, though, don't you think?

Henry: Do you care if people find you vulgar?

Mrs Silberstein: Perhaps we're vulgar because we are rich!

Jock: And the rich have no integrity. Isn't that so, Henry?

JJ. enters, wheeling a small pink bicycle.

JJ.: I thought you could probably use this on the farm, Henry. Save your legs, hey, sonny!

Henry: Why uncle J.J., which farm do you mean? *(He laughs and everyone joins in. He leans the bicycle against the TV box.)*

Dr Johns enters.

Dr Johns: If free will is an illusion, Henry, then you certainly won't inherit the earth. None of us will. But meanwhile, have this. *(He hands Henry a large white envelope which Henry opens and produces a large card with some writing on it)*.

Henry: A year's subscription to *Farmer's Weekly*!

Dr Johns: You can of course exercise your free will and choose *not* to read it.

J.J. Or you can do a little 'free willing' down on the farm. *(He sails round the stage on the bicycle, then goes to pour himself a champagne.)*

Henry: Will I recapture my lost innocence?

Judge O'Hara *(entering)* Only if you *don't* read this, Henry. But every home should have one. No, it's not the Bible, it's the Report on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. *(He hands it to Henry then goes to get champagne.)*

The Duchess: He'll grow into it.
Mrs Silberstein: All that good breeding!
Jock: All my money!
JJ. And my wheels!
Henry: But what am *I* being reconciled to here?

The Misses Silberstein enter, each carrying a pink duvet which they place next to the other presents, one on each side.

The Misses Silberstein: Single beds, Henry Silberstein! It comes to us all, eventually *(They giggle uproariously and go to get themselves champagne.)*

Judge O'Hara: You're being reconciled to the truth, Henry.

Henry: And the truth is?

Lady Mandrake enters, carrying an urn.

Lady Mandrake: The truth is, I have looked simply everywhere and I can't find a suitable place in which to scatter Sir Henry's ashes. He out to be everywhere and in all things, but he's still here. *(She gives the urn to Henry.)* Henry, you will know what to do.

Henry: How can I have no control over my life yet I control another's death?

All: It's quite simple, really, now that you've found Salome.

No. 2 (Ensemble – voices in rapid succession)

Lady Mandrake: But where is Salome?
Mrs Silberstein: Are you ignoring her again?
J.J. Did she find out about your betrayal?
Dr Johns: Is she destined always to be alone?
Judge O'Hara: Has she made you feel a little guilty?
The Duchess: Have you learned to hide your feelings for her already?
Jock: Are you sure this is what you want, Henry?
Henry: What do you mean by 'this'?
Misses Silberstein: Do you want *us*, Henry, that's the question!?
All: The Silbersteins! The Silbersteins!

No. 3 (Solo and Ensemble)

Henry: When I find the right moment, then I will seize it.
The moment between dream and reality,
Waking and sleeping, hope and illusion.
When I find that place where love is not invisible,
Then I will find Salome.
And when she is ready.
Then will she find me.

All: Let's see what she has to say about that!

An enormous box is wheeled onto the stage and placed next to the pile of gifts. It opens in two halves, and out steps 'Salome' dressed in her bridal outfit from Scene 6. She takes Jock's arm and leads him to Henry. Then she turns and links arms with the other guests and leads them in a slow walk to the back of the stage, and out of the door into the landscape, during the following duet.

No. 4 (Duet)

Jock: This, all this, Henry, should have been your inheritance.

Henry: You think I could not manage the responsibility?

Jock: No. I think you could not handle the loneliness, the pain.

Henry: I have always been lonely. And I do not share your pain.

Jock: It was a false hope.

Henry: And now it has disappeared?

Jock: The painful part is this: seeing the false hope disappear. Yes, it has gone.

Henry: And will I find Salome? Does she exist?

Jock: You will find something even more important. Come, let's join the others.

Henry takes Jock's arm and they slowly walk after the others who by now have gone through the door and are gradually walking off stage. As Jock and Henry reach the back door the stage lights gradually fade leaving only the light illuminating the farm scene at the back, then that too slowly fades.

Sound track: the nature sounds fade into sounds of a party (clinking glasses, people talking and laughing), which continue softly for c20 minutes after the house lights come up, in the auditorium and in the foyer.

VIDEO A Western Province landscape of vineyards and mountains with a Cape Dutch farmhouse in the middle distance.

END