

**Wopko Jensma: A Monograph. The Interface Between Poetry And
Schizophrenia**

by
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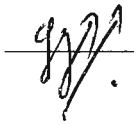
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July 2002

Declaration

Except for the promoter's intervention, this whole dissertation, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is the candidate's own original work and has not been submitted to any other university for any other degree.

Ayub Sheik

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ayub Sheik', written over a horizontal line.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my *doktervader*, Professor Johan van Wyk.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Professors Johan van Wyk and Phillipe Wade for their guidance and encouragement. I would also like to thank Professors Erhard Reckwitz and Elmar Lehmann for their hospitality and critical insights during my stay at the University of Essen which was sponsored by the DAAD.

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Abstract

This thesis is a monograph of South African poet and artist, Wopko Jensma. Jensma's published anthologies, *Sing for Our Execution* (1973), *Where White is the Colour*, *Where Black is the Number* (1974) and *Have You Seen My Clippings* (1977) together with the relatively unknown and unpublished, *Blood and More Blood* deal with issues of identity relating to race and class within the context of apartheid South Africa in the nineteen seventies. These four anthologies represent a poetics of resistance conceived as an antidote to personal and social suffering as a result of the racist oppression of blacks in South Africa.

Jensma's experimental poetry harnesses the signatures of jazz lyrics, concrete poetry, the avant-garde as well as African dance forms in bizarre cameos of underclass misery and racial oppression. In lieu of metrical regularity and rhyme the aesthetic experience is simulated by asemantic qualities of speech, sound and rhythmic undulations in a poetry characterised by what Samuel Beckett has called "the withdrawal of semantic crutches" (Schwab 1994:6).

Jensma's schizoid discourse manifests itself as an asocial dialect with highly personal idioms, approximate phrases and substitutes which make his language extremely difficult to follow at times. Jensma's diction of private idiomatic language, mixing of dialects, the use of syncopation, ellipsis and experimental topography have no doubt contributed to the cryptic and arcane aberrations associated with schizophrenia. This schizoid versification is a paradoxical wish to protect the core of oneself from communication whilst simultaneously expressing the need to be discovered and acknowledged. This private idiomatic language reveal ordinary people driven into interior psychological spaces, as well as psychotic and surreal extremes in order to survive an overwhelming and implosive reality.

Jensma's textual strategies deconstruct modernist assumptions about rationality, domination and meaning as a tyranny of power. The socially constructed self is exposed as a subject disempowered and alienated by ideologies which demand acquiescence and which offer false assurances in return. Likewise, the schizoid scrambling of the signifier is an attempt to repel the subjection implicit in rationalist discourse and to encourage an awareness of the world ideologically sanctioned by its dominant discourses.

This study begins with a detailed biography of Jensma. The next chapter establishes the theoretical assumptions which inform the interface between Jensma's poetry and schizophrenia. Jensma's poetry is then systematically appraised in terms of themes, form and subjectivity. The last chapter is a study of the intertextual relations which provide insight into the context and milieu in which Jensma wrote and which permit a reading of Jensma's poetry as a discursive space in which different literary histories co-exist and respond to one another. The thesis concludes with an evaluation of Jensma's poetry as a pathological yet incisive response to the reductive politics of racial essence, cultural crisis and the vagaries of consumer culture.

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Introduction

It is surprising that having won the Ad Donker prize for originality of voice and vision in 1983, South African poet and artist Wopko Jensma has attracted little critical attention. Apart from brief articles by Peter Horn and Michael Gardiner and a spate of book reviews, no comprehensive study of what is certainly a major South African poet has been undertaken.

This thesis not only endeavours to address this problem, but also uncovers an hitherto unpublished and mostly unknown anthology entitled *Blood and More Blood*. Together with his published anthologies, *Sing for Our Execution* (1973), *Where White is the Colour*, *Where Black is the Number* (1974) and *Have You Seen My Clippings* (1977) Jensma's poetry constitute an interesting and idiosyncratic response to the strife and turmoil in South Africa in the seventies.

Jensma's experimental poetry harnesses the signatures of jazz lyrics, concrete poetry, the avant-garde as well as African dance forms in bizarre cameos of underclass misery and racial oppression. In lieu of metrical regularity and rhyme the aesthetic experience is simulated by asemantic qualities of speech, sound and rhythmic undulations in a poetry characterised by what Samuel Beckett has called "the withdrawal of semantic crutches" (Schwab 1994:6).

Jensma's diction of private idiomatic language, mixing of dialects, the use of syncopation, ellipsis and experimental topography have no doubt contributed to the

cryptic and arcane aberrations associated with schizophrenia. This schizoid versification is a paradoxical wish to protect the core of oneself from communication whilst simultaneously expressing the need to be discovered and acknowledged.

The transgressions which mark his poetic language is not without its political, epistemological and cultural implications. The organising motifs in the texts express a revolutionary subjectivity which protest the vagaries of consumer culture and the inequities of race and class in South Africa. In adopting a sympathetic perspective to Jensma's schizoid discourse this thesis will endeavour to show that the schizophrenic scrambling of signifiers and spatial disorientation is a quintessential representation of post-modern culture which supersede the rational and linear narratives which underpin consensual reality. Space-time compression, cognitive dissonance and surreality find congruent expression in both the schizoid's discourse and in the theatre of signs competing for attention in consumer culture.

The alter personalities which abound in Jensma's texts and their flight from reality will be read as desperate attempts at self preservation under alienating and overwhelming circumstances which implode consciousness. Image, diction and story coalesce in innovative aesthetics which inscribe the anguish and insights of disconnected selves living in multiple realities.

Jensma's use of the absurd, montage and inane demonstrates that poetry is also a site of pleasure and invention. This is particularly noticeable in his use of surprising

juxtapositions, marvellous surrealistic images and instances of concrete poetry. Pleasure is also derived from the rhythms of jazz refrains, kwela and marabenta in a prosody which privileges the acoustic dimension of poetry over metrical regularity.

This study begins with a detailed biography of Jensma. A survey of published sources indicate that apart from newspaper reviews and reports, cursory citations in poetry and art anthologies, no comprehensive biography of Jensma exists. This biography has been reconstructed primarily by interviews with people who knew Jensma, occasional newspaper reports and by Jensma's correspondence in the archives of the National English Literary Museum in Grahamstown. The next chapter establishes the theoretical assumptions which inform the interface between Jensma's poetry and schizophrenia. Jensma's poetry is then systematically appraised in terms of themes, form and subjectivity. The last chapter is a study of the intertextual relations which provide insight into the context and milieu in which Jensma wrote and which permit a reading of Jensma's poetry as a discursive space in which different literary histories co-exist and respond to one another. The thesis concludes with an evaluation of Jensma's poetry as a pathological yet incisive response to the reductive politics of racial essence, cultural crisis and the vagaries of consumer culture.

Chapter One

Biography

Wopko Pieter Jensma was born on the 26 July 1939 in Ventersdorp in the Transvaal. He was the son of a Dutch father and an Afrikaner mother. According to Leo Nietzsche, a long time friend and student colleague of Jensma:

his mother was from a Coetzee family and was a music teacher. She excelled at the piano and tutored Jensma in the cello. Wopko had a younger brother and a sister named Elza, who was a year older than him. Jensma's parents were staunch Calvinists and religiously attended church. However, Jensma's family life was marred by the frequent alcoholic binges of his mother (Nietzsche 2001).

Both parents were never alluded to by Jensma, for, according to Jeanne Goosen with whom Jensma temporarily resided with at Station Road, Littleton Manor in Johannesburg, he regarded the discussion of his parents as a taboo subject (Goosen 1999). The reluctance to discuss his parents was probably due to the trauma of being renounced by his family on the occasion of his marriage to Lydia, a black prostitute.

The name "Wopko" was Friesian and was inherited from his father and subsequently passed on to Jensma's only son. In 1942 the Jensma family relocated to an agricultural college in the Karoo in the Cape. Wopko was three years old. The family business was a dairy, known as Jensma Creamery and which supplied residents and shops in Middelburg. Jensma attended Middelburg Hoërskool and an article in the local

Middellander, which also appears on the cover of *I Must Show You My Clippings* (1977)

indicates that he excelled at rugby:

Middelburg het Saterdag met een span afgereis na Hofmeyer om daar teen die plaaslike span te speel.

Albei spanne het probeer om die spel oop te maak hoewel dit 'n harde wedstryd was het hulle tog bewys dat harde rugby nog skoon kan wees. Daar is herhaaldelik aangeval maar die verdediging was dodelik, en elke man wat te ver hardloop is laag gevat en hard neergesit .

Hofmeyer se punte is aangeteken deur hulle agste man wat 'n drie gedruk het. Middelburg se eerste punte is aangeteken deur Jensma wat 'n drie gedruk het. Daarna het Minnaar na 'n mooi lopies nog 'n drie gedruk wat deur Jensma vervyf is. Eindtelling 8-3 (1977).

According to Leo Nietzsche:

when Wopko was fourteen he and his brother went to a nearby dam to swim. Wopko's brother drowned and Wopko could do nothing to save him. Wopko refused to accept that this was destiny and from then on was always rebellious (2001).

This loss was later expressed in a poem, "My Brother" in *Sing for Our Execution* (1974):

as clear as day i remember
my younger brother –
he left home one morning
and never came back

i remember we went to the river
i saw his body sleeping
deep under the water
i did not cry –

but i remember his quiet face
as he lay in his coffin
his nose and mouth stuffed
with clean cotton wool

i remember i was not surprised
when i saw him a week later
greeting me from amidst the crowd
at the market of our village (1974:65).

After matriculating at Middelburg Hoërskool Jensma enrolled at the University of Pretoria in 1960. Although most published sources (Nielsen 1995) claim that he successfully completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1964, a reading of his letters to

Peter Horn, a close friend, indicate that this was not the case. In 1968, Peter Horn, a German national, who lectured at the University of Zululand in Kwa Dlangezwa, Natal, attempted to obtain a bursary for Jensma to study in Germany. Jensma had always cherished the idea of going to Europe. He replied on the 29th of January 1968:

My problem is that my degree is not fully completed (I had a fight with my Life Drawing Teacher, Leo Theron. He told me that I could sit there till my hair turned grey, he would not give me a pass, rather unfortunate) and I think that one must have a completed degree for the scholarship (Jensma 1968a).

On 13 March 1968 Horn responded:

Is there no way of completing your degree? Why don't you study through UNISA (University of South Africa) - or do you not get on with Battiss either? Fuck that Leo Theron (Horn 1968).

Jensma had been introduced to Peter Horn by Phil du Plessis. On 24 October 1966 he had written to Horn:

Our corresponding ways of thinking resonate. I write quite a lot of little verses, I translate more for bread. My actual medium is sculpture. I've spent long enough outside the borders to say like Big Bill Broonzy, "I feel like hollerin but the town is too small". This with reference to the present here. Most probably I shall become a voluntary exile - just to be able to live and work when and where I want to. The artist in me is difficult to confine. That's why I won't be classified and also not be fenced in any way at all: the way I see it: the soul frees itself from the temporal, and becomes one with the soul of all things (Jensma 1966a).

One of Jensma's friends on the Pretoria campus was Elza Miles, an Afrikaans tutor who took a particular interest in him as he was the only Fine Arts student studying Afrikaans in her tutorial group. It was the beginning of a lasting friendship. Miles explained in an interview:

we clicked because of our Boere background. Whenever Jensma travelled to South Africa from Gaborone (where he was a school teacher) he usually stayed with me. He once brought Oswald Mtshali to my house (Miles 2000).

Jensma's poetry was published in the student magazine, *Gerwe*. Elza Miles recollects:

Jensma played a leading role in the magazine and he was strongly influenced by dada and automatic writing. His poetry was very much like jazz. He also knew a lot about African music, which he used in his poetry (2000).

According to Leo Nietzsche:

Wopko often shoved his poetry under the doors of the professors under the pseudonym of Jack Mafuta. He also delighted in frustrating the art lecturer, drawing inordinately huge parts of the body, for instance, that occupied the whole page (2001).

Wopko then went on to study towards a Teacher's Diploma at the University of Potchefstroom in 1965. He did not complete this diploma as he was involved in a serious motorbike accident in which he sustained a serious head injury. Between 1965 and 1967

Jensma worked as a translator for APB Publishers. On 26 June 1967 Jensma wrote to Peter Horn:

I have translated three shit German books for APB. They are all for sale now - but the whole episode turned out a fiasco for me afterwards, though I got paid and my name appears on the front cover of the books (Jensma 1967c).

Socially, Jensma was an introvert and was described by Jeanne Goosen as:

a very sensitive person with a refreshing sense of humour. He never hated anyone. Jensma loved listening to the music of the jazz artist Dollar Brand, later known as Abdullah Ebrahim. The rhythmic blues and jazz refrains also figure significantly in Jensma's poetry. Wopko loved to play his jazz records day and night. In particular, he loved listening to the Portuguese *Fado's* (a sad lament). Wopko was idealistic by nature, a real Maxim Gorki!

He was kind hearted, on a friend's birthday, he'd usually give them a silkscreen which they framed. He was upset about the racial conflict in South Africa and detested the inhumanity of whites. Of course, he thought white prejudice very funny, it amused him.

Wopko knew a secret way out of South Africa to Gaborone and he helped many political refugees flee, people who were against the apartheid regime. Many of his friends were also held for questioning by the Special Branch of the South African Police, known as BOSS. Wopko was not an alcoholic, though he enjoyed a beer

occasionally and he certainly did not take any drugs. His close friends and confidants were Sheila Roberts, Casper Schmidt, a psychiatrist who died of Aids in Manhattan in 1995, Phil du Plessis, the late artist, Walter Battiss and the alcoholic poet, Wessel Pretorius. Also amongst his associates were Aaron Kibel, the son of the Jewish/Polish painter Wolf Kibel, and Patrick van Rensburg. He also knew Bessie Head in Serowe. As for us we were an artistic group who met informally and spontaneously, like a real dada gang (Goosen 1999).

Jensma's woodcuts and silkscreen paintings were made in African styles and motifs which were integrated with Expressionist and surrealist techniques. He subsequently attracted the attention of King Sobuza at an exhibition in Gallery 111. Jensma was commissioned by King Sobuza of Swaziland to produce a series of woodcuts. These woodcuts were later acquired from a private collection by Warren Sieberts, an art dealer and displayed in the Rosebank shopping mall, the exhibition space being called "Gallerie Metroplex" under the grand ostentation of creating a "revolution in a shopping mall" (Blignaut 1996).

It is widely believed that whilst visiting the king's court Jensma fell in love with a Swazi maiden. This woman was Lydia whom he later married in Mozambique in 1966. According to Jeanne Goosen:

Lydia was a prostitute in the old Lourenço Marques. Wopko hated white women, he had a penchant for black prostitutes and it was really bad fate that he met with Lydia. Lydia claimed that Wopko made her pregnant. Out of a sheer Calvinistic

sense Wopko felt it his duty to marry her. She frequently assaulted Wopko and humiliated him before his friends. She fucked around a lot (Goosen 1999).

Jensma was disowned by his entire family when he married Lydia. Jensma wrote to Peter Horn on 24 October 1966 about his marriage:

I illustrate with my life the opposite of the dogma here and in so far as I can deduce from hints - it doesn't meet with approval anywhere (Jensma 1966a).

On 8 December 1966 Jensma wrote to Horn inviting him to his new home:

My house is reasonably big - 3 bedrooms - and my wife knows how to cook really good Portuguese food. Why don't you come over for awhile. I've just done some paintings and sculptures. I'll send you some of them (Jensma 1966b).

Jensma and Lydia had a son, whom they also named Wopko and two daughters, Tanja and Stieneke. On account of the prohibitions of the Mixed Marriages Act, Jensma first relocated to Swaziland and then to Serowe, Botswana in 1967 to prevent his family being deported. In a letter to Lionel Abrahams, Jensma pointed out his reasons for leaving Swaziland:

Lionel, my application for residence in Swaziland has been refused - I have to get out of here by the end of the month. I'll go to LM (Lourenço Marques) next week (Jensma 1967).

The Mixed Marriages Act caused Jensma considerable consternation. He wrote to Horn:

I hope the Rhodesians do not hand me over to South Africa, You know the Mixed Marriages Bill they passed lately: do you have any recent information? Funny enough, there is a chap, Ndaba, in Johannesburg, running a weekly newspaper and married to an Irish woman. Must be an informer. I do not see any other reason for his comfort. He came here penniless, but has returned from the other side with a smashing new American car (Jensma 1967d).

A few months later he inquired of Horn again:

Is the Mixed Marriages Bill retrospective? Where do I fit in? (Jensma 1967e).

A year later he wrote to Horn:

I would like to come for a holiday etc.- but I do not want to end up in jail. That would be most unfortunate. I hate narrowness of all sorts (Jensma 1968).

In Botswana Jensma taught for a year as a locum teacher at Swaneng Hill High School which was situated near the old Holiday Inn. The February 1967 edition of the *Swaneng Hill High School Newsletter* proclaims:

A new arrival at the school is Wopko Jensma, who is teaching Arts and Crafts to the first and second forms. These two forms are also doing woodwork with John Davies who came to the school last year and with Richard Sekgoma (1967:2).

The Swaneng Hill High School was also deeply involved with the local community and offered dressmaking courses through its *Basadi ba ba ithusang* (Women's Self Help

Group). The headmaster of the school was Patrick van Rensburg who had previously been a South African diplomat for a period of ten years. Bessie Head, the famous black writer, also taught at the school.

Whilst at the school, Jensma attempted to establish a magazine called *Chain*. He wrote to Horn on 7 January 1967:

I have suggested the idea of an art/literary magazine to my principal and he quite liked the idea. Would you be interested to be on such an editorial board. The other names I have in mind I rather not mention in this letter (Jensma 1967a).

Jensma also wrote to the Nigerian writer, E.V. Seko, asking him to be on the editorial board of his magazine and to submit an article for publication. However, he was clearly frustrated with the apathy of local black artists and writers:

I explained the whole journal to them. They do not submit anything. They think I am making money out of it and they are going to get nothing: what a pity! (Jensma 1967).

Jensma had a great interest in African writers. He indicated in a letter to Horn on 16 January 1967:

I have developed quite a liking for Nigerian authors, especially J.P. Clark - he writes drama almost like Lorca (Jensma 1967b).

In another letter to Horn on the 26 July 1967 Jensma wrote:

I like the poetry of Paul Blackburn - have a taste of this:

our emerging African Nations
RAUNDA sit rightdown
and type myself letter
And maka be-lieve ita a
from President Kennedy
declaring me a Disaster Area
and offering me \$30 million for
reconstruction of my major cities
U-RUNDI? They'll ask, wo
ruined me? whom didi, ruin, whom?
What? Thirty million?

GWAN! (Jensma 1967d).

The use of satire and the predilection for an African worldview in Paul Blackburn's poem are important aspects of Jensma's poetry. This, together with the use of black humour, poverty and exploitation are insistent motifs in Jensma's poetry.

Jensma was aware that he was being monitored by BOSS. The year previously he had cautioned Horn:

If you write to me, please be careful. My letter will probably be checked by the Security Police. I have myself slipped up like this, that is why my name is on their file. The Special Branch did question me once, when I lived in Johannesburg. They knew the works - even more than I knew (Jensma 1966a).

Horn replied on 2 December 1966 with a reference to the lawyer and political activist, Bram Fisher (Fisher is discussed in greater detail in a preface to Jensma's poem, "Bram Fisher Gasinks" (1974:18):

I can assure you I have no intention of becoming a bungling Fisher. I am not a professional revolutionary, and the fact is I would be caught the first time I wanted to plant a bomb or something silly like that. In any case I do not think that this country can be liberated in such a haphazard way. A revolution would have to be prepared even more meticulously than any war. I leave this to the experts in Dar Es Salaam, London and Nigeria, or where ever they might be (Horn 1966a).

Lydia took to selling Jensma's woodcuts and graphics outside the Holiday Inn. Between 1969 and 1970 Jensma worked for the Botswana Information Ministry as a graphic artist. In the Information Ministry he was attached to the Government Printing and Publishing Services in the Graphic Reproduction section. The relationship between Jensma and Lydia rapidly deteriorated. Jensma pointed out his reasons for leaving Swaneng Hill High School in a letter to Peter Horn dated 18 February 1971:

I left van Rensburg's (the headmaster) school because life with my wife became intolerable - now I don't know how long it'll still last. I'm not aggressive and I don't believe in violence and as violence is used against me, the only thing I know is to get as far away as possible. I can now see what a big fool I've been, how I've taken humiliation after humiliation - how I've suffered for a dream that wasn't worth dreaming. I'll probably have a lonely life from now but I won't return. I've returned too many times already (Jensma 1971).

Jensma eventually left his wife in 1969 after much acrimony. Phil du Plessis wrote in

Beeld:

Die vrou was kwaai. As Wopko nie genoeg geld maak nie het sy hom met
besemstok oor die skene geslaan. Dit het so sleg gegaan dat Dokter Casper
Schmidt, ook slim digter, al die pad Gaborone toe gery het met sy Volkswagen
om Wopko te gaan bevry. Hy het die vrou oorwin deur haar met 'n kinderwaentjie
oor die kop te slaan en Wopko vinnig in die kar te laai (1991)

Lydia and the children went from Botswana to Manzini in Swaziland and Jensma
arrived alone in Pretoria in 1971. He then moved to Johannesburg where he rented a flat
in Bertrams and resumed teaching art at the Colin Smuts Open School. Colin Smuts
was an acquaintance from the Botswana Ministry of Information where Jensma had
previously worked (Gardiner 2000). Colin Smuts was the Director of the school and had
been introduced to Jensma by Brian Egner. Brian Egner was Head of Information of the
Botswana Press. Colin Smuts was also the secretary of the South African Trust Fund
which came to be known as the United Democratic Front Cultural Desk. The poem
“suspect under section A1 Special” in *I Must Show You My Clippings* (1977) alludes to
Smuts, who was known as Jiggs to Jensma:

Stanley turrentine, you nut! Yes, don't mess

With mister T ' – I agree, djy'se man van die dories, 'k sê

jiggs, jiggs 'k sê, hoe's hjou driving lately?

‘fair to mild’ – nei, ’k hoor djou met my linkeroor (1977:33)

Jiggs was also the name under which Colin Smuts wrote poetry (Chapman 1981:25). The word “dories” (1977:33) is a reference to Doornfontein, one of the oldest suburbs in Johannesburg in which the Colin Smuts Open School was located. Colin Smuts recollected in an interview:

Wopko and I were close friends. We used to spend hours listening to jazz and just rap. We used to go together into Soweto and socialise. Although Wopko was white, he had his “clearance” in Soweto: meaning that he was accepted. At times we used to dramatise Wopko’s poems for the school children, it was great fun. We used to frequent art exhibitions. People would come up to me and ask if I was Wopko as I was a blackman. We laughed at the disbelief and shock it evoked when I pointed out Wopko, boere accent and all. Wopko often denied that he was white. He mischievously told anyone who cared to listen that his mother was Ethiopian and that his father was an Egyptian (2001).

Jensma lived for a while with Jeanne Goosen at Station Road, Littleton Manor, Johannesburg. For a pastime they read each other’s poetry and dined out frequently:

We used to dine a lot at Billy’s Baked Potato, near the fountains at least once a fortnight. We also used to go to the Grapevine in Pretoria... just have coffee and *praat* [speak] nonsense... we discussed mostly art, we never discussed politics (Goosen 1999).

Many people thought that Jensma was a black man because his art looked African and his poetry experimented with tsostsitaal. Mafika Gwala's comments in 1988 about an earlier encounter with Jensma are typical:

Wopko Jensma. For a long time I thought he was black...so when I met Wopko one morning, edged against his withdrawal, I could think of only one thing, his white world was killing him as if out to destroy him. Perhaps he had refused for too long to be the white he was expected to be (Gardiner 2000).

Under the apartheid system, people could apply to reclassify themselves into another race group if they provided proof for such change as laid out in the Population Registration Act. Jensma's reclassification of himself as a Black person compounded the confusion that existed about his identity. According to Jeanne Goosen:

At this time many whites had themselves classified as coloureds. Wopko's reclassification was an act of solidarity with the disenfranchised black people (1999).

Jensma poetry was also published in the magazine *Wurm* which was edited by Phil du Plessis and later in *Ophir*. *Ophir* was edited by Walter Saunders and Peter Horn and the early issues which contained Jensma's poetry were hand-printed. Jensma was a close friend of Walter Saunders in the late sixties when Saunders was a lecturer at the University of South Africa. At this time Jensma boarded with Wolf Weineck in Pretoria (Roberts 2000).

Over seventy poems of Jensma were published between 1967 and 1976 in *Ophir* alone, poems which generated awe and astonishment from contemporaries like Sheila Roberts, Athol Fugard, Mafika Gwala and Nkathazo kaMnyayiza. Gwala wrote to Walter Saunders in 1975:

“Since this world’s been sown

Ghetto cats dig Wopko Jensma” from a poem I did five months back (Gwala 2000).

His poems were subsequently also published by other South African magazines such as *Snarl*, *New Contrast*, *The Purple Renoster*, *New Nation*, *Donga*, *Bolt*, *Izwe* and *Inspan* amongst others.

Jensma’s poetry comprised of a range of experiments with topography, the irrational and with the acoustic dimension of poetry as well as issues of race, class and consumer culture. Jensma wrote to Peter Horn about his conception of poetry:

The condition which the poet sees must become a personal symbol. The poet is not a camera - reproducing “reality”, whatever that is. Poets after all write about nothing but themselves. I write with “the rumbling thunder of emotion”. The only assistance the intellect can give poetry is in the concept of form - but to pump the form full of emotion also does not give it any validity. I use the Afrikaans of the Karoo Malat in some of my poems - above everything, I am just playing with words. This stuff doesn’t go much deeper. For the most part it is done just for the sound (Jensma 1966c).

Jensma elaborated on his ideas about poetry in another letter to Horn:

As Virginia Woolf put it, an experience is followed up by a quiver in the subconscious which later results in the outpouring of the mind etc. And she also said: “forget the experience, keep the quiver”. Ferlinghetti, Ginsberg, Kerouac and the rest: they all wrote the same rubbish, because it sells to the uninformed non conformist. The Westerner is still dreaming about the illusion Voltaire created in their minds (Jensma 1967a).

In an undated and untitled manuscript Jensma also wrote:

A poet digests life - when he spits it out, it's the poet's own spit - its got “physical presence”, its alive, its got blood. Yes, it is the poet himself, right there on the page (Jensma: n.d)

Jensma was also a graphic artist who worked mostly with woodcuts, but produced linocuts and monotypes as well. In a letter to Horn he confided:

I was trained as an artist but express myself better as a sculptor. My work is not non-figurative, but provisionally abstract. I respect Soutine, Rembrandt (overseas) and here, Kibel and Zachie Eloff. The best sculptor here is Sally Dismar (Jensma 1966b).

Being deeply interested in African mythology and iconography his fascinating forms suggests the influence of Michaux and describe “human-animal-plant-spirit-creatures”. Of note are Jensma's three woodcuts entitled, *Mythical green-eyed creature*, *Mythical red-eyed creature* and *Mythical toothed creature* which are available on loan to libraries

from the South African Library Service's Central Collection Of Art. In 1970 Jensma exhibited his art in New York and Oxford.

In 1972, Jensma held an exhibition of graphics, entitled *Wail for the Beast*, at Gallery Y. Woodcuts from this show were incorporated into the 1973 Ophir/Ravan collection of 41 poems entitled *Sing for Our Execution*. By April 1973, according to a report in *Oggenblad*, Jensma had had twenty four exhibitions of his work. He excited the interest of poets, editors and gallery owners such as Wolf Weineck and Harold Jeppe.

In 1979 his works were amongst those displayed in an exhibition called South African Printmakers in the South African National Gallery. His work is currently represented in the South African National Gallery, Cape Town, the Durban Art Gallery and the University of the Witwatersrand Gallery as well as the William Humphrey Gallery in Kimberley.

The University of Witwatersrand Gallery was loaned an untitled silkscreen of Jensma dated 1974 by the Haenggi Foundation of Basle, Switzerland. The silkscreen has since been donated to the University of Witwatersrand Gallery. The Haenggi Foundation is a non - profit organisation which has two of Jensma's silkscreens as part of the Pelmama Permanent Art Collection. Fernarnd F. Haenggi also indicated in an interview that one of his daughters in Switzerland has a linocut of Jensma's entitled, "The Scream" (2001). Hendrik van der Walt, a Durban psychiatrist, also has three linocuts used in *Sing For Our Execution* (1974) and a huge linoprint. The linoprint, Van der Walt explained:

reflects a distinctive African feel and is drawn in a naïve kind of style (2001).

The MTN Art Collection, since its inception in October 1997, has acquired an extensive South African printmaking collection. The MTN Art Collection, which is in Gauteng, has two untitled prints of Jensma along with prints by Digby Hoets, Walter Battiss, Alfred Goniwe, Sandile Goye, Guy Stubbs and Judus Sabela Mahlangu amongst others.

As a little known artist in 1967 Jensma caught the attention of Dan Rakwati, a Fine Arts student at the University of South Africa:

I went to a bookstore in Pretoria to purchase a book on fine art for an assignment on a South African artist. At the bookstore I met a salesman who introduced himself as Leo Nietzsche who suggested that I study the works of Wopko Jensma. Leo Nietzsche was a close friend of Jensma and a fine arts academic. He is presently teaching somewhere in Cape Town.

Wopko was amongst the few if not the only white at this point in time who depicted art in an African motif. This can be discerned particularly in the woodcuts. He also had an inclination towards mysticism. His early work was done primarily in a realist style and as he matured as an artist his work assumed a surreal and expressionist influence with a difference - it was executed in an African style. Wopko was influenced by contemporary artists such as Ben Enwona from Nigeria, Vincent Kofi from Ghana and Malangatana Valent from Mozambique.

His poetry was a form of protest poetry written during the time of apartheid - at least he indicated as much in his letters to me. I have since lost these letters as I became blind from sugar diabetes and have had to relocate to a home for the blind in Johannesburg. It is ironical that although we corresponded so much via our letters we never had the good fortune to meet personally.

Wopko felt ashamed of being a whiteman. He felt that all whites had to share the blame for apartheid and its atrocities (Rakwati 2001).

Jensma wrote to Peter Horn:

It was by pure chance that I landed in the literary world. In any case it is an easier means of getting heard (but also more dangerous) than painting and so on. Perhaps one is safe if one speaks in symbols - like Kafka. Being literal is a little dangerous. In any case I am playing with fire at the moment, but my personal life is my own (Jensma 1966b).

Leo Nietzsche worked at Van Schaik's Bookshop in Pretoria. He was responsible for books in the "Bantu" section of the shop. Nietzsche met Jensma at the University of Pretoria and thus began an enduring friendship. Nietzsche explains:

We once travelled together from Johannesburg to Lourenço Marques. Wopko sat in the backseat – drawing. Wopko also felt that poetry must come from the stomach. He never rewrote any poem. Even when the varsity magazine, *Gerwe*

asked him to change a few lines, Wopko flatly refused. He was also a good friend of the critic, Karsipuu who advised him on his poetry. They spent many nights together discussing poetry. Karsipuu should quip, "If you can get past me, you'll make it". Karsipuu was an Estonian who worked at the CSIR (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research) as a translator and linguist. He produced several multilingual glossaries for the CSIR. Jensma never used "I", and "we" in his poetry, instead he advocated a firm focus on humanity. When I queried why he mixed up his languages in his poetry, Wopko replied, "what language does God talk?". In some ways he was profound. He was strongly influenced by the avant-garde. He often said about the European poets: "whilst they were fucking in the sunlight, we were doing it in the dark".

He felt that every person was born an artist – they only had to find the right medium to express their ideas. Wopko experimented with woodcuts out of yellow-wood, oil paintings, silk screens and pottery. Although all evidence pointed to the contrary, Wopko insisted that he was a realist. He felt that the element was more important than the subject matter. Wopko favoured linoprints and linocuts. In his prints he made interesting contrasts between black and white. He gave me an oil painting as a present. It was called "The Black Night of the Karoo".

Wopko felt that there was no difference between people and that everyone should be united. His views often resulted in him being called a "wit Kaffer".

In Mozambique we had a joll visiting the clubs. We were invited to stay free of charge at an Indian man's house. His name was Akbar Babool (2001).

Jensma later wrote a poem entitled, "In Memoriam Akbar Babool":

you introduced me to my first goddess
"dis towns full a bitches
ya wanna try one?"
afterwards we saw your home
"loaded w' mosquitoes hea
dey nibble ya ta pieces 'tnight"
creaky floor, a gauze door,
backyard of sand
in the middle a dagga plant
"lets've suppa'n onion'n egg
drive down dry bread a drop a wine"
next day the glittering town
prêgo and café com leite (1974:60).

Jensma presented both Peter Horn and Lionel Abrahams with copies of his poetry for their criticism. Abrahams replied to Jensma after reading his poetry on 24 May 1968:

You seem to value crypticness for its own sake. Your titles, numbering, arcane illusions and mysterious punctuation make your work more cryptic and

bewildering. You have a great appetite for variety and a deep curiosity about the possibilities of disrupted words and phrases and about the formal placing of words on paper. These things, together with your use of ellipses and slurring of speech make you an exciting poet to someone fascinated by experiment, by exploration of the pure possibility of things (Abrahams 1968).

Horn voiced disapproval of Jensma's use of the avant-garde:

A sledge-hammer method might under certain circumstances be the subtlest method possible - and the most effective. You don't use watchmaker's tools to repair a car. The dadaist-surrealist method is no good for political poems (Horn 1966b).

Jensma believed in the Zen Buddhist credo of , "first thought, best thought" and was reluctant to make changes to his poetry. He indicated as much to Peter Horn:

Sorry to send these back, but please could you be more explicit in your criticism. Regarding your question marks, do they mean that these parts should be left out?...rewritten? ... you don't like them but you'll put up with them?...or what...? (Jensma n.d)

Blood and More Blood (n.d.) was an unpublished collection of poems by Wopko Jensma which appears to predate his published anthologies. Colin Smuts claimed that a collection of Jensma's unpublished poetry was initially rejected by Mike Kirkwood of Ravan Press. It is a hesitant presumption that the poems referred to *Blood and more Blood*

(n.d.). *Blood and more Blood* (n.d.) was located in the archives at NALN by Professor Johan van Wyk in April 2001.). *Blood and more Blood* had been previously stored in the Human Sciences Research Council. Erika Terblanche, a curator at NALN explained in an interview:

Wopko Jensma had placed a fifty year embargo on the manuscript of *Blood and More Blood*. However there is no date to indicate when the embargo should commence (2001).

The embargo makes an analysis of *Blood and More Blood* (n.d.) questionable because it may contravene Jensma's restrictions.

The title is a fitting epigraph of a poetry of excess, capturing the leitmotifs of macabre violence and anguish in Jensma's poetry. This anthology consisted of thirty four poems. Twenty nine of these poems had since been published in Jensma's three volumes of poetry.

As co-editor, Peter Horn was so impressed by the quality of the poetry that Jensma submitted to the journal, *Ophir* that he proposed a special issue which appeared in 1971 with ten poems entitled *Sing For Our Execution*. In 1975 Horn published a critical article on the poetry of Jensma in *Quarry*'77, which was published by Ad. Donker. Horn raised the issue of Jensma's attempts to speak on behalf of others. He quoted Cherry Clayton:

The consciousness of [Jensma's] poetry is a suffering black organism... his poetry is almost pure outcry, as if the very earth were black, weeping and protesting

when trodden on. It is an amazing feat of identification, achieved instinctively rather than as a calculated poetic technique (Horn 1994: 36)

Horn argued that this view totally misrepresented Jensma's poetry:

Wopko's identification with the oppressed is not a "feat": he is forced into it by the circumstances of his life and by the make-up of his society. He does not speak the language of the discarded, rejected and oppressed because of a pretended change of skin pigmentation, but because he has experienced being discarded, rejected and oppressed... Wopko Jensma's outcry articulates the misery of those who are by the large bereft of speech. But it is not simply *somebody else's* inarticulateness, not simply that of the black or "coloured" masses: it is his own inarticulateness struggling towards speech (Horn 1994:36).

Jensma's response to receiving a draft copy of this article is significant :

received Peter's review on Thursday...went to the hotel round the corner from the PO [post office] to read it, and, sad to say I cried (Gardiner 2000: 8).

Sheila Roberts recollects:

During 1972-73, I taught at the University of the Western Cape and rented a big, old house at the Strand. Wopko had a cousin living in the Strand and he would come over to my place for meals a couple of times a week. He always brought drawings and graphics (woodcuts etc.) with him and I would buy his work whenever I had the money. I still have two, a woodcut and a collage. I tried

writing his story, as fiction of course, in my piece, "Mbiti Herself" which appeared several years ago in *Contrast*. When Wopko's book *I Must Show You My Clippings* came out, I was working as an editor for Ravan Press. I wrote a review of the book which Mr. Van Zyl recorded on cassette. I never received a copy of the tape and it probably no longer exists. In any case the review was verbose and pompous. (I was younger then and keen to show off) (2000).

Sing For Our Execution (1973) as well as Jensma's subsequent volumes of poetry were all typeset by the author himself. In a letter to Peter Horn Jensma indicated that he had initially planned to publish his poems at his own expense:

I believe one could print your own volume of poetry at a low cost, say 50, to distribute to friends only. The Dutch poet, Marsman, printed his first volume this way. Some space was covered by woodprints by a friend. (Jensma 1967b).

Sing For Our Execution (1973), was reviewed by at least thirteen newspapers and journals to print reviews, often accompanied by reproductions of woodcuts from the collection.

Mary Morison Webster wrote in a review in *The Sunday Times* in 1973:

The reader's initial and, indeed, lasting impression is that Jensma is an African-possibly of Sophiatown. Use of words and phrases nevertheless seems, at times, that of an American Negro than of a man from the Transvaal.

Surprisingly, it turns out that this versatile poet (he writes with equal facility in both official white languages) is a European in his mid thirties (son of a Dutch father and an Afrikaans mother) who has so closely identified himself with the African and his cause that he thinks and feels like a blackman (Webster 1973).

Writing in *Rapport*, Stephen Gray said:

It is now time to assert clearly that Wopko Jensma is as important a creative artist as anyone produced by South Africa. His book is not only a collection: it is a phenomenon. It stands at the centre of South African life (1973:12).

An editor of the *Eastern Province Herald*, however, was cynical about Jensma's poetry:

No one could be as sour, tough, bitter and rough as Wopko Jensma makes himself out to be, unless Mr. Jensma happens to be a green marula plum. One cannot doubt the intensity of the bitterness nor its all too probable justification. No doubt any suffering that Baudelaire or T.S. Eliot underwent were, in comparison of those known or observed among his own people by Mr. Jensma, trifles (Henderson 1973).

Whereas Lionel Abrahams, in the *Rand Daily Mail*, 6 January 1975 observed:

At a time when people are more than ever aware of their colour, even in the arts, Wopko Jensma is the only South African artist in any medium who has transcended the barriers. His work is neither English or Afrikaans, black nor white.

The *Oggenblad* review concurs:

To characterise this collection in a brief review is almost impossible. The motives and techniques vary too much; the world from which the poetry emerges is sometimes too strange for the white reader: but one can say this: these are verses of our time, these are verses of Southern Africa – not merely poetry for black or white (Van Dis 1973).

Peter Wilhelm elaborated:

This is the clue to Jensma. He stays together, in shape, alchemically combining enormously diverse cultures and experiences, He is a terrifying, new sort of human, he is the first South African

(Wilhelm 1973).

It was perhaps Anita Moodie's review in *Rapport* which most accurately summed up the significance of Jensma's first volume of poetry:

sorg, smaak en noulettendheid het hierdie boek een van die fraaise en genotvolste produkte van die Suid-Afrikaanse drukkuns gemaak.

Dit vestig Wopko Jensma se naam in Suid-Afrika as 'n sterk en kontensieuse digter en beeldskepper. Hy het nie oornag opgeskiet nie. Hierdie gedigte is 'n keur uit 'n oeuvre wat oor die afgelope dekade ontstaan het.

Dit is nou die tyd om dit duidelik te stel dat Wopko Jensma net so 'n belangrike skeppende kunstenaar is as enige wat Suid-Afrika nog voortgebring het.

Gevolgtrek is dit 'n boek wat ons netjiese indelings deurmekaarkrap. Ten eerste veronderstel dit dat alle Suid-Afrikaners eentalig is. Ten tweede skep dit vreugde uit die waarneming dat ons in ons poësie skeppend sal moet kreoliseer uit Engels, Afrikaans, Amerikaans "slang" uit die "blues", Tswana, Johannesburgse straattaal, spreektaalvorme van Lourenco Marque - en verder alles wat in swang is.

Dit sal die leser nie lank neem om agter te kom wat aan die gang is in Jensma se poësie nie, want sy werk is onmiddellik toeganklik. Hy is beslis nie-literêr. Hy is 'n naiëwe digter in die goeie sin van die woord en so 'n natuurlike surrealis dat mens dit skaars opmerk - die pyn, ontwrigting, fragmentering van groot onderwerpe in plofbare miniature, die vulgêre satiriese klappe vanuit onverwagte oorde: as mens eers gewoond raak aan die vreemde rangskikking van die taal, is dit maklik verteerbaar (Moodie 1973).

The woodcuts in the book also provoked comment:

I find it difficult to analyse my reaction to Jensma's hideously skeletal woodcuts. At first one feels compulsive fascination together with a horrid bewilderment. One cannot assess their merit; they appear to be neither decorative nor illuminating - except perhaps by contrast, for by contrast the poet speaks with a clarity that the artist has not deemed it necessary to attain. But while reading the

poems one begins to understand something of the frustration and the brutality of the illustrations which gradually begin to achieve significance as a visual accompaniment to the verse (Smailes 1974:29).

The titles and form of several of Jensma's poems, as well as their dedication to various black singers and musicians suggest the influence of jazz. Jacques Alvarez-Pereyre in his book *The Poetry of Commitment in South Africa* comments on Jensma's use of jazz:

Jensma's use of jazz must be seen as a homage to the black population, which in South Africa as in America, is the chief repository of this form of expression. At the same time it is also his way of expressing his joy in sharing with communities from which he is separated by law.

There is more: jazz requires people to participate fully in life, it makes them completely human because it enables them to infuse living with the rhythm and freedom which tends to be suppressed in everyday life; it is here that another essential characteristic of Jensma's poetry can be seen (1984: 105).

In a letter to Lionel Abrahams, Jensma indicated his interest in jazz:

The radiogram you sent me gives me endless pleasure. I have two records of Bessie Smith here and the more I hear them the deeper they touch me. My friend, who was in America, bought me a record by her teacher, Ma Rainey - the blues has always been part of my life. I compare it to the Portuguese fado, which is to me, the greatest art: simple stories of everyday life that almost sob, but not -

(Jensma 1971).

On 17 March 1973 Jensma submitted a cursory biography on a single page to the National English Library Museum of South Africa (NELM). In it he describes his occupation as an artist and not as a poet. Jensma gives his address as 416 Ridgeway Court, 133 Nugget Street, Johannesburg and claims that he has travelled to all countries in Southern Africa and once to Europe. It is noteworthy that Jensma mentions that he:

writes from an “African” point of view (1973:1).

This predilection for an African worldview was corroborated in an interview with Jeanne Goosen:

Wopko taught his friends silkscreen paintings. He did not believe that art was a Eurocentric talent. If one was interested, that was enough. Most of his woodcuts drew their inspiration from African mythology (1999).

In a letter to Peter Horn, Jensma was critical of the pervasive influence of western ideas on Africa:

I have not seen anything here which speaks the language of Africa. Everything is monotonously hammered around the remains of the European “civilisation”. Does the word “civilisation” mean anything to you? It means nothing to me. The Westerner only succeeded because of his technical abilities, by creating the monster, the machine! In our civilisation we only depend upon the machine. Our God. This is nothing more than a mere “set up”. It tires me. I guess Charlie Parker

was right: “civilisation is a wonderful thing if only someone would try it” (Jensma 1966c).

In 1975 Jensma’s next volume of poetry, *Where White is the Colour, Where Black is the Number* was published by Ravan at a price of four rands and fifty cents. The book was printed by Zenith Printers of 509 Diakonia House, 80 Jorrisen Street, Braamfontein in Johannesburg. The book was available from leading booksellers as well as direct from the publishers. *Where White is the Colour, Where Black is the Number* (1975) and Jensma’s subsequent volume of poetry, *Have You Seen My Clippings* (1977) included collages and montages based on photographs by white and black artists (Alvarez-Pereyre 1984:105).

This collection of poetry was dedicated to Jensma’s close friend, Walter Saunders, editor of the poetry magazine, *Ophir*, who was instrumental in getting Jensma’s poetry published. The book comprised of a collection of poems interspersed by drawings and photographs. The photographs are montages of everyday township and working life which focus on the despair and privation of blacks. The drawings are surreal representations of African mythical beasts. Vita Palestrant took the photograph on the backcover and the collages in the book were drawn up by Lourenco Carvalho, Kok Nam and Mike McCann. The drawings were by Mslaba Dumile from the Durban Art Gallery.

Lionel Abrahams reviewed *Where White is the Colour, Where Black is the Number* (1975) under a rather interesting caption, “Exercise in mind expansion”:

“Conceived, typeset and designed” as well as written by Wopko Jensma, this book is more than merely a bilingual collection of poems. It uses several varieties - some ethnic and some private – of English and Afrikaans.

But beyond the writing, it is a picture book, a polemic, and a practical exercise in mind expansion for South Africans. The pictures are mostly montages of photographs of sociological subjects with newspaper headlines and some graphic work. With the title they give the book of being essentially a socio-political gesture.

And indeed, the majority of the more accessible poems, most of them in Afrikaans, strikingly substantiate such a gesture. Jensma is particularly good at cutting whips of satire and invective out of the very hides of the white man’s sacred cows, more especially the Afrikaner’s.

But it seems that this brilliant, direct attack on smugness, hypocrisy and moral stupor is not enough for Jensma. Most of his poems, the ones in various slangs, argots and dialects, and even a number of the “straight” English ones, are obscure in style and meaning. If one approaches them open-mindedly some of them yield glimpses of earthy life-styles or dream-imitations of guilt and nemesis. But the didactic presentation of the volume throws up expectations of coherent

statements, and these are lacking in these rather private and experimental verses. So a considerable tension is produced, which Jensma obliquely acknowledges by giving a mock exegesis of one of his poems. His overall intention is suggested in the closing remark:

This exegesis is also available in english - upon request - be you not
ting they call whiteman or blackman.

Jensma's esoteric range of styles and languages reflects his experience of life cruelly fragmented by South Africa's system of sharp categories, clashing interest and maiming prejudices. Less by what it says than by what it does in forcing us face to face with the obscurity of many poems reflecting various ways of life on our sub-continent, this book attempts to make a practical protest against that fragmentation by jolting us out of our insular habits of thinking. Whether it begins to succeed will be one topic in the debate that is sure to rage over this unusual book (1975).

The debate over Jensma's poetry continued in the *Cape Herald*:

When *Sing for our Execution* was published a year ago, *Cape Herald* wrote boldly that Jensma would rank with South Africa's greatest poets, including van Wyk Louw and Roy Campbell. Since then, more distinguished critics have also hailed Jensma's graphic and poetic work... his latest collection of poetry and photo montages goes way beyond *Sing For Our Execution* to a type of esoteric communication which this reviewer finds himself incompetent to judge.

Look at for instance:

com doeks, la

skom's homne-dja

man vanne baas

mak come doeks hei

or again

train you turn on

soul o say yebo

drop us a line

say your crank jam!

What is he saying? Is Jensma more deeply South African than ever before? Is his insight profound, prophetic beyond the understanding of ordinary men? Or has he gone beyond the perceiving and expressing of realities? I would hesitate to say.

Certainly some of these poems are unintelligible to me. His jargon, call it creole or tsotsi or Jensma, sounded so authentic before. Now it sounds like hallucination. The photo montages are a lot less exciting than the woodcuts in the earlier book (Rudy 1975).

Mark Swift in a review in *The Cape Times* was much more generous, lauding Jensma as an:

ebullient, reckless spender of words, who bends every rule in the book (including his own) to mystify, amuse and sadden. From a scaffold of collages and photographs, he has scrawled an epitaph in graffiti on another year of South

African experience... Jensma is always as good as he is bad. A true original (1975).

On 27 June 1975, *Where White is the Colour, Where Black is the Number* (1975) was banned by a notice published in the Government Gazette in Pretoria (Pretoria Bureau 1975).

In an interview in Durban in July 1975 following the banning of the book, Jensma retorted:

to have one's book banned in this country is to be given a literary prize, it is at least some indication that people are reading one's work and one should take it as an honour. The identity struggle in Europe for artists and writers is so hard they turn to suicide. In South Africa it is easy – the politicians make it easy for us. Politicians always think they know so much about arts and culture. As in Russia, they attach too much importance to literary people (Wigget 1975).

Jensma goes on to comment upon the enigma surrounding his identity:

I am always so amused when people do not know what colour I am. They always take me to be a blackman. Two reviews of my book were written on the assumption that I was a black man (Wigget 1975).

Jensma attributed this confusion of identity to his style of writing – a mixture of pidgin English, Afrikaans, Portuguese, French, German and African languages. He also mentioned that his unusual name caused further confusion:

This is probably one of the main themes of my writing that people must always try and identify you first before they can make judgements. To me it does not matter what colour you are. Artists are constantly looking into society and people don't like this at all. One sees all too often an artist acclaimed when he is dead because he can present no more threat to that society. Perhaps I have looked into the ills of this particular society and present too much of a threat. But I can assure you of one thing. Old Tant Sannie from Blikkesdorp is not going to read my poetry. It is of some significance too that my latest book has been on sale for over six months before the banning order came into effect two weeks ago (Wigget 1975).

Commenting on moves by the Afrikaans writers to form a writer's guild to fight censorship, Jensma said that he had never adhered to any group activity but that it "is fine as long as they get something done" (Wigget 1975).

At this point in time (1975) Jensma was working for Republican Publishers in Durban as an illustrator. He claimed to be busy working on ideas for a new volume of poetry and said that he could not afford to pay for an appeal against his banning. Elza Miles recollected in an interview:

In Durban Jensma lived in a flat on the Marine Parade, on one of the top floors. (2000).

During his stay in Durban Jensma submitted five African tales to Jack Cope, the editor of *Contrast* in Cape Town. The titles were “Monna-Mago Brings Rain”, “A Beggar named Makopi”, “Motsomi and the Lion”, “Bubi’s Journey” and “The Flying Hands”. These stories were each about a page in length and were about the fables of Africa. Unfortunately, these stories were not published and are presently stored in the archives at NELM.

It was whilst in Durban that Jensma wrote to Horn:

I trust I am making myself clear - especially to those who feel their minds need borders. To those intellectuals with either left or right wing hang ups and morals - to those who find themselves baffled by my way of life, my creative work. My work is not faked, nor phoney, nor lifted from somewhere (Jensma 1975).

Jensma moved from job to job and from city to city. He did not believe in staying in one place for more than six months (Goosen 2000). After a productive sojourn in Durban in 1975, he returned to Johannesburg to put together his last published collection, *I Must Show You My Clippings* (1977). This third collection was published by Ravan Press in Johannesburg and sold at a price of four rands fifty cents. The book was printed by Zenith Printers of 509 Diakonia House, Braamfontien, Johannesburg. This volume of poetry was a collection of poetry interspersed by newspaper clippings, drawings and

photographs. Most of the poems in this anthology had already appeared in literary magazines such as Ophir, Contrasts, Quarry '76, A World of their Own and Open School Poetry. *I Must Show You My Clippings* (1977) differed from his previous volumes of poetry in its experiments with concrete poetry, collage and the frequency in which absurd inventories were used.

In a review in *World Literature Today*, F. R. van Rosevelt, from the University of Maine in Portland-Gorham commented:

What an enviable title *I Must Show You My Clippings* (1977) is! Anyone accepting Wopko Jensma's invitation to see and read what is indeed a collage of newspaper clippings, poems and graphics will not be disappointed. Jensma's third book of poetry is one wherein poems and clippings complement each other. He himself features in a few clippings, as does the Frisian dairy of his forbears, but it is his total South African involvement he wishes to show us, graphically and literally. For example, a newspaper clipping about the poet, Ingrid Jonker (drowned in Bantry Bay more than a decade ago) faces a poem addressed to the still imprisoned Breyten Breytenbach. The latter is asked of all things, "not to allow hatred to petrify his heart". Sad to say, it is this very appeal which already dates Jensma and some of his poetry as it reveals simultaneously the standstill to which the country has come, in body and soul, politics and poetry alike. An impasse, because Jensma appeals to the politically naïve Breytenbach, who has since been reduced to a whimpering shadow of himself, reportedly grateful when

he is no longer restricted to solitary confinement but to general imprisonment instead!

Jensma's obsessions are confinement, mutilation and crisis of identity. Desperate poetic method, however, cannot clarify or objectify his essential predicament, which is a lack of sanity. Of course, evoking Weimar Germany as he does is metaphorical in itself; but still he should not write about his world in terms of madness, junk and numbers only, for to do so is to call down madness on oneself. Instead, he might try to objectify his chaos. In a country where life and predicament are one and the same thing - and Jensma is not unlike our own here, but only more so - to talk about one's country at all means of course to get caught up in that country's values and its terms. Jensma might want to avoid doing this, because in order to fight one's enemy one runs the risk of becoming like one's enemy in the process. Not surprisingly, the jacket blurb on this book tells us that "it is impossible even from a close examination ... to determine the colour of his skin!"

Jensma's language is fragmented but sharp as glass. His sense and his salvation lie in his poems (his self portraits on the beach are silly and poorly reproduced here). These pieces, however fragmented, cast precisely the diffuse spectrum that might restore his and our heart of darkness.

i am tired, so very tired

tired of the hate stare

tired of the broken telephones

tired of non-white entrances

tired of being a burden

I am tired, tired of hating...

These clippings are a powerful dossier against the state of things

(De Kock 1978:3).

In a review of *I Must Show You My Clippings* (1977), in *Reality*, Marie Dyer comments:

The persona of the poems is appropriately less diverse than before. There are comparatively few excursions into dialect; most poems are all English or all Afrikaans. "I Jensma" - or more accurately, "I, jensma" - appear specifically in one poem and is implicit in many; perhaps, allowing for ironies, in most. In previously published poems he seems to have made himself a mouthpiece for the experiences and feelings of many different South Africans, but here the concerns, though always socially relevant, are more particularly his own.

Jensma makes very great demands on his readers. A knowledge of Villon's French as well as a little German and Gammattaal is assumed; but more importantly, his technique of fragmentation and dislocation - of images, syntax, even spelling and typography - involves immense effort in bringing the disparate elements into some kind of coherence. In one poem, avowedly dada in influence (chant of praise for the idi amin dada) he expresses some dadaist intentions and attitudes:

PROTEST AGAINST LAW

The law of tension

The law of precalculation

The law of reason

The law of aggression

The law of intrigue, the game...

This seems to be the manifesto applicable to many of his own poems, which in their disparate images, incomplete sentences, non-sequiturs, and anti-climaxes, are constructed in a kind of defiance of disciplined reason and the tensions of logic.

On the one hand, it is difficult to be sure that the main intention of these poems is being conveyed to the reader; on the other, it seems clear that the technique itself is an act of protest against what Jensma sees as the crippling, limiting, and fundamentally aggressive domination of rigid reason and calculation of human affairs. In all his poems he reveals a sense of the sickness of his society; it appears that he is exploring here what may be regarded as the philosophical as well as the political sources for it.

The severed ear of Van Gogh is a recurring symbol in these poems, apparently suggestive of the power and truth of genuine suffering, and Jensma seems to contrast this both with the artistic images of Van Gogh's paintings and also with his own poetry. These lines from "the ceiling just caved in today" seem to imply

that Jensma is afraid that art itself can impose an unreal or petrifying pattern on the vitality of real experience:

I, jensma, I am also a so called real artist...

...but don't worry, van ol chap, I jensma

I am having it bronzed!

The nature and feel of the poetry can best be given by a quotation. This is the middle section of the last poem in the book: "I know no heroes":

In these subterranean rooms
My entrails under paper weights
I keep singing this song
Of one thousand unmade beds
Of one thousand dust bins
Of one thousand dark alleys
Of one thousand chicken livers
(neatly tied in plastic packs)
as I turn stones of my life
grab scorpions sleight of hand
unwind untie the poison sting
let my past slip down my gullet

This is characteristic of its un-worked-out quality: its compelling but unelucidated images, its unexpected juxtapositions of various tones and styles, its catalogue of illogically selected elements, combining to evoke a sense of protesting alienation. It seems that in these poems Jensma struggles continually not to be facile, not to

falsify complexities with imposed order and clarity. (Even the drawings and photographs, though intriguing, are enigmatic). These struggles are sometimes exhausting rather than illuminating to the reader - like watching a man struggle to pick up invisible weights. But these are impressive and disturbing, and demand, if not to be understood, at least to be seriously attended to (1978).

Emmanuel Ngara was much more critical of *I Must Show You My Clippings* (1977). In a review for *The Africa Book Publishing Record* Ngara wrote:

Wopko Jensma writes about himself and about the South African situation. He says repeatedly in the first poem: "I found myself in a situation" and his poetry is indeed an attempt to reflect the situations he finds himself in. Although we detect a voice of protest against the social conditions in South Africa, we can hardly describe Jensma's poetry as "militant" or even "protest" poetry. The poet's statements about South Africa are observations rather than critical comments. For African readers, Jensma is not likely to hold much of the attraction as his criticism of South African life is not strong enough to have any real impact on social attitudes. To Western readers opposed to apartheid, however, Jensma offers something; here is a South African who writes simply as a South African. He displays no Afrikaner nationalism, neither does he show any prejudice against blacks. His style demonstrates how he attempts to be a fully integrated South African without any racial or nationalist labels; he writes in both English or Afrikaans (though most of the time in English) and he even uses a sprinkling of African words and African names, mainly Sotho.

Though his style is informal and light-hearted, Jensma's poetry tends to be obscure and frequently fails to make an impact on the reader. However, there are a few poems which draw their strength from rhythm and sound effects, example, "the ceiling just caved in today" and "I know no heroes" ...Of considerable interest are the author's clippings - including photographs of newspaper cuttings and photographs of himself and the Brazilian poet Manuel Bandiera. These are no doubt intended to make visual accompaniments to verbal art, but they are of little artistic value. The book is recommended for library purchase - with reservations (1978).

William Pretorius, writing for *Rapport* gave a positive and incisive appraisal of Jensma's third volume of poetry:

In Wopko Jensma's book *I Must Show You My Clippings* (1977), there is a collection of poems under the heading "Chant of Praise for the Idi Amin Dada" in which there is a play of words on the Black statesman's surname and the literary movement. In fact, the definition of Dadaism found in the *Penguin Companion of Literature* could describe some of Jensma's own poetry:

Its chaotic experiments with language, form... were an affirmation of radical irrationality and futility as a protest against all bourgeois notions of meaning and order.

In Jensma's poetry there is a lively and original experimenting with words, and even the letters of words... he breaks down words, rearranges them, squeezes

them into various political forms, all of which at times gives his work a sense of artificiality and obscurity. At times, too, his word manoeuvring gets the upperhand at the expense of the poem's content, and his poetry drifts off into a whimsical playfulness... he uses language as well to rattle the foundations of an establishment that has grown stodgy in its own self-satisfaction, content to see no further than "the good life".

In a sense, Jensma's unruly poetry is a reaction against this syndrome. He is an interesting and original voice in South African poetry. Jensma built no structures, he established no institutions, he created no stable circle of friends and admirers. In this respect he was very different from his influential contemporaries such as Bill Ainslie, Barney Simon and Lionel Abrahams. Even the community of Afrikaans writers, who diligently promote each other's work rarely mentions Jensma in their account of cultural history (1977).

Shiela Roberts commented in *Contrast*:

As it is impossible even from a close examination of his poetry and woodcuts to determine the colour of his skin – not that I consider such a determination in any way important – and as he writes in various “voices”, from English and Afrikaans to Tsotsi and Gammattaal, he does indeed appear to be the first wholly integrated South African (1977: 14).

In an interview on 2 October 2000, Sheila Roberts commented further:

About my comments that the colour of Wopko's skin could not be assessed from the poems themselves – I agree that this assertion is totally irrelevant and am ashamed of it now. But it was not so irrelevant in 1971, which is when I wrote it, I believe. There had been so many bannings of books, journals, films and music that there was, as I recall, a mood of nervous revolt amongst writers; nervous, because we all bore in mind the kind of terrorism that the editor, Donald Woods, had to face when he tried to find out the truth of what had happened to Steve Biko. For someone like me, an anxious fledgling writer and a clumsy critic, Wopko's use of varied voices and dialects seemed a bold strategy, an act of defiance against the official categorisation of human beings, himself included.

Michael Gardiner has drawn an interesting parallel between Jensma and the South African poet and novelist, Breyten Breytenbach:

Jensma has received very different treatment from the adulation with which every Breyten Breytenbach production was received. Both these poets/artists were born in the same year of Cape Afrikaner families. Both studied art at university and the marriage of each violated South African law, compelling an exile. Whereas Breytenbach repudiates, rejoins, is repudiated by and then welcomed back into his language community, Jensma remains thoroughly outside that social faction of South African society which controls the means of production, which generates wealth and shapes reality according to its notions of what is fit and proper (Gardiner 2000: 4).

In 1979 Jensma lived in a flat in Joubert Park in Johannesburg. He befriended Thys Nel and they frequently visited each other. According to Hendrik van der Walt:

Wopko was the picture of an eccentric artist. He looked like a farmer, with khaki shorts and veldskoens. Wopko was not talkative, in fact he appeared withdrawn. He also had numerous black friends, which was unusual for a white man in the seventies (2001).

Thys Nel was introduced to Jensma by a mutual friend, Rita Cohen. Nel pointed out:

When I met Wopko he was already in a state of schizophrenia. I found him to be a warm, humble person. He told me that he had stayed with Casper Schmidt for a long time. Casper was a psychiatrist who has since moved to New York where he died. When I met Wopko he had stopped writing. I have in my possession, *The Cowhide Drum* (n.d.) which was later published as *Sing For Our Execution* (1974) (2000).

In 1983 Jensma was one of the winners of the Creative Writing Awards sponsored by Mr. Ad Donker of Johannesburg, to mark the tenth anniversary of his publishing firm. The award was to honour three authors who had made a notable contribution to South African literature in English in the last ten years. Jensma was awarded the five hundred rands prize money and a certificate for:

originality of voice and vision.

The other awardees were Mongane Wally Serote and J.M. Coetzee.

Clinton V. du Plessis was inspired to write the following poem after seeing what was alleged to be Jensma's photograph in *Playboy* magazine. The photograph was of a hobo in Joubert Park (2001):

let me show you my clippings

i saw u

trying to lie down

(between the airbrushed beavers

and designer tits

of the playboy bunnies)

bumming around, if i remember correctly,

in joubert park

with a couple of white brothers

i guess it was easy deciding:

to shut the windows.

to lock the doors.

to throw away the key.

to walk away from the unfinished poems.

to run from the fire burning in your head.

to forget about the answers and all the possible questions.

to close your eyes and see the bright sun.

to try to recall the good times.

to take the last drink.

to cross the red robot.

(to stop paying off your past debts in instalments)

i saw u

trying to pick up pace

trying to move with the agility of a wing

i saw u

trying to join the backline one more time

but u kept on stumbling

i saw u

trying to get up or maybe trying to lie down.

Jensma wrote to Lionel Abrahams in 1983, merely informing him about his whereabouts:

I've been living with my father for the past year at 25 Smid Street, Middelburg, in the Cape (Jensma 1983)

Jensma's last known address was the Salvation Army Men's Home in Simmonds Street, Johannesburg. Michael Gardiner recounts his visit to Jensma in the hostel in 1987, ten years after his last publication:

"I don't want to become a campus guru". This is the response Wopko gave to my request for permission to photocopy his poems for my students – his published works were now out of print. We were listening to the jazz artist Herb Ellis, Jensma having asked me to take off the inferior music of Ken Burell.

The smoke from his zol, made of Yellow Pages paper and Boxer tobacco, never rose above waist height. We sat with our heads just above the line of acrid, grey strands. Smoking and coffee were the chief delights of Jensma's existence, where he had taken refuge from his thoroughly disabling schizophrenia.

On seeing Jensma, I understood how, once in one's cubicle amid other unwashed, down-and-out men, it could prove difficult if not impossible to leave such a place, enclosed as one is in that relatively stable and simplified society, where access to fresh, instant coffee is a significant event.

As a recipient of a state pension for the permanently disabled – a pension which the home drew on his behalf and gave him credit at the tuckshop – Jensma had ceased to produce both the poetry and the graphics for which he is so respected. Earlier and extensive support from his friends in Pretoria, Cape Town and Johannesburg had dwindled, and he spent his days on the streets, or in the Carlton Centre for warmth, scrutinising scraps of paper and conversing in a loosely associative manner, unable to write or draw (2000).

In addition to his pension, Jensma received a monthly payment from Abraham de Vries. In 1988 art historian and researcher, Elsa Miles was involved in putting together an exhibition called *The Neglected Tradition*. On the day of the opening she went to pick up Jensma but he was unable to accompany her because of his steadily deteriorating mental condition.

In 1988 a band calling themselves “Mud Ensemble” and comprising of Marcel van Heerden, Juliana Venter, Thomas Barry, Nicholas Hauser, Kenneth Marshall and Christo Boshoff composed and produced a song about Jensma recounting the death of Can Themba. The song was a cut on an album called *Level*. Mud Ensemble performed the song at the Standard Bank National Festival of the Arts in July. The festival itself is an annual event held in Queens Road, Grahamstown.

Peter Lowis, the founder of another alternative band, “Mystery Roach” was also inspired by Jensma’s poetry. “Mystery Roach” was from Benoni in Gauteng. Their song, “trains a-comin’ ” drew its lyrics from Jensma’s poem “in memoriam Ben Zwane”.

By 1989, Jensma’s publishers took to sending Michael Gardiner his post. In the same year, when the driver from the Salvation Army came to fetch Jensma for his treatment at Johannesburg General Hospital he was nowhere to be found. Jensma’s pension was last drawn in August 1993. The next year the Salvation Army Men’s Home burned to the ground. People who knew Jensma were contacted in all major centres. The Salvation Army checked all its shelters and attempts were made to determine whether he had entered a mental home in Pretoria. All efforts failed to produce any trace of him. In July 1996, The *Mail and Guardian* published a report claiming that Jensma could possibly be alive. This created much excitement that perhaps some sign of him had been discovered, but there was no information of him forthcoming.

In May 1999, friends of Jensma - Colin Smuts, Walter Saunders, Wolf Weinek and Michael Gardiner - met with Jensma's two daughters to discuss the establishment of a Wopko Jensma Trust. Jensma's son had died of Aids in 1997. It was agreed to set up a trust into which would go the remaining royalties from the sale of his poetry collections, donations as well as the ongoing income from international anthologies and translations of his work (Gardiner 2000).

To date Jensma has not been pronounced officially dead. N.M. Singer wrote the following unpublished poem about Jensma's disappearance entitled "Desperately seeking Wopko":

You are as lost to this fractured land
and its sightless citizens
as I am to myself
I glimpse your face
in those of children
stolen away
by those vapours they inhale
And in the myriad beings pressing on
to some empty toil.
I thought I saw you
on a crowded night time sidewalk
Alone
Hands eloquently poised

Snarling at the moon

I turn and walk away

The dust and oily sweet smell of impending rain

dancing in my nostrils (2001).

Perhaps Jensma could be better understood by his comments in an undated letter to Peter Horn:

If I have put forward ideas: it means nothing. I have no life - no philosophy, I only live for the love of living. Up to now, it seems, nobody has yet grasped Einstein's eclipse, well, tell me, what really matters in this chaos of worlds?

Chapter Two

Theoretical Assumptions

This chapter begins by engaging with the controversy that Jensma's poetry provoked about his sanity. Jensma's poetry is then placed within a conceptual framework which is informed by the ideas of Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva on modern poetry. The theories of schizophrenia as elucidated by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1983), Frederic Jameson in "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" (1983) and R. D. Laing in *The Divided Self* (1969) are then used to explore the link between schizophrenia and Jensma's poetry.

Wopko Jensma's use of neologisms, portmanteau words, disparate argots, syntactic dislocation, fragmentation and experimental topography has often resulted in a private idiomatic language which was seemingly incomprehensible. This difficulty has provoked widely divergent views ranging from accolades to criticism that he had finally "lost it" and that his poetry was no more than the confused ramblings of a madman.

Described by writer and academic Stephen Gray as "exceptionally great" (Blignaut 1996) and by actor Marcel van Heerden as "way, way ahead of his time" (*ibid*) Jensma is just as commonly referred to (in mostly polite and hushed tones) as "having lost it" or as "schizophrenic" (*ibid*). *Loslyf* editor, playwright and novelist Ryk Hatting agrees with both definitions:

in his writings he has such a grip on his schizophrenia - to the point where ranting becomes art. If he is schizophrenic, his schizophrenia was perfectly in line with the schizophrenia of South Africa in that time. And for that he was actively marginalized (*ibid*).

Phil du Plessis, a Cape Town physician and friend of Jensma was adamant that Jensma's poetry of fragmentation, inverted syntax, seeming incoherence and recurring motifs of mutilation were all symptomatic of schizophrenia. Others like Michael Gardiner saw Jensma's prosody as a particularly apt representation of the fragmentation and surrealistic nightmare which characterised apartheid South Africa in the sixties and seventies. Phil du Plessis was forthright about his opinion on Jensma's mental state:

Nou sê 'n slim Engelsman, Michael Gardiner van die Johannesburg College of Education, in die jongste uitgawe van die tydskrif *New Contrast* dit is politiek en apartheid se skuld dat Wopko siek geword het. Alles wat hy skryf was politiek. Die regering het hom onderdruk.

Ek wil vir hierdie Engelsman sê hy praat twak. Wopko het oor sy siekte geskryf. Sy vrou het hom onderdruk (1991).

This brazen retort was swiftly countered by Gardiner in *Die Burger* (15 March 1991):

Die arme Phil du Plessis! Voer hy nog oorlog? Moet 'n digter altyd tot die een of ander ras of taalgroep behoort? Die brokkies inligting oor Wopko Jensma lewenservaringe is interessant maar kan nie by die gedigte kers vashou nie. As

medikus is du Plessis ook snaaks. Hy sê Jensma se skisofrenie is geërf. Daarmee beperk hy dit tot 'n individuele gebeurtenis. Het siekte nie 'n konteks nie, en kan een mens se lyding nie iets van 'n gemeenskap se kwale suggereer nie? Sulke eendimensionele en chauvenistiese medici moet asseblief van my weggehou word.

Phil du Plessis was quick to his defence:

My groot beswaar teen Gardiner se analise is dat hy die skisofrenie net interpreteer binne die raamwerk van die neerslag van maatskaplike dinamiek in Jensma se verse. Hy ignoreer die primêre simptome van die siekte skisofrenie, wat by Jensma uitmuntend verwoord word. Daar is natuurlik 'n interaksie tussen digter, siekte en omgewing, wat ek in 'n kort moedswillige rubriek nie kon uitspel nie (1991).

In an interview Jeanne Goosen viewed Jensma's schizophrenia a bit more circumspectly:

if he ever was suffering from schizophrenia it was surely due to his wife, Lydia. She made his life hell. When he was ill, he'd scream, have nightmares, mostly about Lydia. His condition deteriorated because of the continuous use of the drug stelazine, perscribed at the Weskoppies Outpatients Hospital. But I doubt that he was truly schizophrenic. I have a paramedical background and I would have known if he was schizophrenic. He showed none of the symptoms for weeks on end (2000).

Certainly Jensma himself alluded to his schizophrenia in *I Must Show You My Clippings* (1977) in the poem "Spanner in the what? works":

i brought three kids into this world
(as far as I know)
i prefer a private life to a public life (i feel allowed to say)
i suffer from schizophrenia
(they tell me) (1977:7)

Colin Smuts also recollected in an interview:

Wopko was fed up with teaching and decided to apply for a disability grant from the Department of Social Welfare. He asked me to write the letter as the Director of the school but I did not know what to say. So Wopko wrote the letter, claiming that he was mad and unable to work. I signed it.

We went to the Department of Social Welfare together. Wopko left seven empty seats and sat on the floor. The Department wanted to know if I was his "boy". This was the time of apartheid, you know. They stared in disbelief when I told them that I was his boss. Wopko got his disability grant. I was amazed that he had pulled it off. He never really was sick. It was the drugs they gave him at the hospital that made him sick (2001).

According to Thys Nel:

when Wopko got excited or agitated he lapsed at times into a state of dementia. Once he took a piece of blue glass out of his pocket and gave it to me. He claimed that it was from the tomb of the Egyptian princess, Nephrites. As he grew more ill, he was mainly interested in tea and cookies. It was sad (2000).

These accounts chronicle the suspicion and conflicting viewpoints which circulated about Jensma's mental health. What is known for certain though, is that Jensma did receive treatment for schizophrenia which grew progressively worse.

Wopko Jensma's volumes of poetry, *Sing For Our Execution* (1973), *Where White is the Colour*, *Where Black is the Number* (1974), *I Must Show You My Clippings* (1977) and the unpublished *Blood And More Blood* deal with issues of identity relating to race and class within the context of apartheid South Africa in the nineteen seventies. These four volumes of poetry represent a poetics of resistance conceived as an antidote to personal and social suffering as a result of the racist oppression of blacks in South Africa. Jensma's poetry is also a critique of the vagaries of consumer culture and include a range of experiments with avant-garde techniques. Although written predominantly in English and Afrikaans, Jensma's poetry draws on Portuguese, French, Zulu, Tswana, German and township argot known as Tsotsi-taal. Jensma's diction is characterised by frequent code switching between standard English, Afrikaans, pidgin and Tsotsi-taal. Jensma's use of Tsotsi-taal, Kaapse taal and an Americanised slang, influenced by the rhythms and lexical items of jazz, will be elaborated more fully in an analysis of his diction.

To a poet like John Dryden the words which make up a poem are the “image and the ornament” (Hamburger 1977:21) of the idea to be conveyed to readers. Jansma’s prosody, in keeping with notions of modern poetry, is devoid of images and metaphors that are ornamental and grandiose and is stark and lucid, rich with the cosmopolitan registers of street culture.

According to Roland Barthes in *Writing Degree Zero* (1970) traditional literary language conforms to the basic structure of ordinary speech insofar as its activity of signification is syntagmatic or relational:

which means that in it words are abstracted as much as possible in the interests of relationships. In it, no word has a density by itself, it is hardly the sign of a thing, but rather the means of conveying a connection. The word extends, as soon as it is uttered, so as to form a superficial chain of intentions. The classical literary utterance is so constructed as to dissolve its signifiers in the very process of forming a signified. In modern literary use of language, by contrast, we find the attempt to eliminate the intention to establish relationships and to produce instead an explosion of words. For modern poetry... destroys the functional nature of language (1970:32).

In his study, *Mapmakers: Writing in a state of siege* (1983), André Brink distinguishes between language that is in everyday use and the language used by creative writers:

The language used by society at large is conditioned by and rooted in convention, since such language is, of necessity, “generalised” and “systematised” within a structure of common denominators. The creative writer’s language usage runs counter to that of society. The writer must hone blunted words anew, rekindle the fire of “original inspiration” in them, rediscover original meanings or discover new ones, departing in every respect from the well-known and well-trodden syntactic or semantic paths, exploring whatever territory remains unknown on either side (1983:118).

Brink’s observation is an apt commentary on Jensma’s experimental prosody. Jensma’s poetry transgresses conventional assumptions and definitions of poetry by experiments with syntax, form, topography, rhymeless verse and irregular rhythms. Drawing on the influences of the European avant-garde, notably Dada, Surrealism and Expressionism, the imagery is frequently shocking in its references to violence, self mutilation and nihilistic despair. The vividness and variety of his language is described by Peter Horn as:

the corrupted sociolect of the slums of Johannesburg and words like “squadcar” and “blackjack” presuppose familiarity with life in an apartheid society

(1994:24).

Jensma’s prosody moves erratically from stark and clear township idioms to the complexity of surrealistic associations, radical topographical deviations, neologisms, semantic dislocations and syntactic fragmentation which bear a striking resemblance to speech patterns consistent with paranoid schizophrenia. Jensma’s schizoid discourse

manifests itself as an asocial dialect with highly personal idioms, approximate phrases and substitutes which make his language extremely difficult to follow at times. Jensma himself was diagnosed as schizophrenic and received treatment at the Weskoppies Outpatients Clinic and the Johannesburg General Hospital.

Schizophrenia is one of the most common, enigmatic and disabling mental illnesses. Spitzer's (1992) research indicates that about three in a thousand people suffer from schizophrenia at any given time. As far as is known, schizophrenia exists in all cultures and has been present throughout history (Spitzer 1992:3). Because of the disorder's complexity few generalisations fit all people diagnosed as schizophrenic. Its most common characteristics are bizarre, irrational beliefs, persecutory delusions, incoherent speech expressed as word salads, thought disorder and various forms of psychoses.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Mental Disorders* (2000) (DSM-IV) describes several symptoms that a person must have before he or she is classified as schizophrenic. Schizophrenia has both positive and negative symptoms. To be diagnosed as schizophrenic one or more of the following symptoms must be present in an individual for at least one month:

Positive symptoms:

- Delusions: (bizarre, false beliefs) which may be paranoid in nature.

Delusions may also be of grandiosity.

- Hallucinations - (bizarre, unreal perceptions of the environment). These hallucinations can be:

- a) Auditory (hearing voices)
- b) Visual (seeing lights, objects or faces)
- c) Olfactory (smelling things)
- d) Tactile (for example, feelings that bugs are crawling on or under the skin)

- Disorganised Thinking and Speech [alogia]:

Abnormal thoughts are usually measured by disorganised speech. Although people with schizophrenia are usually reticent, their speech often indicate the following aberrations:

- Loose associations [rambling on about a number of topics or issues at the same time]. Speech is disjointed and there are very few logical connections between the different topics.
- Tangentiality [inappropriate or unrelated responses to questions]
- Word salads [severely disjointed segments of speech which are often incomprehensible to the listener. A word salad is literally just a number of ideas, issues, words and phrases, which are completely jumbled up or tossed like a salad into an individual's conversation]

Negative Symptoms:

- The absence of normal behaviour. Delusions, hallucinations and abnormal speech indicate the presence of abnormal behaviour. Negative symptoms include: social withdrawal, absence of emotion and expression

[affective flattening], reduced energy, motivation and activity [avolition].

Sometimes schizophrenics have poor hygiene and grooming habits. The schizophrenic may also wear bizarre clothing, use layered clothing or apply cosmetics inappropriately.

- Catatonia :

Catatonia is a negative symptom in which people become fixed in a single position for a long duration.

When people show any of these five symptoms, they are considered to be in the “active phase” of the disorder. Often schizophrenics have milder symptoms before and after the active phase. All people who have schizophrenia have lost touch with reality. The three main types of schizophrenia are:

1. Disorganised Schizophrenia
2. Catatonic Schizophrenia.
3. Paranoid Schizophrenia – strong delusions or hallucinations (Pollard. 2001. Microsoft@Neuroscience.com).

Given the enigma surrounding this disorder one is inclined to agree with Sass who in his study, *The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber, and the Schizophrenic Mind* concludes that:

schizophrenia is a heterogeneous and contested concept which covers a variety of subtypes whose boundaries are still under investigation and perhaps, may never be established (1994:15).

A popular misconception is that schizophrenia involves the splitting of the self into multiple personalities. Glass explains:

the issue is not separable and distinct personalities but fragments of self-experience embedded in delusional projections that function as self limiting epistemologies. To be schizophrenic is to be without “personality” or persona, it is to live outside the knowledgeable frames of consensual reality. In addition, the schizophrenic substitutes internally derived, delusional symbologies for existing and embodied others (1993:135).

Janice Jordan, a rehabilitated schizophrenic recollects her suffering:

the schizophrenic experience can be a terrifying journey through a world of madness no one can understand, particularly the person travelling through it. It is a journey through a world that is deranged, empty, and devoid of anchors to reality. You feel very much alone. You find it easier to withdraw than cope with a reality that is incongruent with your fantasy world. You feel tormented by distorted perceptions. You cannot distinguish what is life. Your thoughts race and you feel fragmented and so very alone with your ‘craziness...’(Carlton. 2001.Microsoft @Gail Medical Encyclopedia.com).

Julia Kristeva makes this useful connection between literature and schizophrenia:

literature breaks the hold of reality. Literature reveals a certain knowledge and sometimes the truth itself about an otherwise repressed, nocturnal world, secret

and unconscious universe...it thus redoubles the social contract by exposing the unsaid, the uncanny ...[literature and its scrambling of reality] make a game, a space of fantasy and pleasure, out of the abstract and frustrating order of social signs, the words of everyday communication. Yet, whilst literature serves the ends of imagination, the utterances of persons suffering from multiplicity also have the power to reveal the “repressed, nocturnal, secret and unconscious universe” (1986:207).

Kristeva describes psychosis as the “crisis of truth in language” (Kristeva 1986:216). Psychosis proceeds by the disavowal of consensual reality (Kristeva 1986:226). In the economy of psychoses there are no images or semblances, each element is neither real, nor symbolic, nor imaginary, but true (Kristeva 1986:236). In psychoses truth moves from the space of the word to the body itself: body becomes text. Thus the truth of the signifier, namely, its separability, otherness, death, can be seen to be exerted on the flesh itself – as on words (Kristeva 1986:236).

Whilst there is substantial consensus that schizophrenia is a mental illness to be treated by drugs, confinement and therapy, there are also compelling arguments which repudiate this claim. R. D. Laing in *The Divided Self* (1969) and *Sanity, Madness and the Family* (1972) and Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1983) are the principal representatives of the anti-psychiatric bloc. These writers had a sympathetic view of schizophrenia and saw its diagnosis as a pathological aberration as a myth. Douglas Kirsher points out that Laing held the belief that:

Schizophrenics (if they wanted) could produce potentially intelligible communications through their actions. Word salads were red herrings produced to mystify others (they may also have helped to mystify the self). Schizophrenics deemed by conventional psychiatry to be ill could be regarded instead as agents whose experiences were potentially understandable and rational when seen as intentional acts within a context. They were using Sartrean self deception as a way of trying to live in what they saw as an unlivable situation (Mullan 1997:32).

Laing felt that the label of “schizophrenic” seriously compromised the rights of its victims:

Sociologically it stigmatises, it places someone down and it strips a person of his rights. It invalidates a person quite explicitly and turns them into an invalid and an invalidated person at the same time (Mullan 1997:51).

The postmodern hostility to the idea of “mental illness” is exemplified in Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1983). Its argument is consistent with Baudrillard and Lyotard’s critique of capitalism as a manifestation of the insatiability of desire in a materialism dominated by modernist structures of production and authority (Glass 1993:132). For Deleuze and Guattari, psychoanalysis, Freud’s oedipal theory, the treatment of psychosis in hospitals, judgements about mental illness - all are manifestations of a corrupt modernity that produces excludable human beings as efficiently as it does commodities.

According to Deleuze and Guattari the schizophrenic has not developed an ego or gone through the oedipal process of individuation. The schizoid had no “me” and hence does not have an unconscious which is preoccupied with the preoedipal drama. The healthy schizoid has an essentially productive unconscious. He does not need to fantasise. Instead, Deleuze and Guattari postulate, he produces and makes the real. This production of the real is fundamentally incongruent with Freudian and Lacanian models of the unconscious. Freud and Lacan see the unconscious as symbolic and fantasy laden - which leads to the perception that desire is associated with lack. That is to say, desire desires that which is fantasised, repressed, wished for, or absent. Desire is engaged entirely with that which is lacking and needs to be represented. Hence “desire gives way to a representation” of that which is lacking - the phallus, the oedipal escapade, the ideal “I” etc. (Deleuze and Guattari 1983:54). The schizoid, on the other hand, is incapable of experiencing lack. To him the unconscious is always productive and never fantastical. Desire itself produces the real and creates new worlds.

The Freudian unconscious is too unproductive and otherworldly to entice the schizoid into normalcy. It has nothing to offer the schizoid. Hence the schizoid scrambles, decodes, and reconfigures the psychoanalytic dialogue transfiguring signifiers into the real, and refusing to be oedipalized.

In the place of psychoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari offer “schizo-analysis”, a kind of linguistic logic that transforms perceptions of what madness is; the mad would no longer be seen as sick, but as laudable examples of rebellion against the epistemes of modern

society. Deleuze and Guattari offer a call to psychological and political revolution by the agency of the mad, the schizophrenic and the psychically displaced and question:

why society confines its madmen and madwomen instead of seeing in them its own heroes and heroines (1983:245).

What is required is a “decoding” that blasts away the “nondecomposable blocks” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983:21) of meaning which keep the self riveted in capitalist “schizo-flows”(Deleuze and Guattari 1983:21). This process opens up cracks in experience. Schizo-analysis erodes the moribund meaning structure of modernism; it reveals in Lyotard’s words:

Those intermundia that perhaps are visible only to children, madmen and primitives (1989:243).

Capitalism and its “privatisation” effectively represses and even attempts to destroy a kind of “primitive” consciousness which seeks to move beyond ideological formulation and what Deleuze and Guattari call the “territorialization” of desire. Systems of production, “organs of private man” and “the abstraction of monetary quantities” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983:244) impose on the self a “yoke of despotism whose effect is castration” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983:112).

Deleuze and Guattari argue for a psychological “breakthrough” that will dehistoricize consciousness, that will cast off linguistic, ethical and interpretative “despotisms” as well as supportive political structures. They attempt to escape not only all categorisation, but all sense of inherited or traditional value as well. The power of “schizo-analysis” lies in its deconstructive logic: it “de-territorializes”; it breaks up the family (destruction of the

mummy-daddy-me triad) and it affirms atheism. The father and mother exists only as fragments of the unconscious, that is, they are not wholly representative of the unconscious. Schizo-analysis advocates nomads or nomadism, that is, selves free from habits, claims to specific territories, and rootedness in any sense of unity or essence. To free oneself of family, belief and structure - the governing territories of capitalism - is to become truly multiple: it is to be schizophrenic in Deleuze and Guattari's political use of the term (Glass 1993:134).

The psychotic, in Deleuze and Guattari's view, is actually free, because psychosis releases the self from connection to and dependence on a normal society. In the words of the editors of *Anti-Oedipus* (1983):

The first task of the revolutionary is to learn from the psychotic how to shake of the oedipal yoke and the effects of power, in order to initiate a radical politics of desire freed from all beliefs (1977:xxi).

To see the world as the schizophrenic does is to liberate the self from the moral and psychological despotisms of the modernist period. Or, as Foucault describes Deleuze and Guattari's project in his Preface to *Anti-Oedipus* (1977):

Withdraw allegiance from the old categories of the Negative (law, limit, castration, lack, lacuna) which Western thought had so long held sacred as a form of power and an access to reality. Prefer what is positive and multiple. Difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems. Believe

that what is productive is not sedentary but nomadic (Deleuze and Guattari 1977:xiii).

Deleuze and Guattari hold views consistent with Baudrillard's critique of ethics, his dismissal of the idea of coherence and identity, his embracing of the nihilist concept of the "excess of meaning" (Glass 1993:134) and the notion that modernity has rendered corrupt and useless all theories of meaning and empathy.

Nick Heffernan, in his article, "Oedipus wrecks? or, whatever happened to Deleuze and Guattari?" points out that for Deleuze and Guattari:

The basic unit of language, the statement, is always politically rather than semantically motivated: it is (after Lenin and Bakhtin) an "order word". In this respect language is not made to be believed but to be obeyed, and to compel obedience (1994:137).

For Deleuze and Guattari, the schizophrenic's linguistic self signifies the act of liberation: the breaking up of signifiers, the dislocation of language and therefore of meaning – which more accurately corresponds to the flows of desire in a postmodern, hyperreal world. The transgression of the codes of signification, the use of the irrational, semantic dislocation and personal idiomatic language also find congruent expression in the poetry of Wopko Jensma:

sanctify daai cherie! Sob stations stick like, hey

lyster 'k sê: patients are advised to remain
standing while the lift motions passengers to drop
teatrays- a-one, a-two, a-three! dis curry - ruti! (1977:33).

For Foucault, madness received its highest expression in its “solitary exaltation,” the self living in the midst of its delusional terror, without the moral constraint of convention. Deleuze and Guattari take this argument one step further: schizophrenia breaks up or fragments social and moral experience; this disintegration or “deconstruction” is the precondition for political revolution. To be schizophrenic, then, is not only to be free of society’s confining meaning – from psychologically defined *territories* such as the oedipal theory which force consciousness to conform to prevailing ideologies. It is a freedom in their view celebrating the fragmentation of experience, the destruction of meaning, and the liberation of desire from the productive needs of capitalism. Deleuze and Guattari take the utterances of the mad as insight and equate the expressiveness of madness with the imagery and technique of the limit breaking artist (Glass 1993:136).

It is the schizoid’s ability to scramble and decode that Deleuze and Guattari associate with contemporary capitalism. Like the schizophrenic, capitalism can insert itself anywhere as a decoder and scrambler. Capitalism breaks down the cultural, symbolic and linguistic barriers which limit exchange. This imperial feature of capitalism is made explicit in Wopko Jensma’s vignettes of urban citiscapes which demonstrate the rush of signifiers associated with consumerist culture:

gliTTeRaTTle...

mY uniSteeL linE
My Shock-SorBer
DrinK MOR JuiCe
dRINk MOr—
eeZee dOeS't
EaT mOR MeaT
ATE moR PoLonY
& S-t-r-E-t-c-H
JuSS EaT MoR—
SaF-t-fLEx Or
TanGY KrisPY
ChocHeeSeCOnesS
& ooooOOOOMPH
onE braSSièRE O
nO oNe RaZOr—
plEEz hAf One & (1977:41).

Reading the poem simulates the disorientation and compulsion imposed on consumers by a signification of excess and by the compression of space and time. The poem exposes the power of despotic signifiers and capitalistic reterritorialization. It creates an impression of the world as a theatre of signs which cannot exclude each other and which exists as a confusion of voices. This schizoid culture has collapsed linear meaning into the compressed time of the perpetual present. This psychosis of modern consumer

culture is expressed by experiments with form, topography, fragmentation and condensation. According to Searles:

Condensation is a process in which a variety of meanings/emotions are concentrated in their communicative expression in some comparatively simple statement (1998:393).

Signification in a postmodern consumer society is considered by Frederic Jameson in his essay "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" (1983). Using Lacan's thoughts on language, Jameson stipulates that schizophrenia emerges from the failure of the infant to accede fully into the realm of speech and language. "Meaning-effects" are derived from the interrelationships of signifiers. The signified is thus an effect produced by the interrelationship of signifiers. Consequently, Jameson sees schizophrenia as the breakdown of the relationship between signifiers (1983:119).

For Lacan (1977), the experience of temporality, human time, past, present, memory, the persistence of personal identity over months and years – this existential or experiential feeling of time itself – is also an effect of language. It is because language has a past and a future, because the sentence moves in time, that we can have what seems to us concrete or lived experience of time. But since the schizophrenic does not know language articulation in that way, he or she does not have our experience of temporal continuity either, but is condemned to live a perpetual present with which the various moments of his or her past have little connection and for which there is no conceivable future on the horizon. In other words, schizophrenic experience is an experience of isolated,

disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence. The schizophrenic thus does not know personal identity in our sense, since our feeling of identity depends on our sense of the persistence of the “I” and the “me” over time.

The schizophrenic has a far more intense experience of any given present of the world than other people do. The “present” of others is always part of some larger set of projects which force people to selectively focus their perceptions. Ordinary people do not, in other words, simply globally receive the outside world as an undifferentiated vision: they are always engaged in using it, in threading certain paths through it, in attending to this or that object or person within it. The schizophrenic, however, is not only “no one” in the sense of having no personal identity; he or she also does nothing, since to have a project means to be able to commit oneself to a certain continuity over time. The schizophrenic is thus given over to an undifferentiated vision of the world in the present (Jameson 1983:120). Renee Sachehaye recounts her experiences in *Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl* (1970):

I remember very well the day it happened. We were staying in the country and I had gone for a walk alone as I did now and then. Suddenly, as I was passing the school, I heard a German song; the children were having a singing lesson. I stopped to listen, and at that instant a strange feeling came over me, a feeling hard to analyse but akin to something I was to know too well later – a disturbing sense of unreality. It seemed to me that I no longer recognised the school, it had become as large as a barracks; the singing children were prisoners, compelled to sing. It

was as though the school and the children's song were apart from the rest of the world. At the same time my eye encountered a field of wheat whose limits I could not see. The yellow vastness, dazzling in the sun, bound up with the song of the children imprisoned in the smooth stone school-barracks, filled me with such anxiety that I broke into sobs. I ran home to our garden and began to play "to make things seem as they usually were," that is, to return to reality. It was the first appearance of those elements which were always present in later sensations of unreality: illimitable vastness, brilliant light, and the gloss and smoothness of material things (Foster 1983:120).

From a study of Rene Sechechaye's text it becomes clear that a schizophrenic experience of the present is unusually powerful, vivid and "material". This heightened intensity of experience is felt as loss or "unreality" by the schizophrenic (Jameson 1983: 120).

Jameson also points out that the media culture of the late twentieth century simulates schizophrenic experience. The rapid succession of signifiers on television and in cinema advertisements erode the viewers sense of temporal continuity. The images which flash across the screen are:

isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence (Jameson 1983:119).

Wopko Jensma also expresses the disorientation of urban consumer culture by the use of the compressed minimal line, the fusion of images and unsettling topography:

day IN day OUT

no WAY oUt –

GENtS/herE

CLOSeD (on a/c

nOISE.... AiR

cONditioninG

opiUM/NicOtiNe

sHOp SwoP nO

BLaNKS onlY oR

FèLA LeGoa!

Fly JeTSet oN

Acid triP to riO

nO MANhoLes in

heLL Or FiRE eS-

caPeS tO HeaVeN

SHAKe- 'N-roll't

BloW buBBlegUm

oH BLUeBore

DaY in DaY out

NO ExIT – No

(yACHt 2 FoOk)

EntrancE herE (1977:40).

This links to Jameson according to whom the postmodern montage disorientates the subject and contributes to the egolessness that is characteristic of schizophrenia. By destroying the distinction between high and low art forms, postmodern culture integrates itself into capitalist mass culture. Jameson links schizophrenia to postmodernism and postmodernism to consumer capitalism. Contemporary capitalism has extended the symptoms of schizophrenia to the masses in the form of postmodern culture. His formulation sees both postmodernism and schizophrenia as cultural forces that scramble and confuse. This schizophrenic confusion destroys the possibility of critical perspectives. In a fragmented cultural milieu, capitalist consumer culture can thrive unopposed. A schizophrenic culture fails to :

accede fully into the realm of speech and language (Jameson 1983:118)

Like a schizophrenic, such a culture is rootless, separated from history and outside of “human time” (Jameson 1983:119). Jensma’s schizoid discourse is an incisive critique of bourgeois redolence, rampant consumerism and mediates the crisis in spatial temporal representation brought on by the engulfment of urban phenomena.

Schizophrenia is manifest in Jensma’s poetry in the form of delusions, paranoia and loss of self in his protagonists. Notions of persecution, pathological compulsion, neurotic fantasies and visual and auditory hallucinations overwhelm Jensma’s speakers. These manic reactions arise as a defence against an overwhelming and implosive reality and are desperate attempts at self preservation.

The poem “Blue 2” (Jensma 1973:8) is a metaphorical representation of apartheid as a “fence” which divides white and black South Africans. In this poem syntactical

dislocation, delusions of persecution and macabre images of violence evoke schizoid speech:

!batter a fences down

enter, i coshed'm down

cup ma head in ya bloodbeat

!fence ya aint no more

baby-black ya eyes a croon

i eat ya, a lashy streak

?fence dont shadow me

aint we nobody's business?

nobody knows da trouble i see

?fence ya aint killin me

day's a down'n out, yea

zombies coon my creoletown

!fence buzz off in a blue

aint ya business, daddy-o?

ya aint foolin me no more

!batter a fences down (1973:7).

The poem consists of alternating couplets and single lines with the schizoid perseveration of the word “fence”. According to Charles Costello in *Symptoms of Schizophrenia*:

perserveration is the persistent repetition of an idea or word (1993:29).

In this instance the speaker repeatedly uses the word, “fence” and declaims it as a barrier between people. The insistence on the destruction of the “fence” is a synecdoche of the destruction caused by apartheid.

The zombie image is expressive of a mass psychosis of catatonic stupor amongst blacks. In the poem this particular form of catatonia is indicative of the withdrawal into the self by people who have been deprived of many rights which gave recognition to their humanity. The zombie image is also interesting, as in many ways, it is what Jensma eventually became – Jensma’s schizophrenia was extremely debilitating in the latter stages of his life and he was frequently reduced to catatonic rigidity.

The poem expresses resistance to racial separation enforced by the apartheid state in a defiant tone. The rapid pace of the poem together with its Americanised pidgin is reminiscent of the American spirituals with its theme of resistance to oppression. The elision and lexical items of jazz such as “daddy-o” and “yea” (1973:7) reinforce an impression of a spiritual and impart a bouncy rhythm of defiance. The word “daddy-o” (1973:7) is deliberately ambiguous. It may also be read as schizophrenic condensation (in which a single word, statement or gesture may have multiple meanings). “daddy-o” (1973:7) may be a lexical item of jazz which punctuate lyrics in what is known as

“troubling the line”. It may also be a reference to the apartheid state and its policemen who were notorious for violently enforcing racial laws and suppressing dissent (Kane-Berman 1993:40). “daddy-o” (1973:7) is also an oedipal reference to the state as a vigilant and repressive father figure.

In “Lo Lull 3” (1973:24) the speaker’s fragmented psyche has resulted in an alter personality which looks on at his own displaced body:

i look at myself sleeping
i look at myself going for a piss
i look at myself coming back to bed
i look at myself having a nightmare
i look at myself getting up
i look at myself shaving
i look at myself going off to work
i keep looking at myself
not knowing that i am being watched (1973:24).

R. D. Laing (1969) points out that the dissociation of the self from the body is a response that appears to be available to most people who find themselves enclosed within a threatening experience from which there is no physical escape. An appropriate example is the experiences of prisoners in concentration camps who lapse into a psychical withdrawal “into” the self and “out of” the body. Despite the unreality of experience the alter personality is excessively alert and thinks and observes with exceptional lucidity

(Laing 1969:82). In the above poem the alter personality reflects this lucidity of thought in its carefully chronicled surveillance of the body.

The prosody obtains its unity by the anaphoric repetition of the phrase, “I look at myself” (Jensma 1973:24). This repetition also creates an incantory rhythm which foregrounds the surreal and hallucinogenic nature of the poem. Dramatic monologue is used by Jensma to express the paranoia of the speaker who concludes triumphantly that his alter personality is also being watched:

not knowing that I am being watched (1973:24).

Part three of “Only Us” (Jensma 1975:15) reflects the depersonalisation of the self which is expressed in bizarre imagery of self preoccupation:

the candlestick of my finger

burns slowly at the dawn

i have a thousand eyes

nine-ninety-nine don't see

i have a million words to say

they are all dead in my mouth

but my hands wield an ax

but i know the price is right.

In the first three stanzas the speaker appears bewildered and clings to his isolation. The absence of punctuation enhance the bizarre effect produced by the intractable delusions of the speaker. These delusions are predicated on manic grandiosity in the form of having a “thousand eyes” (1975:15) and an iridescent finger:

the candlestick of my finger

burns slowly at the dawn (1975:15)

Melanie Klein points out that manic grandiosity is discernible by its over-valuations. With this goes the tendency to think of everything on a large scale, to think in large numbers, all this in accordance with imagined omnipotence (1975:352).

Paradoxically, the speaker is also confronted by the dread of the dissolution of his schizoid self. This is portrayed in the poem through the juxtaposition of over-valuations and devaluations:

I have a thousand eyes

Nine-ninety-nine don't see

I have a million words to say

They are all dead in my mouth (Jensma 1973:15)

The imagoes in the poem foreground the delusions of incapacity and deadness of the speaker. Paradoxically, in the last stanza, in spite of this bewildering inertia, the speaker evokes a militant call to arms:

but my hands wields an ax

and i know the price is right (Jensma 1973:15).

Part Two of “Chant of praise for the idi amin dada” (1977:49) expresses the morbid fascination with destruction:

kiddo smashing a toy
he doesn’t destroy
he perceives, percepts
he reconstructs... (Jensma 1977:48).

The aggressive images and the minute attention to acts of destruction are indicative of a narcissistic rage with the object of achieving total control. The aggressive transference of rage underscores the desire for sadistic gratification from destruction and the need for narcissistic power. The search for power over the object is manifest as a rationalised, intellectualised form of cruelty:

He doesn’t destroy
He perceives, percepts
He reconstructs... (Jensma 1977:48)

The elliptical line ending anticipates the flight from reality and descent into psychoses.

The use of ellipsis in each line foregrounds the alienated and dislocated self of the schizophrenic in part three of “Chant of praise for the idi amin dada” (Jensma 1977:49):

The schizophrenic splits itself, its world.....
Escape voices (yakkity yak) of its conscience..
Oversensitive nerves, tight as wire sinews.....

Give free reign to its floodlight feelings.....

It's severe, wild at one, two, one, at once.....

It's uninhibited, unrestrained, shows two face.....

Unintelligible cacophonic montages, it's dada.....

The elliptical line endings also underscore the ontological insecurity and threatened identity which characterises schizophrenia. The alter personalities alluded to in the first line of the poem emerge in the attempt to keep terror from imploding consciousness. The schizophrenic “split” is a desperate attempt to preserve existence in the face of extreme trauma.

The auditory hallucinations in line two:

escape voices (yakkity yak) of its conscience (Jensma 1977:49)

are the most common in schizophrenia and frequently involve many voices the person may perceive from inside his or her head. These voices may be familiar and may be single or multiple (Bentall 1990:3).

In lines 3-4 the subject is overwhelmed by the manifestations of multiplicity in schizophrenia. The schizophrenic produces what Roland Barthes terms:

the text of bliss...the text that imposes a state of loss... unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memory, brings to crisis his relations with language (Glass 1993:11).

This is manifest in the elliptical line endings which is suggestive of the speaker's extreme perplexity about schizophrenia.

The “uninhibited, unrestrained, shows two face” (Jensma 1997:49) nature of the schizoid episode is described by Terry Eagleton as:

the dismantling of our given identities through art (1983:191).

Fred Pfeil speaks of:

the appeal of (as Deleuze and Guattari might put it...) the new, unrestricted schizoid self, awash in its desiring flows, freely floating in the warm, amniotic currents of the Kristevan or Bartheisan semiotic, unthethered by memory to any fixed sense of self (1988:70-71).

The “unintelligible, cacophonic montages” (Jensma 1977:49) in the last line are diagnosed as formal thought disorder in schizophrenia. The most common example of this is when the subject shifts incoherently from one subject to another without displaying any awareness that the topics are unconnected. Badcock points out that neologisms also abound in formal thought disorder and are indicative of a tendency to create a private language related to the state of narcissistic withdrawal which underlies the disease (1983:140).

Chadwick, in his study, *Schizophrenia: The Positive Perspective* (1998) argues for a shift away from the exclusive focus on dysfunction and disorder in schizophrenics and for the realisation that sanity can grade just as easily into insanity as into “supersanity” (1998:1).

Chadwick's thinking may also lend credence to the view that Jensma is merely satirising the way medical discourses speak about schizophrenia in this poem. Jensma is not confirming the truth about medical perceptions of schizophrenia but transposes elements of the irrational and experimental implicit in "dada" into a new signifying relationship with schizophrenia. Both dada and schizophrenia operate on the premises of the irrational and chance association in an attempt at liberation from what Lacan notes as:

the use of language as the "signifier" of the rational which evolves from a cultural matrix of power, domination, order and regularity (Glass 1993:61).

From a dadaist perspective, Murphy points out that the "Unintelligible cacophonic montages" (1988:49) foregrounds the idea of meaningless which in turn contradicts the notion of the work as an original and inspired creation. Attention is also shifted away from the search for the works self containing meaning (Murphy 1998:33).

The first unpublished poem in *Blood and more Blood* (n.d.) is entitled "Dear God" (nd.:5). The poem is a philosophical musing of a speaker who has grown weary of life and who subsequently withdrew from reality:

dear god why must I hang
An empty sack in the window
Why must the river
Of my blood flow back and forth
Why must my body be a passage of
Silence that never seems to end

In my nostrils the smell of the sea

The slightest breath of air...

Why is my life unauthorised

Why am I sick of my own dialogue

I think I must abandon myself

Now that I've withdrawn

Into a lone neurosis of sleep

But why do I scream for you (n.d.: 4).

The poem is written in free verse and in an irregular metre. The repetitive syntax foregrounds the philosophical introspection of the speaker and the schizoid compulsion to abandon the self. The repetition of questions by the speaker also foregrounds his lamentation. The rhythmic cadence in the poem emphasises the anguish and melancholia of the speaker as he grapples with his existential mystery.

The first two lines of the poem are a cynical allusion to the myth of the Christmas stocking. The myth of the Christmas stocking is linked to the miraculous gift of gold by Saint Nicholas to the poor. Saint Nicholas is believed to have dropped three bags of gold in the stockings of three poor girls who were about to be married. This tradition is perpetuated by the fact that on Christmas day children hang stockings by the window in the hope of some reward from Santa or Saint Nicholas. In the poem the speaker employs

the myth in an oblique manner to question the necessity of depending on miracles to survive. The speaker is obviously of the view that there should be freedom from want in an idealised egalitarian society.

The imagery in lines 3 to 8:

Why must the river
Of my blood flow back and forth
Why must my body be a passage of
Silence that never seems to end
In my nostrils the smell of the sea
The slightest breath of air...(n.d.:3-8)

indicate the delusions of enhanced perceptions by the schizoid subject. The speaker's preoccupation with self is a prelude to a flight from reality.

In line 9 the speaker's lament:

Why is my life unauthorised (n.d.: 4)

may be of biographical significance. Jensma's marriage across the colour line was prohibited in South Africa by the Mixed Marriages Act and he was compelled to move to Botswana and Swaziland to maintain his marriage. It is perhaps this fugitive wandering that is expressed in the plaintive imagery of desolation and anguish.

In the last stanza the speaker's withdrawal from reality is exacerbated. The speaker is engulfed by the auditory hallucinations of voices which evoke a feeling of helplessness:

Why am I sick of my own dialogue (n.d.: 4).

The speaker is overwhelmed by his psychotic episodes and seeks refuge in catatonic withdrawal into "the lone neurosis of sleep" (n.d.:4). The poem concludes in an anguished cry for help from the terrors of psychoses and the quest for existential meaning:

But why do I scream for you (n.d.:4).

Tangential associations, loss of goal and perseveration (persistent repetition of words or ideas) are characteristic of Jansma's schizoid discourse. Many of his personas are afflicted with inappropriate pathological guilt which manifests itself in bizarre acts of paranoia and sado-masochism. These images of the schizoid individual may seem macabre and irrational, but they are coherent within their own framework, and, in this respect, they illuminate the inner world of psychoses and the alienation which ensues from a tragic flight from reality.

Chapter 3

Themes

This chapter analyses the themes in *Sing For Our Execution* (1973), *Where White Is The Colour*, *Where Black Is The Number* (1974), *I Must Show You My Clippings* (1977) and the unpublished *Blood And More Blood*. Edward Said's aphorism:

every text has a context (1995:4)

is germane to a consideration of the thematic motifs in Jensma's poetry. The cataclysmic events of the sixties in apartheid South Africa were definitive influences in the shaping of Jensma's poetry. The rise of black consciousness and the cathartic events of resistance and state oppression were scoured into the popular memory of South Africans. These events together with the pervasive nature of consumer culture were the topics of interest in Jensma's experimental and schizoid verse forms.

The themes in Jensma's four volumes of poetry range from mutilation, confinement, loss and conflicted identity to issues of racism, politics and consumer culture. Equally important themes were the poems linked to events in his life, class conflict and the exploitative nature of consumer capitalism. Of necessity, many themes overlap as is clear in a consideration of the motif of mutilation which is used by Jensma as a pathological gesture of frustration and suffering in response to racism and underclass misery.

The theme of Mutilation

The leitmotif of mutilation derives from manic responses to frustration and despair in Jensma's overwhelmed speakers as well as the sado-masochism of his protagonists. In "Cribdoor 1" (Jensma 1973:6) Jensma employs dramatic monologue in a visceral diction which gives voice to a bizarre ritual of violence and sado-masochism:

single'm out
let'm be a dead locust nibblin stone
crack
the glass eye
the steel skull
the rubber gut scrap
flesh'n bone, hijack'm to solar dust
single'm out.

In the poem the speaker derives masochistic pleasure from inflicting bodily harm. Words such as "glass", "steel", "rubber" and "scrap" (Jensma 1973:6) dehumanises the victim in the eyes of the racist perpetrator and legitimises his sadistic assault. Redl describes the psychology of object-dehumanisation in terms of:

a defence against overwhelming or painful emotions that entails a decreased sense in a person of his own individuality and in his perception of the humanness of other people. The misperceiving of others ranges from viewing them *en bloc* as "subhuman" or as "bad humans" (a long familiar component of group prejudice)

to viewing them as nonhuman as though they were inanimate items or dispensable supplies. As such, their maltreatment or even their destruction may be carried out or acquiesced in with relative freedom from the restraints of conscience or feelings of brotherhood (1971:102).

In the poem the dispassionate ritual of sadism masks the pathological pride and power the perpetrator derives from inflicting suffering upon his victims. The morbid fascination in the ritual of gore constitutes a source of voyeurism for the perpetrator. According to Louw and Becker:

the voyeurism of violence is not only pathological but occurs in many socially acceptable circumstances such as violent films, wrestling and bullfights and are indicative of disquieting elements in the human psyche (1996:79).

The repetition of “single’m out” (Jensma 1976:3) reinforces the organising motif of persecution in *Sing For Our Execution* (1973). The diction of elision and absence of punctuation in lines three to seven accelerate the rhythm of the poem and betray the deep seated hatred of the perpetrator. These images of covert violence and its psycho-social stress, expressed as sadistic dismemberment and mutilation in Jensma’s poetry are expressive of pathological responses to frustration borne of various forms of oppression.

Self-mutilation is also a prominent motif in Jensma's poetry. Self-mutilation is a deliberate, destructive attack on various parts of one's own body (Shneidman 1976:281).

According to Ellie Ragland:

self-mutilation may be attributed to the diminishing of the subject's ego which leads to a pathogenic response (1995:98).

Self-mutilation occurs when emotions of anger, anxiety, frustration and isolation become unbearable in the form of internalised conflicts. The subsequent self-hate is reinforced by self-punishment. Self-injury is a coping mechanism which prevents the descent into psychosis and suicide. Shneidman in his study, *Suicidology: Contemporary Developments* (1976) explains:

self-mutilation is a net result of a conflict between an aggressive, destructive impulse aided by the super-ego and the will to live, whereby a partial self-destruction gratifies irresistible urges (1976:283).

Self-mutilation is thus a way of reducing internal tension and gaining attention. In Jensma's poetry, self-mutilation is often the result of overwhelming anger, self-hatred and depression. In "Misto 3" (1973:8), for example, the speaker vents his rage and frustration in acts of self-mutilation and despair:

lets
spit
lets
spill our names on blank walls
lets
spell it out: we have no future

lets
bolt
lets
howl for their waste blood, yes
lets slit our throbbin human vein ---
guts
guts
guts
(big boss, my lord, may i vomit,
i mean, my bitter, bleedin heart
(flippin fool
drum
guts
drums, hear our drippin pleadin
when will our black christ die
guts (1973:8).

Intense emotion typical of expressionist verse forms are communicated by the halting, staccato rhythm. The interior monologue is used to convey the anguish of blacks embittered by the lack of opportunity in a racist state and who resort to self destructive behaviour in order to alleviate emotional tensions of despair and worthlessness. The use of the plural, “our” (1973:8) in the poem makes the speaker representative of a black collective. The degrading self-images implicit in having “no future” (1973:8) and

“flippin fool” (1973:8) are challenged by the use of the words “lets spell it out” (1973:8) which contradict the racist stereotype of blacks as illiterate and apathetic.

The proliferation of monosyllables gives the poem a telegraphic sense of urgency and reinforces the motif of despair in the poem. The poem obtains its unity by the anaphoric repetition of “lets” and “guts” and by alliteration and assonance:

i mean, my bitter, bleedin heart
flippin fool (1973:8).

The assonance and apocope in “drippin, pleadin” (1973:8) mimics falling drops of blood and are synecdoches of the suffering of blacks. Blood is also symbolic of the extreme frustration and despair felt by the speaker and an ominous portender of violence and rebellion. The tone of cynicism in “big boss, my lord, may i vomit” (1973:8) in which permission is requested for the execution of an involuntary act foregrounds the repressive control blacks were subjected to. The use of the word “vomit” (1973:8) is deliberately ambiguous in that it is also an expression of disgust at racial oppression.

The hope in the penultimate line, “when will our black christ die” (1973:8), expresses the desire for a saviour to deliver black people from racist oppression. The notion of a “black christ” (1973:8) is an important tenet in black consciousness ideology. It also foregrounds the absurdities of racist churches in South Africa in which white congregations prayed separately from blacks. The racist oppression of blacks made it difficult for some to uncritically accept the message of a white Christ who had

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bequeathed an unequal world skewed in favour of whites. Kelly Brown Douglas, in his study *The Black Christ* (1995) traces the origins of the notion of the Black Christ to Robert Alexander Young's 1828 book, *Ethiopian Manifesto*. The idea of the Black Christ was popularised in the 1960's by the Black American civil rights movements (Douglas 1995:30). Malcolm X was disparaging of blacks who uncritically accepted Christianity:

his type has blind fate in your religion. He's not interested in any religion of his own. He believes in a white Jesus, white Mary, white angels and he's trying to get to a white heaven. When you listen to him in his church singing, he sings a song, I think they call it, "Wash Me White As Snow". He wants to be turned white so that he can go to heaven with a white man (Adams 1996:121).

The idea of the "black christ" also features in Langston Hughes poem, "I Wander as I Wander" (1959):

Christ is a nigger
Beaten and black
Oh, bare your back!
Mary is his mother:
Mammy of the South
Silence your mouth...

Most Holy Bastard
Of the bleeding mouth:

Nigger Christ

On the cross of the South! (1959:65).

The theme of mutilation is also manifest in “Misto 3” (1978:8). The motif of a “black Christ” elucidated in “Misto 3”(1973:8) is embodied by a suffering, mutilated black woman:

i saw her sit on a sidewalk
i saw spit blood ina gutter
i saw her stump for a foot
i saw her clutch a stick
i saw her eyes grin toothless
i saw thorns in her burnt flesh

i see her cut her own throat
i see her corpse lie in Dark City
i see her save a multitude (1973:38)

The absence of conjunctions between complete sentences produces a cinematographic illusion which dramatically heighten the pathos evoked in the poem. Cacophonous (harsh sounding) words such as “stump”, “spit blood”, “grin toothless” and “burnt flesh” (1973:38) are calculated to repel and shock its readers and reinforces the image of suffering.

The “thorns in her burnt flesh” (1973:38) in line six is an allusion to the crown of thorns forced upon Jesus before his crucifixion. The thorns symbolise unrighteous persecution by society and is also a metaphor for immense suffering.

The poem, “Lopsided Cycle 5” (1973:5) deals with guilt. Resolution to overwhelming anxiety is strangely predicated on obsessive-compulsive acts of self-mutilation:

i got a gash in my head
blood spurts from it
i must cut my head off
i must hide myself
nobody must see me do it
cause the blood is my guilt (1973:14).

The speaker attempts to make himself invisible by bizarre acts of castration. Self mutilation in this context gives the conflicted subject a false sense of control over his life and body.

The final part of “Lo Lull” (1973: 25) is a monologue in which the speaker derives masochistic pleasure from an elaborate ritual of mutilation:

first paint my head in all detail
then pluck the eyes out
then cut the ears off
then strip off the lips

then smash the teeth out
then burn the hair off
then peel off the skin
then the nose, the tongue
first paint my skull in all detail (1973: 25)

The poem is a masochistic ritual in which the subject takes pleasure in pain which culminates in the final loss of self. The compulsive repetition of painful events betray the speaker's depersonalised view of his body. R. D. Laing, in his study, *The Divided Self* (1969) points out that:

this detachment of the body comes about when the individual regards his body as one object amongst other objects in the world rather than as the core of his being. Instead, the body is felt as the core of a *false self*, which a detached, disembodied self looks upon with tenderness, hatred or amusement as the case may be (1969:71).

This disembodied self may also be an alter personality stricken by guilt at the racist oppression of his fellow countrymen.

The poem, "Pulling Strong At Eleven-Forty-Five" (1973:19) reveals the hustling and violence in township life:

As jimmy rushin says: any monday 'n
she aint your girl, she aint my girl

no, she's anybody's goddamn girl – an I get
maself ma shootin rod
an slash anybody's skull open (1973:19).

In the above poem the diminishing of the speaker's ego has contributed to a destructive and criminal response. The random act of violence is a macabre and aberrant way of releasing emotional and physiological anxiety. The poem is also suggestive of the violence against women in a society dominated by men. Women are objectified as sexual objects trading in the satiation of lust. This frustrates the possessive instincts of the speaker who then seeks release in the shedding of blood.

Laing points out that in phantasy the subject does not have to contend with guilt and thus give free rein to his destructive imagoes (1969:90). This is evident in the tenuous and guilt ridden relationship with reality emphasised in part two of "I Come" (1973:64):

you lie hidden
in the corridors of my fear
smelling of blood

i've plucked out your eyes
i've smashed in your teeth
i've peeled off your skin

but they don't believe

-everything is just lies

but they don't believe

that I call you brother

you lie hidden

in the corridors of my fear

smelling of blood (1973:64).

The ontological insecurity of the speaker is emphasised by the perseveration of the obsessive motif of violence. The elaborate ritual of violence against facial body parts is intended to efface identity. Although the victim (imago) is unsighted his presence is manifest by his "smell of blood" (1973:64). In this poem the protagonist is vainly attempting to come to terms with guilt borne of a surfeit of violence which is repressed in the deep recesses of his psyche. It may also be possible that the protagonist is conflicted by a fantasy of bizarre, ritualised violence against his alter ego.

The ritual of organised mutilation in the second stanza tends to shift focus away from a moral appraisal of his deeds:

i've plucked out your eyes

i've smashed in your teeth

i've peeled off your skin (1973:64).

Roy Baumeister, in his study, *Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty* observes that:

to be free of guilt, including both its emotional side and its aspects of responsibilities and principles, it is better to focus one's mind at lower levels. One attends to the details and procedures rather than the broader contexts and meanings. When burglarising a house, for example, a thief is not reflecting on how his actions violate the principles of private ownership of property, or will cause distress and anguish to the victims... rather he focuses very narrowly on procedural details: fingerprints, window locks, alarm systems, hiding places, dogs. Not only does this way of thinking help him perform more effectively, it also prevents any feelings of guilt...the power of low level thinking to keep one's mind off guilt is a major reason for the apparent fascination with details that have marked many killing operations (1996:338).

In the above poem, the fascination with detail occupies the speaker's attention and prevents him from considering his actions as morally repugnant. On the contrary, the explicit ritual of mutilation reinforces his delusional status in the face of denial by others:

But they don't believe

- everything is just lies

but they don't believe (1973:64)

The speaker's delusional crisis is exemplified by the fact that the "i" and "you" in the poem are manifestations of his own persona.

Jensma has used extreme pathological responses to foreground the acute sense of frustration and degradation felt by blacks under apartheid as well as the absurdities of racism. In the poem, “Trains on platform nine stop at all stations” (1975:45), for example, the paralysis of being restricted to racially separate zones induces vivid images of surreal dismemberment:

yet i wonder wonder why
all the tenants in this block-of-flats
don't have their feet cut off -
it would give them freedom of movement
in all areas but bantustans (1975:44).

The lines above protest the injustice of the Group Areas Act of 1950 as well as the Homeland or Bantustan Policy which sought to remove blacks from urban areas and relocate them to underdeveloped, rural “homelands”. The absurd advice of having “their feet cut off ” (1975:44) emphasises in an oblique way the absurdities of racial restrictions.

The motif of mutilation in Jensma's poetry range from conflicted personas who are overwhelmed by desperation and helplessness and neurotic subjects afflicted by sado-masochism. Acts of self-mutilation are self preservation techniques which relieve anxiety and depersonalising symptoms in Jensma's overwhelmed subjects. The sado-masochist, on the other hand, derives a false sense of power, control and pleasure by the ritualised

infliction of pain. These acts of mutilation are pathological responses to social suffering and the restraint on civil liberties imposed upon blacks by the apartheid government.

The theme of confinement

A recurring motif in Jensema's poetry is the theme of confinement. In Jensema's texts confinement is mainly due to imprisonment for political dissent against a racist regime, incarceration in mental institutions as well as a psychotic terror of confined spaces. Jensema's conflicted protagonists reveal the psycho-social stresses of confinement in a variety of pathological responses.

"Lopsided Cycle 4" (1973:13) is a dramatic monologue written in free verse. The implied author is a political prisoner lamenting his imprisonment:

our cutlassregime hollers praise for the whip
dumbfounded
prisoners a
scratchin a
prison walls
until blood
drips outa'
their nails
a log chain
a ma leg, oh
neverending

pit a agony

set me free

Lod, i hea't

Yours iGoli

leaves the gap for poor souls to die for poor souls to die forever (1973 :13)

In the above poem the speaker seeks death as an escape from the intolerable anguish of imprisonment. "Imprisonment" is also experienced as a sense of being trapped within an array of racist laws under the apartheid government. The line enjambment and elision in lines 2 to 15, coupled with the cacophonous (harsh sounding) diction of pathos foregrounds the continuous lament of the prisoner and concentrates attention upon his ceaseless suffering. The "cutlass regime" (1973:13) is a reference to the apartheid government which was notorious for its brutal suppression of political dissent. The imageries of desperation and suffering whilst in prison elicits empathy for the speaker and foregrounds the abuse of power by the state.

Imprisonment was also used to satirise the apartheid government and its racist dictates:

when he opened the ceremony

i thought of last year

when he passed that infamous bill

now we say: sorry i live, lord

yes, last year i became scum

(notice his pride in that watch dog)

yes, i also remember i protested
that's why i am peering through bars
and one with the gutter (1973:31).

The disenfranchisement of blacks was met with widespread protest by the African National Congress, Pan African Congress and the South African Communist Party before the banning of these organisations. As the National Party intensified its racial control over South Africa, many activists, both black and white, were either imprisoned or summarily banned. In the above poem, the speaker uses self depreciating irony to critique the violation of human rights by the state:

now we say: sorry i live lord
yes, last year I became scum (1973:31).

In addition, the last two lines (L 7-8)

that's why i am peering through bars
and one with the gutter (1973:31)

underscores the fact that racism was a manipulative form of social engineering that resulted in widespread poverty for blacks in spite of the National Party's "separate but equal" propaganda.

The poem, "Lo Lull" (1973) is a four part poem which depicts the anguish and misery of a disconnected self living in multiple realities. The speaker exercises dominion over the form, shape and presence of alter personalities as a compensation for his loss of

effective control in the real world. The poem is a surreal monologue in which the speaker's identity is threatened as he is overwhelmed by his condition of confinement:

i am a dirty little room
with spiders in the corner of my skull
my mouth a dark pit
into which human droppings disappear
the speck of rust in my heart worries me

many people breathe in and out of me
i am at ease with the world
only the speck of rust worries me (1973:22).

R.D. Laing, in his study *The Divided Self* (1969) points out that in cases of acute alienation and suffering the subject may lapse into a state of petrification in order to survive his terror. Petrification is a particular form of terror in which the subject is turned to stone and he regards himself as a thing (1969:48). In this instance words such as “dirty”, “dark pit” and “human droppings” (1973:23) indicate an extreme perplexity of identity which has led to the subject projecting his identity upon his room. The subject's alienation and displaced personality is expressed as “the dirty little room” (1973:22) he is confined in. Similarly, “the spiders in the corner of my skull” (1973:22) allude to the walls in his cob infested cell and the “dark pit into which human droppings disappear” (1973:22) is the toilet pan.

Robert Rieber in his study, *The Psychology of War and Peace: The Image of the Enemy* (1991) makes this incisive comment about the psychology of self-dehumanisation:

Self-directed dehumanisation relates to intrapsychic events in which the self protects itself by immunising itself against stress laden-situations that threaten to be traumatising. Amongst emotionally healthy and stable people selective self-dehumanisation may actually be enabling. In medicine and law enforcement, individuals need to detach themselves from their patients or offenders if they are to perform their job satisfactorily (1991:16).

However, self-dehumanisation carried to its extremity in delusional psychosis (as evidenced in the poem) may leave the individual with a diminished sense of reality and grossly disorientated. These delusional or hallucinatory perceptions estrange the implied author from the outside world. The speaker considers himself as an isolate, without connection or meaning in the world, like Kafka's character K in *The Castle* (1969).

Walter Benjamin describes K:

for just as K lives in the village on Castle Hill, modern man lives in his body; the body slips away from him, is hostile towards him. It may happen that a man wakes up one day and finds himself transformed into vermin. Exile - his exile, has gained control over him (1969:126).

Part two of "Lo Lull" (1973:23) is written in the form of an interior monologue. An interior monologue is a written representation of the speaker's inner thoughts, impressions and memories as if directly overheard without the apparent intervention of a

summarising and selecting narrator (Lennard 1996:111). The desperate behaviour of the speaker is a perverse attempt to cope with his degradation and obtain recognition of his humanity:

they stripped me naked

now they let me prowl

but they don't laugh

i feel no shame, no cold

why are they staring

they wanted me naked

i toss my head off

i cry with agony

to make them laugh

but they only stare

i show them my bum

they still stare

i tell them a joke

they stare

i get it –

i must be their judge (1973:23)

Words such as “naked” and “prowl”(1973:23) indicate that the speaker's confinement has reduced him to a state of acute depersonalisation:

i feel no shame, no cold (1973:23).

The repetition of the word “stare”(1973:23) reinforces the tone of frustration in the poem which derives from the speaker’s changing aberrant behaviour in the face of the implacable gaze of his observers. The acts of crying, laughing and showing them his bum are desperate pleas for recognition, but to his chagrin they merely increase his isolation. His estrangement and frustration leads him to conclude, in the epigrammatic couplet which concludes part 2 of “Lo Lull”:

i get it-

i must be their judge (1973:23).

The subject under surveillance reverses his role and now becomes a critical observer. The speaker’s acute frustration has driven him to introject the attitude and role of his observers.

Laing points out that this particular form of petrification may also arise out of the subject’s longing to escape from the tedium of his own company, a feature which is clear in the frustrating monotony of imprisonment in “Lo Lull” (1973:23).

In “Door” (1973:50) the speaker is forlorn and weary of his incarceration. The psychological deprivation of solitary confinement is emphasised by the repetition of “i” (1973:50) which amplifies his loneliness. His overwhelming desire for companionship is sustained by eliciting “hope”, “patience” and “faith” (1973:50) in the possibility of a visit:

i open the door and see no one

i always open the door
i think I will wait
someone may come some day
someone who wants to see me
someone who will listen to me
one must have patience
one must have faith
i want someone to see me
i want someone to hear me talk
i want someone to knock on the door (1973:50).

According to Ellie Ragland in her study, *Essays on the Pleasures of Death*:

because the ego is formed from the outside world, individuals depend on one another for self validation (1995:19).

Solitary confinement has resulted in severe sensory deprivation in the speaker who yearns for human contact as a form of “self validation”.

“Bram Fisher¹ Gasink” (1975:18) is an Afrikaans poem of three stanzas and of irregular line lengths).

¹ Bram Fisher was one of the leaders of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and a member of a prominent Afrikaans family who was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1965. Fisher was the lawyer who defended the Rivonia trialists. After being allowed out of South Africa on bail to fight a case before the Privy Council, he returned to stand trial. When it became clear that police infiltration of the SACP had established the state's case, he went into hiding to continue his fight against apartheid. Fisher was recaptured in 1965 and sentenced to life imprisonment. He was released on compassionate grounds shortly before his death from cancer in 1975 (Davenport 1991: 404)

In this poem a coloured speaker expresses in Kaaps (Cape Coloured dialogue) his incredulity that a whiteman could languish in prison because of his opposition to apartheid:

dja djy, ou stopkop omgesny-nei 'k se
dis nou lattie kops djou hel sjee
met djou gat kompleet toegestop
oorlattie gwarras nie byie haas galé hettie
ma dja staan vas (ons bo-baas) – so vas
lattie gal wat dja iet
myie katkop virrie ou ballies wil laat voer
ma nei, dja sallie skiet kryie -'k meen

al lê dja gasink innie gemang
ennie tone djou tyd tel
al steie dja onne djou lyf sa eia lig
nei, 'k sê somme so by myself ,
patyt-
al is dja 'n lanie,
nei, dja nei, pass dadie deng hiernatoe, ta (1974:18).

[yes, you, old, shaven head- i say
now that the cops are giving you hell
now that you are fucked

but you stand firm (our leader)- so firm
that the gall which you swallow
makes me want to give my *katkop* to the old prisoners to eat
but no, you won't have any space to maneuver in

even though you are sunk in prison
and counting your ten toes
and even if you are stumbling under the weight of your
own body, me, I'm just mumbling to myself
- even if you're a lanie
no, ja no, pass that thing this way]

The use of Kaapse Afrikaans simulates the effect of conversation in the poem. Strategically placed dashes also creates a choppy rhythm associated with conversation and thinking aloud. The title, literally "Bram Fisher Sinks" alludes to Fisher's imprisonment and failing health. The word "sinks" is used as an idiomatic expression for being trapped. In this poem a coloured speaker voices his disbelief at Fisher's opposition to apartheid. Even though Fisher is now in prison and afflicted by failing health he is still the speaker's leader or "bo-baas" (1975:18).

The second stanza eulogises Fisher's convictions of equal rights for all South Africans in spite of the fact that he is reduced to a frail prisoner. A sentimental diction of pathos

evokes pity for Fisher's suffering and brutality by the police. The speaker comments that in spite of Fisher's famed prowess as a lawyer, he now, ironically, has little space to manoeuvre in. The word "katkop" (1975:18) is prison slang of Cape Coloured origin which refers to the ration of bread allotted to prisoners, literally a "cat's head".

The images in the third stanza, of Fisher "counting his ten toes in prison" (1975:18) and "stumbling under his own body weight" (1975:18) may be biographical in hinting at the cancer which afflicted him and which finally claimed his life. Incredulity is expressed that a white man should sacrifice his life for black interests. The speaker finds Fisher's political struggle difficult to understand as it goes against the stereotype of oppressive and racist whites he is accustomed to.

Peter Horn makes these incisive comments about Jensma's poetry:

The degree of the poet's regression, measurable in the destruction of language, is a yardstick for his impotence and psychological resistance in the face of the brutal power of the real world. The "outside" world which he produces in his imagination confronts him not only in his fantastic nightmares but also in reality: as alienating working-conditions, as capital's absolute power over him, as a state which attempts to control his most intimate thoughts by means of absurd and tyrannical laws. The defence-mechanisms expressed in his paranoid images of power reveal such extreme rationality that society is forced to declare him "mad". He becomes "paranoid" because he sees the reigning spectres in hundredfold

distortion and magnification. For people like him society has only the solitary confinement of jails or the closed wards of psychiatric institutions. (1994:109).

The poem “In Solitary” (1975:109) describes the bizarre thoughts of a man in confinement. Although the speaker is trapped in what may be a psychiatric ward or a prison, he refuses to relinquish his concept of freedom which is diametrically opposed to a society which knows freedom only as a word:

a man in solitary passes by

passes by me in solitary

the moon caught in tree branches

a boat with a man in it rowing

passes by me in solitary

the moon, the man, confined

it's getting late, far too late

i coined the moon, the man, as free

but I remained in solitary

there's another who passes by

but I don't know him , but he is

past me confined in solitary (1975:44).

The poem portrays the introspective musing of a speaker in confinement. The six couplets consists of images observed by the speaker through his prison bars or window. The repetition of the word, “solitary” (1975:44) foregrounds the speaker’s isolation as well as his tragic observation that people are irretrievably confined within the mores of a materialistic society. The first two lines:

a man in solitary passes by
passes by me in solitary (1977:44)

may also allude to an alter-personality of the speaker which arises out of an intense need for company. The imago is thus an aberrant way of coping with his loneliness. Likewise, the “boat with a man in it rowing” (1977:44) may be yet another imago placed within fantastic settings by the speaker. The speaker’s decision:

i coined the moon, the man, as free (1977:44)

is a pathological way of reassuring himself that he exercises control and power over his surroundings.

“Walls” (n.d.: 34), a poem which appears in the unpublished, *Blood and more Blood*, is a poem of narcissistic withdrawal into the self and a neurotic preoccupation with confinement:

i went to a lonesome place
thought I’ll find a dime

but I was shown the backdoor

and I was given no key
now its just my great hate
for the man behind the moustache

he never talks, has no friends
but he shakes me up like hell

i only live in my shadow now
i feel the walls spy on me
those walls with bloodstains
remind me of life long ago (n.d.:34).

The poem is a dramatic monologue arranged in six couplets. The simple diction and relatively consistent metrical pattern belie the emotional turmoil and the undiagnosed psychotic terror which afflicts the speaker. The sedate rhythm of the poem reinforces the perceptions of a resigned, alienated individual with only a tenuous relationship with reality. The poem is an account of the bizarre delusions of the speaker in confinement and his terrifying experiences of “the man behind the moustache” (n.d.: 43) which is presumably his therapist.

The first two stanzas are a reference to the speaker’s institutionalisation. The speaker deplores the absence of social graces at the institution and projects his anxieties of confinement onto his therapist. The therapist is an anonymous face behind a moustache

who is a receptacle for the inappropriate emotions of the speaker. The loneliness of the speaker and his impoverished existence brought on by the sensory deprivation of confinement are projected onto his therapist as well:

he never talks, has no friends (n.d.: 43).

The speaker's paranoid suspicion that the walls are spying on him is triggered by his alienated condition and his bizarre perceptions of reality. His conflicted self regresses into catatonic inertia:

i only live in my shadow now

i feel the walls spy on me (n.d.:43)

The speaker is withdrawn and unmotivated and is overwhelmed by paranoid delusion.

The last stanza is indicative of the deep seated trauma of the speaker:

those walls with bloodstains

remind me of life long ago (n.d.:34).

The image of the "bloodstains" (n.d.:34) induces a bizarre association with the speaker's primal struggle in the womb and the traumatic experience of birth.

Apart from imprisonment, confinement, in Jensma's poetry, generally precipitates psychoses in the form of an obsessive preoccupation with the self. The detachment of the schizoid individual means he can only relate to phantoms of his own fantasies (imagoes) which protect him from the implosive and engulfing reality of the outside world.

Consumer Culture

Another important theme in Jensma's poetry is that of consumer culture. Consumer culture is a culture in which the attainment of ownership and possession of goods and services are the primary aim of individual endeavour. In a consumer culture, the speed and relentless rush of signs enticing people to spend, together with the rapid change in technology, has a disorientating and compulsive hold on society. According to Stuart Evan in his study, *Captains of Consciousness*:

the commodity system enjoys a kind of passively accepted legitimacy as the universal arena within which most human needs are to be met (1992:187).

Consequently, issues of status and prestige in society are perceived in terms of consumption. Frederic Jameson points out how iconoclastic and subliminal messages simulate schizophrenic experience. The rapid fire images which overwhelm consumers are:

isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence (1983:119).

The notion of entrapment and bewilderment in a world suffused with an excess of signs competing for attention is highlighted in the experimental prosody of "*suB/BurB/Bia*" (1977:40). In the title "*suB/BurB/Bia*" (1977:40), "burb" (1977:40) is an expression of disrespect and "sub" (1977:40) is manipulated to suggest a low form of life. In this way the title presages the sterile image of the decadent city:

day IN day OUT

no WAY oUt--

GENtS/herE
 CLOSeD(on a/c
 nOISE...AiR
 cONditioninG
 opiUM/NicOtiNe
 sHOp SwoP nO
 BLaNKS onlY oR
 FèLA LeGoa!
 Fly JeTSet oN
 Acid triP to riO
 nO MANhoLes in
 heLL Or FiRE eS-
 caPeS tO HeaVeN
 SHAKe- 'N- roLL't
 BloW buBBleg Um
 OH BLUeBore
 DaY in DaY out
 NO ExIT—No
 (yACHt 2 FoOk)
 EntrancE herE (1977:40).

The poem is an expression of the urban phenomenon of noise, air-conditioning, drugs and bubblegum, artefacts of popular culture which together with the hectic speed of

urban life disorientate and overwhelm the speaker. The ontological insecurity of the speaker is expressed as a bizarre sense of engulfment by his surroundings which is manifest in the poem by the parallelism of the syntactic structures in lines two and nineteen:

No WAY oUt-....

NO ExIT- No (1977:40).

The use of the minimal line and line enjambment enhance the disorientating effect and create a surreal fusion of images. Life is experienced as an overwhelming excess of images compounded by narcotic attempts at escapism.

The disorientating and unexpected use of the upper and lower case gives the poem a dissonant, clipped rhythm which amplifies the speaker's disenchantment and engulfment by urban phenomena. The poem has three parts and is incrementally titled to finally reveal the syndrome of catatonia.

Catatonia is a condition marked by changes in muscle tone or activity associated with a large number of serious mental and physical illnesses. There are two distinct sets of symptoms that are characteristic of this condition. In catatonic stupor the subject is rendered motionless and initiates no social behaviours. Catatonic excitement, or excessive movement, is associated with violent behaviour directed towards oneself or others (Barstow 1999:1). In the poem the subject exhibits both catatonic hyperactivity and stupor.

The second part of the poem is a continuation of part one. This is manifest by the incremental syllable in its fragmentary title which progresses from “*caTa*” in Part one to “*caTaTo*” in Part two (Jensma 1977:41). The poem is an arbitrary chronicle of the exhortations of commerce and forces the reader to take a closer look at what is taken for granted in urban cityscapes:

gliTTeRaTTle...

mY uniSteel linE

My ShoK-SorBer

DrinK MOR JuiCe

dRINk MoR—

eeZee dOeS’t

EaT mOR MeaT

aTE moR PoLonY

& S-t-r-E-t-c-H

JuSS EaT MoR—

saF-t-fLEx Or

TanGY KrisPY

ChocHeeSeCOneS

& ooooOOOOMPH

onE braSSièRE O

nO oNe RaZOr—

plEEz hAf ONe & (1977:41)

The syntactic fusion of words as in “gliTTeRaTTle” (1977:41), the use of truncated diction and the fusion of the present and past tense create a disorientating fusion of images. The emotive language and expressions of pleasure are a synecdoche of a society immured in an excess of self-gratification. The subject is a target of rampant advertising and is overwhelmed by the public idioms of relentless consumerism. The effect on the subject is a catatonic disturbance of self and is exacerbated by the ideogrammic visual images which simulate a sense of bewildering immediacy.

Interestingly, there is no narrative progression in terms of linear time in the poem - this stasis is a synecdoche of the unfolding catatonia in the poem which is characterised by episodes of immobility. The non-metrical line registers the tension between the collage of perceptual experiences in the poem and the subject’s attempts at linguistic mediation. The experimental prosody replaces acoustic regularity by emphasising the graphic visual dimension.

Roland Barthes study, *Mythologies* (1971) is useful in reading the everyday trivia manifest in the poem in a meaningful way. According to Barthes (1971) the signs which appear as natural and expected in the city are in fact an illusionary reality constructed to mask the real structures of power obtaining in society. These mythological realities are composed by the *petite bourgeois* to encourage conformity to its views and to perpetuate its capitalistic dominance. The “coco-cola” culture of consumer capitalism promotes beliefs and values congenial to itself. By naturalising and universalising such beliefs they

are rendered self-evident and apparently inevitable, excluding rival forms of thoughts and obscuring social reality in ways convenient to itself.

The coded iconic message is the totality of all the messages that are signified by the images. The linguistic message functions in the iconic message by “anchorage” (Barthes 1971:39) and “relay” (Barthes 1971:39). With “anchorage”:

the text directs the reader through the signifieds of the image ...remote-controlling him towards a meaning chosen in advance (Barthes 1970:39-40).

The “anchorage” in the poem are the repeated and insistent exhortations to “drink more” (Jensma 1977:41) and “eat more” (Jensma 1977:41) and participate in an orgy of material gratification.

The fragmentary references to catatonia is finally revealed in its entirety in the third part of the poem which is entitled, “*caTaToniA*” (Jensma 1977:42):

noW screwBALL!
SPEEDball, yeS
HIGHball, send’T
baBy! uP / dOwn
EscalatoR baNtu
Bar/LoUnge nO
siR / YeS boSS/hAf
yr cHiPs’N eaT’T

breYten-aLLeen
 iN 'n ruBBerseL
 SeS mAAndE BrAK-
 gRonD/bLoeDBaD
 desCend dOWn a
 CommOn cOLd – O
 BrUsh yr teetH
 MoR rOpe/lesTimE
 tHere'S MONeY in
 hONeY/ PeanUts/
 piGs/ivOry/ebOny
 StoP! no-U-turn (1977:42)

The repetition of the suffix, “ball” in the first three lines lend an alliterative quality to the staccato rhythm of the poem. The poem is written in a tone of reckless abandon. Its mesmerising rush of signs are located within a distinctly South African context with references to the separate amenities of apartheid such as “bantu bar” (Jensma 1977:42) and the imprisonment of the poet Breyten Breytenbach.

Signs such as “Bantu bar” (Jensma 1977:42) were part of the official culture of apartheid legislated into law by the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1951. The Act legalised the provision of separate buildings, services and conveniences for people of different racial groups. In practice, the quality of amenities for whites were far superior

than all other races (Pityana *et al*: 1991:33). The incremental catatonic episodes in the three parts of the poem culminates in a “cul de sac” (Jensma 1977:42) which emphasises a sense of entrapment and loss of self :

StoP! No-U-turn

CuL DE Sac dAY

In FOR dAY out! (1977:42).

The staccato rhythm, truncated and dissonant diction and the surreal flow of images make this poem a spectacle of modern confusion and disconcerting haste. The poem is an allegory of a subject caught in a vortex of racial oppression and the paranoia implicit in a constantly changing and bewildering consumerist culture which is an apt description of apartheid's cityscapes.

By reflecting on the obvious and seemingly natural in the city, Jensma makes explicit the implicit cultural artefacts of consumer culture. These artefacts of mass consumption are false representations which mask the real structures of power in society. In Jensma's poetry advertising is seen to promote the myth of free choice. A mass culture which encourages conformity to its own views is thus encouraged. Jensma's representations of consumer culture show how the ruling class reproduces its dominance at the level of daily experience. In this process identity is ensconced in images of sterility and nihilism:

we only hear the clang

we only feel the bite

we only taste the sour pulp of an aimless life...

we are through, we scathed ourselves

down (n.d.- poem taken from unpublished letter to Peter Horn, NELM Archives,
Grahamstown).

The political situation

Jensma's poetry was shaped by the racial politics of the apartheid state. Jensma, himself, was a victim of the racist laws of South Africa, as his marriage to Lydia, a black woman was in contravention of both the Mixed Marriages Act (1949) and the Immorality Act (1950). The Immorality Act made sexual contact between people of different races an offence. The anguish of love across the colourline was graphically expressed by Jensma in his poem, "Once and Now":

a' keep forgetting ma skin

it's ma curse

cause a' lost a white swing

yea, a'll neva hav't no mor

yo placid white kaffir

cares no mor

yu wont touch him no mo'

love ya, love ya, my black babe

yea, a'live ma dream, a'm alive (1973:43).

Jensma's association and identification with blacks invited accusations of him being called a "white kaffir" (1973:43). In a poem quintessentially about love the juxtaposition of "white kaffir" (1973:43) and "black babe" (1973:43) foregrounds the absurd preponderance of racial difference in every facet of South African life.

Jensma also satirised the array of racist laws promulgated in South Africa in a poem entitled "Sing a Soul of Sixpence":

when he opened the ceremony
i thought of last year
when he passed that infamous bill
now we say: sorry I live, lord
yes, last year I became scum
(notice his pride in that watchdog)
yes, i also remember i protested
that's why I am peering through bars
and one with the gutter (1973:31).

In the above poem the speaker is a black person who has been disenfranchised by racist legislations. The speaker's self-depreciation is a sarcastic diatribe intended to mock the absurdity of apartheid. Resistance to racism has been punished by imprisonment. The speaker now languishes in misery. The transposition of the nursery rhyme, "sing a song of sixpence" in the title to "sing a soul of sixpence" (1973:31) foregrounds the fact that

black life is an expendable commodity which has been further devalued by racial discrimination.

The razing of settlements and forced relocations were catastrophic events for black communities. Jensma chronicled the destruction of Sophiatown and the devastation of its inhabitants in “Till No One”:

in sophiatown

can themba climbs the steps

or what is left of them

he opens a door of a house

full onto the sky

and stands gaping over the edge

for this was the place

the world ended

then he locked up carefully

lest someone steal

and went back downstairs

and settled himself

to wait

for the house to rise again

for his peoples legs and arms

to be struck back in place (1973:5).

The demolition of Sophiatown was the first stage of a state-initiated six year plan to relocate blacks away from the urban areas of Johannesburg. The “door” and the “steps, or what is left of them” (L 3-6) are synecdoches of the demolition of Sophiatown and the dislocation of an entire community in fulfilment of a grand apartheid masterplan.

The destruction of Sophiatown and other urban areas in which Blacks had freehold rights stem from National Party fears of the growth of the urban Black population. In response, the National Party instituted a form of “influx control” by eliminating the freehold tenure of blacks and placing greater restrictions on their mobility in urban areas. By 1963, more than 60 000 people had been uprooted from the suburbs of Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare, collectively known as the Western Areas and resettled in the municipal townships of Meadowlands and Diepkloof in present day Soweto.

The protagonist in the poem is Can Themba, a journalist and assistant editor of *Drum* magazine. His stories in *Drum* portrayed the suffering induced by massive urban adjustments forced upon blacks in the Reef townships. In the poem, signs of loss and destruction are met with disbelief and denial. Denial is also manifest by the display of habitual behaviour:

then he locked up carefully

lest someone steal (1973:5).

The syncopated diction and fragmentary title reinforces the tension and extreme emotions manifest in the poem. Themba cannot comprehend the horror of the destruction of his home and waits in vain for what he believes to be a surreal nightmare to pass. His death in the final stanza is synonymous with the failed “*asihambi*” (we will not move) campaign initiated by the African National Congress in Sophiatown. The people of Sophiatown were evicted and the white suburb of Triomf was erected on its site.

The Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents Act in 1952 made it compulsory for all Africans to carry reference books which was renewable each month. This law made it difficult for blacks to change jobs with ease and restricted their mobility in the cities. Jensma reflected the hardship brought about by the Pass Laws through bitter irony:

the prize will be
a body plus its labour
what a comfort!
a petty pass law gets us slaves:
right to use a gun
(1973:15).

In this poem Jensma exploits the dramatic monologue’s potential for satire. The speaker’s confessional discourse unwittingly reveals his egotistical and smug demeanor. The reader experiences the callous exploitation and ill-gotten life of ease of the speaker almost as a personal encounter. The compelling feature of this dramatic monologue is

the manner in which Jensma has manipulated the speakers discourse to express his disgust of racism and its abhorrent practices. Unflattering confessions such as “potbelly” (Jensma 1973:15), clinical exploitation as in, “the prize will be a body plus its labour” (Jensma 1973:15) the description of the pass laws as “petty” (Jensma 1973:15) and black workers as “slaves” (Jensma 1973:15) contrive to foreground the ironic discrepancy of the speaker’s view and the covert condemnation implied by the poet. Meaning must be extrapolated from the “double voiced” discourse of diaglossia in the poem.

The tragedy of Sharpeville was as the result of mass demonstrations against the Pass Laws and was captured by Jensma in a poem entitled, “we children” (1973:76):

we children of sharpeville
long since washed clean
of bloodstains
have gathered together
and are making ready to meet him

for us the massacred innocents
a special place was kept in heaven

we the smallest of the dead
once believed in our ignorance
that he was a wicked man

we lift up our hands in thanksgiving
for the truth that is shown to us
as we are gathered here for the last time
around the sacrificial altar
preparing to sing praise
waiting to clap our hands
for him
who is coming to kill us again (1973:76).

Blacks demonstrated their rejection of the Pass Laws by acts of civil disobedience in the form of marches which were planned by the Pan Africanist Congress. People were asked not to carry their passes and present themselves at police stations to demand arrest in mass demonstrations. This was the background to the peaceful march to the police station at Sharpeville in 1960. The police grew alarmed at the size of the crowd and subsequently fired on the protestors. Sixty nine people died, many shot in the back, and one hundred and eighty were wounded.

The tragedy of Sharpeville is expressed as a surreal, repeating moment. By foregrounding the naïveté and innocence of the children their slaughter is made that much more abhorrent. Adulation in the form of praise songs and the clapping of hands are meant to be read ambivalently – as a measure of the children's naïveté and as sarcastic applause for the perpetrators.

Jensma also captured the absurdity and oppression of the Bantustan policy in surreal images of mutilation:

Yet I wonder why
All the tenants in this block-of-flats
Don't have their feet cut off-
It would give them freedom of movement
in all areas but bantustans (1977:45).

In 1970 homeland or “Bantustan” citizenship was imposed on all Africans living in South Africa. Nominal independence was given to the Transkei in 1976, followed by Bophuthatswana (1977), Venda (1979) and Ciskei (1981). By this process citizens of the “independent” homelands lost their South African nationality, although the homelands were not recognised as independent states by other countries (Worden 1996:110). In the above poem Jensma voices his condemnation of the Bantustan policy by surreal images of dismemberment which foreground the absurdities of apartheid. The use of the word, “tenants” points to the fact that blacks were prohibited from owning property outside their designated Bantustans. This measure was to enforce apartheid and keep blacks away from urban areas.

Class conflict

Jensma's poetry also portrays the tension between the underclasses and the rich. The poem, “They call him Boss” (n.d:6) is a play on the fused and confused identity of god and the capitalist entrepreneur:

The sun is going down

Over us all

I know a man

He carries a gun

I don't know his name

But they call him boss

A long way still

Time coming time going

There may be hope he says

Better hammer on hard

Some day a far-of cockcrow

Will tell pilgrims come

A slope of thorns stones

Leads to my boss

Wield a banner

My boss dies on the cross

I am black as sin thank you

Christ is on holiday

Over us all

the sun is going down (n.d.:6).

The syntactic parallelism of the first and last couplets read as a metaphor of diminishing hope and subtle innuendo. The speaker artfully disguises his resistance to the notion of an omnipotent god and the promise of salvation. Embedded within the couplet is the recognition that Christianity is used as a front for the exploitation of workers.

The line enjambment and absence of punctuation creates a choppy rhythm in the poem. This rhythmic structure, together with the simple and terse diction reinforces the impression of an uncomprehending and naïve speaker. Yet, concealed within the speaker's uncomplicated discourse are elements of satire which critique totalizing control and exploitation masquerading as paternalism.

In the second stanza the speaker perceives god and his boss as synonymous in his apparent confusion. The speaker is rigidly entrenched as a member of the servant class and his condition of material depravity is powerfully evoked:

A long way still

time coming time going

there may be hope he says (n.d.:6).

Heaven is the reward that the speaker can anticipate in an imaginary future time and is his consolation for a life of continual misery. A Marxist analysis of the speaker's views is consequently insightful. According to Marx:

Religion is the fantastic realisation of the human essence because the human essence has no true reality. Religion is the universal source of consolation and justification. It is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions (The Marxist Internet Archive@Microsoft.com).

The speaker's salvation is predicated on his hard labour. He is goaded into accepting his exploitation by the promise of heaven:

Better hammer on hard
Some day a far-off cockcrow
Will tell pilgrims come (n.d.:6).

The "cockcrow" is deliberately ambiguous, simultaneously heralding the second coming and also alluding to the betrayal of Christ.

The "slope of thorns stones" (n.d.:6) in line 13 is a metaphor for the precondition of salvation, that is, the idea that the path to god is fraught with hardship. The penultimate stanza is a satirical recognition of capitalist exploitation disguised as Christianity:

My boss dies on a cross
I am black as sin thank you
Christ is on holiday (n.d.: 6).

The capitalists rationalised their exploitation by offering Christianity in exchange. Miles points out that:

Christianity became the prism through which all knowledge of the world was refracted (1989:16).

In the above poem the Christian doctrine of salvation is predicated on willing submission into the exploitation of the capitalistic system.

The “boss” (n.d: 6) “who dies on the cross” (n.d.:6) is synonymous with Christ and perpetuates the cynical illusion of a benevolent master. The simile in line 17:

I am black as sin (n.d)

is indicative of self hate and also stems from the fact that in a South African context, the underclass were blacks whose humanity was negated by racial laws proclaiming their inferiority.

The poem “Black Lake” (n.d.: 37) is an elegy lamenting the misery of workers mired within capitalism:

As soon as day breaks

We savages start struggling

In the black lake

With only our fingernails

We mark the rim of the tub

But we get no grip

We only sing songs to him
Our fluid enemy
But our lament is captured
Where everything evaporates

Faith and hope and love
All these we offer
We your obedient servants
Oh black lake of mystery (n.d.:37).

The poem is a dramatic monologue of four stanzas. It is written in the varying rhythm of speech and its diction of pathos foregrounds the wretched condition of the exploited worker. The line enjambment and rising rhythm sustain the mood of lamentation throughout the poem. The “Black Lake” (n.d.:37) is a metaphor of the capitalist system which perpetuates working class misery and leaves the worker hopelessly entrapped in ceaseless exploitation. In the context of the poem, the colour black connotes misery, evil, degradation and a world devoid of hope.

The use of alliteration and assonance in the first stanza foregrounds the wretched existence of the worker. The pejorative imputation of “savages” (n.d.:37) reinforces the notion of workers as beasts of burden. This perception makes tenable the exploitation

of workers and their differential treatment of servitude by erasing any signs of their humanity.

The surreal image of a lake in a tub in the second stanza emphasises the impossibility of escape from misery for the worker. The “fingernails” (n.d.: 37) which “mark the rim of the tub but gets no grip” (n.d.:37) vividly expresses the desperation of the workers to escape their degraded condition. Paul Lefargue, in his study *The Right to be Lazy and Other Stories* explains:

Poverty is the reward when they work, starvation when they lose their jobs. All the toil, all the production, all the suffering of the working class has been served to heighten its physical and mental destitution, to drag it down from poverty into wretchedness (1990:4).

Stanza three indicates how the workers internalise the values of the capitalistic system which interpellates them as subjects. Lines 7 and 8 are heavy with irony:

We only sing songs to him

Our fluid enemy (n.d.:37).

The speaker contemplates the irony of the celebration of oppression and human degradation by its victims.

The last stanza foregrounds the illusionary promises of:

Faith and hope and love (n.d.:37).

which consoles the worker and guarantees his obsequious attitude to the capitalistic system. The use of the repetitive conjunction creates an impression of plenitude and excess which, for the speaker, is a satire of the working class as “obedient servants” (n.d.:37). The speaker’s lament concludes in “mystery” (n.d.:37) which is an acknowledgement of an inability to comprehend the harsh world he lives in. The tragic figure of the speaker is overwhelmed by a capitalistic credo which binds him in servitude whilst simultaneously proclaiming his freedom.

The class conflict manifest in Jensma’s poetry extend from a protest against underclass exploitation to a critique of the rationalist discourses which perceive starvation and wretchedness as a natural and inevitable condition of the poor. Jensma’s diatribe against capitalist dominance also exposes the hypocrisy and fantastic illusions which veil exploitation as benign and virtuous.

Conclusion

Jensma uses pathological aberration, macabre images and bizarre acts in dissonant aesthetic strategies to foreground the acute depravity and sterility implicit in a capitalistic culture which thrives upon its own greed. His discourse is also a protest against the subsequent underclass misery and the hypocrisy and ideological illusions which maintain exploitation as a benign and natural condition of life. The impossibility of benevolent human contact in an atmosphere of alienation compel his conflicted protagonists to seek contact through hatred, conflict, mutilation and antagonism. Jensma’s themes must also be read within a South African context of racial difference in

which blacks were an excluded and marginalised group. The themes in his poetry draw on satire, the avant-garde and self-depreciating humour to critique apartheid. On a lighter note, his experiments with sound, topography and the inane demonstrate that poetry is also a site of pleasure and invention.

Chapter Four

An analysis of Wopko Jensma's diction

This chapter analyses the formal aspects of Wopko Jensma's poetry. The textual effects created by Jensma's use of language mixes, colloquial expressions, idioms, folklore, punctuation and neologisms are analysed. In addition, the experiments with collage and the use of imagery (often in macabre or surreal contexts) are studied as significant traits of Jensma's poetry.

According to Bakhtin, language is a social phenomenon and as such is saturated with ideology. In his study, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, Bakhtin writes:

A sign does not simply exist as a given part of reality – it reflects and refracts another reality. Every sign is subject to the criteria of ideological evaluation. The domain of ideology combines with the domain of signs. They equate with one another. Whenever a sign is present, ideology is present (1986:10).

The tendentious and shifting nature of ideology makes language a constantly changing and evolving process. According to Bakhtin language is stratified into genre, register, dialect, sociolect (discourse determined by different social groups according to age, gender, economic position, kinship and so on), and the mutual “interanimation” of these forms as heteroglossia. These inherent properties make language a discursive space which embodies the mutual antagonisms of different voices. Bakhtin points out that the many social languages which constitute heteroglossia are all “specific points of view of the world, forms of conceptualizing the world in words” (1981:356).

Each social group - each class, profession, generation, religion, region - possess their own dialect or way of speaking. Each dialect in turn possesses a distinct set of values. As Bakhtin explains in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*:

Any social language is a concrete socio-linguistic belief system that defines a distinct identity for itself within the boundaries of a language which is unitary only in the abstract (1981:356).

However within language there is always a centripetal force which aims at centralizing and unifying meaning. This serves as a common basis for shared understanding between people but it also serves the interest of the dominant social group by imposing a monologic, unitary perception of truth. However a centrifugal force works against this totalizing process to evoke multiple views of the world. This dynamic foregrounds the dialogic or double-voiced nature of language. As Pam Morris writes:

Words are the dialogic site of class interaction. Since different classes within a nation use the same language, words become the arena of class struggle as different classes seek to reaccentuate a word with their meaning. Discourse is also dialogical as it takes into account the interplay of power, class relations and social hierarchy by determining the forms of interaction between self and other (1994:12).

In addition to possessing referential meaning within specific contexts, words also express value judgements. Because of this inherent property of language, speech diversity is an actual index of inequality in society. Since language exists in a state of

heteroglossia, dialogism is necessarily a way in which meaning is constructed. Hence for Bakhtin all discourse is dialogic or “double voiced”. As Sue Vice explains:

at any moment our discourse will be synchronically informed by the contemporary languages we live amongst and diachronically informed by their historical roles and the future roles we anticipate for them. Each utterance, whether it takes the form of a conversation in the street or a novel, consists of the unique orchestration of well-worn words. As in everyday dialogue, all these languages will interact with each other, jockey for position, compromise, effect a temporary stabilization, before moving on to the next construction of meaning (1997:46).

In all these cases, double-voicedness, and the sensitivity of one language to those surrounding it, results not in peaceful relativity or inert coexistence, but in a clash of discourses, as Bakhtin emphasizes:

The authentic environment of an utterance, the environment in which it lives and takes shape, is dialogized heteroglossia, anonymous and social as language, but simultaneously concrete, filled with specific content and accentuated as an individual utterance (1981:272).

“Dialogized heteroglossia” refers to the combative relations different languages enter into when they come into contact with each another. The socially varying values of dialogic speech is useful in understanding the relationship between language and class strife in Jansma's texts. The “high” language variety in diglossia is used in education, public administration, legal and public institutions and encodes the values of the ruling class.

The “low” variety of diglossia is used by the masses in their everyday private and informal interaction and similarly encodes their own value systems. Class conflict expresses itself in the clash between “high” and “low” diglossia. Jensma’s mixed language counteract at the level of language the ideology of racial separateness promoted by the apartheid state. Jensma thus employs the lexicon of “low” diglossia in his critique of the state and its apartheid practices of repression and control. This process signifies the way in which ideological meaning and values are appropriated and transformed into new signifying relationships in Jensma’s poetry.

Aspects of Bakhtin’s ideas of the carnival may also be usefully adapted to an understanding of Jensma’s poetry. The carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the established status quo in society, it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions. Bakhtin explains in *Rabelais and His World*:

Carnival is not a spectacle seen by people, they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. It is a special condition of the renewal and revival of the world in which all take part (1984:198).

Everyone was considered equal in carnival and free and familiar contact was momentarily possible - amongst people of different classes, professions and age. Carnival *mésalliances* allowed for the unusual combination of the sacred and the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant and the wise with the stupid. It is in this

bipolar nexus that Jenma's speakers utter ideas which critique the prevailing social and political order:

he sits in glory

a red robe

a golden throne

a thorn crown

the halo

the cross

the works

on his farm

khaki shorts

chev truck

barbed wire

smoke ring

fencing pole

the works (1973:41).

In the above poem, entitled "Joburg Spiritual", for instance, the omnipotence of God is projected as narcissism when superimposed upon the farmer through the parallelism of associated lexical fields. The fusion of the sacred and the profane is affected by both bathos and burlesque. The poem may also be read as an example of "folk carnival humour" and evokes the comic by alluding to the farmer's grandiosity.

Carnival profanation consists of debasing and bringing down to earth - to the level of the body - of the sacred. This aspect of the carnival is also used as device in part 2 of “Only The Best”:

when our lord’s voice in the air
when we get together arm in arm
when we dream the dull glitter gold
 our angel will come
 our redeemer, our messiah
when we pray we kneel our altar oh
when we die as heroes the fanfare
when our hearts have eaten hot
 steak-and-kidney pies
we’ll remember the four-colour of yore
we’ll remember our land of greed (Jensma 1974:22).

Jensma parodies the sacred ritual of prayer by debasement calculated to foreground greed and satiation. This is done by characteristic carnivalistic reference to parts of the body and feasting.

Carnival laughter is both the form and vehicle of popular liberation. It is a laughter which degrades power. Carnival laughter is also ambivalent. It is gay yet also mocks and derides. Jensma’s adaptation of carnival laughter (and other aspects of the carnival) will be studied within the framework of the rhetorical figures and tropes he uses in his poetry.

The use of colloquial expressions

Colloquial expressions are used with greater frequency by lower socio-economic groups and is expressive of their attitudes, values and sense of identity. Its communicative function is characterised by a disregard for the rules of formal language and as such it is mostly found in spoken language. Certain colloquial expressions may have a restricted interpretive community in the form of street gangs or ethnic groups. This condition promotes solidarity and togetherness within the group by making its members feel privy to forms of communication which are veiled in secrecy from others. Jensma uses colloquial language and streetwise registers to identify with the underclasses.

The use of colloquial language enhances the onomatopoeic quality of the prosody:

!fence buzz off in a blue (Jensma 1974:7).

It also vividly captures the spirit of township life:

your kwela

rocks in me (Jensma1974:12).

and:

one straight not enough (Jensma 1974:89)

as well as:

may I please have it on tick (Jensma 1977:28)

In the above passage a “straight” (Jensma 1974:89) refers to a bottle of alcohol whilst to have something “on tick” (Jensma 1977:28) implies a purchase on credit. These

idiomatic expressions relating to alcohol, debt and music graphically illustrate the preoccupations of township life.

Jensma also uses colloquial speech to foreground the significant sense of othering:

yes, last year i became scum (1974:31).

and:

pynappelkop (1974:41).

“pynappelkop” (1974:41) translates as “pineapple head” and was a derogatory term for Africans.

The chauvinistic character of colloquial discourse is also revealed by derogatory terms used on females:

Dat ma

bitch scuttled roun da

cona. i (Jensma 1974:38).

Conceit, an unusually far-fetched or elaborate metaphor or simile presenting a surprisingly apt parallel between two dissimilar things or feelings (Baldick 1990:42) is also used to parody the egotistical assumptions of personas. The syntactic parallelism of the colloquial phrase “the works” (1974:41), a South African idiom meaning “everything” in the following poem is illustrative of this:

he sits in glory

a red robe

a golden crown

the halo

the cross

the works

on his farm

khaki shorts

chev truck

barbed wire

smoke ring

fencing pole

the works (Jensma 1974:41)

The use of colloquial language in the following blues poem also foregrounds a defiant attitude to suffering in Jensma's protagonists:

An now it's juss moonshine

any damn booze fo' me (1974:43).

Jensma captures the aphorisms of township commerce through the use of mixed languages. The assonance and repetition which characterise colloquial speech become powerful tropes of persuasion when used by the township entrepreneur:

home shop is your shop - tsena! (1974:48)

Sornig points out in his study *Lexical Innovation: A Study of Slang, Colloquialisms and Casual Speech* (1981) that colloquial verbs such as “cookin” (1974:54), “sock” (1974:54) and words like “punches” (1974:54) are illustrative of the generally aggressive tone and character of colloquial speech:

Whilst every utterance is an act of *evocation* it is also an act of *provocation* (1981:74).

In the poem, “No Dreams” (1974:54) the word “tantarantanta”, for instance, resembles the flourish of a trumpet. In the context of the poem “tantarantanta” (1974:54) is a hyperbole which is suggestive of the politician’s narcissism. The name is also a means of ridicule and a pretext for laughter. This laughter has similarities with the Bakhtinian notion of carnival laughter as a form of “renewal”. Part of the ambivalent meaning ensconced in “tantarantanta” is the desire to change society by repudiating corruption at high levels of government. The substitution of proper nouns by colloquial terms, whilst a device for mockery also draws attention to disconcerting class differences.

Forms of substitute naming are also illustrative of the colloquial tendency of substituting proper names for generic nouns. This is apparent in other poems as well:

big boss, my lord, may I vomit, (Jensma 1974:8)

and :

a big bellied back bencher with a bald head (Jensma 1977:45)

Jensma uses colloquial verbs as a form of satire in the following poem. The use of words such as “rolled up”, “pumped”, “bumped off ” and “tied up” (1973:69) are commonly associated with violent American action films and make the actions of the men appear comical in the context of the poem:

since two gents with white suits rolled up

our village is not the same anymore

they pumped our chief full of bullets

they bumped off all our elders

they started raping our womenfolk

they keep talking of a new life for us

they say this thing is also elsewhere

they have our whole country tied up (1973: 69).

The use of folkloric expressions

Jensma makes satirical use of folkloric expressions in his poetry. Jensma used the mythical beasts, magic rites and fables of African folklore in his texts. African folklore is strongly premised on the notion of a spiritual universe and the belief that guidance and security emanate from community rituals. It is this trait of African folklore which posits itself as a postcolonial feature in Jensma’s texts – a collective consciousness of wisdom, foolery, the supernatural and tricks which are dissonant voices against established authority and power. Jensma also exploits the ambivalence of folklore in his poetry. Although folklore is a chronicle of the past, its use becomes a disruptive voice of

class conflict in the present. This is because folklore emanates from the people and is largely an expression of underclass ideals. In Jensma's poetry folklore becomes an internally dialogized element of heteroglossia by its critique of other voices and discourses in the texts.

The use of folklore by Jensma is most evident in his drawings of African mythical beasts which accompany the poems in *Sing For Our Execution* (1973) and in the poems in *I Must Show You My Clippings* (1977). Jensma uses the folklore genre in the following untitled poem in *I Must Show You My Clippings*:

Bring the small calabash (ichimpa!
Take the white clay (mpemba!
Take your white albino hair!
Take your white parrot feathers!
Take the pure white blood!
Blow then the red clay (mukundu! (1977:20)

The expression of African cultural practices and the use of indigenous words represent acts of affirmation by Africans which challenge the hegemony of imperial discourses on one level. It also sends up anthropological discourses and emphasises the absurdity of objectifying African habits. Yet at another level, African discourses are also the object of satire. This is most evident in the repetition of the word "white" (1977:20) which satirises the obsession with being white in South Africa.

The focalizer in the succeeding stanza shifts to a tourist who provides an erudite exposition of the ritual:

The act of blowing (bu-pumina or ku-pumbila) stands
both for orgasm and for blessing with the good
things of life (ku-kiswila). It affords yet
another example of the semantic bipolarity of ritual
symbols. The blowing on of white, then red, clay
dramatizes the Ndembu theory of procreation. My best
informant, Muchona, interpreted the rite as follows:
‘the white clay stands for semen and the red clay for
maternal blood. The father first gives blood to the
mother, who keeps it in her body and makes it grow.
Semen is this blood mixed and whitened with water.
It comes from the power of the father. It remains in
the mother as the seed of life (kabubu kawumi) (1977:21).

By juxtaposing disparate focalizers in this way Jensma satires the colonial desire for appropriation and overwriting of indigenous cultures found in anthropological discourses. Colonial interpretation of difference in terms of the familiar is manifest in the following stanza:

The two antithetical ideals coexist in Ndumbu
society as our own, as any reader of the novel
Gone with The Wind will recognize. This novel, incidentally,

is also based on a dualistic theme- that of North versus South, and of capitalism and landowning. (1977:20).

Jensma also makes satirical use of the ritual spectacles and spells of African folklore:

By the fountain t's basadi for Lentswe
I ask you, Mma Mmho, I ask:
Have you not perhaps, perchance
Kept for me (you know)
My mother's special number one pandora's box?
I need for love - to put a magic spell
Ten burning kisses
Sheaves and sheaves of hair
A wart from an old lady's chin
Dandruff from my father's scalp
The one and only nunu bone
Many-many rows of teeth (1974:19).

Ritual spectacles and spells are used as an expression of spiritual power over the material world. The supernatural is a source of renewal and hope in a world which is increasingly alienating, modern and capitalistic. Whereas in Bakhtin's carnival the body is used as a form of grotesque realism, in Jensma's poem, parts of the body are used as a sacred medium for divine intervention from the ancestors. However the diaglossic speech of the

narrator also points to the fact that he is satirising notions of African spiritual power and its rituals as well.

The use of idioms

Idiomatic expressions abound in Jensma's poetry and is noticeable particularly in the titles of poems. "Spanner in the What? Works" (1977:6), (alluding to a problem which prevents a plan from coming together) "It's a Royal Flush" (1977:30) (a concept in poker in which a player has an ace-high straight flush. A flush is a hand in which a player has all cards of the same suit (Monroe 1983:254), "Sir And Lady Toothpick Caught In The Act" (Jensma 1977:28) (a reference to sex) are some of the titles which draw on idiomatic expressions.

Jensma uses idioms in a variety of ways in his poetry. Idioms such as "white collars" (1974:27) - which is a reference to office workers - are used to emphasise alterity from local cultures and are also synecdoches of the figure of the colonialist:

before the white collars came
we asked our old balding skulls
"who made all this world? " (Jensma 1974:27).

Idioms are also used to express humour as in the title, "How To Make A Horse Of Yourself Without Really Trying" (1977:9) and in the following dramatic excerpt from "Sir and Lady Toothpick Caught In The Act":

sir toothpick: o my dove i love

Idiomatic expressions are also manipulated to express the schizophrenic rush and drug culture of modern society:

FLy JeTSet oN

Acid triP to riO (1977:40).

The use of idiomatic expressions are manipulated by Jensma to express the aphorisms and idiosyncrasies of popular culture. Idioms are woven into the rhetorical strategies of irony, humour, satire, hyperbole and pathos to expose the inequalities of race and class and the disorientation induced by consumer culture. The double-voice of idioms serve two speakers at the same time and express simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the speaker and the refracted intention of the poet. The dialogic interaction of idioms and colloquial language demonstrate the manner in which Jensma's "low diaglossia" attempt to subvert, negotiate or avoid the control of what Bakhtin terms "prestige" languages.

The mixing of South African languages

Some of Jensma's poems mixes different South African languages as happened in the speech communities of areas such as District Six, Doornfontein, Sophiatown and amongst the urban youth of Soweto. These areas were settlements of poor socio-economic classes of people where Africans, Coloureds, Indians and whites freely mingled. The languages mixed are English, Afrikaans, Zulu, Tswana, tsotsi-taal and American slang. The emergence of this type of hybrid language in South Africa can be traced to the process of urbanization which brought different linguistic groups into

contact with one another. This mixing of South African languages is mostly found in *Where White is the Colour, Where Black Is The Number* (1974). The poem entitled, "So What" (1974:30) for example, uses words such as "come doeks " (derived from flytaal and which means "to fight"), "vannie baas" (from the boss) ", (Kaapse taal), "brotha" (brother), (American slang) and "ewe sisi" (my sister) (township slang):

come doeks, la
skom's homne – dja
man vannie baas
ma', come doeks, hei

sjee daai sjaandie
hie', please, 'k sê
my kop lol – but
brotha, djy weet mos
my sisi – êwe sisi
djy know-ie train?
train's mos laat....
late, always late

da train i hear
's long gone
da train
once ma baby in

da train –

‘ngena sisi’

--’s long gone

da train i hear

pass daai sjaandie

mahog – late, of late

nei, latie draad

praat! – skel djy my?

nei, nê? ’k sê –

molô mama, of late

ma babe’s gone

long gone da train

dja baas, latie rep

dollies roep – call me

standby – here’s a

pipeline to dube (1974:30).

The poem chronicles the speaker's despair at being separated from his loved one.

The use of mixed South African dialects in Jensma’s poetry may be read in terms of postcolonial theory. According to Homi Bhabha:

hybridity subverts the narratives of colonial power and dominant cultures by the entry of formerly excluded subjects into the mainstream discourse (1985:57).

The ideological bias of the colonial language is subverted to express native perceptions. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin explain in *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) that this process of subversion occurs by “appropriation” and “abrogation”:

abrogation is a refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusionary standards of normative or “correct” usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning “inscribed” in words (1989:39)

and

appropriation is where language is made to “bear the burden” of one’s own cultural experiences. Language is adapted as a tool and utilized to express widely differing cultural experiences (1989:40).

Jensma uses a hybrid diction to integrate languages in the quest for a unique and inclusive South African identity. This hybridization or, as Bakhtin puts it, “the dialogized interrelation of languages” serves to neutralize “authoritative discourses” (1981:358). Consequently, the linguistic struggle in Jensma’s diction must also be viewed as a struggle for cultural integration and the self affirmation of the black underclasses. This is particularly manifest in the use of tsotsi-taal.

Tsotsi-taal

Tsotsitaal is a *lingua franca* in urban, especially metropolitan townships, with many different varieties. It represents the confluence of many different languages spoken in South Africa. Variants of Tsotsitaal have been spoken widely in townships from

Randfontein to Springs and figure significantly in the urban youthgang subcultures of South Africa. As a pidgin it developed rapidly as a means of verbal communication between people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds who were known as *tsotsis*.

These *tsotsis* (a term which signified a slick and urban male) spoke Tsotsi-taal in the free-hold townships of Johannesburg. However the *tsotsis* themselves preferred the term *amagents* [English-gentleman]. This self inscription suggests that Tsotsi-taal was associated with prestige and streetwise wit by its users. However Tsotsi-taal was stigmatised by speakers of standard Zulu and educators and referred to as “bad Zulu, Sotho, etc.” Tsotsi-taal had low prestige in the community as a whole, mainly because it was associated with criminality. However for the speakers of Tsotsi-taal, the language was highly thought of within its “in-group”.

According to Ntshangase:

Tsotsitaal is also known as Flytaal (Flaaitaal) (from English ‘[to] fly’ and Afrikaans *Taal* ‘language’) which has the connotation that the speaker of this language is a modern, progressive person who can see the world and things from above, that is, from a better angle (1993:8)

Childs however, is of the opinion that :

the etymology of Tsotsi-taal is related to a Sotho pun with the tsetse “fly”. (1992:6).

It is therefore also possible that the name Tsotsi-taal is likewise derived from this Sotho noun

Calteux points out that:

Tsotsitaal is also known as *isiLovasi* in the Durban area. In Tembisa the matrix language of African based Tsotsi-taal is Zulu and in Afrikaans based Tsotsi-taal it is a non-standard variety of Afrikaans similar to Coloured Afrikaans. The lexicons of Tsotsi-taal are made up of various expressions with different degrees of secrecy. This includes many of the lexical items found in prison gangs, deliberate use of semantic shifts in order to obscure the meanings of words or phrases, the use of polysemous words or phrases and other deliberate changes (syllabic and morphemic) aimed at rendering the lexical items incomprehensible (1996:58).

The lexicon of Tsotsitaal is continually changing due to the speakers' desire to keep the language as "fresh" and "secretive" as possible. In township parlance, Tsotsi-taal "moves with the times". There is also a process at work in which words and expressions which were at one stage highly secretive, became commonly known and understood in the community. There is a lot of overlap between cant, jargon, tsotsi-taal and slang. Once a secret expression is known by an entire speech community it ceases to be ambiguous and becomes slang. Once a slang expression has received wide recognition, it ceases to be slang and becomes a standard expression.

Many instances of Tsotsi-taal appear in Jensma's four volumes of poetry:

An a'm dreaming you, cathy-we

da smile on ya face da sun

batusi¹, batusi direlang ...

knockin yo do' a day:

unkhona² u Thandiwe? (1973:43)

Tsotsi-taal is a sociolect expressive of the values of the black underclasses in South Africa. In Jensma's street registers it is used to subvert official discourses. Jensma's integration of Tsotsi-taal with expressionist and other avant-garde techniques results in compacted phrases of high emotion which foreground the suffering and despair of his protagonists.

The use of Afro American Jazz language

Jensma often used the distinctive Afro American language commonly found in jazz lyrics and refers to many blues and jazz artists in his poetry. The reference to Jimmy Andrew Rushing (1903-1972), one of the most famous blues shouters (before the advent of microphones) in the following poem, "Pullin Strong At Eleven-Forty-Five" (1973:19) draws attention to the repetition and truncated diction usually associated with a jazz score. Jensma also uses nonsense words from the lexicon of jazz for rhythmic effect as in the use of "yeya" (1973:19) in the last line of the poem:

as jimmy rushing says: any monday 'n

she aint your girl, she aint my girl

¹ Tswana name for women

² is Thandiwe here?

no, she's anybody's goddamn girl - and I get
 maself ma shootin rod
 an slash anybody's skull open
 hea me ova, yea hea me
 blowin dat ol spiky blues ova
 ma dea woman - yea't aint your beloved ol

 downtown orlando: it's solid hearin, you ablo
 in a shack oozing man, feel that dirge, oh yeya (1973:19).

Jensma's diction shares with American pidgin a forestressing of bisyllabic words, as in: "if the pólice catch em". In standard English the primary stress is generally on the second syllable of bisyllabic words. Jensma's diction also makes frequent use of apocape - one of the most distinguishing features of Americanized pidgin. Apocape is the removal of a letter or a syllable at the end of a word. The use of apocape, ellipsis and other forms of elision give Jensma's diction a telegraphic style which foreground the urgent social messages which inform his poetry:

yea, sugar pie desanto
 yo beat's yellin i'ma head
 lika bandsaw howlin'n scremin
 an all yu'a juss sayin's: free (1973:43).

Jensma has superimposed elements of the rhetoric of Afro-American protest onto South African experiences which are not dissimilar in their revolt against race and class oppression. Americanised pidgin, whilst betraying black peoples insecure command of the dominant language, also pokes fun at language itself – at language's insecure hold on the world. The use of Afro-American pidgin and Tsotsi-taal overturns the usual hierarchy of languages in South Africa, in which standard English is best and pidgin dialects of lesser importance.

Punctuation

Most of Jensma's poetry is devoid of punctuation. This serves to hasten the rhythmic beat of the poem and enhance the effect of colloquial speech. Renato Barille is of the opinion that:

the absence of punctuation in a poem results in the speeding up of linguistic expression which is indicative of an attempt to capture the increasing speeds of modern technology and consumerist society (1990:23).

Most of the letters are in lower case. Of note is the use of the lower case "i", particularly when considering the views of E. E. Cummings:

concerning the "small 'I'": did it never strike you as significant that, of all God's children, only English and Americans apotheosize their egos by capitalizing a pronoun whose equivalent is in French "je" in German "ich", and in Italian "io"? (Dumas 1974:57).

Jensma uses non-punctuation to suggest fragmented thought and pathological aberration in his speakers. Punctuation, when used, as in ellipsis in the following poem, is used to suggest the narcissistic desire for control and the aggressive transference of rage in his conflicted subjects:

kiddo smashing a toy
he doesn't destroy
he perceives, percepts
he reconstructs... (1977:48)

In the above poem the elliptical line ending anticipates the flight from reality and descent into psychoses.

The use of ellipsis in each line foregrounds the void beyond language as well as the perplexed and dislocated self of the schizophrenic:

The schizophrenic splits itself, its world.....
Escape voices (yakkity yak) of its conscience..
Oversensitive nerves, tight as wire sinews.....
Give free reign to its floodlight feelings.....
It's severe, wild at one, two, one, at once.....
It's inhibited, unrestrained, shows two face.....
Unintelligible cacophonic montages, it's dada..... (1977:49).

In the above poem Jensma creates a tension between language and an inexpressible reality by the use of ellipsis. In the poem ellipsis permits the reader to make up his/her

mind about the speaker's statements. Ellipsis is also a way of commenting upon or bringing the reliability of the statement into question.

The unusual placing of exclamation marks and question marks may also be an indication of pathological aberration in Jensma's schizoid discourse:

! batter a fences down (1973:7)

and:

? fence ya aint killin me (1973:7).

The unusual placing of exclamation and question marks foregrounds the puzzled emotions of the speaker. The statement is also an answer to a question without having to state the question in its entirety. It is also another example of the economical use of language by Jensma.

Another unsettling aspect of Jensma's punctuation is his use of the open ended bracket: ||

(big boss, my lord, may I vomit,

I mean, my bitter, bleedin heart

(flippin fool

drum

guts (1973:8)

The open ended bracket is perhaps suggestive of the fragmented nature of schizophrenic thought and elision which derives from intense emotions. It may also allude to the mystery of the void beyond the printed words and the incompleteness of language as a medium of communication.

Neologisms

Jensma diction is suffused with invented words. Words like “thunk”, “gutterdoor”, “lashy”, “brang”, and “jine” are words which remain tied to their source and what Lennard, in his informative book, *The Poetry Handbook* (1996) terms *nonce words* (those invented for a specific occasion).

According to Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin:

successful neologisms emphasize the fact that words do not embody cultural essence, for where the creation of new lexical forms in english may be generated by the linguistic structures of the mother tongue, their success lies in their function within the text rather than their linguistic provenance (1989:71).

Neologisms such as “yeya” (Jensma 1973:19) provide rhythmic continuity in Jensma’s prosody in the same way as it does in a jazz score. More significantly, neologisms emphasize the desire for secrecy and mystification (which also be an attempt to mystify the self) which may arise as a defense against an overwhelming and implosive reality. It is common amongst schizoid individuals to create a private language related to their state of narcissistic withdrawal. Portmanteau words are also used to express the anxiety of overbearing guilt and self depreciation:

always befumbled


i am the blur in a cloudcovered sky

i am the godfornothing biglarge lie (1974:85).

Given Bakhtin's understanding that language is not only a system of abstract grammatical categories, but is also ideologically saturated, Jensma's use of the "streetwise" language of townships can be seen as a revolt against the dominance of ideologies implicit in "official" languages by privileging the views and value systems of the underclasses. It also privileged the impurity of mixed languages against the racial purity and dominance of Afrikaans demanded by the apartheid state. The revolt against "official" languages is also exemplified by the private schizophrenic language used by Jensma as a form of narcissistic withdrawal against official discourses.

The use of Collage

Jensma also used the technique of collage. Collage was invented by the painter, Picasso and later became incorporated into poetry. Picasso explained the meaning of the technique in a conversation with Francios Gilot:



If a piece of newspaper can become a bottle, that gives us something to think about in connection with both newspapers and bottles, too. This displaced object has entered a universe from which it was not made and it retains, in a measure, its strangeness. And this strangeness is what we wanted people to think about because we are quite aware that our world was becoming very strange and not exactly reassuring (Gilot and Lake 1965:70).

Baldick defines collage in poetry as:

a work assembled wholly or partly from fragments of other writings, incorporating allusions, quotations and foreign phrases. The most significant examples of collage are Ezra Pound's *Cantos* and T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1990:39).

Jensma used collage techniques in both his drawings and poetry. Most of the collage drawings were cut out shapes from newspapers. Collage poetry is mostly found in *I Must Show You My Clippings* (1977). The following poem is an example of collage in which the speakers and narrative change erratically in each stanza. The use of abbreviations, unconventional punctuation and slanted fonts foreground the signifiers and create a sense of unsettling discontinuities. The use of unexpected signposting, "(Speed Check Zone Ahead)" (1977:21) subheadings, "*The Making of the Twin Shrine in the Village*" (1977:22) and instructions, "please keep your change, passport, vaccination ready..." (1977:22) further interrupt the narrative flow of the poem. The use of signposting also indicate the influence of pop art on Jensma's poetry. Jensma employed the techniques of pop art by using its iconography and easily comprehensible imagery in a dadaist gesture which awarded the same significance to everyday and mass produced objects as the unique.

The formal discontinuities of the collage poem are representative of a sense of dislocation in the modern world and the disorientation which ensues from experiencing the world as a fleeting and constantly changing theatre of signs:

 this ideal type, as seen by women

the sort of man who, in the ritual song
tough, quarrelsome, lustful men of the bush

the two antithetical ideals coexist in Ndumbu
society as in our own, as any reader of the novel
Gone with the Wind will recognise. This novel, incidentally,
is also based on a dualistic theme – that of North versus
South, and of capitalism versus landowning.

(Speed Check Zone Ahead)

The carnival for her (i suppose) lasted
(it must be) about fifteen years. Then she went
all plump and alcoholic...

I slip into my ‘clube-vugashe’ t-shirt
on a glorious sundrenched holiday
onto step-by-step airplane wizard of blue
palm trees palm trees palm trees palm...

“dont you believe me mister? it’s got
double cams improved crankshaft white wall tyres

stereophonic disc brakes ejectable clutch-cum-seat
with all these xtras mister nothing can go wrong”

(you’re now entering god’s own country)

Please keep your change, passport, vaccination ready...

(Border Post Ahead)

The Making of the Twin Shrine in the Village

Dualism prevails in the public rite that follows
in the patient’s village. This is emphatically
represented both in the binary structure of the
twin shrine and in the explicit opposition of the
sexes in mime, dance and song. The doctors return
from the river bearing leafy fronds, like a Palm
Sunday procession – one made up largely of women
and children...

Take, crush the calabash!

Take, offer the clay to the wind!

Take, scatter the white feathers!

Take, spill the white blood!

Uyawuzwa umoya, let it blow!

the *mpanza* arch represents love—

legitimate and fertile, between man and woman

the male and the female exchange ‘their’ qualities

this ideal type, as seen by women

the good-tempered, hardworking, quiet-spoken man

a man like this will father ten children...(1977:22)

The above pastiche is a satire of western anthropological discourses which attempted to objectify Africans and their cultural practices. The insertion of this anthropological discourse into the heteroglossia of other discourses relativizes this discourse and permit a post-colonial critique. Self referentially (together with the superiority it implies) and paternalism expose the inability of this anthropological discourse to understand African culture by naive colonial readings.

The use of imagery and other rhetorical devices

In *The Appreciation of Modern French Poetry* (1979), Peter Broome and Graham Chester contend that:

the poetic image draws disparate elements together by comparison and holds them there suggestively poised between difference and identity. The poetic image adds an ornamental glitter to the banal and explains the intangible in terms of the tangible. The double perspective inherent in the analogy signified by the image

disturbs the reader's monocular vision and enhances the richness and interest-value of the text (1979:41).

Jensma's use of imagery is expressive of the high emotional states associated with expressionism. The imagery in the poems indicate close affinities with the darker side of the psyche in its fixation with self mutilation, sadistic violence and death. Jensma's imagery is also used to satirise bourgeois redolence with humour and cynicism. These images are made explicit by the rhetorical figures of metaphor, simile, personification, metonymy, onomatopoeia, anachronism and alliteration amongst others.

The use of metaphor

Metaphor is a widespread figure of speech in which one thing, idea, or action is referred to by a word or expression normally denoting another thing, idea or action so as to suggest some common quality shared between the two (Baldick 1990:134). Jensma's metaphoric language derive from the experiences of the underclass black South African. Metaphors conjure vivid images of suffering, paranoia, alienation and depression in the conflicted personas in Jensma's poetry. This is evident in the poem, "Lo Lull":

i am a dirty little room
with spiders in the corner of my skull
my mouth a dark pit
into which human droppings disappear (1974:22).

and:

subways of pain (1974:67)

Jensma's metaphors also foreground issues of guilt and inward turmoil in an evocative manner as in the poem, "My Brother":

you lie hidden
in the corridors of my fear ((1973:64)

and in the poem, "Not Him":

i feel the ants of conscience nibblin (1973:73).

Jensma's metaphors were also crafted to demonstrate dislocation, loss and political sympathies in his protagonists:

our heroes of sharpeville
lie heavily
on the broken backs
of our mind (1977:13).

Metaphors also reveal a sense of the marvellous in Jensma's schizoid discourse. This is evident in the poem, "My Hands":

once my hands were birds singing (1973:92)

The use of metaphor is also illustrative of the important influence of jazz and blues on Jensma's poetry. This is indicated in the poem, "Once and Now":

a'm sittin hea, bessie
getting soaked in your blues (1973:43)

and in part 3 of "No Dreams":

yo throat a screamin sax (1973:52).

The use of simile

A simile is an explicit comparison between two different things, using the words “as” and “like” (Baldick 1990:206). Jensma uses similes in jazz refrains to foreground the intensity of emotions as in part 3 of “No Dreams”:

yo beat’s a yellin i’ma head
lika bandsaw howlin’n screamin (1973:43).

Similes were also used to describe images of foreboding and despondency. This is illustrated in the poem, “Die Halte Calvyn”:

in gedagte
net so groot as die dood
[in thoughts
as huge as death] (1974:12).

Similes are also used as vehicles of irony and satire to express Jensma’s views of religion. This is evident in the poem, “Dladla” :

even yu Lod
white like sin
when yu flip
open
like a knife (1973:82).

In the above excerpt God (or a master figure) is depicted in an inverted signification as “white like sin” (1973:82). This simile also inverts the negative perceptions associated with the colour black in society.

The multiple imagoes of speakers are also made apparent through simile. In the excerpt which follows “we” and “our own underdogs” are multiple personas of the same protagonists:

we will wander why we are treated
like our own underdogs (1973:95).

A sense of the bizarre (in this instance the reversal of the natural order) is also expressed through the use of simile:

wat altyd op ’n kisse lanks sy bed
gereed lê en wag nes die muis
wag om die kat dood te byt (1973:77)

Jensma has used similes to express pathological dysfunction, intense emotions and to invert racial stereotypes in his poetry.

The use of personification

Personification is a figure of speech in which animals, abstract ideas, or inanimate things are referred to as if they were human (Baldick 1990:166). Many of the images personified in Jensma’s poetry relate to death, surreal expressions of suffering and are

drawn from hallucinations and delusions of speakers. This is evident in the poem

“Manje For Now”:

I am piercing thru death’s jeteye (1974:88)

and:

and feel the sea breathes

on us, you and me (Jensma 1973:94)

A sense of the macabre is also evoked through the use of personification in the poem,

“Once A Tune”:

of your hunger

that eats away at the dark

slumped away within you (Jensma 1973:94).

In the above example the personification of hunger infuses the reader with empathy for the privation of the interlocutor. Personification is also evident in other images of anguish and suffering as in the poem, “For Them The Sun”:

dawn comes in screams of sun (1974:80).

as well as in Jensma’s absurd inventories in the poem, “Lemme Knows Two”:

Yes, a walking cabbage just went by (1974:84)

and in the poem, “A Twelve Tone For Dollar Brand” :

(da potatoe tiptoe in) (1973:116)

are just two examples which illustrate the use of personification to evoke the marvellous and fantastic in Jensma’s prosody.

The use of metonymy

Jensma also makes avid use of metonymy - a figure of speech which replaces the name of a thing with another name that is closely associated with it - (Baldick 1990:135). In the following excerpt from the poem, "Pullin Strong At Eleven-Forty-Five", for example, a "door" alludes to heaven:

oh, Lord
open up
your door, I'm a comin in (1973:21).

Jensma also uses metonymy to critique the life of excess and comfort enjoyed by the affluent which he terms the, "steel-and-chrome set" in the poem, "Stiletto Heel" (1974:32):

the ashblonde
in the easy chair
has a cushy number (1974:32).

Metonymy is also used to evoke irony as in the poem, "Umlilo, So Hell":

and I know my god is boss
his son, soul brother jesus
keeps for me my bottle of red (1974:27).

Metonymy is also used to evoke the surprise which derives from juxtaposing incongruous imagery. This is illustrated in the poem, "Trains On Platform Nine Stop At All Stations":

(freedom skids barefoot over bottle tops
(jailjoints fall off bar stools (1974:45).

The use of onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is the use of words that seem to imitate the sounds they refer to (Baldick 1990:156). An interesting feature of Jensma's prosody is his unconventional use of onomatopoeia as in the poem, "Trains On Platform Nine Stop At All Stations":

and when he smiles his platinum teeth
ring– a–ding his love for his platinum cigars (1974:45).

Jensma manipulates onomatopoeia not only for its acoustic value but also as a means of critiquing the destructive excesses of consumer culture.

The rhetorical figure of anachronism - the misplacing of any person, thing or event outside its proper historical frame (Baldick 1993:8) - is also manipulated by Jensma to communicate absurdity and chronological displacement in the following untitled poem:

It's the good life
It's the wide outdoors
It's the rugged veld
It's the good old brand
(established wayback in 1984) (1977:12).

"1984" (1977:12) may also be an allusion to David Bowie's futuristic song, "1984". The song is critical of modern consumer culture and its organising motif is manifest in these lyrics:

the times they are a changing
and the changings not for free (Bowie: 1990)

The use of alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of the same sounds - usually initial consonants or stressed syllables – in any sequence of neighbouring words (Baldick 1990:5). Alliteration is used to foreground images of suffering and alienation as in the poem, “Toll”:

his bitten back tell
the walls that line his hate
his beckoning hands
tell us
the bite of the whip (1974:26).

Jensma also uses alliteration as a substitute for rhyme and to accentuate rhythm as in the poem, “Bell Toll For Me”:

The futile flesh of my face
Tears off its sucking sockets- (1974:47).

Line and Stanza Organisation

The use of free verse

Free verse is a kind of poetry that does not conform to any regular metre (Baldick 1990:88). Jensma’s line and stanza organisation illustrate his experiments with varying

metres as is indicated by his use of concrete poetry and irregular verse forms. His verse forms are also substantially influenced by dadaism and surrealism. Jensema's free verse forms are grounded in the rhythms of speech. As such the poetic line is often divided into breath units and are unified by euphonic (sound) devices such as anaphora - a rhetorical figure of repetition in which the same word or phrase is repeated in successive lines - (Baldick 1990:10) and parallelism - the arrangement of similarly constructed clauses, or verse lines in a pairing or other sequence suggesting some correspondence between them - (Baldick 1990:160).

Allen Ginsberg's essay "When the Mode of Music Changes the Walls of the City Shake" (1961) is insightful in understanding the spontaneity and experimentation dominant in Jensema's line and stanza organisation:

trouble with conventional form (fixed line count and stanza forms) is, it's too symmetrical, geometrical, numbered and pre-fixed - unlike to my own mind which has no beginning and no end, nor fixed measure of thought (or speech, or writing) other than its own cornerless mystery. One must verge on the unknown, write towards the truth hitherto unrecognisable of one's own sincerity, including the unavoidable beauty of doom, shame and embarrassment, that very area of self recognition which formal conventions, internalised, keep us from discovering in ourselves and others. The mind must be trained, i.e. let loose, freed - to deal with itself as it actually is, and not impose on itself, or its poetic artefacts, an arbitrarily preconceived pattern (Häublein 1978:13)

Jensma's versification catches our visual attention by its unusual organisation. Charles Olsen's maxim that form is the extension of content is validated by Jensma's versification. The emotional turbulence of his conflicted speakers are expressed in disjointed stanzaic frames of varying line lengths. The unpredictability and irrationality of absurd inventories are also expressed in experiments with topography and in the layout of stanzas.

The use of repetition

Although Jensma's verse forms avoid metrical regularity there are several unifying elements. The repetition of words and phrases constitute a basic unifying element. Repetition is an important organising factor in his poetry which assumes various functions in his schizoid discourse. In the following poem, for example, the dual imagoes of the speaker are held together by anaphoric repetition:

i look at myself sleeping
i look at myself going for a piss
i look at myself coming back to bed
i look at myself having a nightmare
i look at myself getting up
i look at myself shaving
i look at myself going off to work
i keep looking at myself

not knowing that I am being watched (Jensma 1973:24)

Bernheim and Lewine point out that repetition is also a coping strategy for the schizophrenic (1979:30). Repetition is an anchor and gives a false sense of assurance in the maze of sensory bewilderment which characterises the schizophrenic's world.

Pathological compulsion and ritualised suffering is also foregrounded through repetition:

first paint my head in all detail

then pluck the eyes out

then cut the ears off

then strip of the lips

then smash the teeth out

then burn the hair off

then peel of the skin

then the nose, the tongue,

first paint my head in all detail (Jensma 1973:25).

Repetition is also used to concentrate attention and heighten pathos:

i saw her sit on a sidewalk

i saw her spit blood in a gutter

i saw her stump for a foot

i saw her clutch a stick

i saw her grin toothless

i saw thorns in her burnt flesh (Jensma 1973:39).

Pleasing sound patterns are also expressed through repetition:

and say cheese in cream cheese (Jensma 1977:15).

The absence of punctuation and repetition of “palm trees” (1977:21) together with its elliptical line ending evoke a sense of infinite continuity in the following excerpt:

palm trees palm trees palm trees palm... (Jensma 1977:21).

The magical qualities of repetition are also evinced when used in the context of ritual spectacle and religious rites:

Take the white clay (mpemba!

Take your white albino hair!

Take your white parrot feathers!

Take the pure white blood! (Jensma 1977:20).

Parallelism is also used to emphasise cognitive dissonance and inane paranoia. The repetition of “who da hell’s shaky jake” (Jensma 1977:60) in the following poem appears out of context and is indicative of the speaker’s puzzled state of mind:

He’s come home – patrão jim, oh

yo wringin’ n twistn’ n moanin

who da hell’s shaky jake?

I open a door marked: ‘gents’

A joint filled with toilet rolls

I open a door marked: 'barber'

A joint filled with human hair

Who da hell's shaky jake? (Jensma 1977:60).

The use of absurd inventories

The absurd was popularized in theatre and in the prose fiction of twentieth century writers. Absurd playwrights and writers tried to convey their sense of bewilderment, anxiety and wonder that they felt about an inexplicable universe. As such, their works expressed the meaningless and absurd condition of life. Abandoning rational devices, the absurd was evoked by cognitive dissonance, the discarding of realistic illusion and the use of dreams and fantasies.

Words were considered inadequate to express the essence of the human experience. As Jean-Paul Sartre's claimed:

the absurd demonstrates that language and the world are hopelessly divorced from one another (Hinchcliff 1974:28).

This limitation of language led to the parody of conventional language, clichés and technical jargon. These stylistic devices are also evident in Jensma's poetry. An example is the parody of technical jargon in the following untitled poem by Jensma:

“don't you believe me mister? It's got
double cams improved crankshaft white wall tyres
stereophonic disc brakes ejectable clutch-cum-seat
with all these xtras mister nothing can go wrong” (1977:21).

According to Sigmund Freud:

delight in nonsense has its roots in the feeling of freedom we enjoy when we are
able to abandon the straightjacket of logic (1958:101).

Yet the literature of verbal nonsense expresses more than just playfulness. Martin Esslin surmises that :

the absurd transcends the real world and opens up a glimpse into the infinite. It is
an attempt to transcend and enlarge the limits of the material universe and logic
(1968: 331).

For Salvador Dali the absurd was one way to systemise confusion and discredit completely the world of reality (Rosemont 1970:114). Jensma evoked the absurd in his poetry by the use of the inane:

One hole above needs a nail
More holes would need more nails
Other pictures more pictures
Nothing I want to do about it (1977:11).

The extraordinary, the irrational and the contradictory in Jensma's versification constitute an allegory of the absurdities he found in South Africa. These absurd inventories are manifest in chance associations, the fantastic and phrases with a minimum denominator of self evident meaning:

yet this is not enough
because the traffic jammed up in pretoria
because white cops carry black cops in coffins
my father is made of leather)
my mother looks cleancut in handmade paper) (1974:74).

The narrative flow of his poetry is often interrupted by incongruous statements which prevent rational comprehension. Examples of these unsettling discontinuities are to be found in unexpected absurdities such as "(Speed Check Zone Ahead)" (1977:21), "(the potatoe tiptoe in) (1973:115) and "(da jumpin pumpkin)" (1974:87)

Jensma also exploits the element of humour in the absurd. This is evident in the light hearted spoof in the following poem:

First of all, i found the broad loaded
With blackheads and pimples
That she has rotten teeth
That she is an alcoholic
That she is mentally disturbed

All this taken into account, dear sir
 Sorry to say, sir, I failed to enter the paradise
 Of erotica (as advertised)
 Dear sir, I can't comply and return herewith
 Your merchandise by registered post (number OK 88)
 And what's more, sir, I found
 That she wasn't made of rubber after all (1977:16).

The poem is a litany of complaint about the purchase of a rubber doll by mail order. The list of human defects in the doll elicit black humour in increasingly absurd terms.

Jensma also expressed his abhorrence to apartheid and racism by the use of the absurd presented in the form of prayers:

amakaladi: tjarra, tjarra ad infinitum
kaffir: amaboen, amaboen ad infinitum
amaboen: kaffir, kaffir ad infinitum
tjarra: amakaladi-ladiii ad infinitum
curryball: a-hmm sanctus dominus dei...
 : *ad lib all together now:*
 amatjrblackaf bludybalshitirboenwhitrock(1977:73).

The absurd in Jensma's poetry consisted of images, phrases and nonsense words which prove that meaning is only one aspect of poetic function. More significantly though, Jensma's use of the absurd is a satirical magnification of the absurdities he found in

consumer culture and in the socio-political context in which he wrote. The superlatives used in advertising, for instance, has succeeded in devaluing language to the point of meaninglessness. The specialized jargon used by different groups of society further underscores the absurdity prevalent in mass communication. As Martin Esslin points out:

A yawning gulf has opened between language and reality (1980:409).

Thus Jensma's absurd inventories is also a parody of the massive breakdown of communication in society.

Jensma's satire of racial invectives in the form of absurd prayers (1977: 73) also critiques the absurdity of racial stereotyping in South Africa. The absurd play on racial invectives such as "curryball", "amaboen" and "kaffir" (1977:73) are synecdoches of the absurd racial politics of South Africa.

Tone

The use of Humour

Humour is the recognition of incongruity in a ludicrous context (Schaeffer 1981:17). Humour is apparent in Jensma's poetry in the forms of wit, burlesque, puns, farce and black humour and must be understood within the context of the motifs of racial oppression, mutilation and paranoia. Humour, in the tragic circumstances which overwhelm the protagonists in Jensma's texts serve as a momentary release and defence against intolerable anguish and degradation. According to Freud:

humour is the triumph of narcissism, the ego's victorious assertion of its own invulnerability. It refuses to be hurt by the arrows of reality or to be

compelled to suffer. It insists that it is impervious to wounds dealt by the outside world, in fact, they are, merely occasions for affording it pleasure (Lefcourt 1986: 217).

Jensma's humour is subversive, poking subtle fun at racism and the moneyed class.

Jensma burlesques the biblical fall from grace of Adam and Eve in the poem "Sir And Lady Toothpick Caught In The Act" (1974:28). Humour is foregrounded by the use of a pidgin dialect associated with slapstick:

by-m-by yessah & lady m'lady
waka waka for garden an go play plenty
m'lady e meet snake...
m'lady put mango for yessah groundnut stew
true true yessah e like am...
an da lawd he came: 'wotin dis!
who tell you you be naked?
a-ha! you done chop am mango for middle garden...(1974:28).

Black humour is also used in the following interior monologue as a perverse attempt to gain recognition of one's humanity:

i toss my head off
i cry with agony
to make them laugh

but they only stare

i show them my bum

they still stare

i tell them a joke

they stare (1974:23).

Humour and wit is illustrated in the farcical representation of heaven as a five star service industry in the following poem:

on my way to St. Peter's Gate

i see a sign looming up-

WELCOME TO SOWETO

Air-conditioned rooms and baths

we can recommend the soap (1974:40)

Paradoxical humour derives from the context in which Soweto is mentioned. Soweto is a dilapidated township to which thousands of blacks were relocated under the Group Areas Act. Riddled with crime, violence and poverty, it is an antithetical notion of heaven. The image of Soweto subverts the rigid racial stratification of apartheid society. In the context of the poem whites would be compelled to live with blacks in heaven, an idea considered an abomination in racist doctrine. The word "soap" evokes cynical humour as it is also a reference to the number of detainees who allegedly died by slipping on soap whilst in prison for political acts of subversion.

Humour is also indicated through the use of puns which play on statements of the obvious:

porno actress reveals all(1977:73).

Hilarity is evoked by the ambiguous possibilities of sensational news and lewdness by the porn star in the above excerpt.

Farce is also used as an element of humour:

on the last page, a cop

full-fledged with cap-and-whistle

in the nude and angelic stare (1977:28).

The hilarity which derives from a ludicrous context and the resulting sexual innuendo are characteristic of farce.

Humour also forms part of Jensma's satirical outlook. Satire is a mode of writing which exposes the failings of individuals, institutions, or societies to ridicule and scorn (Baldick 1990:198). It is usually directed against the injustice of social wrongs and mixes a critical attitude with wit and humour in an effort to improve mankind or, as Alexander Pope puts it:

I hope to deter, if not to reform (Pagioloro 1969:301).

According to Arthur Pollard the essence of successful satire is to get your victims "hopping mad" and your audience "laughing their heads off" (1970:12). Jensma's satiric

tone takes the form of wit, ridicule, caricature, hyperbole, cynicism, lampoon, invective, irony and sarcasm amongst others.

In the following poem the speaker's sardonic tone foregrounds the callous oppression and exploitation of black workers under apartheid. The employer is pictured as a fat, unconscionable capitalist profiting of the labour of others:

we drum our fingers on our potbelly
and feel at ease with the world
we brood around
innumerable slotmachines
the prize will be
a body plus its labour
what a comfort!
a petty pass law gets us slaves:
right to use a gun (1973:15).

Jensma also critiques the contradictions and absurdities of apartheid:

time after time our prime
minister proclaims lasting peace
and nails sharpeville on
another burning cross (1973:42).

The ambivalent signification of the cross is manipulated to suggest a symbol of peace as well as the "burning cross" associated with the racist oppression of the Klu Klux Klan.

The ironical proclamation of the minister satirises the impossibility of peace whilst blacks are disenfranchised and killed in incidences such as the Sharpeville massacre.

Jensma also uses satire to ridicule the pompousness and narcissism of his protagonists:

dominee pettikop petoors
staan sy plek in die gemeenskap vol
só vol
daar is skaars plek vir ander (1973:85).

The omnipotence of Jesus Christ is also trivialised and degraded in burlesque:

praat groot van “super star”
-mister jesus christ
vi’ ons glim “die ster” maar skraal (1973:103).

Through “The Parable of the Sower” (Matthews 19:13), the Bible is also parodied:

i plant my corn on the rocks
it does not grow
i plant my corn on fertile land
It does not grow
next time I plant
i’ll start beyond
i’ll start beyond the bread (1973:91).

Jensma also uses caricature as a form of satire. The use of caricature involves the exaggeration of an individual's features or characteristics to the point of making him look ridiculous. Satire is manifest in caricatures such as "fanie du mielie bruin" (1974:55) and "pynappelkop" (1974:41).

In "chant of praise for the idi amin dada" (1977:47) Jensma lampoons the Ugandan dictator, Idi Amin:

l'elephanté, mongo!

open that mouth, show your teeth

see, he eats, he greets me

i laugh louder, laugh superbrite

see, no blood, my teeth so clean

l'elephanté mongo! (1977:47).

The poem is a reference to the sadism and brutality that characterized Amin's reign of terror as Ugandan president. The syntactic parallelism of the first and last lines, "l'elephante, mongo!" of the poem refers to the obesity, strength and monstrous qualities of Amin who was once the heavyweight champion of Uganda. The medial pauses in the poem create a staccato rhythm which make each inhumane act of Amin distinctive and definitive. Indeed, Amin was reputed to be cannibalistic and stored his victims' heads in

refrigerators. The speaker's incredulity and overbearing nervous fear foreground Amin's capacity for unprovoked violence and murder. The portmanteau word "superbrite" foregrounds the fear-induced compulsion of the speaker to ingratiate himself with Amin. The speaker's tone of awe is a desperate attempt to satiate the dictator's megalomania.

Irony

Irony is another strategy in Jensma's poetry. Irony derives from the incongruity between appearance and reality (saying one thing and meaning another). Irony is used by Jensma to expose hypocrisy, vanity, exploitation and the foibles of racism. It is also used to foreground pathos, suffering and loss in the protagonists in Jensma's poetry.

Situational irony is presented in a bizarre, surreal context in "Till No One" (1973:5), a poem which recollects the demolition of Sophiatown:

in sophiatown
can themba
climbs the steps
or what is left of them
he opens a door of a house
full onto the sky
and stands gaping over the edge

for this was the place
the world ended

then he locked up carefully
lest someone steal
and went back downstairs (1973:5)

The protagonist is overwhelmed by the destruction of his home and lapses into a state of denial. His tragic circumstance is brought to the fore by the irony of ritualised behaviour intended to evoke a false sense of normalcy and assurance (“he locks up carefully, lest someone steal”) (1973:5).

Situational irony is also manifest in the numerous instances of self mutilation:

lets
slit our throbbin human vein- (1973:8).

The personas in Jensa’s texts seek resolution by unrealistic and deviant forms of behaviour. Self mutilation, whilst an expression of psychotic frustration and a cry for help is ironical, because it further exacerbates the individual’s plight.

Self-disparaging irony is also used to expose the dehumanisation of blacks under apartheid:

when he opened up the ceremony
i thought of last year
when he passed that infamous bill
now we say: sorry i live , lord
yes, last year I became scum (1973:31).

In “I Come” (1973:64), the sadistic destruction wrecked upon the alter personality is a bizarre and ironical claim of kinship:

I’ve plucked out your eyes

I’ve smashed in your teeth

I’ve peeled off your skin

But they don’t believe

- everything is just lies

but they don’t believe

that I call you brother (1973:64).

Situational irony is also used to expose the hypocrisy and dubious benevolence of colonialism in the word, “help” in the poem, “Our Village”:

they pumped our chief full of bullets

they bumped off all our elders

they started raping our womenfolk

they keep talking of a new life for us

they say this thing is also elsewhere

they have our whole country tied up

they have come a long way to help us

they want us to have faith in them

our village is not the same anymore

since two gents with white suits rolled up(1973: 69).

Irony derives from the lack of consonance between the projected benevolence and the lethal brutality of the protagonists. By using the rhetorical figure of analepsis (commonly referred to as retrospection or flashbacks), the speaker foregrounds the ironical sense of devastation and irretrievable loss brought on by the colonial encounter. This sense of devastation is presented in ironic understatement or meiosis – “our village is not the same anymore” (1973:69) – a mild way of referring to the tragic and unsettling upheaval of colonialism.

Irony is also manipulated to express sarcasm:

t’s for mister slyguy
that I’ve fallen in love with stones
that good old factory smoke
those greasy machines
the bus in first gear, yes dad (1977:14)

The speaker’s euphonic diction conceals the sarcastic diatribe against exploitation by the merchant class.

Conclusion

Although written predominantly in English and Afrikaans, Jensma’s poetry is a mixture of Portuguese, French, Zulu, Tswana, German, American slang and township argot known as Tsotsi-taal. Jensma’s diction is characterised by frequent code switching

between standard English, Afrikaans, pidgin and the formulaic tokens and expressions of Tsotsi-taal. Jensma's use of Tsotsi-taal and a distinctively Americanised pidgin influenced by the rhythms and lexical items of jazz, marrabenta and kwela is a privileging of varying rhythms and demotic registers over metrical patterns and acoustic regularity in his poetry.

Wopko Jensma's experimental prosody draws on a broad range of poetic forms and tropes to elucidate his organising motifs of race and class oppression, mutilation, psychoses and the vagaries of consumer culture. His poetry departs from conventional line and stanza organisation and is remarkable for its fragmentary nature, neologisms, portmanteau words, syntactic dislocation and avant-garde influences. These poetic forms, together with the use of chance associations and the unconscious contrive to debunk the romantic view of language as a transparent window towards an ideal reality beyond itself.

His four volumes of poetry constitute experiments with syntax, form, topography, syncopated diction and an eclectic mixing of languages. His asocial idiolect is further complicated by the use of neologisms, syntactic fragmentation, semantic dislocation and the frequent absence of punctuation. Jensma's diction is also a semantic puzzle of nonsense words and disparate collages usually associated with the European avant-garde.

The first volume of poetry, *Sing for our Execution* (1973) demonstrates Jensma's predilection for schizoid and original verse forms. The poetic impulse seems to be motivated by the high emotive responses typical of expressionism. Intense emotion is

particularly noticeable in the fragmentary and elliptical versification in this volume. In *Sing for our Execution* (1973) Jensma uses a concentration of satire, black humour and anaphoric repetition in a diction which vacillates between a schizoid discourse and Americanised slang. The use of jazz language enhances the acoustic value of the prosody with its rhythmic cadences, instances of parallelisms and nonsense words.

Jensma's second volume of poetry, *Where White Is The Colour, Where Black Is The Number* (1974) is a continuation of his experimental verse forms. A notable feature of this collection is the striking use of imagery in macabre and surreal contexts. The dramatic monologues in this volume reveal conflicted and overwhelmed speakers whose asocial discourse invite an exploration into nuanced ambiguities and irony. The streetwise registers used by Jensma's protagonists also indicate a higher frequency of colloquial language and idiomatic expressions. In this volume Jensma's diction also grades erratically between tsotsi-taal, standard English and Kaapse taal (a version of pidgin Afrikaans).

In *I Must Show You My Clippings* (1977) Jensma's makes increasing use of absurd inventories, chance associations and incongruous imagery. The use of collage, changing registers and folkloric expressions are also more evident in this volume. Of particular interest are the use of magical rites, incantation and spells. The use of concrete poetry and radical topography which simulate schizophrenic bewilderment are further examples of experiments which enhance the optical significance of this collection.

Chapter 5

Subjectivity

Jensma's poetry express subjective views about consumer culture, poverty, politics, religion and racism in ways which invite the reader into simple identification with his speakers – that is, the reader is offered a position as transcendental ego. These speakers discourses are diaglossic or “double voiced” and in which Jensma's own subjectivity is refracted and given agency. This chapter draws eclectically from the theories espoused by Freud, Lacan, Marcuse, Foucault and Anthony Easthope's study, *Poetry as Discourse* (1983) to critique Jensma's use of subjectivity.

The subject, from the moment of its birth, is interpellated and inscribed in discourse. According to Lacan:

Language is not a function of the subject's identities and desires as much as the subject's identities and desires are functions of language (<http://www.microsoft@lacan.net>.)

Consequently, a person's subjectivity is an effect of discourse. As Easthope points out:

Discourse is determined linguistically and at the same time ideologically. But it is also determined subjectively. Subjectivity is integral to all discourse and there cannot be discourse apart from subjectivity (1983:31).

Roland Barthes explains in his essay, “The Death of the Author”:

in literature it is language which speaks, not the author (1980:45).

This view enables an understanding of the subject as a lost object. Firstly, the use of language evokes a fundamental form of alienation that is part and parcel of *one's mother tongue*. The very expression – mOther tongue - suggests that it is some Other tongue (Fink 1995:7). The *misrecognition* which results in the illusion of a unified “I” in the symbolic order is predicated on loss. Language genders our identities. This is also another of our primary losses: a fall from androgynous wholeness into sexual difference ("it's a boy!"). These perspectives suggest that the subject is split and unstable and it is only on entry into the symbolic order that full subjectivity comes into being. In the symbolic order identity depends on difference rather than the self-identification of the mirror stage. Language, the system of differences which articulates identities, constructs positions for the subject- notably the subject position “I” – which allows differentiation from others and identity for the self.

Freud, on the other hand, sees the social construction of subjectivity in the dramatic clash between the reality principle and the pleasure principle. For Freud, the instincts (emanating from the id) are originally governed by the pleasure principle: their aim being solely to gain pleasure and retreat from unpleasantness. The ego develops from the id. The ego deals with the external world and operates according to the reality principle, acting as a mediator between the external world and the drives of the id. Under the guidance of the reality principle, the individual learns what is useful and approved behaviour, and what is harmful and forbidden. Herbert Marcuse points out in *Eros and Civilisation* (1984) that it is in this extant control of the id that a person becomes a:

conscious thinking subject, geared to a rationality that is imposed upon him from outside (1984:14).

For Marcuse then, rationality is a social construct and subjectivity is the product of social experience. Marcuse sees subjectivity as a product of societal consciousness, whereby the individual is subjected to rationalising forms of thought and behaviour. In his language, desires, needs and in the formation of his consciousness the individual is dominated by society and remains a socially submissive subject. Marcuse's view is similar to that of Foucault who perceives the subject as constituted in a matrix of power-knowledge relations. For Foucault, power is exercised in language by the way it constitutes and governs subjects.

Subjectivity in language can be detected by the use of pronouns. This is precisely because all discourse presupposes a subject since:

A signifier is that which represents a subject for another signifier (Easthope 1983:43).

Roman Jakobson discriminates between *énonciation* (the speech act) and the *enounced* (the narrated event) as well as the speaker of enunciation (the actual subject or producer of meaning) and the speaker enounced (the participant in the speech act) (1971:133-134). Thus the "I" as represented in discourse (subject of the enounced) is always sliding away from the "I" doing the speaking (subject of enunciation). Easthope elaborates:

For the subject of the enounced: the word is treated as meaning, discourse appears transparent and subjectivity becomes fixed, finding a fixed position where

the ego is apparently present to itself. For the subject of enunciation: the word is treated as a thing, subjectivity becomes *decentred* as the fixed position of the ego is shown to be a temporary point in the process of the other (1983:45).

Lacan defines these two positions as the *imaginary* and the *symbolic*. In Colin MacCabe's summary:

as speaking subject we constantly oscillate between the symbolic and the imaginary - constantly imagining ourselves granting some full meaning to the words we speak, and constantly being surprised to find them determined by relations outside our control (1976:14).

In *histoire*, the impersonal mode, the narrator is implicit whilst in *discours*, the narrator is presented explicitly. The latter is significant to poetry as it makes the reader identify with the represented speaker – offering a position to the reader as transcendental ego. This creates the impression of an individual voice speaking because it conceals the way it is produced as an effect (a process of *misrecognition*). Thus a reader is always positioned in enunciation as its subject - the reader always produces the poem as a present reading and becomes temporarily alienated from his own subjectivity.

The above insights into subjectivity are useful in understanding the way Jensma's speakers are focalized. The expressions of overt racism, self-consuming capitalistic greed, narcissism, pleasure in exploitation, self-pity, liberal condescension and suffering are designed to create a dramatic awareness of injustices in South Africa during apartheid, and, on a global scale, the domination and exploitation which ensues from the

metanarratives of rationality and insatiable capitalism. The different voices in Jensma's poetry constitute autobiographical speakers, the poor and oppressed black person, the white oppressor, the narcissistic capitalist and the schizophrenic amongst others.

The speaker as autobiographical Jensma

In presenting autobiography as fiction Jensma conflates the author and the narrator in the poem into a single persona. This combination of the imaginative and the referential dimension provides a view of Jensma's life which is not possible with facts alone, for, as Pirandello puts it:

a fact is like a sock that won't stand up when its empty. In order that it may stand up one has to put into it the reasons and feelings which have caused it to exist (Shelston 1977:10).

Fictional autobiography conflates the lives of the author and the narrator. This in turn is situated within a larger matrix: the culture which contains these texts. The intratextual and extratextual convergence in the autobiographical "I" in Jensma's texts registers the experience of an identity overwhelmed by race and class inequalities and alienated by the imposition of apartheid in South Africa. The dissonant voice of the autobiographical "I" attempts to preserve identity through self-inscription which implodes into pathological aberrations and gestures of resistance which seem almost futile. This, for instance, is manifest in the jacket blurb of *Where White is the Colour, Where Black is the Number* (1974):

This exegesis is also available in English - upon request - be you not dis
ting they call whiteman or blackman.

The anxiety of identity of the autobiographical “I” can also be observed in the
dissolution of a coherent self in the following poem:

I was born 26 july 1939 in ventersdorp

I found myself in a situation

I was born 26 july 1939 in sophiatown

I found myself in a situation

I was born 26 july 1939 in district six

I found myself in a situation

I was born 26 july in welkom

I found myself in a situation

Now, when my mind started to tick

I noticed other humans like me

Shaped like me:ears.eyes

Hair legs arms etc... (I checked)

We were all cast in the same shackles:...

I brought three kids into this world

(as far as I know)

I prefer a private to a public life

(I feel allowed to say)

I suffer from schizophrenia

(they tell me)

I'll die, I suppose, of lung cancer

(if I read the ads correctly)...

I died 26 july in the costa de sol

I found myself in a situation

I died 26 july in the grasslands

I found myself in a situation (1977:9).

The poem is a confessional discourse which obtains its poetic unity through anaphora and the repetition of phrases. Repetition projects ambivalence in the poem. The autobiographical "I" in changing geographical contexts is a synecdoche representative of all humanity. The schizoid split in the "I" and its bewilderment is induced by living in a society regimented by apartheid laws such as the group areas act (in which separate residential zones were allocated to different race groups). The poem is a surreal chronological flight from birth to death which satirises the absurdity of racial laws in South Africa.

The conflicting claims of suburban identity is a synecdoche of a society immured in the racist division of property and beset by irreconcilable contradictions of race and class. The false certainty of the speaker's conflicting geographical citations indicate a deeply fragmented psyche which in turn is an allegory of a divided nation.

Stanza five is a satire of the notions of difference espoused in apartheid doctrine. A common identity of people is projected with significant and ironical omissions of race and colour by which South African society was regulated. The bracketed phrases in the eight stanza indicate societal control over the individual characterised by repression, propaganda and the control of information which suggest totalising bureaucratic control over the subject:

I brought three kids into this world

(as far as I know)

I prefer a private to a public life

(I feel allowed to say)

I suffer from schizophrenia

(they tell me)

I'll die, I suppose, of lung cancer

(if I read the ads correctly)...(1977:9).

The last four stanzas are unrhymed couplets in which the autobiographical "I" dies in four places simultaneously. The linear progression from birth to death simulate a

conflicted existence straining against ideological control exercised as a tyranny of power.

Another important feature of the autobiographical “I” can be discerned in the way in which trauma is narrated. In the poem, “My Brother”, for instance, the “autobiographical Jensma” reacts to his brother’s death by regressing into a diminished sense of reality and denial:

as clear as day i remember
my younger brother –
he left home one morning
and never came back

i remember we went to the river
i saw his body sleeping
deep under the water
i did not cry –

but i remember his quiet face
as he lay in his coffin
his nose and mouth stuffed
with clean cotton wool

i remember i was not surprised

when i saw him a week later
greeting me from amidst the crowd
at the market of our village (1974:65).

Jensma also comments about his schizophrenia in the poem, “Spanner In The What? Works”:

I suffer from schizophrenia
(they tell me) (1977:9).

The bracketed phrase suggests that Jensma himself does not really believe that he is afflicted by schizophrenia. These lines instead show how a subject can be reductively and erroneously constituted in discourse and consensual reality.

However, the autobiographical “I” also reveals symptoms of extreme depersonalisation associated with schizophrenia:

the candlestick of my finger
burns slowly at the dawn

i have a thousand eyes
nine-ninety-nine don't see

i have a million words to say
they are all dead in my mouth (1975:15)

On the surface it may seem that the autobiographical “I” has reduced efficacy and is only able to relate to his own phantoms. But the autobiographical “I” is much more complex. These statements are also testimony to the repression and selective vision of prejudice in the malaise of South African society. The “thousand eyes” represent the collective of society which is blind to the injustices perpetrated by apartheid. The “million words” that are “all dead in my mouth” (1975:15) allude to the censorship and the impossibility of free expression in apartheid South Africa.

The speaker as oppressed poor and black

The poor and oppressed black voices in Jensma’s poetry are a synecdoche for the suffering and powerlessness of the disenfranchised black majority in South Africa. These speakers portray the frustration and despair of people without basic needs and deprived of fundamental human rights. The poem “Lopsided sided Cycle 2” (1973:11) draws attention to the misery and hunger of the poor and oppressed:

today we will be singing a sad song, son:
a song of our hunger
we will defy you, yessa boss
we will crucify the nearest christ
we will all be living aloud
you know why son, eh?
we carry the carcass of hunger gravewards (1973:11)

The dialectic tension between “we” and “you” in the poem dramatises the class antagonism articulated by the speaker. His subjectivity is an effect which materialises from the disparate power relations between his “boss” and himself. Individual identity is conflated within a group identity as the speaker inscribed himself within a collective “we”. The line “we will defy you, yessa boss” (1973:11) indicates that subjectivity derives from the way the subject is constituted (or thinks he is constituted) by the other. Hence, the speaker objectifies the boss as the exploitative capitalist responsible for his suffering.

The poem, “Not Him” (1973:73) is a subjective account of the poor which sees the protagonist as bearing up with fortitude under extreme conditions of hardship:

when it's time for lunch
he disappears to somewhere
and comes back later picking his teeth
but i know he did not eat
he gets a bit of grub only sometimes
but i know he's mostly hungry
and never says a word about an empty stomach
i am not going to tell him i know
and i am not inviting him for dinner
already i feel the ants of conscience nibble
i am not going to tell him i know (1973:73).

The poem dramatises the intersubjective relationship between the first person and the second person. Self-awareness is forced upon the subject by the gaze of the other:

already i feel the ants of conscience nibble (1973:73).

The confessional tone of the poem creates a confidential relationship between the speaker and the reader – a confidence which covertly invites a shared subjectivity. In lieu of societies stereotype of the apathetic vagabond, the protagonist, instead, commands respect by the speaker for braving his hardship with unflinching nonchalance. However this representation of the protagonists who endures his hunger with silence is an unwitting confession of an inability to exercise a degree of altruism by the speaker. The speaker has become self-centred in an imperative for survival. The repetition of the sentence:

i am not going to tell him i know (1973:73)

is a veil of silence in which the speaker's conscience is salved. In the poem, image, story and diction coalesce to express the ambivalence and complexity of the speaker's subjectivity.

The speaker as white oppressor

In "Lopsided Cycle 6" (1973:13) the speaker is the exploitative whiteman rejoicing in the benefits he has accrued with apartheid:

we drum our fingers on our potbelly
and feel at ease with the world
we brood around

innumerable slotmachines
the prize will be
a body plus its labour
what a comfort!
a petty pass law gets us slaves:
right to use a gun (1977:15).

An interesting feature of this poem is the manner in which it serves two speakers at the same time and simultaneously expresses two different intentions: the direct intention of the speaker and the refracted intention of the poet. This is done by exploiting the monologue's potential for satire. The speaker's unwitting exposure of his narcissism is in fact the refracted and critical voice of the poet.

The speaker appears smug and self satisfied at the profit and power derived from apartheid laws which facilitate the racist exploitation of labour. The reader experiences the callous exploitation and ill gotten life of ease of the speaker almost as a personal encounter. The compelling feature of this monologue is the way in which Jensma has manipulated the speaker's discourse to express his disgust of racism and exploitation. Unflattering confessions such as "potbelly" (1977:15), clinical exploitation as in, "the prize will be a body plus its labour" (1977:15) the description of the pass laws as "petty" (1977:15) and black workers as "slaves" (1977:15) contrive to foreground the ironic discrepancy of the speaker's view and the covert condemnation implied by the poet.

The poem “I Come” (1973:63) is a dramatic monologue in which the speaker derives sadistic pleasure from calculated maliciousness:

i am white and brutal

i come to you after death

and leave you completely deserted

a little tenderness

a little care

only hardens my heart

a gentle bayonet

a breeze of bullets

is the voice of my existence

i did not hear you

i wont listen

i did not hear a thing

i am white and brutal

i come to you after death

and leave you completely deserted (1973:63)

The title overwrites the narcissism and inflated ego of the speaker with sexual overtones – “I Come” (1973:63). This sexual leitmotif is perpetuated by phallic allusions such as “gentle bayonets”, “breeze of bullets” and “white and hard” (1973:63). The “gentle bayonet” (1973:63) is also contradictory in that it sexualises brutality.

The speaker perceives himself as the glorified “i”, wholly smug and omnipotent in his monocular vision. The focused, sadistic actions of the speaker achieve a dramatic effect by anaphora and repetition. These rhetorical devices construct an image of the speaker as callous and morbid. The assonance and alliteration in:

a gentle bayonet

a breeze of bullets (1973:63)

foreground the chilling and evil tone of the speaker. The speaker is devoid of emotion and moral reflection – strategies which are calculated to elicit moral outrage and horror in the reader. The speaker feels he must neither love or be loved and draws upon the resources of his hatred to alienate himself.

The speaker as capitalist

Kim Worthington in her study, *Self as Narrative: Subjectivity and Community in Contemporary Fiction* (1996), distinguishes between the reflecting subject and the reflected object in the dichotomy of subjectivity (1996:161). The reflecting subject reveals his/her subjective position in his/her discourse whilst the reflected object is objectified in that discourse. Part 5 of “k ntie, hy’s on the binge or how to make a

horse of yourself without really trying” (1977:15) is illustrative of the binary tension which emanates from conflicting discourses between the reflecting subject and the reflected object (these positions alternate between the boss and the worker in the poem).

The poem is a polyphonic microcosm of contesting speech between the speaker as capitalist and the speaker as exploited worker. Both speakers are workers and the capitalist voice is satirised through mimicry:

it's for mister slyguy
that i've fallen in love with stones
that good ol factory smoke
those ghreasy machines
the bus in first gear, yes dad
a'm really gunnu luv those ol stones

so i better DIG/SLAM/FIST/CUT

but please hear my wail's drone:

Raditsepe: *we hear you, yet we don't*
 thin down your voice
 lets hear you strum in tone

Ramokgotla: *we never dug the whip*
 Bring BRANG brung

the bloody tea my boy

Ramotau: *hear my growl, now*
yes, now, for the morrow
i be-been a-oozin in alley

mister slyguy, you're a goodguy, yes—

“Oh here you are, Joe
we've been searching the world
to only find you!” (1977:14)

The contesting voices in the poem dramatise the class conflict between rich and poor. The striking feature of this poem is its visual pattern. The shift in topographical format between colloquial speech and dramatic verse creates a visual stanza which permits opposing voices to express their subjective views (albeit in the guise of satire). The class antagonism between proletarian and capitalist is presented in thinly veiled irony by the worker in the first stanza and is rebutted in a voice of open contempt by the capitalist in the second stanza.

In the first stanza the worker's sarcasm is foregrounded by the ironic lauding of decrepit working conditions:

t's for mister slyguy
that i've fallen in love with stones

that good ol factory smoke
those ghreasy machines
the bus in first gear, yes dad (1977:14).

The above lines constitute an ironic lauding of the capitalist by the worker. Abhorrent and exploitative working conditions are cynically eulogised, exposing the hypocrisy of the capitalist in the process. Rimmon-Kenan points out the naming is also an indicator of the qualities of character (1983:83). The naming of the capitalist as “mister slyguy” (1977:15) is suggestive of his cunning, graft and moral depravity. The capitalist is exposed as a callous exploiter of labour in his position as the reflected object.

The dramatic verse inscribed in the poem reveals the capitalist as the reflecting subject:

Raditsepe: *we hear you, yet we don't*

 thin down your voice

 lets hear you strum in tone

Ramokgotla: *we never dug the whip*

 bring BRANG brung

 the bloody tea my boy (1977:14).

Raditsepe's paradoxical statement, “*we hear you yet we don't*” (1977:14), satirises the condescending attitude of the capitalist and his desire to impose his will upon the worker. Ramakgota's response foregrounds the servitude expected by the capitalist as

well as his boorish demeanour. The phrase “dug the whip” (1977:14) is suggestive of a phallic symbol of overwhelming power over the workers. The words “*bring, BRANG, brung*” (1977:14) uses alliterative acoustics to mimic thunder – which connotes the thunderous, commanding and fearful voice of the capitalist. In this way the reflecting subjects are satirised and objectified as callous, ruthless and egotistical.

The speaker as schizophrenic

The schizoid speakers of Jensma cannot distinguish between fact and fantasy, are afflicted by spatial disorientation and their personalities are often inhabited by multiple imagoes. These fragmented identities arise in the hope (according to Cixous) that :

being several and insubordinable: the subject can resist subjugation (Glass 1993:37).

In certain symptoms of schizophrenia such as thought insertion, delusions of control and auditory hallucinations various aspects of self-awareness are disrupted. These dislocated and disconnected speakers often reveal conflicting and deviant forms of subjectivity which are manifest in different imagoes.

In “Lo Lull 3” (1973:24) the speaker’s fragmented psyche has resulted in an alter personality which looks on at his own displaced body (this has already been discussed in the chapter on schizophrenia):

i look at myself sleeping

i look at myself going for a piss

i look at myself coming back to bed
i look at myself having a nightmare
i look at myself getting up
i look at myself shaving
i look at myself going off to work
i keep looking at myself
not knowing that i am being watched (1973:24).

“Hide His Head” (1975:23) is a poem in which the speaker’s abnormal thoughts and perceptions (psychopathology) appear consistent with an episode of schizophrenic delusion:

i have a pain in my hand
for quite some time now
it gets worse when i reach
to pick up his head by the hair

his head is on a golden tray
displayed in our front gallery
where everyone can see it first
the crust of blood round his neck
reminds us of the knife
and the day we killed him

i have tried to resist the feeling
off picking up his head by the hair
but something compels me

i want to hide his head
where no one will be able to see it
so I would not have to feel
the pain in my hand anymore (1975:23).

In the first stanza the speaker assigns a psychotic meaning to the pain he/she feels in his/her hand. According to Freud:

hypochondria, like organic disease, manifests itself in distressing and painful bodily sensations and also concurs with organic disease in its effect upon the distribution of the libido. The hypochondriac withdraws both interest and libido- the latter especially markedly - from the objects of the outer world and concentrates both upon the organ which engages his attention (1980: 40).

This bizarre delusion of the sensation of pain derives from the pathological guilt experienced by the speaker and is due to a real or imagined death:

the crust of blood round his neck
reminds us of the knife
and the day we killed him(1975:23).

The speaker's sense of reality is diminished and is overwhelmed by paranoid delusion and appears to be fixated on an image of mutilation which excites macabre, compulsive behaviour:

i have tried to resist the feeling
of picking up his head by the hair
but something compels me (1975:23)

Charles G. Costello points out in his study *Symptoms of Schizophrenia* (1993) that delusional beliefs of being controlled by an invisible, powerful agency is a common schizoid affliction (1993:97). The speaker's inexplicable compulsion is also linked to a fear that his/her heinous deed is subject to public display. This irrational fear clouds his/her cognitive ability and induces a fantastic resolution to his/her dilemma:

i want to hide his head
where no one will be able to see it
so i would not have to feel
the pain in my hand anymore (1975:23).

In the interior monologues of the psychotic, as Kristeva argues in *Black Sun* (1986):

the imagination functions as witness, as a reporting and a participation, an intimacy fed by history and ultimately is dependent on whatever brutality, cruelty, and love that history throws in its path (Glass 1993:18).

Consequently the psychically unhinged subjects in Jensma's poetry reveal subjective views borne of a desire to find meaning and to be understood in a chaotic, fragmented

and overwhelming world. The schizoid's discourse, without the anchors of linear time and consensual reality, must be read differently from discourse which express a cohesive identity. For the schizoid, subjectivity is dependent on whichever alter personality happens to be present to consciousness. Exiled from the Lacanian misrecognition of a unified self, the schizoid existence is a fragmentary and frightening world of delusional terror, a subjectivity that cancels itself out as it unfolds.

Conclusion

Jensma saw the dominant forms of subjectivity in South Africa as oppressive and constraining. This is made apparent by motifs which concentrate on the disparate class and race relations in South Africa. His poetry challenges these views and attempts to reconstruct a sensibility that would revolt against existing society by promoting individual and social transformation. Jensma's poetry advocates a revolutionary subjectivity that strives to overcome domination and repression and to transcend the simplistic formulations of racial essence.

Chapter 6

Wopko Jensma Intertext

Jensma's four volumes of poetry include a wealth of intertextual allusions and references which foreground the context and milieu in which he wrote. These intertextual relations provide insight into the ideological assumptions and subjectivity in his oeuvre. Intertextuality is premised on the notion that a text is not an autonomous and unified object but a set of relations with other texts. Poststructuralist critics such as Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva employ the term to disrupt notions of meaning by pointing to the infinite regression of signification and the impossibility of foreclosing meaning. Alternatively, structuralist critics such as Gerard Genette and Michael Riffaterre perceive intertextuality as a means of locating and fixing meaning. This study, whilst a cursory consideration of these positions, is informed by Bakhtin's ideas of dialogism and the interactive significance of language and eclectically draws on the perspectives of Gerard Genette and Michael Riffaterre.

According to Susan Holthuis:

intertextuality is a specific form of constituting meaning (1994:12)

This implies that meaning is derived from particular interactive contexts with other texts and other voices. In his study, *Intertextuality*, Graham Allen elaborates:

The text is not a closed entity with an independent meaning. The act of reading plunges the reader into a network of intertextual relations. Reading thus becomes

a process of moving between texts. Meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all other texts to which it refers and relates to (2000:1).

In “Word, Dialogue, and the Novel” (1980), Julia Kristeva breaks with traditional notions of the author’s “influences” and the text’s “sources”, positing that all signifying systems, from table settings to poems, are constituted by the manner in which they transform earlier signifying systems. A literary work, then, is not simply the product of a single author, but of its relationship to other texts and to the structures of language itself (1980:66). Kristeva referred to texts in terms of two axes: a horizontal axis connecting the author and reader of a text, and a vertical axis, which connects the text to other texts (1980:69).

Using Bakhtin’s concepts of dialogue and ambivalence Kristeva concludes that:

any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another (1980:37).

Roland Barthes also points out that the author’s work is never original but “already written” (1974:21). According to Barthes:

A text is a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. The writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power, is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the other, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them (1977:146).

The eclectic engagement of the author's ideas with others by means of intertextuality is a process which Kristeva calls "transposition" – a phenomenon which results in the intersection of textual surfaces and can be traced as the movement from one sign system to another. For Barthes, Kristeva and other poststructuralists, intertextuality implicates the text in an infinite regression of meaning. The text is without closure. This study however, approaches intertextuality in a less confrontational manner – that is, as a concept that indicates the various dialogues and negotiations going on between texts and authors and as an approach which permits a greater appreciation of the text by locating it within particular interactive contexts. As David Lodge points out:

Meaning is located in the dialogic process of interaction between speaking subjects, between texts and readers and between texts themselves (1990:86).

According to Bakhtin, language is "always in a ceaseless flow of becoming" (1986:66). Language, seen in its social dimension, is constantly reflecting and transforming class, institutional, national and group interests. No word or utterance is ever neutral. All language responds to previous utterances and pre-existing meanings but also seeks to promote further responses. For Bakhtin, an utterance is not monologic (possessing singular meaning and logic) but dialogic i.e. their meaning and logic is dependent on what has been previously been said and how they will be received by others. As Bakhtin writes:

The word is not a material thing but rather the eternally mobile, eternally fickle medium of dialogic interaction. It never gravitates towards a single consciousness

or a single voice. The life of the word is contained in its transfer from one mouth to another, from one context to another context.

When a member of the speaking collective comes upon a word, it is not as a neutral word of language, not as a word free from the aspirations and evaluations of others, uninhabited by other's voices. No, he enters the word from another's voice and filled with that other voice. The word enters his context from another context, permeated with the interpretations of others. His own thoughts find the word already inhabited (1984:20).

Bakhtin's ideas are useful in understanding intertextuality in Jensma's poetry, particularly in the way the organising motifs of the text, its ideological positioning and subjectivity are expressed through allusion, quotation, dedications, newspaper articles, photographs and other non-literary forms.

Bakhtin uses the term *heteroglossia* to describe the potential of language to contain many voices within its structure. As Bakhtin puts it:

The text serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the speaker and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourses there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions (1981:324).

This exemplifies the dialogic tension between the author and the speaker which comes about when a single utterance expresses two intentions and two ideological positions.

However, the schizophrenic text is much more complicated. The multiple imagoes which inhabit the text suggest the presence of many speakers, who may have conflicting, irrational or fantastic views, all in the interest of self preservation from an overwhelming and implosive reality. Thus the intertextual relations in Jensma's texts are not posited on a rational, linear summation but a disconnected polyphony of schizophrenic paranoia, delusion and spatial disorientation.

The banning of a text and the subsequent restriction in its ability to signify also impacts upon its intertextual significance. Foucault's conception of intertextuality emphasises the role of both discursive and nondiscursive formations – such as institutions, professions and disciplines - in shaping what can be known. For Foucault, intertextuality is also affected by the forces which restrict the free circulation of the text. Although every text possesses countless points of intersection with other texts, these connections also situate a work within existing networks of power, simultaneously creating and disciplining the text's ability to signify. Thus the banning of *Where White is the Colour, Where Black is the Number* (1974) six months after its publication is an intertextual attestation of the apartheid institutions which attempted to form and regulate textual meaning. Consequently, intertextuality shapes not only our understanding of the text but also our existence as social and political subjects. As Eric Rothstein points out in his article, "Diversity and change in literary histories":

authors and readers are culturally produced producers of texts (1991:117)

In this study intertextuality is premised on the notion that meaning can be attached to a text within specific interactive contexts. This in turn enables an understanding of how Jensma appropriates intertextuality as a narrative technique of subversion against apartheid, the vagaries of consumer culture and underclass suffering. This study is informed by the position of Ziva Ben-Perot, who, in her article, “The Poetics of Literary Allusion” suggests that intertextual allusions serve as:

built-in directional signals or markers which point out the way in which the text should be read (1976: 14).

Thus in Jensma’s texts, intertextuality is a way in which the texts draws attention to its own conventions. This is most evident in the title of the anthology, *Where White is the Colour, Where Black is the Number* (1974). The title alludes to the lyrics of a Bob Dylan song, “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall”:

I’ll walk to the depths of the deepest black forest,
Where the people are many and their hands are all empty,
Where the pellets of poison are flooding their waters,
Where the home in the valley meets the damp dirty prison,
Where hunger is ugly, where souls are forgotten,
Where black is the colour, where none is the number (1987:60).

The lyrics of privation and suffering are transposed into the organising motifs of *Where White is the Colour, Where Black is the Number* (1975) in themes of racial protest, alienation, injustice, dispossession and poverty writ into a South African experience.

Jensma has transposed Dylan's sympathy for the underclass black into his own oeuvre. The way in which Jensma re-presents the allusion is also significant. Jensma's title evoke the binary divide and unequal status quo in South African society which is apt in the context of the racial politics of his time.

References to writers and artists

The Expressionist intertext

The poem, "die herren grosz und luginbühl in the offing" in *I Must Show You My Clippings* (27:1977) makes reference to the expressionist¹, George Grosz² (1893-

¹ Expressionism was a general term for a mode of literary and visual art which developed as a radical reaction to realism. Although not an organised movement, expressionism was an important factor in the painting, drama, poetry and cinema of German speaking Europe between 1910 and 1924. The term did not come into use until 1911, but has since been applied retrospectively to some important forerunners of expressionist techniques, going as far back as Georg Büchner's plays of the 1830's and Vincent van Gogh's paintings of the 1880's. Other significant precursors include the Norwegian painter Edvard Munch, the Swedish playwright August Strindberg (in his *Dream Play*, 1902) and the German playwright Frank Wedekind. Within the period 1910 to 1924 consciously expressionist techniques of abstraction were promoted by Wally Kandinsky and the "Blue Rider" group of painters. In drama, various anti-naturalistic principles of abstract characterisation and structural discontinuity were employed in the plays of Ernst Toller, Georg Kaiser, and Walter Hasenclever: these had some influences on the early plays of Bertold Brecht, notably *Baal* (1922). The poetry of Georg Trakl, Gottfried Benn, August Stramm and Franz Werfel displayed considerable distortions of accepted structures and syntax in favour of symbolised moods. The nightmarish labyrinths of Franz Kafka's novels are the nearest equivalent in prose fiction. German expressionism is best known today through the wide influences of its cinematic masterpieces: Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920), F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*

1959). The allusion to Grosz is conceived by G rard Genette as paratextuality. According to Genette, paratextuality consists of those elements which lie on the threshold of the text and which help and control the reception of a text by its readers. This threshold consists of a “peritext” and an “epitext”. The “peritext” consists of elements such as titles, prefaces and notes. The “epitext” consists of interviews, publicity announcements, reviews, private letters and editorial discussions outside the text in question. Hence, intertextual references to Grosz is in the form of a “peritext”. The allusion to Grosz

(1926). Along with their much imitated visual patterns of sinister shadows, these films reveal a shared obsession with atomised, trance like states, which appear in expressionist literature too (Baldick 1990:78).

² Grosz was an illustrator, painter and caricaturist who became an American citizen in 1938. He published a series of books and journals which were critical of German militarism and capitalistic corruption in post-war Berlin. He drew collage-like drawings which focused on political and social abuse as is illustrated in *Suicide* (1916). Grosz joined the Communist Party in 1918. He became a member of the Berlin Dada group the following year. In 1920 he organised and exhibited at the First International Dada fair. In 1933 he accepted a position at the Art Student’s League in New York. In America he painted New York street scenes and nudes, the most famous of which was *New York Harbour* (1936). After World War Two his work took on a surreal, nightmarish quality as is shown in *The Pit* (1969) (Weinstein 1973:118).

appropriates his criticism of the political and social abuse which he portrayed in his paintings. Walker, in his essay, "City Jungles and Expressionist reifications from Brecht to Hammett" points out that an important aspect of Grosz's paintings was the portrayal of tormented individuals (1998:2). This motif is transposed in bizarre contexts of pathological dysfunction and suffering in Jensma's poetry:

i got a gash in my head
blood spurts from it
i must cut my head off
no one must see me do it
cause the blood is my guilt (1974:14)

and

i saw her sit on a sidewalk
i saw her spit blood in a gutter
i saw her stump for a foot
i saw her clutch a stick
i saw her eyes grin toothless
i saw thorns in her burnt flesh (1974:39).

Expressionism was also an important matrix in Jensma's poetry. This is manifest in Jensma's use of expressionist stylistic devices and motifs in his poetry. In her study *Borges and the European Avant-garde* (1996), Linda Maier defines expressionism as an attempt to express a subjective, inner reality and spiritual truth by the use of intense emotions. The aim of expressionism was to project an internal vision into the external

world (1996:101). In this process the objective representation of reality disappears behind the vision and a more essential insight is produced, or as Pinthus points out:

the intention was to dissolve the surrounding reality into unreality (Vadja 1973:118).

Walter Sokel, in his book, *German Expressionist Drama* (1979) points out that these expressionistic effects were achieved by stylistic distortion, fragmentation, sudden changes in narrative and the use of dream effects amongst others techniques.

Wopko Jensma's four volumes of poetry draw substantially from expressionist thinking, particularly in the avoidance of a mimetic representation of the external world and in its use of leitmotifs of poverty and depressed economic and social conditions. Jensma's poetry draws from expressionism a predilection for extreme states of tension marked by stylistic distortion and fragmentation. In an undated letter to Peter Horn, (an epitext), Jensma suggests that the poet should write:

with the rumbling thunder of emotion (n.d.)

This is evident in Jensma's "telegraphic style" which emphasised the urgent social messages in his poetry through an economy of words. Sentences are reduced to verbs and nouns. Articles, adjectives and conjunctions are eliminated.

There are other expressionist techniques which also impacted on Jensma's aesthetic conceptions. A high degree of tension was also communicated by the schizoid discourse, fragmentation, syntactical dislocation, the use of neologisms and the rhetorical figure of syncopation amongst others. Syncopation, a device favoured by the expressionists, is a

kind of verbal contraction by which a letter or syllable is omitted from a word. It is usually used to signify intense emotional outbursts or excitement (Baldick 1990: 221):

i hear dem yellin t' me

daddy, ma daddy!

an deir shellin cos I'm done

juss dat wring ma head

make me turv a dream

dat shake me outa ma sleep

make me ransack my heart

'f da fumin fire

incinerate me t' skull and white (Jensma 1974:51)

Tension is also conveyed by the use of the rhetorical figure of aposiopesis. Aposiopesis is a rhetorical device in which the speaker breaks off suddenly in a sentence and suggests overwhelming emotion which makes the speaker unable or unwilling to continue (Baldick 1990:15):

now is not the time to cry..... (Jensma 1977:33).

Walter Sokel points out that the use of scatology was also a common expressionistic technique (1979:31). Jensma also employed the expressionist technique of using scatological language in startling contexts to shock and astound his readers:

't blew my arsehole

to smithereen (1973:10).

and:

hey boy, i say, boy; hey mr shithead! (1977:55).

The expressionist influence also extends to the imagery of the poems which work by producing a clash between incongruous contexts:

do not exhibit your sickness

i am tired of pictures in the abstract (1974:30)

Jensma also made use of funeral scenes which was common to expressionism:

because the traffic jammed up in pretoria

because white cops carry black cops in coffins (1974:45).

The juxtaposition of disconnected imagery dispels the illusions of unity and "reality" in the poem by presenting a world distorted by a subjective vision. A typical example is Franz Marc's famous painting, "blue horses". The painted body of the horse is turned into a mere function of its colour and the colour in this work becomes the more dominant and striking component.

The forms of distortion in expressionism brings with it a de-automatizing renewal of vision. This is particularly evident in Jensma's dehumanisation and re-coding of the body which also reflect the expressionist tendency for the inflated and grotesque:

single'm out
 let'm be a dead locust nibblin stone
 crack
 the glass eyes
 the steel skull
 scrap flesh'n bone,
 hijack'm
 to solar dust
 single 'm out (1973: 6).

Also common in expressionist texts are the privileging of the socially marginalised such as madmen, prostitutes and other outcasts and their valorisation as the new prophets, saints and heroes of the age. Jensma's poetry also reflect the experiences of people excluded from the mainstream of society. His poetry portrays the experiences of prisoners, hoboes, the dispossessed, the starving and the disenfranchised.

Jensma also refers to the South African expressionist artist, Wolf Kibel³ in *Have you seen my clippings* (1973). In the poem, "Klop en vir julle sal toegemaak word", Jensma claims kinship with Kibel through schizophrenia:

wolf kibel was a skisofoon (1977:24).

Jensma uses the term, "skisofoon" [schizophrenic] (1977:24) as a compliment, in line with what Chadwick, in his book, *Schizophrenia: The Positive Perspective* terms,

“supersanity” (1998:12). Freed from the despotism of the oedipal yoke, the artist is able to see more acutely into the foibles of society than so-called “normal” people.

Jensma has appropriated the forms and motifs of expressionism into a new signifying relationship in his poetry.

3. Kibel (1903-1938) received his training in art in Vienna. In 1931, two years after his arrival in Cape Town he held his first exhibition. His work was received with hostile criticism although Hugo Naudé saw enough merit in Kibel’s work to invite him to Worcester. Kibel was strongly influenced by the expressionists. He drew simple objects from his surroundings and projected subjective emotions through them. Wolf Kibel never gained public acceptance in his lifetime and died in abject poverty at the age of 34 (Fransen 1982:292).

The dadaist intertext

Whilst the schizophrenics scrambling of signifiers is commonly perceived as a symptom of pathological aberration the artists and poets of the avant-garde⁴ consciously experimented with the play of signifiers for aesthetic reasons. Jensma illustrates the similarity between schizophrenia and dadaism⁵ in part 3 of “Chant of praise for the Idi Amin Dada”:

the schizophrenic splits itself, its world.....
escape voices (yakkity yak) of its conscience.. ..
oversensitive nerves, tight as wire sinews.....
give free reign to its floodlight feelings.....
it's severe, wild at one, two, one, at once.....
it's inhibited, unrestrained, shows two face.....
unintelligible cacophonic montages, it's dada..... (1977:49).

Jensma's poetry appropriates the dadaist predilection for lampooning prevailing values, religion and culture into a South African context.⁶ His dissident views were made both

⁴ Wopko Jensma's poetry of experiment and revolt against established order draws substantially from the avant-garde. The avant-garde is a French military and political term for the vanguard of an army or political movement. Its use has since been extended to label the confluence of progressive artistic tendencies in the early twentieth century. Artists and writers were described as the avant-garde because their work seemed ahead of the time.

⁵ Dadaism was an avant-garde movement of anarchic protest against bourgeois society, religion and art founded in 1916 in Switzerland by Tristan Tzara, a Rumanian born French poet (Baldick 1990:50). Dada flourished mainly in France, Switzerland and Germany. Prominent dada artists were Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray, the poet-sculptor Hans Arp, the poets Andr  Breton, Paul Iuard and Louis Aragon.

⁶ Dada was an acute state of protest against society, literature, and those ideologies which had contributed to the destruction and chaos of World War One. The dadaists were driven by the conviction that deep-seated European values such as nationalism, militarism and even the long tradition of rational philosophy were implicated in the horrors of the war. The dadaists consequently embraced the contradictory, the irrational and the extraordinary in reaction to the incomprehensible carnage of the war. The cultural conventions of a decayed European civilisation were further undermined by nihilism, cynicism and the

by explicit reference to Dadaist artists and poets and by using its textual strategies in undermining the dominant political and social discourses of his time. Jensma drew from dadaism his inspiration for radical poetic forms, unconventional punctuation, the ridicule of the unequal status quo in society and the questioning of values and mores which were taken for granted.

The ideas of Hans Robert Jauss also come to bear upon the historical implications of change and continuity in these intertextual relations. Jauss's ideas of the "horizon of expectations" (1982:20) could be used to point out, for instance, that the ideas of shock, nihilism and protest which the dadaist provoked in the public consciousness are appropriated for different reasons and in different contexts by Jensma. Change and continuity may seem paradoxical, but they are patently manifest in the way Jensma uses the ideology of dada to show up injustices, domination and oppression in a South African context. This is also evident in Jensma's use of laughter as a weapon in Bakhtin's canavalesque sense.

The allusions to dada artists/poets such as Marcel Duchamp, Tristan Tzara (Jensma 1977:24) and Jean "Hans" Arp (Jensma 1977:55) reiterates the Bakhtinian notion that a multivocal social history exists inside the text. The dadaist ridicule of morality, culture and the rationality which underpinned these discursive formations reinforces Jensma's intentions of subverting the status quo of race and class in South Africa. The avant-garde (particularly dada, surrealism and expressionism) serve as a "matrix" in Jensma's

making of anti aesthetic creations. The dadaists sought to shock and outrage people and provoke them into reacting to their activities (Rosemont 1978:16-19).

texts. The “matrix” is an idea conceived by Riffaterre which refers to a word, phrase or sentence which informs the structure of the text in terms of its aesthetic conventions and ideological assumptions(1983:12). This “matrix” or model of the avant-garde is manifest in Jensma’s textual strategies both in the mimesis of avant-garde form and in its ideological congruency between the text and that of the avant-garde.

The dada poets condemned the rationality which had plunged the world into the first world war. Jean Arp explains:

at Zurich in 1915, uninterested as we were in the slaughterhouses of the world war, we gave ourselves to the fine arts. While the cannon rumbled in the distance, we pasted, recited, versified, we sang with all our soul. We sought an elementary art which , we thought, would save men from the curious madness of these times (Bigsby 1972:6).

One of the ways Jensma critiqued the injustices of race, class and capital in South Africa was by appropriating the dadaist undermining of forms of rationality which were destructive and oppressive into his own oeuvre. This was done by satirising apartheid and injustice – issues which were foremost in the consciousness of the majority of South Africans in the seventies. Poems such as “Lopsided Cycle” (Jensma 1973: 10-15), “Sing a Soul of Sixpence” (Jensma 1973:31) and “Joburg Spiritual” (Jensma 1973:32) protest the Pass Laws, the Bantustan policy, disenfranchisement and the socio-economic misery brought on by racial exploitation. In the poem, “Chant of praise for the Idi Amin Dada”

(1977:47), for instance, Jensma uses intertextual reference as a device to foreground the irrationality of Idi Amin, the Ugandan dictator, by exploiting the ambivalent signification implicit in the word, *dada*.

The dadaists were also critical of religion. This critical attitude also permeates Jensma's poetry via an ideological expansion of the *dada* matrix and served to posit a common worldview predicated on an imperative for social change. Whilst Jensma uses the motif of religion to show up hypocrisy, narcissism, existential reflection and suffering, poems such as "Die Halte Calvyn" (1973:12) and "Letter to Thelonius" (1974:59) are critical of religion. These poems portray religion as an instrument of subservience and propaganda in the service of capitalism. The market economy is driven by exploited workers comforted by the illusionary promises of salvation. Jensma repudiates the internecine view of an omniscient benefactor by startling images of God. In "Letter to Thelonius" for instance, God is depicted as a harbinger of death:

thunk, your stern face
has a wire beard and cobweb eyes
a stengun on your hip
empty booze bottles round your neck (1974:59).

Jensma transposed expressionistic devices and motifs into a new signifying relationship to foreground suffering, exploitation and injustice manifest in the relations of race and class in South Africa. The telegraphic fragments of speech and compacted phrases of expressionist dialogue were also used to evoke extreme states of tension and emotion in his protagonists.

The Surrealist Intertext

Jensma also used surrealism⁷ as an intertextual device in his poetry. This is hardly surprising when one notes the fact that, like Jensma, many surrealists took a keen interest in jazz and admired non-European cultures. In part nine of “Chant of praise for the Idi Amin Dada” (1977:55) Jensma refers to some of the dada poets/artists turned surrealist:

i state, i recall, recall

kurt schwitters

jean arp

marcel duchamp

theo van doesburg

francis picabia

tristan tzara

recall, call, fukol, all (1977:55)

Each poet/artist in the above poem is symbolic of a particular world view which Jensma appropriates into his oeuvre. This is manifest in the use of the textual strategies of surrealism and in the ideological orientation of Jensma’s poetry. Surrealism was characterised by the use of incongruous imagery and an emphasis on the irrational by the

⁷. Surrealism was an anti-rational movement of imaginative liberation in European (mainly French) art and literature in the 1920’s and 1930’s, launched by André Breton after his break with the dada group. Surrealism stressed the subconscious or nonrational significance of imagery arrived at by automatism, the exploration of chance effects and the use of incongruous and fantastic imagery. Surrealism grew out of the dada movement but unlike dada, its emphasis was not on negation but on positive expression (Bigsby 1972:23).

use of metaphor. The objective of surrealism was the infinite expansion of reality as a substitute for the previously accepted dichotomy between the real and the imaginary.

According to Aragon:

the real is a relation like any other; the essence of things is by no means linked to their reality, there are other relations besides reality, which the mind is capable of grasping and which also are primary like chance, illusion, the fantastic, the dream. These various groups are united and brought into harmony in one single order, surreality (Rosemont 1991:123).

Jensma's bizarre imagery is memorable for its use of the marvellous surreal image:

the candlestick of my finger
burns slowly at the dawn (1974:15)

and:

my skull explodes
explodes with hands and all
my skull
with my hands inside

once my hands were birds singing (1973:92).

The surreal image also disturb one's sense of reality by dislocating objects from their contexts and by ascribing uncommon properties to common objects:

Kleine verfrommelde almanak

Dieman ondersteboven leest

MIJN KLOK STAAT STIL

Uitgekauwd sigarettееееindje op't

WITTE SERVET

De scherwen van de kosmos vind ik in m'n thee (1977:57).

[small crushed almanac

that reads upside down

MY BELL STANDS STILL

Chewed up cigarette-butt on the

WHITE SERVIETTE

The schrapnel of the cosmos I find in my tea]

Jensma also made avid use of the Surrealist strategies of surprising juxtapositions and images which provide a spectacle for which neither rational logic nor past experience have prepared us for:

pork legs, sausages- by- the- dozen - dirtcheap!...

a soldier drowned in wine

prisoners hiding in peerholes

and o yes, the captain has come for dinner

he wears chains for cufflinks – goldplated

funny enough, amongst it all, on the table
a paper flower, growing in a biscuit pot (1977:27).

The incongruities of the surreal image deprives the reader of a sense of reference. In Jensma's poetry, surreal incongruity and the use of the marvellous surreal image creates a delay in comprehension. This, according to Anna Balakian:

is a process that triggers in the reader a sense of discovery rather than the immediate transmission of thought or image. The act of seeing became more important than the object to be seen (1972:127).

As can be deduced from the above examples of Jensma's poetry, surrealism has a profound effect on Jensma's aesthetic conceptions. The surrealist rebelled against the notion of discourse as an all embracing and self contained entity. They drew attention to the discursive and provisional nature of the sign by experiment and distortion. In repudiating the ruling ideologies of the time they emphasised the disorder and instability which underpin all forms of representation. Consequently, Jensma's prosody constituted experiments designed to shock and coerce the reader into a critical scrutiny of the illusions of harmony, closure and naturalness projected in the text. Intertextuality was used by Jensma as a device which encouraged the reader to focus on the social significance of his poetry.

Concrete Poetry as Intertext

Genette points out that titles control the reception of a text. He distinguishes between *thematic* titles which refer to the subject of the text and *rhematic* titles which refer to the manner in which the text performs its functions. “gomringer variasies” (1977: 35-38) is a *rhematic* title in that it establishes the kind of poetry that will convey a particular theme – in this instance, the use of concrete poetry by reference to the poetry of Eugene Gomringer.

The four concrete poems which constitute “gomringer variasies” (1977:35-38) in *I Must Show You My Clippings* (1977) are a tribute to Eugene Gomringer, who, together with Oyvind Fahlstrom, popularised concrete poetry in the sixties and seventies. Jensma used the techniques of reduced language, fragmented letters, symbols and other topographical variations conceived by Gomringer in his book, *The Poem as Functional Object* (1960) to evoke an extremely graphic impact on the reader.

Concrete poetry consists of poems which are written as a pattern on a page. The physical arrangements of words and other topographical elements are manipulated to enhance meaning and effect in a poem. Concrete poetry is notable for its simplicity of design. Gomringer regarded words as symbols and claimed that there was no reason why poetry should not be experienced on the basis of language as concrete material (Bohn 1986:6).

The act of perception itself is the first preoccupation of concrete poetry. Concrete poetry foregrounds formal pattern by utilising repetition, combinations of words or letters, unity of themes and by creating a minimal-maximal tension in the smallest space. The purpose of reduced language is not the reduction of language itself but the achievement of greater flexibility and communication. According to Gomringer, the resulting poems should be as easily understood as signs in airports or traffic signs (Bohn 1986:7).

“Gomringer Variasies” (1977: 35-38) combines the visual, phonetic and kinetic elements in poetry. The first poem in “gomringer variasies” (1977:35-38) represents a single trail of tears down a page. In the poem the melodramatic is evoked by the physical arrangement of the word in the shape of a tear:

teur

reuri

eurig

urigh

righe

ighei

gheid

heido

eidop

idopn

dopno

opnot

pnote(1977:35).

The vertical symmetry and formal simplification created by a restricted use of language permit the poem to be read visually as a whole as well as in its parts. The radical fusion of words evoke the image of a falling tear on a piano. The brevity and conciseness of the work makes the poem memorable and imprints itself upon the mind as a picture.

Concrete poetry is not bound by conventional rules of grammar and linear form. This is well illustrated in the second poem of “gomringer variasies” (1977:36).

sewe spoke op wiele het vandag hier
insgelyks aangekom
aangekom insgelyks
hier het sewe spoke vandag op wiele
het hier sewe spoke vandag op wiele
aangekom aangekom
insgelyks insgelyks
sewe spoke het vandag hier op wiele (1977:36).

The poem is written in the shape of wheels in relation to the meaning of the word "seven ghosts arrived here today on wheels". The blank spaces of the page are of equal importance as the words. Paul Claudel points out:

the poem is not only composed of those letters that I plant like nails, but of the white spaces that remain on the paper (Bohn 1986:4).

The words of this poem have simultaneously a verbal, a vocal and a visual positional value, evoking in this process the three dimensional language object.

The visual dimension is an integral part of the poem and develops and expands the verbal text. The simultaneous function of the work as poem and picture can also be traced in the third poem. Not only is each letter a unit in a visual chain of “pig ears” or alternatively a reference to the plant “varkore”, it reinforces the visual chain by its strategic topographical positioning as well. In deciphering the linguistic message the reader traces the visual image as well:

varkore var	erokrav var
varkore rko	erokrav okr
varkore ore	erokrav ero
ore varkore	ero erokrav
rko varkore	erokrav okr
var varkore	varkore rav (197:37).

In the last poem of “gomringer variasies” (1977:38) the silent spaces constitutes rather than disrupts the discourse. The repetitive nature of the poem and its combinations of words which transgress conventional syntax combine to form a striking picture of a knee. The formal configuration reinforces the visual message (knee deep in shit).

Perception and conception, image and metaphor tend to merge into an indivisible whole

(Bohn 1986: 13):

kniedie pi ndi eka
kniedi ep ind iek
knied ie pin die
knie di epi ndi
kni ed iep ind
kn ie ed
kn ied iep
k nie die
kni edi
kn ied
k nie
kni
kn
k
ak
kak
e kak
ie kak
die kak
n die kak
in die kak
p in die kak
ep in die kak
iep in die kak
diep in die kak
ediep in die kak
iediep in die kak
niediep in die kak
kniediep in die kak (1977:38).

The sense of discovery is an added satisfaction for the reader. Wendy Steiner explains in

The Colours of Rhetoric (1970):

not only does concrete poetry dissolve the traditional barriers between the reader and the text, it also erases the boundaries between the text and the world. By defamiliarizing well-worn habits and modes the reader's sensibility is sharpened as he is encouraged to participate in the creation of the poem (1970:12).

European Writers Intertext

Another European writer which shaped Jensma's aesthetic conceptions and ideological assumptions was the poet, Francois Villon. The poem, "somewhere in the middle, Sunday" makes reference to Villon⁸:

the cops are still looking, poking
torches into wardrobes, looking
where's that francois villon?
(he must be up to something
he cant just get away with playing harp
on the barbed wire on the berlin wall
he can't just leave puke in the wardrobe

⁸ Francois Villon, alias Francios de Montcorbier, alias Francios de Lorges, alias Michel Mouton was one of the most popular and widely read poets of pre-Renaissance France. Born in 1431, he obtained his Master of Arts at the University of Paris. He had to flee from Paris in 1444 after killing a priest in a street brawl. He joined a criminal organisation, the "Brotherhood of Coquille" and wrote some of his ballads in its secret jargon. Villon spent several years in and out of jail because of his participation in robberies and brawls. Pardoned in 1446, he returned to Paris and wrote *Le Lias* (The Legacy) (1446) followed by his long poetic work *Le Grand Testament* (1501) which is a cynical and sentimental reflection of life (Stevenson 1969:2-3)

(he must be up to something
the cops are still looking, poking (1977:45)

The marvellous surreal image of Villon, “playing harp on the berlin wall” (1977:45) places him in the contemporary reality of the cold war. Villon’s music on the Berlin wall subverts the symbol of the Berlin wall as a divide between Germans. His music is a symbol of unity which is critical of the separation of East and West Germany. Villon is an apt choice for this symbol as he was notorious for defying the law in his lifetime. This links to the *intratextual* motif in Jensma’s poetry of repudiating official discourses and laws which were used as instruments of oppression. This is exemplified in part four of “chant of praise for the Idi Amin Dada” (1977:50):

PROTEST AGAINST LAW:

the law of tension
the law of precalculation
the law of reason
the law of aggression
the law of intrigue, the game.... (1977:50).

What on the surface appears to be an innocuous poem of maverick militancy is really a critique of forms of legislated power vested in powerful institutions in society. A case in point is Michel Foucault’s genealogy which does not regard laws as peaceful modalities of accommodation, but as the merciless institutionalising of violence. Laws ensure the systematic imposition of the rights of the powerful and the obligations of the weak. In

history, each new system of laws impose their own violence as rules are interpreted to suit the new masters (Major-Poetzel 1983:37).

Max Weber's explanation of subjective rationality or "*zweckrational*" demonstrates how goal orientated rationality is used to subjugate and dominate people. The social structure of modern society has become dominated by bureaucracy which undermines freedom and democracy in the long run. Jensma critiques the subjective rationality imposed by institutions of power which curtail individual freedom, ostensibly in the public interest. This is manifest in the numerous allusions to apartheid laws and capitalistic practices which impose suffering and constraints upon people.

The poem "Once Rhymes" is dedicated to the German poet Erich Fried⁹:

why can a man
whose heart has been cut out
not grow a new heart?

⁹ Erich Fried was born in Vienna in 1921. In 1938 he established a resistance group to the Nazi occupation of Austria after his father was beaten to death by the Gestapo. In the same year he escaped from Belgium to England where he obtained employment with the "Jewish Refugee Committee". His first poems appeared in exile magazines. In 1950 he began to broadcast on the "German Service" of the BBC. He published the following anthologies: *Realm of the Stones* (1954), *Warning poems* (1964), "*The liberty to open the mouth*" (1972) and *Dear Poems* (1979) amongst others. In addition, Fried campaigned against the American involvement in Vietnam as well as the Israeli occupation of Palestine. He died in 1988 (www.fried@Brittanica.com)

my picture of a glass vase
is hung with ivy and ribbons
is filled with hearts adrift

cause your guilt is a plant
that yellows in darkness
grows towards the crevice
without reaching it (1973:70).

This peritextual dedication is vital to the understanding of this cryptic poem. Fried survived the holocaust in the Second world War but had to endure the anguish of seeing his friends and family “liquidated” by the Nazis. The first stanza is a patent reference to Fried’s suffering at the spectacle and memory of the death of Jewish people in the holocaust. The speaker ponders whether Fried’s gruesome experiences has irretrievably changed him into a withdrawn figure incapable of loving again.

The image of “ivy and ribbons” in line 5 is symbolic of death. The “glass vase” in line four conjures up a macabre vision in which the “hearts adrift” (line 6) allude to those who died in the gas chambers in the extermination camps. The colour “yellow” is an intertextual allusion to the yellow Star of David. The Star of David was an insignia that all Jews were forced to wear and publicly display to indicate that they were Jews. In the poem, the withering, yellow plant on a grave is the only visible sign of guilt (and

remorse?) for the atrocities perpetrated against the Jews. In this poem the peritextual reference to Fried serves dual functions. It enables an understanding of the poem which would not be possible without the mention of his name. It also reinforces the matrix of persecution which is an important motif in Jensema's poetry.

South American intertext

Jensema also makes reference to South American writers such as Manuel Bandeira and Carlos Drummond de Andrade. These references give insight into the broad scope of his aesthetic conceptions as well as the appropriation of ideas from diverse contexts into South African experiences.

Paratextual reference in the form of a dedication is made to Carlos Drummond de Andrade¹⁰ in part five of "lopsided cycle" (Jensema 1973:5). Andrade's book on cannibalism specifically relates to Jensema's use of cannibalistic imagery and the

¹⁰ Andrade (1902-1987) was a Brazilian poet who worked as a journalist before obtaining a degree in pharmacology. In 1928 Andrade became a civil servant whilst working as a newspaper editor. His first volume of poems, *Alguma poesia* (Some poetry) (1930), exhibited many characteristics of Brazilian modernism. Andrade is considered the major Brazilian poet of his time. His works include *Poesias* (poems) (1942), *A rosa do povo* (The people's rose) (1945), *Claro enigma* (Clear enigma) (1951), *A vida passada a limbo* (Life in a new copy) (1959), and *Impurezas do branco* (the impurities of white) (1973). He also wrote essays and award-winning translations of European writers ([www.carlosdeandrade@microsoft.com](mailto:deandrade@microsoft.com)).

grotesque. In “chant of praise for the Idi Amin Dada”, Jensma resorts to cannibalistic imagery in a description of the Ugandan dictator:

l’elephant , mongo

open that mouth, show that teeth

bite clean, feel the neck crack

see he eats, he greets me

i laugh louder, laugh superbrite

see, no blood, my teeth so clean

l’elephant , mongo (1977:47).

Jensma appropriates the cannibalistic imagery used by Andrade to convey sado-masochism, moral and political corruption, as well as a flagrant disregard for human rights. Cannibalistic imagery is a *hypogram* (to use Riffaterre’s term which refers to borrowed semantic units or codes) appropriated from Andrade. Cannibalistic imagery is also used to expand on the theme of persecution by an intertextual allusion to Idi Amin¹¹.

¹¹ Amin’s reign of terror as Ugandan president and callous abuse of human rights has earned him the notoriety of being the most brutal dictator since Adolf Hitler. He seized power in Uganda from Milton Obote in January 1971. In his eight year military dictatorship he is reputed to have killed over a million people and virtually ruined the country. Amin’s expulsion of Uganda’s Asians, who were mainly merchants and professionals, threw the country into further economic chaos. He was driven into exile to Saudi Arabia in April 1979.

The reference to Amin foregrounds the abuse of human rights and corruption. These elements are organising motifs in Jensma's poetry which also establishes an *intratextual* link to the morbid fascination with suffering and other aberrant pathologies associated with Jensma's schizoid speakers.

Jensma also resorts to non-literary sources in his array of intertextual relations. An example is the photograph of the Brazilian poet, Manuel Bandeira in *I Must Show You My Clippings* (1977:39). Allen argues that the meaning of the photographic image depends upon its deployment in the text and in the codes and conventions it evokes in the reader (2000:177). The photograph (in the context of a book of poetry in which it is found) is a visual sign which links to the type of poetry that Bandeira wrote. Bandeira's poetry was an important factor in shaping Jensma's aesthetic conceptions. Bandeira's poetry developed around the idea of building language associations around proverbs and popular expressions. This idea is also used in a number of Jensma's poems and is manifest in tangential associations, word play and the use of popular expressions in Jensma's poetry. Examples of Jensma's creative use of popular expressions are the poems, "Spanner in the what?, works" (1977:6), "it's a royal flush" (1977:30) and the concrete poem, "kniediep in die kak" (1977:38) amongst others.

South African intertext

Jensma poetry makes reference to numerous South African artists and writers. The type of literary and artist figures alluded to range from "sestiger" cult figures (a group of

Afrikaans writers of the sixties) such as Ingrid Jonker and Breyten Breytenbach to Drum magazine writers such as Can Themba. Jensma also makes intertextual reference to the artists, Dumile and Justin Matau. It is significant that the South Africans mentioned are either black or those who resisted the apartheid state. This emphasises Jensma's affinities with struggle politics and his identification with blacks.

In *I Must Show You My Clippings* (1977) there is a torn newspaper article which reports on a new publication of the Afrikaans poet, Ingrid Jonker, entitled, *Ingrid Jonker: versamelde werke* [collected works] (1973). The article states that the book was published by Perskor and lauds Jonker as one of South Africa's greatest poets. Nelson Mandela's opening speech to the South African parliament, in which he paid tribute to Jonker for championing the cause of "the poor, the oppressed, the wretched and the despised" (2000:34) through her books, could also be applied to Jensma. Both Afrikaner poets wrote about marginalised groups in society and shared similar social concerns and views. The newspaper article in the text is a paratextual element which provides an indication of Jensma's political and social consciousness as a writer in the late sixties and seventies in South Africa.

It is also significant that Jonker committed suicide in 1965 by drowning in Bantrybay (a fact which is also mentioned in the newspaper article). Suicide is an important motif in Jensma's poetry and is seen by Jensma as a tragic and pathological response to overwhelming anguish. Jonker's death and subsequent hailing as one of South Africa's greatest poets also corroborates Jensma's views about a writer's predicament under

conditions of oppressive state control. In an interview with *Rapport* (an epitext i.e. a relation which exists outside the text) Jensma commented:

Artists are constantly looking into society and people don't like this at all. One sees all too often an artist acclaimed when he is dead because he can present no more threat to that society (Wigget 1975).

The poem "*caTaToniA*" (1977:42) makes reference to the poet, artist and political activist, Breyten Breytenbach's solitary confinement in prison:

BrEYten-aLLeen

IN 'n ruBBersel (1997:42).

Breytenbach was imprisoned by the apartheid regime from 1975 to 1982. Jensma's poem commiserates with Breytenbach and deplores his imprisonment for campaigning against injustice in South Africa. Jensma, himself, was wary of the security police and often advised his friends to exercise caution in their letters (see chapter 1: Biography). The intertextual link to Breytenbach is a further reminder of the repressive and dangerous climate under which writer's in South Africa worked.

Laurent Jenny points out in his article, "The Strategy of Forms" that intertextual determinants in a text may point to a specific work (hypotext), code or motif (1982:34). The allusion to Breytenbach's imprisonment is an intertextual determinant which reinforces the motif of imprisonment in Jensma's poetry. The fusion of fact and fiction in Jensma's themes (the same could be said for the reference to Jonker's suicide) is a further

dimension which foregrounds the bewildered and disorientated nature of the schizoid's perceptions – fact, fantasy and delusion are interpreted within the same lens of “reality” by the schizophrenic.

Can Themba is the sole protagonist in the poem, “Till No One”:

in sophiatown

can themba climbs the steps

or what is left of them

he opens a door of a house

full onto the sky

and stands gaping over the edge

for this was the place

the world ended (1973:5).

Jenny states that:

When a work enters into a relation of intertextuality with a genre, that genre or code becomes part of the message of the hypertext (1982:42).

Thus the allusion to Can Themba¹² in the poem “Till No One” (1973:5) links the poem's motif of racist dislocation to the various stories of forced removals that Themba wrote

¹² Can Themba was a journalist and assistant editor of *Drum* magazine. He was famous for his short stories and opinion pieces. His stories reflected the suffering induced by massive urban adjustment forced upon blacks in the Reef townships. In his stories Themba recorded the voices, images and values of a black urban culture which was repressed by apartheid. Can Themba was sacked from *Drum* in 1953 for drunkenness and in 1963 went into exile in Switzerland after being “silenced” by the Suppression of Communism Act (Chapman 1992: 262).

about in *Drum* magazine. This intertextual relation is used by Jensma to protest against the razing of towns such as Sophiatown and the relocation of its people according to a grand apartheid masterplan. The allusion to Themba transposes the stories of urban dislocation associated with him into a new signifying relationship in Jensma's oeuvre.

The drawings in *Where White is the Colour, Where Black is the Number* (1974) are paratextual elements. These paratextual drawings are *allographic* – that is, work done by someone other than the author (Allen 2000:106). The drawings are surrealistic in conception and are pictorial extensions of the avant-garde matrix which permeates the text. These drawings were done by Mslaba Dumile, who is also alluded to in the poem, “Portrait of an Artist” (1973:72):

you got sick of the mess

sick of the galerie – dumile¹³ (1973:72)

According to Elza Miles, Zwelidwe Geelboi Mgxaji Mslaba Feni (called Dumile) was born on the 21 May 1939 in Worcester in the Western Cape. He died on the 14 October 1991 in New York. Dumile was inspired by the paintings in the Bushmen caves in the Worcester surrounds, particularly their images and use of colour. From 1957 to 1964 Dumile was apprenticed to several pottery and foundry firms in Johannesburg and learnt under the supervision of Johannes Mphiri and the painter, Ephraim Ngatane and Herman Wald. Dumile's work was noticed in the Open Art Fair in Joubert Park by Madame Haenggi in 1960. Madame Haenggi was a shareholder in the Queens Gallery and founded Gallery 101 in 1961. In 1964 Dumile contracted tuberculosis. He spent three months at the Charles Hurwitz South African National Tuberculosis Association (SANTA) Hospital in Diepkloof, Johannesburg. The Matron, Mrs. Forster, noticed his talent and asked him to paint murals for the sanatorium. Of these murals, only one, dated 1964 and signed by Dumile is still intact. All the other murals were covered by paint during renovations. Dumile had his first exhibition in Madame Haenggi's Gallery 101 in 1966. He also received support from Lionel

The drawings and photo-montages of Dumile are vignettes of African life. These pictures capture the depressed socio-economic position of Africans whilst paradoxically emphasising their dignity. Dumile's art is a pictorial extension of the motif of black suffering and hardship portrayed in Jensma's poetry.

The poem, "Portrait of the artist" (1973:72) is a reference to an exhibition by the South African artist, Justin Matau¹⁴:

Abrahams, Bill Ainslie and Barney Simon. Dumile drawings for *Where White is the Colour, Where Black is the Number* (1974) were chosen by Jensma and assimilated into the book together with the photo-montages. Dumile was artist in residence during the 1979/80 academic year at the African Humanities Institute, University of California, Los Angeles and subsequently taught at the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston. In 1980 Dumile settled in New York. His work included designs for record covers, book illustrations, posters, murals and calendars. In 1989 he facilitated the mural project for the Pathfinder Building in New York and contributed a portrait of Nelson Mandela. Dumile converted to Islam and took the name Osman Utletaan Feni (Miles: 2000).

¹⁴ Julian Motau grew up at Khotama, north of Pietersburg in the Northern Province. From earliest childhood he made drawings in wet sand. He went to school in Tzaneen. In 1963 he moved to Diepkloof in Soweto. Early in 1965 Matau, accompanied by his brother, went to the Fine Arts Department at the University of the Witwatersrand. They were referred to Judith Mason who was lecturing there at the time. Matau worked under her tuition for at least 5 months. She taught him the rudiments of oil painting and also gave him guidance in drawing. She encouraged him to draw everyday life rather than copy pictures from books. He also received training from the sculptor, Peter Haden, who established The Academy in Craighall, Johannesburg. He was inspired by Dumile and patronised by Linda Goodman who took him into her home and provided him with a studio. Matau, in the company of a friend, Cecilia Legodi, was shot in a

it was the opening of matau's

matau's people of violence

matau's people wanting pity (1973:72).

These images of violence and misery are an elaboration of similar motifs in Jensma's poetry. Pictorial and written signs coalesce in an intertextual relationship which accentuates pathos and empathy for Jensma's protagonists.

The jazz and blues intertext

For Riffaterre, texts produce their significance out of transformations of the sociolect, which he defines as language which is specific to a particular social group and which embodies its values and status. In intertextual relations the sociolect is transformed by the writer to reflect his own perspectives (an idelect) (1978:19). Jensma appropriates the sociolect of jazz and blues to express his own particular idelect. This is manifest in the intertextual allusions to numerous jazz singers. In *Sing For Our Execution*, for instance, Jensma refers to the legendary blues singer, Bessie Smith¹⁵:

street in Alexandra whilst on a visit to friends. Apart from drawing in pencil, charcoal, conté and pen and ink, he also painted and sculpted. Matau's work shows affinities with the work of Käthe Kollwitz and Makonde sculptures. A portfolio of 10 printed images of Matau's work, entitled *Memorial for Julian Motau*, was published by the Goodman Gallery in 1969 (Miles 2001)

¹⁵ Bessie Smith, the "Empress of the Blues" was known as the most renowned blues singer of all time. A protégée of the legendary Ma Rainey (Gertrude Malissa Pridgett Rainey), Bessie Smith combined the

a'm sittin hea, bessie
getting soaked in yo blues
a've been livin it, bessie
an now it's juss moonshine
any damn booze for me (1973:43).

The appropriation of the idioms, cadences and tone of the blues is an important intertextual motif in Jensma's poetry. Jensma's poetry of social protest draws from the themes of hardship, betrayed love, loneliness and racism renowned in the blues. To have the "blues" implies a state of despondency and it is this feeling which is communicated by the speaker in the above poem. "moonshine" (1973:43) is a reference to the home brewed alcohol which Bessie Smith drank so prodigiously. She preferred her home-brew (which she called white-lightning) and claimed that anything sealed made her sick.

Jensma's allusion also appropriates the social concerns portrayed in Bessie's songs. Of note are *The Workhouse Blues*, *Poor man's Blues* and *House Rent Blues*. The themes of these songs (which deal with violence and the complexities of the urban experience) are adapted by Jensma into new contexts and serve as an emotional release for the depressed socio-economic conditions which blacks in South Africa faced:

emotional fervour of the blues with the vigorous appeal of jazz in such hits as *Down Hearted Blues* (1923), *Young Women's Blues* (1926) and *Preachin' the Blues* (1926). Bessie Smith had sold over eight million copies of her recordings before her career ended in the early years of the Depression (Hill 1998:776).

today we will be singing a sad song, son:
a song of our hunger
we will defy you, yessa boss (1973:11)

Jensma also alludes to other blues artists such as Archie Shepp, Jimmy Rushing, Thelonious Monk, Sonny Boy Williamson, Ma Rainey and Big Bill Broonzy amongst others. Most of these peritextual references are in the form of dedications which preface the poems. The jazz matrix is also manifest in the use of syncopated diction, nonsense words such as “yeya” “daddy-o” and “yea” (1973:7) which are known in a jazz score as troubling the line, repetition and in the use of jazz vocabulary such as “zoot suits” (1973:112) (a reference to faddish clothes). It is a point of interest that faddish clothes or extraordinary dressing may also be a symptom of schizophrenia.

Jensma’s poetry also alludes to boogie-woogie. The boogie-woogie is a percussive style of playing blues on a piano characterised by a strongly rhythmic ground bass of eight notes in quadruple time and a series of improvised melodic variations (<http://blueslyrics.tripod.com>):

gotta earn a livin
a face-square a mondriaan
no graft
no dough
no grub
a boogie-woogie a slant a

hobo earns a livin (1974:42).

The up tempo rhythms of boogie woogie became popular as music which lifts the spirits in times of hardship. At the time of the American Depression, the hot, bouncy boogie rhythms excited the black masses to dance the huckle-back and jitterbug, helping to release their pent-up fears and frustrations. Boogie woogie was essentially fast paced blues. It was performed by blues pianists Clarence “Pine Top” Smith, Albert Ammons and Pete Johnson. Jensma appropriated the self-affirmation and fortitude projected by boogie-woogie into a new signifying relationship which showed poor South Africans dancing their troubles away.

African music as intertext

Jensma’s poetry also draws eclectically from African music. The allusion to African music and musicians foreground native idioms, perceptions and rhythms which coalesce into a discourse critical of racism, poverty and oppression by the institutions of the state. The poem, “A Twelve Tone for Dollar Brand” (1974:111) is dedicated to the South African musician, Dollar Brand, also known as Abdullah Ebrahim¹⁶. After the 1976 Soweto riots Brand’s music became increasingly political and his music was accordingly categorised as liberation music. Songs such as “Nelson Mandela”, “Slave Bell” and “Liberation Dance” illustrate Brand’s opposition to apartheid. It is Brand’s condemnation of dispossession and oppression of South African blacks that Jensma reconfigured into his poetry by paratextual reference.

16.Brand was born on the 9th. of October in 1934 in Cape Town. In 1959 he joined the Jazz Epistles. In 1960 the band produced the album, *Jazz Epistles: Verse 1*. Due to the political climate in South Africa and the lack of opportunity in jazz he relocated to Zurich in 1962. In Zurich, Duke Ellington furthered his career by arranging a recording session for him. Brand later played with Elvin Jones (1966) and toured Europe as a solo artist and in groups which included Don Cherry, Gato Barbieri, Ntshoko and Johnny Gertze (1966-9). His music reflected his growing involvement in politics and religion after his conversion to Islam in 1968. He returned to South Africa in 1976 and recorded several albums before moving to New York. In 1982 he led a performance of the mixed media opera, *Kalahari Liberation* in Europe. The following year he formed a septet, Ekaya. Jensma used the mix of popular music, Africa folkloric rhythms and the piano styles of Ellington and Thelonious Monk implicit in Ibrahim's repertoire in his poetry (Valliamy 1982: 69-75).

Part two of the poem, "No Dreams" (1973:52) makes reference to Mahlahthini and the Mohotella Queens:

ah, mahlathini, mahlathini

hollers

wayside da mohotella queens (1973:52)

Simon "Mahlathini" Nkabine teamed up with Hilda Tloubatla, Nobesuthu, Shawe Mbadu and Mildred Mangxola to form Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens¹⁷ in the mid 1960's.

¹⁷ After a hiatus in the 1970s, the band re-formed under the guidance of producer and saxophonist West Nkosi. Nkosi died in a car crash in 1998 and Mahlathini died from complications of diabetes in 1999. Despite contemplating retirement, the Queens decided to continue as a group and released *Sebai Bai* in 2000 with an all-star cast of players including Regis Gizavo, Ray Lema, Papa Wemba and Salif Keita (www.mahlatini@Microsoft.com)

Together with the Makhona Tsohle Band they created what became known as *Mbaqanga* music. The sweet traditional female harmonies with the deep, growling male lead defined the South African sound for years and played a key role in the musical resistance to apartheid. It is this signifying relationship that Jensma recasts into his oeuvre by intertextual allusion.

Jensma also adapted the driving rhythms of marrabenta to illustrate the frenetic hustle of urban citiscapes in the poem, “Marrabenta” (1974:77):

saw her winkin’ n eye bout a lousy dime

!o clemens

a humdrum of a chatterin millions, lone

!o pia

her eyes mirror a tiring world, oh

bless us-

marvellous

her womb a precipice, swingin tit

!o dulcis

singin punk, cool kid, oh boy, let be ha’

virgo maria

que up boys, what bout a quick poke, eh? (1974:77).

Marrabenta was a rough-edged, urban dance music which originated in Mozambique in the 1950's. The word "marrabenta" has its origins in the Portuguese word "rebenta", which means "to burst". Albert Mula, one of the more famous marrabenta artist explains that the etymology of the word is located in the dance itself:

We dance until we burst (Rosenburg@Microsoft 2001)

Traditionally, marrabenta was played on whatever instruments were available: oil tins, wood and pieces of fishing line. Based on a variety of traditional rural rhythms it became strongly associated with the struggle for independence. The traditional dance rhythms were also used to express political and social criticism. In the above poem, Jensma uses marrabenta as an instrument of social criticism. The poverty that forces women into prostitution is repudiated by images which alternate between lewd sensuality and the sacred. The prostitute is equated with "virgo maria" (the virgin Mary) (1977:74) – which in turn imposes a feminist reading of maternal suffering and the violation of a women's body which is sacred into the text.

Jensma also employed the syncopated lyrics and bouncy rhythms of kwela music in his poetry:

you breeze from far, spokes
still
your kwela
rocks in me
your wail's
A eh pa

the old PIDE
hidin in ma
cona till a
end a fight
then
brandishing
the cosh, eh
pa, whea's a
hooligans now
ep
drink up ol
son an feel
the jazz breeze blowin fez (1973:12)

Kwela music emerged in the South African townships but its origins are disputed. Allen Kwela¹⁸ is thought to have developed kwela music whilst many claim that kwela derives from a township reference to the police vans, popularised by the township hit, “Tom Hark”, with the refrain, “ here comes the *kwela kwela* vans” [a reference to the South African police vans]. Kwela music chronicles the broken dreams and aspirations of black

¹⁸ Allen Kwela was born on the 11 October 1939 in Chesterville, Durban. As a herdboys he fashioned a guitar out of a gallon and cable wires and strummed along whilst doing his chores. After he completed his schooling, he bought an electric guitar and played all night sessions at local jazz spots. Kwela finally moved to Johannesburg with the hope of cutting a record. His distinctive sound was labelled as kwela music and was played in tandem with Spokes Mashiyane(www.sheer.co.za/allenkwela).

people as a result of the racist oppression of apartheid(www.sheer.co.za/allenkwela).

Jensma appropriates kwela music and the resistance to state oppression it symbolised to critique the violent imposition of racist laws by the state.

Hypertextuality

Hypertextuality, according to Genette involves:

any relationship uniting a text (the *hypertext*) to an earlier text (the *Hypotext*) upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary (1997:51).

Allen also points out that hypertextuality marks a field of work the generic essence of which lies in their relation to previous works (2000:108). The anthology, *Blood and more Blood* predates Jensma's published poetry. Many of the poems in the unpublished *Blood and more Blood* have a *hypotextual* relationship to poems which were subsequently published. A case in point is the poem, "Some Lone Soul" (n.d. 47) which appears as "Lo Lull" in *Sing for our Execution* (1973:22). The earlier version of the poem reads like this:

i am a dirty little room
with spiders in the corner of my skull
my mouth a dark pit
into which human droppings disappear
the speck of rust in my heart worries me
although it's part of the night
of my daily existence

many people breathe in and out of me
i am at ease with the world
only the speck of rust worries me
it may be, after all,
part of an everlasting eternity (n.d.:47).

Apart from the change in title, the published version has a few other significant changes:

i am a dirty little room
with spiders in the corner of my skull
my mouth a dark pit
into which human droppings disappear
the speck of rust in my heart worries me

many people breathe in and out of me
i am at ease with the world
only the speck of rust worries me (1973:22).

The difference between these poems indicate that hypertextual transpositions have been made of the hypotext. Genette points out that texts can be transformed by self-expurgation, excision, reduction and amplification. (1997:8). The changes in Jensma's poems have been made by excision – lines 6-7 and lines 11-12 of "Some Lone Soul" (n.d.: 47) have been omitted in "Lo Lull" (1973:22). Removing existential reflection in the latter poem has the effect of reinforcing the state of petrification into which the

speaker has lapsed. This also has the effect of heightening the extreme perplexity of identity which has led to the subject projecting his identity upon his prison cell. Consequently, the excision has brought the conflicted speaker and his delusional status more forcefully into the foreground.

Hypertextual transpositions are also evident in the two versions of the following poem. In *Blood and more Blood* the poem in question appears as “Joburg Spirituals”:

we all sat round a fire
a cop squadcar hollered to a stop
fools, we don't run but sit and grin
i saw them thump the nightwatch down
- his head a ball of blood
to the white, me, they said:
of course we won't see you here again
and with that, like broads
they scuttled round the corner
and their squadcar screamed away
- my pals now all gone, oh lord (n.d. 37)

In the published version, “Joburg Spiritual”, there are significant changes in form and content:

we all sat roun a faia
a cops

squadcar holler a stop
a lump
a fool we dont run but
sit an
grin. hell, Lod, i saw ‘m
thump da nightwatch down
his head a ball o’ blood
i a white: we dont want
to see
you here again. an what
dat ma
bitch scuttled roun da
cona. i
my pals all gone, o Lod (1973:38).

The latter version improves on the hypotext in a variety of ways. The narratorial flow of the hypotext – which gives the effect of bland reportage - has been replaced by a staccato rhythm which is accentuated by the use of truncated diction. The staccato rhythm enhance a sense of drama and gives the speaker's voice a new found sense of urgency. This effect is produced by the reconfiguring of the verse into dimetric metres written between pentameters and hexameters. The staccato rhythm also derives from the stressed beat of the first syllable of the dimeters and the disruptive use of fullstops in the middle of lines. The staccato rhythms of the dimeters in “a cops” (line 2) and “a lump” (in the

throat) (line 4) and their equivalent syntactic and metrical position in the poem also foreground the petrifying fear blacks had for the security police. The image of violence is made dietic (draws attention to itself) by its exaggerated indentation in lines nine and ten. The syncopated diction also foregrounds the emotional tension in the poem and effectively communicates the speaker's sense of panic and calamity.

There are also significant changes in the content of the hypotext. In the latter version "the cops" are excised in the penultimate line and replaced by "ma bitch" (1973:38) which "scuttled roun da cona" (1973:38). This change in content is strategic as it reifies the speaker's sense of loss and draws attention to his subversive and forbidden relationship with a black woman. This in turn reinforces the theme of interracial taboos imposed by the apartheid state which Jensma sought to subvert in his poetry.

Conclusion

The intertextual relations in Jensma's poetry provide an insightful study into the scope, depth and diversity of Jensma's oeuvre. It allows Jensma's poetry to be read as a discursive space in which different literary histories co-exist and respond to one another. Jensma's anthologies can then be situated within the framework of a larger "social text" which protest othering, oppression and the subjective rationality which permits institutions of power to wield control over ordinary people.

A study of the hypotexts, paratextual relations, intertexts and non-literary forms of allusion provide, from a structuralist perspective, greater interpretative certainty in the

cryptic and arcane poetry of Jensma. As pointed out, the matrix and hypographs are organising motifs which make Jenma's schizoid prosody understandable within specific interactive contexts. Intertextuality, however, is not a feature of the text alone, but of a dialogue between the reader and the text. Meaning inheres in the reader and as Neil Fraistat points out in his study *Poems in their Place*, meaning not only shifts from reader to reader but also between readings (1986:7). It is therefore an awareness of the intertextual nature of the text and the significance of its historicization which permit a sensitive and informed understanding of Jensma's poetry.

Conclusion

Wopko Jensma's poetry of fragmentation, bizarre pathological motifs and multiple imagoes is a chronicle of personal devastation rooted in the volatile chapter of South Africa's apartheid past. Image, story and diction coalesce in dissonant aesthetic strategies to express the anguish and psychological annihilation emanating from human degradation and despair. Overwhelmed by a repressive society, racism and materialism, the conflicted speakers in the text retreat into interior psychological spaces and into the private idiomatic language of the schizophrenic. The multiple imagoes which emerge are a startling polyphony of alienation, pathological hate, helplessness and sado-masochism. These multiple voices express the hostility, oppression and suffering which characterised the apartheid state in the seventies.

Harnessing the resources of concrete poetry and the avant-garde, Jensma's experimental poetry is grounded in African experiences, folklore and existential reflection. Shunning metrical regularity, the aesthetic experience derives from the rhythmic cadences of jazz lyrics, kwela and marrabenta. The use of African experiences, idioms and dialects constitute a re-instatement and re-imaging of suppressed local histories, geographies and communities. This revolutionary subjectivity challenged the dominant fictions of race and class in South Africa. Jensma's de-coding and re-coding of race finds congruent expression in the thinking of Edward Said:

No one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are no more than starting points which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated

the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale – but its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively white, or black, or Western, or Oriental. Yet just as human beings make their own histories, they also make their cultures and identities. No one can deny the persisting continuities of long tradition, sustained habitations, national languages and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about. Survival is in fact about the connection between things (1994:408).

Jensma's poetry also illustrate that meaning and signification do not exhaust poetic function. The text is more than the representation of meaning, "the pheno-text" and has to be understood as the engendering of meaning, "the geno-text" (Lechte 1990:128). Thus Jensma's experiments with elision, ellipsis and syncopation also attests to what the poem represses, the process that exceeds the subject and his communicative structures.

Wopko Jensma's poetry is also an imaginative critique of "constituted realities" and its ambient ideologies which have exiled the other outside the pale of common humanity. For Jensma, the subject is held together as a fictive and concrete unity by the illusion of misrecognition. Consequently for Jensma's schizoid speaker's: reality, time and personality do not exist. The real world must be invented. In challenging specious bourgeois morality and a repressive political order, Jensma's poetry foregrounds the provocative notion that sanity can grade just as easily into "supersanity" as into insanity.

Jensma's hybrid language, scatology , fragmented forms and leitmotifs of anguish and despair demonstrate that:

poetry is not a special package tied up in pink ribbons: it is one of the ways of knowing the world (Antin 2000:231).

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