

**UNIVERSITY OF NATAL  
PIETERMARITZBURG**

**THE INFLUENCE OF SELECTED ENGLISH  
ROMANTIC POETS IN B.W. VILAKAZI'S POETRY**

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**THE INFLUENCE OF SELECETD ENGLISH ROMANTIC  
POETS IN B.W. VILAKAZI'S POETRY.**

*By*

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(B.A. Hons.)**

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## DECLARATION

I, **Evangeline Bonisiwe Ngidi**, declare that this thesis is my own work except where otherwise indicated. It has not been submitted in part or as a whole for a degree at any University.

  
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Signature

  
.....

Date

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## ABSTRACT

B.W.Vilakazi is regarded by many literary critics as the best poet of his time, who had he lived longer, would have marked his living years the Vilakazi era. It is for this reason that I decided to embark on the study of his poetry, and that which influenced him, mainly the English Romantic Poets. In doing this research I also emphasised typical aspects of Romantic poets so as to clarify whether Vilakazi does fall under this category (Romantic category) .

In the introduction of *Inkondlo kaZulu* Gumede remarks thus on B.W.Vilakazi's poetry:

*"UVilakazi isiqungo sokwakha izosha lezi usithole esiNgisini. Usebenzisa isiZulu kanye nemizekeliso yaso namalutha, ekhombisa ithuba lokuqhuba isiZulu sibe nenkinga yaso yezincwadi noma izosha lezi zincikile esiNgisini. Ube nesibindi sokuzisukela aqambe lolu hlobo lwezibongo zesiZulu wangagudluka endleleni endala."*  
(1935:vi)

“Vilakazi gets his poetic inspiration from English.He uses Zulu images and superstitions to show that Zulu can have its own literature even though it is related to English. It is very brave of him to compose new genre in Zulu praises, without diverting from the original version by older poets.”

The scope of the study will be as follows: Chapter One is an introductory chapter which includes: the aim of the study; preamble, literature review, research methodology, biographical notes on Vilakazi, Vilakazi's literary works (novels, anthologies of poetry, articles in journals), Vilakazi's lexicographical work (the

Dictionary), Vilakazi's influences (his own personal experiences, traditional poetry, traditional prose narrative, Biblical influences and mostly the English Romantic Poets). This chapter includes the definition of Poetry and the definition of a poet, definition of a Bard '*Imbongi*', it also defines Romanticism (as a movement and as a concept); and it gives various critical views on B.W. Vilakazi.

Chapter Two deals with the influence of English Romantic Poets on Vilakazi, and looks at certain poems of Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley.

Chapter Three deals with Vilakazi as a Romantic poet ( certain Poems with Romantic aspects).

Chapter Four is the Conclusion looking at the extent that the Romantic poets influenced Vilakazi's writing.

## CLARIFICATION

1. As Vilakazi's two anthologies of poetry, **Inkondlo kaZulu** (1935) and **Amal' ezulu** (1945) are referred to extensively throughout this thesis, abbreviations such as '*Ink*' for '*Inkondlo kaZulu*' and '*Amal*' for '*Amal'eZulu*' will be used.
2. All Zulu words will be italicized.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In exploring the above mentioned topic I will be focusing mainly on the Romantic aspect of Vilakazi's poetry. In this research I will be looking at the extent to which Romantic poets influenced Vilakazi's work. I will also explore the connection (if any) between Vilakazi's translation of English poems and the writing of his own poems using his own ideas and images. The intention of this research is to clarify what Romanticism entails both in English and in Vilakazi's poems. The research will also help in making the reader realise how Vilakazi uses these Romantic Poets as a stepping ground for his own works.

This research will further explore the instances where Vilakazi differs from the English Romantic Poets. He uses words like '*ukufa*' (death) as an escape from the world and '*ikhambi*' (potion) as his image for poetic inspiration. It should be understood however that the English Romantics do sometimes use the idea of dying as their final escape from the world but they do not share the idea of becoming *amadlozi* as Vilakazi does. Vilakazi on the other hand goes further to explore the things that happen after death, that is why he mentions '*amadlozi*' which is what his relatives become after death. Vilakazi in his poem '*We Moya*' (Oh Wind) makes his death wish very clear, which might mean that he also wishes to be one of *amadlozi* or else he wants to die so as to escape from the injustices of the world (which is a characteristic of Romantic Poets).

In stanza 13:

*"We Moya! Leth' ukukhanya  
Kwenhliziyo yami. . .  
Ngife kanye nawe kanye"* (Ink.pg 13)

“Oh Wind! Bring light  
Of my heart. . .  
So that I might die with you”

Vilakazi also uses his own images of drunkenness and drugs to express the way he gets his poetic inspiration (which means the way he gets his poetic inspiration is not the same as that of the English Romantic Poets although they are using the same imagery of drugs and drunkenness). For example in the poem ‘*Cula Ngizwe*’ (Sing that I might hear) stanza 2; we find:

“*Mangibe njengophoswe ngekhubalo  
Bese ngilala phezu kwengalo  
Ngizunywe wubuthongo*”  
(*Ink pg 36*)

“Let me become like one bewitched by potents  
And let me lie on my arm  
Overcome by sleep”

Although there are many similarities between the English Romantic Poets and B.W. Vilakazi, he goes further than them by his mention of *amadlozi* and the connection he has with them and the effect they (*amadlozi*) have on him which he believes to be the source of his poetic inspiration. Throughout his poems it is evident that Vilakazi acknowledges that he is like a diviner (*isangoma*). The *isangoma* initiate has to undergo a lengthy training under the supervision and the inspection of a more experienced diviner chosen by her<sup>1</sup> the initiate’s ancestors. In the middle of the night when other people are asleep, that is when her ancestors come and talk to her and make her sing and dance (*ukugida*). The same thing happens to Vilakazi when he is asleep: his ancestors come and talk to him at night. He then has an obligation to

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<sup>1</sup>She and her is used when referring to an *isangoma* because majority of them are females

reduce the information to writing for the people to read it. His ancestors have given him the work of a go-between as *isangoma* is. This is evident in his poem, 'Ugqozi' (The Power of inspiration) stanza 5:

*“Namhla kangikwaz’ ukuthula noma  
Lapho ngilele kwesikaBhadakazi  
Ngivuswa wuMkabayi ethi kimi:  
‘Vuka wena KaMancinza  
Kawuzalelwanga ukulal’ ubuthongo  
Vuk’ ubong’ indaba yemikhonto  
Nank’ umthwal’ engakwethwesa wona’ ”*  
(Amal’ pg 2)

“Today I can’t keep quiet even  
When I’m asleep at midnight  
Mkabayi wakes me up saying to me:  
‘Be awake you of Mancinza  
You were not born to lie in sleep  
Rise and praise matters of war  
Here is the burden I put on your shoulders.’ ”

### 1.1 AIM OF THE STUDY

This research is aimed at exploring the extent of the influence of English Romantic poets on B.W.Vilakazi’ poetry. This will be achieved by looking at how Romanticism shaped Vilakazi’ s way of thinking and his way of looking deeper into things. His way of identifying the injustices of the world; and his use of the images of escaping those injustices; and the death wish or ‘thanatos’ if things get more tough than he can handle. In his poetry he identifies the oppression of the Black people by Whites; he also talks about the hard conditions that Black people work under (In the poem ‘*Ezinkomponi*’ - In the Mine compounds). He then looks for temporary solutions for his problems in hypnosis, trance and dreams. This research will also consider to which extent Vilakazi uses nostalgia as a central theme in his

poems (as English Romantic Poets use this too).

## **1.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **(a) PRIMARY DATA**

For the impact that dreams have on a human being and their interpretation (as they are used as an escape image in Vilakazi's Poetry) people from the Zulu community have been interviewed. Also the views Zulu people hold on Death (*ukufa*) and ancestral spirits (*amathongo*) and what they believe happens after death were included. This is crucial as death is Vilakazi's final escape image from the injustices of the world; *amathongo* (ancestral spirits) also form part of the escape image of dreaming because that is where they come and talk to him and give him inspiration to be a poet.

### **(b) SECONDARY DATA**

My secondary data consists of published and unpublished materials like Theses and Dissertations, books and articles from journals. The basic sources are Vilakazi's own books *Amal' ezulu (Zulu Horizons)* and *Inkondlo kaZulu (Zulu Poem)*. Other works related to Vilakazi were also used. Various materials on modern poetry were consulted to get a clear picture of poetry. Journals, and encyclopaedias were also used. This thesis used dictionaries that are in the reference section of the library in order to get more information about the English Romantic Poets and Romanticism as a movement and a concept.

### **1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW**

There are many works on Vilakazi but they deal with different things in different ways. The following book, theses, dissertations and articles in journals have been consulted.

#### **1.3.1 BOOK**

##### **THE POETRY OF B.W. VILAKAZI (by Deuteronomy Bhekinkosi Ntuli)**

This book deals with Vilakazi's poetry in general, emphasising particular themes and the structure, language and style the poet used in all his poems.

Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter. Chapter 2 deals with the formative influences of Vilakazi. Chapter Three discusses factual and concrete themes (historical poems and poems that are about nature). Chapter Four discusses poems with abstract concepts ( poems on inspiration, death, philosophical poems, nostalgic poems, and protest poems). Chapter Five deals with imagery in the poetry of B.W. Vilakazi (it discusses the use of simile, metaphor, personification and symbolism). Chapter Six discusses form ( parallelism, linking and refrains; rhyme; rhythm and stanza forms).

Ntuli's work is very broad and general, due to the fact that he treats a wide variety of aspects connected with the poetry of Vilakazi.

### 1.3.2 THESES

#### (b) WATER AS A FOCUS OF SYMBOLISM IN VILAKAZI'S PROSE AND POETRY (by Eliachim Thabani Zibusisoziyeza Mthiyane)

This dissertation (which was submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of B.A (Honours) degree at the University of Zululand in 1971), deals with the way in which the image of water is used in Vilakazi's prose and poetry, and what the water symbolises. Mthiyane talks about **Nature and Water Symbolism**; where he uses the images of '*Indebe*' (a ladle) and '*igobondo*' (a claypot) which are both water containers.

Mthiyane describes the two water containers as:

“The '*indebe*' is used for filling up the pitchers with water. It is also a traditional cup. In each case '*indebe*' is used for water movement. . . This is symbolic of knowledge and instruction. Knowledge . . . Should also be emptied to the recipient in measured wholes . . . to build up the body- in this case a nation. The '*igobondo*' is known for its fresh, clear, cool water. Without water, the '*igobondo*' is a symbol of emptiness and uselessness. Its stability and heaviness is caused by the water content which is deliberately moved in, and fills up the whole internal space. Man without knowledge would be tossed about uselessly like a gourd without water. Once a man has allowed himself to be wholly filled with knowledge that is knowledge internalised, he becomes a source of freshness and clarity and disciplined cool behaviour.”

(1971:2)

Mthiyane argues that in his works Vilakazi uses the water imagery to stimulate the senses. The sense of hearing, according to Mthiyane, is referring to man's sensitivity to the tone and timbre of the water voices e.g the murmur of the waterfall - '*Impophoma yeVictoria*' (The Victoria Falls). According to Mthiyane Vilakazi is very sensitive when listening to the running of the water which he considers to be pure.

Mthiyane also talks about the struggle between white rule and Zulu reign where old men had to go and look for jobs in towns. Vilakazi's water is not always quiet, this symbolises the 'ups and downs' in life (like life that is reflected in his poem '*Ezinkomponi*'). Mthiyane argues that Vilakazi occasionally makes a comparison where he portrays uThukela (Tugela River) as a symbol of disorder and heathen practices while uMvoti (Umvoti River) (in '*Imifula yomhlaba*' - Rivers of the world) is painted as a symbol of calmness and a haven of peace.

According to Mthiyane, Vilakazi also uses contrasts; joy is symbolised by "singing", flowing and the tossing of water, disappointment by a "withdrawal" dance of water, hell is symbolised by a "black cloud", heaven is symbolised by a cloud and plenty and fruitfulness is symbolised by innumerable droplets.

He (Mthiyane) also talks about death. There are many instances where death is associated with water e.g., when people die because they have drowned in rivers, where there are floods and people die. Mthiyane says about Vilakazi's notion of death:

"It is important to note that Vilakazi's death is not an end to communication between friends and relatives. What happens is that the departed spirit assumes invisible everpresent state which he likens to air."  
(1971:22)

Mthiyane talks about the gods which he refers to as '*amathongo*' (Ancestral spirits) and about Nomkhubulwana (the Zulu deity and beauty who is symbolised by the rainbow). According to Vilakazi a river becomes a guardian spirit of locality, in a mystic way. The uMvoti river is a visible symbol of all the guardian symbols of Groutville. The greatest spirit, the creator, is pictured as the greatest control behind

the rivers and water. Vilakazi at this stage paints God as the greatest river of life.

Mthiyane argues that the art in the hands of a skilful writer to create a living vivid pictures which intensify, clarify and enrich his descriptions is called imagery. Images created are usually drawn from familiar materials surprisingly woven to create thought-provoking pictures. He further says that at times images are used to convey a second or a third level of meaning and they (these images) are called Symbols.

About the study of Vilakazi's water as a focus of symbolism Mthiyane comments:

“A study of Vilakazi's work reveals that he uses the term 'water' not only to mean water in its liquid form but also to refer to its other forms such as vapour, mist, fog, cloud, frost and snow. The importance of the water imagery is the fluidity of water not just the liquidity.”

(19771: 1)

### **(c) PROTEST IN VILAKAZI'S POETRY (by Nompumelelo B. Zondi)**

A Dissertation by Zondi (which was submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the M.A. Degree at the University of Natal, Durban in 1995) which deals with **Protest in Vilakazi's Poetry** was also read. Zondi gives the definition of poetry; she gives genres and characteristics of oral literature. She talks about poetry, history and protest. She gives the physical characteristics of the oral poet, that he must be strong to be able to perform his exhausting task. The oral poet must therefore be a healthy person who can even go out with the army to witness the pride and the dangers of the battle so as to incorporate performance in his poetry (*izibongo*). He must have intellectual as well as moral qualities.

Zondi defines Protest as an expression of disapproval or objection against something. It is also a statement of formal dissent. She deals with protest drama,

protest against tradition and protest against government.

In the second chapter Zondi discusses social conditions in South Africa before 1950. Political developments meant the emergence of Trade Unions and Political parties. Laws oppressive to Africans were aimed at safeguarding the Whites by making it impossible for Blacks to be successful in business education and politics. Zondi states:

“Labour laws reserved certain skilled jobs for Whites. Discrimination on the basis of colour clearly became part of the legal system. The attitude of colour discrimination goes all the way to the time when Vilakazi was writing and of course, far further back in the past. This is clearly demonstrated by Vilakazi’s poem ‘*Ngephasika*’ where he points out that Blacks are discriminated against solely because of their colour.”

(1995:52)

The establishment of the Land Act of 1913 was aimed at destroying a whole class of peasant producers to avoid their competition with White farmers. Education was also used as another tool of oppression in the 1930's and 1940's as Zondi remarks:

“Before the segregated structure of education called Bantu Education which was implemented by the Nationalist Government after coming to power in 1948, education for most Blacks was in the hands of the missionaries”

(1995:53)

In the 1920's two organisations emerged as responses to the oppressed; Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP).

In the third chapter Zondi analyses the protest in Vilakazi’s poems. When analysing them she looks at three things: 1. Contextual elements (when and why the poem was written). 2. Summary and division of the poem. 3. Protest elements. This summary

will however focus only on the protest element because that is the core of Zondi's thesis.

In her analysis of the protest elements Zondi associates most of the things that Vilakazi writes about to the oppression and ill treatment of black citizens by the whites. What follows here is a summary of Zondi's analysis of Vilakazi's protest poems.

In '*Ngephasika*' (At the Passover), Zondi says that Vilakazi sees black people's suffering in the light of faith (because Christ ran away from Herod's wrath and found protection in Africa), and that the sufferings born by black people are a reminder that Christ himself suffered in the hands of his persecutors. In '*Woza Nonjinjikazi*' (Come enormous engine), Zondi says that Vilakazi seems to be very unhappy about industrialisation, which is, according to Zondi, 'a chief agent of the disruption of traditional society' (op cit:85). In '*Khalani MaZulu*' (Weep oh Zulus), Zondi says, Vilakazi is protesting specifically against his own people, the Zulus over the battles they fought. She further says that Vilakazi sees the battle as being senseless because it gave the whites the opportunity to take advantage of it.

In '*Inkelenkele yakwaXhosa*' (The calamity of the Xhosaland) Zondi says that this poem can be seen as a protest against the unjust domination of false diviners and witchcraft, and as protesting against 'gullibility when confronted with great promises that would show as unattainable' (op cit:98). Zondi says that in '*Aggrey we Afrika*', (Aggrey of Africa) Vilakazi is protesting against those people who are not proud of being black.

According to Zondi when writing '*Inyanganga*' (The moon), Vilakazi was basically concerned with the unequal rights of black and white people, because he (being black) cannot enjoy the beauty of the moon without being taken as a transgressor. Zondi thinks that in writing '*Ngoba . . . Sewuthi*' (Because . . . you now say), Vilakazi

Vilakazi addresses in '*Ezinkomponi*' (In the mine compounds) are but a thinly disguised metaphor for the whites. This, Zondi says, becomes clear when Vilakazi uses a word like '*gegethekani*' which mean a mocking laughter. The owners of the machines do not sympathise with the workers, instead they load them with more and more work. On '*Imfundo ephakeme*' (Tertiary education), Zondi says that most of the poem is a regret on the part of the poet, because he had hoped to find joy in education but he only finds the opposite. The poet finds his ex-classmates better-off than him (although he had studied very hard); they have most of the things he does not have.

### 1.3.3 ARTICLES FROM JOURNALS

#### (a) LAMENT FOR HIS FATHER : ZULU POEMS BY B.W. VILAKAZI (by Cherie MacLean)

I have been consulting the articles in journals, like that of Maclean which is entitled **Lament for his father: Zulu poems by B.W.Vilakazi**. In this article Maclean expresses the difficulty that Vilakazi finds himself in when trying to accept that his father is dead. It took him ten years to come to terms with his father's death (which is the interval between the two poems). MacLean makes this clear:

“The title of the first poem '*Sengiyokholwa-ke*' containing the remote future infix -'yo' and the clitic '-ke' meaning 'then' sets the tone of the poet's disbelief that his father is dead and the conditions he lays down for the remote possibility of his disbelieving it in the future. The title of the second poem, '*Sengiyakholwa*', contains the auxiliary infix '-ya-' which indicates the final or long form of the present tense positive, tells us that at last the poet believes his father is dead.”

(1986:70)

In the first poem '*Sengiyakholwa-ke*' Vilakazi is expressing his disbelief about the death of his father, he is challenging the universe, he is saying that the moon and sun must die before he believes that his father is dead. In the second poem

'*Sengiyakholwa*', the death of his brother Mandlakayise and Nomasomi makes him realise that his father is gone forever. Besides the sadness and grief in the two poems; MacLean also deals with the use of grammar, for example the use of grammatical morphemes like '-wa-' in '*Sewafa*' to show that this incident happened some time ago. Furthermore, MacLean deals with the possible Biblical inclination in this poem in such a way that she translates '*sewafa*' as 'you are dead' and suggests that 'you' refers to Jesus rather than Vilakazi's father.

MacLean argues that Vilakazi uses the refrain '*ungunaphakade*' (for ever and ever) at the end of his first, second and last stanzas of '*Sengiyokholwa-ke*', as well as at the end of the last stanza of '*Sengiyakholwa*' to echo the traditional conclusion of the Christian prayer: "for ever and ever, amen"

## **(b) ASPECTS OF THE ISANGOMA IN THE POETRY OF B.W.**

### **VILAKAZI (by Adrian Koopman)**

Another article is by Koopman which is entitled **Aspects of the Isangoma in the poetry of B.W. Vilakazi**. In this article Koopman shows the similarities between the '*isangoma*' and Vilakazi. There is a great deal of similarity as '*isangoma*' works through the ancestors who come to him at night and Vilakazi gets his poetic inspiration through dreams given to him by his ancestors. Like *isangoma*, *amadlozi* wake Vilakazi up at night and give him what they want him to write. This article also deals with the role of the *isangoma* as a go-between between the living and the dead. Koopman starts by talking about the 'death wish' which is a typical aspect of a Romantic poet. He also talks about images of drugs and medicines, of drunken and drugged states to express states of poetic inspiration. In the inspirational poems Vilakazi questions himself as to why he writes poetry. In most of his poems he

addresses the fact that it is his duty to write for the generations to come. Thus Koopman remarks:

“This duty as well as his skill of writing has been given to him by his ancestral spirits. Both of these aspects are germane to the occurrence of *isangoma* imagery in his later poetry. . . .More relevant, however is the ever- increasing reference to the ancestral spirits and we find that this period of his poetry is characterised by open communication with the ‘*amadlozi*’ questioning them, addressing them and most frequently, appealing to them.”

(1980:4)

Koopman further argues that Vilakazi brought together two themes on inspiration from nature and inspiration in Zulu heritage in the poem ‘*KwaDedangendlale*’ (In the Valley of a Thousand Hills). This poem also deals with the role played by *amadlozi* as Vilakazi sees this place as an area belonging to Zulu people, thus linked with their history. Vilakazi appeals to his ancestors to ensure that he is always in a place where he can be reminded of his heritage and the task of recording and interpreting this heritage for others.

According to Koopman, Vilakazi’s poem ‘*uMamina*’ gives us an insight into Vilakazi’s personal and private world. Vilakazi introduces his readers to a very curious relationship (his and Mamina); they are very close and very intimate, yet at the same time he cannot find her.

Koopman comments on the way in which the *isangoma* functions:

“. . .a person called by the shades to become a diviner who finds himself being increasingly active at night consulting with the shades, . . .communication with them is being either as soon as people have fallen asleep, i.e. the early night or preferably the very early hours of the morning before any of the homestead’s other

members have woken up.”

(1980:22)

An *isangoma* does not eat certain food and she is supposed to wash in cold water in the river or under a waterfall in early hours of the morning. The power of the *isangoma* is her ability to communicate with the ancestors and even to leave for a time this world and to visit *amadlozi* beneath the earth. Koopman concludes by saying that although there are many parallels in behaviour between Vilakazi and an *isangoma*, he was not possessed by his ancestral spirits, but he (Vilakazi) saw his relationship with the society and his role as an interpreter and a go-between.

### **Conclusion on Literature review**

Although the above works deal with one and the same figure ( Dr. B.W. Vilakazi) they discuss different themes and concepts, e.g. general themes for Ntuli; Symbolism of water for Mthiyane; protest for Zondi. This thesis will deal with the influence that Romanticism had on Vilakazi's writing.

## **1.4 BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON B.W. VILAKAZI WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS WORKS.**

Benedict Wallett Vilakazi was born on the 6th of January 1906 at Groutville Mission near Stanger. He was given a pet name 'Bhambatha' because 1906 was the year when a man called Bhambatha (of the Zondi clan) led an unsuccessful rebellion against the Poll Tax Law. Vilakazi's parents Mshini and Leah were both Christian converts of the American Board Church. ( By the time of his death in 1933, Mshini had become a Roman Catholic). Benedict was sixth in a family of seven children. Vilakazi grew up at Groutville, which is near Stanger (now officially known as KwaDukuza), the place where Shaka had one of his kraals known as *kwaDukuza*. It is not strange, therefore, that we find poems on Groutville, Stanger and Shaka

*'Ngomz'omdaladala kaGrout'* (About Grout's old Village), *'UShaka kaSenzangakhona'* (Shaka son of Senzangakhona).

His schooling career started in 1912 at the Groutville Primary School. After passing Standard Four he went to St. Francis College, Mariannhill. Here he did Standard Five and Six and a Teacher's Certificate ( T 4). During his student years at Mariannhill, Vilakazi was the secretary of Father Huss. According to Nyembezi these years were of great importance:

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

(1962: 14)

There is evidence of his deep attachment to this institution in his long poem on the 50th anniversary of Mariannhill, i.e. *'Isenanelo eminyakeni engamashumahlamu'* (Comment on the 50th anniversary). (*Inkondlo kaZulu* p82)

He first taught at Mariannhill. Later he chose to go and teach at the Catholic Seminary in the rural area of Ixopo. He preferred this quiet place to the urban area. When he was at Ixopo he became interested in private studies and got encouragement from the Catholic Priests to study Latin. By this time he had been converted to Catholicism and was even contemplating taking up Holy Orders. Vilakazi went to teach at Mariannhill again. In 1933 he left Mariannhill for the Ohlange institute. The early thirties were significant years for Vilakazi's development as an artist. Of the period when Vilakazi was at Mariannhill and later at Ohlange, Dhlomo says that it:

“. . .seems to have affected his soul deeply and produced attitudes that were to colour the rest of his life. First, he was married, (1932) then his

father died, (1933) and, at last, he lived with boastful African Graduates from Fort Hare who despised anyone who had no university qualifications.”

( 1952: 30)

During this time he was studying for a B.A. degree with the University of South Africa. He completed his degree in 1934 with a distinction in Zulu. In 1935 his first anthology of Zulu Poetry, *Inkondlo kaZulu* (Zulu Poems) appeared. In this book we find poems in which he expresses his grief about the death of his father. The poems are ‘*Sengiyokholwa-ke*’ and *Unokufa*’ (*Inkondlo kaZulu* pp 34 and 72 respectively).

Vilakazi wanted to proceed with postgraduate studies in Zulu. He enquired whether Prof. C.M. Doke of the Department of African Studies at the University of Witwatersrand could help him. Coincidentally this happened at the time when the University wanted a Black Assistant. Vilakazi was appointed in 1936. Vilakazi’s arrival in Johannesburg was a remarkable experience. He had to adjust himself to a new environment. He faced this with courage because he felt he was an ambassador of his people and he had to represent them well. His first impressions and experiences in this city are reflected in poem like ‘*Wo ngitshela Mntanomlungu*’ (Oh tell me Whiteman’s child):

*"Izindonga zezindlu zinde  
Zishona phans' emhlabathini  
Zikhoth' amafu phezulu  
AmaMboza akwanodwengu  
Akazange akubone lokhu"*  
(*Amal*’ pg 8).

The walls of the houses are tall  
They reach down in the ground  
And touch the clouds above  
The AmaMboza (regiments) of Nodwengu  
Did not see this

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

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

(1952: 30)

The poet expresses his disillusionment in the poem '*Imfundo ephakeme*' (Tertiary Education), in which he notes how prosperous some people are in comparison with those who aspire to higher education:

*"Esakhula nabo bangafunda,  
Ngihlangana nabo bangeyise.  
Ngithi lapho ngishay' unobhanqa,  
Bona baqhamuke ngezimotho,  
Bathuquz' uthuli bangishiye  
Namhla banjengamakhosi omhlaba'*  
(Amal' pg 7)

Those who we grew up with and did not study further,  
When I meet them they look down at me.  
When I walk on foot,  
They come on their cars,  
They raise dust and leave me  
Today they are the kings of the world'

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

The next few years were not happy ones for Vilakazi. He lost his brother, Ephraim Mandlakhe in February 1940. In 1942 his wife Fanny (MaNxaba) died. He married Emily Phoofolo the same year. His second volume of poetry '*Amal'ezulu*' (Zulu Horizons) appeared in 1945, with a long touching poem '*Nayaphi?*' (Where did you go), in which he mourns the death of these two beloved ones, his wife and his brother, Mandlakhe:

*'Ngaqalaza macala wonke  
Ngithi ngizokubona, Mandlakhe.  
Ngabuza ezinyangeni,  
Zaphenduka zabhekana,  
Zangithela ngezinyembezi  
Sezililela' uNomasomi'*

(Amal' pg 17)

I looked on all sides  
Hoping that I will see you, Mandlakhe.  
I asked the planets  
They turned and looked at each other  
They cried  
Lamenting for Nomasomi'

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

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

## **1.5 VILAKAZI'S LITERARY WORKS**

Vilakazi's literary works can be divided into three categories:

1. Novels
2. Anthologies of Poetry

### 3. Articles in journals

#### 1.5.1 Novels

Apart from Anthologies of poetry Vilakazi also wrote three novels:

*Noma Nini* (For Ever) 1935

*UDingiswayo KaJobe* (Dingiswayo son of Jobe) 1939

*Nje Nempela* (Truly Indeed) 1943

These novels are of an appreciably high standard especially because of the masterly use of the language found in them. There are many instances where his prose becomes highly poetic. However, through my observation I found that they occasionally include unimportant incidents.

#### 1.5.2 Anthologies of poetry

*Inkondlo kaZulu* (Zulu Poem) 1935

*Amal' ezulu* (Zulu Horizons) 1945

#### 1.5.3 Articles in journals

*African Drama and Poetry*, South African Outlook, Vol LXXIX

*Some Aspects of Zulu Literature*, African Studies, vol 1 (1942)

#### 1.5.4 Lexicographical work

##### Dictionary

Vilakazi worked with Prof. C.M. Doke on the compilation of the monumental *Zulu - English Dictionary* which was published in 1948, a year after Vilakazi's death. Doke acknowledges Vilakazi's great input in the writing of this Dictionary in the introduction of the Dictionary:

"I wish to pay tribute to the part played by my compiler, Dr. B.W. Vilakazi, to whom a large portion of the fresh material is due. Not only did he supply a great number of the idiomatic sentences appearing throughout, but his pronunciation gave the tones recorded and to him are due in the main the details of etymology and derivative forms . . . And now, after he had done his part in the reading of the galley proofs of this work, the untimely death, on 26 October 1947, of Dr. Vilakazi, cut off in the midst of further researches and literary creativity, has deprived the African people of a brilliant son, one who not only achieved high academic standing, but whose life and personality gained for him a lasting place in their affections. This dictionary of his mother tongue- the language he loved- will stand as a monument to a great African."

(1948:xiii)

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

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

(1952: 30)

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

"Vilakazi. . .was obsessed with a great desire for the intellectual uplift of

his people.... he believed his people were capable of rising high in intellectual achievement and he devoted his energies, not only to himself, but to the self-effacing and unselfish end of encouraging and advising many a budding Bantu author”  
(1949:187)

## 1.6 VILAKAZI’S OWN PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

For an artist to produce a piece of work he/she might be influenced by a number of things. These influences could be his/her own personal experiences or models of expression found in his/her cultural background or artistic knowledge.

Tragedies in Vilakazi’s life, such as his father’s death reflected in two poems ‘*Sengiyokholwa-ke*’ (By then I will believe) and ‘*Sengiyakholwa*’ (Now I do believe), as well as the death of his wife and his brother’s death reflected in the poem ‘*Nayaphi?*’ (Where did you go?), contributed towards making him a poet.

Vilakazi also seems to be influenced by the sterile environment he finds himself in while being a lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand. He is homesick, and used nostalgia to write his poem ‘*KwaDedangendlale*’ (In the Valley of a Thousand Hills). In this poem Vilakazi looks at the place of his birth and early life and he tries to explain it to his readers.

It is also evident in Vilakazi’s poems that his career is also encouraged by the circumstances surrounding him at the time he was writing. That is why he writes poems about his complaints with the injustices surrounding him as a human being, he has a way of communicating them. Beeton witnesses that:

“ A man may have good morals to communicate but if he has not the

authority of mind and expression to communicate them as an artist, he will forever remain voiceless. Conversely, if a man has a splendid 'technique' and nothing worthwhile to say, he is condemned forever to hollow, if pleasant, tinklings, he is condemned forever to play a minor role, even though he may acquire some contemporary glitter."

(1964:16)

Ntuli remarks :

"An artist has to acquire proper balance between what he intends to say and how he will say it. Readers are inclined to applaud a writer who expresses their grievances in verse, even though that verse is of little or no literary merit. Such verse is likely to rouse the emotions because of its topicality and bluntness, but it may not last as a work of art"

(1984: 134)

The circumstances that surround the poet, sometimes deal with very important aspects of life which may be the reason Ekwensi in Lindfors says:

". . .the role of the writer is dictated by the social and political atmosphere in his country.... if writers were listened to as a voice, the warning voice or the voice of a prophet or the voice which mirrors the time, Africa might benefit."

(Lindfors (nd) pg 33)

Vilakazi's poem '*Ngoba . . . Sewuthi*' (Because . . .you now say) can be taken as an example. Here Vilakazi is complaining about black people's suffering which he feels is not taken seriously. The narrator of the poem feels that he is not regarded as a fully-fledged human being because he always tries to be happy in spite of having to work and live under bad conditions. The poet does not tell us what exactly is being done to him, except the fact that he is being treated as if he has no feelings at all. At the end of stanzas 1,2,3 & 4 we find these words:

*“Sewuthi nginjengensika  
Yon’ engezwa nabuhlungu*

...

*Sewuthi nginjengedwala  
Lon’ elingakwaz’ ukufa*

...

*Sewuthi ngiyisilwane  
Esifa kuzalw’ esinye.*

...

*Sewuthi ngiyisiduli”*

(Amal’pp 19-20)

"You say I am a pillar  
Which feels no pain

...

You say I am like a rock  
Which knows no death

...

You say I am an animal  
Which dies and another is born

...

You say I am an antheap"

### 1.6.1 TRADITIONAL POETRY

Zulu people had their own poetry which was expressed orally, rather than in written form ‘*Izibongo*’ (Praise poems). This is the main form of poetic expression.

There is, however a difference between *izibongo* and poetry especially in the way the two use language. Gunner says of *izibongo*:

“*Izibongo* may be freefloating in a way that written poetry is not, but there are still certain conventions of language that mark them off from ordinary speech and give the language a rich, varied denseness. The cluster of praise names which mark and identify a person often make use of very condensed, compact language. Information which in normal discourse would be presented in a leisurely, expansive form is compressed, often paratactic, and lacks the wide range of tenses of the verb available in ordinary speech. Expression is often cryptic and aphoristic. Single lines

often recall the balanced structure and gnomic brevity of proverbs.”  
(1983:4)

The evidence of Vilakazi using traditional poetry can be seen in his poem  
*'UShaka kaSenzangakhona'* (Shaka son of Senzangakhona).

In this poem Vilakazi uses the well known praises of Shaka in stanza 1:

*“Uteku lwabafazi bakwaNomgabhi  
Betekula behlezi emlovini  
Beth' uShaka kakubusa kakubankosi  
Kanti yilapho ezakunethezeka”*  
(Ink pg 40)

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

Another poem which incorporated izibongo is *'Phezu kwethuna likaShaka'*  
(Over Shaka's grave). The poem is an expression of the poet's delight at the monument built in honour of Shaka. Shaka is directly addressed in the poem and the poet is able to introduce the praises of relevant people. Sometimes the poet starts by mentioning the name of that person and then proceeds to add relevant praises immediately, in some instances he only inserts the praises expecting his readers to know the person he is referring to. In this poem Vilakazi refers to Solomon by using his praises in stanza 2:

*“Ukhombise umhlaba wonke  
Nkayishan'enkulu kaMenzi”*  
(Ink pg 59)

“You have shown the whole world  
Great Nkayishana of Menzi”

Another reference to Shaka is made by the inclusion of praises, without mentioning his name in stanza 4:

*“Nant’ izwe selibuyelana  
Selizibonel’ imiloyo  
Ayikhuluma mhla esefa  
Osixhokolo siseNkandla  
Bangamtshela nazibuko  
Bamweza ngelicons’ amathe. . .”*  
(Ink pg 59)

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

Vilakazi also allotted known praises to other people, e.g. in the poem ‘*Aggrey we Afrika*’ (Africa’s Aggrey), he used Cetshwayo’s praises to show that he admires Aggrey who was a Ghanaian intellectual and thought he deserved being praised the Zulu way. Aggrey did not do what Cetshwayo did, but the poet wants to highlight that Aggrey also struggled for his success.

*“Magwaz’ eguqile njengethole”*  
(Ink pg 69)

“He who stabs while kneeling like a calf.”

## 1.6.2 TRADITIONAL PROSE NARRATIVE

Vilakazi also borrowed from traditional prose narrative, i.e. folktales and myths. In his poem ‘*NgoMbuyazi eNdongakusuka*’ (About Mbuyazi at Ndongakusuka), Vilakazi uses the tale of Nanana, a frog whose children were eaten by an elephant in stanza 11:

*“Umlethil’ emachibini ezindlovu  
Ezithath’ abantabakaNanana  
KaSelesel’ owakh’ endleleni  
Ebhidle ngamabomu ngokwethemba  
Ethemb’ ubungqamungqosho”*  
(Amal’ pg 54)

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

In Zulu there is a myth which says death resulted from the delay of a chameleon in delivering an important message from God that people will not die. While feasting with ‘*ubukhwebezane*’ (the berries of the Lantana plant) the chameleon was overtaken by a lizard which was delivering a message that people will die. Vilakazi refers to this folklore in his poem ‘*Unokufa*’ (Mother of Death) where he writes in stanza 10:

*“ Wawunjalo kusemandulweni  
Mhla uNkulunkulu ethum’ unwabu  
Lwalibala, lwaficwa intulo  
Eyakhweca isisu yelula  
Imilenze yamemeza ngezwi  
Yathi: ‘Kuthiw’ abantu mabafe’ ”*  
(Ink pg 81)

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

### 1.6.3 BIBLICAL INFLUENCE

Vilakazi was born in a Congregational Mission of Groutville, he also taught in Catholic schools in Ixopo and Mariannhill, so it is not surprising that in his writings there is evidence of Biblical influence. In his poem ‘*Unokufa*’ (Mother of Death), he refers to death as a sting. This may be associated with the famous Biblical quotation :

“*Kufa! Luphi udosi lwakho na?*”

(1 Corinthians 15: 55)

“Death where is thy sting?”

Ntuli believes that to Vilakazi the sting of death is a reality because he has seen it operating in his family. He (Ntuli) does not say it is non-existent. According to Vilakazi this sting is active. The poet gives us a new picture of the sting piercing into the flesh. The sting has worked on two planes. By killing his father, it also ‘killed’ the poet mentally because of the sorrow he experienced.

In the poem ‘*NgePhasika*’ (Easter), Vilakazi retells a story about the life of Jesus, his humiliation , his crucifixion etc.

Ntuli believes that the poet is not just retelling the story for its own sake, but rather uses it as a platform from which he can express his discontent about being

discriminated against as a result of his colour.

(Cf. Ntuli 1984:51)

On his way to the cross Christ suffered deeply so the poet believes that it is going to be easy for Christ to understand the suffering he (the poet) is going through and Christ is going to help him through this ordeal. In 'Ngephasika' we find these words in stanza 7:

*"Lapho bekubethel' ogodweni,  
Usungulo olungenamahlon' okungena  
Lubhoboz' inyam' emanzi luyibhangqa  
Nokhun' olomil' olungezwa zihlungu  
Kuyampompoza kweyam' inhliziyo"*

(Ink pg 2)

"When they nail you on the log,  
The shameless nail entering  
And piercing moist flesh and binding  
It with the dry wood that feels no pain,  
There is bleeding in my heart"

As a person who grew up in a mission under a religious background he was familiar with the parting words of Christ :

"There are many rooms in my father's house, if it weren't so I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you"

(John 14:2)

This may have influenced the poet's phrasing of the fourth stanza of *Sengiyakholwa* (Now I do believe), and therefore his address is in the 2nd person singular in stanza 4:

*“Ngingekholwe kanjani ukuthi sewafa  
Um’ umgwaqo wakho uvulekile,  
Ngibon’ iminyaka yonke ubhudulekile,  
Wena kungathi wahamba umnyang’ uvuliwe  
Khona abanye beyophuma sengathi badiniwe  
Kanti sebelandela wena bangabuyi”*

(Amal’ pg 67)

“ How can I not believe you are dead  
When your road is open in front of me  
I see all the years you have worn away  
It seems as if your own going opened the door  
For others to go out when they were tired  
Indeed following you and not returning”

Vilakazi’s religious background may also be seen to influence the phrasing of the 8th stanza of the same poem:

*“Ungiweza ngamasango namazibuko  
Obuhlakani nezindlela zenkalipho  
Nodondolo lwakho ngiluzwa lugqula  
Phambi kwamehlo ami ngingakuboni”*

(Amal’ pg 67)

"You make me cross over through gateways and fords  
Of wisdom and awareness  
I can hear your guiding staff tapping  
In front of me although I cannot see you”

MacLean argues that these words are reminiscent of the 23rd Psalm from the Old Testament of the Bible:

“ ‘He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the Valley of Death, I will fear no evil for Thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me’ ”

(1986: 73)

#### 1.6.4 ENGLISH ROMANTIC POETS

The way of thinking that Vilakazi was using in his writing seem to have been greatly influenced by English Romantic Poets. Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats were among the greatest English Romantic Poets and they wrote poems like

‘The Cuckoo’, ‘To the Skylark’, and an ‘Ode to the Nightingale’ respectively.

Vilakazi has also written a poem called ‘*Inqomfi*’ (The Lark) based on the ideas used by the three poets. Vilakazi in this poem asks who taught the bird to sing. This idea was also used by Shelley addressing the Skylark. In the poem ‘*Cula Ngizwe*’ (Sing that I might hear) stanza 2, Vilakazi is writing about the effects of listening to the bird’s song and this is a similar image used by Keats. In the same stanza he uses the images of drunkenness, drugs, and ultimately sleep and dreaming which is typical of Romantic poets.

*“Mangibe njengophoswe ngekhubalo  
Bese ngilala phezu kwengalo  
Ngizunywe buthongo  
Ngifis’ ukukhohlwa yizihlungu  
Zezifo zezwe nayisizungu  
Sokusala ngedwa”*

(Ink pg 36)

“ Let me be like one bewitched by potents  
And let me lie on my arm  
Overcome by sleep  
I wish to forget about pains  
Of diseases of the world and the feeling  
Of being alone”

This topic, i.e. The influence of English Romantic Poets in Vilakazi will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter as it forms the major part of this research.

## 1.7. WHAT IS POETRY ?

Poetry is the highest expression of creative inspiration.

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary poetry is among other things :

“The art or work of the poet, involving (1) elevated expressions of (2) elevated thoughts or feelings in (3) metrical or rhythmical form: quality (in anything) that calls for (4) poetical expressions”

(1982: 790-791)

Poetry uses language in a special way for a special purpose. The unusual form is achieved by the use of repetition in various guises, such as alliteration and rhyme, and the unusual concentration and emotional effect by the use of imagery reinforced by repetition.

## 1.8 WHAT IS A POET?

The word poet comes from the Greek word '*poien*' which means 'to do' or 'to create'. The poet is a creator of beautiful images, metaphors and verses. He has acquired the art and technique to express in verse a vision of the world, and in so doing, is able to move and to arouse emotions, feelings and fantasies that demonstrate a poetic interpretation of reality.

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary a poet is :

". . . a person with great sensitivity and imagination, who searches for and cultivates what is beautiful, noble, and ideal. We can see a poet as a person deeply imbued with the value system of his culture, a person able to reflect on his people's past and present in order to draw inspiration also for the future. A poet is able to give expression to the feeling of sufferings or of joy and elation which accompany either his individual life or that of

his people."

(1982: 791)

Cope defines a poet as a person who has :

"... a natural gift of seeing and feeling more than ordinary man in the wake and experience of life. He has a command of words. Words in a poet's mind, partly arise out of the emotional field, partly they are deliberately fitted to convey it. The mating of words, to the entire mental experience of thought and the emotional field, treated as an experience..... is the entire revelation or unfolding of a poetic act. It is a natural gift of interpreting life in emotive words that gives poet happiness."

(Cope 1968)

### **1.9 VILAKAZI'S PLACE IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN MODERN POETRY**

Vilakazi's name is held very high by South African writers especially those who write in Zulu because of his courage to pave a way in the writing of Zulu poems using the poems from English poets as his guidelines. As a result many Zulu modern poets have been influenced by Vilakazi a great deal, e.g known figures like H.I.E.Dhlomo, who wrote an epic 'Valley of a Thousand Hills'. The two poems share almost the same title but are very different in their contents.

In his poem Dhlomo anticipates Soweto poetry's<sup>2</sup> attempts to subject African tradition to contemporary pressures whilst Vilakazi's poem is a nostalgic poem which talks about the beauty of his birthplace and the places he grew up in.

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<sup>2</sup>This is a kind of poetry which deals with apartheid and the struggle. There are many anthologies of poetry that are compiled with the same name. These poems are written by Black authors in English, some of the authors were activists in the struggle in early 70s and 80s.

Vilakazi translated some poems from the English Language like Joseph Cotter's 'And what shall you say?' into '*Wena-ke uyothini?*' (What shall you say?) and Paul Dunbar's 'A death song' into '*Ma ngificwa ukufa*' (When death overcomes me). Because of his courage, Vilakazi became a role model to many poets and writers therefore it is not surprising to find that some decades after he died we find poets like J.C. Ngubane translating William Wordsworth's 'Solitary Reaper' into his '*Umvuni onosizi*' (A reaper with sorrow). Although Ngubane does not say that himself (that his poem is a translation), the evidence of the existing relations between the two poems is overwhelming.

Despite the influence that Vilakazi had on other modern poets, most of the literary critics focus on poems about oppression and apartheid, and stress the works of political activists who were once banned in South Africa, and in so doing they leave out the very important figures who also dealt with the same struggle. Vilakazi had his struggle before most of our contemporary activists did. Look for example at his poem '*Ezinkomponi*' (In the mine compounds). In this poem Vilakazi talks about the pain that Black people suffer under White oppression, but much to the reader's surprise most critics focus only on political activists and talk only of the so-called "Soweto poetry" as being the most prominent in as far as addressing the issue of apartheid is concerned.

However critics like Chapman allege that early poet's poetic (H.I.E. Dhlomo) writing were appearing only in magazines and newspapers if at all. He considers this to be the fate of many 'black voices' (as he refers to them) which long before Soweto poetry, in as early as the 1930s and 1940s began to be heard with some persistence in black newspapers like '*Bantu World*,' '*Umteteli waBantu*' and '*Ilanga laseNatali*'. Chapman has nothing to say about Vilakazi's poetry and has only this

to say about the early poetry:

“ . . . poetry of the 1930s and 1940s is most significantly represented by two figures: Peter Abrahams, who is better known as a novelist and H.I.E. Dhlomo”

(1982:14)

### 1.10 CRITICAL VIEWS ON B.W. VILAKAZI

The views that the critics have concerning Vilakazi are based on the style and the way he presents his two poetry books. After the publication of *Inkondlo kaZulu* in 1935, Taylor writes an interesting review. He refers to the fact that prior to the publication of this book, *izibongo* (Zulu praise poems) were the main type of poetry among the Zulu. He notes the importance of Vilakazi's contribution and says:

“Mr Vilakazi in the richness of his Zulu vocabulary, in the truly African flavour of his imagery and in the exuberant extravagance of his description is a true descendant of the *imbongi* (the bard). But the background of his thought is not that of an *imbongi*.”

(1935:164)

Taylor further refers to the fact that Vilakazi is influenced by education and European culture. Taylor also says that Vilakazi does not succeed much with rhyme. But he agrees that the poet does not deserve to be condemned for this because he is an experimenter who should not be criticised for small failures. Taylor feels that Vilakazi's talent is revealed chiefly in the emotional content of the poem.

In the introduction of *Inkondlo kaZulu*, Gumede comments thus about this anthology:

*“Le ncwadi kayinasilinganiso ngenxa yalokhu ngoba umlobi ubebhala nje ngoba ethole isikhathi, ekhululekile. . . . Iminqa yalawa mahubo iseyamile kuprose, kayikalumbeki ngokuphelele ukuba ibe ngeyobumbongi.”*

(Ink, pg vii)

“This book lacks balance because of the fact that the writer was writing when he had time, and when he was free. . . . The lines in these poems follows the pattern of a prose, it is not yet ready to become part of poetry.”

This is not surprising when we remember that these poems were written before Vilakazi matured as a poet. He had not decided on a specific pattern to follow.

In the preface to this anthology Gumede attributes this lack of balance to the fact that the poems were written at different times over a long period.

It is clear that critics are unanimous in praising the second volume, *Amal'eZulu* as an improvement of the first one. In the introduction of his review of *Amal'eZulu* Jolobe says:

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

(1945: 127)

According to Ntuli (1978), Jolobe finds Vilakazi’s two long poems (*KwaDedangendlale*-in the Valley of a Thousand Hills and *Ezinkomponi* -in the Mines ) successful in painting a series of mental pictures. In his concluding paragraph Jolobe says:

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

(1945:27)

Kunene's (1962) critique finds Vilakazi's work highly commendable, and he places this poet above all his successors although he gives a contradictory note in as far as '*Sengiyokholwa-ke*' (Only by then will I believe) and '*Ma ngificwa ukufa*' (If death overcomes me) are concerned. Kunene says that the poem *Sengiyokholwa-ke* is a translation of an English poem of the 16th century, of which he does not give the title and the writer.

At another time Kunene says that the poem '*Ma Ngificwa ukufa*' is Vilakazi's original work while this is clearly an adaptation of Dunbar's 'A death song'

## CONCLUSION

This chapter is meant to be an introduction of the research to follow. I hope to have given an overview of the whole thesis, aim of the study, research methodology, and biographical notes on B.W. Vilakazi. In this chapter I also gave definitions of poetry and the poet. I also gave a definition of an '*imbongi*' (a bard) because Vilakazi holds the view that there is a certain '*imbongi*' responsible for his poetic development. I gave the critical views on B.W. Vilakazi.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **2.1 THE INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH ROMANTIC POETS ON B.W. VILAKAZI'S POETRY.**

#### **2.1.1 Romanticism as a movement**

Myers describes Romanticism as the period from 1789-1838 in the English literature. The movement began in reaction to the restraints of Aesthetic Distance and formalism of Neo-classism. It called for poetics and philosophy centred around individual feelings and imaginations. Philosophically the movement maintained that

- 1) A man is born good and later is corrupted by experience in society
- 2) the inner man's spirit and emotions are proper vehicles for poetry
- 3) evolutionary spiritual change can be brought about by exalting nature over civilisation, revolution over status quo, and energy over resraints

(1989:268)

#### **2.1.2 Romanticism as a concept**

The Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms defines Romanticism according to Fowler, who sees it as:

“.. the general term for a range of related ideas, poetics, philosophic and social. The central distinctive feature of the Romantic mode is the search for a reconciliation between the inner vision and the outer experience expressed through ‘a creative power greater than his own’ because it includes his own.

(1973:210)

Lovejoy feels that for a variety of reasons the Romantic writer feels cut off from the world around him. The failure to understand the true nature of a man and his creative power has led to a characterisation of external nature fixed and dead.

The Romantic poet seeks a way to reactivate the world by discovering in himself the creative perceptiveness which will allow him to draw aside the veils which men have laid across their senses. He seeks a perception where the false separation of Nature (external objects) and nature (living being of the perceiving man) can be reconciled. The Romantic thinker often feels that such a faculty is not an invention, but a re-discovery of the truth about the way we perceive and create, which has been lost in the development of more complicated social forms and the growth of rational and self-conscious theories of human thought.

He (Lovejoy) thus remarks:

"The artist feels isolated, unable to discover what must exist, some objective form and Form to embody his sense of the continuity of his own imagination and the visible world. He is drawn towards those experiences which offer a blurred version of the separation of ego and event, drug hallucination or the radical innocence of childhood perception."

(1973: 210-211)

### **2.1.3 Typical aspects of a Romantic poet**

For the purposes of this research Romanticism will be further defined as a way of thinking creatively.

Typical aspects of a Romantic Poet are:

- a) External stimulus -something that the poet feels and decides to write about which is usually nature.

- b) Internal reaction - emotional response which are feelings from the heart of the poet which is an experience of being part of nature, e.g. how does it feel to be a singing bird (Vilakazi's *Cula Ngizwe*- Sing that I might hear)

The poet forgets for a while about the real world, he uses the images of escape eg drunkenness, falling asleep and dreams, drugs and trance.

A romantic poet may sometimes use 'death' as a means of final escape.

Vilakazi believes that Zulu poetry should be written in a way relevant to Zulu speaking people. He decorates what he got from the English Romantics with rhyming schemes and stanzas, and he (Vilakazi) remarks:

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

(1936: 127)

For the purposes of this thesis we will not only draw the similarities between the poems under the headings translation and adaptation but we will look also at the end result of Vilakazi's writing. The question that needs to be answered at the end is does Vilakazi end up with good poems or mere translations or adaptations, 'as Ntuli remarks:

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

(1984: 34)

This writing will deal with the way Vilakazi uses adaptations, translations and the

transfer of isolated line and ideas that he derives from the English Romantic Poets. William Wordsworth's style that Vilakazi uses will be discussed in greater detail as it seems to have influenced Vilakazi's way of writing more than other Romantic Poets. However Keats and Shelley will form part of this discussion too.

#### 2.1.4 ADAPTATIONS

Vilakazi uses adaptations and translations from English Romantic poets. He acknowledges that at the beginning of the poems, that they are not his original work, e.g. in *'Ma ngificwa ukufa'* (When death overcomes me) he says:

*"Lesosha siyisihumusho esithe ukuguqulwa sesosha esithi 'A death song' esabhalwa ngu Paul Laurence Dunbar imbongi yomnigilose yaseMelika"*  
(Ink pg 37)

"This poem is an adaptation of a poem 'A death song by Paul Laurence Dunbar, an African-American poet."

And at the beginning of *'Wena-ke uyothini?'* (And what shall you say), he says:

*"Lesosha siyisihumusho sesosha esithi 'And what shall you say' esabhalwa ngu Joseph S. Cotter, Jr. imbongi yomnigilose yaseMelika"*  
(Ink pg 93)

"This is a translation of the poem 'And what shall you say' by Joseph S. Cotter, Jr. an African-american poet."

Vilakazi adapted Paul Dunbar's "A death song" to write his poem *Ma Ngificwa ukufa* 'When death overcomes me'

The first stanza of Dunbar's poem reads like this:

“Lay me beneaf de willers in de grass,  
Whah de branch ‘ll go a-singing as it pass  
An’ w’en I’s layin’ low,  
I kin hyeah it as it go  
Singin’, ‘Sleep, my honey, tek yo’re’s ‘at las’.”  
(1970:42)

Vilakazi used this stanza to write as follows:

*“Ngimbeleni ngaphansi kotshani  
Duze nezihlahla zomnyezane,  
Lapho amagatsh’ eyongembesa  
Ngamaqabung’ agcwel’ ubuhlaza  
Ngozwa nami ngilele ngaphansi  
Utshani ngaphezulu buhleba:  
‘Lala sithandwa, lal’ uphumule’.”*  
(Ink pg 37)

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

Vilakazi uses repetition in the last line *la la . . . la la* which is not found in Dunbar's poem; he has the final rhyme which has the pattern of *aabba* e.g. in stanza 2, we find these rhyming words following the above mentioned pattern pool (line 1); cool (line 2); spring (line 3); sing (line 4) and school (line 5). Each and every line in Vilakazi's poem has 10 syllables which agrees with the message of the poem which is calm, whereas Dunbar's poem does not have a fixed

number of syllables in sentences and Ntuli has this to say on Vilakazi's poetry:

"The length of the lines and the tendency to lengthen the penultimate syllable of the words retards the pace of movement of this poem when one reads it, and this agrees with the calm and reflective tone of the whole poem."

(1984:41)

Vilakazi succeeds in making a good adaptation by not merely using the Zulu language to translate what Dunbar has written in English. The way he uses the language and the way in which he chooses his words is highly commendable. Msimang remarks on that aspect:

*" . . .sithola amagama ade etwatshekwa ngumfo kaMaphephethe ukuze kugqame umqondo owethulwayo. . . alitwatshekile ebelingekho kuDunbar yileli lokwembesa."*

(1986:138)

" . . . we find words that are usually put by Maphephethe's son to give a clear picture of the message he is conveying. . . the word he uses, which is not found in Dunbar is the one of 'covering something in a blanket' "

Vilakazi in his poem expresses his wish to devote his life to the service of the school children, which Dunbar's poem mentions only in passing. Vilakazi's last stanza is longer than Dunbar's, however he borrows Dunbar's last line  
*'Lala sithandwa, lal' uphumule'* (Sleep darling, sleep and rest)

Vilakazi is very careful in choosing the words he is going to use in his adaptation. Ntuli makes a further remark:

"For Dunbar's 'Bury me', Vilakazi could have used a direct equivalent '*ngingcwabeni*'. But he chose to use '*ngimbeleni*' for a good reason. The verb *-ngcwaba* means burying a dead thing which is expected to rot. On

the other hand *-embela* is more euphemistic. It also implies burying something which will be of use though it is buried. Burying may be done merely to preserve the thing for better use at a later stage. Vilakazi's word is very appropriate here because its implication is that the burial of his body will not be the end of his existence. It will merely be a passing phase leading to a better (spiritual) existence."

(1984: 42)

Vilakazi's poem is not exactly the same as the original poem he had his own ideas in mind. Let us examine the last lines of Dunbar's second and the third stanzas:

"An' de chillen waded on dey way to school  
Let me settle w'en my shouldahs draps dey load  
Nigh enough to hyeah de noises in de road;  
Fo' I tink de las' long res  
Gwine to soothe my sperrit bes'..."

Vilakazi on the other hand puts these ideas like this, in the third stanza;

*"Ngiyeke ngifel' ezindleleni  
Zabantwan' abafund' isikole  
Njengob' amahlomb' esehluleka  
Yimithwal' ebengisindwa yiyo.  
Iyona imisindo yabantwana  
Eduduza imiphefumulo  
Elel' ukulal' okuphakade."*

(Ink pg 38)

"Leave me to die on the paths  
Of school children  
Since the shoulders now fail (to carry)  
The burdens which were heavy on me.  
It is the children's noises  
Which console the spirits  
Which are sleeping the everlasting sleep"

Vilakazi suggests that he will be very happy to hear children's noises when he is dead. He will be consoled by the fact that Black children are going to school, as it was always his wish to see more educated Black people.

Ntuli argues that a translation may be better or poorer than the original poem depending on the words the translator chooses. In this case Msimang believe that Vilakazi's ended up with a good poem because he did not simply translate Dunbar's poem word for word.

### 2.1.5 TRANSLATIONS

A translation is an adaptation of some kind as Ntuli clarifies:

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

(1984:43)

Vilakazi translated Joseph Cotter's “And what shall you say” fully into Zulu and gave it the title: *‘Wena-ke uyothini?’* Let us look at these two poems:

#### *Cotter's poem:*

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

(1970:135)

**Vilakazi's poem:**

*“Woza-ke mnewethu,  
Masiye kuNkulunkulu wethu!  
Lapho sesiklele phambi kwakhe,  
Ngokhuluma ngithi:  
‘Nkosi kangizondi muntu’  
Kepha mina ngiyazondwa;  
Kangibhambi muntu ngemishiza’  
Nokho ngidunjelwa yimivimbo;  
Kangiqhwagi ndawo zamuntu’  
Okuncane kwami kuyaqhwagwa;  
Kangizibhinqi izizwe zabanye,  
Esami sibhinqwa yizo zonke’.  
Ngitshela mnewethu!  
Uyothini wena?”*

(Ink pg 93)

**(My translation of Vilakazi's poem)**

“Come, then my brother,  
Let us go to our God!  
When we stand before him  
I will speak and say:  
‘Lord, I hate nobody’  
But I am hated;  
I do not flog anybody with fighting sticks  
But weals are swelling on my body;  
I do not seize anybody’s place’  
A little that I have is seized,  
I do not mock anybody’s race  
Mine is mocked by all races’  
Tell me, my brother !  
What shall you say?”

Vilakazi does not do much about this poem except translating it into Zulu and breaking down the last line of Cotter's poem and made two lines of his own. It seems that Vilakazi held the idea that, a translation should not be just a copy of the original

work or be given the equivalent of English words in Zulu. But it should show the poet's talent of choosing words he is going to use without deviating much from the original work.

## **2.2 ROMANTIC POETS**

For a poet to be recognised as a Romantic Poet, he or she should first satisfy a certain criterion. Romantic Poets are usually familiarising themselves with what is happening around them. They seek the injustices of the world and identify them. They then look for a way to escape from that reality. For English Romantic Poets, observing nature; listening to music of the birds and worshipping art, is usually a common escape image. They usually use the senses of looking, touching, hearing, and smelling. This is their external stimulus.

After they have used their senses there is an Internal Reaction. They want to become part of Nature. They wish to forget about the injustices they have identified. They use images of escape from the real world for example they use a state of being drunk, dreaming, in a hypnotic trance, and drugged. They sometimes use death as an image of final escape.

According to Martin (1991) William Wordsworth seems to have influenced much of Vilakazi's way of writing. For the purposes of this discussion no direct comparison will be made of the works of the two poets. However, this discussion will focus in the way they wrote their poems and the images they used whilst writing. They are both good poets but their style is not the same as they come from different cultural backgrounds. The Prelude will be used to clarify most of Wordsworth's Romanticism. Vilakazi and Wordsworth seem to have had similar

experiences in life which may be the reason why their works are related in one way or another.

### **2.2.1 BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON WILLIAM WORDSWORTH**

According to Greenfield (nd) William Wordsworth was born in Cockermouth, Cumberland, into a comfortable middle class family planted in the Lake Country. His father John Wordsworth, was a legal agent to wealthy landowners. Although he was often away from home on business, John took time when at home to introduce his children to English Poetry and encouraged William to memorise long passages from the works of William Shakespeare, John Milton and other poets of the time, a skill that he would treasure both as an illusive poet and as one who composed his past experiences.

In 1778 Ann Wordsworth (his mother) died suddenly, and then, over Christmas holiday of 1783-1784 John followed. In an early version of the Prelude (written in 1798-1799), Wordsworth interprets the effect of his father's death to his young consciousness:

“ . . . The event  
With all sorrow which it brought appeared  
A chastisement, and when I called to mind  
That day so lately passed when from the crag  
I looked in such anxiety of hope,  
With trite reflections of morality  
Yet with deepest passion I bowed low  
To God who thus corrected my desires.”

John Wordsworth's death had material as well as spiritual consequences for William. The children dispersed as they were having financial problems.

Escaping from the discomforts of Allan Bank, the Wordsworths moved to the Grasmere Vicarage in June 1811. Wordsworth's four-year old daughter Catharine died in June 1812 after a series of illnesses, and then six-year old Thomas died in December, following complications from measles. Wordsworth was a most loving and devoted father and both he and Mary (his wife) went through long periods of mourning. Wordsworth expressed his loss of Catharine and her continuing presence in his mind in a sonnet published in 1815 :

“Surprised by joy - impatient as the Wind  
I turned to share the transport- Oh! With whom  
But Thee, deep buried in the silent tomb,  
That spot which no vicissitude can find.”

(Greenfield pp307- 332)

Wordsworth very much believed in solitary worship of Nature and its potential blessing to mankind. He thought that his imaginative powers come from Nature, which made him grasp his real self and become a more matured poet.

“ . . . day by day  
Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell  
How Nature, intervenient till this time,  
And secondary, now at length was sought  
For her own sake”

(The prelude lns 203 -8)

Nature seem to lead Wordsworth to a deeper love of humanity. He introduces the visionary contact with the natural world which makes one (especially a child) accumulate a store of experiences which, though not recollected precisely, can nevertheless be a constant inspiration to the adult. He even makes a picture of real, vital children at the school.

“A race of real children, not too wise,

Too learned, or too good ; but wanto fresh,  
And bandied up and down by love and hate;  
Fierce, moody, patient, venturous, modest, shy;  
Mad at their sports like withered leaves in winds;  
Though doing wrong, and suffering, and full oft  
Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight  
Of pain and fear; yet still in happiness  
Not yielding to the happiest upon earth”

“The Prelude” lns 436-44

Alexander makes a comment on these children:

“For these children, free reading and natural vision will result in Knowledge not purchased with the loss of power” (449), resembling that combination of truth and beauty which Keats was to seek, abstract knowledge and its concrete and effective moving embodiments in words. . . The belief that romantic reading can inoculate a child against common fear in the face of such an incident may be questioned, but this is the poet’s interpretation in 1804 of his experience and may be more widely valid than might at first appear.”

( 1987: 72 - 73 )

Wordsworth deeply believes in the power of imagination. When he is having problems with writing, the imagination does its work and makes clear the deep significance of the incident, and the lesson it holds for him and for humanity. He says in the Prelude:

“Imagination! Lifting up itself  
Before the eye and progress of my Song  
Like an unfathered vapour; here that Power,  
In all the might of its endowments, came  
Athwart me; I was lost as in a cloud,  
Halted, without a struggle to break through.  
And now recovering, to my Soul I say  
‘I recognise thy glory’ ”

“The Prelude” lns 525-32

The information above shows that Wordsworth like Vilakazi worships nature and uses his imagination to compose poetry.

### **2.2.2 WORDSWORTH'S 'LINES COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY'**

In this poem Wordsworth is visiting or passing by Tintern Abbey, it has been five years since he set foot there but the place is still the same to him. He can still see and hear what he saw and heard the last time he was there.

“Five years have past; five summers, with the length  
Of five long winters! And again I hear  
These waters, rolling from their mountain -springs  
With a soft inland murmur- Once again  
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,...”  
(Ln 1-5)

Wordsworth praises and admires the beauty of this place. He appreciates these ‘pastoral farms green to the very door’ (16 -17). It seems to me that Wordsworth admits that it is through his long absence from this place that makes him see it as even more beautiful.

“ These beauteous forms  
Through a long absence, have not been to me  
As is a landscape to a blind man’s eye:  
But oft, in lonely rooms, and ‘mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
And passing into my poorer mind,  
With tranquil restoration:”  
(Ln 23-31)

By seeing this landscape he forgets about the ‘heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world’ (40-41). Wordsworth feels as if he is day dreaming or

hypnotised while looking at this wonderful art of Nature:

“ . . . that serene and blessed mood  
In which the affection gently lead us on -  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things.”

(Ln 43-50)

The poet feels the presence of Nature and he is disturbed (like a person under hypnosis) by it. The experience is felt, we are made to imagine, as a stimulating and harmonising influence which seems to rise through the whole of one's being.

Hartman makes more clear that:

“ Wordsworth, though sensing his mortality - that nature can no longer renew his genial spirits - continues to go out of himself and towards nature. His sight gradually expands into communion. A sentence from ‘Tintern Abbey’ may start with the first person yet end “on all things”, and that which has moved the poet sometimes, somewhere, as a personal feeling, becomes a principle animating the world.”

(1964:27)

The individual mind, its shadowy self-exploration, is always felt in ‘Tintern Abbey’. Wordsworth journeys, by a typical descent, into landscape and mental landscape, to find at mutual depth an image of the “sole self”.

Vilakazi is highly influenced by Wordsworth's poems and he (Wordsworth) was confident that his poems were of great standard and that they would influence people in the years to come if they are influenced by Genius and nature as he

believed they were, that is why he sarcastically remarked:

“I attach no interest to my poems in their connection with the world further than as I think they are fitted to communicate knowledge; to awaken kindly or noble dispositions or to strengthen the intellectual powers; in a word to promote just thinking and salutary feelings . . . If my poems are inspired by Genius and Nature they will live, if not, they will be forgotten and the sooner the better.”

(1987:141)

Vilakazi was influenced by Wordsworth’s ‘Tintern Abbey’ in writing ‘*KwaDedangendlale*’ (In the Valley of a Thousand Hills). They are both nostalgic poems and they both refer to the places that the two poets value very much. Both poets seem to remember these places and a certain time has passed since they had been to these places.

### **2.2.3 KWADEDANGENDLALE - IN THE VALLEY OF A THOUSAND HILLS**

This poem indicates that Vilakazi was homesick while living in Johannesburg. He started comparing his new life with the one he led while he was in his birth place, KwaDedangendlale.

*“ Ngikhumbule kude ekhaya  
Laph’ ilanga liphumela  
Phezu kwezintaba ezinde”*

(Amal' pg 23)

“I remember far away , at home  
Where the sun appears  
Over the tall mountains.”

This is a nostalgic poem in which Vilakazi is daydreaming of sitting on top of eMkhambathini (The Natal Table Mountain).

*“Nami ngimile phezulu.  
Ngigoshem’ eMkhambathini  
Ngabuka phansi ezansi,”*  
(Amal’ pg 25)

“I also am standing on top  
I am squatting on the Natal Table Mountain  
I am looking down below.”

Like Wordsworth, Vilakazi is referring to the aspects of the landscape. These aspects will be identified and defined. Vilakazi is giving a very detailed map of the landscape; he is not physically in KwaDedangendlale but he can let his mind go there (Imagination) and be able to feel everything associated with this place. He is also using the names of the people known in Zulu history to show that this place has very important ancestral spirits. Each and every place named and people mentioned has a certain value and great importance to Vilakazi.

Vilakazi is very happy that he was born in a place of such beauty, that he even coins some words to describe it: *KwaBuhlebungayindawo*- At the place of everlasting beauty, *KwaMfulisagcwelamanzi* - At the place where Rivers are always full of water and *KwaTshanibuseluhlaza* - At the place of Grass-Eternally -Green. He **also** wants his readers to be grateful too to their ancestors because they are fortunate that they were born in Zululand (in stanza 10):

*“ Uyohlala phans’ ubonge  
Amathong’ oyihlomkhulu  
Akuzalela kwaZulu”*

(Amal’ pg 27)

“You will sit down and give thanks  
To the spirit of your grandfathers  
Who gave birth to you in Zululand

Vilakazi is describing the landscape at KwaDedangendlale, saying how this place look like, *Sisingethwe yizintaba* (Amal' pg 24) (We are surrounded by the mountains); *Ezinawa namatshe* (Amal' pg 24) (Which has cliffs and stones)(stanza 2) . Vilakazi feels that when he is at KwaDedangendlale he is free to do whatever he wants to do: *Lapho sigingqika khona* (Amal' pg 24) (the place where we roll down), *Sithuba njengemimoya* (Amal' pg 24) (Singing like wind)(stanza 3).

Nature is also always in favour of this place because *Imikhambathi yakhona nasebusika iyathela* (Amal' pg 27) (The acacia trees of this place are productive even in winter) (stanza 11). This place is also not noisy but it has ‘a holy peace’ (*Nokuthul’ okucwebile*) (Amal' pg 24) (stanza 1). Because of the nature that is always good, in this place there is an abundance of wealth (in Zulu perspective of course) *Ngabon’ amasim’ amnyama* (Amal' pg 25)(I saw black fields). The blackness of these fields means that the harvest is going to be good as black in this case means ‘dark green’. *Ngibon’ imihlambi emihle yezimbuzi neyezimvu* (Amal' pg 26) (I see beautiful herds of goats and sheep). It should also be noted that in Zulu society the standard of wealth is measured by the herds one has.

Vilakazi believes that this area contains the spirit of his ancestors which make a strong bond between himself and the place even though he is far away in Johannesburg. Through his ancestors he is able to achieve poetic inspiration.

“*Ngabuza ngingenalwazi  
Bangihlebel’ endlebeni  
Bangikhombisa . . .*”

(Amal' pg 25)

“I asked in my ignorance  
They whispered in my ear  
And they showed me . . .”

Whilst in KwaDedangendlale, Vilakazi sees the way in which people dress (which is totally different to the way in which people in Johannesburg dress), . . . *Nezihlangu zezinsizwa* (Amal' pg26) (And the fighting shields of young men).

Vilakazi's intention of going to KwaDedangendlale is to get poetic inspiration from his ancestors. By imagining himself in this place he is able to feel the presence of his ancestors, and he can ask them to give him the power of preserving Zulu cultural heritage. In this connection Nyembezi remarks:

“Vilakazi was gravely concerned that the Zulu heritage would be lost to the younger generations. He refers over and over to the need for preserving those things which are sacred and precious.”

(1961: 70)

The poet views kwaDedangendlale as a paradise where everything is perfect.

Ntuli holds this view:

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

(1984: 85)

Stanza 10:

*“Ngiph' indaw' enjenga lena  
Wena Thongo likababa,  
Lapho ngiyoba namandla,*

*Ngqiqoq' umqondo kaZulu,  
Ngiwuvalel' embizeni.  
Ngihay' amahub' enkondlo."*

(Amal' pg 29)

"Give me a place like this  
You, O spirit of my father,  
Where I will have power  
And gather up the collective thought of the Zulu people  
And put it in a big beerpot  
And sing the songs of poetry"

Vilakazi is giving a map of his landscape;

*"Ngqiqoshem' eMkhambathini*

*. . .  
Bangikhombisa kusuka  
Phezulu koMgundlovana  
Kudwebe kushon' eMhlali  
Nangenhla kwaseMgundlovu"*

(Amal' pg 25)

"I am squatting at the Natal Table Mountain

*. . .  
They showed me from  
Above Greytown  
And cross over to Mhlali  
And above Pietermaritzburg."*

Like Wordsworth, he is using the place he knows very well, the place of his birth where he spent his early childhood years. While in this place he feels like someone who is drunk (stanza 13):

*"Ngidakwa yilezintaba  
Ngilahleka ngingatholwa"*

(Amal' pg 27)

"I am made drunk by these mountains

I am lost and unable to be found”

The poet finds himself daydreaming about things that are not where he is, he is seeing baboons which are not there; he is in the room but his mind is going wild to the forests where he sees baboons, in stanza 14:

*“Ngidakwe ngaphuphutheka  
Ngaze ngaficwa yinkungu  
Ngiphakathi namahlathi  
Ngahlangana nezimfene”*

(Amal’ pg 28)

“ I have been drunk and went with no direction  
Until I was overcome by mist  
In the midst of the forests  
I met up with the baboons”

Vilakazi imagines himself being in the Valley of a Thousand Hills, it is as if he is there to recollect the memories of the past. He is using his imagination to see the things that are very precious to Zulu people but which are not valued where he is (in Johannesburg). He is even jealous of those people who are experiencing such life and near such beauty (stanza 7):

*“Ngabona nokushelana  
Kwezintombi nezinsizwa  
Ngabon’ amasok’ enqoba  
Ziwakhunga ngobuhlalu.  
Ngema ngafikelwa wumona,”*

(Amal’ pg 26)

“ I saw the courting  
Between maidens and young men  
And I saw young men’s victory  
The maidens giving them beads  
I stood there with jealousy”

Vilakazi is convinced that the place of his birth is beautiful and uniquely different

from other places where one can say whether its winter or summer but at KwaDedangendlale it is as if it is always in summer. He even tries to give proof for people with pessimistic minds ( stanza 9):

*“Uyovakashela khona  
Uzibone lezi zinto  
Ziyokuvula inhliziyo”*  
(Amal’ pg 27)

“You will visit this place  
And see these things  
They will open your heart”

### **2.3 VILAKAZI’S “NGOMZ’OMDALADALA KAGROUT” ( ABOUT GROUT’S OLD VILLAGE)**

According to Kunene, ‘*Ngomz’omdaladala kaGrout*’ (About Grout’s old Village) was influenced by a poem by Oliver Goldsmith’s entitled ‘The Deserted Village’. But Ntuli sees the two poems differently:

“Goldsmith’s poem was inspired by the nostalgia and despondency which he felt at the ruins of Auburn, the village of his birth. On the other hand Vilakazi has some pride when he looks at Groutville, the place of his birth. His pride emanates chiefly from the fact that Groutville is situated near where Shaka lived. A large portion of the poem deals with Shaka’s historic deeds. Again each poem has its own merits.”  
( 1984: 46)

This poem was influenced by nostalgia, as Vilakazi is talking about the things that were of importance to him as he grew up like swimming pools (in stanza 3:

*“Azisekh’ iziziba zakho Mvoti,  
Amaqhikiza nezintombi zakho  
Ezazibhidla nje zishay’ intshiki kuzo  
Alisekh’ itsh’ elikhulu lokugxuma . .”*

(Ink pg 52)

“Your swimming pools are no more, Mvoti  
Your old and young maidens  
Were diving in them  
The big rock of jumping is no longer there”

As the story about Shaka dominates the poem, this expresses the poet’s nostalgia for the unimpeded splendour which the Zulus have lost for good.

Ntuli holds a different view:

“We expect the poem to concentrate on Groutville. But from the end of the third stanza the poet branches off and starts addressing Shaka. Shaka begins to dominate the scene as long references are made to his deeds and death. The poet’s attention now drifts between his address to Groutville and recounting the historic events connected with Shaka. About half of the poem deals with Shaka and this destroys the balance between the main subject, the village, and the minor one of Shaka which should have been mentioned in passing.”

(1984:70)

## 2.4 KEATS’S ‘ODE ON A GRECIAN URN’

It may be possible that Vilakazi read Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn”, and this gave him an idea to write his ‘*Ukhamba lukaSonkomose*’ (Sonkomose’s beerpot). But the two poems do not at all deal with the same things. Keats is obviously concerned with the nature of art. Marquard remarks :

“...presumably poetry in particular, and the urn is an image or symbol of it. The full significance of this is realised only in the last stanza. . . . The urn is unravished both in its artistic integrity, and in holding that final meaning which, like the ‘eternity’ of the last stanza, lies beyond thought alone. The perfection of its form carries an immediacy of meaning that makes Keats say that it can:

. . .thus express  
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme,”  
(1954:101)

Keats's sees his urn as a beautiful art of nature through which he sees the truth about things. He wants his readers to believe the beauty they see to be true:

““Beauty is truth, truth beauty” - that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know”  
(Ln 49-50)

Vendler commented on these last lines:

“But the whole last sentence of the poem is the sentence of the speaker who, in his prophecy, recounts what the urn will say to succeeding generations.”  
(1983:134)

As all other Romantic Poets, Keats worships nature. Although the urn is an artificial object it is beautiful and divine. Vendler (1983) believes that the divinity physically worshipped in this ode is the art object, the urn. The divinities conceptually celebrated are the two sets of divinities of Beauty and Truth, Sensation and Thought. The divinity imaginatively celebrated is that greeting of the spirit that takes place between the audience and the art object.

## **2.5 UKHAMBAMBA LUKASONKOMOSE - SONKOMOSE'S BEERPOT**

In '*Ukhambamba lukaSonkomose*' the poet is talking to his grandfather whom he does not know personally, as he has only heard of him through his father. Unlike Keats's urn, this poem is not at all about the beauty or the appearance of the beerpot. But

looking at this beerpot reminds the poet of his ancestors. The beerpot and the beer inside it act as the binding bond between the poet and his ancestors.

By the end of the poem the poet says (stanza 6):

*“Yeka lawo manz’ ampofo,  
Qwabe wen’ obuwakhonza  
Enjengompe lwezinyosi!”*

(Ink pg 11)

“O that tawny water  
Which you, Qwabe liked very much  
Which tasted like honey of the bees”

The poet is not happy about the fact that old meaningful practices which used to bring people together are no longer there. In olden days people would just drink from the same beerpot using their mouths (with no cups), and the beerpot would just circulate among all the people. Vilakazi’s beerpot has a sentimental value for him, he admires it, not because it is part of nature but because he sees it as a symbol of the union that exists between him and his ancestors. Ntuli witnesses this:

“. . . according to traditional Zulu religion people used to sacrifice to the spirits by putting beer in a pot for them in order to come and drink overnight. This was done as a token of gratitude for prosperity, or as an offering to accompany a request for blessings to the family.”

(1984:130)

## **2.6 INFLUENCE FROM SHELLEY’S ‘ODE TO A SKYLARK’**

In his poem *‘Inqomfi’* (The Lark), Vilakazi was influenced by Shelley’s “Ode to a Skylark”. Although the two birds are not the same they have one thing in common, they can sing. Vilakazi and Shelley do share the same ideas:

“Thou lovest - but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.”  
(Ln 80)

Vilakazi put the same idea as (in stanza 16):

*“Unothando kodwa alukagazingwa lusizi”*  
(Ink pg 17)

“You have love but it has not been singed by sorrow”

Shelley sees his bird as a fountain:

“What objects are the fountain  
Of thy happy strain?”  
(Ln 71-2)

Vilakazi uses the same idea in his poem (in stanza 15):

*“Lesi siphethu siqhunyiswa yin' ingom' emnandi?”*  
(Ink pg 17)

“Does this fountain produce a pleasant song?”

Shelley likens his bird to a girl that resorts to music in order to forget the feeling of loneliness:

“Like a high-born maiden  
In a palace tower,  
Soothing her love laden  
Soul in secret hour  
With music sweet as love, which overflows the bower.”  
(Ln 41-5)

Vilakazi's girl on the other hand can only groan because of loneliness (in stanza 14):

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

( Ink pg 17)

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

## 2.7 INFLUENCE FROM KEATS'S ‘ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE’

Keats's nightingale is also a musical bird. The two poets (Keats and Vilakazi) sometimes feel that they want to go to these birds (Nightingale and Inqomfi respectively) seeing that they cannot, they tell this bird to go away:

“Away! Away! For I will fly to thee . . .”

(Keats ln 31)

Keats considers the bird to be better than him because it can conquer the difficulties before it. But he is telling it to go away because he is afraid that the bird might influence him and he might want to follow it.

Vilakazi put the same idea as (in stanza 7) :

*“Suk’ uphele phambi kwami  
Funa ngimpampe nami nawe . . .”*

(Ink pg 15)

“Go, completely away from me  
Lest I fly with you . . .”

Vilakazi also feels that the bird is free to do whatever it likes to do and at anytime  
(in stanza 16) :

*“Kuwen’ imini nobusuku bufana nentwana”*

( Ink pg 18)

“To you, the day and night are the same”

Vilakazi wants the knowledge that the bird has so that he might be happy as the bird  
is (in stanza 11 & 12) :

*“Nami ngifundise leyo  
Nhlokomo yokuy’ ekhaya,  
Ngazi nami wen’ okwaziyo,  
Ngingaphez’ ukuba umhlokomi.  
Njengoba ngibek’ indlebe nawo wonk’ umhlaba,  
Nolwandl’ olugubhayo, namaza, naw’ umoya  
Sekuthe khemelele nakho kubek’ indlebe,”*

( Ink pg 16)

“ Teach me that  
Shout of joy of going home  
To know what you know  
And do not stop shouting with joy  
As I am listening and the whole world  
And the moving ocean, the mist and the wind  
Are standing by, they are all listening.”

This idea of wanting to be taught by a bird appears like this in Shelley:

“Teach me half the gladness

That thy brain must know  
Such harmonious madness  
From my lips would flow,  
The world should listen as I am listening now.”  
(Ln 101-105)

Keats’s poetry played a very important role in Vilakazi’s style of writing, in the poem (The Lark) ‘*Inqomfi*’ we find lines echoing those Keats used in his ode on a Grecian urn:

“ Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter . . .”  
(Ln 11)

Vilakazi used these lines in his poem about ‘*Inqomfi*’ (in stanza1) :

“*E! Sesizwil’ imloz’ emnandi, phezu kwalokho  
Esingakayizwa injengompe luconsela  
Phezu kway’ indimi . . .*”  
(Ink pg 14)

“O! We have heard sweet whistles, but  
Those yet to be heard are like nectar dripping  
Onto the tongue . . .”

According to the Zulu culture and belief ‘*Inqomfi*’ is a bird that can predict an unusual occurrence or a coming disaster (*Inyoni eyihlabamhlola*). Neither a skylark nor a nightingale can be able to do this prophesy. Commenting on Vilakazi’s ‘*Inqomfi*’, Wainwright has this to say:

“Vilakazi has not simply translated either of these two poems but has added much from Zulu culture to enrich it . . . because something purely imitative is not of any real value. For imitation to succeed, it must be one

that is transformed into something typically Zulu and it must be seen against background of the Zulu culture”

(1977:38)

## 2.8 VILAKAZI'S “WE! MOYA” (OH! WIND)

Vilakazi in this poem refers to both the wind and the Holy Spirit. In the last stanza he is asking the Holy Spirit to give light to his heart, which cannot be done by a pure wind. A reader with religious inclinations can also associate stanza 7 with God and heaven when Vilakazi says:

*“Woza sizothele wena  
Ngokuzwa izinxanelo  
Ezivel’ ekhaya lelo  
Eliqeda ukwenqena”*

(Ink pg 13)

“Come so that we may feel your warmth  
By hearing the good news  
Coming from that home  
Which ends lazyness”

This poem might seem to have been influenced by Shelley’s ‘Ode to the West wind’, there are however no exact words that Vilakazi used from Shelley’s poem. Both poems are describing the wind that give them the smell of fresh vegetables and rain. Shelley in Rhys gives the circumstances under which he wrote his poem:

“This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno near Florence and on a day when that tempestuous wind whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains. They began as I foresaw, at sunset with a violent tempest of hail and rain attended by thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cisalpine regions . . . The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of the rivers and of the lakes, sympathises with that of the land in the change of season, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it.”

(1907:329)

Vilakazi in his poem says:

*'Uw' esizwa ngaw' iconsi . . .*  
(Ink pg 13)

“It is you who makes us feel a raindrop . . .”

Vilakazi expresses his feelings about the wind, he does not know where it comes from. He wants to be with the wind as a result he personifies it saying he wants to catch it:

*“ Ngiyalangazel' ithuba  
Lapho ngiyokubamba  
Ngifisa ukukuphamba  
Ngiqonde ukukukhuba”*  
(Ink pg 12)

“I long for a chance  
When I will catch you  
I wish to trick you  
I am aiming to trip you”

Kunene feels that these personifications that Vilakazi is making are ineffective since the wind is not a visible thing:

“Such personification sounds rather ridiculous because of its inconsistencies with the subject. It is unthinkable, for instance that the wind could be tripped even in its personified form.”  
(1962:210)

Both Shelley and Vilakazi however want to escape from their problems through or with the wind:

Shelley's lines read:

“Oh lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!  
I fall upon the thorns of life”  
(Ln 53-54)

Vilakazi says:

*‘Ngife kanye nawe kanye’*  
(Ink pg 13)

“So that I may die with you once and for all”

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I tried to identify the influence of English Romantic Poets in Vilakazi’s poetry. I mentioned and discussed the typical aspects of a Romantic Poet. The poems from Wordsworth, Keats and Shelly were discussed. Vilakazi seems to have read Wordsworth’s “Lines composed above Tintern Abbey” before writing his *‘KwaDedangendlale’* (In the Valley of a Thousand Hills) as these are both nostalgic poems. Vilakazi also used ideas from the Ode to a Skylark and the Ode to a Nightingale in writing his *‘Inqomfi’* (the Lark). In using the ideas from these poems Vilakazi did not in any way translate the poems, rather he used the ideas to create poems with typical Zulu culture, superstitions and beliefs.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3.1 VILAKAZI AS A ROMANTIC POET

Vilakazi sees himself as a mouthpiece of *amadlozi*, they give him information and he writes it down for the next generations, in the poem '*Ithongo lokwazi*' (The ancestor of wisdom):

*“Ngiphe ungcaphunele namuhla  
Kuleyo ndebe oyigcin’ ethala lobuzwe,  
. . .  
Ngibekel’ izimfaba nezinkedama zikaNdaba”*  
(Ink pg 39)

“Give me and scoop up for me today  
From that ladle you keep at the shelf of nationhood  
. . .  
I will keep it for the poor and orphans of Ndaba’s”

They even tell him that he was not born to sleep (*‘Ugqozi’* - Power of inspiration): '*Kawuzalelwanga ukulal’ ubuthongo*' (Amal' pg 2) (You were not born to lie in sleep). When writing the information given to him by *amadlozi*, he mixes it with Romantic images and ideas, which means he amalgamates the two. **Although he** uses Romantic images, Vilakazi always has a connection with *amadlozi*, a connection he gets through dreams. Vilakazi perceives dreams as a way of communication between him and his ancestors. He also believes in '*amadlozi*' (which is what people become after death) because they reveal themselves to him through dreams (*Sengiyakholwa* - Now I do believe):

*“Namuhla sengiyakholwa ukuthi sewafa  
Ngoba kwaButhongo ngiyakubona.”*  
(Amal' pg 68)

It is very important to know how *amadlozi* function before we go on discussing Vilakazi's poetry as he believes that his inspiration comes from them; we need to also see how the *isangoma* (diviner) functions and behaves, and how she is possessed by ancestral spirits in some of his poems.

*Amadlozi* have a duty to look after the living people of their families. People should thank *amadlozi* by slaughtering a cow or a goat in return. If there is a fight within the family, they (*amadlozi*) just stop looking after the family and let the bad things happen.

The incident in Kubheka's book (*Ulaka LwaBaNguni* -The Wrath of the Nguni people) supports the point of the anger of the *amadlozi* when one is disobedient. Here a young man named Mphakamiseni had forsaken his parents because they were illiterate. He was a well known doctor, so he could not associate himself with people of such a low life style. But when he got married he wanted to have children but he could not have them. He was supposed to go back to the home he had abandoned and ask for forgiveness from his late mother.

*“UMphakamiseni wazizwa efikelwa yisibindi wezwa ukuthi uzonqoba futhi. Wayesengene kwesinye isikole manje, isikole okungesona esencwadi. Yinye kuphela impi okwakufanele ayinqobe manje, yimpi yolaka lwaBaNguni, okwakuyimpi yolaka lukanina uBazothini. . . . umbhemu lona uma efuna ukushweleza nge`siZulu kumele makaphindele ezimpandeni zakhe angazami ukukha phezulu, kwakufanele aye ekhaya eMnambithi. Futhi ngoba wayeseke wakhuluma ngalolu daba kwakungasafanele achithe isikhathi, hleze izithutha zimthukethelele.”*

(1988:214)

“Mphakamiseni got courage and saw his victory. It was a war he had to conquer He entered a new school which was not about reading books. He had one last war to conquer, the war of the wrath of aBaNguni, which

was a war of the wrath of his mother Bazothini. . . . that if the young man wanted to apologise the Zulu way he had to go to his roots. He was supposed to go home at uMnambithi. Because he had already spoken about it, he had a duty to do it then, otherwise the ancestors would be angry at him.”

For different views on this issue I conducted interviews with different people. All the people I talked to believed in dreams and *amadlozi*. They defined *amadlozi* as people who once lived and then died; once they are dead they become go-betweens between God and men. Their families talk to them when they want things and *amadlozi* talk to God on their behalf. The interviewees defined *amathongo* as the ancestral spirit which usually guides people, e.g. in the case of *isangoma*. *Isangoma* is guided by a certain *ithongo* which tells her what to do. These people perceive dreams as a way through which dead people communicate with the living. They tell their families (the living) what they do and do not want through dreams.

In his poetry Vilakazi looks at himself and sees an *isangoma* who communicates with *amadlozi* through dreams. According to Berglund (1976) *idlozi* is the most common name for the shades<sup>3</sup>. He associates *idlozi* with *umlozi* (whistle) which is a spirit of a necromancer which makes itself audible by a whistling voice, said to be produced by ventriloquism, such as a necromancer supposedly possessed by a spirit. If a man dies and is buried, he goes under the earth. According to Berglund, the realm of the deceased is thought to be shadowy existence underneath the earth. Older people are sometimes referred to as *amadlozi* both in an honorary capacity and when referring to their advanced age. *Idlozi* may be associated with age since it is possible for an older person to act as an *idlozi* prior to death.

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<sup>3</sup>Berglund uses the term ‘shades’ when referring to *amadlozi*; he avoids the word ‘ancestors’ because he believes that they are not the same thing.

Berglund also makes a difference between *idlozi* and *ithongo* saying that although *ithongo* is usually used as a synonym of *idlozi*, *ithongo* is perceived by the Zulu society as a spirit of an ancestor. *Amathongo* are usually associated with *ubuthongo* (sleep) because they are believed to operate at night.

Dreams also are very important to the lifestyle of the Zulu people. Berglund points out that:

"The important role played by dreams in Zulu thought-patterns cannot be overstressed. Without dreams true and uninterrupted living is not possible. There is a cause for anxiety when people do not dream."

(1976:97)

Berglund also has a lot of information concerning the *isangoma*; where he deals with the issues including the call of an *isangoma* by the shade, accepting the call, the lengthy training that the novice (an *isangoma* who is still undergoing training) undergoes and the things that a novice is not supposed to do, and the types of food she is not supposed to eat.

According to Berglund an *isangoma* is the servant of the shades. Becoming a diviner is a call; nobody becomes a diviner through her own will, as Mnkabayi is calling Vilakazi in 'Ugqozi' (Power of Inspiration):

"Vuka wena kaMancinza  
Kawuzalelwanga ukulal' ubuthongo

. . .  
Nank' umthwal' engakwethwesa wona"

(Amal' pg 2)

"Wake up you son of Mancinza  
You were not born to lie in sleep

. . .

Her is the burden I put over you”

Dreams are a very important instrument through which the shades call the diviners. The dreams are often accompanied by visions which to the dreamer are both frightening and obscure. Besides dreams, the shades indicate their calling through frequent sneezing, yawning, belching and hiccups.

The way in which the shades operate or function is usually interrupted by the people who are sexually active so the novice (*ithwasa*) should avoid the food that resembles that act and Berglund supports this view by saying that women in training should avoid bananas because they are like men’s sexual organs, hence they are regarded as being strong like men. One of Berglund’s informants told him that bananas reminds her of men:

"I just become sick as soon as I eat this thing. It is the same sickness as when my husband has desired me. I am sick until the heat (ie semen) has left me. In the same way I am sick until I have got rid of this rubbish in my body"

(1976:158)

*Izangoma* and novice choose people who prepare their food, they do not eat hot food, as Berglund says:

"A novice does eat food prepared by unknown people or by such who live as husband and wife. . . . The food must be cool, giving coolness to the novice"

(1976:159)

An *isangoma* should be a clever person and should always be alert, so she must limit herself or himself in the types of food she eats. That is why a novice cannot eat pork because it causes fatness (an *isangoma* should not be too fat); they also cannot

eat sheep as it causes dumbness and they do not put much salt in their food as it causes haziness and it is very bad for dreams. Hutchings has this to say on dreams:

“Dreams have a long and wide association with medicine in many cultures, both as uncomfortable symptoms requiring treatment, and also because of their perceived significance and power”

(1994:348)

Vilakazi likens himself to an *isangoma*, he yawns, sniffs, belches like *isangoma* does. Vilakazi does all the things that *isangoma* does; his ancestors wake him up at night, in the poem ‘*Imifula Yomhlaba*’ (Rivers of the world):’

“*Lingibuyele futh’ iphupho,*  
*Langinyenyazel’ endlebeni,*  
*Langenyula phansi kwengubo”*  
(Amal’ pg 34)

“The dream came back to me  
It whispered in my ear  
It dragged me from under the blanket”

They ancestors talk to him and he talks to them, they give him the information to write down (as they show medicinal plants to *izangoma*), as Hutchings remarks:

“ . . . diviners’ students are required to learn to recognize medicinal plants through the medium of dreams, with daily sessions, conducted by the trainer in the field, on the habits, properties, uses and preparation of the plants concerned.”

(1994:351)

The ability to interpret dreams is considered an important attribute of the healers’ art, because as Buhrmann mentions, dreams have the following functions:

“1. To untreated, afflicted persons dreams serve as pointers to how they

the trainer in the field, on the habits, properties, uses and preparation of the plants concerned.”

(1994:351)

The ability to interpret dreams is considered an important attribute of the healers’ art, because as Buhrmann mentions, dreams have the following functions:

“1. To untreated, afflicted persons dreams serve as pointers to how they should seek assistance. 2. During *vumisa* (diagnosis by divination) they can have diagnostic significance. 3. During treatment they direct steps to be taken and correct timing. 4. They have a therapeutic value. 5. They have a prognostic value.”

(1984:50)

To both the *isangoma* and Vilakazi dreams are very important not only because they are a way and means of communication but also because through them (dreams), *amadlozi* are able to give them information, i.e. poetic inspiration for Vilakazi and medicinal plants to *izangoma*, e.g. in ‘*Ugqozi*’ (Power of Inspiration):

*“Ngalala ngaphupha ngeny’ imini*

*Ngathi ngiyakhuluma ngayisimungulu  
Kanti sengintshontsh’ amandl’ ezimbongi”*

(Amal’ pg 1)

“I slept and dream of one day

I tried to speak but I could not

It was then that I stole the power to recite poetry”

### 3.1.2 INJUSTICES AS DEPICTED IN VILAKAZI'S POETRY

As a Romantic Poet, Vilakazi identifies the injustices that surround him which is mainly the maltreatment and the oppression of black people by the whites.

Black people are oppressed in every sphere of life: in education, in business and in politics. Gerard has this to say on the issue of Vilakazi's involvement in the struggle:

“Although Vilakazi did not engage in politics; it is clear that his experience of township life in Johannesburg . . .prompted him towards his chosen medium (poetry)”

(1972:249)

On Vilakazi's involvement in the suffering (sympathy that he feels for black people can be seen in his poem '*Ezinkomponi*' (In the Mine compounds) and in '*Ngoba . . .Sewuthi*' - Because...Now you say ) of his people, Ntuli has this to say:

“We cannot doubt his concern about the humiliation and frustration of his people. Although he may not necessarily have experienced many hardships himself; Vilakazi identified himself with the less-privileged who could not voice their grievances.”

(1984:6)

Vilakazi decides to write about these things; like in '*Wo Ngitshele Mtanomlungu*' (Oh Tell me Whiteman's Child) where he writes about the prejudices laid upon a Blackman because of his skin colour and his inferior language (in stanza 3):

*“Isikhumba sami siyangiceba,  
Ulimi lwami lona luhle  
Nom' abanye bethi luyangehlisa.”*

(Amal' pg 9)

“My skin betrays me,  
My language is good  
Although some says it degrades me”

In the poem '*Aggrey we-Afrika*' (Aggrey of Africa) Vilakazi is protesting against

those people who are not proud of themselves and their black skin. In stanza 5:

*"Uzibinya ngombal' omnyama  
Lona mina nabazelwe nami  
Esilwa sifun' ukuwususa  
Ngokubhix' ibumba likamlungu"*  
(Ink pg 71)

"You were proud of the black colour  
Which, me and my contemporaries  
Are fighting to take it away  
By applying the Whiteman's clay (complexion cream)

Vilakazi honours Aggrey for his contribution in the empowerment of Black people, Aggrey did not want to progress alone but he was also very much concerned about the development of his fellow Black people. Because of his influences most of the people saw the need of studying. In stanza 2:

*"Wathi usuhambile . . .  
. . .  
Bonke basukuma phansi bema  
Baboph' imithwalo bayofunda"*  
(Ink pg 68)

By the time you were gone . . .  
. . .  
They all stood up  
With their luggages they took off to school"

Vilakazi further refers to Aggrey as a source of wisdom. In stanza 5:

*"Sizosukuma phansi sivume  
Ulithongo lokuhlakanipha"*  
(Ink pg 71)

"We are going to stand up and agree  
That you are an ancestral spirit of wisdom"

In his poem '*Ezinkomponi*' (In the Mine compounds), Vilakazi is complaining about the conditions that Black people work under (under White supervision). The poem begins with a frustrated miner who is being awoken by the mine machines. In stanza 1: '*Ngizovuka musani ukungibebesela*' (I am going to wake up stop, nagging me) (Amal' pg 60).

He is tired from the previous day's labour and he is expected to go to work and perform his duties. The machines here are viewed as objects which have been instructed by their owners to work continually to make sure that the miners do not get free time to sleep. The poet is asking the machines to give him a break. In stanza 19: '*Dumani kancane kengilal' ubuthongo*' (Amal' pg 66) (Roar softly so that I might get some sleep). Vilakazi wants to get some rest, he wants to sleep and wake up in the land of ancestral spirits (in fact he wants to die). He believes that if the machines can make a soft noise it will to him be like a lullaby which will cause him to fall asleep. He also seems like he will enjoy dying in his sleep. In stanza 19:

*"Dumani kancane kengilal' ubuthongo*  
.  
.  
.  
*Ngisho ubuthongo bokulala ngivuke kude*  
*Kude ezweni lamathongo"*  
(Amal' pg 66)

"Roar slowly so that I may sleep  
.  
.  
.  
I mean the Sleep of sleeping and waking up afar  
Very far in the land of the ancestral spirits"

Black men are treated like boys (in stanza 8): "*Buphelile ubunumzane singabafana*" (Amal' pg 62) "Our manhood has disappeared, we are boys"

The poet is complaining that the Blacks are poor, but even if they are capable of being richer, they don't many have rights (they are restricted even in the way they spend their money). Even if they would die under ground nobody would care.

Vilakazi also complains about many regulations that have been made for Black people, that they are not allowed to go around freely like Whites. In the poem 'Ngoba . . . Sewuthi' - (Because . . .you now say) the poet is complaining about the illtreatment by masters who do not respect their servants but instead call them names as if they are animals without feelings. The poem gives a list of things that a Black worker does to keep himself busy so that he may not feel the pain; in stanza 1: 'Ngihlabelela ngephimbo' (Amal' pg19)'I am singing with a voice'; In stanza 3:

*“Siyogadlela ngendlamu  
Singoma ngamadala”  
(Amal' pg 20)*

“We will be singing a lively dance  
Singing the old songs”

In the poem 'Khalani MaZulu' -(Weep you Zulus), the poet warns the Zulu people about the senseless fights they have which are benefitting the Whites. Nkosi acknowledges the contribution made by Vilakazi in voicing out the ill treatment of his people and he remarks:

“Vilakazi took up the cause of industrialisation and urbanisation of Black Workers in his protest poems in verse which showed in its content if not in its style a major break with the previous African verse in which the element of 'protest' had been carefully muted”  
(1981:112)

In his poem '*Inyanga*' (The Moon) Vilakazi recalls how the moon brought joy to his forefathers and to himself in the past and how the things have changed since then.

He is now living in the city and he cannot enjoy the beauty of the moon because of the long and wide buildings. In this poem Vilakazi compares the moon and a herbalist (someone connected to the ancestors), the moon brings light and life by shining over people and the herbalist brings life by healing the sick.

Commenting on the first stanza:

*" . . . Ngithi ma nami ngithi  
Ngidonswa okudonsa  
Umunt' ophila enozwelo lwemvelo  
Ngithuke ngikhalelwa zinsimbi"*  
(Amal' pg 15)

" . . . When I also try  
To go out, I am attracted by what pulls  
A living person who has natural emotions  
I get arrested "

Ntuli says:

"In this stanza the poet's protest stems from his observation that Black lovers are arrested for their natural response to the beauty of the moon. He feels that these regulations are biased because Whites are exempted from such restrictions. What puzzles the poet further is that this discrimination is practised at the very place where his people once lived a normal life without fetters before the Whiteman came."

(1984: 136)

Vilakazi as a Romantic Poet uses images of escape from the injustices of the real world. He uses the image of drunkenness; drugs; he sleeps and dreams which is when his ancestors come and talk to him. He often makes appeals to the spirit in search of inspiration. He uses his imagination in writing his poetry. His ancestors

give him the words to write down, sometimes he asks them to give him things they see so that he can write down for the coming generation (*'Wo! Leli khehla'* -Oh this old man), stanza 5: *Chathazela min' engizobhala phansi'* (Amal' pg 12)'(Pour a little for me because I am going to write down). He acts like a mediator between his ancestors and his readers. He is like an *isangoma* which is called by the ancestors to be their mouthpiece. In order to forget about the injustices he has identified, a Romantic poet uses many images like nature and nostalgia which is usually connected with the poet in a certain but intimate way.

### **3.2 ROMANTIC THEMES IN VILAKAZI'S POETRY**

#### **3.2.1 NOSTALGIA**

According to the New Oxford Dictionary (1998) nostalgia is: a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past, typically for a period or place with happy personal associations. The aspect of nostalgia is commonly used by Romantic poets. This aspect also influenced Vilakazi in writing his poems as he was concerned with preserving things for generations to come.

##### **(a) *Ukuhlwa* (Dusk)**

This is a nostalgic poem in which Vilakazi shows how he misses his birth place, KwaDedangendlale, and how he resents the way in which things are done where he now lives. In this poem Vilakazi is using the word dusk as a metaphor whilst referring to the unpleasant life he sees in this area (Johannesburg). He associates dusk with criminals (Stanza 3):

*"Ngiyesab' izinswelaboya  
Sezalukil' ukuzingela"*  
(Amal' pg 13)

“I am afraid of criminals  
They are out on their way to hunt”

Considering the circumstances under which Vilakazi was writing and the way in which he perceived the whole idea of urban life, it is not surprising to find him using an image of *amalulwane* (bats) (stanza 2). By this he is referring to people who do not know where they belong, they have adopted Western culture yet they are black, they are not different to bats who are mice with wings.

Vilakazi seems to be very worried because he cannot see natural things like *utshani* (grass), this environment is not hygienic to him as it is full of dust (and dust is not good for one’s lungs and chest) (stanza 4)

*‘Lapha kakukho utshani  
Kukhon’ uthuli lwezindunduma  
Olushuquka luya phezulu’*  
(Amal’ pg 13)

“Here there is no grass  
There are heaps of dust  
Which takes off and goes up”

In this place there are no rivers *‘Lapha kakukho mfula’* which means he cannot see his image as he does when he is at KwaDedangendlale (stanza 9):

*“Kanjali isithunzi sami  
Naso savela phakathi  
Ngazibuka nganeliswa”*  
(Amal’ pg 26)

“And my reflection  
Appeared inside  
I saw myself and I was satisfied”

Where he is now he does not have this satisfaction because this place is not quiet, *as* the one in ‘*KwaDedangendlale*’ which has ‘*ukuthula okucwebile*’ (holy peace) (stanza 1) but he describes this new place as: “*Kuphela kuyaphethuzela*” (People are only moving in swarms).

**(b) *Ngizw’ ingoma* - I hear a song**

In this poem Vilakazi emphasises all the things of the past which are now forgotten. He admits that he has been ignoring this song (sung by the Venda people) because he could not hear what the words were, but all that has changed now, he loves and adores this music (in stanza 1):

*“Ingoma yenu ngiqale ngayizwa,  
Ngayizwa ngayeya ngokungazi  
Namuhla sengiyayiqonda ngiyayithobela.”*  
(Ink pg 38)

“I first heard your song  
I heard it, take no notice of it, because of my ignorance  
Today I understand and adore it.”

At first he did not understand this song, by listening to it carefully he realised that the way in which these people are singing is similar to the Zulu one because they adopted it from the Zulu people (may be before the Mfecane) ‘*Enilutape kwaZulu neduka nomhlaba*’ (Which you took in abundance from Zululand and you got lost in the world). Although the Venda people have made this adaptation their own and they are also singing it in their own language, Vilakazi can see that this is what his ancestors used to sing, ‘*Kwakuhaywa ngokoko bawokoko*’ (It was sung by my great-great grandparents -ancestors of my ancestors-)

Listening to this song raises nostalgic feelings within him and he feels sad because there is nothing he can do to stop good things from disappearing even if he wants to, (stanza 1):

*“Ningikhumbuz’ okungasekho  
Nengingenamandl’ okukubamba  
Noma sengikhal’ ezimaconsi.”*  
(Amal’ pg 38-9)

“ You remind me of what is no more  
Which I have no power to hold  
No matter how hard I cry.”

Vilakazi is now very much interested in this song simply because it reminds him of the things that his ancestors used to do. It reminds him of the way which life used to be like: the way of living in big homesteads, how his ancestors used to socialise ‘*Bebhem’ izinyathi*’ (Sniffing snuff), it should be remembered that the act of sniffing snuff was a sign of unity and oneness as people were always sharing. The association that Vilakazi makes between the song sung by the Venda people and his ancestors’ way of life is the one which gives him inspiration: ‘*Ningisus’ usinga*’ (You arouse my inspiration).

**(c) *Wo! Leli khehla* - Oh! this old man**

The poet gives a picture of an old man, who does not know where he belongs: he has lost the important aspect of culture (*iziqhaza* - ear-plugs), at the same time the holes in his ears shows everybody that he once was a true Zulu. The ear plugs symbolised the culture of the Zulu people. The hole in his ear shows that there is something missing in his ears that was once there and he also does not know where he lost it (ear-lobe) (in stanza 2):

*“Namhl’ iziqhaza zokuhloba  
Uzikiphile wazilahla phansi;  
Awazi nalapho zasala khona  
Namanxiwa lapho zawa khona.”*  
(Amal’ pg 12)

“Today the decorative ear -plugs  
You have removed and thrown them down  
You don’t even know where you left them  
Or the deserted homesteads where they fell.”

For Ntuli the old man’s grey hair in Vilakazi’s poem is:

“. . .symbolic of his profound wisdom and knowledge of the past.  
His knowledge is further represented with an appropriate image of a pool  
whose depth is unfathomable.”  
(1984: 129)

Stanza 1:

*“Linenzulu lelokhanda lakho!  
Ngibe ngiyafak’ ubhoko ngizwa  
Ukujula kwalo, ngingagquli phansi”*  
(Amal’pg 11)

“ There is depth in that head of yours  
When I put the staff in it, I feel  
Its depth and do not touch the bottom.”

Its typical of Vilakazi to ask for poetic inspiration, and in this poem also he is asking this old man to give to him this deep knowledge he has, so that he may write it down for the generations to come (in stanza 5):

*“Chathazela min’ engizobhala phansi  
Okuzwayo . . .”*  
(Amal’ pg 12)

“Pour out a little for me who will write down  
What you hear . . .”

Vilakazi’s nostalgia is a concern about things that are about to disappear; he counteracts that by talking to his ancestors and uses that opportunity and ask for the power to write down for the generations to come from his ancestors.

**(d) *Izinsimbi zesonto* - The Church bells**

In this poem also, Vilakazi is expressing his nostalgic feelings about the things that were once of a value to him but suddenly they are not (anymore). The conflict in the poet’s mind can be seen through this poem. He sees the bells of the church as a call to Western civilisation; and Ntuli comments:

“The chiming of the bells is symbolic of a call to accept Western civilisation. The poet looks at modern life and remembers how this new civilisation has forced him to change to new things and abandon what he values.”

(1984: 131)

In stanza 4:

“*Ndabazemkhonto ngikushiyile’  
Gudulokubhenywa ngakulahla*”

(Amal’ pg 22)

“I have abandoned the matters of spear  
I have thrown away my smoking horn”

Because of this civilization the poet has changed even the way he dresses. He can no longer dress as his ancestors used to, he now wears the uncomfortable trousers brought by this civilization (in stanza 4):

*“Leza kimi izwi lenu zinsimbi,  
Langigumulis’ umutsh’ omkhulu  
Langinik’ indlu yemlenz’ emibili  
Langibhec’ emhlane ngamalokwe”*  
(Amal’ pg 22)

“Your voice came to me bells  
And took my traditional loin-skins  
It gave me a house of two legs  
It put dresses on my back.”

The poet admits that there is nothing he can do about the situation since his nation was defeated (in stanza 6):

*“Kuhle ngihlale phansi ngibuke  
Mlungu, wahlule wachith’ uZulu!”*  
(Amal’ pg 22)

“Its better if I sit down and observe  
Whiteman you have conquered and dispersed the Zulus”

In the last stanza of the poem ‘*Inyanga*’ (The Moon) he expresses nostalgic feelings about his birthplace where everyone is free to enjoy the goodness of nature (looking at forests, listening to the murmuring sea) but he can not do this in the city:

*“Ngikhumbul’ ekhaya ngibon’ amahlathi  
Ngibon’ izigodi ezimbiwa yimichachazo  
Ngizwe ukuduma koLwandle  
Ngibon’ ucansi lwamasimu akamoba  
Engiwakhumbula maqede ngibheke  
Phezulu . . .”*  
(Amal’ pg 15)

“I remember at home, I see forests  
I see holes dug by streams  
I hear murmuring of the sea  
I see large fields of sugar cane

That I remember and look  
Up . . .”

In stanza 10 of the poem *'Imifula Yomhlaba'* (The Rivers of the world), Vilakazi is worried about the homesteads which used to be so beautiful but now there is no one living there and nobody to plant the fields. The only thing that makes him happy is that the rivers still go their usual way:

*“Yonke le miful’ iyanyeleda,  
Idlul’ amanxiw’ amadala.  
Nezife namasim’ ommbila  
Asaz’ aphen duk’ amafusi”*  
(Amal’ pg 34)

“All these rivers go slowly  
Passing old deserted homesteads  
And fields of mealies  
Which are no longer ploughed”

The flow of water in these rivers reminded him of the beauty of the place of his birth, in stanza 21:

*“Engiyibuke kwehl’ amanzi  
Ngawaphatha kant’ unyembezi.  
Ngakhumbula kude kwaZulu”*  
(Amal’ pg 39)

“That I looked at and water went down  
I touched them (eyes) and there were tears  
I remembered far away at kwaZulu”

### 3.3 Images of nature

#### *UMamina* (Mamina)

There are two reasons why Vilakazi use nature imagery. Firstly, he uses them

because the English Romantic Poets used it as their 'vehicles' for their messages. The Romantic poets have always been celebrated for their love of nature. Wordsworth (Lines compose a few miles above Tintern Abbey) in particular believes that:

"In nature and the language of the sense  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being."

(ln 107-11)

Byron (in Watson: 1985) even suggested that there is nothing he hates in nature as he sometimes become part of it:

"I live not in myself, but I become  
Portion of that around me; and to me  
High mountains are a feeling, but the hum  
Of human cities torture: I can see  
Nothing to loathe in nature, save to be  
A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,  
Class'd among creatures, when the soul can flee,  
And with the sky, the peak, the heaving plain  
Of ocean, or the stars, mingle, and not in vain."

(III stanza 72)

Watson feels that such delight in nature is not new. He feels that this ideology is dominant in Milton's poetry as he (Watson 1985:44 ) remarks:

"Milton's description of the Garden of Eden in *Paradise Lost*' Book iv became a model for a painterly landscape of lawns, downs, hills, and valleys; while in Book ix a Miltonic simile becomes a good example of the idea that nature is refreshment after the city:"

"As one who long in populous City pent,  
Where Houses thick and Sewers annoy the Aire,

Forth issuing on a Summers Morn to breathe  
Among the pleasant Villages and Farmes  
Adjoind, from each thing met conceaves delight,  
The smell of grain, or tedded Grass, or Kine,  
Or Dairie, each rural sight, each rural sound;”

(ix, ln 445-51)

To Romantic poets the landscape and the natural world are not just seen for their beauty, but for their ability to express some of the elusive truths and perceptions of the mind. Watson (1985:52) remarks thus on this view:

“In their search to find ways of expressing their internal feelings, the Romantic poets look outwards to nature to find emblems of the mind. They externalize their emotions in describing them through natural correspondence: the calm and the steady lake, the high mountain, the stream or river. Moreover, this is more than a mechanical correspondence: it is a kind of creative relationship between the internal mind and the external world, put at its simplest form by Byron (*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*):

‘Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part  
Of me and my soul, as I of them?’

(III, stanza 75)

In writing their poetry Romantic poets express their feelings of close intimacy with nature and Vilakazi does this in ‘*uMamina*’. The second reason why Vilakazi uses nature imagery is because of the influence from the Oral literature. Nature imagery is used most of the times in *izithakazelo* (clan-praises), *izibongo* (praise poems), *izinganekwane* (folklore) and *imilolozelo* (lullabies) (We gave examples of these when we were doing Vilakazi's influences in the first chapter). Vilakazi perceives Mamina as a goddess of nature. He feels that Mamina is a part of him (stanza 5 & 6):

“*Uwedwa ekujuleni komphefumulo  
Wam*’ . . .

. . .  
*Unjengesiboshwa, ukinatelw’ enhliziyweni*

*Yomphefumulo wam' ongathi nyiki."*

(Amal' pg 43)

"You are alone deep in my soul . . .

. . .  
You are like a convict, you are tied to the heart  
Of my soul which does not move"

Koopman gives a clear background of this poem:

"The name '*UMamina*' literally means 'feminisation of myself', And it is this poem, more than any other, which gives us an insight into Vilakazi's personal and private world. *Mamina* is the name which Vilakazi gives to the beautiful young maiden who dominates the poem, and the basic 'plot', as it were, of the poem details his relationship with her. The poem abounds with description of the girl's charms. *Mamina*'s beauty is likened by Vilakazi to that of the girls of Nongoma of whom it is said that they are so beautiful that they cannot have been born of mortals:"

(1980: 6-7)

*"Ungikhumbuza phansi kwaNongoma*

*Laph' izintombi zingazalwanga*  
*Ziqhibuka phansi njengamakhowe"*

(Amal' pg 44)

"You remind me of down at Nongoma  
Where the girls are not born  
(But) they spring from the ground like mushrooms."

She is so beautiful that when he looks at her, his knees turn to jelly:

*" Wangibuk' ntomb' enzimakazi*  
*Ngajiyelwa ukuthi ngiyoshonaphi,*  
*Kwaxeg' amadolo zaw' izikhali,..."*

(Amal' pg 44)

“You looked at me, O dark-skinned beauty  
I was confused as to where I should go  
The knees shook and the weapons fell,...”

Vilakazi describes himself as being bewitched and behaving like an insane person (*okohlanya*). Out of that insanity (an image he is using) he gets inspiration to become a poet.

Vilakazi himself seems not to know who Mamina really is. Vilakazi alleges that Mamina was not born as Vilakazi associates her with Nomkhubulwana<sup>4</sup> who is believed to be a goddess of nature and fertility. Nomkhubulwana is also responsible for good harvest that is why when there is a drought people go to a certain mountain to ask for rain from Nomkhubulwana. Vilakazi associates Mamina with fertility of the mind and what he produces (poetry) is Mamina’s work; as he says in ‘*KwaDedangendlale*’ (stanza 11):

“*Yebo, nami ngiyothela  
Ngigcwal’ amajikijolo*”  
(Amal’ pg 27)

“Yes, I will also bear fruit  
And be full of blackberries.”

Vilakazi thinks that when he associates himself with fertile thing he himself will have a fertile mind which produce good poems, he thinks he will bear fruit because

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<sup>4</sup>Nomkhubulwana is a goddess associated with harvest. When there is a drought people usually go to the mountain to ask for the rain. People plough a field for her that nobody can reap from. She is very much respected by the Zulu people and she is regarded as God’s daughter (*Indodakazi kaMvelinqangi*).

at 'KwaDedangendlale':

*"Imikhambathi yakhona  
Nasebusik' iyathela,"*  
(Amal' pg 27)

Vilakazi also thinks that because Mamina is associated with fertility she inspires him to write poems (he writes in response to Mamina's music):

*"Akunkondlo yamawisa namahawu;  
Ngithi ngivumel' igekle lakho"*  
(Amal' pg 45)

"This is not a poem about knobkerries and shields  
I was singing in accompaniment to your reed flute"

### 3.4 POETIC INSPIRATION

#### 3.4.1 Images of drugs and *ikhubalo* or *ikhambi*

##### (a) *Impophoma ye Victoria* (The Victoria Falls)

Vilakazi is describing the beauty of the Falls with its fearful waters and its unknown depth to people. God gave the Falls the power and the ability to make noise. Nothing can be compared to the noise made by the flow of water in the Falls. He compares the noise of the Falls to that of the sea and feels that the sea cannot compete with the power of the Falls (in Stanza 2):

*"Nolwandle luhoxekela emuva  
Lusinel' emuva njengezomgqizo  
Kunokuba lwelanyathiselwe nawe"*  
(Ink pg 19)

"Even the sea holds back

It dances back  
Rather than being compared to you”

Vilakazi uses different words to describe the noise made by the Falls to show the life that the Falls have: it is not a still water but it is alive:

- \**Gobhoza* - the flow of water (stanza 1)
- \**qhaqhabuka* - the thunder-like sound (stanza 1)
- \**Dumase* -Mr Roarer (Stanza 2)
- \**bubula* -murmuring (stanza 4)
- \**dazuluka* -cry out loud or to lament (stanza 4)
- \**mpompoza* - oozing (stanza 7)

The way in which the water in the Falls moves makes people feel comfortable:

In stanza 8:

*“Umsindo wakh’ unjengoju lwenyosi  
Unjengesandla somzanyan’ ekhanda”*  
(Ink pg 21)

“Your noise is like honey of a bee  
Is like a hand of a caring nanny on the head”

People get consolation and feel like they have a shelter if they look at the Falls. Vilakazi does not mean that the Falls can provide houses for people but rather that by looking at the Falls even those who are homeless seem to forget about that. The way in which the water falls makes people daydream and hypnotises them and make them feel good about themselves. In stanza 8:

*“Nemihambima ithol’ isiphephelo  
Ngasezimpikweni zamanz’ amhlophe*

*Adilik' empophomeni yakho"*  
(Ink pg 21)

"Refugees get shelter  
Near your wings of white waters  
Dropping from your Falls"

In stanza 8 Vilakazi talks about the state of being drugged and drunk as people are smoking dagga. They finally sleep.

*" Amehlo abo agcwal' intokozo,  
Bahlale phansi bacobelele  
Insangu, bashay' amadosh' ogwayi,  
Babheme bakubuke baze bome."*  
(Ink pg 21)

" Their eyes become filled with joy  
They sit down and prepare together  
Dagga, and snuff in their containers  
They smoke and look at you until they are thirsty."

By looking at the Falls people become hypnotised in such a way that they forget all about their problems, even those who are homeless they find relief just by looking at the Falls. They feel as if the Falls can read their hearts and their minds and see that they don't even have a place to sleep (in stanza 7)

*" Uphumuz' imiphefumulo ehlwelwe,  
Eyimihambima ingenandawo  
Yokubeka nohlangothi ngenkathi  
Ilizw' elakho izwi ikubheka."*  
(Ink pg 21)

"You relieve souls that have been caught by dusk  
Which are refugees with no place  
To sleep at the time  
They hear your voice and look at you."

**(b) Cula ngizwe - Sing that I might hear**

In this poem Vilakazi is appealing to the wind, the flower and the bird to sing for him so that he might forget about his loneliness (in stanza 2):

*“Ngifis’ ukukhohlwa yizihlungu  
Zezifo, zezwe nayisizungu  
Sokusala ngedwa”*  
(Ink pg 36)

“I wish to forget the pain  
Of diseases, the world and the loneliness  
Of being left alone”

The singing by the wind will give him quietness as if he was sleeping (in stanza 1):

*“Nokuthul’ okunjengobuthongo  
Bungizume phansi”*  
(Ink pg 35)

“The quietness that is like sleep  
Catching me down unaware”

Vilakazi wants the flower to sing him the song of love and water falling into the ground. He feels like the lips of the flower will whisper to him the secret of new love which is like that one of the stars at night which awaits the star of the dawn (in stanza 3):

*“Imfihlo yothando olusha  
Olufana nolwezinkanyezi  
Zilinde bonk’ ubusuk’ ikhwezi  
Elibik’ ukusa”*

(Ink pg 36)

(Ink pg 36)

“The secret of new love  
Which is like the stars  
That wait the whole night for the star (of the dawn)  
Which shows that the dawn is coming”

Vilakazi wants to be hypnotised by the noises made by nature so that he might not hear or see bad things that are happening to his people. He thinks after listening to these ‘songs’ he might wake up and find that there is a change in the situation before him (no more discrimination and oppression). That is why he talks about the star of the dawn, which he uses as a symbol of a new beginning.

Vilakazi want to be like a bewitched person and to fall asleep so that he can forget all about the world outside. A bewitched person usually communicates with the spirit within him at the time which he/ she has no idea of what is happening outside (in stanza 2):

*“Mangibe njengophoswe ngekhubalo  
Bese ngilala phezu kwengalo  
Ngizunywe buthongo  
Ngifis’ ukukhohlwa yizinhlungu  
Zezifo, nezwe nayisizungu  
Sokusala ngedwa”*

(Ink pg 36)

“Let me become like one bewitched by potents  
And sleep over my arm  
And sleep overcome me  
I wish to forget the pains  
Of diseases, the world and the feeling of loneliness  
Of being left alone”

(c) *uMamina* (Mamina)

In this poem the images of drugs and drunkenness are found. Vilakazi uses the image of madness show that he does not understand what is happening to or around him. He does everything out of insanity and madness, the last thing he finds himself doing is being a poet, in stanza 12:

“*Hiya Mamina  
Ngizozula ngibuye ngithini  
Ngoba ngivukwa yikhamb’ okohlanya.  
Ngihlanya ngihamba ngingenabhungane*”

(Amal’ pg 45)

“ Hey Mamina  
I will wander around and then say what?  
Because I have been aroused by charms like a madman  
I act (madly) although I go about without a beetle ”

Vilakazi is explaining the effect that ‘*ihungulo lamangwe*’ (charms of the *amangwe* tree has on him; it hypnotises him, it makes him feel like he is drunk ‘*umunyamunyane*’ (red dagga plant which is usually referred to as -in Zulu- ‘*utshwala bezinyoni*’ birds’ liquor plant), and he find himself reciting a poem:

“ *Ngihawula ihungulo lamangwe,  
Ngidakwa yimunyamunyan’ okwenyoni.  
Manje ngishay’ inkondlo,...*”

(Amal’ pg 45)

“ I am hypnotised by the charms of ‘*amangwe*’ bush  
And I am made drunk by the red dagga plant like a bird.  
And so now I sing my song,...”

The word ‘*ukuhlanya*’ (insanity) is used metaphorically; what Vilakazi mean is that the way in which he gets poetic inspiration is like being drugged or insane, because

in both states he loses contact with the real world temporarily.

Vilakazi acknowledges that when his poetic inspiration becomes strong it is then that he feels like he is under the influence of drugs, it is not him who is writing poetry but his ancestors through his hands.

*“Ngizw’ ikhambi lingen’ ekhanda,  
Lingiphethul’ ingqondo ngibamb’ usiba,  
Kanti sekuyilapho ngihay’ inkondlo,...”*

(Amal’ pg 49)

*“And I feel inspiration entering my head,  
It arouses my mind and I catch hold of a pen,  
And it is here that I sing my song,...”*

*‘Imifula Yomhlaba’* (Rivers of the world) is a poem about Vilakazi’s poetic inspiration, but in the same poem he still uses the image of being vulnerable to drugs. He feels like the water from these rivers have a very strong power that can drug him, in stanza 27:

*“ . . . .  
Ngehlis’ ukoma ngamanzi ayo  
Ngibhem’ insangu yamanz’ ayo  
Ngiguqe ngibong’ amathongo.”*

(Amal’ pg 42)

*“I will quench my thirst by water of these rivers  
And smoke dagga of their water  
And kneel down to thank my ancestors”*

### 3.3.2 The images of sleep, dreams and *amadlozi*

Vilakazi always makes a connection between *ubuthongo* (sleep), *amaphupho* (dreams) and *amadlozi* (ancestors). It seems like every night when he is asleep he

dreams of his ancestors. In these dreams he is able to talk to them (ancestors) and ask for inspiration. These images can be found in the following poems.

**(a) *Inyanga* - The moon**

In this poem, the poet starts by making a comparison between the moon and the herbalist and by expressing his admiration for the moon. The rest of the poem however is an appreciation of the help the moon gives to mankind. In the past looking at the moon was always a pleasure to people. He thinks of the joy that his grandfathers had by looking at the moon. The moon gives dreams to those asleep. It gives poets the words to write (stanza 4):

*“ Obab’ omkhulu bakubon’ uphuma,  
Ugqolozela umhlaba kanje  
Uphuphis’ abalel’ ubuthongo,  
Ufunz’ izimbongi ngamazwi,  
Ziwaqephuze zikhihliz’ amagwebu  
Asik’ imizwa yomphefumulo kuphela”*

(Amal’ pg 14)

“Our grandfathers saw you coming out  
Staring down at earth like this  
Giving dreams to those asleep  
You put words in the mouths of the poets  
Saying them off by heart  
Touching only the feelings of the soul.”

The above stanza shows that Vilakazi has discovered the worth of the moon. It is a source of inspiration to poets. The moon has an ability to give dreams to those asleep, inspiring them to write.

In the fifth and the seventh stanza he asks the moon to inspire him too. He wants to be like those poets that the moon has given words to:

*“Nami ngifunze Nonyezi”*

(Amal’ pg 14)

“Feed me, too, Moonlight”

*“Ngiphakele nami kuleyondebe...”*

(Amal’ pg 15)

“Dish out for me , too from that ladle”

Vilakazi gets his encouragement from the moon. Even when bad things happen to him or those around him; when the moon appears he gets revived. The reason for this may be because when he sees the moon he appreciates it and the it ( the moon) ends up being his source of inspiration. When the poet uses the moon to symbolise a source of inspiration, he makes us look anew at an earlier stanza where he says:

*“Wen’ omuhle ebusuku  
Laph’ abanye bemathunz’ amzizi,  
Uhlangane nabo bakusinde.  
Kodwa wena ma uqhamuka,  
Kuqin’ amadolo ngihambe”*

(Amal’ pg 14)

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

This could be interpreted to mean that the poet gets discouraged and does not see his way clearly but the appearance of the moon clears the way for him. There can be speculations as to what source of inspiration this moon symbolises. A reader with

a Christian inclination for example, may associate the moon with Christ, and say that the poet is praying for the guidance from him. This idea may be supported by Vilakazi's statement made in '*NgePhasika*' (At Easter) where he says to Christ:

(Cf. Ntuli 1984:108)

*"Inyanga nguwena..."*

"The moon is you..."

Ntuli makes a comment about the moon the poet is using:

"Whatever interpretation we make, it is clear that whenever the poet looks at the moon, . . . he becomes aware that it is not just an item of nature, but it has power to inspire."

(1984:108-109)

**(b) *Ugqozi* - Power of inspiration**

In this poem, Vilakazi presents his imaginary experiences when he enters Dukuza, one of Shaka's royal Kraals. He is meeting Mnkabayi, Shaka's aunt and this results in his acquisition of great power to compose poetry (stanza 2):

*"Kwakhany' engqondweni yam' efiphele.  
Kwafika kim' uMnkabayi emuhle,"*

(Amal' pg 1)

"It became clear in my confused mind  
There came to me, beautiful Mnkabayi"

Vilakazi sees Mnkabayi at KwaDukuza, and he is speechless, he cannot say the

praises like his grandfathers used to. He becomes so comfortable within these premises that he even falls asleep. His ancestors made him speechless so that when he wakes up and opens his mouth he might speak only the words they had given him in the dream (stanza 4):

*“Lwagcwal’ umlomo ulimi lwami;  
Ngathi ngiyakhuluma ngayisimungulu,  
Kanti sengintshontsh’ amandl’ ezimbongi.”*

(Amal’ pg 1)

"My tongue filled my mouth  
I tried to speak but I could not  
By that time I was stealing the skills that the poets have"

He admits that he now can not keep quiet (he is always writing): *Namhla kangikwaz’ ukuthula’* (Amal’ pg 64)(Today I cannot sleep), also he gets pressured by ancestors in a form of uMnkabayi telling him not to sleep:

*Lapho ngilele ngikwesikaBhadakazi,  
Ngivuswa nguMnkabayi ethi kimi:  
“Vuka wena kaMancinza !  
Kawuzalelwanga ukulala’ ubuthongo.  
Vuk’ ubong’ indaba yemikhonto!  
Nank’ umthwal’ engakwethwesa wona.”*

(Amal’ pg 68)

“When I am asleep at midnight  
Mnkabayi wakes me up saying:  
‘Wake up you of Mancinza  
You were not born to lie in sleep  
Wake up and thank the matters of spear  
That is the burden I put on you’”

In the above stanza Vilakazi is comparing himself to Bhambatha of the Zondi clan who went to ‘eMgungundlovana’ (Greytown) in 1906 protesting against the Poll Tax (*imali yamakhanda*). Vilakazi’s father’s name was Makhwatha and he

(Vilakazi) always refers to him as '*uMakhwatha waseMzwangedwa*'

(Makhwatha of Mzwangedwa) and Bhambatha's father was Mancinza. By this stanza it is suggested that Vilakazi is given a duty to educate his people (of their heritage) through his writing.

It seems as if the poet intends his readers to read the whole poem in order to understand it more easily. As evidence to this; most stanzas end with commas to illustrate that the next stanza is the continuation of the last one.

Ntuli comments like this on the structure of this poem:

"The poem contains properly ordered narrative. This is a beautifully streamlined story which works smoothly towards the climax when the mission of the poet has proved to be a great success. He now has inspiration in abundance."

(1984:99)

Vilakazi feels that he has now fully acquired the power of inspiration he has always been looking for. His visit to kwaDukuza helps him a lot in as far as the acquisition of poetic inspiration is concerned. He entered the gates of Dukuza with a confused mind and came out a poet with a duty to write. His ancestors visit him in his sleep and tell him not to sleep as he is supposed to write poetry (last stanza).

Ntuli makes a remark on this poem:

It is interesting to see how the poet who gets to Dukuza empty-handed ends up with such plenty. Vilakazi has reinforced this idea by using the stanzas which develop from a short one of 5 lines to the long ones of 7 lines. The prominent character in the poem is Mnkabayi. We feel that the poet has used her to represent other ancestral spirits who help him in granting the poet's wish."

(1984: 98-99)

On his entering in Dukuza the poet is an ordinary person who does not even know

the praises of the king. He can not even speak, his tongue shrinks. Mnkabayi put upon him a burden to write poetry. He can not keep quiet. He can not live without writing. Even if he wants to sleep Mnkabayi wakes him up, reminding him that he was not born to sleep but rather has a job to do.

**(c) *Imbongi* - The Bard**

In this poem Vilakazi is talking about a bard or an oral poet. An oral poet is recognised by his intellectual qualities of constructing praise poetry '*izibongo*', and performing rather than reciting them. The act of performance requires the poet to be a strong person because when performing '*izibongo*' he has to move around the stage (performing ground) and makes physical and facial expressions where necessary. The construction requires the poet to be an intelligent person who knows how to choose words for his poem. Most of the time oral poets (like any other poets) use figurative words.

According to Ntuli in this poem Vilakazi speaks about the poet in a wider sense.

“ . . . He praises the poet for his ability to use the language that moves the heart and mind of a man. He points out that the poet's scope is not confined to time and space. To illustrate that the poet was in existence from time immemorial, he makes use of convincing personification of the stages through which the world has passed:”

(1984:101)

In stanza 3:

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

(Amal' pg 3)

“Poet, you sang praises when the world was still crawling

The world grew up and stood up,  
And it ran fast forward...”

In this poem , Vilakazi believes that he can hear this poet even when awake. It seems that here Vilakazi introduces us to the concept of daydreaming. What happens when he is asleep and dreaming seems to happen even when awake, in stanza 1:

*“Olukaban’ ulim’ olukhuluma  
Lunyakazise imithambo  
Yezinhliziyo neyamakhanda  
Ezilwane nemithi nenhlabathi  
Okhulumela kude naseduze,  
Kodwa kuvele kufane;  
Okhuluma ngivuka nanxa ngilele,  
Nokho ngivele ngimuzwe ?”*

(Amal’ pg 2)

“Whose tongue speaks?  
And moves veins  
Of hearts and of heads  
Of animals, trees and soils  
Who speaks far and near  
But it still remains the same;  
Who speaks when I’m awake and when I’m asleep  
I can still hear him?”

Vilakazi knows that this ‘*Imbongi*’ - (The bard) is sent by his ancestral spirit to guide him and to give him inspiration to write poetry. That is why he sometimes feels that what he is writing is not his ideas but rather ideas of this poet who is speaking through him.(Stanza 4):

*“Konje ngabe yim’ engikhulumayo  
Noma ngabe nguwe Thongo likaMbongi”*

(Amal’ pg 3)

“Is it me who is speaking  
Or is it you spirit of Mbongi?”

Vilakazi believes that he is the one chosen by the ancestral spirits to be their

mouthpiece. He believes that before him the world did not have such persons as him, in stanza 4:

*“Ngingakazalwa umhlaba wawungenandlela  
Ungaziwa, ungaqondakali ngawubamba”*

(Amal’ pg 3)

“Before me the world had no way  
It was unknown, and not understood, I got hold of it”

Vilakazi is very grateful to this poet for guiding him. The bard calls him, he gives him sight, he leads his way (stanza 4).

*“Ngizwe umemeza, Mbongi, phambi kwami,  
Wangihola ngodondolo ngingaboni ngabona”*

(Amal’ pg 3)

“I heard you calling in front of me, Mbongi  
You led me with your staff; I was blind but I saw”

However, Vilakazi feels that during the time he was led by this poet he acquired skills to stand on his own . He appreciates what this poet has done for him but he wants to try his luck and develop the skills he has acquired.

*“... Ngidedele ngibonge, ngivul’ indlela nami kwaMhlaba”*

(Amal’ pg 3)

“Allow me to compose and pave my way on earth”

**(d) *Imifula Yomhlaba* - Rivers of the World**

*'Imifula Yomhlaba'* (Rivers of the World) is a very important poem in Vilakazi's life and in his adventure as a poet. He entitles his poem *'Imifula Yomhlaba'* but when you go deeper into the poem you find that in fact the rivers are representing a certain symbol. Vilakazi is in fact referring to many ideas that come to his mind e.g. in the first stanza:

*"Nans' imifula ngiyibona  
Ihlakalele phambi kwami,  
Inezinyawo njengabantu"*

(Amal' pg 30)

"Here are the rivers, I see them  
Scattered before me  
They have feet like human beings"

Vilakazi admits however that he has his own river which is different from these rivers, in his river he finds the courage to leave his father's homestead and start his own life, in stanza 2:

*"Kodwana mina nginowami  
Owangivelela ngiqala  
Ukuphum' emzini kababa"*

(Amal' pg 31)

"But I have my own (river)  
Which came to me when I was  
Leaving my father's house"

As we have indicated earlier on, Vilakazi gets his inspiration through his ancestors who communicate with him through dreams. Vilakazi admits that this river is the

cause of his dreams, which means that by providing him with dreams this river makes it even a lot easier for Vilakazi to talk to his ancestors (**river = sleep = dreams = ancestors talking to him = inspiration to write** (writing what his ancestors have been saying to him at night))

In stanza 2:

*“Lomful’ ungilandel’ iphupho  
Elingifikela ngilele  
Lingihlebele onk’ amashwa,  
Lingixoxele namaphutha”*

(Amal’ pg 31)

“This river calls dreams for me  
Which comes to me when I am asleep  
And whispers misfortunes to me  
And talks to me about mistakes”

When he wakes up from his dream Vilakazi feels like he has wings and that he can fly all over the place, in stanza 4:

*“La ngiqabuk’ ebuthongweni,  
.  
.  
.  
Ngikhul’ amaphiko anamandla  
Ngizizwe ngifana nokhozi”*

(Amal’ pg 32)

“When I wake up from my sleep  
.  
.  
.  
I grow strong wings  
And I feel like an eagle”

Vilakazi feels that these rivers are his source of inspiration since whenever he goes to them they do not reject him. Even if he goes there at night they are always waiting for him, in stanza 24:

*“Ngike ngiyibuk’ ebusuku,  
Ngivuke ngiyibhek’ emini,*

*. . .  
Noma ngiya ngayiphi inkathi,  
Ngiyificile le mifula  
Ingangicifeli namehlo”*

(Amal’ pg 40)

I sometimes look at it at night  
I wake up and look at it during the day

*. . .  
I can go there anytime  
I find these rivers  
They do not wink at me”*

When thinking about his rivers Vilakazi feels joy and he hears flow and fulfilment in his soul:

*“Noma ngicabanga ngamuphi  
Wayo yonk’ imifula yami,  
Ngifikelwa njal’ ukwethaba  
Ngizwele umqondo ugobhoza  
Ungenakh’ ukuphazanyiswa”*

(Amal’ pg 41)

“Even when thinking  
About any of my rivers  
I always feel happy  
I can feel my mind flowing  
Without any interruption”

He also feels like all the nations or countries are full of their own rivers (rivers that he believes bring life to him) (same stanza):

*“Sengathi kukhon’ amazwe  
Agcwel’ imifula yobomi”*

(Amal’ pg 41)

“It is like there are countries  
Full of the rivers of life”

Vilakazi sometimes becomes sad when he cannot find answers explaining the way other rivers function (rivers like uThukela, uMvoti etc) then he feels: *‘Ngizizwa nginokudangala’* (I feel sad) [stanza 25] then decides to go back to the river provided by his ancestors (spiritual river that only he can feel and see), in stanza 26:

*“Ngibuyel’ emuv’ emfuleni  
Wethongo likababamkhulu  
Elingilandel’ ebusuku”*

(Amal’ pg 41)

“I go back to the river  
Of my grandfather’s ancestral spirit  
Which follows me at night”

This particular river has given him so much that he likens it to the spear of war, (in the same stanza):

*“Langinik’ umkhonto wokulwa  
Lathi mangingadlali ngawo”*

(Amal’ pg 41)

“It gave me a spear of fighting  
And it said I should not play with it”

Vilakazi in his life honours this spear very much, it is a weapon given to him by this river of wonders, the river which gives dreams to people; this river gave him a weapon he values he needs every time which is the reason why he feels like he has a duty to safeguard this spear, in stanza 26:

*“Yebo wena mfula wephupho,  
Ngiwubekil’ umkhonto wakho”*

(Amal’ pg 41)

“Yes you, river of the dream  
I have put your spear in a safe place”

Mthiyane remarks thus on Vilakazi’s rivers:

“The many thoughts that come and go; the many wishes that never come true the quiet thoughts, the slow yearnings, the intense burning desires and many other such thoughts that ramify in the mind are symbolised by the rivers .”  
(1972:8)

Ntuli comments thus on this poem:

"Looking at the rivers, he thinks back on the battles that were fought on their banks. He remembers how his forefathers were conquered. These forefathers are the source of his irresistible river of ideas. His intellectual ability is a heritage from the ancient Zulus who were killed in heroic forward thrust, like the surge of the great rivers."

(1984: 177)

Vilakazi feels that he has achieved a lot through the presence of this river. Because of this river he has travelled around the world. He feels like he is indebted to this river ( in stanza 27):

*“Sengiyonamathela kuwe,  
Mful’ onamanz’ ongiyise kude,  
Ngazula nomhlaba wonke ngadela,  
. . . .  
Le mifula ngiyoyikhonza”*

(Amal’ pg 41)

I will then stick by you

River with water which took me far away  
I loitered around the world and got enough  
. . .  
I will worship these rivers”

**(e) *uMamina* (Mamina)**

In the poem '*uMamina*' Vilakazi is asking Mamina if she is an ancestral spirit:

*“Uthi awungukhohlisi Mamina!*  
. . .  
*Uthi awuyen' omunye wamathongo?”*  
(Amal' pp 49-50)  
“ Aren't you deceiving me Mamina  
. . .  
Aren't you one of the ancestral spirits?”

Vilakazi is making this association between *uMamina* and *amathongo* because she also gives him poetic inspiration as *amathongo* do:

*“Manje ngiyabuza kuwe, Mamina  
Wena engibon' ukuth' ungomunye  
Wale mingcwi yamathongo  
Engizulisa ngilele nala ngiphapheme”*  
(Amal' pg 49)

“ Now I am asking you Mamina  
You, who seem to be one  
Of these spirits of ancestors  
Who make me restless when I'm asleep and awake.”

Vilakazi feels that he has a duty to be an interpreter of what his ancestors are saying to him. He seem to be the one that can understand what the ancestors are saying through the dreams they give him at night. Even during the day he sees visions that others cannot see (day dreams).

*“Yebo Mamina, sengiyavuma  
Amathong’ angethwes’ umthwalo  
Ngiwuzwa ngiphapheme nakwaButhongo  
Ngithi ngizumekile ngixoxiswe ngawe  
Ngivuke ngokhel’ ubhaqa ngiqoshame”*  
(Amal’ pp 48-49)

“Yes Mamina, I agree  
The ancestors put a burden on my shoulders  
I hear it awake and in the place of Sleep  
While in deep sleep I am talked to about you  
I wake up lit a candle and squat”

The role of an interpreter played by Vilakazi is also evident in stanza 21 where Vilakazi wants his voice to rise itself so as to thank God for all his blessings:

*“Vuk’ umhlwenga phimbo lami  
Ungehlulwe yigekle lomhlanga  
UNkulunkulu ukunik’ amalaka,  
Nolimi nezindebe zokuphumesa  
Iminjunju nemizindlo, nemicabango  
Eqhuma emithonjeni yomphefumulo  
. . . .  
Dweba phansi okwaziyo nokuzwayo  
Ithongo lizokuhumushela ngosiba.”*  
(Amal’ pg 48)

“Arouse yourself, Oh my voice  
That you will be not surpassed by a reed flute  
God has given you vocal cords,  
And a tongue and lips of speaking out  
The pains and ponderings, and the thoughts  
Which burst from the fountains of soul  
. . . .  
Write down what you know and feel and hear  
The spirit will interpret for you with a pen.”

Vilakazi seems to feel that his ancestors have a right to know what is happening on earth.

*“Nami ngibeke phambi kwamathongo  
Uwanike le nkondlo yakho, Mamina  
Uzuwafundel’ amadlozi ngomhlaba”*

(Amal’ pg 50)

“Put me in front of my ancestors  
Give them your song, Mamina  
Make sure you teach them about the world.”

**(f) *Ithongo lokwazi* - The Spirit of wisdom**

The poet recognises the strong power of this ancestral spirit. This is a nostalgic poem in which the poet talks about the people who are lost and had rejected their customs (stanza 1):

*“Bedukile balahleka ngosiko nomthetho,”*

(Ink pg 39)

“They are lost and ignored custom and law”

Vilakazi is asking this spirit to give him skills of writing poetry in a way that will be easily understood by his people:

*“Ngiphe, ungcaphunele namuhla  
Kuleyo ndebe oyigcin’ ethala lobuzwe  
Ikhono lokugcoba phansi lokh’ engikuzwayo,  
Ngibekel’ izimfaba nezinkedama zikaNdaba.”*

(Ink pg 39)

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

The poet associates the spirit with a very well known person in the Zulu lineage :

*“Ngiyacela Thongo likaNdaba!”*

(Ink pg 40)

“I ask you spirit of Ndaba”

When making a comment on the above line Ntuli says:

“Unlike in Western culture, the Zulu muse is conceived of as a male spirit, and it is connected with a known person. Vilakazi does not use Ndaba’s spirit consistently as a kind of a muse responsible for knowledge or inspiration. We are left with an impression that this spirit does not specialise, but among its functions, one is to help those who seek insight into their problems. The poet’s supplication and selflessness suggests that his request has a good chance of being granted.

(1984:100)

### **(g) *Imfundo ephakeme* - Tertiary education**

In this poem Vilakazi is expressing the things he expected to get after reading many books . He feels like he wasted his time trying to analyse what is written by White men because what he gets in the end is a headache and sore eyes. He alleges that uneducated people are better than he is; they dropped out of school but they have many things he doesn’t; they lead lives he admires : *‘Namhla bangamakhosi omhlaba’* (Today they are kings of the world). He is not a free person because wherever he goes there are books in his bag that he must read.

The poet is expecting a reward from his ancestors because he has performed the duty they gave him: the duty to write what they gave him at night. They are looking

after him because he has been an obedient child.

*“Ngibon’ amagam’ esizwe sonke.  
Amehl’ amadloz’ angibhekile;  
Amathong’ abeke nezihlangu,  
Alalele ngaphansi komhlaba  
Athi mangingene ngikhothiswe  
Ukhamba ngoba ngingakhohlwanga.”*

(Amal’ pg 8)

“I see the names of the whole nation  
Ancestors’ eyes are looking at me  
Ancestral spirits put away their shields  
They are listening from beneath the earth  
They say I should come and have a sip  
In their beerpot because I did not forget”

The poet bears in mind the fact that people might have difficulty in trying to analyse what he had written because he was not himself when he was writing . His ancestors were speaking to him at night, and they were nagging him to write down everything for the generations to come (in stanza 9)

*“Ngikhothe ngadla ngabek’ ethala,  
Ngibekel’ usapho lwakwaZulu,  
Lusale lukhoth’ ezincwadini,  
Luxabane lodwa luchazana  
Nezint’ engazibhala ebusuku,  
Ngingazange ngizisukele ngibhale,  
Ngibeleselwe yinina mathong’ ohlanga,  
Ningixabanis’ ingqond’ ebusuku.  
Kuleyo nkathi ngizobe sengafa.”*

(Ink pg 8)

“ I had a sip, ate and put (left overs) in the storehouse  
For Zulu’s young generation  
Staying behind reading books  
Quarreling with one another trying to analyse  
Things that I wrote at night

I did not just write on my own  
But was pestered by you, ancestral spirit of the nation  
Confusing my mind at night  
By that time I will be dead.”

### 3.6 ‘THANATOS’- A DEATH WISH

Typical of Romantic poets is that when things get tough on their side they resort to a death wish as the means of final escape. Firstly, they identify their injustices of the world, they try and find a way to escape from them by using a series of images like drugs, trance, drunkenness, hypnosis etc. They also turn to nature and appreciate everything it offers, they sometimes use their imagination to see things that are far away and they sometimes daydream. If all this come to a point where it does not help they then wish that they were dead or in a kind of sleep that leads to death, for example, in Keats’ ‘Ode to a Nightingale’ he sits in the dark and listens and appreciates death:

“Darkling, I listen; and for many a time  
I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
(vi, lns 51-52)

According to Averil (1980) Keat’s world is ‘full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression’; this being the reason why Keats wants to die.

Keats gives death nice names because he wants to die a painless (quiet) death because to him death seems like richness:

“Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme,  
To take into the air my quiet breath;  
Now more than ever seems it rich to die.”

(vi, ln 53-55)

**(a) Ezinkomponi – In the Mine compounds**

Vilakazi also wants to die a painless death, he wants to die in his sleep (stanza 19):

*“Dumani kancane kengilal’ ubuthongo,  
Ubuthongo bokucimez’ amehlo,”*

(Amal’ pg 66)

“Roar softly so that I can sleep  
The sleep of closing eyes”

Vilakazi believes that he will die a happy man if he dies in his sleep because he will not be thinking of any problems and he will not be worried about tomorrow (stanza 19):

*“Ngingacabangi ngelakusasa nokusa.  
Ngish’ ubuthongo bokulala ngivuke kude,”*

(Amal’ pg 66)

“Not thinking of tomorrow and dawn  
I mean the Sleep of sleeping and waking up far away”

Averil (1980) also holds this view (that Keats saw death as a luxury or as something to celebrate) because as he (Keats) was writing a letter to Fanny Brawne of 25 July 1819 he said:

“ have two luxuries to brood over . . . your loveliness and hour of my death”

(1970:165)

Vilakazi also sees death as a good thing may be because that will give him a chance to meet with his ancestors as he says (stanza 19):

*“Ubuthongo bokulala ngingavuki  
Ngisingethwe yizingalo zawokoko  
Phans’ emahlungwini ezulu”*

(Amal' pg 66)

“The Sleep of never waking up  
Comforted by the arms of my ancestors  
At the newly burnt velds of heaven”

The use of the word ‘*izulu*’ in this stanza shows that Vilakazi wants to go heaven when he dies, this is also evident in ‘*We Moya!*’ (Oh Wind!). The whole poem talks about the wind in its literal sense, as it moves the trees and makes that noise. The focus however changes completely in the last when the poet uses another kind of imagery, now the kind of the wind that Vilakazi is referring to is likely to be the Holy Spirit as it can bring light (stanza 13) ‘*Leth' ukukhanya*’ (Ink pg 13) (Bring light), this wind is going to bring this light to the heart (which is usually the work of the Holy Spirit) ‘*Kwenhliziyo yami enhlanye*’ (Ink pg 13)(Of my one-sided heart), he also wants to die with this wind ‘*Ngife kanye nawe kanye*’ (Ink pg 13) (And I will die at the same time together with you).

Keats sees life as being ‘leased’ to him which means it is going to be here for the time being that is why he wants to die with no pain ‘To cease upon the midnight with no pain’ (Ode to a Nightingale ln 56) and also in ‘Why did I laugh to-night?’ the idea of life being ‘leased’ to him features:

“ . . .I know this being’s lease  
My fancy to its utmost blisses spreads;  
Yet I could on this very midnight cease”

(ln 8-10)

Vilakazi also believes that life is a very short and a passing thing. In his poem ‘*Okomhlaba kuyadlula*’ (Worldy things pass) he uses an image of leaves and dreams, he compares it to life itself (stanza 6):

“*Yin' impilo yomuntu, we Muntu?*”

*Ayinjengamahlamv' emith' eluhlaza?  
Njengephupho olizw' ulele, ulalele  
Kodw' uvuke selishabalele njengomoya,"*  
(Amal' pg 6)

“What is a person’s life, you human being  
Isn’t the same as leaves of green trees?  
Like a dream that you hear when you are asleep and listening  
But when you wake up it has vanished.”

In ‘*uMamina*’ Vilakazi feels like the earth is not a place for him anymore, it is not safe, so he needs to be in a place where his security can be guaranteed:

*“Woza Mamina,  
Ngizwa ngifikelwa yisizungu.  
Lo mhlab' angiwuzwa awunasiphephelo.  
Ngidonse siye kwelakini, Mamina”*  
(Amal' pg 51)

“Come Mamina,  
I feel overcome with loneliness.  
I can’t feel on this world, it doesn’t have a safe place  
Pull me and let’s go to your place Mamina.”

### **3.7 DEATH AND AMADLOZI**

#### **(a) *Sengiyakholwa* (Now I do believe)**

In this poem Vilakazi is talking about his father’s death which took him years to accept. The experiences in his life makes him believe that his father is dead. The death of his brother (Mandlakayise) is very painful to him; he feels the same pain when his first wife (Nomasomi) dies. He now believes that his father is dead because many people have died after his father, and they never come back. He feels lonely because these people leave him, he is the one burying them (at Groutville and Mariannahill). He believes that when the bells ring at these missions for the morning

prayers, his family also goes to the assembly. Vilakazi sees himself as an old person as he now has grey hair (which is a symbol of ageing that he saw in his father before he (his father) died,(in stanza 7):

*“Kanjalo sengidelil’ ukuthi sewafa’  
Ngoba ngibona kimi kuqothuk’ ekhanda  
Izinwele zobusha izimvu zingikhanda  
Zinginik’ ukuzotha nophawu lobudala”*  
(Amal’ pg 68)

“Of course I have accepted that you are dead  
Because I see myself losing in the head  
Hair of my youth and developing grey hair  
Giving me dignity and the symbol of ageing”

It is evident that Vilakazi believes in dreams and life after death. His late father visits him at night and shows him the way. All along he(Vilakazi) didn’t believe that his father has passed away but as soon as he (Vilakazi’s father) revealed himself in Vilakazi’s dreams, so now he believes that his father is dead. Vilakazi is again making connection between ‘ubuthongo’ (sleep) and his contact with *amadlozi*. It seems like *ubuthongo* gives him a good platform of meeting his ancestors( last stanza):

*“Namhla sengiyakholw’ ukuthi sewafa,  
Ngoba kwaButhongo ngiyakubona”*  
(Amal’ pg 68)

“Today I do believe you are dead  
Because in the place of Sleep I see you

Vilakazi feels that his father comes to see him at night because he is happy, that is why he (Vilakazi’s father) comes with a cool heart:

*“Uza nenhliziyo enokuphola*

*Ungiweza ngamasango namazibuko  
Ubuhlakani nezindlela zenkalipho”*  
(Amal’ pg 68)

“You come with a cool heart  
You make me to cross over through gateways and fords  
Of wisdom and awareness”

In the discussion on ‘*amadlozi*’ above, it was mentioned that *amadlozi* become angry when a member of the family does wrong things, this means that Vilakazi’s father is happy which is the reason why he comes with a cool heart.

Vilakazi’s father’s visit is a great help to him because he now can hear his father’s staff tapping in front of him. Although he cannot see his father, he can feel his presence because his father gives him wisdom:

*“Nodondolo lwakho ngilizwa lugqula  
Phambi kwamehl’ ami ngingakuboni.  
Nginjengempumputhe ngamehl’ omzimba.  
Yebo, manje ngiyakholwa sewafa,  
Wanyamalal’ ungunaphakade.”*  
(Amal’ pg 68)

I can hear your guiding staff tapping  
In front of me although I cannot see you  
I am like a blind person with my bodily eyes  
Yes, now I do believe you are dead  
And that you went away for ever and ever”

The guidance which Vilakazi gets from his father is the same as the one he gets from ‘*Imbongi*’ (A bard), he feels like the bard is also using a guiding staff to open his eyes (stanza 4) ‘*Wangihola ngodondolo ngingaboni, ngabona*’ (You led me with your guiding staff, I was blind but then I could see)

The appearance of his father in his dreams opens Vilakazi’s eyes. It makes him

accept his father's death. It causes him to feel his father's guiding staff in front of him. He feels his father's presence although he knows that he is dead and gone for ever and ever.

**(b) *Isenanelo ngeminyaka engamashumimahlanu* ( Comment on Marianhill's 50th Anniversary)**

In this poem Vilakazi feels that after his death he will join the spirits of his ancestors and he will also influence young writers as the spirits have doing to him all along. Ntuli argues that the poet relies on the spiritual world:

“In his poems on inspiration Vilakazi expresses his reliance mainly on the spiritual world. His attitude towards the spirits is that of reverence and humility. He feels that all the glory that may be accorded him for his work should be passed on to these spirits. Even the human beings and natural phenomena which inspire him seem to be a symbol of some spiritual being.”

(1984:110)

*“Siyobuya njengomoya  
Wamathongo namadlozi  
Sifukamel' isikole.  
Lapho wena mfana uzwa  
Umoy' uwahlaz' ihlamvu..  
Uhweleza phezu kwendlu  
...  
Kobe kuyithina  
Bosukuma mfana uvuke  
Uthath' usiba oluloba  
Umcabango nezindaba  
Esiyokunika zona...”*

(Ink pp 92-93)

“We will come back like wind  
Of the ancestral spirit and ancestors  
We will warm the school

When you boy hear that  
The wind moving the leaves  
Moving over the house..

...  
That will be us  
Giving you dreams  
You should wake up, boy  
And take the pen that writes  
The thoughts of the news  
That we will give to you..."

Vilakazi seems to be concerned with the standard of education his people receives. That is why he says when he is dead he will come back to protect the school. He will come back and inspire young writers. He will talk to them and they will have to write it down.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I hope to have identified and discussed Romanticism in Vilakazi using poems with images of escape from the injustices of the real world. Vilakazi, like Wordsworth admires nature, in order to escape from these injustices the poet simply turns to nature (usually he daydreams about it). Vilakazi also uses a state of being drugged and charms as his images of escape, and uses death as his final escape. When he is asleep and dreaming his ancestors come to him and give him the words to write in poetry (in 'Imbongi' -the Bard). Vilakazi associates his poetic inspiration with his ancestors (in 'Ugqozi' - Power of Inspiration). From the interviews I conducted and material from Berglund, I began to understand that there are 3 kinds of dreams:

- \* the dream that *izangoma* usually have. Diviners and novices have dreams almost every night. Their ancestors come through the dreams to talk to them about many things, especially their work.
- \* Dreams that come because of witchcraft and sorcery, which cause illness in people.

Fortunately these dreams can be treated with traditional medicinal plants.

\* Dreams to ordinary people. These types of dreams are a channel of communication between living people and their ancestors.

According to Berglund the absence of dreams does not only cause a vacuum in life, but it can also indicate a lack of interest on the part of the Shades.

## CHAPTER 4

### 4.1 GENERAL CONCLUSION

The English Romantic poets had a great influence in Vilakazi's way of writing, and his way of looking at things especially his views about nature. Vilakazi used these poets as a foundation for his remarkable work in writing poetry. Ntuli comments on Vilakazi's dependency on Romantic Poets:

“ . . . we have seen that no artist can claim to be fully independent of the others. The artist's mind perpetually receives ideas from his environment. Even without him realising it these ideas are manifest in his work. It is impossible to stop the imitation of models. We have seen how even the most prominent Zulu poets like Vilakazi . . . have good poems which are in one way or another imitations of their predecessors”  
(1973:134)

Although Vilakazi uses English Romantic Poets as his example, in writing his own poems he contextualises them within the Zulu culture by referring to his ancestors as his source of poetic inspiration (which is not the case with the English Romantics). He talks about dreams, which is something that the Zulu people believe in very deeply. He also feels like there is a need to amalgamate traditional and Western cultures to give new life to literature, as he says in his Ph.D thesis:

“What future literature needs is not a compromise between the old and the new ideas, but a fusion, as it were, not a mixture but an amalgam. The virile elements of both African and Western cultures must fuse and give birth to a new life, expressed in a new literature.”  
(1946:372)

Vilakazi admits that he combined Oral poetry and Romanticism in writing his poetry, in stanza 3 of *Imfundo Ephakeme* (Tertiary Education):

*“Ngavakash’ izimbong’ ezimnyama  
Zihay’ imiqondo yamakhosi,  
Nezinye zibong’ utshwal’ emsamo.  
Ngafak’ ukuhlakanipha kwazo,  
Ngakudiya nokwezabamhlophe”*  
(Amal’ pg 7)

“I visited black poets  
They were reciting kings praises  
Others thanking sorghum beer at the back  
I put their intelligence  
And mix it with the white people’s”

Vilakazi may imitate the style that English Romantics used, certain lines in his poems may be in a way a translation of the lines from English Romantics but he uses the same old lines and gives them new meanings because (as Wainwright remarks):

“ . . . something purely imitative is not of any real value. For an imitation to succeed, it must be one that is transformed into something typically Zulu and it must be seen against the background of the Zulu culture.”  
(1977:38)

Ntuli holds the same view when saying:

“We did not hesitate to applaud the poets who used material only as a starting point. We pointed out how good poets give new shades of meaning to well-known lines composed by earlier poets. There were cases where a poet would take an image from another writer and then add new dimensions to it so that it was injected with fresh richness which the original poem did not have. This was regarded as a creative type of imitation”

(1972:135)

## 4.2 FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of the study was to see how much influence the English Romantic poets have on Vilakazi. The research looked at the ideas he adopts from these poets and how he combines these ideas with traditional poetry to produce something new. He uses many Romantic themes in his poetry, e.g. nostalgia (remembrance with sentimental value) in poem like *'KwaDedangendlale'* (In the Valley of a Thousand Hills). Vilakazi looks at the cliffs and the valleys in this place, he looks at the quietness of this place *'Nokuthul' okucwebile'* (Amal' pg 24) (And the holy peace) compared to the busy urban environment in the poem *'Ukuhlwa'* (Dusk) where people are moving up and down in swarms *'Kuphela kuyaphethuzela'* (Amal' pg 13). Looking at the place in *'KwaDedangendlale'* gives him inspiration to write poetry and because this place is ever fertile, acacia trees of this place bear fruit even in winter: *'Imikhambathi yakhona Nasebusik' iyathela* (Amal' pg 27). *'KwaMfulisagcwelamanzi'* (At the place of rivers-always-full of water), *'KwaTshanibuseluhlaza'* (At the place of grass-eternally-green), Vilakazi thinks that he also will be fertile, i.e. have a creative mind: *'Nami ngiyothela*

*Ngigcwal' amajikijolo'* (Amal' pg 27)

(I will also bear fruit and be full of berries). He also remembers the cultural things that are no longer valued and the type of clothes Zulu people used to wear, e.g. *'Iziqhaza'* (Amal' pg 12) (ear-lobes) in the poem *'Wo! Leli khehla'* (Oh this old man) and *'umutsha'* (Amal' pg 21) (loin-skin) in the poem *'Izinsimbi zesonto'* (The church bells). He uses his imagination to see these things and places because he is no longer at the place of his birth.

He also uses nature imagery in his poetry which inspires him to write, e.g. in the poem *'uMamina'* (Mamina), in this poem Vilakazi is daydreaming, he sees this beautiful and faultless woman who exists only in his heart and mind which is the reason why he says that Mamina is tied to his heart and that he can feel and hear her

every move:

*“Unjengesiboshwa, ukinatelw’ enhliziweni  
Yomphefumulo wam’ ongathi nyiki  
Unyakaza ngikuzwe, uphefumule ngikuzwe”  
(Amal’ pg 43)*

“You are like a convict, you are tied to the heart  
Of my soul which does not move  
I can feel you moving, I can hear you breathing”.

Mamina is associated with the goddess of nature Nomkhubulwane and she inspires him, she teaches him to recite poems while she is playing a reed flute.

Vilakazi also uses images of drugs and drunkenness *‘Ngidakwa Yimunyamunyan’ okwenyoni’* (Amal’ pg 45) (I get drunk from a red dagga plant like a bird). He also use images of *‘ikhambi’* and *‘ikhubalo’* (potions) which enters his head and turns upside down and before he knows it he is writing poetry, like in the poem *‘Cula Ngizwe’* (Sing that I might hear) *‘Mangibe njengophoswe ngekhubalo’* (Let me become like one bewitched by potions); and in the poem *‘uMamina’ ‘Ngoba ngivukwa yikhamb’ okohlanya* (Because I am possessed by a potion like a madman), *‘Ngidakwe ngivuke ngihambe’* (I get drunk and I wake up and go), *‘Ngizwe nginekhambi okohlanya’* (I feel like I have a potion (in my head) like a madman), *‘Ngizw’ ikhambi lingen’ ekhanda, kanti sekuyilapho ngihay’ inkondlo’* ( I feel a potion entering my head, that is when I am reciting my poem).

He uses dreams and sleep to talk to his ancestors who give him information to write down. He sees dreams as a means of communication with his ancestors. He also believes that when he dies he will also become an *‘idlozi’* and that he will come back to influence and inspire young people to write (in the poem *‘Isenanelo eminyakeni engamashumimahlanu’* (Comment on Mariannhill’s 50th anniversary):

*“Siyobuya njengomoya  
Wamathongo namadlozi,  
Sifukamel’ isikole.  
Lapho wena mfana uzwa  
Umoy’ uwahlaz’ ihlamvu  
Uhweleza phezu kwendlu*

*. . . .  
Kobe kuyithina  
Sikuphuphis’ amaphupho  
Bosukuma mfan’ uvuke  
Uthath’ usib’ oluloba  
Umcabango nezindaba  
Esiyokunika zona”*

(Amal’ pg 92)

“We will come back like wind  
Of ancestral spirit and ancestors  
We will warm the school  
When you boy hear that  
The wind moving the leaves  
Moving over the house

*. . . .  
That will be us  
Giving you dreams  
You should wake up boy  
And take the pen that writes  
The thought of the news  
That we will give to you”*

Vilakazi uses images of nature, images of drugs and drunkenness, images of ‘*ikhambi*’ and ‘*ikhubalo*’ (potions) as a source of his poetic inspiration. He also communicates with his ancestors through dreams and that is where they give him information and things that they want to write down.

### 4.3 EVALUATION

Benedict Wallet Vilakazi- imitator or innovator? Since the publication of his two anthologies of poems in 1935 and 1945, this question has been debated at length by scholars and critics. There are those who have called his poetry a “Zulu-isation” of English Romantic poetry, others who have insisted that his poetry was a pioneering expression of Zulu cultural identity. But personally I feel that Vilakazi paved way for his successors, which is the reason why we find poets like J.C. Ngubane translating Wordsworth’s poem. There are also many other poets who use the same themes as Vilakazi. I also feel that Vilakazi is a good poet who succeeded in mixing the Western style and the traditional style and built his own poems.

I leave the last words to Vilakazi himself:

(*Isenanelo eminyakeni engamashumumahlanu*’ (A comment on Mariannhill’s 50th anniversary)), stanza:

*“Khathisimbe kuyofika  
Oqaphelisayo ngeso,  
Awubon’ umsebenzana  
Esashiya siwuqalile,  
Awutshel’ abaphilayo  
Bawushayel’ amahlombe”*

(Ink pg 92)

“May be some day will come  
Someone with a sharp eye,  
And notice this little work  
We left after starting it,  
And tell it to the living  
And they will applaud it”

## APPENDIX 1

To support what have been said about amadlozi, an interview with MaGumede Hlongwa of Maphumulo was conducted.

*UMBUZO: Ungubani igama lakho?*

QUESTION: (What is your name?)

*IMPENDULO: Mina nginguKhohlisile, ngokuzalwa ngingowakwaGumede ngapha eMthandeni, ngabe-ke sengiganela kwaHlongwa.*

ANSWER: (My name is Khohlisile, my maiden name is Gumede, I am from eMthandeni district, I then was married to Hlongwa)

*UMBUZO: Wazalwa nini?*

QUESTION: (How old are you?)

*IMPENDULO: Ngazalwa ngoZimilele, okuyisigigaba esikhulu esenzeka ukuthi imifino imile ezintini, abelungu-ke baye bathi lokho kwenzeka ngo-1923*

ANSWER: (I was born during Zimilele a period when you could see green leaves on dry stems, the Whites believe that that happened in 1923)

*UMBUZO: Njengoba -ke usungumuntu osemdala ngalolo hlobo ngiyethemba uzongisiza ngokungicacisela okuthile mayelana nezinkolelo ngamadlozi.*

*Uma ngingabuza nje gogo ungangichazela uti ayini amadlozi?*

QUESTION: (As a person who is that old I believe I can get some clarifications in as far as beliefs about amadlozi are concerned.

If I may ask, how can you define amadlozi for me?)

**IMPENDULO:** *Amadlozi abantu bakini asebalala, abangasekho.*

ANSWER: (Amadlozi are the dead people from your family, who are no longer with you)

**UMBULO:** *Uma amadlozi kungabantu bakini abangasekho, kanti yini amathongo?*

QUESTION: (If amadlozi are one's ancestors then what is amathongo?)

**IMPENDULO:** *Amathongo, yiwona amadlozi, kodwa isikhathi esiningi uthola ukuthi igama lamathongo lisetshenziselwa ukuchaza umoya wabo abantu abangasekho. Leli gama like lisetshenziswe ukuchaza uNomkhubulwana, ngoba phela kunenkolelo yokuthi yena akazalwanga kodwa wayelokhu ekhona kwasemandulo, yikho-ke nje ebizwa ngethongo elikhulu.*

ANSWER: (*Amathongo and amadlozi are the same in a way, but the word amathongo is usually used to refer to the spirit of the ancestors rather than the ancestors themselves. This word is sometimes used to refer to Nomkhubulwana, because there is a belief that she was not born but she was already there from time immemorial, which is the reason why she is referred to as the Big Ancestor.*)

**UMBULO:** *UNomkhubulwana yena ungamchaza uthini?*

QUESTION: (Can you briefly describe Nomkhubulwana as to who she is ?)

**IMPENDULO:** *UNomkhubulwana lona thina sakhula kuthiwa yindodakazi kaMvelinqangi, unamandla afanayo noMvelinqangi. Buka nje ngoba kwakuthi uma kuthwasa ihlobo sihambe siyolima insimu yakhe entabeni, le nsimu yayingavunwa muntu. UNomkhubulwana uhambisana ikakhulukazi nezivuno, ngakho kwakuthi uma sekuvuniwe obekutshaliwe kuhanjiswe kuyena, wayebekelwa entabeni lapho. Kwakuye kuthi futhi noma kuswelakele imvula, izulu lomisile kuhanjwe kuyiwe entabeni kuyocelwa imvula kuyena.*

ANSWER: (When we were growing up Nomkhubulwana was said to be God's daughter, she has same powers as God. At Spring we used to go to a mountain to plough her field, and nobody reaped from it. Nomkhubulwana is usually associated with harvest, so at the time of harvest people usually gave her their harvest , this was also put on the mountain. When there was drought, people would go to her to ask for the rain.)

**UMBUSO:** *Ngokwazi kwakho kwenzekani uma umuntu eseshonile, uba nesimo esisha noma kuphela nje ethuneni?*

QUESTION: (According to your own understanding, what happens to a dead person, does he/she assume a new creature or does it all end in the grave?)

**IMPENDULO:** *Umntu oshonile uba yidlozi, okusho ukuthi-ke ubheka abasekhaya abasaphilayo. Ubavikela ezingozini, abenzele izinhlanhla. Nguyena oba ngumxhumanisi phakathi kwabakubo abasaphilayo noMvelinqangi.*

family. He protects them from bad things and bring good things. He becomes the mediator between God and his people.)

**UMBUZO:** *Kuyenzeka yini ukuthi umuntu abe yidlozi elibi?*

QUESTION: (Is it possible sometimes that a person becomes a bad ancestor?)

**IMPENDULO:** *Alikho idlozi elibi, uma kuwukuthi kwenzeka izinto ezimbi ekhaya kukabili: okokuqala kungenzeka ukuthi idlozi lifulathele okungukuthi lidiniwe, isikhathi esiningi-ke uma idlozi lifulathele lisuke lidinwe umsindo ekhaya, uma abantu behlala ngokuxabana idlozi liyadinwa. Kwenye inkathi kungaze kuphume isidumbu uma kungaxolelwana, kwenziwe inhlambuluko.*

*Okwesibili kuke kwenzeke ukuthi kube khona umuntu ngaphakathi emndenini ophendula idlozi efuna lidle ekhaya, esimweni esinjalo, amabhadi afika elakanyana.*

ANSWER: (There is nothing like a bad ancestor, if bad things are happening within the family it might be because : One, people are fighting within the family, ancestors do not dwell in such a place. This might result even in the death of a family member if people do not talk their differences out.

Two, if there is witchcraft within the family causing the ancestors to turn their backs to their families, then bad things happen.)

**UMBUZO:** *Wena gogo uyakholelwa yini emaphusheni?*

QUESTION: (Do you believe in dreams?)

**IMPENDULO:** *Hhawu, phela amaphupho yiyona nto esiphila ngayo, engani njengoba kwashona uHlongwa nje nyakenye, wabuya ngephupho ehleka, lokho*

*kukodwa nje kwakukhombisa ukuthi wahamba kahle. Wabuye wafika futhi ngelinye ilanga wahlala laphaya ngasemnyango wathi angithathe intondolo ngiyihlabe ngoba ufike engaphethe lutho kwabakubo.*

ANSWER: (Of course, I do believe in dreams, it's part of our daily lives. After his death my husband came back in a dream smiling which was a sign that he had no problems where he was. He came back the second time and told me to slaughter a he-goat because he arrived empty-handed to his ancestors.)

**UMBUSO:** *Njengoba amadlozi kuyinto eyingxenye yempilo yenu, umuntu osuke epoka uba kanjani yidlozi?*

QUESTION: (As ancestors are such an important part of your lives, does a person who comes back after death and haunts other people also become an idlozi?)

**IMPENDULO:** *Umuntu opokayo uba yidlozi naye ngendlela yakhe ngoba ngeke nje umbone evimbela umuntu wakubo kodwa umuntu angamazi nakanjani uzomvimbela, ngichaza ukuthi uyabona ukuthi owakubo lona ngakho akafanele ukuba amphathe kabi.*

ANSWER: ( A dead person may haunt people he does not know, but he never haunts people of his family, he knows that he is supposed to protect them.)

## APPENDIX 2

The information on this appendix was obtained through an interview with **Mr. Nelson Ndela Ntshangase** (Lecturer in the Discipline of isiZulu, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg). The information he gave me was taken from his unpublished book entitled: '*The Sintu Religion*' based on his research of same.

QUESTION: How can you define '*amadlozi*' ?

ANSWER: *Idlozi* is a general term which may mean: (a) a person who once lived and died but his spirit is alive

(b) It may mean a spirit whose origins are not known but wants to reveal itself and work through someone (living person) eg '*isangoma*'

(c) Metaphorically, it refers to an older person in a home or community

QUESTION: What is the difference between '*amadlozi*' and '*amathongo*'?

ANSWER: There is no vast difference but '*ithongo*' is more of a spirit than a person who once lived.

QUESTION: How can you define Nomkhubulwana?

ANSWER: Nomkhubulwana is an '*idlozi*' at a national level; she is a female mediator between God and human beings. She looks after fertility of human beings, soil and animals (domestic animals mainly).

QUESTION: According to your understanding what happens after a person dies?

**ANSWER:** Considering the definition of '*idlozi*' as a person who once lived we are led to believe that a person does not end in the grave but he/she continues to live as an '*idlozi*'.

**QUESTION:** Is there anything called a bad ancestor (*idlozi elibi*) ?

**ANSWER:** Yes, through the work of witchcraft people can turn *idlozi* against each other within the family (*ukuphehla amanz' amnyama*). In this case '*idlozi*' turns against people and stop protecting them but it does not kill them.

**QUESTION:** Do you believe in dreams? If you do, how do you perceive them?

**ANSWER:** Yes, I believe in them. Dreams come in a certain pattern which is the reason why I listen to them. That pattern shows that there is an important message that that dream is trying to communicate.

**QUESTION:** Is it a myth or a fact that dead people communicate with their families by means of dreams?

**ANSWER:** It is a fact, We (in our society) often hear people saying that they dreamt of so- and- so (their relative) saying this and that; if you observe the situation you may find that things that happen afterwards resembles the dream. But not all dreams become a reality.

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