

In Four Movements.

Notes. Filed, Unfiled, Submitted.

Inleiding

stereophonic were available.

"Soos Athena, dogter van Zeus... so began my acquaintance in printed form with Judith Mason. This was to set ~~the~~ ^{the} tone for further articles and snippets on this artist, and I myself was to be ^{in wonderment} awestruck and dazed for the next 18 months when I followed her development from ^{her first exhibition} 1962 ^{to deceased} till just over a year ago. In that time I was to accept most of the information and digest it uncritically on this venerable artist. The house of cards ~~came~~ ^{structurally} crushed upon itself when I ^{noted} its defects ^{and} its engineering defaults ^{were noted, when} ~~and its motivational~~ ^{I realised that I had seen it through rose coloured glasses.} ~~ness of character.~~ This insight was proffered me by John Russell in his book titled Francis Bacon (Revised and updated edition, 1993 from Thames and Hudson, from the series: A world of art) which did not at all talk about Mason but nevertheless gave me enough information ^{on} her to make me bitter, especially when I remembered that Hitler had written that Mason's "work is not at all related to the battered, vicious or fragmented subject of Francis Bacon." I remember being interested in Bacon when I saw ^{his} some of his work reproduced in colour in a book some years ago and that was ~~my~~ ^{the} beginning of my fascination with him. But I had had to read Mason for examination purpose in my matric year but my interest in her was longer lasted longer than exams and after school I took an independant research of this artist whom I found often described in the superlative, whom critics, may praise-singers lay ^{prostrate} ~~prostrate~~ before her ("Vroumens, ek lê aan jou voete-Jansen). This very person had ^{said up her that she was} called her ~~the~~ "propeter vra inkeer" (note the use of prophete prophets in her description).

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I remember that when I left school I was especially impressionable and gullible as well, and my teacher (in my matric year) herself was impressed by Maron and she drove me to see her that artist from her vantage with no discrediting powers (I did see her in that way for some time). I was also at that time also in great awe and with great admiration for people of authority and dared not challenge their authority - for what did I know in comparison to them. Thus I too took information from them as authoritative and conclusive, but was nevertheless doubtful and cautious to question their understanding even when information was likely to be rebuked by new information, I was tentative in stepping on their toes and knocking them off their pedestals and high temples, from the high places of power (the high priests of knowledge). Even when I ~~saw~~ myself saw the similarities between Maron and Bacon I comfortably said there were none (on the surface) but deeply I was squaring with discomfort at the obviousity of ~~that~~ the similarities. Perhaps at the time of Hige's writing there were no similarities, ^{though} but I doubt it because she was able to simultaneously draw comparisons and re-cover them to discourage any further illuminations and allusions to that artist. Also because in later publications, it was not mentioned that Maron had some relation to Bacon (the first I got to read of it was when I finished this article and read Bettie du Plessis (1/02/91) saying "En meteens besef ek die afstand tussen die beelde in die van die Engelse skilder Fran Bacon met wie se werk Maron se werk is ooreenkomstig to on."). So I think it was a curious incident this evading Maron as related to Bacon and it is this evasion that has decided me to write my own personal account of their similarities, quoting examples that I think illustrate

these I have, thankfully since discovered that critics are
 not infallible and little are they authoritative, that what they
 write is often very subjective and are in pursuance of
 personal agendas, that they have self ^(or vested) interests and will
 promote certain people over others (this is illustrated by
 Ivor Powell in relations to Robert Hodgins) and will
 use certain people to illuminate their own persons and elevate
 themselves and will conveniently avoid certain topics or areas
 or questions that are as important (Kendel Geers in his
 article on his article on "marginal at the centre: third world
 avant-garde uses Mshahintshali as an example of a producer
 of naïveté) (rightly so) but does not mention pluralist
 appropriators like Vorster, H. and Arnold (Payne 1992: I find
 these kinds of omissions very interesting to note especially
 when the named artists use a style largely reminiscent
 of naïveté - perhaps education exempts them from
 lambastion by this avant-gardist?) What you read now is
 a personal view of the situation as it unfolded before
 me and my opinions on various elements of that
 situation. I have learnt to laugh at critics and
 regard them with suspicion for what they do and how
 they go about it. Perhaps you will these notes
 (for they are that) never, this I think might
 be true and what I write is a personal view of
 impression that should not be taken as
 authoritative or knowing, that the reader is welcome
 to regard them with suspicion or contempt or
 anger or to squint, I never... , make your own
 conclusive statements if you will but conclusions are
 undesirable in such an open-ended topic as this
 one.

Enigma, very enigmatic visions of the halcyon past and
a mundane present.

"There is no such thing as art for the masses...
Why should art be understood by everybody. We do
not insist that mathematics or nuclear physics be
understood by everybody; we do not insist that
counterpoint or theology be within everybody's grasp..."

Judith Mason, 1965 during a
lecture on "The Western Heritage" at the Human Rights
Society. I do not know what was said before or
after these lines but I have here an ^{idea} view of
someone who jealously guards her profession (like
the Marine turtle in her 1992 painting: "Orania")
~~where a turtle resides over bottles of p~~ Perhaps since
that time (1965) she has changed (1995), probably so
because now she is heard ~~as~~ saying that "one has to
know what one is and I am a good second rate
artist". She says that it is not for wanting to be
second rate and quotes Braque "you don't paint what
you want to paint but what you can." (I am
suspicious of quoting from big names but sometimes people
say what you yourself so succinctly what you yourself
want to say that you ~~really should not try to make~~
~~it original~~ cannot say it better, so you quote them, as
I myself do elsewhere in this writing (this diatribe).

This in my view is a far cry from the early
Mason who, ~~said that~~ at the selfsame Human Rights
Society lecture (1965) said that "Great art is as private
as death... an intensely personal matter." ~~star~~ I
suppose at the time Mason who was feted as
a "great artist" by the establishment had to ~~formulate~~

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a hypothesis for this great art, this which is defined by many in very personal and at times laughable terms (but which probably ~~was~~ applicable in his time is applicable at the time, for instance John Ruskin (1819-1900 says that ^{in general, great art is} ~~great art is~~ generally distinct, large in masses and scale and always delicate. Trilling and Bloom: (1973:169-171)

I almost want to laugh now that Mason says "I don't think there's only place for great art". Perhaps in her heyday part she was misled and misguided but I think that rather she knew all along what was happening with her, that critics and the establishment were prying here to take place of a masterful South African artist on par with the Picasso, Munch, Bacon etc, in my view this being so even put in Hidge's article, Hidge who ~~is~~ in my view suggests that she is separate from "masterful influence" but that she is "like" masters (masterful influences in comics because I think that it depends on where you come from when you consider Picasso a master; it depends on the politics of your background and culture and all the rest of your baggage. Personally, Picasso (for me) Picasso is a fraudster in certain ways but a godd improviser nevertheless.

Flattery

"she destroys what is not good" - Die Vaderland, Besondere Bybebe Temas 1961. Taken as a whole her works are icons illustrating religious experience at its quick; Chris van der Walt; To the point 1/7/72 (source unknown)

It seemed to me that Mason herself was appreciative of these flatteries - I have no knowledge of her pleading for her humanity amidst this

"heilig" elevation. Those people are entitled to their ^{opinions} ~~own~~ views but I think that they exaggerated in their reportage, and in my view there were meant to inspire awe and to dazzle one and to also influence the public and build up the Masonic legend, and I too was once swept away by this rising tide of superlativity and extravagance. I think that when a person's work is described in such one is afraid to disagree with those in the know, but I feel liberated that I can now look at this silliness and laugh, for it is all now hot air that is losing its war on and it is reducing itself to its real size.

Such kind of inflation led me in the past to view Mason as being high on a pedestal, in a glass bell box of the type that are used in museum (that could also be mausoleums) to present priceless objects of antiquity or icons, also to thus to see Mason as a Holy saint removed from the populace. Because of this I remember revering her (this caused me a great deal of mental anguish, indecision and unpleasantness in my person - remember that I looked up to the historians, the critics, and one does not want to earn the wrath of your masters on whom you depend for your livelihood - speaking metaphorically, I take my metaphor from my own dependance (at the time) on the grace of museums and galleries (and teachers who did not allow room for opposing views or views that came into conflict with their own, otherwise you know that you would be marked for a very very long time after) - guides in such places often say nice things and you do not want to offend them with your divergent opinions if you still want to be welcome (at that

time, now it is of course very different for me! So
you become complacent and flattering about their
knowledge.

Revolution

⁴ Talkin' About a Revolution

Poor people are gonna rise up
And get their share
Poor people are gonna rise up
And take what's theirs

Don

Don't you know
You better run, run, run
Oh I said you better
Run Run Run

Finally the table are starting to turn
Talkin' about a revolution.

Tracey Chapman, excerpt
from her song.

1982, SBK April Music Inc./

Purple Rabbit Music.

1988 Elektra Records.

As the revolution advances, in those moments of
great confusion when uncertainty stands before you,
when you are dazed and disoriented you take possession
of what is around you to have something valuable
after the destruction, you steal, you pillage high temples
and ramnage through the rubble. Now the quiet (after the
storm) you ponder your actions - it begins to rain, you
get wet, you run for shelter and at your shelter you

contemplate your actions, you begin to take stock of
 your new found wealth, some real, some ^{just past} fake but you
 do not know which and really do not care because
 you have it (the wealth I mean). Now you want to
 write a catalogue for easy reference and you put
 like with like for convenience. You do however
 discover that at some point someone had compiled
 a catalogue (raison d'être?) and had deftly put
 apart like and like and put expressly objects expressly
 in certain packages and written that comparison with
 like and like should be discouraged and that the
 writer is implies that such comparison is in point of
 fact being discouraged. I suppose that one could go along
 with this politically expedient formula of promoting
 and elevating certain tongue over others and deliberately
 suppressing others. It is after all very comfortable to think
 of right and left, to ~~potentise~~ think of comfortable
 zones, to ignore that reality is very complex and not
 so clearly divided. And if you have no outstanding
 characters of your own you elevate them ^{in 1st} that
 instant when you write of them (your small characters)
 in reference to already existing, outstanding and established
 characters as being unlike (although with similar characteristics)
 but doing like things to those that are established, so in
 one swoop you have dispensed with the complexities of
 relationship and now at once the small enter into
 their own with the big league, so were you once
 had the great and small you are now confronted
 with a level field. I am such instances I think that
 you who does such things betray your own shallowness
 and bring harm to your little characters as well, if

however. you and your characters are willing to go out in self-promotion so much the better for you, but you will have to deal with the consequences of your fallen status when such time comes; you are going to be found out someday by somebody (not just someone mind you but a *sun* body) and you will I think be shamed. At this point it is good to beware of the Jabberwocky - the Claws that scratch, the teeth that bite; Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll - I was there myself once but was disillusioned by the unreality of that reality created when Alice followed the Rabbit.

(We come back to the event of the revolution).

In compiling your catalogue you find a lot of information and so you continue though a hard time you have of it; "The ways deep and the weather sharp, (Eliot ^{the journey of the magi} the very dead of winter", and indeed the winter of our discontent), in deciding what is relevant and what is trash - we all have our own way of winnowing so we end up with different measures of trash and grain - we have a hard time of it (in deciding, when there is so much information in this information age). During the revolution [whose peak in my case was the unhappy African Biennale with all the hollering, (the nose breathing and other matters that apparent have no founding/foundation is you like) but nevertheless so voraciously gossiped about and repeated sensationally by the media] I came to want (I knew that one day I should come

to want, to seek shelter and be comfortable in knowing something too) and the ~~unpleasant~~ pleasures I came to grasp a few things (A bird in the hand).

Unsolicited Material, The Rake's Progress, Payne and other similarities.

A friend sent me a book on Francis Bacon by John Russell (Revised and Updated Edition 1993, from the famous series of "World Of Art" published by the Thames and Hudson. Payne in his essay titled "Tunnel Visions" say ".... that iconography cannot be invented, but through the invention of new or formal arrangements iconography can be re-interpreted and new meaning can be brought to bear upon it" (Payne 1991: 20). I agree with him and he agrees with me (Sometimes people put so succinctly what you yourself want to say). Through ~~any~~ progression (The Rake's Progress) one discovers things about yourself and I mean things, both pleasant and otherwise. Sometimes you also discover things about other people and you are at once fascinated and repelled (I suppose like Beavis and Butt-head, MTV's cartoon metalheads whose "rampant homophobia is lampooned by their obviously uncomfortable fascination with homophobia" - Tony Karon. Wand G. 26/04-01/06 95) and this can show in the handling of ~~the~~ an object or a thing that provokes such nature in you.

Miles and Miles of Travel, in India, In Italy, in Oneself

In the late 70's and early 80's Maron took a trip to India, this I suppose for spiritual rejuvenation and after having tired of trying to "re-mythologize" religion. While there she travelled on foot for about 550 miles (340 km). Maron came back recharged and produced paintings with Tiller like Shiva Dancing and Kali Crossing the Gaudahi.

At this time Maron had, according to Zoe Storrer (Rand Daily Mail 10-12-81) "left her search ~~for~~ through an adolescent uncertainty and youthful darkness", I think that one is to understand here that Maron has matured. Ten years later Maron was to say "Ek het swak werk ~~die~~ afgelepe tien jaar gedoen (Beeld kalender, 1/08/91). (In the past 10 years my work has been weak - translation mine). She is known for her to be ^{at times} self-deprecating and humorous about it but for me what has often come across is her arrogance (~~Wie do not insi~~ Why should art be understood by everybody, ~~she asked~~). Of these post ^{India} Bombay visit travels works Miles (Elza) said "the success product ousted the great visions of the past" that blotches and scratches of "getting to Tibet across a paddy field does not 'flow' in with the rest (1983), this apparently after her 2nd visit to that country. It was in this article that I first came across what I consider to be some genuine criticism, where the critic did not go on to give the public the superlatives of Cheales and ^{RPM} Winder (synonymous to me with the Maron enigma of the 70's and ~~only~~). Her work had been known for its wild Africa imagery and its seriousness, but then post India she began using apes in her works.

Only after her seemingly disastrous stay in Italy did she begin to use humour in her work (Orania).

Maron was in my view aloof and arrogant and full of self-importance in the late seventies. In an article titled ^{where} ~~in~~ Maron is by Hilary (Prendini) Toffili it is said that "she rarely gives Press interviews, but allowed Hilary Prechini into her very private world. (I think it is sloppy thinking for artists to project vulnerable facades to the public and hope to get their sympathies; if you make yourself vulnerable people are bound to take advantage of your weakness. Maron later on discovered this as she says (when questioned of her breakup with Liada Goodman (iron of the Goodman Gallery). She said "You are selling bits of your soul's meat and it's negotiable tender as long as your name is fairly regarded." (Style 92/03). In that same conversation she says that she thinks art dealers think artists are fools who can be flattered and manipulated and ^{that} this embarrasses her. She then says that she is unskilled in handling ~~g~~ does not know how to handle people who embarrass her, people that she feels she wants to kick in the face but at whom she just shrugs and shuffles because of her cowardice. (I am a coward sic). I think that as an artist one reveals yourself at your own peril and you have no right to claim (and expect) mercy from the public, you do what you do and you whimper at yourself - but I suppose she being such a sensitive person (reportedly) she just had to tell the truth! Through her importance, ~~at~~ her ~~se~~ and sensitivity were matched by her arrogance. She has a right to her privacy (everyone has a right to their own privacy but I

think that once you become a public figure you forfeit some of ^{those} your rights, especially when you display your most intimate thoughts. People become unloving (others become interested) in you and you have to face them, you cannot wrap yourself in a cocoon and expect adoration when you at your own time come out; if you are ignored it serves you right, you taste your own medicine and see how you like it! Yes, and in the ^{next} article (also by Toffili) first^{ly} recounts the previous visit some eleven years back (This article is titled "Two Poor Whites in a barn near Florence: style 92/03: 39-45). It reads: When Z finally do track down Judith down she's in Simonstown. I haven't since her since 1977, when Z interviewed her for The Star in a mud-walled thatched cottage at the end of a lane near Hertford restaurant, with Bantams and fantail pigeons and a sign that said "Please No Visitors". I think that this gives one an insight into Mason's peculiarities and her aloofness and probably her feeling of self importance. Perhaps it is too harsh to say this as she might have been going through hard times herself, 39 with two children and divorced. A pre-menopausal woman with school and household duties who had at that time "a creative drive that was already selling producing gallery sell-outs. One remembers that only 10 years earlier Mason was obsessive with the quality of her work that "in the past" "so severe is her self criticism was so severe that in the past four or five years ~~she~~ (year 1969) she had completed less than a dozen paintings. The article in The Star (31/07/69) continues to say that other paintings that failed to

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meet her standards were destroyed. I think that at this time she had a novel and an extravagantly romantic view of an artist, also because perhaps because she did not follow her ideas as they presented themselves, but rather wanted to manipulate them to her own end - a painful and a time consuming exercise that produces things that you cannot want for yourself (from my own experience).

Die Koms Van Raka

— Die vroue het hom die eerste gewaar
in die loons namiddag toe die arbeid klaar was.

Raka. N.P. van Wyk Louw

Hitse sê van Mason dat alhoewel gebruik sy beangs beeldde met "a victimized or vulnerable quality" hulle is nie eers "related to the battered, vicious or fragmented subjects of Francis Bacon, nor to the obsessive, ghoulish themes of Edvard Munch nor to the Surrealist torment of works such as the Viennese painter Rudolph Hausner's "Ship Of Odysseus" in die Viense Stadt Museum. Hitze also says that "a lot of her work draws initial inspiration from poetry and literature (poësi en letterkunde in Afrikaans), but that this is only a launching pad from which her "rich creativity takes over to explore and complete its individual course." She is at pains to show that "the poetic stimulus is merely a germ from which the final work can grow" and how it "blossoms" into what Magritte René Magritte called "visible poetry". Hitze ends this dramatic by saying that "she monologues by saying,

that she, like Picasso, can surely say 'that like Picasso, she can say that in the end when all is said and done she paints for her pain and joy. This might (or might not be true), the dispute here is that of putting any established names at the side, any names that Mr. Mason could be used linked with. And the Wagnerian climax is the comparison with Picasso, ensuring that the clava stays in our minds on the same level as that hugely inflated (and fraudulent European marks) who was such a wonderful innovator. One remembers that for a very long time this was the basic Mason file from whom we all got our information (except when ^{you were} ~~you are~~ so fortunate as to have an audience with the big mama herself.

Neither are there any more of the sinister, depersonalised aspects of Magritte's isolated images in her work. (Toupe Ozynski in her review of a mason nitstalling (RDM, 13/7/81) said 'Painted with concern, yet strangely dehumanised'. She quotes a painting "Asleep in Bombay", 'a painting of the many thousands of poverty stricken Indians who sleep on the pavement at night.' She says "it is more of a biological 'thing' half degraded back into earth and water, than a human being stamped by deprivation."

that continues to Note how Hidge says that "her art may erroneously appear to bear surface resemblance to the types of paintings mentioned" (Bacon et al) At that time when I was gullible and easily impressed

upon Maron was indeed high up there with the "masters". It occurred to me then that in her prime (Mrs Maron's prime, not ~~Ms Jean Brodie~~ "the prime of Miss Jean Brodie by Muriel Spark-book) but our local historians who seemingly were opportunists, anxious to have our own (South African) goddess of delights who could compare with the Picassos, took Maron as one such suitable individual, and she herself agreed and a web of intrigue was spun round herself by that person and the historians. Thus we find such (in my view) silliness as those that are written of by Hidge, helped along by Winder and Cheales (for what I remember of there two ^{is the} ~~was~~ the praises that they heap on Maron, they are her fans seemingly.)

Menage, Maledolence, Theatre and Visual Callisthenics

Over the years Maron's ~~sombre and rather tones~~ heavy, dark colours and tones (Black, Prussian blue etc) have progressed to being more light and colourful. One can see this difference in "Roar" (1972) and "Leopard of Delight" ~~from~~ 1965, compared with "Painting from Magus II" (1994). In those days of dark colours, bright reds and blues Berman says that she usually conceived the pictorial environment in a limited range of muted shades "with just a single note in a contrasting tone" she says. This, according to me is very much like Bacon's Pope Innocent X, (Study After Velazquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X 1953). Here the colour is very ~~dr~~ predominantly dull with bits of

brightness added. Similarly, Bacon's later work is more colourful and less restrained (Blood on the Floor - Painting 1986, No 109 in the book) and Painting 1978, No 102 in book).

I also think that there is ~~an amazing~~ ^{are great deals} of similarities in their handling of space - it locks and imprisons and distresses (for me), whether it is Bacon's Grids or four walls or Rooms with blinds closed etc or Mason's open spaces, spaces filled with darkness, with water, with nothingness. One I find this especially in Mason's "The Flood II". Here the space is open, deeply penetrating - into its own interior, where I feel lost and unsafe and threatened (as I feel in Bacon's Rooms). I think that Mason's spaces are full not of quietness but of a disquiet sense of calm, a beauty that is an illusion as if the landscape invites me but really wants to engulf me, to grip me and never let me go; the indigo sea, the lone mountain, the monotonous sky heavy with silence and a ghost face out of the air. This landscape (The Flood II and other works in the book "Talking Pictures") is not a nature scene, but ~~an~~ a scene evocative of threatening emotions, rendered before me in a beautiful language, but dangerous nevertheless. I feel the same with Bacon and I while I may be afraid of these scenes I am not too late to enjoy their strange beauties.

There was a time when Mason was notorious and famous for her African wildlife imagery (Wild Dog 1963, Leopard of Delight 1965, Roar 1972

Leopard's Breath 1970, Movement Of A Lion, She-Wolf
 #1965 etc. These wild animals were often placed usually
 in a landscape with a low horizon, or an empty landscape
 or any place where a sense of quiet could be evoked.
 Similarly Bacon has used African imagery in his work,
 he has employed to empty scenes (scenes devoid of clutter)
 and also used the very low horizon line. I think here
 of pictures like "Man with Dog 1953 (42) and Sphinx
 (1953) (40) and also Chimpanzee 1955 (43) and the feline
 motif was introduced in "Portrait of George Dyer and Lucian
 Freud 1967 (42-64). Felines were Mason's favoured wild life.
 Compare the low horizon of Mason's She-Dog Wild Dog 1963
 with Bacon's "Man with Dog 1953 (42). Mason was there
 also used space in her work (Talking Pictures both have
 the details)

It became clear to me that Mason and Bacon
 shared similar themes even if for different purposes
 (danger, pain, death, bone beneath the skin etc.). Such
 obvious truths did make me want to question Hitge's
 bona fides, Hitge who seemingly was taken over by
 Mason and was in fervour in praising her, who said
 that her images, unlike those of Warhol which are 'factual'
 or voyeuristic, are used as reminders and catalysts, that "they are
 translated into symbols by the transforming power of her
 imagination". While this might perhaps be true (or not
 true) I note that Hitge in her art essay frequently
 puts Mason apart, her figure is isolated and her
 otherness is emphasized, she wants us to see her as
 spiritual and uses Warhol not as a Mileskane but as
 a measuring instrument, so she is given a greater

more significant and spiritual rôle over Warhol's materialistic one as she clearly implies in her essay. Mason and Bacon are both able painters who seemingly exercise a great deal of care in their painting. In Bacon there are for me elements of playfulness and accidentalness while in Mason there is for me a total restraint of inclination. A critic wrote of her work that "Most striking is the sense of everything being meticulously planned beforehand, each line, each stroke of paint absolutely deliberate. Chance and no spontaneity have no place in these works" (Footprints - Sunday Express: 19/05/76.)

In Bacon there is ~~is~~ in my view a great amount of control yet with an air of playfulness and being free to experiment and make mistakes; whereas in Mason I do feel as though ~~to~~ everything has been rehearsed before hand to the last detail (I am not saying that this is so, but rather that this is my impression). I compared Bacon's Triptych - In Memory of George Dyer 1971 (N086) and Mason's Intergrating and Disintegrating Self Portrait No 2. Here I saw that they both approached the picture formally but that Bacon was in execution free than Mason who to my mind had absolutely to keep to her agenda.

Both Mason and Bacon have used Roëtgen pictures (X-rays) for their work purposes. "Bacon also mentioned in 1963, a book called Positioning in Radiography which he has kept for a long time, both for the X-ray photographs and for the repertory of position in which X-rays should be taken" (Russett: 93: 113). Incidentally I also have this book (I graph

See I also looked at Bacon's "Three Figures in a Room 1964 (57) and Three Studies for a Crucifixion 1962 (14) where echoes of X-ray pictures could be seen by me. And in Mason this I saw in her Intergrating and Disintegrating Self Portrait 2. Incidentally, Bacon's Man with Arm Raised 1960 (53) is echoed in a slightly different form in Mason's Inspector Of Sacrifices (1980). Htidge says that in Mason hands and arms expose their bones, and the underlying skull in a head is suggested. She also says that "her intention is always to probe depths and to uncover and expose, in a search for essential inner reality." (Catalogue of Mason's prestige exhibition, Pretoria Museum 1978).

In "Inspector of Sacrifices" the man who in my view is from Bacon's "Man with Arm Raised" (or who has very strong echoes of him) no longer stands next to a portal but has grown w- in now hovering in the air, with wings that are like those of a dragon fly. He has jettisoned his body and left a few of his spinal column bones sticking in the air. I see him as being in a state of flight (but this pointing to my mind has failed to set achieve what it sets out to do, mainly to portray motion, here it looks as though two elements were put together, as though the man and the background are paper cut-outs.) ~~We are~~ ^{I am} not sure of what he is looking at but perhaps the title is meant as a clue (Mason's title are always illustrations and have a tone of poetic Independence. This perhaps is wonderful but I feel that it has been overdone and it begins to lose in exact and high quality. Strange. If perhaps

She could stop trying to tell us what it is all about, if she could for a moment stop talking at us, if she could present her case in a matter of fact way (nothing added or taken away) if she could just let the public be and not expect the viewer to have to know all those symbols and things, if she could give us a few untitled. Yes if she could take the left travelled road perhaps there might come something new (othways something New Out Of Africa is a title of a work by Renelope Siopis.) In Aron Z could not see what the man with the raised arm is looking at either.

Of Fevers and Other African Diseases

(Ketty Dietrich)

"These fragments I have shored against my ruins". This quotation from T.S. Eliot's Poem "The Wasteland" is written on one of the two panels on Maron's *Integrating and Disintegrating Self Portrait 2*. It has also been used as a basis for Maron's tapestry "Fragments", woven by Mags (as she is known to Maron) - Marguerite ~~Stephens~~ Wewind. Higgs says of Maron that "A line from a metaphysical poet or modern poet will stimulate her strongly, and two weeks later the visitor will find the result expressed on a canvas in a studio." Quaint, but the reader is unlikely (or certainly was unlikely at the time of Higgs's essay) to be welcome to the Maron studio - remember "Please No Visitors"). Among the other modern South African poets that Maron has drawn inspiration from are

Ted Townsend and Patrick Cullinan (whose book of Selected Poems - has just recently been published) both of whom are South African. I think her most well-known images from poems are of that poem of Eliot. Bacon has also used this poem for some of his work. There is a painting titled "A piece of Waste Land" and 1982 (105) and Painting 1978 (102) which had originally been Painting Eliot which Bacon later struck out. Russel says that this particular painting can be read in terms of the last page of "The Waste Land".

Dayadhram: I have heard the key
 Turn in the door once and turn once only
 We think of the key, each in his prison
 Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison
 Only at nightfall, aetherial rumours
 Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus
 ed io senti chiara l'uscio di sotto
 al orribile forre

(Russel 93: 182)

It is interesting to note that the last two lines are from Dante's Inferno whom Mason has also been fascinated by and has contributed (by two forms of drawings) to a book called "A Dante Bestiary" in 1989 (or thereabouts). In Mason and Bacon (and myself) I now see a mutual liking for Eliot. Bacon has also used another of Eliot's poem Sweeney Agonistes as a basis or perhaps a departure point for his work (I am not familiar with this poem though) [Triptych 1967 823]. The painting portrays a scene of violence and murder with someone on the telephone while an open window shows us the viewer a night scene with

a single speck of light in the distance. The leg in Dr Bacon's Painting 1978 resurfaces in Mason's Shiva Dancing II (after her India travels in the early 80s (in die jaer tagtig). Marilyn Martin in her description of this work said "In een van die werke getiteld Shiva Dancing verander 'n mensehand in die liggaamsdele van die god, in 'n gevleete pinkie en in 'n klon." - no date or source of the article. (In one of the works titled Shiva Dancing, ~~and the god's body changes~~ ^{the} there is a metamorphosis of a winged body part into a claw-translation mine). I wonder if perhaps has since issued a statement cancelling her earlier claims and whims and things.

Bacon is know (well known) for his distorted and contorted figures (Hitz says that these are battered, vicious and fragmented), which I think are quite beautiful. He is known for his portrayal of violence, pain and generally "unsavouriness". His work is also erotic. I refer here to his "Study For Seated Nude 1952 (7)", Two Figures 1953 (after Muybridge's photo studies) ⁽⁴¹⁾ and even his Triptych-In Memory Of George Dyer 1971 (87). Berman says that Mason's mature images are "patently erotic", however she does not give ~~no~~ examples of such works. Also, Mason is known for her ghastly themes and has been accused of dabbling in satanism and being Gothic for its own sake. She is known for "uncanny beings with disembodied heads and limbs, and for her floating spectres with shrouded eyes. Spectre - a ghost, a haunting presentiment or preoccupation. She has also been accused of being a Satanist, but Mason is a

Roman Catholic son convert whose earlier works were concerned with re-mythologizing religion - a woman with a mission. Thus (in my view) some of her work related to that of Bacon are covered in a cloth of ecclesia, at times with political overtones, such as "Flagellation (Christ at the Column)" ¹⁹⁶⁵ which refers not only to crucifixion but (Berman 93: 236) to the execution of a political insurgent. There is another well known Mason Crucifixion ⁱⁿ (also 1965). While both are more connected with the crucifixion, Bacon's have been involved and concerned with a scene of a crucifixion, and not the crucifixion. I remember reading that for Bacon a crucifixion was a scene of suffering (such as a war, etc.), and in this instance I remember his well known "Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion" 1944. This work in my view was also a precursor for Mason's disembodied and limbers Spectres.

Fascination with these unhappinesses, with evilness and with unpleasantness are with Mason and Bacon. One of Mason's more recent work is partly a written composition that says "In my loft the dry bones of fledglings embrace". Also that "Sometimes at noon I cough up from within me the pain and stench and vomit of an old despair. I wretch and whimper and cause the lurch of footsteps to echo in my emptiness". This writing I find enervating, saddening and frightening in its violence and uncomfortable despair (as though the prevailing atmosphere is never to change, as though she can never be saved or find refuge, I find that there is a feeling of hopelessness. Mason has of recent been concerned with more personal issue I think. In her last vitallizing

last September her works had titles such as
 "self portrait in time, space and context".

I find it interesting that both have tackled issues
 from the Greek folklore; Mason in "Middle Aged Daphne,
 Middle Aged Eve" 1972 and Bacon in "Triptych Inspired
 by the Oresteia of Aeschylus" 1981.

In those dying days someone wrote of Mason's
 work as being "faultless and even flawless". (star 27/08/74).
~~Someone did write that of her art that "a perf~~ This
 person also wrote that "a perfection of technique and a
 careful design can preclude the possibility of change,
 and change is life" Wetz said (Pretoria News 22/08/75)
 said that her technique is unsurpassed in South
 Africa. I wonder whom Wetz used as a comparative
 figure and I also think that his statement can
 now be challenged. We now have artists like
 Rethada Cronje and Keita Dietrich and Penelope
 Slops whose techniques are equally dazzling. I
 have often been curious about Mason's work and
 not interested as for instance I have been in Payne
 Curious in this sense denotes a cursory glance
 a seeking to find out mysteries for their own
 sake while being interested involves wanting to
 know not just for the sake of knowing but
 for furthering ^{my} ~~your~~ self and drawing comparisons.
 And because I am not familiar with symbols I
 have found myself confused, dazed and disoriented before
 her and unmoved and the work inaccessible. But they
 have kept my attention long enough because of the

attention to detail and ~~and~~ slick finish. Yes so Z
at times find her work exquisite and but unimpressive
and these sentiments were received by me after DML
Of the Natal Witness (12/04/78) had said them.

A cautionary tale of deceit and hidden
agendas that can damage and ruin one (and
one's reputation as a scholar too)

~~Self-aggrandizement of the critics~~

"Die Dans"

"Maar toe die stemme in die smoor nog ligg,
toe koki weer: „En ek sal gaan,” want
want in die skreeu het hy stid verstaan
dat dit nie sy krag was; nie sy woorde, wat lulle prys:
en toe die vuil geskreeu tussen die roke rys,
het hy begryp dat hy altyd eensaam met sy wees
om kosbare dinge tussen lulle son wees.

Perhaps it is so that critics take pot shots at the
vulnerable and consolidate their self-worth by
at times unworthy appraisals or perhaps overblown
appraisals. What strikes me in this regard are two
certain persons in relation to a third party. They are;
Ivor Powell, critic and writer, Kendel Geers, enfant terrible,
avant gardist artist and critic and their curious relation to
Robert Hodgins - artist and at one time a well known
teacher. Geers and Powell have rallied around Hodgins
for, possibly different reasons but what I see them doing
now is promote using their status and influence
to promote Hodgins. I understand that at ^{one} time Hodgins

was Geers's teacher (around 1983) & and now Geers considers him to be best South African painter. Geers is in awe of this artist and during a televised interview (16/04/95, Collage on NNTV at 5:30pm) I saw ~~his~~ a flurry of excitement, deference, weakness and awe in Geers such as I ~~have~~ ^{do} ~~never~~ ^{not} ~~seen~~ ^{often}. (I should not say he was drooling for that would insult him and that is also an insult I think so I have refrained from using it. (But apparently Ricky Burnett could not help using such of Newtown Galleries would not help using such words as 'self styled Bismale puppydog to describe Geers). It was really a pathetic sight but so refreshing to see someone's weakness for another someone's paintings. Yes, and two paintings featured on with Geers were also featured in the first and only edition of ^{art} Ventilator - ~~art~~ a Southern African magazine for the arts - by the editor Ivor Powell at the expense of the thousands of artists who have not been exposed to the public before (and there is such a scarcity of art journals in this country), yet the likes of Hodgkins soak up all the limelight and even get half page spreads in ^{the weekly} Mail and Guardian (now Mail and Guardian) of 24-30/03/95 where Powell admits to having done at least 20 interviews with the artist "This must be at least the 20th interview I've done with or over the years with the painter," he writes. Hodgkins's ideas influenced the likes of Powell and a young group of artists which included Kentridge, Bell, Victor and Stopporth. (Payne in Tunnel Vision.) I get the feeling here that it has to do with patronage; I do not mind and I would not like to discourage these people's interests in Hodgkins.

however their conduct becomes questionable when he is get all the prime cuts - metaphorically speaking, & take any metaphor from meat. After all, Hodgins has been featured before and there are those who also deserve to be illuminated. Critics must not get away with this thuggery.

Geers in his ~~thugger~~ essay on third world avant-gardists talks of naive art as being accepted for politically correct reasons and saying that we must stop making these kinds of things (by implication). He quotes Ntshahintshali as our exempli gratia (rightly so) but then I wonder what exempts pluralist appropriators who ~~are a much no~~ like Arnold and Foster who are a much more refined form of naivete. Why are they not also attacked and bludgeoned? I wonder if their education might have something to do with it - they have a Ph.D and a Masters in the Arts respectively. So this selectiveness on the part of these two critics makes me wary of their intentions.

Some Notes on the notes that were used (in no Particular Order):

Malcolm Payne: In A letter to the Curator, Chrisa Art Gallery (15 June 1992)
Tunnel Visions.

Art Ventilator: A Southern African Magazine for the Arts. Vol 1 September 1994
= Mapping at the Centre: Third World Avant Garde... Kendall Geers.

Robert Hodgins at the scene of the crime... Bruce Powell.

I could not help noting that black artists are added almost as an afterthought, and that in these progressive times they were given less than 20% of the space

Such things are painfully obvious and one has to think, and perhaps I am glad that such an unrepresentative rag was shortlived.

Forever Collage Televised (16/04/94) NNTV

Vita Art Now Exhibition catalogue - assortments.

Robert Hodgins Forager 1986 - commentary: Harold, Powell.

Mason - by Margaret Hitzge - Our Art 3 19

by Esme Berman - Art and Artists of SA 19

by " " " " Story of South African Painting 1992.

A Conceptual Self-Portrait (Judith Mason). Notes compiled by

Rindexi Villiers, PTH Art Museum

1994.

Some notes on Mason compiled by Annelie Franken.
Francis Bacon by John Russell.

Of Gerards, Hitzge and Flourey Athena who came fully formed and arrayed in her straramour of strong originality.

One of the differences (as I said earlier) between Mason and Bacon is their *modus operandi*. Mason has been known to be obsessive and to get every detail just right (almost as though she is doing a graphic design) and her work is narrative and full of meanings. She is clearly a symbolist and Hitzge also says that "if there were no such things as symbols, there would be no Judith Mason paintings, for symbols are the foundations upon which her work is structured". Mason's painted objects, says Hitzge, ^{always} become ambiguous images and Mason want likes to feel that she can get a lot of symbolic values out of it. She also says that "the symbols are a code for something else".

and are a 'revelation and representation of something hidden' with no spelling out of meaning. Althe Wehr however says that "Judith Mason's art is art with a message. To communicate her message she makes use of representations - often extremely literal - of symbols and emblems from literature and history that have a defined rather than an intrinsic significance.

Calling, therefore for a literary rather than a visual interpretation, they provide plenty of material for lengthy commentaries on "clues to the meaning of..." and demand that you at least take along your dictionary of symbols when you visit the gallery.

(Pretoria News 22/09/75) It is interesting to note that this is from a review of Mason's prestige exhibition in 1975 at the Pretoria Art Museum so most of her work was there for Wehr to ^{make this} comment in this way.

Mason's technique has been the subject of comments and discussions especially because it is so virtuous.

A critic wrote in the Citizen (2/9/82) that "you're nonetheless often uncertain whether her sophisticated technique is the most important feature of her art, or the eerie 'soliloquy' that arise because of it." This was a comment on "biggest exhibition of oil paintings ever held" (1982).

I myself have been dazzled by her technique more than what she was doing in her work thus I became more curious than interested. Mason says in a short

1972 essay "A prospect of Twine" (1972) Mason declares that

"Only painting and poetry... do not need the scholarly dotting of i's and crossing of t's. They enter at once into metaphor and have their own authority...."

Even though it is claimed that her work has

"no spelling out of meaning" (Hidge) there are recurrent images in her work (or they recurred for a very long time) such as the vest or "tank top" which Berman says is "used as a symbol for her domestic self" For me this means that there are specific meanings associated with some of her work, for instance her "Integrating and Disintegrating Self Portrait 2" tells of her breakdown (heartbroken she was) and I remember that Rina de Villiers explained her symbolism to me in that particular painting. It was clearly a narrative ~~for~~ and there was no "nexus of implications" ^{"(Hidge)"} or "multi-layered meaning" as Berman would have me believe. Perhaps there is indeed a multi-layered meaning in some of her work but I doubt it after taking a literal reading of her Integrating and Disintegrating Self-Portrait 2.

For Baron however it is slightly different; He is ^{qu} said to have said - "quoted as having said (Rusd 93: 113) "I don't know, and I never know, quite how the image will come about. If I did I should become just an eccentric illustrator and I could never surprise myself." In the light of this it was interesting for me to note that

(Let the reader beware that Hidge is out to give the reader a subjective view, that she does not want Mason to be compared to anyone (probably because nothing compares to her so superb). She says that in her "There is a great technical virtuosity inventiveness, but no virtuosity and no conjuring tricks.") I + seems to me that Hidge is anxious to protect us

from oneself (the critic as a censor, is the critic a censor, should the critic censor?) It has to do I think, with being in a position of power (places of power) and in a sphere of influence where you have clout over other people. This can be understood in conjunction with my diatribe against Hodgkins in relation to Geers and Lowell.) This wanting to put us in a ^{particular} frame of mind, this wanting to set us against our inclinations is in my view clearly evident in Hitger's essay on Mason. I have heard nothing of Mason protesting about the inaccuracies and fallacious and misleading arguments brought forward by Mason. I come to the conclusion that the two were in agreement to formulate the Mason persona and what a job of it they did. I want people to be aware of this falsity. prevail what I think is falsity. Hitger/Mason intrigue and not be swept away by its currents as I once was, and as many other people conceivably were).

In Mason's early paintings, her pictures served her ideas but later Mason began with the idea and let the picture take over and dictate its own development. In Mason then, images are coherent and well conceived and with certain aims (narrative or narrative-like) while in Bacon images are ambiguous and unclear with no particular reading required (as is in Mason - my view). Bacon, says Russell, "did not care to elucidate his paintings and ~~hardly~~ almost never responded when someone else hazarded an explanation". Russell also says that "it was in Bacon's ^{his} character that, when he once came back from a visit to a museum with the germ of a new subject, he said to a friend 'No critic will ever know where that comes from! I suppose that this will have to do with the

extremely knowledgeable critic who always mentions that for instance "in Masochela we find echoes of Hepworth" etc. Such historical perspectives are desirable and on occasion clearly necessary (for a better understanding) but I think can be quite repulsive when taken to the extreme. (I mean when a critic would subsist on pointing out historical styles in someone's ~~one~~ work the whole time and making that person non-existent. Just a thought on what I think might perhaps happen.

Ciphers, Cicadas and Warm Water in the winter time.

-The Himalayas.

Making Maron a masonic figure has I think helped to diminish her. (People are responsible for their actions and they must have the consequences of their actions too.) While I approach Bacon's work intuitively (I was once very cerebral about it and it yielded nothing) I still find that I have to approach Maron's cerebrally. The legacy of apartheid lives on; we still feel and see its effects to this day, the Immorality Act for example. And their after effect have a staying power, and one cannot just shrug them off at the twist of a flick of a switch.

Maron's travels have often rejuvenated her and brought into her more something new. After her stay in Italy in a place called Montanino (stayed there for three years) she said of it that

"Ek het 'n gebrek aan selfvertrou gehad" (Beeld 29/10/90, Lucia Burger). In her post Italy works exhibited in 1990 Maron has apparently changed. She scrawls on the walls for her descriptions of her work, as in graffiti like inscriptions some of which says "Finished as a painter. An attempt to describe the grief of not being able to paint properly, the prospect of not painting at all." (I think she likes to be romantic and beguiling. She is still painting now. I think she liked the age of the Romantics.)

(Beeld 29/10/90, article titled Fyn Indith se vet selfvertrou is terug). Hazel Friedman (Star 30/10/90) is article titled 'Indith Maron where to now', says this graffiti thing she undertakes this writing on the wall (for it is writing on the wall) to be an attempt on Maron's part to breakdown the sacrosanct image of the gallery and to make her work more accessible (I wonder to whom, perhaps there was a shift in market trends yesterday, it is now a process of adapt or die, there is no longer a Htop to make us go in her rigting, she is now on her own, I almost want to say gleefully "How have the mighty fallen"! but I refrain because that would be rude and an unpleasant thing to say now wouldn't it?)

Maron's new work after Italy where she says "As a consequence of being isolated in Italy, I've been working on autobiographic self-portraits where I paint what I feel to be myself from inside and calling them autographs rather than portraits" - a very painful and sensible woman she is. (The Star, 23-10-90, Renee Sigel.) Such work include "Holiday Snap This autographs are for me reminiscent of Bacon's portraits Michel Leiris (1976) and (1978) No (93) (94) and Bacon's

"Study for self Portrait-Triptych 1985-6, No (101).")

Tudiz says that before leaving for Italy (the tragic heroine) people had told her that her career was over (many of these people she respect "Baie mense-party het ek bare

respek voor - het gesê ek het die einde van my loopbaan as 'n skilder bereik. 'n Mens moenie dit oor iemand sê nie, al

is dit waar. Skilders kan hulself vernietig. (Beeld - 29/10/90, Lucia

Burger. Madame Sosostis, the famous clairvoyante sometimes ~~has~~ a cold gets a cold, nevertheless ... (She is

a character in Eliot's *The Waste Land* and the cold implies impaired judgement but you never know the truth or falseness of a clairvoyant, an inyanga, a sangoma.

It is very speculative (his predicting the future).

Mason now older is no longer described as "destroying what isn't good" (~~van der Walt, to the point~~ *Die Vaderland*, 1969.

~~she now sees herself as 'n werker~~ "Sy beskou haarself as 'n werker, 'n ambagsvrou wat 'n eerlike dag se arbeid verrig waarmee sy wil verdien."

It comes to my attention that a certain Phil du Plessis (who is now her family doctor)

het "haar werk vernietigend gekritiseer het" in the 60s and 70s (in die jare sestig en sewentig). She now says "Ek

het swak werke die afgelope tien jaar gedoen (1981-1991).

It is in this article that I get to read of

Mason and Bacon in the same breath (Burger: "En meteens besef ek dat die afstand tussen die beelde en die van die Engelse skilder Bacon niet wie Mason se werk ooreekoms toon. (Beeld kalender; 1/08/91), Bartie

du Plessis). I am relieved to find at last someone

who will not shy away (or cover up or indicate where we must go instead of letting us go free) from mentioning the two together comfortably.

At this point I learn that "Mason is objective to the point of absurdity about her work. The quality of her work" she tells Phina Venster that "This is nothing new because many years before (Star 31/7/69) an art correspondent had written "So severe is Mrs. Mason's self criticism that in the past four or five years she has completed less than half a dozen paintings. The rest, unable to meet her stern standards, she has destroyed." So much for those who set themselves gargantuan tasks! I wonder what has been achieved. Unpretentiousness leads to stagnation, computers now do things better than we can in some instances but of course there is no feeling. The life cycle of a butterfly repeats itself - it is a natural cycle.

At this point Mason tells Phina Venster who interviews her for inclusion in Signature, a supplement to Business Day and which was published on 5/09/94 that "one has to know what one is and I know. I am a good second rate artist". She says that she has seen first rate and knows the difference that it is not for wanting to be second rate and quotes Braugner "You don't paint what you want to paint but what you can". And then she says "Anyway I don't think there's only place for great art". This is a far cry from the young Mason whose art was in her view once great ("Great art is as private as death, an intensely personal matter.") (Star 31/7/69). It seems to me that finally Mason is coming into her own (where are they now, the Cheates and Winder and Hidge and all the rest of that school). This is the end of this piece of writing.

Moshekwa Langa matriculated in 1993. He has since been working alone from home in what used to be ~~Kwa~~ the Kwa-Ndabehle Homeland. He lives mostly alone but shares the house he lives in with his mother and his uncle. Moshekwa is interested in matters of history and culture.

Moshekwa's own work has ~~hardly~~^{not} been seen by the public before. He has worked on the theme of identity and its definition and has written extensively on his own origins (as a living person) and the puzzlement that he experiences in day to day living. His 'theme was ~~originally~~ (there is no originality, only re-interpretation and new formal arrangement to recreate meaning).

Neither Fish Nor Fowl now is Transgression of Borders. Moshekwa was born 19 August 1975, is male. He regards this violation as a necessity. He acknowledges that Maron may also have been personally attacked and this rightly so because she is connected to her work (they are not separate, they take each from the other.) Moshekwa welcomes any comments you may have to make. ~~but~~ He can be reached at (01215) 472680.

The article is not a comparable study of Maron and Bacon. It is a conflagration.

A Moshekwa Langa
31 May 1995

Other Books used in Compilation of These Notes:

- The Concise Oxford Dictionary. 1990
- The Wind at Dawn - An Anthology of Poems by
Smyth and Swagins. 1990
- Eliot's The Waste Land and The Journey of the Magi have
been used with freedom
- and so too N.P van Wyk Louw's epic poem Raka
has been quoted. Tafelberg Uitgewers. 36th print 1984, first published 1941.
- Victorian Prose and Poetry (Lionel Trilling and Harold Bloom)
- Efr. The Oxford Anthology of English Literature 1973
- Both English and Afrikaans Language + (Italian)
- Skool woordeboek (Afrikaans + Engels) by Krifzing, Stein, Kromhout.
- My own Notes.

Liberty has been taken in interpretation
and what I have said is not necessarily
your opinion (obviously). P.O. Box 147

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