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CHAPTER ONE – EXPLORING IDENTITY

1.1 IDENTIFYING SOUTH AFRICANS

> In South Africa...the crisis of legitimacy has been replaced by a crisis of identity, which has allowed space for intense debate and the flowing of new creative works by those with their eyes fixed on the post-apartheid culture.
> Liz Gunner (1994: 1)

1.1.1 Self as Body

In 2004, Anthony Sher wrote a play[1] about the life of Demetrios Tsafendas, the man who assassinated South African Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd in 1966[2]. The play was called *I.D.*, a title which highlights the anxiety of both protagonist and antagonist, who were – each in their own way – obsessed by a search for identity. Verwoerd codified the system of apartheid as a thesis in the Department of Sociology at the University of Stellenbosch, and he was to spend his life labouring at the task of delineating the precise nature and means of sanctioning the schema he proposed. This was a process which resulted in a formidable structure around a very specific framing of identity in terms of race. As is well known, this despised system of identification lead to a great deal of anger, hatred, pride, jealousy and, ultimately, bloodshed. Eventually, it also lead to the isolation of the South African government from the international community.

Hendrik Verwoerd was not born in South Africa, and Sher suggests that it may have been because he felt himself to be an outsider that he became so obsessed with issues of identity. Demetrios Tsafendas was a mixture of Shangaan, Portuguese, German and Greek ancestry and he spent his life as a displaced person within Verwoerd's system, searching for a place where he might feel he belonged. He was repeatedly rejected

[1] For published plays, the date given is the date of publication. For plays that have not been published, the year given indicates when the work was first performed.
[2] *I.D.* premiered at the Almeida theatre in London in 2004, and was screened on SABC 3 on July 6 2004 at 22:00.

and ostracised from various communities as he floated uneasily between the cracks of the edifice designed by Verwoerd. The assassin lived in a liminal state, forever in-between, belonging nowhere, never at home. Sher's play suggests that eventually this dissatisfaction crystallised into a firm hatred for the man who had defined Tsafendas as nameless.

Sher's play highlights to what extent questions of identity overshadowed all other concerns of the Afrikaner Nationalist government. When Population Registration Act Number 30 was passed on 7 July, 1950, it stipulated that every inhabitant of South Africa be designated an identity by the "Office for Race Classification"; a classification which was to have far reaching consequences. One's capabilities were seen as determined by the description of one's physical characteristics, such as the texture and colour of one's hair, the size of one's lips, or the way in which a light shone from one's skin[3]. The question of identity was at the very foundation of the apartheid project and increasingly precise biological and sociological definitions of the population of the country were used not only to describe, but to control the population. In fact, this process might be seen as an apt metaphor for the way in which descriptions of identity are often a form of control exercised by the one formulating the definition.

It is still the case that some or other form of physical description remains the basis of the methods used to construct a legal identity. For example, records such as eye colour, fingerprints, voice, iris, height, scars, dental records and DNA are the forensic tools used to establish the proof of the identity of an individual body. This type of classification of an identity rests on what Paul Ricoeur (1991: 73) defines as "sameness

[3] This included the infamous "pencil-in-the-hair-test" in which a pencil was stuck into a person's hair. If it did not fall out, because the curls were too tight, one might then be classified as coloured instead of white.

(Latin *idem*...)". In other words, it defines the body as being itself. But the physical identification under apartheid was intent on defining a body not only as "itself", but, more importantly, as part of a collective. In this sense, the body was located and defined as being part of a particular narrative.

The story which apartheid told about the people of South Africa was about hierarchy. It provided a demeaning description of all races other than the so-called "white" race. Of course, many did not accept this story told by the state legislature, and yet, ironically, resistance to the narrative enforced by the laws of the land often became the very means used to shape a sense of identity. In other words, the racial identities themselves were not always challenged as much as the interpretation of the categories created. Much of the interest in the literature written during the apartheid era springs from the exploration of ways in which writers resisted the institutionalisation of their identity, and the ways in which they challenged the monolithic identity structures propagated by the state. And yet, the influence of the apartheid system's description of identity often remained the cornerstone of definitions of identity. This is an issue to which this thesis will repeatedly return – that in order to become free, it may be necessary to liberate ourselves not only from the identities imposed on us in the past, but from the ways in which those identities were structured. I would argue that the means of untangling the strictures of these identities lies in first addressing their creation as signs.

1.1.2 Self as Symbol

If one agrees that a person's identity is more firmly rooted in the ways in which he or she is contextualised in terms of a narrative structure, rather than in a substantive material "essence", then the question arises of which narratives to select out of the myriads of stories being told. As a source of identity, the physical body at least provides a coherent object of investigation which remains, more or less, stable. This is not, however, true of the ways in which the body can be interpreted. Besides defining identity as *idem* (sameness), Ricoeur also refers to identity as *ipse* "as self" (73).

> [T]he self does not know itself immediately, but only indirectly, through the detour of cultural signs of all sorts, which articulate the self in symbolic mediations (80).

It is this second form of identity which is of primary interest to this thesis, and I will be examining a number of play texts as "cultural signs" mediating and articulating a semiology of identity. This is in line with current thinking that identities such as gender and race are not biological, but social constructions[4]. Still, the debilitating impact which the social construction of the apartheid identity had on the stories South Africans told about their senses of self is inextricable from the material consequences of the classifications introduced by the system.

But then the story changed. Due to a great many factors and forces – including the resistance movement within South Africa; the Communist insurgence on its borders; the country's increasing isolation by means of the sanctions and embargoes imposed on it; advances in mass media which helped to disseminate an awareness of

[4] One example of many is laid out in the introduction by Natasha Distiller and Melissa Steyn to *Under Construction: 'Race' and Identity in South Africa Today* (2004: 1-11).

democracy as a norm; as well as any number of unquantifiable forces, such as change in perspective which may have been brought about due to transformations in religious or other ethical configurations – the nationalist government underwent a transformation in 1989 when it gave up resisting the African National Congress. It subsequently unbanned the party, and held a referendum on reform in 1991. According to this referendum, most of the white population of South Africa were sufficiently convinced that democracy provided a more tenable future, and they endorsed the first fully democratic elections held in 1994 which swept the ANC into power where it has remained until today.

This was an extraordinary turn-around. What is perhaps even more remarkable is that this transformation did not occur in isolation, but was similar to other revolutions across the world which occurred at the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century, such as the victory of the Solidarity movement in Poland; the fall of the Berlin wall; and the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union. What was noteworthy about all of these "velvet revolutions"[5] was the purported transformation, or change in perspective of those in power. In other words, this was not simply the case of one group winning an outright war against those of a different persuasion and capturing their geographic territory. Instead, the terrain captured in these examples was ideological, and much of the impetus for change came from within the ruling governments themselves.

The dissolution of apartheid and the advent of democracy in South Africa created the opportunity for radical re-configurations of identity, and the transformation of structures of identification. The official semiotic description of identity ostensibly

[5] The term "velvet revolution" was initially used to describe the Czech transformation which brought Vaclav Havel into power, though it is an apt metaphor for many of the other transformations which occurred at this time.

changed completely and South Africa's new constitution categorically outlaws discrimination in terms of race. It may, therefore, come as a surprise to find that fourteen years after "liberation", race still dominates many discussions of identity. For example, at the time of writing, every job application, student registration and request for funding in the arts demands a declaration of race. In many ways there has not been a transformation of descriptions of identity in racial terms, and it is the contention of this thesis that we urgently need to relinquish our desperate clinging to supposedly fixed categories of race, ethnicity, gender, and nationalism and begin to seek out new sources for our identifications.

1.1.3 Transforming Identities

Since the subject of identity is one which is of interest to a number of fields in the humanities, it would be unnecessarily limiting to confine my investigations to theories of literature and drama. Any attempt to come to terms with some of the ways in which the word is being employed today would have to take into account the relevance of the term to a range of disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, sociology and anthropology. I will consequently be taking a multi-disciplinary approach throughout this thesis.

Where many of these fields converge is in their interest in the transformation of identity. However, transformation has not always been considered in a positive light. For example, in the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle sought to distinguish between what he called "differentiae" and essence, claiming that

> not every differentia precludes identity, since many different differentiae inhere in things specifically identical, though not in the substance of these nor essentially (1952: 97).

In referring to an essential quality which identifies any particular thing – as opposed to superficial "differentia" – Aristotle refers to a conception of identity which is unchanging. This is the same formulation of identity which Erika Fischer-Lichte notes in eighteenth century Europe. She shows how in *Letter to Monsieur d'Alembert* (1758), Jean-Jacques Rousseau refers to identity as a static concept, and notes that for him "change in identity is out of the question; change can only be experienced and lamented as a falsification of that which is authentic, as a loss of identity" (2002: 1). She goes on, however, to say that in the twentieth century a number of fields in the humanities, including philosophy and anthropology, have developed concepts of identity which "presume change". Fischer-Lichte goes as far as to say that today "without the potential to transgress certain boundaries and cancel out certain existing differences, identity seems almost an impossibility" (2). Similarly, Marvin Carlson draws attention to an essay by Clifford Geertz, called "Blurred Genres", in which Geertz writes that

> traditional anthropological concerns with continuous traditions, singular and stable cultures, coherent structures, and stable identities has been largely replaced by a concept of identity and culture as constructed, relational, and in constant flux, with the porous or contested borders replacing centres as the focus of interest, because it is at these borders that meaning is continually being created and negotiated (in Carlson 2003: 206).

There appears to have been a shift in the description of identity. Instead of seeing identity as a product of a history of stable traditions and communal beliefs, it is today often described in terms of the boundaries of value systems. Instead of searching for stability as definitive of an identity, the search has shifted to areas of friction and instability. In *The Mysteries of Identity: A Theme in Modern Literature*, Robert Langbaum writes:

> As a term in philosophy *identity* used to apply mainly to the unity of objects, especially through an expanse of time....The word did not take on its current psychological denotation, it did not begin to apply to self, until the unity of self became problematic (1977: 25).

Clearly, contemporary thinking is increasingly suspicious of notions of identity as unchanging and permanent. In South Africa in particular, since the 1994 transformation from a Christian Nationalist government there has been a constitutional shift away from the idea that a ruling party might be capable of representing god-given – and therefore essential – identity structures. And yet, this shift has also created a sense of dis-ease in the loss of clarity concerning the delineation of identities. Many, as I have already indicated, are still trying to hold on to the former categories, while others are trying to patch up a sense of fracture by positing an essential "free" individuality as the basis for a universal identity. Whatever the case may be, the "unity of self" in South African society is problematic, which is perhaps why the issue of identity has become such a prominent concern for so many.

This thesis hopes to examine representations of, and reactions to, the loss or lack of unity of self. I am interested in perceptions of identity in crisis and would also like to explore whether a perception of identity as unstable, uncertain and lacking unity should necessarily result in psychic calamity, or whether this instability might turn out to be an indication of an inherently transformative ability, which might even be regarded as a sign of health. In my investigations into play texts, I will certainly not be seeking to invent or discover a totalising conception of "the" quintessential South African identity[6]. The task of this thesis is not to seek out a new grand narrative

[6] In trying to define identity in South African theatre, one is reminded of Pat Schwartz's comment about Athol Fugard, namely that he "believes that it is as impossible to categorise 'a South African theatre' as it is to categorise 'a South African'" (1988: 157).

under which to homogenise all heterogeneities, but rather to provide a glimpse into micro-narratives discerned within frameworks realised by some of the plays published during the period under investigation. I am particularly interested in those representations which not only depict transformation, but which are also transformative. These are plays which do not simply seek to represent identities, but to create them. They are plays which not only read culture, but write it.

1.1.4 A Deleuzian Vocabulary

In examining the transformation of identities, it may be useful to make use of Gilles Deleuze's description of definition in terms of lines which demarcate planes (1993: 226-230). These lines can be used to divide large collectives, such as different life-worlds (existing synchronically), as well as different roles within a single life-time (in terms of a diachronic description). On a more precise level, Deleuze describes molecular adjustments used to move lines of segregation, as well as "nomadic lines" which define the flight and flux of planes of identification as they territorialize and de-territorialize areas of influence. Since this thesis is most interested in descriptions of alterations in identity, it seems appropriate to turn, from time to time, to a Deleuzian vocabulary.

Of all Deleuze's innovations in description, the one which is possibly the most significant to this study is his distinction between "arboreal" and "rhizomatic" classification systems. As the name suggests, the "arboreal" relates to the structure of a tree, and in the arborescent schema "ordering is strictly hierarchical, from superior to subordinate" (Stagoll 2005:13). This represents a fairly fixed and static structure in which "lesser" ideas flow into and are supported by a central trunk. This is also the structure of a traditional thesis which begins by setting up variables which it then

consistently applies to specific instances. The trouble with this sort of schema, as Cliff Stagoll indicates, is that "thinking in such a way stifles creativity, leaves superior concepts relatively immune to criticism and tends to close one's mind to the dynamism, particularity and change that is evident in lived experience" (14). In contrast to this is the "rhizomatic" structure, related to the biological form of the rhizome, which is structured like a grass[7], rather than a tree. Deleuze describes it as follows:

> A rhizome as subterranean stem is absolutely different from roots and radicals...any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything else...this is very different from a tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order....A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles. A semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts... (1993: 29-30).

According to this description, there is still a causal relation in the rhizome between past and present understanding, even though this knowledge does not flow along a clearly discernible line. Whereas arborescent epistemological structures require a fixed origin, with a specific starting point and a linear branching out, the rhizome spreads in all directions simultaneously[8]. Deleuze goes on to expand his notion of the rhizome in terms of "multiplicities", saying that, "Multiplicities are rhizomatic....A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions" (30). Furthermore, Verena Conley says that the rhizome

> is always a multiplicity; it has no genealogy; it could be taken from different contexts....The rhizome does away with hierarchies. It augments its valences

[7] Verena Conley says that rhizomes can be compared to "pliable grasses...horizontal and flat" (2005: 234).

[8] If one were to consider the creation of identities in terms of the metaphor of biological evolution, one might also here contrast structures relating to a ladder with those of a bush. Stephen Jay Gould refers to the first as *anagenesis*, whereas the rhizomatic model relates more closely to Gould's description of evolution as a "bush" characterised by "an elaborate and complex series" of events (1997: 63).

> through hybrid connections that consist by virtue of addition, of one thing 'and' another. The rhizome operates in a space without boundaries and defies established categories such as binaries or points that would mark-off and be used to fix positions in extensive space. It ceaselessly connects and reconnects over fissures and gaps, deterritorialises and reterritorialises itself at once (2005: 233).

One way in which a multiplicity can be interpreted is as a unity which contains different parts, such as a wasp and an orchid, which together create an interdependent structure, though one would never be in danger of mistaking the wasp for the orchid. In the same way a posited "national" identity is a type of multiplicity, and yet one would not say that all "South Africans" are the same, as the popular SABC 1 jingle would encourage one to believe. In this way a multiplicity is a unity which exists with multiple interacting parts. Theatre is an excellent example of a multiplicity, in that it exists within numerous relations: between audience and performer; performer and writer; director and performer; advertiser and audience, and so on. Elizabeth Grosz defines a Deleuzian multiplicity as follows:

> A multiplicity is not a pluralized notion of identity (identity multiplied by *n* locations), but is rather an ever-changing, nontotalizable collectivity, an assemblage defined, not by its abiding identity or principle of sameness over time, but through its capacity to undergo permutations and transformations, that is, its dimensionality (1994: 192).

A multiplicity is thus not defined according to its stability, but in terms of its transmutability. If we are to consider the search for identity as a search for a multiplicity, then we must forever give up the notion that we will ever be able to settle on a comprehensive definition of what an identity is. This thesis, for example, will be circling and exploring a number of different aspects relating to the search for identity, and yet, it will not necessarily be able to separate the various components into a particular lineage in order to discover a single essential property definitive of all

identities. The thesis relies, rather, on the conceptual matrix of the rhizome. Instead of approaching identity in terms of binary oppositions such as white/black, male/female, bourgeois/proletarian, (which inevitably runs the risk of resorting to hierarchies), I would prefer to open definitions up to include a multiplicity of possible interpretative schemas, an approach encouraged by the use of a rhizomatic structure[9].

The rhizome is a structure well suited to the study of identity within a heterogonous society, since Deleuze claims that it is precisely heterogeneous elements which "form a rhizome" (1993: 32), not those which are homogenous. In this sense, the whole of South Africa might be considered a giant rhizome, a vast unity impossible to quantify accurately since it is in constant movement, in various stages of flux defined by flights of fear and attractions of desire. Some elements crystallise while others burst loose – here is a divergence, there a subversion, while "micro-fascisms" are perpetually forming within it. From this point of view, there is no total, grand identity which can be discovered and named, and yet this thesis will from time to time settle on a certain plane and attempt to elaborate a particular type of identity structure. As it does so, it will be trying to examine the emergence of a map which intersects performance with text and charts junctures created by writing and its analysis. These planes are acknowledged as being not only interpretative tools, but also creative devices.

To reiterate – I do not believe it useful to attempt to fix a set of definitive variables defining what identity is. I do not feel that it will be a valuable exercise to create a specific definition beyond the one already introduced which focuses the study on the level of the sign, which can then be applied to the plays under consideration. Instead, this thesis is a perpetual search for different types of identities and I would like to use

[9] As Felicity J. Colman writes: "The rhizome is a powerful way of thinking without recourse to analogy or binary constructions. To think in terms of the rhizome is to reveal the multiple ways that you might approach any thought, activity, or a concept" (2005: 231).

different approaches for the different texts and planes addressed in this manner. Using multiple entry points and an eclectic array of inter-disciplinary theoretical tools, I mean to approach the issue of identity from numerous sides at once, as a speculative exercise attempting to tease out meanings which may not have been apparent at first glance. In so doing, I hope to show that an opportunity exists in terms of a potential shift in South African identities from those fixed on historical notions of race to categories which are more fluid and less certain.

1.1.5 Aims

Briefly stated, in this thesis I mean to explore some of the ways in which identity has been represented in dramatic texts written in South Africa since 1994. My way into this terrain is by examining representations of identity largely in terms of characterisation (though not excluding aspects of style, narrative construction and inter-textuality) in a selection of plays published in English. Dramatic texts are an ideal location in which to examine transformations of identity, since the theatre operates as an arena of transformation, and I believe that drama is not only able to represent transformation, but also to effect it. Although I will not be able to ignore aspects relating to performance, since this is a thesis in English Literature my primary focus will remain on the play text[10].

The present study is thus rooted in three terrains in contemporary South Africa: configurations of identity (as theory), the theatre (as practice), and selected play-texts

[10] Furthermore, I have chosen to focus on those publications which have had the largest impact. Now it will certainly be a contentious issue to try to define "impact", and there can be no set definition of this. However, I have, for example, only selected publications which have had significant productions, been published by established publishing houses, and which have been accessible to the general public, (that is, texts which can be ordered from book stores). So, for example, from the outset I have excluded self published plays, plays published in readers for school-children, and plays exclusively published in academic journals.

(as demonstrations of the practice of theory). Before moving on to an examination of some of the play texts produced since 1994, I feel it may be of some value to elaborate aspects related to the other two facets of this study. I will begin then with the study of theatre, and then move on to consider some of the potential problems involved in emphasising text over performance, before moving on to a discussion of issues of identity in terms of other disciplines in the humanities – including philosophy, anthropology, sociology and psychology. This rather lengthy introduction will hopefully assist in interpreting the characterizations in the texts under examination.

Throughout the thesis, I would like to keep under consideration the question of what it means to have a fixed, and firmly grounded sense of identity – which might provide one with a sense of rootedness and belonging; and to contrast this with a more flexible identity – which might allow one to be more open to change, but which also runs the risk of being inchoate. Related to this question are the implications of transformation on senses of identity, and whether one requires a clear idea of that which one hopes to transform into.

1.2 DRAMA AND TRANSFORMATION

1.2.1 The Importance of Play

> By means of such games as theatre...performances are presented which probe a community's weaknesses, call its leaders to account, desacralize its most cherished values and beliefs, portray its characteristic conflicts and suggest remedies for them, and generally take stock of its current situation in the known "world". Victor Turner (*From Ritual to Theatre: the Human Seriousness of Play*, 1982: 11)

Our everyday world is filled with drama. Besides the proliferation of performances in terms of the representation of fictional characters in media such as movies, television, and radio, there are also the roles mediated by journalists, editors and presenters. Besides computer role-playing games and chat-rooms being accessed with *nom de plumes* (known as "avatars"), there are also the parts being played out in courts of law, and the roles adopted for the ceremonies of diverse religions. Then there are those who assume the roles of therapists and teachers or, on a more intimate plane, are playing the parts of fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, of friends and family. There are also politicians and advertisers who identify us as actors in a consumer's marketplace. Instead of playing a peripheral role in our existence, the dramatic impulse seems to be at the heart of many of the habits and rituals which make us human. Perhaps the traditional theatre environment might be seen as a formalisation of this ordinary, everyday behaviour, this playing out of our daily identities.

The performance of a play is thus both a very ordinary, and a very important cultural marker. Drama offers the opportunity of a shared reality and the space created by a dramatic performance may well constitute one of the last meeting places of a communal "society", where a material experience is shared within a collective. This is an experience which does not happen in the same way in the solitary darkness of the

cinema. As Paul Slabolebszy says: "Film takes you on a journey on your own, alone"[11], whereas theatre is a shared experience, the audience being more aware of the visceral reality of the performers on stage, as well as of other audience members.

The performing arts are visible to a group gathered together in a shared space and in this way the theatre is able to assist with a representation of culture and can create contexts of cultural and economic exchange in ways that other art forms can not. So theatre is capable of creating a community and even, possibly, transforming the perceptions of that community. Public performances are sites where the consciousness of a community can be discovered or invented; forged or strengthened. Theatre is what John MacAloon calls a "laboratory for cultural negotiations" (in Carlson 2003: 214). Besides forging a sense of communal identity, theatre also serves an external purpose in promoting – by portraying and defining – a specular cultural identity within an unfamiliar context. This may be in terms of the performance of a South African play in an international arena, but it equally describes a play from Cape Town being performed in Pretoria, such as the plays of Fiona Coyne or The Magnet Theatre, which can be seen in terms of a distinctly "Capetonian" identity.

The performing arts are uniquely situated to locate and reveal identities which have become static and much stand-up comedy (such as that of Pieter Dirk Uys, Marc Lottering and Barry Hilton) relies on an audience's recognition of stereotypes. However, the stage also provides a space where identities can be transformed. When an actor portrays an identity on stage, this could serve as an impetus for people to identify or resonate with the "self" of the character/performer. This could lead to the desire to mimic (or, in some cases, to oppose) the identity portrayed on stage. A

[11] This was stated during a public interview between Paul Slabolepzy and Anthony Akerman on 11 April, 2003, Auckland Park during a meeting of the South African Screen Writers' Association (SASWA).

character is able either to draw or to repel the viewer. Going to the theatre is thus an enormously powerful exercise in identity formation, as one's sense of self is pushed and pulled in various directions. Fischer-Lichte puts this into a remarkable perceptive when she writes that

> theatre symbolises the human condition of creating identity to the extent to which it makes the distancing of man from himself the condition of its existence (5).

In this sense, the recognition of an identity is only possible when an act of separation has taken place, when the one identifying has been distanced from the one being identified. In a performance space characters are objectified in that they are distanced from the audience observing them, not only in terms of physical space, but also in terms of a metaphorical distance in which identity can be examined and configured[12]. In *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor*, Bruce Wilshire puts it like this:

> The result of the experiment of theatre is discovery, and we come home to ourselves as we believe we are: beings of inexhaustible particularity as well as [beings having] indefinitely expandable horizons of human concern and identification... (1982: 10).

Theatre is thus a transformative ritual which enables one to produce meaning and which helps one to create modes of identification. One of the very earliest anthropologists to write of ritual as a kind of theatrical event was Arnold van Gennep who in *Rites de Passage* (1908) detailed ways in which cultures carry out or perform

[12] This applies equally to the Naturalistic theatre as well as that, for example, of Augusto Boal, in which an audience is asked to identify with characters. I am using the term "objectified" in its materialistic sense, not in its pejorative sense of showing a lack of concern.

rites which symbolically indicate transformations of identity. Erika Fischer-Lichte describes his definition of these "rites of passage":

> They trigger the transforming effects which change the identity of individuals, social groups and entire cultures at times of life crisis....They are bound to a highly symbolic experience of transition or transgression of boundaries... (2002: 3).

In *Performance* (2003), Marvin Carlson describes Victor Turner as the first to use the tools proposed by Van Gennep, the "first to use the concept of Social Drama as a tool for anthropologists" (15). In this sense, the enactment of culture is seen as a performance, as a drama which displays a certain community's perceptions, as well as the workings of its imaginative frameworks. For example, Peter Merrington in "Masques, Monuments, and Masons: The 1910 Pageant of the Union of South Africa" (1997), describes the 1910 celebrations as formative dramatic rituals which created the sense of a new nation out of the Union of South Africa. In a similar vein, Loren Kruger describes the inauguration of Nelson Mandela on 10 May, 1994 as a performance event which symbolically changed and re-interpreted the signifiers of the old system (*The Drama of South Africa: Plays, Pageants and Publics Since 1910*. 1999: 1-4). My aim here is to take this process further, and to draw potentially political implications from performative metaphors, or, more accurately, from the characters and themes created by playwrights in their writing. Since dramatic terminology has been used to describe a political process, perhaps the study of theatre could be a fruitful place to search for representations of the transformation which South Africa is still undergoing.

Victor Turner, in *From Ritual to Theatre: the Human Seriousness of Play* (1982) defines two types of "communitas": one involving the "confrontation of human identities", and the other serving as an "ideological communitas" (47). Theatre is able

to bolster both of these: on the one hand providing a space in which it is safe to be confronted by other, unknown identities; on the other hand creating an ideological realm where agreement and disagreement can be played out. Turner describes theatre as a "liminal" activity. Looking to Van Gennep's rites of passage, Turner emphasises not so much the "set apartness" of performance, but its "in-betweenness" – its function of transition between two states of more settled or more conventional cultural activity (16). He makes the distinction between the "liminal" (which aims at transforming the participant) and the "liminoid" (which seemingly unites disparities in a momentary suspension of belief). For Turner, theatre is "an important means for the intercultural transmission of painfully achieved modalities of experience" (18). He sees the liminoid space of performance as a "hybrid space where cultural styles jostle and collide; where culture wars spawn not new resentment but new cultures" (129). From this point of view, the inauguration on 10 May, which brought together elements of Western and African styles, was an amalgamation of conflicting identities in which the potential for a new South African culture was defined.

In relation to this event, one is reminded of Homi Bhaba's writings on an "in-between space" where the meaning of culture is forged, with the aim of "transforming the conditions of enunciation at the level of the sign" (*The Location of Culture,* 1994: 247). Ironically, as Kruger points out, although African elements were present at this historic inauguration – such as the presence of *izimbongi* (praise singers) – the structure of the ceremony was a replica of the inauguration of a modern Western president from any one of the European nations which colonised Africa. One has to wonder whether the "sign" really changed significantly, or whether the enunciation mimicked the colonialist methodologies and, in effect, camouflaged a "South African" identity in order to make it more palatable for a global arena. This is an important

question – how attempts to create a sense of authenticity have been reconciled with the demands of multi-culturalism in terms of a global context.

Theatre occupies a unique position in being part of a world of "play", while at the same time drawing on representations of serious subjects. It is clearly not reality, and yet it often hopes to represent the real[13]. Marvin Carlson points out that Richard Schechner, amongst others, has drawn attention to this dual nature of the "play frame", in that "a performer is not herself (illusion) but also not not herself (because the play takes place in reality)". So there is a kind of "double consciousness – not me, not not me" (49). Earlier in *Performance*, Carlson also cites Richard Bauman in this regard:

> all performance involves a consciousness of doubleness, according to which the actual execution of an action is placed in mental comparison with a potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model of that action (5).

This "doubleness" also comes about because there exists a "close relationship between the self of the performing artist and the self being presented" (50). This is why it may also be necessary in this introduction to explore the ways in which a "self" is constructed in terms of theories proposed by other disciplines in the humanities which also have an interest in the human propensity for "play". For example, Carlson notes that

> [Johan] Huizenga considers the development or reinforcement of a community spirit or consciousness, "communitas", to be one of the basic features of play, and suggests that its effects often continue beyond the actual play experience. (22).

[13] Since our only access to reality occurs in terms of its representations, this provides a powerful link to our perceptions of what is real.

Similarly, Mikhail Bakhtin documents the topsy-turvy world of the carnival as representing:

> the place for working out, in a concretely sensuous, half-real and half-play-acted form, a *new mode of interrelationship between individuals,* counterpoised to the all-powerful socio-hierarchical relationships of non-carnival life (in Carlson 23).

In these terms theatre is part of an ulterior and unusual activity which is part of a gratuitous, imaginary world of "play", instead of the "everyday". As Bakhtin has pointed out in his famous analysis of the carnivalesque – in the carnival the rules of the everyday do not apply; hierarchies are inverted, and nothing can be taken seriously. Brian Sutton-Smith also examines the subversive potential of this liminal space and the "disorderly quality of liminal activities" which allows participants to let off steam "from an overdose of order". According to Sutton-Smith, "we have something to *learn* through being disorderly", since novelties "which arise when contingencies in the normative system require it" produce "a *protocultural* system, because it is the precursor of innovative normative forms" which is, ultimately, "the source of new culture" (in Carlson: 19). In this sense the liminal creates a provisional space in which innovations to orders of socialisation may be played out. This is one of the reasons why anthropologists are interested in playfulness, because it occurs on the threshold between formal rituals of daily behaviour, in a liminal space referred to by Turner as "anti-structure". In a sense, play stands removed from the ordinary strictures of society and provides a space outside of the everyday, in order to, as Turner says, "think about... propositions that are not *in* cultural codes but *about* them" (in Carlson: 19).

The theatre can be seen as a representation of a public imagination, as a forum in which a private, subjective enunciation is made communal, and yet what is being

displayed is also some version of a reality with which an audience is able to identify. This does, however, introduce a potential problem into this dynamic: whether or not one should (and if one should, then to what extent) keep the worlds of the imaginative play and pretence separate from the "real" world in which one is obliged to be responsible for one's actions, and in which there are real, material consequences for one's decisions. Turner sees "liminoid" activities as including a range of individual leisure activities which are all outside of what is described as "work", or, in other words, as part of the world of "play". But to what extent can one equate performance (and, consequently, theatrical) practices with "real life"? Is it possible to claim that the world of "play" has an important influence on the world of "work", without imposing unnecessary (if any) restrictions on what play "should" achieve? Is it necessary to separate the "real" from the "imaginary"? If one claims that the imaginary world is similar to – if not commensurate with – the "real" world, one runs the risk of requiring a stringent censorship over imaginative material which is not in line with, say, ethical, national, or political ideals. It was precisely the close correlation between the material and the imaginary worlds which lead to the restrictions imposed on artists during fascist systems in Italy and Germany, and under Communism in the Soviet Union and in China, as well as, of course, under the Afrikaner Nationalist government in South Africa[14]. There seems to be a paradoxical situation here: if one acknowledges the importance of "play", then there is the danger of turning it into a very serious enterprise, which would, consequently, stunt its ability to function

[14] Michel de Certeau (1988) claims that the idea that media, literature or performance can have a negative influence over society, dates back to the Enlightenment:

> In the eighteenth century, the ideology of the Enlightenment claimed that the book was capable of reforming society....This myth of Education inscribed a theory of consumption in the structures of cultural politics...the conviction that ...the public...is moulded by (verbal or iconic) writing, that it becomes similar to what it receives, and that it is imprinted by and like the text which is imposed on it (166-7).

freely. It is as though, in order to take play seriously, one should not take it too seriously, or else its "playfulness" seizes up!

Due to the urgency of critiquing the apartheid system, performers and playwrights may have felt compelled to address "real" issues about the political realities of South Africa. The only way to "play" with these structures was by satire, such as, for example, in the caricatures created by Guy Willoughby, Robert Kirby, and Pieter-Dirk Uys. There were also plays like *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (Fugard; Ntshona; Kani 1974) and *Woza Albert!* (Ngema; Mtwa; Simon 1983) which were presented as "playful", but which still maintained a socially and politically aware message. In other words, their forms of play were delineated by demarcations of a set of serious principles. After 1994, when the imperative of attacking the injustices of apartheid were no longer necessary, perhaps a turn from the "serious" to the "playful" is a quality one might expect to encounter. Quite possibly, the end of the enormous pressure to be overtly "serious" about the political realities of the country will now have made it possible to examine other aspects of this society. Perhaps the shift from the realm of public politics may have resulted in a move towards an interest in the politics of the self.

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, theatre can be seen as a metaphor of reality. I have provided a few tentative speculations as to why a study of identity in theatre – particularly with reference to its links to play and transformation within a society – may be a useful undertaking. As a meeting place for society, as a representation of the liminal state of play, theatre could serve as a site which is capable of representing cultural transformation. Before I move to a more specific discussion of ways in which identification can take place, it may be relevant briefly to discuss the relation of text to performance, since my main focus in this study will, after all, be the texts of plays

which have been published. The next section provides a discussion of some of the concomitant limitations of the decision to focus on published texts instead of on performance.

1.2.2 Text and Performance

This thesis finds itself caught between the discourses of two disciplines – literature[15] and performance; text and speech. Jacques Derrida (in *Of Grammatology* [1976]), insistently draws attention to a prioritisation of text over orality. All language, he says, "is beginning to let itself be transferred to, or at least summarized under, the name of writing" (6). It is "as if", he says, speech, voice, hearing, sound are "revealed today as the guise or disguise of a primary writing" (7). Writing is no longer merely a "supplement" to speech, but has become the means of understanding the origination of language. In this sense Derrida sees no reason to value *homo loquens* over *homo scriptor* and even performance becomes a type of text, which can be read in terms of its semiotic representation.

Perhaps every reading of a play is, in effect, a performance; and yet the text provides a means by which the ritual of a performance can be re-enacted. Also, it does still seem to be the case that plays which are published survive longer than plays which are not published. As Hauptfleisch indicates in "The (Re)Canonization of South African Theatre" (1996: 115), publication is "[f]undamental to canonization and literary

[15] Drama still forms one of the core genres (alongside poetry and prose) taught by English departments, so the question as to why English published play-texts have been chosen as the principle objects of examination could be answered from a purely administrative point of view, in that this thesis falls within the ambit of a Department of English, and is thus primarily concerned with the exploration of texts which can be reproduced in the classroom for purposes of study.

history...most assuredly so in the case of an ephemeral art form such as theatre". He goes on to make his point even more forcefully:

> Ultimately we all perceive the evolution of the theatre in this country in terms of *published* texts, no matter what we all say and write about performance and oral traditions....Eventually everyone seeks a text to read, analyse, discuss and (re-) perform… (115).

And yet, among many writers on theatre, there seems to be a move away from the priority of text to that of performance. Marvin Carlson notes that "[p]lays have been traditionally regarded as stable written objects, their various manifestations in different productions a more or less accidental part of their history, not really essential to understanding". He says that although their broader context has often been interpreted as "literary" (80), perhaps theatrical performance is closer to "the circus, the sideshow, the parade, or even the wrestling match or the political convention" (86), than to literary forms such as novels or poems. Later, Carlson cites Conquergood who sees a shift in ethnography as being from "world as text, to world as performance" (209). Similarly, Richard Schechner's interest in the anthropology of theatre is not in the text so much as in the performance act:

> Who performers are, how they achieve their temporary or permanent transformations, what role the audience plays – these are the key questions; not about dramatic literature, but about the living performance event when looked at from the viewpoint of the human beings involved in the performance (1985: 32).

And yet, perhaps a compromise might be reached between seeing either text or performance as foundational. As Steven Connor (1997) points out:

> Any theatrical work exemplifies the tension between product and process, for a dramatic work can never exist fully either in its script version, or in an

> individual performance of that script. Any script must advertise its incompleteness, its necessity of being embodied in more than mere printed words, while any performance must always refer back to some notional script (142).

It should be borne in mind that although performance itself can be read as a sign system, it is one which is perhaps more difficult to codify. Hauptfleisch asks: "how do you describe, analyze, evaluate and eventually write about or report on the performance?" (11). And yet, theorising on performance (often in terms of the presence of the physical) is a rapidly growing area of academic investigation lead by writers such as Marvin Carlson, Richard Poirier, Philip Auslander and others. However, apart from occasional forays in my examination of plays and a few pages in my conclusion, I will not be looking in any detail at theories of performance.

The decision to limit my primary investigations into dramatic texts may seem somewhat conservative, and yet, while acknowledging that a focus on textual narration and characterisation limits the study, it still permits one to draw on a wide range of disciplines. From its earliest beginnings, the study of literature has, after all, maintained an interest in what would later become the concerns of many disciplines in the humanities and one might even describe the discourses of philosophy, history, psychology and sociology as emerging out of an interest in narration, in the telling of stories about how the world has come to be the way it has been understood to be. In this way, I would argue that the study of drama as literature is still a worthwhile enterprise. Still, although the primary focus of the more detailed investigations will remain published texts, I will certainly also explore ways in which text and performance interact and make use of this opportunity to explore the relationship between performativity (the moment of actual embodiment, the moment of negotiation in time and space, the interaction with the instinctive and the accidental) and the formulation and inscription of a text. Although I will return principally to the

textual evidence for my assertions on new South African writing, it will not be possible entirely to disregard the performances of plays which have not been published, nor to ignore theories on how identities come to be performed.

Focusing on texts then as a primary resource is one thing, but why only plays in English? Trying to draw conclusions about South African identities within the limited range of a single language is problematic. Alexander Neville writes in "Mainstreaming by Confluence: The Multilingual Context of Literature in South Africa" that "[i]t becomes impossible...to write about South African literature and then to confine oneself to literary works written in English" (1996: 9). If what Neville says is true, then this thesis attempts the impossible, since it tries to address issues of South African identity while focusing only on a confined and very specific area of textual research into sources in only one language. Post-apartheid theatre is a vast terrain and focusing only on works published in English is a means of limiting the scope of the study in order to make it manageable. Occasionally, however, this line may be blurred and reference will also be made to texts in Afrikaans, Xhosa and Zulu.

1.3 IDENTITY AS PERFORMANCE

1.3.1 Psychological Descriptions of Identity

When defined as an individual, one is separated from the collective, and there is a certain nostalgia in having to relinquish one's sense of association, of "belonging". As Michel Foucault (according to Bhabha) has it: "the most individual are those subjects who are placed on the margins of the social" (1994a: 151). Since individuality is based on difference, it is not impossible to imagine that suffering is a necessary step towards achieving it. Freud, for one, saw melancholia as creating the essential differentiation needed for identity formation, since the ego itself seems to be built upon a series of rejected "object choices", and these rejections are also the source of melancholia (in Carlson 2003: 54). This idea, that melancholia or some form of suffering is needed in order to individuate or to become a unique "self" is echoed in the aphorisms of the cynical philosopher E. M. Cioran, who writes in *Anathemas and Admirations*: "It is not by genius, it is by suffering, by suffering only, that one ceases to be a marionette" (137) and "Melancholy redeems this universe, and yet it is melancholy that separates us from it" (1992: 141)[16].

Jacques Lacan's mirror phase is also concerned with the initial separation of the self from the rest of the world, the identification of a complete being who is not equivalent to his or her surroundings. The theory of identification proposed by Lacan can be employed as a useful explanation of the processes which go into the creation of an identity, particularly with its relations to image and performativity. His by now famous analogy sources the identification of self in two periods of development: the

[16] This may seem to be a somewhat pessimistic view, and yet it casts a new light on philosophies which exhort one simply to "find oneself" in order to be happy, when the act of abstracting oneself from a community may well result in exactly the opposite effect.

"mirror-phase" (when a subject, while still in a pre-linguistic phase, identifies itself with an image of totality which it is able to recognise in a mirror); and within the recognition of the naming of the subject, when he or she becomes aware of his or her situatedness within the symbolic processes of naming (1992: 122-123). During this "mirror phase", the identification of the self with its image is illusory, since the image displays completeness, or an appearance of closure and finality, which the subjective self does not experience.

There is a similarity here to a Freudian model, which depicts the self as a confluence of often contradictory forces, (most explicitly between the Id and the Superego). According to Carlson, Lacan shares Freud's orientation and offers a model of identity formation which denies a fixed identity, but instead sees "identity as socially constructed within the realm of language and social practice" (2003: 51). Lacan's model of identity formation rests on the reassurance of an image of completion. This could be seen as a "theatrical" metaphor in that it relates the sense of self to a visually coherent appearance. It seems that being "real" comes to depend both on visibility and on the ability to be a spectator to one's own contextualisation within a visual field. In this way, one's identity is created both in terms of image and text. Perhaps it is a case of a text (in terms of the cultural context of one's belonging) being used to collate and focus resources and energies (writing, erasing, rewriting, editing, modifying, deleting) in a perpetual longing for the sense of completion presented by an image.

Other psychologists have also developed a model of identification in terms of performative metaphors, an analogy which permits a greater deal of flexibility in the description of a self. These include Erving Goffman, whose book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) remains a seminal contribution to the field. Goffman talks of the implications of performance and role-playing, and the construction of a

social self. Marvin Carlson notes that for Goffman, "the question of whether the "self" being represented is the "true" self or not is a relatively minor concern" (2003: 38). However, Goffman's rather extreme model of an empty self created purely in terms of roles has been critiqued by, amongst others, Bruce Wilshire.

In *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor* (1982), Wilshire uses ideas from the dramatic model proposed in the creation of identity, such as "play, mimetic response, role, display, [and the] recognition of self through others" (xiv), without denying the possibility that an authentic subjective self may exist. Nevertheless, the idea that the identification of the "self" is purely a construction is not new, and views for and against this model run throughout the history of Western thought. Marvin Carlson defines a strain of thinking which considers the idea of the self as primarily a role player as a negative notion (in that roles subvert the "true" self). In this tradition he includes Plato, Friedrich Nietzsche and George Santayana. Also, Jean-Paul Sartre condemns the idea of playing a role as representing "bad faith", which he finds epitomised by the behaviour of tradesmen: "Their condition is wholly one of ceremony. The public demands of them that they realize it as a ceremony" (2003: 39). On the other hand, there is a range of more neutral, or even positive views about the idea of having a deliberately enacted self. For example, there is the view of Robert Park who writes that

> the word 'person', in its first meaning, is a mask...one is always, more or less consciously, playing a role. Our very faces are living masks which...tend more and more to conform to the type we are seeking to impersonate...(in Carlson: 41).

It is the view of this thesis, that not only can performative models be used to describe identity, but that dramatic performances can also be seen as an analogy of ways in which new identity structures are created. I will return to this issue of performativity

when discussing various means of shaping gendered identities in the following chapter. While considering more specifically psychological models, I would like to briefly consider a Jungian approach to identity formation, with specific reference to Jung's theory of the shadow and ways in which it might be applied both to drama, as well as to a post-apartheid South African identity.

1.3.2 A Jungian Analysis of Drama

James Hall, amongst others, has noted what he refers to as "the dramatic structure of dreams" (1986):

> Most dreams have a dramatic structure, with a beginning problem, complications and developments, and often analysis or solution, followed by a result, a change in the original situation of the dream. Dreams are like personal dramas, staged by and for the dreamer to help the dream-ego move further in the process of individuation. The dramatic structure of dreams faces the ego with situations that are symbolically important (47).

Dreams are referred to by Jungian's as "the royal road to the unconscious" (92) and thus provide an insight into repressed material. Hall also points out another important aspect of the function of dreams, namely that "[d]reams are primarily in the service of individuation, and they accomplish this through compensating distorted or one-sided views held by the waking ego" (107). Also, dreams "provide a viewpoint that is demonstrably more objective than that of either the analyst or the analysand" (102). In this sense, dreams are capable of symbolically objectifying conditions present in the unconscious. This is a quality which dreams share with drama, since I believe that the collective experience of drama is similarly capable of objectifying and representing repressed perspectives.

Jung drew a parallel between myths, fairytales and dreams, saying that "[i]n myths and fairytales, as in dreams, the psyche tells its own story" (1969: 127). Elsewhere he says that "[t]o concern ourselves with dreams is a way of reflecting on ourselves – a way of self-reflection" (1971: 77). And yet, dreams are not only solipsistic, but also revelations about a wider community. Although they are always about the dreamer, they are also about a more extensive identification, since

> a dream with a collective meaning is valid in the first place for the dreamer, but it expresses at the same time the fact that his momentary problem is also the problem of other people (68).

One of the most important things which dreams reveal are areas of life which, for one or other reason, have not been integrated into the psyche, which have been pushed out of the light of rational consciousness, which have been repressed. This brings us to a vital part of Jung's analytic method, namely the integration of shadow as a means of transformation and healing.

Jung presented a lecture in 1939 on some of the ways in which identities are able to change by means of transformation and specific processes which the individual undergoes "by participating in a process of transformation which is conceived of as taking place outside the individual" (1972: 49). He goes on to say that for this type of transformation to occur "one has to witness, or take part in some rite of transformation". Jung describes transformative experiences which occur when the individual identifies with a group: "it is the identification of an individual with a number of people who, as a group, have a collective experience of transformation" (59). Transformation in groups seems to occur a lot more easily, since "[i]n the crowd one feels no responsibility, but also no fear" (60), and there is a sense of *participation mystique*, an "unconscious identity" which only lasts while the group is together. And

here Jung refers directly to the theatrical experience, which he calls an "easy" means of sharing and shaping identity:

> Supposing, for example, you go to the theatre: glance meets glance, everybody observes everybody else, so that all those who are present are caught up in an invisible web of mutual unconscious relationship. If this condition increases, one literally feels borne along by the universal wave of identity of others... mankind has always formed groups which made collective experiences of transformation – often of ecstatic nature – possible (60).

Within this shared identity, "[t]he group can give the individual a courage, a bearing, and a dignity which may easily get lost in isolation. It can awaken within him the memory of being a man among men" (61). So the individual at times gladly subscribes to a group identity, willingly submerging his or her individuality within the collective. Loren Kruger (1999), Temple Hauptfleisch (1997) and Peter Merrington (1997) have all referred to the theatricality of the events which took place on 10 May 1994 with the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the first democratically elected president of South Africa. This might be described as one of those ceremonies of transformation which Jung describes which assisted in transforming the sense of national identity.

Athol Fugard famously paraphrased the purpose of his writing as being "to bear witness"[17]. So, the collective audience of South Africans experienced a shared sense of transformation during the proceedings on the day of the inauguration. Perhaps it should be mentioned, however, that not that many white citizens joined in the celebrations on the lawns of the Union Buildings that day. I distinctly recall how many white people vacated the city centre out of fear during those fateful days. Of

[17] The Market Theatre Artistic Director Malcolm Purkey has mentioned that some people have questioned whether it was Athol Fugard or Barney Simon who first used this description. (Seminar held at Parktonian Hotel, Braamfontein, on 26 May 2007.)

course, one does not know how many people witnessed the events on television from the cloistered surroundings of their living rooms, yet the greatest number of participants were undoubtedly black. It may seem an obvious point to make that the black majority of South Africa welcomed the changes that were brought about, whereas not all of the white citizens of South Africa necessarily shared in their jubilation. Many whites were afraid and resisted change for a number of reasons. They were afraid of seeing their privileges eroded, certainly, but there was also the sense of having lost a war and fearing the retribution from people they had been taught – by authorities in schools, government and often from the pulpit – to consider as their enemy.

Both the inauguration celebrations in 1994 and the TRC process could be read as dramatic transformative experiences to which Jung's descriptions of collective transformative experiences could be applied. I believe that for many whites the black populations formed part of their shadow in that they were pushed out of consciousness. The idea of a collective shadow could very clearly be identified in South Africa during Apartheid. In this sense, not only did black South Africa became the shadow of white South Africa, but white South Africa also became the shadow of black South Africa. Writing from a Western perspective, Jolande Jacobi says that at that time (during the 1960's), “the qualities of the collected shadow [were] imparted...to capitalism or to communism according to one's political beliefs" (1965: 38). As Jung says:

> The real existence of an enemy upon whom one can foist off everything evil is an enormous relief to one's conscience. You can then at least say, without hesitation, who the devil is; you are quite certain that the cause of your misfortune is outside, and not in your own attitude (1971: 224).

But psychological health, according to Jung, relies on integration, and it is the integration of the shadow which leads to healing. As Hall repeatedly states, the shadow can only be dissolved through integration. When the shadow personality is in ascendance it "knows" things with certainty and adopts attitudes that may be at variance with the usual sober personality.

> The shadow, or indeed any complex, if unrelated to the psyche as a whole, can be just as destructive and even life-threatening as a cancerous cell of the body that has escaped normal integration into the healthy subsystems of the body (35).

Another interesting point is that integration depends on the revelation of the shadow, not on any specific activity. In other words, what is required is an act of perception. This is why literature is so well suited to assisting in the revelation of the shadow, because all that needs to be done, as such, is to see. Jung does not classify neurosis as a "problem", but sees it as arising when one is unable to face and acknowledge that a problem exists. He says that "it would be a serious misunderstanding to confuse the existence of problems with neurosis...the neurotic is ill because he is unconscious of his problems" (1971: 86). In other words, to become conscious of one's problems and of one's shadow would be the first step towards integrating and healing the psyche. The analogy then is that if theatre might be able to reveal the existence of a shadow side to the collective unconscious, then it might succeed in healing society by its acts of revelation. In this sense, the social satires and biting critique of an author such as Mike van Graan would not necessarily "improve" society by overtly instructing an audience to reform; instead, they might permit integration to take place simply by revealing the existence of problems, by making a society aware of them.

In addition to the shadow, there is the persona, which Jacobi defines as follows:

> By the 'persona' Jung means that segment of the ego which is concerned with relations to the surrounding world. Its task is to build up a relatively stable facade adapted to the demands of present-day civilization. An elastic persona that 'fits well' belongs to the psychic wardrobe of the adult man, and its lack of rigidity is an indication of psychic maldevelopment. Contrariwise, there is always the danger of identifying with the persona, e.g. the professor with his books, the tenor with his voice, the general with his work. Then one can no longer do anything in the human way, one is glued to one's mask. But if one has no proper persona, one strikes other people as being vague and vacillating and no-one know what to make of such an individual (35).

James Hall describes two forms of anxiety: persona anxiety and shadow anxiety (21). The persona "consists of 'mask', not just in the sense of hiding something, but also in the sense of revealing something – a social or cultural role, for example, as was indicated in the large masks of classical Greek drama" (19). Perhaps anti-apartheid theatre could be characterised as having dealt largely with shadow anxieties, with what was not permitted into consciousness in everyday life. If apartheid created its own specific complexes and neuroses, then the post-apartheid era is possibly involved with a different range of complexes. It is thus possible that one of the predictions one might be able to make is that post-apartheid theatre may be distinguished by its "persona anxiety" in that the neurotic tendencies now concern ways of configuring identity and how to accept newly transformed social roles. The emphasis is now no longer on ways in which to reveal the shadow, but rather, on how to fit into a newly constellated society in which one is required to perform new and often radically different roles.

1.4 SOURCING THE SELF IN THE DESIRE FOR FREEDOM

1.4.1 Frames

Charles Taylor's wide-ranging *Sources of the Self* (1989) provides a thorough historical overview of philosophical conceptions of selfhood. Taylor roots a sense of self within a framework, and makes the claim that if one is to understand a person's sense of identity one has to be aware of the parameters of his or her framing perception of value. Early on in this monumental study, Taylor writes:

> I want to defend the strong thesis that doing without a framework is utterly impossible for us; otherwise put, that the horizons within which we live our lives and which make sense of them have to include some strong qualitative discriminations (27).

Taylor roots a sense of identity, then, in an ability to discriminate, or, otherwise stated, to be able to make judgements. An immediate danger when confronted by the idea of judging, is that one might discriminate *against* other people, or insist that one's own judgements are the only correct views[18]. Although Taylor defines the self in terms of a framework of values and beliefs, according to him, it is impossible to find a single global framework, and he admits that "frameworks today are problematic":

> What is common to them all is the sense that no framework is shared by everyone, can be taken for granted as *the* framework tout court, can sink to the phenomenological status of unquestioned fact (17).

[18] The use of the word "discrimination" is problematic, particularly in a country like South Africa, since the word conjures up our highest ideals (to be a discriminating person) and our lowest (to discriminate against).

Taylor, then, is not necessarily endorsing what Jean-Francois Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition* (1984) refers to as "meta-narratives", since, despite Taylor's anti-postmodern tendencies (to which I will return), he is clearly not sanctioning a universalising framework which encompasses all others. And yet, for Taylor, there appears to be a nostalgia for frameworks which might have been more widely shared, and he notes, for example, that the loss of moral horizons which were taken to be the same for all, is part of Max Weber's definition of disenchantment (12).

For Taylor, the question of a framework is inextricably tied to notions of the "good", since, for him, a framework distinguishes what is deemed desirable or beneficial. Instead of focusing on the borders, margins, and liminal states – to which popular contemporary methodologies might refer – Taylor defines identity in terms of central tenets of belief. He claims that in order to understand a formation of self, one requires "an understanding of what is of crucial importance to us":

> To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose (27).

Jürgen Habermas uses the word *Lebenswelt* (life-world) to refer to a construction which seems similar to what Taylor calls a "framework"[19]. For Habermas, the process of communication becomes possible when the horizons of two people are able momentarily to forge into a *horizonverschmeltung* (a "melting of horizons"). In this sense, one's identity is made possible by being in relation to others, not in separation from them. In *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984), Habermas writes of

[19] "Communication takes place within a lifeworld that remains at the backs of participants in communication. It is present to them only in the prereflective form of taken-for-granted background assumptions..." (1984: 335).

identity as no longer founded in terms of a cosmic order, nor on an autonomous individuality; but rather in terms of communication (or, to be more precise, what Thomas McCarthy, in his introduction to Habermas's book, describes as "communicatively shared intersubjectivity" [xxi]).

Jean-Francois Lyotard, on the other hand, questions ways in which a "good" is defined. He sees this definition as occurring not on an individual level, but rather in terms of the knowledge produced by a society:

> What is a "good" prescriptive or evaluative utterance, a "good" performance in denotative or technical matters? They are all judged to be "good" because they conform to relevant criteria (of justice, beauty, truth, and efficiency respectively) accepted in the social circle of the "knower's" interlocutors. The early philosophers called this mode of legitimating statements opinion. The consensus that permits such knowledge to be circumscribed and makes it possible to distinguish one who knows from one who doesn't (the foreigner, the child) is what constitutes the culture of a people (1984: 19).

So what Taylor sees as definitive of a "self", Lyotard sees as definitive of a collective. (This is a point which will be sustained throughout this thesis – the tension between the individual and the group.) Instead of providing a stable point of identification, the "self" may equally be described in terms of an *heteroglossic* index, as a site of many voices vying for control. Whether or not the self can be circumscribed as a singular entity, or whether it is, as Deleuze maintains, an assemblage, is crucial for further explorations into the ways in which a description of self is used as a critical index of identity. The question of whether the self is able to freely frame its identity, and what the parameters are of freedom are also very important to this perspective.

1.4.2 Freedom

> [W]hat is universal in the modern world is the centrality of freedom as a good. (Charles Taylor, 1989: 395).

Perhaps the greatest change in the public ethos of the South African government has been the enthusiastic embracing of the concept of "freedom" as a good. The word has been re-interpreted throughout the history of South Africa (after all, the Voortrekkers also based their movement inland on a search for freedom), but more recently it has designated an urgent meeting place between different cultures and across various ethnic groups. Freedom is not only a frame which South Africans have been able – with some sense of relief – to share with each other, but it is also an ideal (and idealised) common denominator which can be employed in conversations with other countries.

Charles Taylor calls "freedom" a "hyper-good", or, in other words, a good which supersedes all others. It forms part of what might be referred to as a modern myth, with reference to the liberation of the individual. It is possible to consider that this myth played an important role in the impetus which inspired the American struggle for independence from Britain, as well as the revolution of the French citizens against their aristocracy. The ideals of "freedom" also motivated the various impulses leading towards the eventual dissolution of European Colonial Empires after the First World War, and the move towards independence in African states after the Second. It seems that the last centuries have been infused by perpetual struggles for freedom. And possibly the single most important work at the very beginning of this movement towards the enfranchisement of individual liberty is Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract*, which was first published in 1762. In this work, Rousseau searches

for the answer to a single perplexing question about how the collective strength of a group could be used to protect the liberties of the individual, or:

> How to find a form of association which will defend the person and the goods of each member with the collective force of all, and under which each individual, while uniting himself with the others, obeys no one but himself, and remains as free as before (2004: 14).

This tension between belonging to a group while expressing and exploring one's freedom as an individual is not necessarily resolved satisfactorily by the democratic process, and throughout this thesis I will be trying to explore a paradox that exists between what Rousseau refers to as the "general will", and the "private will"(19); as well as the contradictory desires for both "civil liberty" and "natural liberty" (21). Rousseau attempts to resolve some of the dilemma's created by these frictions by emphasising the separation of civil and religious matters, and by endorsing the Marquis d' Argenson's maxim that "everyone is perfectly free to do what does not injure others" (165). To greater or lesser degrees, these two principles are still the mainstays of many democratic states.

Perhaps Rousseau's greatest influence on the modern state was more pragmatic than philosophical in that it defined a free society not substantively as "some conception of a good society", but rather "by the procedure of its inauguration" (Taylor. 1989: 86). This aspect of freedom as defined by a civil process is certainly a practical and visible result of certain ideologies; and yet, even though an absolutely crucial aspect of South African identities lies in the agreement about "freedom" being a good, ways in which freedom is defined may differ. Appeals towards freedom can include the desire for emancipation, (whether this be in terms of colonialism, gender, or economic dependence) as well as in terms of sexual freedom and the expression of idiosyncratic, and possibly iconoclastic, views – both "freedom from", and "freedom to".

Charles Taylor notes that Kant stresses a formation of "freedom as self-domination", which distinguishes free actions from those bound by duty (83). Perhaps this distinguishes the Modern Age from the Victorian era in Britain, the shift away from an emphasis on duty towards an emphasis on personal freedom. Rene Descartes considered the somewhat blasphemous notion that freedom is a great virtue because it is a quality we share with God. He wrote:

> Now freewill is in itself the noblest thing we can have because it makes us in a certain manner equal to God and exempts us from being his subjects; and through its rightful use is the greatest of all the goods we possess, and further there is nothing that is more our own or that matters more to us. From all this it follows that nothing but freewill can produce our greatest contentments (in Taylor: 147).

In his conclusion to *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor underlines the importance of this hyper-good, claiming that out of all other goods it grants one the greatest sense of meaning. He asserts nothing less than that "[t]he fully significant life is the one which is self chosen" (383). And yet, how does freedom to do as one desires compare to the freedom gained, for example, by mastering one's impulses and desires? This raises a perplexing question concerning configurations of the self, whether or not one is really free to choose one's identity, or whether one is merely in control of the expression of that self. And to what extent is identity created within the act of expression? Can one even speak of an identity existing anterior to its expression? Furthermore, if identity is a matter of belief in a framework of values – which encompasses nothing less than one's worldview, one's *weltanschauung* – to what extent is one in a position to choose that view? An apocryphal anecdote about Max Weber has him saying that although he agrees with the relativity inherent in worldviews, one still cannot step into a worldview as easily as one climbs into a taxi cab.

Jean-Francois Lyotard also sees "freedom" as a key modern "good", or means of legitimation in that it forms one of the "two major versions of the narrative of legitimation" (1984: 31). These narratives, according to Lyotard, are the means by which modern societies define what is true, and they form the basis for decisions concerning which knowledge is deemed to be worth pursuing. The narrative about freedom sees "humanity as the hero of liberty" (31), and is also referred to as concerning the "the emancipation of humanity" (51). As a legitimation of true knowledge, Lyotard claims that "in the context of the narrative of freedom, the State receives its legitimacy not from itself but from the people" (31), and yet, paradoxically, he sees this narrative as a means by which the state attains power over the individual, in the name of "progress":

> The State resorts to the narrative of freedom every time it assumes direct control over the training of the "people", under the name of the "nation", in order to point them down the path of progress (32).

"Freedom" can thus paradoxically become a means of legitimising the exercise of power, rather than an expression of the liberty of an individual. This use of the notion of freedom might be seen as a defensive mechanism by a system which fears that it may be disrupted. This is because freedom can also mean the freedom to invent, to be original, and, as Jacques Derrida writes in *Acts of Literature* (1992):

> An invention always presupposes some illegality, the breaking of an implicit contract; it inserts a disorder into the peaceful ordering of things, it disregards the proprieties...it unsettles the givens (312).

So this use of freedom as rebellion, as revolution against the totalising ordering of society, will also have to be taken into consideration. Have post-apartheid writers

made use of their freedom by unsettling stable traditions in South Africa, or have they reinforced the reification of past mythologies? What is of particular interest is how freedom has been used to armour collectives established in terms of ethnicity or race against intrusions from other bodies. In other words, newfound freedoms to express cultural identities have sometimes resulted in a willing suspension of personal freedom for the sake of a consolidated communal expression. On the other hand, one might also wonder whether the freedom which liberates one from social constraints is necessarily to one's advantage. For example, the psychotic is also completely detached from others, and suffers and causes suffering as a result of this.

An important point is made by Michael Luntley when he asserts in *Reason, Truth and Self: The Postmodern Reconditioned* (1995) that the Enlightenment sought to identify the "true" self outside of various defining features. Controversially, he claims that the modern self is a "highly abstracted entity...a self stripped bare of its history, gender, class, achievements, values, passions and beliefs" (151). On the other hand, a version which Luntley favours is offered by John Rawls, who "offers a conception of self in which the contours of self are found in real social and historical traditions rather than shaped by abstract demands of rationality" (175). Furthermore:

> The contingently framed self is a self of the here and now, in real history and real culture. Its values are part of the ongoing contingently evolving world (224).

Luntley thus endorses a view of seeing the self as part of a process of tradition, as forming part of the community which is constitutive of the self's identity. In other words, the communities to which a self belongs are not merely the adornments or possessions of a self, but formative elements. These reflections on collective and personal freedom will become particularly important in the discussion on ethnicity.

The question of belonging – whether it is to a gender, a nation or a narrative – informs all considerations of identity. But where is the "society" to which one might hope to belong?

1.5 SELF AND SOCIETY

1.5.1 Defining Society

This thesis is concerned precisely with the question of definition; and yet, to create a category, to name a group or to try to define it as an entity inevitably involves some form of generalisation. But how is one to set about trying to define a group, a "mass"? Louis Althusser points out in *Essays on Ideology* (1984):

> the masses, considered as a subject, pose very exacting problems of identity and identification. You cannot hold such a 'subject' in your hand, you cannot point to it (80).

Here Althusser is referring to the masses in a Marxist sense, as economic arrangements of power; and yet the same principle applies when speaking about the conceptualisation of any group, whether this is located in terms of language, ethnicity or geography. In the previous section, I approached identity primarily as the psychological description of an individual subject. In the sections before that, I emphasised the capacity of performance to influence communities, and I would like to move this discussion now to ways in which one might go about defining communities as "societies".

I have made the point that both theatre and literature are significant indicators of one's society, and significant means by which one is able to relate to one's identity within a community. A sense of "society", the consciousness of belonging to a group, provides one with an awareness of continuity in terms of shared beliefs, convictions, and ideals which reflect who one believes oneself to be. But whom does one include in the category defined as "us"? Where is "society"? It seems to be a word as difficult

to define as "culture" which Raymond Williams describes as "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (1976: 76). In South Africa, in particular, the conception of a "society" is likely to run into all sorts of difficulties. Besides the many diverse economic categorisations, one is also confronted by many different religions, political beliefs, cultural practices, and so on. When is it appropriate, for example, to locate a so-called "ethnic" identity, without resorting to the troubled site of race? I will be returning to this discussion in more detail in the section on ethnicity as well as in my conclusion, but for now it is interesting to note just how much of an identity can be based on exclusion, which remains a very strong basis for identity. This is the "Other" proposed by post-colonial theory, and it seems many communities make exclusion part of their definition. The danger, of course, lies in the possibility of creating a collective shadow of the other. For example, much was made of a national identity propagated by the U.S.A. during the Cold War as based on its opposition to communism. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, however, something of an impasse occurred in national identity, which the following, frighteningly naïve statement made by George W. Bush on 21 January, 2000 makes clear:

> When I was coming up, it was a dangerous world, and you knew exactly who they were. It was us vs. them, and it was clear who "them" was. Today, we are not so sure who the "they" are, but we know they're out there.
> (quoted on the frontispiece of *Them* [2002] by Jon Ronson.)

This would be an amusing statement, were it not for Bush's unfortunate "discovery" of an enemy in the form of Muslim fundamentalism and an Axis of Evil in the seven years that have passed since this comment was made. My question, then, is whether or not it is possible to create a sense or description of identity which is not exclusive, or whether all identities are founded on what they are not.

In his essay "Solidarity or Objectivity?" Richard Rorty writes that people are able to make sense of their lives by "telling the story of their contribution to a community" (1996: 573). In the same essay, he makes the controversial claim that "Either we attach a special privilege to our own community, or we pretend an impossible tolerance for every other group" (582). Rorty considers it impossible to be neutral about one's own community, and although he does not seem to be speaking out against tolerance *per se*, he does qualify different degrees of tolerance.

With the enormous advances in communication, transport and international trade, it has become impossible to avoid encountering societies which are radically different from one's own. It is difficult to imagine a world where the idea of being part of a "society" at all was never considered because there were no visible alternatives. The conception of "society" as a unit first had to be invented. In Jonathan Cullers' introduction to Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (1960), he makes an important point, which is that even though it may be true that, as Jeremy Bentham claimed, "society is a fictitious body", the symbolic recognition of this body does have important practical consequences:

> What Freud, Saussure and Durkheim seem to have recognised is that the social science could make little progress until society was considered as a reality in itself. A set of institutions which was more than the contingent unification of the spirit or the sum of individual activities (xii).

So it may be useful to speak of a "society", without oversimplifying or generalising the constraints and conditions imposed by the group upon each individual. Yet no identity structure today remains uncontested, whether we divide people according to gender, class, nation, or whether in terms of marginalisation, "otherness" and difference. The question remains whether any definition of identity in terms of a society will not inevitably become reductive. If one considers the demographics

required of the South African national census in categorising people; if one continues dividing people up according to qualities, characteristics and features, one would surely end up only with individuals who have such highly specific definitions which include nobody but the single person described. This is reminiscent of Zeno's observation that space is "infinitely divisible" (1880: 387) in his famous dialogue on "Achilles and Tortoise". If one follows Zeno, then logical talk of divisibility inevitably leads to an absurd quandary in which infinity would have to be passed over before all things which are potentially divisible have been divided. This highlights an interesting problem: if one wishes to describe anything, at which point does one stop dividing?

A convenient way of dividing society up into groups is along economic lines, into such categories as "consumer", "industrialised", "agrarian" and "subsistence". Perhaps no other scale determines to such a large extent which people one identifies with, with whom one is able to communicate. Now that money is no longer tied to a fixed commodity like gold, and has become a purely imaginary enterprise. New stratospheres of symbolic meaning have opened up purely imaginary senses of signification[20].

When discussing the economic indicators of different "groups" (or societies), one needs to keep in mind that the GDP per capita in South Africa is around R1390.00 per month[21] while theatre tickets at present can range from R60.00 to R447.00 (for a recent production of William Kentridge's *Mozart's Magic Flute* in 2007). It is clearly an elect and highly exclusive group of people who can afford to attend the theatre,

[20] Surely nothing provides a more purely imaginary symbol than currency – nothing means less in itself, yet nothing means more in terms of its value as exchange.

[21] "Doing Business: Exploring Economies". *The World Bank*. <http://www.worldbank.org/http://rru.worldbank.org/DoingBusiness/ExploreEconomies/BusinessClimateSnapshot.aspx?economyid=172> Accessed 30 January 2005.

not to mention those who are able to study it and who have the time, energy and leisure required for an intimate examination of the implications of identity. Consequently, those able to afford making and attending the theatre under investigation in this thesis undoubtedly fall within the category of "consumer" society, and have links with other such societies in the contemporary Western world and with consumer societies in Japan, Singapore and South Korea, as well as, increasingly, in India and China. Clumsy and problematic though this description may be, it will have to serve as a provisional economic description for the time being.

In summary then, the society about which this thesis is concerned could be described in terms of the intersection of a language (English); a geographic region (South Africa) and an economic sector (consumer). And yet, one of the key features of literature after 1994 is that it seems to be increasingly moving away from the sense of an author as representative of a particular collective. Instead of having to perform a spokesman's role, there has been shift, in many instances, towards representing only the individual self.

1.5.2 The Fragmentation of Collective Identities

Sarah Nuttall defines the pre-liberation era as being representative of the collective rather than individual identities:

> The work of liberation was seen as something to be taken on by communities and their representatives....These were political and often racialized communities. Culture making, despite its variety and complexity, became largely instrumentalist and based predominantly on a moral economy. Cultural production was imagined, then, according to prescriptions of community, or a sense of solidarity, or a search for wholeness in the face of fracture. Emphasis was given to shared, or representative, experience (2006: 265-266).

As mentioned previously, for Paul Ricoeur all identity is narrative, since, as Viljoen, Lewis and Van der Merwe explain, "it is narrative that connects the discontinuity of the 'I' to its continuity" (2004: 12). Participating in a continuity often implies being part of a group, communing with others. Consequently, one of the earliest predictions made about the direction which South African theatre would take after apartheid, was that it would become increasingly unshackled from an obsession with collective concerns and that there would be a rise in a more personal, subjective approach[22]. To an extent, developments have borne out this prediction, and André Brink (1997: 172) and Temple Hauptfleisch (1997: 161-162) have both noticed an increase in more personal plays. Furthermore, Miki Flockemann says that

> with the shift in the 1990s it seemed as if there would now be a greater emphasis on the individual voice, and voices exploring and articulating personal, subjective experiences, not speaking as representatives of a group, and where your story isn't always a testimony to a larger community, but it's your individual story (in Solberg 2003: 32).

This sounds similar to what Lyotard suggests in the face of the break-up of grand narratives. He says that since we no longer "have recourse to the grand narrative...the little narrative [*petit récit*] remains the quintessential form of imaginative invention" (1984: 60). The crumbling of the emphasis on a collective identity which is narrated by grand stories of the history of the group, the tribe, the nation may thus be an inevitable part of processes of liberation. Ashraf Jamal, in *Predicaments of Culture* (2005), proposes a heterogeneity which repeatedly appears to be veering back toward notions of the radical individual and the personal freedoms expressed on the margins

[22] Eldred D. Jones says that "[t]he dominating influence in South African literature, indeed, in all South African culture, has been apartheid. Its stark polarities of black versus white, oppression versus liberty and poverty versus opulence, have produced a literature of protest which is limiting even in its common necessity...it is a culture whose main feature is exteriority which is reflected in the literature" (2002: vii). For this reason, as mentioned before, one might expect post-apartheid literature to be increasingly interested in the personal.

of popular discourses. He suggests the formation of a wildly individualistic queer identity as an option of disidentifying with the collective. But not everybody has described the break-up of collective identities in a positive light. For example, Chris Weare says that

> South African theatre makers do not have an artistic and cultural vision – only individuals and/or groups of people with very personal and/or community agendas. South Africa seems very 'ghettoized'. The complexity of this new emerging nation is so bewildering that it is completely overwhelming people. That is why American cultural imperialism is alive and well in South Africa. For the most part we are still trapped! (in Jamal 2000: 198).

Ironically, then, a fragmentation into more individual parts might lead to a flattening out of group differences under the sway of the hegemony of American cultural domination. In this sense, what is displayed as being "the personal" is often little more than a thinly disguised variation of the Californian Cult of the Personality. So these "individual stories" are often housed in terms of American popular culture.

Ari Sitas describes theatre after democracy as being "at an impasse" for this very reason. He suggests that since 1994, South African theatre has "had neither voice nor vision", saying that it "fragmented into tiny communal cells: plays by women for women, gays and lesbians for gays and lesbians, workers for workers, community members for community members, and so on" (1996: 87). And yet, Sitas also sees this fragmentation as potentially leading to a new source of creative energy:

> This fragmentation, frightening at first in a country brimming with narcissistic confidence, has started becoming a source for new energies. Most creativity seems to be the highly charged particles or fragments from the "margins" (1996: 87).

This interest in and emphasis on the marginal can also arise due to what Steven Connor refers to as the "romance of the marginal" (1997: 267), and there is also the danger of sentimentalising marginalisation *per se*. And yet, much of the theatre I will be discussing here might be described as being "marginal". In fact, Owen de Jaager says that "South African theatre is a fringe without a mainstream" (in Solberg 2003: 10).

If there is a mainstream in South African theatre, this might be musical theatre which has seen large audience figures. Keith Bain, for one, points out that "musicals and more commercially viable cabarets, revues and stand-up comedy shows remain the major theatre draw cards" (2003: 149). Some of the successes in recent years include *Grease* (2000), *Cats* (2001), *Chicago* (2004), *Phantom of the Opera* (2004), *The Sound of Music* (2005), *My Fair Lady* (2006), *Hair* (2007) and *Hairspray* (2007). Not all the big musicals are imports and there are also local productions which are enormous commercial successes, such as David Kramer and Taliep Petersen's *Kat and the Kings* (1997), which went on to play on the West End and Broadway; and Packed Houses production of *Soweto Story* (2007), which is based on *West Side Story*.

Nevertheless, besides these money-spinners, there is still an enormous amount of diverse theatre being made in South Africa. Considered geometrically, the more fragmented an object is, the more separate surfaces it is able to maintain. As an analogy, the more fragmented a national theatre is, the larger its margin will be. On the other hand, an extreme individuality could also lead to an extreme self-indulgence, which is not necessarily more interesting than the various propagandas mooted by collectives. For example, in his summation of the 2006 Grahamstown festival, Robert Greig succinctly pinpoints this trend when he states that the festival

was beleaguered by "two types of inauthenticity, one rural and moralising, the other urban and self-indulgent":

> The one inauthenticity is of the regional black artists' group that moralises about national issues – and will probably get taxpayers' money to do so. The other is that of the urban white artist whose work is totally rooted in the ego and shows no trace of his surrounds. He or she will not get taxpayers' money because individualism is not part of state culture (2006: 11).

The problem that Greig identifies in what he calls "rural, black" theatre is that it is overwhelmingly issues based, dealing "with ready-made causes and issues like Aids, corruption, abuse of women". He sees this theatre as inauthentic due to the assumption of "the spokesperson's role" which denies "the particularities of self and surroundings" and results in "a moral appeal" and sermonising. On the other hand the "urban white" theatre he criticises is "irredeemably frivolous". Both groups are insistent that what they say is important because they talk of experiences which "are theirs", although neither really gives "a damn about theatre" (11). Fragmentation and marginalisation are thus a guarantee of neither quality nor relevance. Both an entrenched collective identity and the precious individualistic indulgences which may pass for the identifications of a marginal figure can result in Brook's "deadly theatre"[23] – the first because it denies the individual experience; the second because it remains naively unaware of its social context.

[23] In *The Empty Space* (1968), Brook writes of four types of theatre – deadly, holy, rough, immediate. Out of these, the "deadly" – as the name suggests – is the worst: commercialised (9); prostituted (10). This sort of theatre involves embalmed classics (10); an imitation of "externals" (12); and the attempt to preserve performance as history (15). It uses tradition as a barrier to a "living theatre" (16) and is typified by a lack of trust between artists (18). It labours under "conditioned reflexes" (23) and incompetence (29). This is theatre which has not died, but which kills the ideals to which theatre might apire.

These questions of community (or lack of it) are not unique to South Africa. This is a very interesting era, in which an unimaginably vast range of information is available to many, and yet there is no single platform by means of which to disseminate it. Perhaps there is no public meeting place any more, not in any country in the world. As Richard Schechner says, "Who today dares call 'the public' to the theatre? Who can identify a cause that 'everyone' supports?" (2004: 7). He notes that the extreme individuality of the Internet "spins so many threads that a consensus or public sphere is not possible". Is there still a polis?

This comes down to an important aspect of identification: how many people does one need before one can claim to have identified a group? Earlier, I drew Zeno into the fray, with his famous parable of the tortoise and the hare. But the philosopher from Elea also had another parable, about how to define a "heap". The crux of this analogy is deciding at which point a collection of millet seeds becomes a "heap". If one takes off one seed at a time, the heap is intact, but once one is left with a single seed, this is surely no longer a heap. At which point, then, does it cease to be a heap? At which point is it identifiable as a group which constitutes something extra beyond a collection of its parts?[24]

[24] Zeno's parable is demonstrated in Stephen Fry's novel *The Stars' Tennis Balls* (2000) wherein an old man called Babe is trying to explain to Ned Maddstone the subtle difference between a heap and what is not a heap, using fir cones instead of millet seeds. Babe begins with two fir cones, which Ned agrees is not a heap. Babe continues adding cones until Ned concedes that a heap has, indeed, been reached:

> Babe clapped his hands. "A heap of fir cones! Seventeen of the darlings. So Ned Maddstone is telling the world that seventeen is officially a heap?"
> "Well..."
> "Seventeen fir cones constitutes a heap, but sixteen do not?"
> "No, I'm not saying that exactly..."
> "There we have a problem. The world is full of heaps..." (181).

Individuality is, admittedly, an untidy concept to bring into a discussion such as this one. Still, according to Charles Taylor, individuality and freedom are two of the strongest values assumed in terms of creating a contemporary sense of "self". Yet "individuality" is not a concept one can easily pin down. For example, can individuality be expressed without resorting to collective descriptions which might resonate with a shared community, or at least with an other? And would one assume that everybody carries with him or her an equal measure of individuality, or is it more a style of personality, which could, for example, be cultivated and expanded? Watered down by overuse, the term slips and slides out of one's grasp. It is a word often implying a range of positive associations (originality, courage, responsibility); and yet, it is also linked to negative connotations (selfishness, alienation, isolation). It would be impossible to have a history of individualism, since, although one might be able to identify general tendencies in specific works – such as contrasting the Romantic poets' preference for individuality with those of, say, the Augustans – the whole point of being an individual is that one is not tied to an institution. This also highlights the contradiction of calling oneself an existentialist, since, if one is genuinely opposed to institutionalisation, one would also reject this label itself.

On the other hand, Gilles Deleuze does not distinguish between individual and collective, saying that "every proper name is collective, every assemblage is already a collective" (1993: 253). In this sense, distinguishing collective from individual identities might not be as urgent a project as it may at first appear to be, since individuals are already collectives of different identities, and collectives are often distinguished by a united ideology. In fact, collectives may turn out to be even more coherently individual than particular people. Also, as Deleuze says, both "[g]roups and individuals contain microfascisms just waiting to crystallize" (32). The question of

flexibility or impermanence of identity will thus not be solved by transposing questions of identity from the collective to the individual or vice versa.

So far then, I have highlighted an emphasis of this thesis on fractured identities which have been described as rhizomatic. I have so far hesitated to invoke the name of Postmodernism, since it can attract a nebulous cluster of differing theoretical devices. However, there is no getting past it, my approach and analysis of identities does emerge from within the sphere of influence of the postmodern. So before this thesis (finally) settles down to an examination of actual texts, I would like to very briefly mention the extent to which depictions of identity – both of self-hood and of society – will be viewed in light of some considerations emphasised by Postmodernism.

1.5.3 Conclusion – Postmodern Paradigms

> If the individual self is an illusion, it seems clear to me that the group is also an illusion....And yet the illusion itself can have a certain truth or reality (since it can be defined or named) which must be taken into account, whether it be an illusion of self, of nation, of race, of other groups, of the world.
> Eugene Ionesco (*Fragments of a Journal*. 1968: 148)

One of the key requirements in literary studies today involves adopting a position in terms of a theoretical framework, and one is inevitably required to announce this position, or perspective. This springs, most likely, from a growing awareness that the way in which we interpret human behaviour determines to a large extent what we are able to read into it. It seems that naming often comes before discovery, and that identities may be invented (or discovered) in terms of their definition. If this theoretically eclectic introduction has not yet sufficiently revealed its inclinations, then it is now time to declare unequivocally that the approach which has been and

will be used in this thesis is largely drawn from theorists who have been called postmodern.

It may seem more natural when dealing with contemporary South African literature to adopt the apparatus of "post-colonial" studies, since these are the tools which have more often than not been applied to the literatures of African states after their independence. And yet a certain sector of South African society is also part of an international community I have previously described as "consumer". Also, South Africa does not fit quite as neatly into the post-colonial model as other African countries might. Not that long ago, it was a colony of Britain, as so many other countries were, but then its position shifted from that of a colony into first a "Union" and then a limited form of a Republic, (or what has since come to be called a nationalistic "regime", but what might more accurately be described as a "limited democracy"). Clearly South Africa does not represent a cut-and-dried case of a colonial country developing into a post-colony after a war of independence. What it shares with many post-colonial countries, however, is the impulse towards establishing a coherent sense of identity in terms of an opposition to colonialism and an embracing of democracy. And yet this striving after a sense of what it means to be "Proudly South African[25]" can also be at odds with the experience of being caught up in a global flow of information. In addition to this, South Africa became democratic in a decade which has been characterised by an unprecedented expansion in communications technology, in terms of cell-phones, the internet and satellite television, which thrust those who could afford these new technologies into a global

[25] "Proudly South African" is the brand name of a campaign launched by government, business, labour and community organisations to promote South African companies, products and services.

arena[26]. And this international situation does seem better suited to postmodern descriptions rather than in terms of being a post-colony. As Renato Ronaldo points out, the postmodern has come to refer to people who "inhabit an interdependent late twentieth century world marked by borrowing and lending across porous national and cultural boundaries" (in Carlson 2003: 206). This also describes the majority of readers of published plays in South Africa. As formerly mentioned, the representations of the characters identified with by these readers form the basis of the limitations imposed on these investigations[27].

Postmodernism celebrates the dissolution of identity and the impossibility of fixed notions of self. It describes notions of self as permeable and fluid. Most tellingly, postmodernist discourses deny the possibility of an authentic identity. As Lyotard has it:

> A *self* does not amount to much, but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before. Young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, a person is always located at "nodal points" of specific communication circuits, however tiny these may be. Or better: one is always located at a post through which various kinds of messages pass...[Yet] [n]o one, not even the least privileged among us, is ever entirely powerless over the messages that traverse and position him at the post of sender, addressee, or referent (1984: 15).

This then, is the approach which this thesis will adopt towards the discussion of self which follows. It will be examining characters as representations of experiments in selfhood, experiments in freedom, as the posting of "nodal points" through which the messages and the energy of a South African culture can be forged. I find much of

[26] I am reluctant to employ Marshall Mcluhan's term of a "global village" since most of the globe does not have access to the new technologies. And yet, it seems that there is certainly some sort of global enclave, or a system of power of international proportions.

[27] That is not to say that the identity constructions of those very many millions of South Africans who are illiterate are irrelevant, it is rather realising the limitations of any textual investigation.

what Charles Taylor writes extremely useful, and yet I do not agree with him that the postmodern discourse is not applicable to matters of identity because it does not operate in terms of a "framework". I agree with him that in every description, a frame is present, but I would prefer to draw on the implications of the word "frame" as verb rather than noun, as an indication that it is the process of framing which creates the framework. So my emphasis will be on the processes of creating identity, and not on reaching a final set of conclusions about the variables which create any specific identity. In this way, the variables defined by Taylor are helpful in describing what has gone into the construction of the modern idea of self; and yet, I tend also to agree with Robert Jay Lifton and his description of a "protean self", which Carlson describes as being composed of "fluidity" and which is "reflective of the flux of a postmodern world" (2003: 206). I will return specifically to this sense of postmodern identity in Lifton's description during my discussion on syncretism.

One of the advantages of working within a postmodern paradigm, is that one is able to borrow concepts and terminology from a multitude of other discourses. Over the course of this first chapter, this thesis has tried to grapple with some of the issues concerning identity and the formation of "self" which currently prevail in the humanities by approaching the issue from a range of various disciplines. Often the definitions produced by fields overlap, which is to be expected, since they share an interest in the workings of consciousness, but even if they are not always in agreement, the contradictions between their views often provide interesting areas of investigation.

Moving on to the play texts themselves, I feel that the best way to proceed is to examine different plays from a number of different theoretical positions. The content and style of each work will influence its reception, which is why I will not be

interpreting all of the plays in terms of the same identity configurations. Those reading this thesis hoping to discover a definition of "real" identity as opposed to one which is fraudulent or inauthentic, are bound to be disappointed. For the purposes of this thesis, an identity is a way in which a person or a collective has been framed. In this way an identity represents a temporary point within a matrix of descriptions. Suffice to say, this in no way makes identities whimsical, arbitrary creations. In many instances identity structures have become deeply rooted habitual tendencies kept alive by an individual's insistent faith in the premises on which he or she has founded a classification of himself or herself. In other instances – during apartheid, for example, as described at the beginning of this introduction – powerful state sanctioned identities had very real material consequences for millions of people. There is, however, one thing which all individual and collective identities share. None of them is permanent.

Although I will be focusing on plays written since 1994, this definition of new writing is perhaps not always thematically precise, as some plays preceding this date share similarities with plays within this period. Also, a few of the texts which I will examine were written before 1994; though there are valid reasons for their inclusion, not least of which is the fact that their publication date after 1994 signals the time when they were made more widely available. Having said that, this thesis will certainly also take into account the influence of older plays, in order to indicate appropriately the emergence of a tradition within South African playwriting, and to contrast the new with the old.

In the following chapters, I will examine four different frames from which to examine issues of identity in new South African play texts. First I would like to explore notions of identification in terms of gender. Then I will move on to examine

identities structured in terms of political affiliations, before moving on to the related ideas of nationalism and ethnicity. Finally, I will consider hybrid, or syncretic forms of identity construction. These frames have all been profoundly influenced by the changes which were effected in May 1994, and they could all be considered as tentative forays into and experiments with new-found freedoms.

CHAPTER TWO – GENDERED IDENTITIES

2.1 WHITE MEN IN EXILE: MASCULINE SUBJECT-POSITIONS

2.1.1 Introduction

> To speak of masculinity in general, sui generis, must be avoided at all costs.
> Homi Bhabha. ("Are You a Man or a Mouse?" 2000: 102).

The issue of being defined in terms of a gender has increasingly been problematized by discourses on sexuality and the institutionalisation of feminism in departments of Women's Studies and Gender Studies. It is relatively recently that discussions of gender have become validated as academic discourses, and yet these discourses already hold a considerable amount of sway. In fact, it would be almost impossible today to write on issues concerning the configuration of identity without referring to gender. Curiously, there seems to be a vast discrepancy between the received wisdom on the subject and that offered by academics. To begin with, this chapter will examine a few of the differences between the popular view that biological essentialism determines the characteristics and qualities of gender identity; and the view offered by many academics, which claims that gender constructions are fluid and uncertain creations manufactured by prevailing (and changing) discursive norms. This introductory section will also be looking at the formulation of gender, as distinguished from sex, before considering alternative approaches to establishing a definition of masculinity.

There are a number of reasons why I have chosen to focus on masculinity instead of femininity. For one thing, a number of essays which focus on women have already been written about the contemporary South African stage[28]; and yet I find no

[28] For example: "The Personal is the Political – Gender in the Context of Apartheid South Africa: A Look at Two Women Playwrights" (Loots 1996); " Colonised Bodies: Overcoming Gender Construction

indication that the subject of masculinity has ever been approached in this regard. Also, I have become interested in an interesting reversal which seems to have taken place, in that it seems that the "masculine" is often described today as the negative side of the female positive, a situation which reverses the norms prevalent as little as a century ago. The subject of white South African masculinity is also of interest, because this is an identity construction which has undergone a particularly significant alteration since the advent of democracy. And it is not only white masculinity which has been affected. Robert Morrell points out in his introduction to *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (2001):

> South Africa, until recently, was a man's country. Power was exercised publicly and politically by men. In families, both black and white, men made decisions, earned the money, and held power. The law (both customary and modern) supported the presumption of male power and authority and discriminated against women (18).

This moment of transformation is of interest, since it is precisely at the juncture where identities are contested, where they are attacked and defended, that their limitations become more pronounced, that their form is outlined. Perhaps it is only when things change, when identities are destabilised, that one can begin to speak of what they were and what they might become. Since sanctions meant that South Africa was excluded for a long time from international cultural exchanges, it is possible to speculate that gender roles in South Africa may have remained considerably more rigid than in many other countries. For example, Greig Coetzee rather pointedly describes South African men as "fossils" (in Morrell 2001: 3). For many, South Africa has been described as one of the last bastions of male chauvinism; but white men, in particular, have now had to undergo a fundamental shift in terms

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of Bodies in Dance and Movement Education in South Africa" (Loots 1995); and "Re-evaluating Otherness, Building for Difference: South African Theatre Beyond the Interregnum" (Blumberg 1995).

of the perception of ideological power invested in them during the apartheid era after the changes made to a status quo which had been maintained for many decades. It would, therefore, be interesting to examine how a loss of ideological legitimation has been portrayed. This loss of legitimation also coincides with what some writers have described as a condition of crisis in masculinity in global arenas[29], a subject to which I will return.

The white men in South Africa who had already left secondary school before the momentous changes to the country's constitution began, have, during the course of the past decade, become alienated from the formative conditions of their principle education. I am using the term "exile" in the title of this chapter to indicate this severing. These are men "in exile from" the conditions which formed their sense of masculinity. The term "exile" has also been used to highlight what I read as an irrevocable tie between notions of masculinity and ideals about nationalism. One fairly obvious relation is that the etymology of the word "patriotism" arises from Latin (*pater*, *patr-*, father) and Greek (*patēr*, *patr-*, father), indicating an association between being male and being part of a country. Furthermore, it appears that the plays which best exemplify a masculine identity are also those which describe men in exile.

The position of the exile provides an interesting space in which to examine identity, since the exile lives as an outsider, while bolstering his sense of self by maintaining his identification with a country which has rejected him, or, in the case of a self-imposed exile, which he has rejected. In contrast to the immigrant, then, the exile

[29] When I speak of globalisation, I am not referring to an equal exchange of countries and cultures, but rather to the imposition of ideologies from the world's more powerful consumer societies, and in particular, the United States of America. I agree with Rien T. Segers that "globalisation" is most often a form of "Americanisation" (2004: 189).

often deliberately maintains his sense of alienation[30]. I would like to examine, then, how notions of whiteness, maleness, and nationalism have intersected; and what effect a loss of legitimation has had on depictions of white masculinity.

2.1.2 Biological Essentialism

To what extent are people governed by hormones, chromosomes, DNA and blood type? How decisive is biology? Since Thales of Miletus first insisted that "Everything is water", the search has been on for a single origin and cause of all behaviour. New advances in chemistry and biology (such as the unravelling of DNA in the Human Genome Project) have also recently provided a new impetus for the movement which sees the human body as ultimately determining its destiny. Perhaps Richard Dawkins' view that "we are machines" (2003)[31] represents the most extreme form of contemporary materialism. As stated in the introduction to this thesis, I am more interested in the interpretation of signs than in the revelation of matter. Nevertheless, this divergence is worth noting, if only because it is so extreme.

It seems that diametrically opposite views on gender are presented by popular and specialised literature on the subject. If one considers the plethora of self-help books available today, one might assume that a biological essentialism in gender role specification has been universally accepted. The current interest in the division of sex roles received an enormous impetus from John Gray's spectacularly successful *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* (1992), and a range of other popular

[30] Of course, the state of exile was and is not unique to men, and yet it does seem that the condition of men in exile has been more thoroughly represented in new play texts than that of women.
[31] Stated on "Dolly" in the DVD *Three Tales* (2003. Nonesuch Records. Music by Steve Reich and visuals by Beryl Korot).

psychology texts endorse very similar ideas[32]. These texts emphasise innate differences between genders which are attributed to biological causes, and they ultimately argue for an essentialism in terms of gender identities. For example, in *The Essential Difference: The Truth about the Male and Female Brain* (2001), Simon Baron-Cohen spells out his thesis on page one, namely that "[t]he female brain is predominantly hard-wired for empathy. The male brain is predominantly hard-wired for understanding and building systems." Here, the use of words like "hard-wired" designates a fundamental and innate predisposition, and in many of these texts, the argument is made that men and women "naturally" behave in certain ways, and that trying to behave in any way that contests these "natural" dispositions will lead to contradiction and anxiety. And yet it is precisely the construction of the "natural" which troubles gender theorists. As Anna Tripp makes clear:

> while essentialists invoke notions of nature and what is 'natural' in order to authorise their positions, others have countered that these notions of 'nature' and 'the natural' are in fact culturally mediated or constructed, historically variable and ideologically motivated (2001: 10).

Elaine Storkey describes a linear progression of ideas on gender, and she defines essentialism as belonging to a "pre-modern" sensibility. By this she means an identification which is comparatively static since it subscribes to a "fixed order, fixed roles, and fixed explanations, reinforced by accepted tradition":

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[32] These include: Tannen, Deborah. 1991. *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation.* New York: Ballantine Books; Jessel, David. 1992. *Brain Sex : The Real Difference Between Men and Women.* New York: Delta; Glass, Lillian. 1995. *He Says She Says: Closing the Communication Gap Between the Sexes*. New York: Perigee Books; Baron-Cohen, Simon. 2001. *The Essential Difference: The Truth about the Male and Female Brain*. New York: Perseus Books Group; Pease, Allan and Barbara. 2001. *Why Men Don't Listen and Women Can't Read Maps.* London: Orion; Moir, Anne and Bill. 2003. *Why Men Don't Iron: The Fascinating and Unalterable Differences Between Men and Women*. New York: Citadel Press; Pease, Allan & Barbara. 2004. *Why Men Don't Have a Clue and Women Always Need More Shoes : The Ultimate Guide to the Opposite Sex.* New York: Broadway; Legato, Marianne J. and Tucker, Laura. 2005. *Why Men Never Remember and Women Never Forget.* Emmaus: Rodale Books.

> At its heart lies an essentialism, the idea that a certain 'essence' defines the centre of our identity as human beings and as men and women. In gender terms this means that men have certain identifiable, fixed characteristics, and women have other identifiable, fixed characteristics, and that these identifiers are rooted in our very nature (25-6).

Storkey also notes a post-war move away from biological reductionism (38) and notes that biology itself does not rely on a neutral authority, but forms part of a specific ideological interpretation of reality. Perhaps it is the point of theory not to assume that anything is "natural". Only by questioning the idea that phenomena are self-evident are we able to prise our way into assumptions underlying certain discourses.

In contrast to Tripp and Storkey, probably the last prominent academic to propose an essentialist gender identity was Camille Paglia, who became famous in the early nineties with her voluminous study *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (1992). Paglia's book is based almost entirely on the cornerstone of Nietzsche's distinction between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, which he proposed in the first sentence of *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872)[33]. Paglia consequently reads the female/feminine as Dionysian and the male/masculine as Apollonian and describes all interaction between genders in terms of this grid. Since her grand statement and the surrounding controversy it attracted, however, she has not been easily assimilated into academic discourses, possibly since she remains a virulent opponent of feminism. On the other hand, she has been active in popular media, and still writes a regular column for the highly influential online magazine Salon (www.salon.com) as well as being a contributing editor of *Interview* magazine. She was also listed with Julia Kristeva and Germaine Greer, when "she was named

[33] "[T]he continuous evolution of art is bound up with the duality of the *Apolline* and the *Dionysian* in much the same way as reproduction depends on there being two sexes which co-exist in a state of perpetual conflict interrupted only occasionally by periods of reconciliation" (1994: 14).

one of the 'Top 100 Public Intellectuals' in the world, in a list compiled jointly by editors of the journals *Foreign Policy* and *The Prospect* (UK)" in September, 2005[34]. Paglia, however, does not represent the prevailing view disseminated by most academic writing on the issue, which declares that gender is fluid, changing, and inconsistent.

On the contrary, it has almost become a standard practice when writing on gender to begin one's writing with a disclaimer which makes clear that the writer does not subscribe to the belief in essentials. The preamble to many an essay on gender is likely to begin with some sort of statement that gender is a socially conditioned category, that it changes over time, and cannot thus be construed as arising from biology. For example, Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett hasten to point out in their introduction to *The Masculinities Reader* (2001) that

> each contributor rejects the idea than men and masculinities are either locked in a genetic combination, or determined by a fixed, unchangeable, biological set of conditions or factors (10).

And in Robert Morrell's discussion in *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (2001), he writes:

> Masculinities are fluid and should not be considered as belonging in a fixed way to any group of men. They are socially and historically constructed in a process which involves contestation between rival understandings of what being a man should involve....Masculinities are constantly being protected and defended, are constantly breaking down and being recreated (7).

Perhaps what lies at the heart of the turn against essentialism, what has made it possible to speak about constructions of gender identity at all, was the separation of

[34] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camille_Paglia> Accessed 7 February 2006.

"sex" from "gender". When speaking about "sex" (male and female) there is a clear objective, physical biological distinction which can be made; whereas to speak of "gender" (masculine and feminine) implies an altogether different categorisation which is semiotic in nature, and is largely controlled by social constructions. According to Lynne Segal (1990: 66), this crucial split was first introduced by Robert Stoller in 1968 and later popularised by Ann Oakley. Once "gender" was created as a site which did not rely exclusively on sex, debates about how to characterise different genders were able to be nurtured. Nevertheless, the identities to which this thesis refers are all firmly and inescapably lodged within theoretical realms, which Jeff Hearn and David Morgan see as occupying a space diametrically opposed to essentialism. In fact, they state that theory's very *raison d'etre* arises from an opposition to what is considered self-evident:

> The need to theorize gender, in particular to theorize men and masculinity, arises largely because of the dangers of reification, essentialism, and reductionism that arise when using such categories as 'women' and 'men', 'femininity' and 'masculinity' (8-9).

Similarly, Whitehead and Barrett (2001) claim that "'Masculinity' is not a coherent object about which a generalizing science can be produced" (30). Anna Tripp goes even further in contemplating the difficulty of practising any kind of cultural criticism at all, since "culture is not coherent" (2000: ix). All of our gestures then towards trying to settle on a definition of gender must of necessity be tentative and porous constructions. There are no hard and fast lines in the study of ideas and families of meaning can become vast and diffuse. In addition to this, it should be mentioned that definitions of groups can in no way be taken as reflections of personal, individual experiences, since one's experience of living can not necessarily be quantified and restricted by one's alignment within a category. Briefly stated, there

is no single unifying quality (besides the over-arching name) which could be applied to all individual members of the set called "white men who grew up during apartheid". Instead of searching for foundational qualities on which to build, I will be trying to look for particular displays of masculinity. When I do refer to the category of "masculine", it should be made clear that this is in terms of an imaginary, fictional construction. By this time the reader will have become aware that this thesis is mostly concerned with the description of an imagined collective, with what Elias Cannetti calls an "invisible crowd"[35] and Benedict Anderson refers to as an "imagined community"[36].

I would now like to consider some of the alternative ways of defining gender, and investigate whether or not one could apply these frameworks to the study of masculinity in the selected post-apartheid plays. If essentialist arguments are no longer legitimate, then on which grounds can notions of gender be premised?

2.1.3 Alternative Definitions of Gender

According to R. W. Connell (2001), there are at least four different strategies one could adopt when dealing with definitions of gender: Essentialist, Positivist, Normative, and Semiotic. Briefly stated, for Connell, essentialist strategies are problematic in that different writers apparently "discover" completely different essences. For example, while some people have defined men as essentially

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[35] In Canetti's astonishing *Crowds and Power* (1981), he posits that men and women operate as a double crowd – mixing together but regarded as separate. For Cannetti, "war is the danger of the double crowd" (72-78).

[36] Benedict Anderson's phrase refers to nationalism, but it could apply equally well to the category of gender: "it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (1991: 15). I will discuss Anderson's views in more detail in the next section.

"responsible", others would say that "irresponsibility" is an essential feature of a masculine identity. Ultimately, what these definitions do is to tell us more about "the ethos of the claimant than about anything else" (31).

Then one could attempt positivist definitions, which try to quantify ways in which men behave and to provide a sociological answer to the decisions made by men in actual situations. These definitions constitute, for example, the M/F scales adopted by many psychological practices[37]. One difficulty with this type of definition according to Connell, is that at some point a decision must be made regarding the terms which will be used to investigate the differences between masculinity and femininity; and the selection of the criteria used to differentiate the masculine from the feminine already reveals a point of view. These distinctions, therefore, rely on the very "typifications that are supposedly under investigation in gender research" (32).

A third potential strategy involves normative descriptions, which rely on "what men ought to be" (33). These definitions investigate sex role models, from fashion to the multitude of media representations of men. Unfortunately, these idealisations are hardly ever attained, and Connell asks the crucial question: "What is 'normative' about a norm hardly anyone meets? Are we to say the majority of men are unmasculine?" (33). This is hardly a desirable approach.

[37] These are scales used to determine which personality traits are predominantly male (M) and which female (F). For example, Richard A. Lippa refers to a study in which he describes men as predominantly characterised by their relations in terms of "instrumentality", whereas women are qualified as being more "expressive" (2001: 170). M/F scales list qualities and characteristics of either gender which are then tested in a population by means of various exercises. Interestingly, Lippa concludes his study with the proposition that "M and F are at core indefinable and should be banned from the scientific vocabulary" (169).

A fourth definition of masculinity occurs in terms of semiotic processes where systems of meaning are under investigation, principally language. In terms of this approach, one examines particular instances, and tries to avoid generalising about a masculine personality. Instead, the formulation of masculinity in language is analysed, such as, for example, its description in terms of being "not-femininity" (33). This analysis also assists in defining masculinity as a relationship in terms of power (43).

For the purposes of this thesis, the fourth type of definition seems the most feasible, since I will not be dealing with any actual human beings, but rather with their representation as characters in plays, in terms of the experiment of literature. I would be interested in finding points of intersection between the characters created by a number of different playwrights, in terms of their performance of definitions of masculinity. In a sense, this methodology refers to a style of reading, more than an insistence on particular content. In other words, this approach will also take into account mythological and psychological descriptions offered by essentialist modes (if that is what is being represented by a particular writer) while maintaining a sceptical attitude towards norms as revelations of universality.

2.1.4 Pejorative Definitions of Masculinity

It may be relevant to note that what were once considered to be norms of ideal masculine behaviour have drastically changed in the last half century, and many qualities which were previously praised are today lambasted. Whereas the prevailing views on masculinity were forged during the nineteenth century, these views have rapidly been declining since the middle of the twentieth. For example, Anthony Clare, in *On Men: Masculinity in Crisis* (2001), writes that notions of hegemonic masculinity

> while forged over a number of centuries, flowered in the nineteenth century, a century of unparalleled male achievement in science, technology, biology, medicine, exploration and imperial expansion (69).

Not only were male achievements praised, but the male perspective was considered the norm. For example, Anna Tripp (2000) points out that:

> Masculinity has long and often been represented as the human norm – and conventionally masculine qualities (such as vigour, courage, rationality, authority, mastery, independence) have been seen simultaneously as universal 'human' ideals (11).

But these views have changed, and where accepted as "masculine", these traits are no longer necessarily accepted as desirable. In fact, it is difficult to find theoretical definitions of masculinity today which are phrased in a positive light. Instead, many academic definitions of masculinity seem to be posted in terms of a negative description, and definitions of masculinity are increasingly becoming pejorative. Whitehead and Barrett point out that in terms of masculine role behaviour, "what was appropriate 50 years ago is now 'stigmatised and debased'", and behaviour which typified the male role, such as "aggressive, dominant, emotionally repressed behaviour" is today seen as "(self)-destructive, if not derisible" (2001: 6). They suggest three reasons for this, including,

> [firstly]...rampant, soulless consumerism; secondly, women's (feminism's) successful assault on male bastions of privilege; and thirdly, more widespread social and cultural disapproval of traditional displays of masculinity (6).

Whatever the case may be, we have arrived at an historical juncture in which destructive behaviour has become synonymous with descriptions of masculinity. Anthony Clare states that

> [v]iolence, sexual abuse of children, illicit drug use, alcohol misuse, gambling are all overwhelmingly male activities. The courts and prisons bulge with men. When it comes to aggression, delinquent behaviour, risk taking and social mayhem, men win gold (3).

One statistic with which it is impossible to argue is that "[m]ost episodes of major violence...are transactions among men" (44). Michael Messner goes as far as to say that performing as "masculine subject":

> not only serves men ill emotionally and in their relationships, it can only be sustained and reaffirmed through fraternal groupings, often misogynistic male bonding rituals, rejection of intimacy and an avid denial of the 'Other' – be it women, femininity, or gay sexuality (in Whitehead and Barrett 2001: 10).

And yet, an interesting point which Clare makes is that for all their excesses of power, men are seemingly not necessarily happier than women. For example, they are far more likely to be suicidal and they do not live as long as women in any society in the world (2001: 3). He also refers to the "increasing redundancy of male violence", in the sense that hunting and warfare no longer constitute a necessity for survival for many modern men. Furthermore, "the growing irrelevance of men to reproduction and the expanding self-confidence and assertiveness of women all constitute mighty blows to male confidence" (129).

To be described today as "masculine" is then, in terms of these discourses, nothing short of an insult[38]. The rare texts which do describe masculinity as a positive quality, rely on essentialist and archetypal definitions. Besides the popular psychology books already mentioned, there have been a few attempts to rehabilitate masculinity and to

[38] Again, one must be clear here that this is with reference to a "Western" model of masculinity, and not a universal variation on the theme, since male confidence in, for example, the Arab world, as well as in much of Africa does not appear to be beset by similar uncertainties.

explore a positive male identification. These include views such as that put forward by Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), which presents an image of an archetypal masculinity embedded in the figure of the "Hero"[39]. There is also Robert Bly's *Iron John* (1999), in which he endorses an essentialist view of a masculinity best expressed in terms of the archetypal "Warrior". However, I feel that these views are less than useful, since by endorsing the hero and the warrior, it would appear that these writers are encouraging exactly the destructive role behaviour which Whitehead, Barret, Clare and Messner describe. To re-iterate: I will be turning to semiotic and performative descriptions in order to reach some sort of conclusion, however tentative, as to ways in which white men have been portrayed in the dramatic texts of post-apartheid South Africa.

2.1.5 Doing Instead of Being

There is another way in which one could describe gender. According to Judith Butler, in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), one's actions and behaviour can be said to constitute one's identity (3). Besides the semiotic approach, this thesis will also be turning to a performative model, which takes as its starting point Friedrich Nietzsche's observation in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, that "there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything" (1967: 45). This performative aspect of identity formation – referred to extensively in chapter one – provides a focal point for this thesis. According to Erving Goffman, gender can be described "in terms of *display*" which is used "to sustain one's self-presentation" as an appropriately gendered person

[39] In this seminal work Campbell describes an innate masculinity which is expressed in terms of the figure of a hero who sets out on a mythic quest. After numerous trials, the hero is ultimately initiated into a male order and undergoes the symbolic death of his old identity. When he eventually returns to his society, he has been transformed, having attained the knowledge he needs to save his people.

(in Coleman 1990: 187). And I would agree with Whitehead and Barrett that masculinity is most useful as a term when it describes an action instead of an essence:

> since masculinity is something that one 'does' instead of something that one 'has', it would be appropriate to say that men 'do' masculinity in a variety of ways and in a variety of settings, depending on the resources available to them (2001: 18).

Unless extensive use is made of a narrator, we learn almost everything about a character on stage in terms of what he or she does or does not do. To speak can also be an action, as John Austin points out in *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) with his definition of speech acts as statements in which "the uttering of the sentence is, or is part of, the doing of an action" (5). The decisions made by characters in terms of dialogue and action consequently go a long way towards constituting the ways in which we perceive them. By watching characters fulfil their roles on stage, one could also reflect on ways in which masculinity is performed as a role off-stage. Will Coleman, in *Doing Masculinity/Doing Theory* (1990), highlights his preference for the dramaturgical model which

> privileges *description* over theoretical/causal analysis. For in this version, persons are seen as acting for *reasons* rather than causes. Persons are seeable as 'doing' masculinity, rather than it being something that is done to them or that happens to them (192).

Trying to discern the performance of masculinities in plays seems, then, to be an entirely appropriate place to seek out these semiotic constructions.

2.2 SEPARATION AND SEXUAL MATURITY IN *THE CAPTAIN'S TIGER* (ATHOL FUGARD)

It seems fitting to begin the analysis of play scripts with two texts by Athol Fugard, South Africa's most celebrated playwright[40]. Since Fugard's debut with *No Good Friday* in 1958, and his international success with *The Blood Knot* in 1961, his voice has become synonymous with a theatre of resistance in South Africa. His willingness to engage in stories concerning all the peoples of South Africa has endeared him to a worldwide audience, and his characters have resonated with many different facets of South African society. That is not to say that he is necessarily universally admired within the country. For example, although Zakes Mda says that he enjoys his work, he also says that he has "vehemently disagreed with him in almost everything he has written". This is largely because, according to Mda, his South Africa "is different from Athol Fugard's South Africa" (1993: 53).

After the tumultuous events of 1990, Fugard has on occasion expressed a mild anxiety about his subject matter. With apartheid dead and buried, he confessed that he sometimes felt "confused" about the themes he would be addressing in his writing. Hilary Burns goes as far as to say that he underwent a "profound identity crisis" (2002: 242). A number of commentators, including Dennis Walder, have noted a change in Fugard's work, in that his post-apartheid plays have tended to elaborate more personal concerns than before[41]. Fugard has never called himself a "political" writer,

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[40] Carol Becker refers to him as "South Africa's most famous playwright" (1998: 92). A press statement issued on 4 April 2007 to announce his role as patron of the Arts and Culture Trust <www.act.org.za> states that "Fugard has written a total of 37 plays, many of which have been filmed, with Fugard acting in several....His work has garnered him many prizes in South Africa and abroad, and he has received more than 20 honorary degrees from universities throughout the world. He has also been elected a fellow of the British Royal Society of Literature (1986) and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1988)."

[41] "Fugard seems to have found the space, in the 'post-apartheid' 1990s, to ruminate upon his personal past in a quite detailed, nostalgic way..." (2000: ix).

preferring instead to refer to himself as "intensely regional" (Lewis 1998: 77), and yet, it seems as though the region he has been writing about describes a circle gradually drawing closer and closer to his own personal account of the world. Whereas Fugard said of his *Notebooks* from 1960-1977 that he "made it a point to exclude 'self'" (1983: 8), the vision expressed by his post-1994 works has certainly become more introspective. According to Annette Combrink, in Fugard's most recent writing "there is a strong suggestion of the confessional, which also has the concomitant effect that his work has become increasingly interiorized" (2004: 55). This could be an indication that since the end of apartheid, Fugard feels it unnecessary to represent a collective or attack the marginalisation of certain groups; and yet this shift could also indicate a change in his priorities which have come about as a result of the specific period of his life, as part of growing older. He told Simon Lewis: "with a writer who reaches my age...you turn inward and you rely more and more on your own resources and your provocations in your final phase of your life come from within rather than from without" (78).

Whatever the case may be, whether this turn inward reflects the onset of a new phase of life, or whether it is on account of the burgeoning of democracy, *The Captain's Tiger* (2001) could be considered one of the most autobiographical of Athol Fugard's plays[42]. Keyan Tomaselli calls it the "most personal of Athol Fugard's plays" (1998: 194). It might also be considered one of his most experimental pieces[43] in that he strays from his usually realistic settings and employs a variety of non-naturalistic narrative devices, such as portraying himself both as "The Author" and as the young "Tiger". By entering the narrative – a technique he also used in *Valley Song* (1996) –

[42] Two other Fugard plays which are also clearly autobiographical are *Master Harold and the Boys* (1982) and *Exits and Entrances* (2005).
[43] Fugard's earlier experimental pieces are generally considered to be *Dimetos* (1977) and *Orestes* (1990).

Fugard, as author, experiments with postmodern conditions of reflexivity and draws attention to the processes of mediating a narrative construction.

The plot of *The Captain's Tiger* documents a time Fugard spent on the SS Graigaur in 1952 when he was still an aspiring writer. On the ship he was employed as a supernumerary, a role referred to colloquially by the eponym of the title[44]. Tiger recounts his attempt to write his first novel, which was to be based on the character of his courageous mother; and the plot also details his initiation into manhood by means of his first sexual experience with a prostitute in Niigita, Japan.

The young author's relationship with his mother comprises the central conflict of the play, although there is also some interaction with a Swahili mechanic called by the unfortunately rather offensive appellation of "Donkeyman". Donkeyman provides the Author with a sounding board and encouragement. He is the Tiger's first audience. They also begin to learn each other's language. The author's relationship with the memory of his mother, Betty le Roux, remains at the centre of both the play and the novel which Tiger means to write. He says that his novel is going to be "about a beautiful young Afrikaner girl in a white dress in a small Karoo town" (5) and is to be called *Betty Le Roux: The Story of a South African Woman*. In this novel, he will explore "all those secret dreams and ambitions" (17) of her youth. He is going to recreate her life using a photograph he has of her as a starting point:

> It's the photograph of you [his mother] when you were a young girl that's hanging in your bedroom. That is going to be my inspiration. I'm going to weave together all the stories you've told me about your life and what you

[44] "That means I get a shilling a month, a comfortable bunk in the sick bay and three whopping good meals a day, in return for which I have to look after the Captain...clean his cabin, make his bed, do his washing, serve his food...a sort of glorified servant" (4).

> wanted to do with it, only this time all those dreams you had are going to come true (5).

Tiger means to rewrite his mother's history with a happy ending, and this is a piece about a son trying to fulfil his mother's dreams. Betty then steps out of her photograph and tries to help the young author with his grand undertaking. She reminds him of his ability to shape reality as a writer and tells him that he is now in a position to reconstruct his memory and to manipulate the very fabric of reality, since a memory can be made true, "[i]f you say so" (8). The young author subsequently becomes very excited by the possibility of creating a world:

> Creative authority. That's what you've put your finger on young lady. The freedom and authority of the creative artist to go in any direction his imagination chooses. Theoretically I can do anything I like with you (9).

But this freedom does not occur in a vacuum, and after realising that he can do what he likes with the character of his mother, he adds, "It's a hell of a responsibility you know" (9). Here Fugard appears to be echoing the work of Viktor Frankl, who writes that freedom can only be earned with an increase in responsibility[45]. In the process of his maturation, then, Tiger grapples with the responsibilities inherent in the choices he makes, which applies equally to his creative as well as his sexual development.

Fugard thus creates a fictional character based on the facts of his youth. He re-invents himself and his mother by ascribing different names to these characters, and by toying with notions of truth and fiction, biography and memory. He has created a moving memoir which also grapples with the existentialist question of a character's

[45] "Freedom is not the last word. Freedom is only part of the story and half of the truth. The positive aspect of freedom is responsibleness" (*Man's Search for Meaning*, 1985: 156).

freedom. Betty eventually tells the young Author how to tell her story, and it seems as though she has broken free from him, and that a character he has created is now dictating to him how he should behave.

The central conflict of the play revolves around the dynamics of this intense relationship, and the conversations Tiger/Fugard has with his mother/muse lead to the emergence of a number of interesting issues surrounding notions of masculinity. It does seem like a play of ideas, more than one driven by plot. In fact, a number of reviewers – including Peter Marks[46], Raeford Daniel[47] and the unnamed reviewer for the *Weekly Mail and Guardian*[48] – have suggested that the play might be too static and that it lacks dramatic conflict. Perhaps this is because the conflict is psychological, rather than physical, and the play is, consequently, less visually engaging than it might otherwise have been.

The first real sign of conflict occurs when the young Author disagrees with his muse concerning the issue of sentimentality. When Tiger describes an incident he wants to tell about his early memories of visiting Olive Schreiner's grave on top of a koppie in Cradock and seeing a black eagle, she tells him that it strikes her as "[f]alse, exaggerated, sentimental and improbable" (35). In addition to this, she insists that she wants "to be real" and to have "a real life" (36). Tiger says, "Try to understand that my job as a writer is to make reality dramatic and to do that I have to take liberties" (36). But Betty then warns him that if he tries to manipulate her, she will abandon him.

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[46] "For a seagoing tale, it's a rather stagnant enterprise, choked off in the thin atmosphere of pretty words and worthiness" (1999: 16).

[47] " [The play has] a ponderous pace interlaced with introspection and intellectual argument....[It] can be taxing on the average attention span" (1997: 25).

[48] "*The Captain's Tiger* is largely a narrated retrospective monologue, where the intermittent interactions with the other players do little to alleviate what is essentially untheatrical theatre. This stasis and dearth of visual stimulation make the production no more entertaining than a radio drama..." ("Ponderous, Sparsely-staged Documentary Journey with Little Dramatic Variety", 1997: 4).

Tiger takes her threat seriously enough to rewrite the scene, and yet, it is ultimately only by casting away his novel at the end of the play, that he can free himself of her and gain the independence he needs to become a mature writer.

One cannot easily place the masculine and feminine roles in this play into fixed categories. As a young man, Tiger is naive, and a "masculine" maturity is purported to be gained by sexual experience; and yet, it seems that the female characters hold the ultimate power in the play, since his mother, as his muse, presides over his writing. When Betty wants to relate the initial sexual encounter between herself and his father, Tiger suddenly becomes jealous and afraid, since the notion of his mother as an erotic creature frightens him:

> TIGER: No! No! No! Hands off! I warn you now, if you start interfering with that scene
> BETTY *ignores him and continues singing.*
> BETTY: 'I'll always remember
> The rambling rose you wore in your hair ...'
> I'm lying there on my bed in my nightgown. It's a warm summer's night. My young body is hot and sweating, my heart throbbing. His music is drifting in through the open window. It feels as if he's caressing me...
> TIGER: That does it. I'm putting on the light.
> BETTY: You can't. You're powerless. You can't move.
> [*He tries, he can't.*]
> Waves of desire are passing over me. I put my hands on my young breasts...
> TIGER [*fingers in his ears*]: I'm not listening. (46)

At first, Tiger blames his concern on the board of censors, but later Betty tells him that "[s]exual desire is a perfectly healthy and normal human drive. You're behaving as if you're scared of it" (47). And it is then that she discovers that he is still a virgin. After laughing, she becomes angry:

> You had the nerve, the conceit, the male arrogance to think that in spite of your ignorance about the most basic drive in human nature you could write about me? Tell my story?....If you want my advice, Mr Author; go back and tear up every page of your precious manuscript and start again after you've discovered what it means to hold a woman in your arms (48).

Betty eventually persuades Tiger that his sexual discovery is essential for his ability to understand women. She says:

> And stop talking to me about 'we writers'. Before you can even start to think about yourself as one you've got to be a man, which you aren't yet, my boy. (49).

Being a "man" here refers not only to losing his virginity – a designation associated with the rites of passage required to become an adult in many cultures – but also to being a writer. Being able to use his pen to produce a reality out of nothing becomes a sign of manhood, and creativity becomes synonymous with virility. Betty suggests that she initiate Tiger and slips into bed next to him. But he takes fright:

> TIGER [*in a panic*]: For God's sake no. Do you realise what you're doing? You're based on my mother. This is as good as incest! (49)

Tiger escapes his mother, and it is then, out of a despondent rebellion that he decides to join Donkeyman in Niigata and pays for a prostitute. While his mother exercises an enormous influence over him, his father – when he is not entirely absent – is described as weak. Even though the Tiger promises: "PS Tell Dad I haven't forgotten him. He'll be getting his own letter very soon" (17), this letter to his father never

materialises. In his *Notebooks* (1983), Fugard describes his own father as weak[49]. The overarching dominance of the maternal influence is thus contrasted by the frailer figure of the father. Betty tells the story of how she met his father and found he was not only physically, but also emotionally, crippled. Disillusionment takes over, and a tragic portrait of what eventually happened to the relationship is conveyed, of how the father faded away, how the mother, burdened with responsibility, went completely grey. Eventually, after presenting a poignant image of his aged parents, Tiger says "I thought I could at least give you one on paper, but even that won't work. I can't make a happy ending out of my Dad." And it is then that he throws his manuscript overboard.

With this rejection of his creative effort, with the failure at trying to reconcile reality and fiction, Tiger achieves another tier of adult masculinity by effecting a separation from his mother and her story. He has attempted to source his identity in terms of his childhood memories, but a more compelling configuration arises in the rejection of those memories. Only by rejecting his mother and overcoming his Oedipal desire can Tiger claim his masculine identity.

Tiger both desires and dreads his mother, his muse. He is inspired by her, but he is also trapped by her, since she is the one in control of his emotions and his creativity. Peter Marks notes that "Fugard duels with his imaginary mother for control of her story, a battle at once Freudian and Pirandellian" (1999: 16)[50]. But what does it mean

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[49] Fugard describes his father as having "a vacuous mind, poring over comic books" (30). Later he describes him as being a "character who deliberately propagates and establishes a public image compounded of cowardice, weakness, dependence" (31). (It should be noted, however, that besides these failings, Fugard also manages to convey a sense of his father's humanity and his portrait of his father in the *Notebooks* is not entirely unsympathetic.)

[50] The battle is "Pirandellian" since this story demonstrates a struggle between a writer and his characters, as in Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1922).

to try to defy the gods, to reject the mother? Some see this as the ultimate masculine act. Elaine Storkey claims that:

> To develop his identity as a man, [a boy] needs to relinquish his bond and attachment to his mother. Because he is different from her, he cannot identify with her. Therefore, a boy's gender identity is created by emotional separation (2001: 80).

Consequently, as adults, "men fear closeness, for it threatens their sense of a separate identity, while women fear isolation and aloneness, for it threatens theirs" (80). Is this part of an essentialist ideology? Or is it part of a certain story about masculinity? It seems that it is a story which has been told by many. For example, Carol Gilligan makes a similar claim that:

> Since masculinity is defined through separation while femininity is defined through attachment, male gender identity is threatened by intimacy while female gender identity is threatened by separation (in Storkey 2001: 80).

There is perhaps a danger here in reading this description of masculinity as an immutable property of being male. Yet it could also be read as a narrative which describes a possible way of being. The fact that this particular story about masculinity has been strengthened by repetition makes it a more powerful narrative than other stories, and yet this does not imply that it is necessarily the only story. This distinction which sees men as more individualistic, can be taken even further still, and Lynne Segal, for example, defines "femininity" as an attitude (and an activity) which emphasises the communal in opposition to the Apollonian independence ascribed to masculinity:

> The daughter is experienced and loved 'narcissistically' by the mother, as someone just as herself. The girl therefore remains forever more attached to,

> and identified with, the mother, more secure in her gender identity, defining herself more in relation to others, with a weaker sense of her own individuality, competence and autonomy than men (1990: 80).

And Luce Irigaray posits that, since a girl is born from a woman,

> the little girl finds herself in a relationship of identity and familiarity with the woman who conceived her. The relationship between two subjects is therefore easier for her than for the boy, who has to build it with his mother in terms of difference, using objects...(2000: 96).

According to this view, a boy's relationship, or his means of establishing an identity is in terms of objectification, which might also include the process of writing. To write could even be considered the ultimate act of objectification, of stepping outside of time, outside of reality, in order to reflect on it. Also, in the male rituals of countless cultures, becoming a man involves leaving the women and children to explore often dangerous activities, such as hunting or warfare (or the sports eventually invented to replace these rituals). So the act of leaving his motherland and crossing the seas alone could also be seen as a demonstration of this separation.

In *The Captain's Tiger*, it is possible to discover many paradoxes inherent in the construction of a masculine identity. Is Fugard falling into habitual responses on issues of gender? Possibly. Is his construction of the muse as a beautiful woman perpetuating an ancient mythology? Perhaps. It might even be true that within this specific construction of identity configuration, Fugard does not challenge the received wisdom on the subject of gender. It is possible to see his story as a continuation, and a possible endorsement of this mythology, which reflects the context of his generation.

The Author loves his mother and wants to write for and about her; and yet, in order to become an authentic, individual, masculine writer, he must, paradoxically, reject

her and seek autonomy in the same way that he left his homeland and set off, alone, across the world. The play signals a departure from Fugard's previous fugues on collective concerns and shifts the focus to Fugard himself and his development as a gendered individual in terms of a myth of separation and individuation.

2.3 LANGUAGE AND LAND IN *SORROWS AND REJOICINGS* (ATHOL FUGARD)

In *Sorrows and Rejoicings* (2002) Athol Fugard tells the story of an exiled poet, Dawid Olivier. The play wrestles with ways in which conditions of exile challenge Dawid's sense of himself as an artist and as a man. As indicated earlier, it is the contention of this thesis that configurations of masculinity are closely tied not only to notions of patriotism, but also to ideas (and ideals) of nationalism. Homi Bhaba, for one, emphasises the connection between masculinity and nationalism and writes that he wants "to displace [masculinity] onto another kind of anxious love – *amor patriae* – the naturalist, phallic identification with the service of the nation" (in Tripp 2000: 103). If being part of a nation is equated with masculinity, this could be one of the reasons why those rejected by the state, who are turned into exiles, begin to consider themselves emasculated. I will be arguing in this chapter that it is when Dawid can no longer be of service to the nation, that he begins to feel that he is less than a complete man.

Michael Seidel feels that exile is "a form of modern alienation, a Marxist allegory of separation – separation from worth, from satisfaction, and even from material equity" (1986: xii). Edward Said also argues that exile is part of the human condition specific to the twentieth century, which he calls a severe "contemporary political punishment"[51]. Huma Ibrahim goes as far as to employ a new word for the consciousness created by a state of being in exile:

> The state of exile is often imposed on a subjectivity torn between a sense of not belonging as well as a desire to belong to one's gender, linguistic group,

[51] Exile is "the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted" (Said in Ibrahim 1996: 12).

> community, and nation. The consciousness arising out of this ambivalence is the basis of the exilic consciousness (1996: 2).

In this section, I will be exploring this ambivalence and how a particular protagonist's identity is fixed to his language, his land, and, ultimately, his gender. The severing of Dawid from his homeland reflects not only his sense of belonging to a nation, but also of belonging to a language and a gender.

Sorrows and Rejoicings is set in a farm house in the Karoo at the turn of the millennium. Dawid Olivier has returned home to die, and his story is told in a series of flashbacks comprising mostly of fairly lengthy monologues. During the apartheid era, Dawid's work was banned and he consequently went into exile in England with his wife, Allison. But before he met Allison, he had a romantic relationship with a coloured woman, Marta, with whom he conceived a daughter. Since they could never formalise their union (due to the Immorality Act), he left her and married Allison. In England, Dawid never recovers from the depression caused by his state of exile. He becomes an alcoholic, and eventually contracts leukaemia. The play takes place when he returns one last time to his old home. He meets his daughter, Rebecca, for the first time, and then dies in the presence of Marta, who has been waiting for him these many years.

As a poet in exile, Dawid Olivier represents a group of actual writers who formed a prominent part of South African literature. When J. V. Povey describes one of the most prominent features of the community of poets in exile in the 1970's, he writes that:

> More than any other group, [South African poets] constantly revert to the issue of their exile; the haunted investigation of the poet's feeling as he is cut

> off from the heritage of his national birth and copes with an environment which (although intellectually free) is alien, and a memory which is always tinctured with guilt. (In Goddard and Wessels 1992: 12)

The fictional protagonist of Fugard's play experiences this same alienation and guilt as writers who died in exile, such as Arthur Nortje and Can Themba. He is guilty because he left Marta behind, and because he has ceased to be a productive member of his community. Perhaps what Dawid misses most of all is his language, since this ties him to his identification as an Afrikaner. This is revealed in various ways. For example, during their exile, much is made of the pronunciation of Dawid and Allison's surname (Olivier). Allison likes the English pronunciation of the name, though Dawid hates it and sees it as "an erosion of his Afrikaner identity" (11). Later, during one of the flashbacks, Dawid declares that "your soul speaks with your mother tongue":

> Couple of times I went out and just walked aimlessly around London streets speaking in Afrikaans to myself. Non stop! People must have thought me mad. But I was holding onto my soul you see....When I landed in Jo'burg and spoke Afrikaans to the Immigration Officer it was like kissing my grandmother again, or Marta...(44).

The words which Dawid has offered the world in his poems express his filial sense of belonging to South Africa. When Allison learns that Rebecca has burnt Dawid's last South African poems she says

> What you turned to ash and smoke out there in the veld was evidence of a man's love, for his country, for his people – for you! Don't reject it. That love was clean and clear and good! It was the best of him (51).

Poetry here becomes the vehicle for the expression of a "man's love", and in destroying it, Rebecca has rejected not only Dawid's work, but the components which

have gone into sustaining his identification at a fundamental level. It is as though she has murdered a critical part of him, and turned away from the last gesture of a desperate love.

In trying to hold on to his language, Dawid wishes to reconstruct his world in terms of a logos. He hopes to stabilise his signification by reciting and recalling the names of places and objects in the language of his mother tongue. By listening intently to Marta's gossip from the village he tries to "cancel out his exile" (19), to erase his bleak memories of London with the trifling details of a small Afrikaans village in the Karoo. Allison realises that he will never stop loving Marta, because, as Allison points out, she is "part of this world that he loved with such passion" (30). Dawid's erotic love for Marta is connected to his love of Afrikaans, and his love for the Karoo. Once Dawid has arrived, he wants Marta to recite the list of goods available in the local store. She says,

> one day he asked me to tell him all the things that were on the shelves in the trading store – you know, the tins of pilchards, the packets of mielie meal and sugar, the bottles of methylated spirits, Five Roses Tea, Koo Apricot Jam – and how much they cost, and he just lay there listening to me very hard as if I was telling him something very important. And always in Afrikaans. I had to speak to him in Afrikaans (19).

Similarly, place-names tie Dawid to the land of his birth and signify a location for his identification. When he makes his last journey home, he revels in the place names which lead him home:

> Wonderboom, Rietfontein, Heuningspruit – [I] kept saying them over and over, like a mantra, adding the new ones as they came up – Voorspoed, Kromdraai, Verkeerdevlei, Wolwehoek...(15).

In the same way that Lena (in *Boesman and Lena* [1969]) uses a litany of place names to orientate her sense of self[52], here names reinforce a connection to land and belonging. Dawid not only feels himself alive in this land, but at times he expresses his sense of coherence in terms of *being* the land itself. For example, when he cannot write any more he describes himself as a land bereft of rain:

> I'm drought stricken...an officially declared drought stricken area. I watched it happen to the Karoo a couple of times you know. A long, lingering agony as a relentless sun burnt everything to death. Day after day (35).

As in *The Captain's Tiger*, we also find a number of references here to the processes of writing, and many of Dawid's reflections on the practice of literary creation no doubt arise from Fugard's own thoughts on this subject[53]. Dawid's writing is an expression of his identity – not only of his masculinity, but of his body itself, and his poems become a metaphor for his being. For example, the ink on the page is equated with the blood flowing through his veins. Dawid chooses brown ink because it is "the colour of dry blood...because that is what a writer leaves on the page" (28). His poems have become his body. He has identified himself so wholly with his work, that when he can no longer express himself by means of his poems it is as though he is suffocating, dying. He describes his writer's block in biological terms:

> The ink in my fountain pen has clotted and dried up like the blood in a dead man's veins. God knows I've tried to get it flowing again, but if my writing ever had a heart it has stopped beating (34).

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[52] Throughout *Boesman and Lena*, Lena struggles to remember the route they have taken. Finally, Boesman helps her to recall the list of towns they've passed through: "Missiondale to Bethelskop....Then to Kleinskool. Kleinskool to Veeplaas....After that Redhouse...Bethelsdorp, Korsten, Veeplaas, back here a second time" (55). It is only then that she can begin to feel that she understands her situation, when she replies, "Is that the way to was? How I got here?" (55).

[53] Of course, one can never completely equate the author of a work with his or her protagonist, and yet there is still a significant relation between the two.

Artistic creation becomes a metaphor not only for procreation, but for the vigour required to sustain being. This existence, this sense of aliveness is strongly slanted towards a masculinist orientation; and the life force in Dawid's veins comes from a very specific location in terms of its masculine instincts. As a failed creative artist, Dawid is defined as a man who has lost his virility. Another story, a dream, reveals the emasculation which he experienced on being banned:

> A man, one of the comrades, is in a similar situation – banned and silenced into impotence by the government. There is nothing left for him to do except sit in his comfortable little flat and listen to classical music, read beautiful poetry, and watch the world around him go up in flames on his television set....Me! His sense of uselessness is finally too much for him. He cuts off his testicles, puts them in a box, and posts them to the State President with a little note: 'You took away my manhood, so why not take these as well.' That's when I knew I had to leave (27).

In this dream, the pen is described in terms of procreation, in terms of the dissemination of seeds as ideas. By being banned, Dawid has lost his virility, and his decision to leave arises from a sense of shame (37). The government has castrated him, and once in exile, he is no longer the man he was. We learn, for example, that the reason why Allison and Dawid cannot have children is because he has contracted *pampoentjies* (mumps) and consequently, "his testicles came up as big as cricket balls" (32). He never regains the virility which he loses in exile.

The set of *Sorrows and Rejoicings* is dominated by a massive stinkwood table which anchors the action in the play. Whether Marta is washing it with her tears, or Dawid is standing ranting on top of it, its presence permeates the play. For this reason, it may be worthwhile here to quote the entirety of the story Marta tells about the origins of this table, since it comes to represent a great many things in the course of the development of the plot:

> Dawid loved this table. He always said he was going to write a poem about it one day. He explained it all so wonderfully to me one day when I was still a little girl. Once upon a time it was the King of the Knysna forest, the tallest of all the tall trees. Monkeys and beautiful birds lived in it and made their nests in it. Elephants slept underneath it at night. Then, one day, men came with their axes and chopped and chopped and the King of the Forest came crashing down. But that wasn't the end of it because then the carpenter came and gave it a new life by making it into this beautiful table. Now it is the place where the family sits down to say grace and eat the food that God gave them. This is where the family prays. But it hasn't forgotten its life in the green forest. (13-14).

The image of Dawid as "King of the Forest", an erect tall tree, contains connotations which recall Paglia's description of "masculine" qualities which she associates with the Apollonian which seeks the erection of elevation[54]. Though the tree has been cut down and carved up to serve a social function, it still remembers how it used to fulfil the (masculine) roles of protection and sustenance and has come to represent a type of "father figure" in the family home. After the funeral, Marta says that she wants the table to be "shining with love" (39) and she has been meticulously polishing it during all the years of Dawid's exile while she was awaiting his return. The table is not only a symbol of the resilience of memory, but also of the love Marta has nourished and sustained in Dawid's absence. But Dawid is no longer the king of the forest, nor is he the centre of the family home. His daughter, Rebecca has learnt to grow up lying about her father, and she subsequently hates him for having betrayed her and her mother. So Dawid has also failed at his fatherly duty to provide for his child.

The play is suffused with further indications of Dawid's lost masculinity. Wanting to apologise to Allison for his increasing alcoholism, he decides to try to catch a fly in a

[54] "Both the Apollonian and Judeo-Christian traditions are transcendental. That is, they seek to surmount or transcend..." (1992: 8). And, "[t]he penis is like eye or hand, an extension of self reaching outward" (23).

matchbox as an anniversary present for her, to remind her of the dry Karoo back home. He tells himself: "Gird your loins, Dawid Olivier, and go hunting. Prove to your deeply doubting mate that you are still a man" (33). And yet, even this most trivial quest ends in failure. Finally Dawid must concede, with his beloved Ovid (who also died in exile), that he is "not the man" (36) he was.

The tragedy is firmly centred on the figure of Dawid, and the play serves as an elegy of his emasculation. The three female roles surrounding this figure (Marta, Allison, Rebecca) are used to bring out aspects of Dawid's loss. Some reviewers felt that the significance of these characters as women had been smothered by the over-arching figure of Dawid Olivier as man. The most severe attack was launched by Christina Scott, who attended the American première. She writes that the play is

> a preachy history lesson with yet another main character based on the playwright's ego....In the flashbacks of a trio of women – a former lover, an ex-wife and an abandoned daughter – Dawid talks. They don't. He's spotlit. Their faces are in shadow. He moves. They don't. It's like Madame Tussaud's waxworks....These are the women's remembrances and yet they don't feature in them. Dawid hogs all the flashback airtime (2001: 9).

I would agree that this is a play based on Fugard's sense of his own identity as a writer, and I would agree that it remains focused on the character of Dawid. It is unashamedly a play concerned with the definition of masculinity and it does not pretend to be anything else. I would not, however, go as far as to say that the play is misogynistic simply because the female roles are not as fully developed as the male role. Of necessity, a dramatic plotline isolates certain incidents which are selected in order to enhance the dramatic structure, and simply because Ophelia and Gertrude do not get as much stage-time as the protagonist is surely no reason to dismiss *Hamlet*. So I believe that *Sorrows and Rejoicings* as a play of the mind, as a description of the

world seen through the eyes of a poet, does reflect and represent a detailed portrait of male identity, and had Scott looked a little further, she might have found the play to be a critique of this form of identity, and not an endorsement. The fact is that this is a play about the failure of masculinity, something which Scott's hostile review fails to recognise. Dawid's ultimate tragedy is not that he lost his country, his daughter, or his first love; but that he has lost his sense of identity. The situation of the character here is similar to that of Dominee Byleveld in Fugard's earlier work *The Road to Mecca* (1985). Dominee Byleveld also fails at love because he is unable to transform himself, because he is unable to change, and remains trapped by the conservative traditions which reinforce his identity.

In other words, the loss of Dawid's language, land and loves is directly tied to his acute sense of his lost masculinity; and he dies, in part, because he has not been able to adapt, because he cannot relinquish his brittle, masculine self-image and holds fast to what he considers as his essence. It could be argued that Dawid's failure arises as a result of his subscription to this particular construction of what it means to be a man. Had he not invested as much significance in being a hunter, a provider and a virile exponent of his country's culture, then he would, perhaps, not have suffered as greatly and may not have resorted to alcoholism as an escape from his various humiliations. If Dawid had not invested as much in what he believed to be an archetypal identity, then he may have been spared the full extent of this tragedy. In contrast to the tragedies of the ancients, where fate is respected and feared, here Dawid's decline can be seen as at least partially resulting from his incapacity to adapt.

2.4 OUTRIGHT MALE CHAUVINISM IN *A MAN OUT OF THE COUNTRY* (ANTHONY AKERMAN)

Anthony Akerman's second play *A Man Out of the Country* was first produced in 1989, three months before the release of Nelson Mandela. A radio adaptation was broadcast on 2 October 1996, and it was eventually published in 2000 by Wits University Press. It thus traverses the various conditions of change in South Africa. Although it was originally written during the apartheid era, it was also written in exile, and only published after the coming of democracy, conditions which warrant its inclusion within the present discussion. In this section I will particularly be examining ways in which masculinity can be constructed in opposition to whatever is perceived to be its opposite, such as, in this instance, what is described as feminine and homosexual. I will be relying to a large extent on Anthony Clare's description of masculinity in *On Men: Masculinity in Crisis* (2001) in order to unpack the representations of masculinity in the play's male characters.

In *A Man Out of the Country*, the two white male roles present a position so extreme that it could only be referred to as male chauvinism. At the centre of the play is Tristan[55], who is living in exile in Amsterdam with his Dutch girlfriend Maria. During the course of the play he is visited by his old friend Dean and Dean's wife Chris, a couple who are on their way back to South Africa to farm. A black South African exile, Samson (or Sipho) also joins them for dinner, as well as a gay Argentinean exile, Antonio. Issues of exile are discussed, and Samson strongly objects to Dean and Chris returning to South Africa due to the political climate. At the climax of the play, Tristan's resentment at the fact that Maria is betraying him leads to an acrimonious

[55] The name is taken from the poem "Tristan da Cunha" by Roy Campbell who is the subject of Akerman's play *Dark Outsider*, published in the same collection. Campbell himself is also depicted as shamelessly chauvinistic.

confrontation and, in a sense, her betrayal mirrors the way in which he feels he has been betrayed by his country.

Tristan is caught between a European liberalism, and his old-fashioned mores about the appropriate (and fairly static) roles he feels men and women should be assigned. During the initial exposition we learn that Maria has referred to him as a "typical male" (4), and he tells Maria (while she is applying her make-up) that she is adopting "that recurrent female predicament: in front of a mirror" (4). In this way, we are immediately introduced to the polarisation of sexual roles which betrays a rather strained view of gender construction. Akerman is quite explicit about this and even has his characters point it out, for example, when Chris describes Tristan as follows:

> CHRIS: He's the original male...What's the word?
> TRISTAN: Chauvinist?
> CHRIS: The other one. Pig! (2002:6)

So the characters in this play display signs of an extreme male chauvinism, giving the impression that white South Africans adhere to a particularly "macho" code of conduct. This code is maintained throughout by Dean and Tristan in terms of their jocular role-playing. As Anthony Clare explains,

> When men are in the company of fellow-men, they characteristically cut each other down, mock. Competition, the mark of most male relationships – in business, sport, academic life, romance, social situations – is the antithesis of the domestic, the intimate, the exposed (2001: 205).

At the heart of the play's development lies the friendship between Tristan and Dean, who form a male bond maintained by the display and performance of role-playing scenarios. For example, Tristan and Dean continuously josh each other about their

prowess as lovers, and when Dean stops Tristan from carrying his suitcase he says "No point sending a boy to do a man's job" (2002: 6). Their interaction also involves copious amounts of drinking, and the relation between hard drinking and complying with masculine norms is underlined throughout the play. For example, both Dean and Samson bring Tristan whisky as a gift, and Samson arrives at the dinner party completely drunk. Later, Dean sings a drinking song (26). All of these activities enforce a view of masculinity as being free from constraint, a definition Clare elaborates:

> Stereotypical male activities – drinking like a man, fighting like a man, striving to win like a man, dying like a man – involve the assertion of the self against constraint, against control (2001: 205).

In Dean and Chris's interaction, their joking reveals a level of playfulness about their gender roles. Although she does not always obey him, she nevertheless tolerates his sexism:

> DEAN: Thing is you got to know how to handle your woman.
> *He smiles at Chris.*
> Chris, do us a favour, girl. Get Tristan's present out of the suitcase.
> CHRIS *gives him a deadpan look.*
> Go on, Chrissy, ease off in the direction of the suitcase and we'll sit here and admire your bum (8).

The camaraderie between Dean and Tristan is further reinforced by sexist jokes, such as when Dean says that his ideal woman is "one who gives six hours of fucking and sucking and then turns into a pizza and six pack". At this interjection Chris grabs him by the testicles and forces him to admit that he's a "chauvinist pig" (11). On the other hand, Chris is not an entirely passive figure in the relationship. For example, she is shown to be sexually aggressive towards Dean when the other guests are out of the

room. In order to maintain his sense of identity "as a man", however, Dean resists her, since it would clearly not do to be perceived as obeying a woman.

Since Antonio is homosexual, he also provides a counter-balance to this display of machismo and defines the limits of this structuring of masculinity as a heterosexual enclave. Dean suggests that Tristan and Antonio cement their reunion by smoking a rugged bottle-neck of *dagga* (marijuana) as a male initiation rite into the ways of the South African male (14). When Antonio objects to the vulgar tone used by Dean and Tristan, Maria says "Hasn't Tristan explained to you how open and honest South Africans are?" (19). There is more than a touch of sarcasm in her tone, and what Maria really means by this show of "honesty" is what she later calls Tristan's "egoistical behaviour". When Antonio mocks his extreme masculinist behaviour, Tristan says "Am I being over-sensitive, or are we being rebuked for macho behaviour?" (24). Overall, there is hardly any genuine resistance to the two white males' inexcusably crude machismo. In fact, their chauvinism seems to be made light of by the playwright in that it is expressed in a playful, tongue-in-cheek fashion.

At times Akerman seems to be conveying the idea that, whereas Dean and Tristan's sexism is perhaps never entirely endorsed (in that the female characters attack it with ridicule and sarcasm), Samson's sexism seems to be acceptable, since it is entrenched in his "culture" as a black man. Samson takes his role as a man very seriously (he tells the others that "You have to be a man" [32]), and his definition resorts to some of the stalwart essentialist qualities already described, such as having a sense of personal responsibility. Samson explains that part of "being a man" means that "you can't hold someone else to ransom for the problems in your own life" (32). This does sound like a very positive statement, until one begins to wonder about the implications this has on what "being a woman" would involve. If these are particular characteristics which

define masculinity as separate from femininity, surely this implies that being "a woman" would mean being dependent on someone else, and not having a similar sense of personal culpability. This depiction of fulfilling a masculine role refers to an entrenchment of men as separate, responsible and independent; as has already been alluded to with reference to Elaine Storkey (2001: 80) and Lynne Segal (1990: 80) in the analysis of *The Captain's Tiger*.

The association of women with land has already been touched on, but in *A Man Out of the Country* this relation becomes particularly prominent. Why does one speak of a "motherland" and "mother nature"? Why does one refer to "virgin" territory? The metaphors extend to the dual meaning of the domination of a country, and the sexual "conquest" of a woman. This association is not unique to the English language, and yet it seems so embedded in English that the implications have become almost invisible. The dead metaphors associating women with land may be embedded within a deep mythological genealogy dating back to agrarian societies, and yet this is not necessarily a good enough reason to maintain and encourage their use.

One of the strongest motifs in *A Man Out of the Country* seems to be an association of one's homeland with a woman, who is possibly a mother figure, but who is also seen as a lover. For example, Tristan makes a pass at Chris by telling her an erotic dream he's had about her. In this dream he associates her with a highly charged sexual representation detailing the lush landscape of Hog's Back (9-10). Maria later enforces this point of view when she says that Tristan "cares for his country more than for me...when he comes to bed I can smell her on him. She's his whore" (25). In this sense, although Tristan feels that he is morally superior to her – because Maria is having an affair – he is being equally unfaithful to her in that he refuses to give himself completely to the Netherlands, and by association, to her.

Tristan's longing for his homeland takes on an erotic quality, in a similar way that Dawid in *Sorrows and Rejoicings* associates South Africa with Marta, his coloured lover. Both relate the condition of exile to impotency, and in being separated from their lovers/land, they have lost their virility and can no longer reproduce themselves; in life, in art. There is a strong sense of the patriotic in this play, and yet, on reflection, this definition is rather similar to the cowboy configurations associated with the North American frontier, and with the stereotyped "Okker" of Australia[56]. In other words, the territorial urgency expressed in this version of masculinity seems to be more about the metaphoric meaning of land than about a particular piece of land itself. Ironically, this marker which is used to particularly tie specific men to a specific geography turns out to associate them strongly with men in other countries, rather than to the people of a particular territory. The sexualisation of land seems to indicate that it has become a signifier cut loose from what it signifies.

I have tried to show that at the heart of this rather extreme – and often unpleasantly chauvinistic – piece lies a sense of masculinity as premised largely on an opposition to the feminine. This distancing occurs at the semiotic level of the sign, and what is *not* masculine must be spurned in order for the identification to be completed. Pleck and Thompson state that early studies into masculine roles reveal that in order to become identified as masculine, "Men should cultivate an independent style of achievement, and they should cultivate incompetency in all feminine activities" (1987: 26). This is a conclusion also reached by Michael Kimmel, namely that "anti-femininity lies at the heart of masculinity" (in Whitehead and Barrett 2001: 23). Anthony Clare puts it as follows:

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[56] There seems to be a relation between the words "okker" (Australian), "okie" (American), and "oke" (South African) in that they all carry the connotation of being a somewhat rugged, ever reliable, working man.

> Men repudiate the feminine not only in women but in themselves. As the coloniser despises the colonised for being weak, for having yielded to invasion and conquest in the first place, so men view women's apparent acquiescence with contempt. Such a view demands that any move towards identification with the oppressed, the colonised, be promptly repudiated and stamped out. If a man feels he does not have *it* – masculine strength, masculine bravery, masculine achievement – he is a castrated male. He is a woman...(2001: 205).

Throughout this play, Tristan and Dean try to prove that they are not like women. We are presented with a view of two South African white men who are heavy drinkers, enjoy a good fight, and who are virulently opposed to any type of behaviour which might be construed, even if only accidentally, as feminine. Their dialogue consists of a series of displays of masculine posturing which is clearly demarcated in terms of a machismo premised as being in opposition to both the female character's femininity and Antonio's homosexuality.

These brutal displays of machismo are not presented entirely unproblematically, and I doubt whether Akerman means to present an uncritical appraisal of this form of identity. The subject is, however, one which recurs in his other plays, such as *Dark Outsider* about the male chauvinist poet Roy Campbell, and *Old Boys*, a story of brutalised masculinity and male bonding, drawn from Akerman's experiences at the all-boys school, Michael House. In these plays, masculine identity becomes the primary role, the most important configuration of identity and it does seem as though Akerman's plays offer little by way of critical reflection on the problem of male chauvinism. Instead, his characters respond to their crisis of identity from within the context of their chauvinism itself. One does not get the impression (as one does in *Sorrow and Rejoicings*) that the masculine role identifications of these characters might have anything to do with their crisis.

2.5 SEXUALITY AS HEALING IN *THE BELLS OF AMERSFOORT* (ZAKES MDA)

Zakes Mda first came to the attention of the South African public when he won the Amstel Playwright of the Year in 1978 for *We Shall Sing for the Fatherland* (1980). He has written some thirty plays since then, but after his successful debut as a novelist with *Ways of Dying* (1995), he has become better known as a writer of novels. *The Bells of Amersfoort* (2002) is the last play which he has written to date and at a seminar held at Midrand Graduate Institute in 2002 he indicated that it would most likely be his last play. It was commissioned by De Nieuw Amsterdam Theatergroep in collaboration with the Sibikwa Players and premiered in the Netherlands on 29 March 2002.

The play operates on many different levels and primarily concerns the plight of a black woman (Tami) who has been living in exile in the Netherlands. Even after the demise of apartheid, she cannot seem to shake a lethargy which has come about as the result of a complex relationship of interdependence with her hosts, which includes elements of both gratitude and guilt. She is also hesitant to return to her boyfriend, Luthando, who remained in South Africa and has subsequently been corrupted by his newfound wealth and power in the new dispensation. Tami also turns to drink, like Dawid and Tristan, as a response to her feelings of helplessness and loss in an alien land.

Although Tami is the protagonist of this drama, and although an analysis of her role could result in a substantial discussion on issues of identity, I have decided, instead, to maintain my focus in this chapter on white men estranged from their homeland, and will consequently be discussing a supporting character in the play, Dominee Johan van der Bijl. As it transpires, it was Van der Bijl who stopped the marriage between

Luthando and Tami when he was still a security policeman for the apartheid state. At first Tami doesn't recognise Van der Bijl when she sees him having sex twice a week with a black prostitute in an apartment opposite her own. Only later does she discover his true identity.

Van der Bijl's sexual encounters underscore his own fraught relationships with Europe and Africa. In consorting with a prostitute, Van der Bijl does not feel that he has been unfaithful to his wife, and he claims that "No one can accuse me of infidelity because there has never been any emotional involvement between Heleen and me. No attachment. Just the gratification of the flesh" (137). In a sense, the commitment he feels to his land is here telescoped into the metaphor of commitment to a woman, and his relations with the Netherlands in general appear to be similar to his dealings with the nameless prostitute. He had originally come to Europe in order to establish a sense of his identity in terms of his roots, but ultimately this is a failed project. He says:

> They say it is my ancestral home, yet I come as a stranger. Don't think I have not tried to find a connection. To establish my roots, so to say. I have even gone to a village that bears my name. It is far removed from who I am. From what I am. I am of Africa. I do not feel part of this land. Even the soil smells differently (144).

Van der Bijl tries to overcome his racist past as well as to reconnect with Africa by having sex with a black prostitute. His repentance takes a form of ecstasy, and yet, ironically, she has come to represent Europe, and when he is with her his identity as an African is emphasised.

Shane Graham has written eloquently on the ties between landscape and identity in *The Bells of Amersfoort*. If one's identity is tied to a specific land mass, how does

one's sense of self alter when one is removed from that location which one has suffused with meaning? The exile exists in an imaginary space, and yet, are not all countries imaginary spaces? The lines dividing nations are abstract, mental constructions and the signification of a country is a speculative gesture. Graham notes that "what Mda's play reveals is that, if the investment of memory is split between the body and the land, then the two must be joined in order to create a historical memory that is citable or representable..." (2005). In this way the play emphasizes the close links between memory and space/place.

The reception which the play received in South Africa was decidedly mixed. For example, whereas some reviewers found the African elements contrived, others felt that it was too European. For example, Ina Randall of the *EP Herald* mentions the "silly designer African inserts" (2002: 6), and Francois Smith of *Die Burger* also found the "Africanisation" (2002: 4) of the piece to be artificial. On the other hand, according to Sandile Memela, the device of Dominee Van der Bijl "establishes an immediate psychological bond with a white audience", who desires nothing but to be seen as having "repented". In this way the play "liberates white guilt" and "serves as part of a political experiment to massage the white conscience and lull the masses to sleep by reminding them of how far they have come" (2002: 27). Memela feels that the drama deliberately plays to white audiences and tries to alleviate their pangs of conscience. Adrienne Sichel, however, called Johan van der Bijl "a sledgehammer symbol of Christian hypocrisy and denied responsibility" (2002: 9), and clearly did not feel that he was by any means a soporific to white guilt. Whether one sympathises with the character of Van der Bijl, or whether one condemns him, one cannot deny his attempt at a reconciliation within himself, even if it is doomed to failure.

The configuration of masculine identity represented by Van der Bijl is, paradoxically, that of being both white and Africanist. He cannot go back to South Africa, and says, "There is no place for me in Tami Walaza's South Africa. It is a South Africa of anger, bitterness and vengeance" (156). The ramifications of his fraught suspension between what is native and what is foreign confuse his sense of masculinity. The erstwhile concrete categories of nationhood and race have been cut off from their master signified (the system of apartheid), and have become free-floating signifiers, based on economic, sexual and cultural exchanges. The new identity which Van der Bijl forges for himself arises from his capacity as a consumer to purchase a sexual engagement with a black woman. In this sense he is attempting to objectify and purchase reconciliation as a commodity. And yet, this exchange ultimately severs him from the emotional and spiritual rehabilitation he had been hoping to attain.

2.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS ON GENDER

Throughout this section, I have tried to avoid describing masculinity in either normative or pejorative terms. This has not always been possible, since there is no entirely neutral ground from which to speak, and, for example, some sort of indictment of the male chauvinism displayed by the characters in Akerman's text has become evident. Also, I may have favoured the processes of individuation suggested by *The Captain's Tiger* as a possible psychic move towards identification, rooted within a mythological context. Nevertheless, to restate a point made in the introduction to this chapter, it does seem as though it is increasingly difficult to settle on descriptions of masculinity which avoid essentialism, but which are also phrased in a positive (or even a neutral) light.

Ultimately, a potential goal might be a sense of equality, which is, after all, what the early feminists sought. We should, however, bear in mind that, as Elaine Graham reminds us, "difference and equality are also constructs" and that they "emerge from human discourse" (in Storkey 2001: 54). To make the attempt to reach for a sense of gender equality, then, is also dependent on certain prescriptions and subjective value judgements. More importantly, to equalise terms of gender description robs one of the ability to define what each term might mean, since difference is required in order to demarcate definitions. I would like to close this chapter with Jeff Hearn and David Morgan's distinction between two different types of definitions of masculinity:

> either masculinity is constructed and sustained by hidden but discoverable forces, discourses, ideologies, structures, and the like...or else it is constructed *bricoleur*-fashion, by the actor, and sustained by conscious monitoring and impression-management (1990: 197).

For the most part, I have tried to examine masculinity in terms of the first of these approaches – to discern ideologies and discourses which have sustained various characterisations of masculine roles. And yet, it is possible that any definition of masculinity which has been approached in these terms will already be outmoded, and that only those acting in the present are able to forge a masculinity monitored by the reactions of an audience. Any definition which is fixed and final is also, by the same token, as good as dead and buried. What masculinity might mean in the present and future is something which could only be determined by the actors involved in the living moment. As Lois McNay points out:

> The formation of the subject within language is crucially linked to the ambiguous status of the sign itself....The Subject can only emerge as such within language. At the same time, however, the unstable nature of language means that, at the moment of its appearance, the subject is 'petrified' or reduced to being no more than a signifier....The stabilization of identity is constantly thwarted by the destabilizing effects of the unconscious upon the symbolic order...(2000: 7).

What has also become apparent in this examination of characters representing white masculinity is how fraught this identification has become as a result of the end of apartheid. Each of these characters reveals an uncertainty, a fragility, a vulnerability arising from the cracks, fissures and spaces which have now begin to appear as patriarchy slowly, after its long history, begins to crack open. If there is any binding theme connecting these diverse characters, it might involve the failure of the masculine model as a durable form of identity construction. Perhaps the masculine role can no longer provide a stable, coherent sense of identity, if it ever did.

CHAPTER THREE – POLITICAL IDENTITIES

3.1 POST ANTI-APARTHEID THEATRE[57]

> [A]fter April 27, 1994, "the enemy" was all of a sudden gone....Apartheid and violence made for powerful images, poignant stories, stirring poems, heart-stopping film...can we learn to create again without "the enemy"?
> (Metz 1996: 57)

> While anti-apartheid theatre was known worldwide for dramatizing the struggle against apartheid, theatre in South Africa today is hampered by the loss of a focused movement for change... (Kruger 2002: 231).

The observations above by Gordon Metz and Loren Kruger typify the reactions of a number of commentators on post-apartheid theatre. When the behemoth of the nationalist regime was replaced by a democracy, the impetus behind the revolutionary protest theatre created during apartheid quietly fizzled away. The creativity which had been exercised on behalf of agit-prop and protest theatre lost its urgency. As Ian Johns lamented after a South African festival in London: "The plays' hearts may still beat with passion but the playwriting joints have grown stiff" (2002: 20). Perhaps it is no wonder that some writers are still turning to the old themes for inspiration. And yet, eighteen years after the unbanning of the ANC, theatre which indicts the apartheid system hardly seems as much of a necessity as it may once have been.

Post-anti-apartheid theatre (to use Loren Kruger's definition [2002: 233]) is work which takes place in a completely different context to revolutionary work created during the heyday of the nationalist government. As Gael Neke maintains, there is a distinct difference between a revolutionary art which fought against a system at great

[57] I would like to use the word "political" in the title of this chapter in a very specific sense. I realise that the word has been opened up by writers such as Michel Foucault to refer to a vast range of human endeavours, but I would here like to use it in a very narrow sense as being related to the system of state governance, and, in particular, to expressions either endorsing or critiquing governmental policies.

personal risk, and art which retrospectively attacks apartheid from the safety of the post-apartheid era. She states that this work

> carries less potential of censure and requires less courage in that it does not contest an existing situation. Its themes are generally now accepted as having moral validity thus no longer holding the risk of alienation for the artist. These factors change the very notion of the 'political' in this art (1999: 5).

In other words, the sense of the 'political' in current anti-apartheid art seems to be more a kind of reification of ideology, rather than an appeal for transformation, since the transformation has now ostensibly already occurred. Where apartheid is still today used as a theme, it may perhaps seem more appropriate to celebrate the freedom from oppression, rather than dwelling on accusations of injustice. And then there is also the development of a new form of protest theatre, which challenges the present status quo.

Every society requires performances which recall defining moments of its history, particularly times of transition and transformation. As an analogy, two of the most important moments in the historical trajectory of families (which could be seen as smaller, more private examples of societies[58]) also constitute the most widespread and familiar performance events – namely, marriages and funerals. In South Africa today, possibly in the world, the most common form of performance event is likely to be the wedding ceremony, which provides the staple fare for many musicians, singers, photographers, interior designers, chefs and dressmakers. Marriages also sustain a good many churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and religious officials. Funerals may require less preparation, and yet, they are also very significant. The ending of apartheid has been presented both as a marriage between the different races of the

[58] It is difficult to decide whether the family is a metaphor for society or whether it is society which is a metaphor for the family.

country[59], as well as the end of an era (albeit a rather more joyful putting to rest than is associated with most funerals). And yet, the question remains whether one ought to put the past behind one once and for all; or whether one should, like the Malagasy, continue to exhume and rebury the dead.

If one is concerned with the transformation of identity, one might ask whether texts which continue to rebury the apartheid past might be hampering processes of change by reinforcing the memory of identity structures created in terms of opposition. In recalling the oppressive apartheid system one is also recalling the construction of an oppositional subject position, and this may reinforce the very polarisation which apartheid created. Ironically, many writers during apartheid who resisted the confines of the labels created for them by the state, still unwittingly reinforced a no less fundamentalistic subject position for themselves in terms of their opposition to the identities imposed on them by the Department of Home Affairs. Even though redefinitions in terms of subject positions advocated the loosening of bonds, the way in which revolutionaries against the state described, defined and classified their subject position was often no less essentialist than the state-sanctioned classifications. To put it more simply: both sides were participating in the same grand narrative. And as David Medalie says, with reference to an argument by Njabulo Ndebele, "the narrowness of apartheid finds its counterpart, not its antidote, in an anti-apartheid polemic which does nothing more than combat the offending ideology on its own terms" (2008: 3).

[59] This is particularly true of racial relations in popular soap operas such as *Egoli*, *Generations*, and *Isidingo.*

It seems that this grand narrative of apartheid and its counterpart have not necessarily been put to rest. In his essay "Unspeaking the Centre" (2001), Mark Fleischman notes that since the coming of democracy

> there have been those productions which continue to focus on the grand narratives: apartheid and colonialism....These represent attempts to re-write the colonial/apartheid narrative from the post-colonial/post-apartheid perspective. However, despite being productions of great note, like all such attempts they remain anchored to the grand narrative, one foot in the past, struggling to move on (98).

Fleishman's intent here is clearly not to disparage the claims and concerns of such narratives, nor to cast doubt on their legitimacy. Instead, his point is that totalising grand narratives are in danger of smothering and subsuming a myriad alternative histories and experiences into a single story, which can limit one's frame of reference. Since Jean-Francois Lyotard's description of grand narratives as confining visions in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984), it may seem preferable to seek out multiple descriptions of history, instead of stories which feature a single track at the exclusion of all others. Lyotard states that he senses a growing "incredulity towards metanarratives" (xxiv). The Lebanese novelist Elias Khoury has also warned of the dangers of becoming a people who are "prisoners of one story". He refers particularly to the Israelis and Palestinians, and according to Jeremy Harding in the *London Review of Books* (2006), Khoury warns that these peoples "have begun to tell a single, fatal story and must look to themselves and the world for other stories or they are finished" (10). This is not, then, a question of whose story is the right story, nor of who has the right to tell a story, but it seems rather to be an indication that many stories are preferable to any single story. Deleuze's model of a rhizomatic structure which deals in multiplicities (1993: 29-30), is particularly apt here.

On the other hand, one should also be clear as to which segment of the population is most opposed to stories dealing with the apartheid narrative. For example, there seems to be a particular resistance among the white community to stories which rehash the apartheid past, casting all whites into the role of perpetrators and seeing all blacks as victims. There seems to be a feeling that, since power was, to an extent, willingly relinquished[60] and since a clear public apology was made, the white population does not want to keep on being reminded of the past. Similarly, in post-World War Two Germany, a new generation turned vehemently, and with disgust, against the ideologies maintained by their parents; and since they were not complicit with their views, the new generation also, eventually, felt that they should have no share in their shame[61]. In the same way, those who were born in South Africa in 1989 – when the tumultuous processes of change first began – will turn twenty next year, and the new white adults feel that they do not share in the guilt of their forefathers. Mike van Graan reported the following feedback on his play *Some Mothers' Sons* (2006) at a public lecture to the University of Cape Town Drama Department:

> Now we often hear that audiences – still overwhelmingly white and middle class – don't want to be reminded of those times. It's been suggested to me that perhaps some of what the black character Vusi says about his experiences at the hands of the brutal apartheid regime in my own play, *Some Mothers' Sons*, be toned down for white audiences, no matter that these experiences are central to the choices that he makes. "We've done the guilt thing. So let's move on, dammit!"
> <http://www.drama.uct.ac.za/newsevents/general> 4 February 2007

Some Mother's Sons is an interesting example of a work which deals with the violence of apartheid, since it draws a parallel between the injustices of apartheid and

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[60] After all, according to R.W. Johnson, *Umkhonto we Sizwe* were "one of the world's least effective guerilla forces" (2006: 32).

[61] On the other hand, it might also be argued that in Germany a new meta-narrative has simply replaced an old one.

the violent crime endemic to contemporary South Africa. The play tries to reach behind acts of injustice to reveal the humanity of both victims and perpetrators while approaching issues of forgiveness and reconciliation. Although Van Graan is an antagonistic opponent of the present government and its policies, he certainly does not feel that it is too soon to stop speaking about apartheid. The fact that he is himself coloured allows him to be a lot more forceful in his denunciations of both the past and the present than if he were white.

Mike van Graan was elected the General Secretary of PANSA (Performing Arts Network South Africa) at its inception in 2002, and he held the position up to 2006. During his tenure as General Secretary, Van Graan conducted a nationwide survey of theatres and audiences. In the above quoted speech to the drama students of UCT, he summarises an important finding from his research, namely that theatre audiences are (still) "overwhelmingly white and middle class". Despite government's best efforts to support theatre which is considered to be "relevant", and of "cultural significance", theatres cannot keep their doors open without an audience. In this sense then, the work which audiences choose to see will play a role in what is being produced. From this point of view, it is clearly impossible to force audiences to support plays about apartheid.

One of the problems with arts sponsorship in South Africa today is that much theatre which is being paid for by the National Arts Council is drawing neither audiences nor critical engagement, since it is overly didactic. This form of theatre might best be described as educational theatre, in that it hopes to teach lessons about history, and to confront ignorance about issues such as Aids, xenophobia, domestic violence, drug addiction and so on. But one of the difficulties with art which is based on a strong

moral conviction is that it can so easily slide into a form of propaganda[62]. Perhaps at least part of the trouble stems from the fact that texts which elucidate a strong moral standpoint stand in danger of presenting only a single point of view, and that they do not adequately reflect their own processes of narration. For example, Ian Steadman (1999) points out that "because apartheid provided such an easy moral target" (26), many people supported anti-apartheid theatre regardless of the quality of its presentation. Consequently, many critics hesitated to offer any kind of critique of this sort of theatre on other levels, since it held the moral high ground. These constraints were, in some measure, carried over into at least the first decade of the post-apartheid era when it seemed inappropriate to attack the ANC or to criticise the new government, since it had now become a legitimate authority which superseded one founded on injustice. But, as Steadman points out, it is precisely now that our "critical vigilance" must be sharpened, since, "if we abandon critical vigilance at this crucial moment, we lose the war against fundamentalism, against essentialism, and against nationalism and racism" (26).

Mike van Graan's *Green Man Flashing* (2004) has been a prominent example of a new era of protest theatre in South Africa. Although the play does not refer explicitly to actual incidents, it is contemptuous of attempts by the ANC government to protect its cadres from scandal, and reflects on the way in which a government can resort to corruption when self-important, high-minded ideals are placed above transparency and accountability. The programme which accompanied the play showed newspaper clippings from various stories which exposed corruption in government, leaving

[62] On the other hand, is there something inherently wrong with propaganda *per se*? It is only recently that the term has become pejorative. If one considers the various Ministries of Propaganda which different countries maintained during World War II, it seems to have been understood as a means of disseminating information, not necessarily manipulating and brainwashing people. Today's governmental Media Officers are surely involved in the same enterprise. Why not call them what they are?

audiences in no doubt as to the target of the play's attack. Van Graan followed this up with *Hostile Takeover* (2005), a dark comedy which satirises Affirmative Action and Black Economic Empowerment.

In contrast then to plays which still attack apartheid, there has gradually been a shift towards plays which attack the present government. It seems then, that, as the media have been so fond of saying, "the honeymoon is over", and it is now possible to appraise all manner of governance, regardless of its ideological perspective. New forms of protest are growing out of political theatre and it seems that since the coming of democracy there has been an opening up of identities structured in terms of purely oppositional political concerns. The segments into which political interests have previously been divided are no longer as clear as they may once have been.

In some ways there has been a revival of "ethnic" identities, instead of the identification with (or in opposition to) a state sanctioned identity. In the following chapter, I will be exploring some of these definitions of national identity, and consider the question of whether or not South Africans can be found to share a sense of national belonging. This view will examine ways in which ethnic identities reinforce separate "nations", and create ruptures in the "national identity". But before moving on to a more detailed discussion of definitions of nationality in terms of ethnicity, and questions of whether or not a national theatre is possible in a multi-cultural society, I would like to stay with the political focus introduced here and consider a number of plays which have elaborated the processes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, before focusing on one particularly prominent example.

The TRC was an attempt to try to consolidate some of the stories about the past into a narrative which could be accepted by, if not all, then hopefully most of the citizens of

South Africa. It serves as a kind of epilogue to anti-apartheid theatre and was the largest and longest continuous performance of nation building ever seen in the country. Although the results of the commission have not been unanimously praised, the process itself was seen as a watershed. In a way, this was the grand national funeral referred to earlier; an attempt to put the past to rest by exposing the murky secrets of the apartheid regime once and for all. The process was also a vital part in the search for a national identity, a search which has become a crucial part of much post-apartheid literature. As David Attwell and Barbara Harlow point out in their introduction to the Special Issue of *Modern Fiction Studies* (2000):

> The pressure is on to find the resources, policies and vision to 'bind the nation together' and to take its people decisively from its traumatized past to a reconstructed future (2).

The TRC – and the proliferation of media, literature and drama which it germinated – was one such attempt.

3.2 PERFORMING THE TRC – *UBU AND THE TRUTH COMMISSION* (JANE TAYLOR / WILLIAM KENTRIDGE)

> Perhaps no country in history has so directly and thoroughly confronted its past in an effort to shape its future as South Africa has. Working from the explicit assumption that understanding the past will contribute to a more peaceful and democratic future, South Africa has attempted to come to grips with its apartheid history through its truth and reconciliation process.
> (Gibson 2004: 129).

The aims of the TRC, as defined by the 1993 constitution, were the promoting of "national unity and reconciliation in a spirit of understanding which transcends the divisions of the past." ("Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report" in Verdoolaege 2005: 184). This was an event which had far-reaching consequences for the country's media and arts. The weekly broadcast of *Special Report*, which detailed the preceding week's hearings, had the largest audience of any television show in the country's history (191). According to Laura Moss, the TRC "wholly permeated South African culture for over three years [from 1996-1999]" (2006: 89).

What made this commission different from similar proceedings elsewhere was that the hearings were held in public, unlike the *in camera* commissions of Chile. Also, if acts were deemed to be motivated by "political objectives"[63], amnesty was considered, and in most cases granted. It was, in other words, a purely narrative construction of a nation. Njabulo Ndebele referred to the proceedings as a "restoration of narrative" and went on to say that in "few countries in the contemporary world do we have a living example of people reinventing themselves through narrative" (in Graham 2003: 12). The explicit project of the commission was to heal national wounds not through vengeance but through understanding; it was a symbolic procedure. The final clause

[63] The final clause of the Interim Constitution states that "amnesty shall be granted in respect of acts, omissions and offences associated with political objectives and committed in the course of the conflicts of the past" (in Krog 1998: vi).

of the Interim Constitution, which stipulated the necessity for the hearings to commence, states that "there is a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for *ubuntu* [the African philosophy of humanism] but not for victimization" (in Krog 1998: vi).

If a nation is an "imagined community" as Benedict Anderson (1991) maintains, it would make sense to effect the restoration and healing process on an imaginary level[64]. Similarly, André Brink claims to favour "an imagined rewriting of history or, more precisely, of the role of the imagination in the dialectic between past and present, individual and society" (in Graham 2003: 13). Not everybody, however, has agreed with this interpretation of events. By acquitting perpetrators on condition of a full disclosure, the TRC was perhaps also sending out a message that confession equals justice. There was a sense that in having perpetrators come face to face with their victims, they would be made to understand the heinous nature of their crimes and that this perception of their guilt would be sufficient punishment. Since only the perpetrators were questioned and cross-examined, however, some felt that the stories of the perpetrators, ironically, gained precedence over the stories of their victims. Shane Graham for one, contends that the stories of perpetrators were sanctioned over those of victims, and that "the victims' accounts of the past" were thrown "into conflict with the accounts given by the perpetrators themselves" (2003: 12). It troubles Graham that the perpetrators took centre stage in the drama:

> The "I" who tells the story never entirely equals the "I" to whom terrible things were done, for to tell a story requires *agency*, and the trauma victim is one who has experienced a loss of agency (2003: 18).

[64] Here I am using the word not as dismissive of validity and factual authenticity, but claiming the immense power of the imagination in not only mediating, but actually forging notions of reality.

In her account of the media representations of the event, Annelies Verdoolaege states that the TRC coverage bore the problematic characteristics "inherent to the media as an institution", namely "sensationalism, partiality and simplification" (2005: 188). She also feels that, as a result of the media emphasis on sensationalism, they "tended to pay more attention to the perpetrators than to the victims" (188). This brings to light another very important aspect of the proceedings, which is that the event was, as Antjie Krog has pointed out, very clearly "mediated" rather than an example of "direct" expression (in Kruger 1999: 290). By this I take Krog to mean that the event was continually interpreted for a mass audience by the media, which selected and packaged the proceedings for public consumption. Verdoolaege goes so far as to say that the TRC "has been one of the most mediatised phenomena of the 1990s. It has probably been the most mediatised event ever taking place in Africa" (2005: 181).

Whereas Krog is specifically referring to the way in which the Truth Commission was packaged, I take Verdoolaege to be referring to the massive coverage the proceedings garnered, and the enormous national, pan-African and international interest in the TRC. This was probably due to the international interest in the story of apartheid, particularly by countries who had supported the anti-apartheid struggle and who, consequently, felt that they had had a hand in effecting change in the country. This interest was also, no doubt, partially due to what Mark Gevisser has described as the "inherent theatricality" (1997: 4) of the event since the performances of both perpetrators and their victims lent themselves to dramatic stagings.

Besides the deluge of media coverage, the proceedings also generated a number of theatrical productions. These include Mike van Graan's *Dinner Talk* (1996)[65]; Pieter Dirk-Uys' *Truth Omissions* (1996); Paul Herzberg's *The Dead Wait* (1997); Walter

[65] Many of the names on this list were first sourced in a similar list in Marlin-Curiel (2002: 286).

Chakela's *Isithukuthuku* (1997); Nan Hamilton's *no. 4* (1997); Jane Taylor's *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1997); *That Spirit* (1996) by Mina Nawe Theatre Group; *The Story I am about to Tell* (1997) by the Khulumani Support Group; Thembi Mtshali's *A Woman in Waiting* (1999); Antjie Krog's *Waarom is Die Wat Voor Toyi-Toyi Altyd So Vet?* (Why are Those who Toyi-Toyi in Front Always so Fat? [2000]); and most recently *Truth in Translation* (2006) created by Paavo Tom Tammi in collaboration with Michael Lessac.

According to Stephanie Marlin-Curiel (2002), *The Story I am About to Tell* and *That Spirit* both focus on "the deep emotional trauma that remains with survivors as the TRC goes about 'healing the nation'" (275). In marked contrast to the media focus on the stories of the perpetrators as protagonists, these plays were more specifically concerned with "healing the nation", as opposed to "exploring the socio-political aspects of the TRC". So there is a tension here between trying to analyse and discuss the work of the TRC and its ramifications, and the attempt simply to exhibit the raw emotional data which came out of the project. For example, in *The Story I am about to Tell*, three people who had presented their testimony at the hearings appear onstage to retell what had previously been spontaneous speeches they had made in front of the commission. This unaltered testimony is then interpreted by three actors and, in this way, the unprompted, emotional recalling of memory is placed alongside its interpretation in terms of aesthetic considerations. The drama draws on both the veracity of the actual language of victims and the emotional interpretation of this narrative by trained professionals. In this way, the performance of evidence as a staged event is examined as part of the construction of history. What is significant about these two plays is that they deal exclusively with the stories from the point of view of the victims themselves.

On the other hand, Jane Taylor's *Ubu and the Truth Commission* – one of the most publicised plays about the hearings, which has also enjoyed numerous international stagings as well as some success as a published text – focuses particularly on the role of the perpetrator as central protagonist, deferring or displacing the context of the victims. As Graham says, "Whereas *The Story I Am about to Tell* attempts to circumvent the danger of producing a 'horror pornography' by having the victims tell their own stories on stage, *Ubu* takes a very different tack, for it is essentially a theatre of *displacement*" (2003: 18).

Using the backdrop of Alfred Jarry's seminal text (*Ubu Roi*, 1896), the character of Ubu is used to portray a quintessential white South African male who worked for the apartheid state. In referencing a work from the Western canon, it consciously situates itself within a specific literary tradition. In displacing the direct engagement with its subject matter by means of historicisation[66], the mixing of genres, and the use of multi-media; as well as in employing metaphorical, allegorical and mythical components in its narration, *Ubu* becomes more of an intellectual exercise than *This Story*.

Jarry's original Ubu is described by Jane Taylor as "grandiose and rapacious... notorious for his infantile engagement with his world" (1998: iii), and it is these features of the character (including his burlesque display of irresponsibility which cannot conceive of the consequences of his actions) which inform her adaptation. Ubu does not stand for any particular person in South Africa, but for "an aspect, a tendency, an excuse" (iv). The character took shape as a result of her observations during the TRC proceedings that many of the perpetrators seemed genuinely

[66] I am referring to Brecht's concept of "historicisation" as a theoretical exercise which approaches the setting of a play as an object of historical investigation.

astonished to discover the terrible consequences of their actions. The central protagonist is "an agent of evil" (v), and it is "the story of an individual pathology". And yet, the play extends to a range of other concerns, being, according to Taylor "an exemplary account of the relationships between capitalist ideology, imperialism, race, class, and gender, religion and modernisation in the southern African sub-region" (vi).

Ridiculing an agent of the apartheid state and turning him into a farcical character is a way of stripping this sinister creature of his capacity to engender fear in much the same way as Charlie Chaplin's film *The Great Dictator* (1940) served to undermine Adolf Hitler by deriding him; and yet there is also the danger that this portrayal might trivialise actions and their consequences. For example, Loren Kruger finds that

> The cruel burlesque of Jarry's plot has the potential to highlight the capricious and often arbitrary violence of state operatives, but the adolescent excesses of Jarry's text also runs [sic] the risk of trivializing the suffering of those testifying against such acts of cruelty (2000: 558).

Pa Ubu and Ma Ubu are exaggerated caricatures, lampooning the frivolous cruelty of children. The violence which explodes out of Pa Ubu's actions begins "at home" in his interactions with Ma Ubu, as for example when he says "I will bash your head in and never say sorry" (3) in a sing-song, child-like manner. They also talk about themselves in the third person as "mother" and "father" and in a sense this shows the degree to which identity has split off from being the subject of responsibility. Pa Ubu also makes use of the "royal we" when he says, for example, "we were busy with our business". Besides possibly serving as an indication of his feelings of superiority, this also creates a sense of acting out of a collective imperative, and not from a personal motivation, implying that the blame for his actions can be shifted to his superiors. As an agent of the state, Pa Ubu denies personal culpability for his actions, saying, "Once I was an agent of the state, and had agency and stature" (5). Here we see two

paradoxical meanings of agency: to be an agent, after all, is to represent a greater power, and is exactly the opposite of "having agency", that is, to have power. The irony is that his stature is now inversely proportional to what it was, since the authority of the state came crashing down.

What is perhaps the most noteworthy thing about the interactions between Pa and Ma Ubu is the mundane domesticity of their situation, underscoring (to use Hannah Arendt's famous term), the "banality of evil"[67]. Pa Ubu comes across as a blustering husband, very determined and perhaps somewhat dim, but certainly not demonic, or even demonstrably wicked. Eventually, as the evidence mounts against him, Pa Ubu's monstrous deeds begin to infiltrate his familial surroundings and his paranoia creates danger out of even the most ordinary items:

> MA UBU: I see that prices are still rising.
> PA UBU: What uprising?
> MA UBU: Today, everything costs an arm and a leg.
> PA UBU: I had nothing to do with it!
> MA UBU: Pass me the salt.
> PA UBU: Who said it was assault? (29)

William Kentridge, who designed and directed the production, should perhaps share in the role of author/creator with Jane Taylor[68], since his input led to many of the elements which make up the show, including the use of puppets and digital imagery. Kentridge is aware of their accountability towards the victims of apartheid and he asks in his introduction, "what is our responsibility to the people whose stories we are using as raw fodder for our play?" (xi). In facing the impossibility of truly representing

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[67] Arendt, Hannah. 1994 [1963]. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a Report on the Banality of Evil.* Penguin: UK.
[68] This is an instance of a play in which the performance was far more powerful than the text on its own. One might say that every play is like this, that the performance is the actual event, rather than reading, and yet this case supersedes ordinary examples, since the puppetry, music and animation move the production well beyond a work of literature.

them, Kentridge opted for the use of puppets. These were chosen as the witnesses to atrocity, since they provided metaphorical rather than literal representations of the victims. It also highlighted the fact that they were speaking for a community, that they were, as it were, being "spoken through" (vii), and "[t]hey thus very poignantly and compellingly capture complex relations of testimony, translation and documentation apparent in the processes of the Commission itself" (vii).

Graham describes the use of puppets as dramatizing "the ruptures and displacements" of the testimonies (2003: 16). He also, however, finds that the transference of the victim's speech to puppets robs them of a measure of agency:

> The use of puppets makes possible the group's unique theatre of displaced testimony, but it also reduces the victims to interchangeable parts. If their stories are all alike, because they lack agency, then the survivors themselves appear equally devoid of substance (20).

Besides the puppets of victims giving testimony, a number of other puppets represent aspects of the apartheid state. In some way, then, it appears that Pa Ubu is caught between the machinations of these two groups of puppets: between the monstrous creatures which represent the state, and the victims. On the other hand, these monsters might also allude to darker aspects of the human psyche. For example, a vulture puppet on stage stays visible for much of the action, serving as a reminder of the persistence of death, and a three-headed dog (described as "Pa Ubu's dogs-of-war" [9]) calls up mythical resonances of Cerberus, the guardian of Hades. By transporting the primal impulses of the unconscious onto these terrible creatures, Kentridge creates an astonishing and vivid representation, and yet, these symbolic figures could also be seen as detracting from issues of personal culpability in that they are seen to dictate the actions of the individuals who performed the dirty work of the apartheid government. It is perhaps unsurprising how, in terms of attribution theory, many of

the perpetrators changed their view of the attribution from an internal attribution while the atrocities were being committed (such as bravery, courage, conviction, and loyalty) to an external attribution when their deeds were reviewed as evil (coercion, manipulation, governmental pressure, authority.) In contrast, victims of apartheid were likely to see external factors as a cause of their suffering, while describing their liberation as arising from internal causes.

The clash between the visceral reality of the violence perpetuated and the intellectual justification of those actions is vividly portrayed when, for example, Pa Ubu reacts to a graphic description of butchery (13) in a farcical scene where he attempts to shield himself in scientific mumbo jumbo (15). Much of the talk of killing is similarly smothered by absurdity. For example, Niles, a puppet crocodile, says "A little killing here and there never hurt anyone" (19). The backdrop text which appears with this is "More killers than saints have dined with princes" (19), a wry commentary on the nature of power in all societies, and the corruption and killing which so often goes along with maintaining it. So talk of killing is parodied (perhaps as a defence mechanism to the enormity of the perpetrations) and yet there are also quieter, more tragic moments in the piece, such as when a witness takes the stand and describes how her son was burnt to death (23).

The testimony heard is told in Zulu, Xhosa, Sepedi and Tswana and translated, as it was during the hearings. As in *The Story I am About to Tell*, all of the testimony in the piece was taken directly from the TRC hearings, with the assistance of Antjie Krog, whose enormously influential account of the Commission, *Country of My Skull* (1998), has since become one of the most important description of the proceedings. These testimonies gradually begin to take over the action, which becomes less and less frivolous as the play progresses. Pa Ubu's escapades begin to take on a more

sinister (and a less comic) tone, as more and more murders pile up; until he shouts in desperation "It wasn't personal. It was war!" (55).

Finally, Ubu is put on the stand. In his defence, all he can say is "I too have been betrayed! I knew nothing" (67). Still, language defeats him and the true meaning of his words slips and slides out from under him, betraying his attempts to gloss it with his own interpretation, as for example, when he says "I served in bloody...I served in bloody...I served in bloody good units" (69).

In this way, one of the paradoxes of the apartheid era comes to the fore, namely the fact that it was not maintained, for the most part, by "evil" men, but that people often operated in ignorance out of a sense of duty, out of a sense that what they were doing was for the greater good, not only for the white citizens of South Africa, but for all. Arguments such as this might seem trite in our own era, and yet I do think there were sincere believers who were not "wicked" people. What this reveals is how an episteme is able to infiltrate and manipulate the collective consciousness of a society, and that evil resides not in some transcendental realm, but somewhere far more subtle: in the ordinary, everyday actions taken by ordinary, everyday people.

At the end of the play, Pa and Ma Ubu sail off on a boat; after all the horrors relayed, they float peacefully towards the giant eye with which the piece began, and which now transforms into a setting sun. It is as though Pa and Ma Ubu are gliding into the eye of the observer, into the eye of a silent spectator. After all the ranting and raving, nothing happens to Pa Ubu, just as nothing happened to most of the perpetrators who took the stand at the TRC. No apartheid generals even appeared at the hearings and when former president P. W. Botha ignored his subpoena, nothing came of it and he was permitted to retire in peace until he died peacefully in his sleep in 2006. The TRC

was an experiment in narration. It seemed to underscore a belief that both justice and judgement occur in terms of a perspective formed within the act of witnessing; that to be aware is enough, that consciousness is an action.

Whereas *The Story I am about to Tell* focused on the stories of victims, and *Ubu and the Truth Commission* centred on a protagonist who was a perpetrator of some of the atrocities, another, more recent production chose to focus on the people who mediated between these two groups, namely the translators. The Market Theatre's production of *Truth in Translation* (2006) tried to bring to light the trauma experienced by those who had to interpret the words of the victims into one of the languages of the oppressor. The idea of focusing on the translators provides an interesting perspective and created many opportunities for elaborations on the ways in which mediators of events become complicit in the events themselves, how translating another's story forces an identification with the person. It emphasises that there is no frictionless medium of expression. In the press release for the play, this notion is elaborated as follows:

> The interpreters stand for us, imperfect witnesses caught in a conflict between watching and participating, but different from us in that they had no place to hide...no place to turn away. They absorbed all sides of every story, every lie and every truth. By a supposed simple act of translation, these young people found themselves in a quest for their own identities. They became interpreters not only of their nation's story but also of their own humanity and untapped source of grace, humour and courage.

And yet, the fact that the show was written by a Finn and a Hollywood sitcom director (Paavo Tom Tammi in collaboration with Michael Lessac) did detract somewhat from the style and tone of the production, fashioning it into something which seemed to be more of a product geared for a global audience than an indigenous performance piece. Although it was cleverly directed, it came across as

somewhat cold. The superficial postmodern California gloss sat rather awkwardly next to the more meaty deliveries one has come to expect of South African performers and there was for me an uneasy balance between parody and sincerity[69]. *Ubu* also dealt with its subject in contrasting and often conflicting ways, but for me it managed to provide a more authentic representation of both the agony of the victims and the naive arrogance of the perpetrators.

Ultimately, one wonders whether any of these plays about the TRC could really do justice to the process. Shane Graham feels that "the psychological truth of the event cannot be captured by the conventions of narrative, which reduce the traumatic events to language and present them in a linear sequence" (2003: 16). I am not quite sure that I agree with this contention, since Graham seems to be saying that it is impossible ever completely to tell anybody's story. Perhaps he is right, but this does not detract from the necessity of nevertheless attempting to connect. Of course all communication is imperfect, and yet it remains one of the deepest human desires. To try to understand another person's point of view, particularly in a country such as South Africa in which the plethora of languages and traditions makes all understanding fraught from the outset, is surely an important endeavour[70].

According to Ivor Chipkin, "the challenge of the TRC was to overcome the worry that the South African people did not actually exist" (2007: 174). In trying to find a common ground in the absence of a collective cultural belief system, this was an

[69] When I spoke to the producer of the piece, Yvette Hardie in May 2007, she did mention that the production had changed considerably after its run at The Market Theatre, and that the humane element, particularly in terms of the human relations between characters, had been further developed in preparation for its tour to Rwanda, Sweden, Germany and the U.S.A.

[70] There may also be a different way of understanding narrative, not necessarily as temporal in the Aristotelian sense of having a beginning a middle and an end (which necessitates a satisfactory conclusion), but rather in terms of a Deleuzian map (as opposed to a trace) with multiple entry points and pathways.

opportunity in which to define "the people" as those who were previously oppressed. And yet, the fact that the ANC were also accused of abuses, and whites were also in some cases cast as victims problematised this perspective. It would have been simpler if all blacks could have been classified as victims and all whites as perpetrators, even if this was only understood symbolically. When the ANC desperately tried to intervene on the eve of the publication of the findings to prevent their party from being described as inhumane, this showed the extent to which an investment had been made into the classification of "the people" as those who were black and oppressed. If the ANC were also occasional oppressors, then the story of reconciliation was no longer between groups but between individual perpetrators and victims, which would make the story of the TRC not specifically about South Africa, but about "humanity as a whole" (182). As Chipkin says "the TRC did not generate the South African people *per se*: it produced a world people" (185) and in this way, for all the good it did, the process failed to provide a clear framework for a national identity. (Seen from a different perspective, however, this may have been its greatest strength).

According to Dave Steward (2006: 17), the TRC did not fulfil its expectations and was fundamentally flawed, since the National Party and the Inkatha Freedom Party were not adequately represented. Enormous divisions still exist between the versions presented of what happened in the past by people of different races. Steward says that "[w]e still need a reconciliation process in which genuine representatives of all our communities must hammer out a version of our history with which we can all agree" (17). The question remains whether such an over-arching meta-narrative is possible, or even desirable. It will surely never again be possible to re-enact the momentous events of the three year Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and there is no doubt that it was an extraordinary achievement; a grand experiment with enormously profitable results.

The Commission stands as an exemplary test of what South Africans have been willing to do in order to create the context for a peaceful co-existence with each other. As elaborated in the first section of this thesis with reference to Victor Turner, these rites of passage are crucial to the creation of a *communitas.* So the TRC may have been an imperfect project, and yet it was nothing less than an attempt to forge a nation; an attempt to explore narratives from both sides of a conflict and to bring them together into a story shared by a country, even if that story happens to be fragmentary, incomplete and continuously in the process of changing. The fragmentary nature of *Ubu* alludes to the fragmentary experience of the TRC. Michael Carklin says that both Kentridge's earlier work *Faustus in Africa* (1995) and *Ubu and the Truth Commission*

> invite us, the audience, to participate more fully in the process of making meaning, of making sense of the past. They offer us narratives made up of fragments, clues, intertextual references, and juxtaposed images, and it is thus the very nature of the theatre experience itself that offers us particular kinds of engagement with aspects of our past(s) (2002: 23-24).

This sounds like the kind of creatively mapped experience proposed by Gilles Deleuze, as opposed to a literal tracing of attempted verisimilitude. Deleuze says that

> [c]ulture endows consciousness with a new faculty which is apparently opposed to the faculty of forgetting: memory. But the memory with which we are here concerned is not the memory of traces. This original memory is no longer a function of the past, but a function of the future. It is not the memory of sensibility but of the will (1993: 226).

The reconstruction of memory thus has as much to do with the future as it does with the past. In this sense, the TRC can be seen as an attempt to will a country into existence, rather than to restore a country which was lost in the past. In the next

chapter, I would like to consider other attempts at nation building, and particularly how attempts have been made to reconcile the configurations of a national identity with appeals towards ethnicity. A sub-text to the chapter incorporates the question of whether there are necessarily advantages to attaining a national identity, and from where our ardent desire to strive for one arises.

CHAPTER FOUR – ETHNIC IDENTITIES

4.1 DEFINING NATIONALISMS

The search for identity is a search for completion, the grasping after an illusory image of totality, an imaginary unity of self. As Homi Bhaba reminds us: "identity is never an *a priori*, never a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality" (1994a: 51). In this chapter, I propose that if South African theatre hopes to reflect a national consciousness, it would do better to embrace unstable, uncertain and insubstantial identifications, instead of seeking to represent identity as either a completed totality in terms of a particular national ethos, or in terms fortified by a specific ethnic identification.

Part of the problem with resorting to ethnicity is that the word "ethnic" is originally a term of exclusion, as Werner Sollers has pointed out:

> an ethnic, etymologically speaking is a goy. The Greek word *ethnikos*, from which the English 'ethnic' and 'ethnicity' are derived, meant 'gentile', 'heathen'. Going back to the noun *ethnos*, the word was used to refer not just to people in general but also to 'others' (1995: 219).

If the "ethnic" is the other, then the term "nation" might provide a more useful alternative in describing, for example, the Zulu nation, the Afrikaans nation and so on[71], as a term of inclusion instead of exclusion. And yet, perhaps South Africa is a nation composed of "others", a nation of many nationalities. Still, I will be arguing that reverting to these ethnic nationalities hinders processes of transformation. For there are those, like Maishe Maponya, who insist that identity must be tied to ethnicity, which he equates with race. Particularly when he says:

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[71] This also highlights the problematic nature of attempting to create a national theatre for South Africa, if such a thing can even begin to be imagined.

> I don't believe in the sense or notion of multiculturalism and non-racialism in the arts in theatre; I definitely think that is just a myth that is being imposed upon us to be able to keep control over us or to make us lose ourselves in terms of our own identity (1996: 187).

Perhaps Maponya is reacting to what he sees as a superficial fusion of identities. This is the sort of syncretism which Ashraf Jamal has described as "reactive syncretism", consisting of "an arbitrary and facile fusion of differences" (2005: 61-62). Maponya appears to feel that multi-culturalism is inauthentic when contrasted with an essential ethnic identity and in this sense he is promoting the view that ethnicity should be discovered and restored, instead of being compromised by rival ethnicities. On the other hand, there are theatre makers like Marthinus Basson who hope to avoid this particular method of identification. For example, Basson is highly critical of festivals which attempt to promote "Afrikanerness", saying, with reference to the *Klein Karoo Kunstefees*, that "[i]t should be an *arts* festival, first and foremost, and not an *Afrikaans* arts festival" (in Solberg 2003: 134). And Reza de Wet has also said that she refuses to be a "figurehead" for Afrikaans, claiming that she does not wish "to be taken up as a symbol of nationalism or some such thing" (*ibid*, 181). This may be one of the reasons why De Wet has increasingly been writing in English, which is not her mother tongue.

Perhaps there is something to be said for the attempt to consolidate and represent history from a particular ethnic vantage point. This approach, however, also often results in entrenching communities into fixed positions, which isolates them from other communities. This is something which Shaun Irlam has pointed out as a feature of much post-apartheid literature, when he writes that it has become "refracted into separate communities" and that it has "grown more insular":

> Increasingly, a new literature of separate development is emerging, in which communities...explore their own histories and assert their own agendas (2004: 698).

Although there is a certain freedom in being able to explore unique cultural identities, there is also the danger, as Ashraf Jamal has suggested, of remaining "trapped in the multiple ghettos of the apartheid imagination" (2000: 197). Chris Weare also feels that "we do not have an artistic and cultural vision – only individuals and/or groups of people with very personal and /or community agendas." Weare agrees with Jamal that "South Africa seems very 'ghettoized'" (in Jamal: 198).

This refraction into separate units is a far cry from the rubric under which the performance of Nelson Mandela's historic inauguration ceremony took place, which was "many cultures, one nation" (Kruger 1999: 2). On the one hand, the many disparate cultures of South Africa seem to be threatening the possibility of a united nationhood; but on the other hand, trying to subsume all identities into a common "Simunye" rainbow dream[72] is not necessarily a desirable alternative and I am not suggesting here that we should attempt to bury the vast range of South African identities into one all-encompassing state-sanctioned formula. This is perhaps the opposite extreme of the cloistered paradigm referred to by Jamal and Weare, but, ironically, it is no less essentialist in that it attempts to fuse all identities into one purportedly universal description. Leon de Kock, for one, sees the attempt at an overall unity of identity as not only objectionable, but impossible. This is because he sees identity as being a site of "unresolved difference", and because he sees the South

[72] The logo and catch phrase of the South African Broadcasting Corporation's flagship channel (SABC 1) is "Simunye – We Are One". Simunye is a Zulu word meaning "we are one", or "we are united". Ironically, it is likely that the term first originated as a call to unite the Zulus, and not as an appeal to multi-racial unity.

African subject "as fractured" (2004: 3)[73]. Instead of trying to subsume all of the many heterogeneous identities of South Africa into one blanket description, he would rather that we appreciate "the country's brimming residual fund of identities" (8). But what of the possibility of creating a South African theatre out of these fractured selves, a theatre which enacts the embattled state and liminal zones created by multiculturalism? Would it not be possible to forge a sense of belonging which does not rely on ethnicity, yet which also avoids attempting to dissolve all differences[74]?

I would suggest that part of the "ghettoization" Jamal and Weare refer to arises when writers attempt to restore what they perceive to be an essential, lost identification. This is an attempt at what Eric Hobsbawm has referred to as an "invented tradition", which seeks "to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (1983: 1). Certainly, a concrete idea of the past may provide one with a sense of stability, and yet, the problem with this is that it also implies a mythical past in which identity was once unified and whole; resulting in a permanent dissatisfaction with the present, which can also spill over into a degree of resentment.

Homi Bhabha says in "Narrating the Nation" that: "[n]ations, like narratives, lose their origin in the myths of time and only fully realise their horizons in the mind's eye" (1994b: 306). Similarly, Benedict Anderson, in coining his famous term of the nation as an "Imagined Community", claims that nations "loom out of an immemorial past and...glide into a limitless future" (1991: 12). In focusing on the ethnicity of separate nationalisms, this fiction is strengthened; but I believe that the vigour of South

[73] Temple Hauptfleisch also refers to the fractured nature of South African society in the sub-title of his book *Theatre and Society in South Africa: Some Reflections in a Fractured Mirror* (1997).
[74] I will be going into greater detail about this in my concluding chapter when I examine attempts to subsume the many heterogeneous identities of South Africans under the sign of the "rainbow people".

African literature in general (and theatre in particular) lies in persistently forging new conceptions of identity, not in trying to reclaim an invented, mythic identity.

One of the problems with plays which focus on particular ethnic groups is that they often end up as a kind of tableau about a specific culture; which is of interest, perhaps, in reinforcing the solidarity of an implied community, but which is also limiting, because it is so exclusive. These sorts of plays are, consequently, often only of tourist value to those outside of the community portrayed. Keith Bain points out that Darryl Accone, for one, is concerned about a theatre which caters first and foremost for a tourist market (2003: 154-5). He also cites Hauptfleisch, who laments that original indigenous performance styles have become "artificially preserved, resurrected, or even exploited" for commercial or tourism purposes (197)[75].

There are a number of plays geared towards the promotion of a certain cultural identity that have been produced since 1994, which, I believe, fit this model. For example, there are the plays of Mbongeni Ngema: *The Zulu* (1999) and *House of Shaka* (2005); pieces which focus on a very specific representation of a collective ethnic identity. In these plays, ethnicity is celebrated and fortified; it is uncritically read as an unambiguous, normative construction. A number of other plays also fall into this category of defining a specific ethnic identity, such as Deon Opperman's epic *Donkerland* (2005). And yet, *Donkerland* also serves as a critical examination of the Afrikaner identity, whereas Ngema's post-apartheid plays do not seem to reflect anything but complete adulation for the cultural identities they present. Opperman's more recent work *Kaburu* (2007) is a more flagrant attempt at reinforcing a populist Afrikaner identity and it compares contemporary struggles against crime to past

[75] One might wonder whether there is such a thing as "natural" preservation. After all, how are cultures preserved? Is not all preservation somehow unnatural in the face of changes compelled by time, decay and loss?

conflicts in the history of the Afrikaner people. Abduragman Adams' *Angels Everywhere* (2005) also tries to portray a collective identity shared by those living in the Cape Flats, but here this identity is constructed in terms of a mishmash of languages, religions and practices. The identification of a culture at the intersection of these matrixes is thus a different process from the consolidation of an identity in terms of the reification of particular, exclusive practices.

Another example is the long running and favourably reviewed production *Born Thru the Nose* (2005), created by Greig Coetzee and Bheki Mkhwane. In my view, this is a play which, again, seems almost *overly* respectful of all Zulu customs and traditions. It is a one man show about a character called Caiphus Majozi who (according to the press release) has to deal with a clash between the "rich traditional world of his cultural heritage and the modern world of science". Ultimately, it seems that the play suggests that it would be preferable to follow the voices of the ancestors, rather than subscribing to the advice of a medical doctor who insists on a caesarean section when Majozi's wife's pregnancy develops complications. According to this ethos, it seems more important that the ancestors be respected, even if this endangers the life of both the mother and her unborn child. To me, this seems like a good example of the type of insular "nationalistic" thinking which can lead to closed-minded, uncritical acceptance of cultural values simply on the basis of their being "traditional". After all, are these not similar arguments to those Cardinal Bellarmine levelled at Galileo Galilei? The "traditional" becomes preferable merely because that is how the culture has always operated; because that is what was previously known.

In contrast to this type of theatre, which hopes to reinforce one particular ethnic identity, there are many other playmakers who have been striving for a fusion of different ethnic communities, and whose interest lies in exploring and critiquing

ways in which cultural identities are created. One of the ways in which this can be done is by showing how the clash between traditions leads to the possibility of creating new forms of culture. This is a style which has variously been called "cross-over" (Hauptfleisch 1997: 66), "syncretic" (Balme 1999), and "hybrid" (Graver 1999: 7). It is an approach which favours a notion of identity as composite, fragmented and undecided. Instead of reaching into a mythic past for certainty, this identification revels in the hesitations and ambiguities presented by performances which forge new ways of description. These are plays which produce identity, rather than attempting to rediscover it. This, I believe, is the sort of theatre which can be transformational.

Perhaps when there are multiple claims on the interpretation of identifying markers, this weakens the possibility of an essentialist mode; when no mode of discourse dominates all others. This is the strength which Loren Kruger, for example, identifies in the inauguration of the first democratically elected president of South Africa:

> What emerges from this event and other instances of South African theatrical nationhood is not an authoritative *teleology* of performance that might lead to a single national identity, but rather multiple *genealogies* of performance, the analysis of which might clarify the place of the past in the present (1999:9).

If genealogy is favoured over teleology, it implies that the past is still important, and yet, if representations of the past are deemed to be multiple, this prevents one single over-riding version dominating the description of the direction which the country is inevitably and "naturally" seen to be heading towards. It seems important always to keep in mind the idea that enactments of nationhood are constructed and that they, therefore, remain flexible. For example, Kruger goes on to say that:

> Calling the inauguration and its surrounding performances 'theatre' highlights simultaneously the effective enactment of the nation *and* the subjunctive, perhaps fictive, even illusory dimension of theatrical nationhood (1999: 11).

Here she describes the various performance events which formed part of the inaugural ceremonies as underlining theatre's fundamentally subjunctive role. The performances maintained

> a relatively fictional, autonomous, and, in this sense, aesthetic distance from indicative action....Although most obviously applied to the utopian dimension of anti-apartheid theatre's evocation (in performing defiantly under duress rather than by depicting future conditions) of post-apartheid South Africa, subjunctive action can also apply to what some might call the 'bad fictionality' of enactments of and in the ersatz public sphere of settler culture or the segregated public sphere of *volkseie* [ethnic identity]. Despite their very different meanings, these enactments have in common the representation of fictions that attempt, in the restoration – or contestation – of scripts, conventions, and behaviours in dramatic conflict, to realize a new South Africa onstage (1999: 18).

The fact that these performances – from *izimbongi* (Zulu praise-singers) to renditions of the Afrikaner *tiekie-draai* (a traditional dance) – stood side by side in the same festive display during the inauguration ceremony, created a new forum for the performance of national identity. If any one of these events had occurred in isolation in different parts of the country on the day, the gesture might have been interpreted as defensive, but alongside each other, the possibility for the transcendence of a singular ethnic identity was permitted.

Perhaps the insistence on the recovery of essentialist ethnic modes, which I described earlier, sits uneasily in a national framework, since it reiterates the calcification which was so abhorrent in the apartheid system, the malignant "good

neighbourliness" of Hendrik Verwoerd which threatened to imprison different sections of society into immutable camps. As Loren Kruger has it:

> insisting on authenticity or an absolute difference between European and African, imported and indigenous, literary and oral, threatens to repeat the neo-colonial essentialism that it purports to critique. Because the discourse of ethnic essentialism has historically been associated with segregation, even Africanist advocates for authentic or, more precisely, *autochthonous*[76] language or modes of performance have found only a limited, usually ethnically exclusive following (1999: 19).

Part of the problem is that South Africa is a country without any *autochthons* except the San (whose uniquely theatrical form of hunting I have previously described as a form of early theatre [2003: 65-78]). These are the most displaced of peoples, having been variously relocated by virtually all the tribes to have come into contact with them. Today, not one lives in the traditional way of his or her forefathers. So the days of the original inhabitants are over and it is impossible to recover this way of life. Loren Kruger points out that since there is no *autochthonous* mode of discourse any more, South African theatre has, of necessity, become syncretic, or, more precisely, it has of necessity used "*syncretizing* practices" (1999: 20). This is a form of theatre which "marks an ongoing negotiation with forms and practises, variously and not always consistently identified as modern or traditional, imported or indigenous, European or African" (21). Syncretic theatre, then, far from being a new direction for the South African stage, has always been one of the defining features of indigenous performance practices. The lines between different cultures, where they meet, often

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[76] "Autochthon (*n)* 1. one of the earliest known inhabitants of any country; aboriginal. [c17: from Greek *autokhthōn* from the earth itself...]" *Collins English Dictionary.* Contrast with "indigenous (*adj*) originating...(in a country, region etc)". *Collins English Dictionary.* In this sense it is possible to talk of indigenous practices and indigenous people who originate in South Africa, even though they might not be autochthons.

provides the juncture where crisis occurs, and much dramatic conflict lies in what De Kock has referred to as the "seam" (2001: 284) between different groups.

In the next chapter, I will be looking at radical forms of syncretism, which I will define also in terms of the fusion of different forms of media, narration and genre. I would first, however, like to turn to *Happy Natives* (2003) by Greig Coetzee, an example of a play in which different ethnic nationalisms are brought into conflict with each other in what I consider to be a creative and productive manner.

4.2 ETHNIC IDENTITIES IN *HAPPY NATIVES* (GREIG COETZEE)

Happy Natives (2003) is a play about two actors, one white (Kenneth) and one black (Mto) who create a corporate theatre piece about the New South Africa. Greig Coetzee provides perspectives from three different language groups – Zulu, English and Gujarati – in a piece in which eight characters confront each other, presenting effective contrasts in terms of a wide matrix of identity structures, including young/old; rich/poor; educated/illiterate. Only two actors take on all of these roles and in having the same actor play out a number of diverse parts, Coetzee is able to pitch a wide range of cultural and economic identities against each other while also showing how these cultural identities consist largely of a series of habits and acquired patterns of behaviour[77]. In the various clashes between characters from different ethnic identities, each character is also permitted a moment of justification, a space in which to present the version of the world which supports her or his convictions. Ultimately, it seems that the characters who resist adaptation and remain inflexible inevitably suffer as a result of this inability to adapt to changing circumstances.

However, it is not only adaptation itself which is important, but also the motivation behind the desire to adapt. For example, the play offers an acerbic view of some of the new money in the country by mercilessly ridiculing both the new black elite (in the form of Xaba), as well as the white opportunists hoping to profit from Africanisation (in the form of Chenaye). Chenaye and Xaba portray the extremities of ruthless

[77] A number of recent South African plays also show an actor visibly changing roles during the performance of a piece. This is a style which also borrows elements from mime and clowning. It indicates the manner in which a person might adopt different roles in the course of his or her lifetime, or in terms of the context of their circumstances. Some of the more noteworthy productions in which a performer visibly changes role include Andrew Buckland's *The Water Juggler* (1998), *The Well Being* (with Lionel Newton, 2000) Rob van Vuuren and Jose Domingos' *Bangalore Torpedo* (2001), Rob van Vuuren's *Electric Juju* (2006), Craig Morris' *Hero* (2005) and *Blood Orange* (2006) and Magnet Theatre's *Every Year, Every Day, I am Walking* (2007).

capitalism and Chenaye's identity is constructed in terms of various marketing opportunities. Her garish insincerity and *faux* camaraderie represent a breed of opportunist eager to participate in the rhetoric of the new South Africa for personal profit. Although she says that "[i]f we are going to be part of Africa, we must all speak an African language" (31), and although she tries to practise her Zulu whenever she speaks to Mto (24, 31), the phrase which best represents her attitude turns out to be "[*i]zandla ziyagesana*" (55) which translates as "[o]ne hand washes the other" (56). In other words, all that she is hoping for from her inter-cultural exchanges is more business. The cultural heritage and history of South Africa are, to her, tradable commodities valued only in terms of their exchange value. What is true for her is determined entirely by what the client wants, and she says, for example, that "[i]f the client wants a lion in a tree, we don't laugh, we nod our heads" (46). In this way, Coetzee parodies the raw greed which has also accompanied the transition in South Africa from a protected nationalised economy to an ostensibly open market.

Whereas Chenaye effects an "African" idiom, Xaba (the government representative who is her client) adopts a florid, colonial register, repeatedly mimicking stock phrases such as "at this particular point in time...so to speak...by and large" (44). He occasionally bursts out with a string of empty platitudes, such as "I am not categorically sure in fact whether actually" (43), and "I am wondering at this particular point in time whether the African Renaissance is something that the people at large can see" (44).

It is ironic that both of the two superficial business racketeers are pretending to adjust to the culture of the other. Chenaye pretends to be interested in Zulu, and Xaba affects an imperial high society idiom; and yet these gestures are empty, since there is no true interest in understanding the other. The focus remains on self interest, and

not in another person or a different culture. Neither of these characters has any semblance of authenticity and they have, in a sense, abdicated their potential for freedom, an action which is similar to Jean-Paul Sartre's famous example of the waiter operating in "bad faith"[78]. Xaba and Chenaye seem to see the identification of self and other as constituted by their exchange value; as mere commodities. Chenaye not only humiliates Kenneth, but in the process she also makes herself ridiculous, since she has unwittingly turned herself into an object of exchange. Her relationships are all directed towards the goal of selling herself and in this way she has turned herself into a commodity.

Leaving aside the question here of whether this behaviour is morally justifiable or not, I am here simply noting the way in which these characters are structured and the sort of ends they appear to be serving. It is certainly possible to see in their rootless behaviour a depiction of the postmodern turn which favours surface over substance (or, at any rate, makes negligible the distinction between these two) and sees meaning arising from function. Ironically, this self-same ethos also celebrates difference, whereas this move towards the tenets of global capitalism is a shift towards a cancelling out of variation. Neil Lazarus, for example, refers to global capitalism as "the most totalizing system the world has ever known" (2004: 619).

In contrast to these two who are willing to do anything for an opportunity to make money, Jimmy is stuck in the past. He is "on border patrol, for the rest of his life" (56), as Mto describes him, and he cannot cope with the many changes which have taken place in the country's political structure. He reminds one of the characters in

[78] In this example, Sartre describes a waiter's obsequious manner and willing depiction of himself as a subservient automaton as a conscious deception of his identity as a free agent (1993: 167-169). Perhaps there is nothing wrong with this per se, in that I have, after all, previously described all identity as being a type of role; but what makes this particular role less than admirable, perhaps, is that it is effected purely for financial exchange, as a commodity.

Coetzee's earlier play *White Men With Weapons* (2001) which dealt with the effect of the radical changes of 1989 on the military conscripts and the permanent forces of the (then) South African Defence Force. These were men who experienced the changing landscape of power from inside the system which provided its defence, and Coetzee's play depicts how many of them broke down psychologically in the process. Jimmy tries his best to present a veneer of transformation, and yet, his schizoid identity structure is brittle and cracks when he lashes out at Prudence towards the end of the play, saying "One good kaffir deserves another" (53). He feels betrayed by the system and shut out from contact with his neighbouring community.

The perception of Prudence's identity changes, not as a result of a transformation in herself, but due to the way in which the audience learns about the construction of her identity. Her perceived identity changes from the role of servant to that of a leader of her community. When we first meet her she calls Kenneth "master" and describes herself as "the cleaning girl for Master Jimmy" (20). Her diffidence creates a passive, slightly pathetic character who is trying to ingratiate herself with a potential employer. Later, after Jimmy's attack, however, Prudence drops the mask of servility she has effected and presents a view of herself as she is perceived by her community:

> Me, I am oldest woman for Sibisi family from Maphumulo. I am holy woman in Zionist church. I am president of the Hallelujah Jehovah Funeral and Saving Society. I am not kaffir (54).

This revelation alters one's perception of Prudence and she changes from being a subservient, passive identity into a character commanding respect, who wields a considerable amount of influence. As noted, however, this is not a transformation which has come about due to a change or development in her character, but rather via the revelation of new information. In a way then, none of these background

characters – Chenaye, Xaba, Jimmy, Prudence – can be said to develop in the course of the action. Instead, they present different faces of identities caught within a changing landscape. The main focus of the piece lies with its two central characters – Mto and Kenneth. Both of them undergo a substantial transformation wrought not only by a shift in terms of the audience's perspective of them, but also through a crucial shift in each character.

For example, at the beginning of the piece, Mto identifies himself with his father, who was ostensibly a freedom fighter entrenched in the struggle against the old regime. This is initially Mto's formative identity in the play within the play which concludes with grandiloquent phrases such as "My father, a son of Africa...a man who fought for a dream. A dream of freedom" (2). But despite basing his identity on a mythological father figure as freedom fighter, Mto's move to the white suburb of Woodlands sees him trying to erase marks of distinction between himself and his white neighbours. For example, he is more than happy to be accepted as "part of the scenery" (16) by a white boy soliciting money for raffle tickets. Mto wants to fit in, and is content to conform to notions of what is considered appropriate behaviour. He tells Kenneth that "[i]f the people here like keeping their grass short, well then, I'm going to keep mine short as well" (17), to which Kenneth replies, "Fuck it broer. Your grass roots are showing. What's this now, you mowing for freedom?" (17).

Towards the end of the play, however, the image of Mto's father as heroic freedom fighter is revised when we discover that Mto never knew his father at all. Mto confronts the truth about his father, namely that "he didn't kill anyone, except himself. He got it wrong" (55). Ironically, this truthful acceptance of his father as flawed, and not a legendary hero, also allows him to accept his cultural identity. And

it is then that he welcomes the spirit of his father with *umhlwehlwe*[79], slaughters a goat to propitiate his spirit and allows his grass to grow, as is his traditional custom.

Kenneth, in contrast, comes across as the most rootless of all the characters. He admires the potential which Mto's culture presents for the creation of a solid ethnic grounding, and compares this to the predicament faced by those seeking a post-apartheid white identity, saying, "South African whitey's had a useless publicity department...you wearing fur and feathers looks (sic) like a Zulu warrior and me sitting in an ox-wagon with a rifle in my hand would just look like a (sic) old racist what used to shoot blacks" (12-13). When Mto protests he goes on:

> you're all the culture we've got. What is my culture? I come from a French murderer, Scottish cattle thieves, in-bred Dutch farmers and fuck knows what other European 'gommie' leftovers...you're the Samurai of Africa. The perfect African Renaissance image: a Zulu warrior with the Spear of Knowledge in his hand and the Shield of Truth by his side....If I was Zulu I'd do the whole thing: get married with cows, goats' blood on the walls, ox blood on the floor, read my bones, speak to my ancestors, the whole trip broer. Shit, it's even better than being Jewish or Catholic – you have all this stuff you can do that says, 'I'm Zulu'. Roots, Mto (13).

Kenneth is clearly longing for a stable sense of identity. One of the markers he refers to is a style of dress ("fur and feathers"), which he regards as an indicator of cultural identity. It is often in terms of appearance (and in the acceptance of that appearance) that people are placed within an ethnic context. In *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (1911), Henri Bergson describes how humour can be created when one challenges displays of cultural affiliation in terms of fashion. This can be achieved specifically by means of incongruity and a defamiliarisation of context. For example, an item of clothing which is out of context strikes an audience as amusing;

[79] This is dried offal from a slaughtered goat which is burnt with incense.

but Bergson goes on to say that an audience is in itself unaware of the illusory nature of its own sense of style, and how this is also entirely bound by context:

> It might almost be said that every fashion is laughable in some respect. Only, when we are dealing with the fashion of the day, we are so accustomed to it that the garment seems, in our mind, to form one with the individual wearing it.... Suppose, however, some eccentric individual dresses himself in the fashion of former times: our attention is immediately drawn to the clothes themselves, we absolutely distinguish them from the individual, we say that the latter IS DISGUISING HIMSELF, – as though every article of clothing were not a disguise! – and the laughable aspect of fashion comes out of the shadow into the light (V.1).

The reason why an item of clothing which is inappropriate is funny is because the audience does not realise how carefully they are attached to what they consider to be appropriate, and how completely they have associated propriety with what is natural. Bergson then draws an analogy between a sense of fashion and a sense of ceremony:

> It might be said that ceremonies are to the social body what clothing is to the individual body: they owe their seriousness to the fact that they are identified, in our minds, with the serious object with which custom associates them, and when we isolate them in imagination, they forthwith lose their seriousness. (V.1)

According to Bergson, people laugh at exaggerated incongruities when these are perceived within the context of what is familiar, and hence considered to be "normal". Perhaps times of great disruption and change provide rare opportunities to be reminded that nothing can be assumed to be "normal". A large proportion of the comedy in *Happy Natives* arises from the incongruence created by clashes in terms of what is considered to be appropriate role-playing behaviour, as has already been described in the ways in which Chenaye and Xaba present themselves in their

attempt to "dress up" an image of South Africa in order to sell the country to potential investors.

As already mentioned, Mto and Jimmy are the only characters who undergo some form of internal transformation in the play and the other characters are largely foils used to chart the progression of these central roles. There is, however, another character, an Indian shopkeeper called Patel, who perhaps best represents the notion of the flexibility required of identity structures in order to survive changing landscapes. Whereas Kenneth feels that his mixed ancestry puts him at a disadvantage and whereas he longs for "roots", Patel has accepted his situation and manages to adapt to each change in his environment.

The name Patel is the second most common Indian surname world-wide (following "Singh"). It represents a caste title meaning "farmer" or "village head" used by many different groups, and can thus not be traced to any particular ethnicity within the Indian community. In some way, this small detail of naming allows an insight into the character of this boisterous shopkeeper who started working for the Greek owner of the original café as a boy. He keeps the name of his café as "The Olympic Café" out of respect for the former owner and he also speaks a mixture of Zulu and Funagalo to the black boys playing video games in his shop. Although Patel complains about rising crime, he seems to have accepted the changing roles of the country with good grace, coming across as neither bitter about the past, nor cynical about the future. In some ways Patel reminds one of the old Italian in Joseph Heller's *Catch 22* (1994), who talks to Nately about how losing wars makes far more sense than winning

them[80]. The old man in Heller's novel consequently adapts himself to whichever nationality happens to be governing his country. He asks Nately:

> What is a country? A country is a piece of land surrounded on all sides by boundaries, usually unnatural. Englishmen are dying for England, Americans are dying for America, Germans are dying for Germany, Russians are dying for Russia. There are fifty or sixty countries fighting in this war. Surely so many countries can't *all* be worth dying for (257).

The old man finally tells him that "It is better to *live* on one's feet than die on one's knees" (257). And perhaps in the minor character of this old man rests a clue: unless one has a more supple identity, one which is not tied to ideals of patriotism and nationalism, one will, like Jimmy, break. Perhaps an authentic identity needs to be comprised of a certain balance between being aware of the traditions and rituals of ethnic origins, while remaining open to the possibilities of change and transformation.

In *Happy Natives* a number of potential sources for identity are depicted: tradition (Mto's roots, which are re-interpreted and adapted to changing times); function (exemplified in the opportunism of Xaba and Chenaye); or indoctrination (Jimmy). Each of these characters has clothed him- or herself in some form of illusion. Some – like Mto, Prudence and Patel – see through the illusory veils of the ceremonial; others – like Jimmy – never do. As an actor, Kenneth seems aware of the ways in which identity can shift, and yet he faces the disillusionment of discovering that there is no role for him to play in the new South Africa. He shuffles between London and

[80] The old man says: "I was a fascist when Mussolini was on top, and...I am an anti-fascist now that he has been deposed. I was fanatically pro-German when the Germans were here to protect us against the Americans, and now that the Americans are here to protect us against the Germans I am fanatically pro-American...you and your country will have no more loyal partisan in Italy than me – but only as long as you *remain* in Italy" (255).

Durban and ends up returning to England at the end of the play when he is fired from the project because, as Chenaye explains to Mto, "there are too many white faces involved" (34).

The effect of two actors playing all of the roles is not only an indication of their skill and versatility as actors, but also reveals the transferability of roles, and the ways in which one can take on different tasks of role construction – how patterns of posture, gesture and tone can transform the presentation of identity. And yet, the fact that the black actor plays all the black roles (Mto, Xaba, Prudence, policeman) while the white actor plays the white roles (Kenneth, Chenaye, Jimmy) and Patel, perhaps shows that skin colour is still very much tied to perceptions of identity. Still, the play tries to deal with the multifaceted identity constructions in South Africa, playing off different generations of ethnic nations against each other and in doing so it contrasts a range of ethnic groups. It uses humour both to emphasise and alleviate the divide between cultures.

Greig Coetzee's comic satire on the new South Africa concerns a white theatre practitioner who is eventually rejected by the corporate market and seems to indicate the author's own disillusionment with the opportunities available for white South African writers and performers. The fact that the play was first produced in collaboration with the Soho Theatre in London seems to indicate that Kenneth's concerns about the difficulty of making a living from drama in South Africa are also shared by Coetzee. It might be considered ironic, then, that since the success of this production, Coetzee has performed all over South Africa and continues to present his audiences with a wide array of characters and caricatures which provide a microcosm of a new South African society.

4.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS ON ETHNICITY

Perhaps the most distinguishing mark of post-apartheid literature is its uncertainty and instability. As David Attwell and Barbara Harlow put it, the fields of post-apartheid fiction are

> the experiential, ethical, and the political ambiguities of transition; the tension between memory and amnesia. [Post-apartheid fiction] emphasizes the imperative of breaking silences necessitated by long years of struggle, the refashioning of identities caught between stasis and change, and the long role of culture – or representation – in limiting or enabling new forms of understanding (2000: 3).

Key amongst these new forms is the opportunity for self-criticism, for parody, and for the enumeration of uncertainties which were inadmissible under a system which tended to polarise points of view. As Attwell and Harlow maintain:

> Whereas under apartheid, to separate the political and the aesthetic – to insist that the aesthetic had its own priorities and demands – was to risk political censure, that separation is now widely endorsed. The liberalism of the new order is more accommodating than a revolutionary culture could ever be, to the reinventions of tradition, to irony, to play (4).

In this sense, the plays which I have described in the first section of this chapter as attempting to consolidate a particular tradition of ethnic nationalism may seem out of place in a post-apartheid South Africa which is experimenting with new forms of identity construction. As I have also tried to show, it is ironic that the recovery of the revolutionary traditions of the past can also lead to the enfranchisement and consolidation of the various groups of the country into warring camps, since this notion is at odds with the ethos of the revolution which sought to create an

egalitarian state. Without the opposition created by apartheid rhetoric, revolutionary traditions can seem, at best, insincere, and at worst, inflammatory.

In Ivor Chipkin's *Do South Africans Exist? Nationalism, Democracy and the Identity of "The People"* (2007), he shows that "the people" in the context of African nationalism are constructed in a very different way to what they are in many other nations in the world. Whereas the ideals of nationhood are often premised on shared cultural values, languages, or religions (among other possible factors); African independence has most often been formulated in terms of its resistance to colonialism. In other words "the people" are defined as those who resist oppression.

Chipkin develops a theory of NDR (National Democratic Revolution) as a key marker for nationalist aspirations in African states. Instead of creating or preserving a culture, the interest here is in producing democratic institutions and preserving them. Chipkin illustrates his point with an analysis of an advertisement which appeared in *The Sunday Times* in 2001, which alleged the existence of a media plot against President Thabo Mbeki. Carefully unravelling the logic behind the phrasing of the advertisement, Chipkin finds it to be premised on assumptions such as that criticism of Mbeki would be tantamount to wanting to preserve "the legacy of apartheid" and would, therefore, be unpatriotic. Looking further, he finds that being black is defined as "by definition, reversing the apartheid inheritance" (6), which, therefore, implies a more authentic claim towards a national identity than, for example, being white. Chipkin's vigilant eye picks up other slippages. For example, in Mbeki's "I am an African" speech, Chipkin questions why, in his landmark discourse, Mbeki conflates being "South Africa" with being "African" (100). Chipkin wonders whether Mbeki is implying a hierarchy of Africanness, and whether the president is endorsing the idea

that migrants will never be as authentically South African as those who have been indigenous to the continent for longer.

It seems, then, that there is a sturdy, and potentially dangerous, strain of essentialism in some current constructions of national identity. And Steven M. Burgess points out: "The notion of group identity remains a sensitive idea in South Africa because of the imposed racial group identities of apartheid. To this day, many people remain very conscious of apartheid group identity" (2002: 12). He makes an interesting case in his book *South African Tribes* (2002) for dividing up people into groups identified by their value systems, rather than their ethnicity. He notes, however, that although there has been a decrease since 1994, "racial and ethnic loyalties are still the most prevalent sources for identity in South Africa" (85). There are also "extremely high levels of national identity" (89).

According to J.P. Wade (1996), there are two competing models of nationalism in South Africa:

> First, there is the sort of nationalism found most notably in Afrikaner nationalism, the Pan Africanist Congress, and Inkatha. It is here that the discourse of 'essentialism' is most constitutive, whether it be that of eternal Afrikaner, Zulu, or African.... [an] essential nation – often pre-colonial – as an opposition to the destructive impositions of imperialism.
>
> The second available national model, which is in the process of becoming hegemonic in South Africa, is a progressive one modelled not on occident fascism but on European modernity: to develop an economically advanced (Reconstruction and Development) and democratic society which can become a proud member of – and share the fruits of – 'world civilization'....Instead of being exclusionary, regressive and inward-looking, this form of nationalism is inclusive, modernising and internationalist (241-242).

The second type of nationalism mooted here seems to be more useful in a country such as South Africa since the country is unlikely ever to have an homogenous population. Ironically, an appeal for this second type of nationalistic identification often results in the dissolution of a strongly nationalistic identity in favour of one which is either more personal, or more global. So there appears to be a trend in many countries away from an overt insistence on nationalism. For example, Horsman and Marshall point out how increasingly less importance is being apportioned to nationalistic identities across the world:

> Individuals are increasingly encouraged to view themselves as members of groups – not national citizens exclusively, not members of a social class, but as blacks, as Slovaks, as Muslims, as French-Canadians, as born-again Christians, as gays, as environmentalists, and so on (1994: 20).

While nations survive, it may be impossible to relinquish being identified with one or other of them. Perhaps the same could be said of languages and ethnicities; and yet, it is impossible to avoid what appears to be a loosening of bonds, as personal identities take precedence. In her article "Building a National Culture in South Africa", written on the eve of the tumultuous changes which were about to shake South Africa, Karen Press states that a unified national culture must be "anti-ethnic" (1990: 26). Interestingly she does not say non-ethnic, but actively *anti*–. Although she says that a "politically acceptable" (30) culture should never be "imposed upon people" she does point out that "if these various cultural traditions are reified and celebrated as the most significant markers of the identity of the communities who practise them, it becomes impossible to develop a genuinely national cultural identity amongst the people as a whole" (31-32). The dark side of a too stringent adherence to ethnicity is

that it can result in "ethnomania", which is a destructive force, which considers all other ethnic groups as less important than one's own[81].

In this chapter, I have tried to touch on a play which demonstrates a clash between different ethnic nationalities. I have suggested that plays which focus too "seriously" (that is, without an adequate degree of self-reflexivity; without the opportunity for irony and the possibility of parody), on their own ethnic origins and rituals, pose a problem for the building of a united national identity[82]. For this reason, multi-cultural productions are more appealing in this regard than more insular work. Since it is impossible for South Africans to find a shared past, it may be preferable to locate a national ethos within a shared attempt to create a better future. An idea of nationalism might, as Duncan Brown (2001) has suggested, be better premised on a "shared problematic", rather than a shared past or a "metaphysical essence" (763). In this way, a national identity might be more profitably premised on a synchronic, rather than a diachronic reading (767).

I am struck by an uneasy consideration. In this chapter I have questioned the value of writing purely from a single ethnic or nationalistic perspective, and besides English plays, I have also mentioned productions in Zulu, Afrikaans and Xhosa. However, if we consider these three language groups (which are also the three largest mother tongue language groups in South Africa) as identifying particular nations within the state, where does this leave the English mother tongue speakers? They do not seem to share a particular affinity with the set of traditions and customs of others in the same linguistic community in quite the same way that the speakers of Afrikaans, Zulu and

[81] As Marvin Harris says: "ethnomania kills people, neighbourhoods, communities and whole societies" (1999: 129).
[82] As Henry James said of America in the twentieth century, "If each of the incoming foreign identities claims universality, how can a single, true national identity survive and dominate?" (In Higgins and Leps 1999: 127).

Xhosa do. More and more, I have been wondering whether or not my indictment of ethnic theatre might not, in fact, be a defensive reaction in realising that English speakers have no coherent national/ethnic identity to speak of, something which Greig Coetzee's play also points out in Kenneth's outburst (2003: 13). Although English has won out as the most important communal language, it has been able to adopt this envied position only because it lacks the specificity of the indigenous tongues and because it continues to be influenced – and quite possibly dominated – by the massive global Anglo block.

These reservations aside, the view which I have been advocating here is a sense of identities which are open to adaptation and arise from the realisation that there is no essential identity to which one might hope to return. It is thus characterised by a sense of suppleness and improvisation. Natasha Distiller and Melissa Steyn introduce *Under Construction: 'Race' and Identity in South Africa Today* (2004) by stating that "every act of description is an act of creation" (11). Creating new identities, which are temporary, which are fleeting, seems to me to be a far more worthwhile project than trying to maintain and concretise our many diverse senses of self into particular ethnic constructions. So I feel that we should make room for the strange, for the new, for the uncanny, for representations of selves we have never before imagined as possible. According to this view, it would be preferable to break out of the model of identifications determined by exclusion, and rather open up new definitions and new ways in which South Africans can speak about themselves and their encounters in a multi-national society.

The only national theatre which might be possible for South Africa would be one in which multiculturalism plays a key role, and in which no single ethnic identity is endorsed as natural or permanent. At present I would hazard a guess that the closest

we have to a national stage might be The Market Theatre of Johannesburg, or perhaps The Baxter in Cape Town, or even the annual National Arts Festival in Grahamstown. And yet, none of these institutions is free from controversy. For one thing, they hardly ever host or produce productions in languages other than English.

Another question is whether or not theatre practitioners feel any sense of responsibility towards a "national stage". Do theatre makers feel themselves accountable towards a nation, or towards the traditions of performance itself? Perhaps the theatre has a responsibility towards the history and representation of all its practitioners, which would include both creators and spectators as being part of a community, instead of to a "rainbow nation". In a letter to Richard Schechner, Eugenio Barba expresses a belief in a community of theatre practitioners, rather than a national community[83]:

> I don't want a country made up of a nation or a town. I don't believe in it. Yet I do need a country. That is why, in simple terms, I do theatre....I have been lucky: my country has expanded. It does not consist of land or geography. It is made up of history, of people (1995: 147).

The syncretic ideal is the focus of the next chapter of this thesis, and I will undertake a more detailed discussion of ethnicity as race in my further discussion of the "rainbow nation" metaphor in the concluding chapter. First, however, I wish to examine two writers of syncretic works which, I believe, break clear of identifications with "nation" and "ethnicity" and which move into the realms of experimentation with senses of self beyond the considerations of gendered, politicised or nationalistic identities.

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[83] Arthur Miller expresses a similar sentiment when he says that "the playwright is nothing without his audience. He is one of the audience who happens to know how to speak. We are a kind of church." More worryingly, he adds that "if the parishioners are no longer interested in that church, you know what happens. It becomes a garage or a grocery store" (1996: 524).

CHAPTER FIVE – SYNCRETIC IDENTITIES

5.1 DEFINING SYNCRETISM

Both *Happy Natives* and *Ubu and the Truth Commission* might be read as "cross-over" in terms of the definition proposed by Temple Hauptfleisch (1997: 66). They both involve confrontations between different ethnic groups, use different languages, and (in the case of *Ubu*), present an amalgamation of different genres, such as animation, puppetry and song. And yet, both of these works still appear in some way to present different cultures and languages as distinct from one another. In contrast, the truly syncretic creation involves an amalgamation or fusion of different cultures into a new culture. As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin write in *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), syncretism is "the process by which previously distinct linguistic categories, and by extension, cultural formations, merge into a single new form" (14).

The word "syncretism" was derived from the Latin *syncretismus* which, in turn, referred to the Greek *synkretismos*, meaning a merger of communities. Approaches to the notion of syncretism vary, depending on whether beliefs and value systems are exclusive or inclusive. In religions which are exclusive, for example, syncretism can be seen as a form of betrayal, as a divergence from a singular truth, whereas non-exclusive belief systems are able to accommodate other traditions and even to incorporate them into their own[84]. As I will try to show in this section, these two orientations towards syncretism could be used to describe the various reactions which

[84] For example in what is probably the most all-consuming living religion, Hinduism, a god has been made of Buddha, and Mother Theresa has been re-interpreted as an embodiment of Vishnu. Of course there are also Hindu fundamentalists, who are (particularly) anti-Islamic, but, in general, Hindu dogma permits the possibility of incorporating contesting religions into the vast panoply of Hindu gods, instead of seeing difference as a source of conflict. This way of thinking stands in sharp contrast to the mono-theistic faiths (Islam, Judaism, Christianity) which all consider the proposition of any other god as blasphemous to their own.

people have had to the conception and representation of syncretic identities in the South African context: whereas some might consider the emergence of the syncretic a sign of hope, others see it as a threat.

Syncretism is linked to the notion of hybridity and can be applied to amalgamations of religions, cultures, and races. In terms of racial theory, Andrew Smith points out that to be "hybrid" was initially a term of denigration (2004: 250). This was specifically in relation to "supremacist Eurocentric accounts of racial origins and racial distinction", which were used to incite a fear of the dangers of interbreeding:

> A whole discourse arose alerting a European audience to the dangers of miscegenation, warning of a dissolution of the blood of the higher races and suggesting that the resulting mulattos, cross-bred humans, would prove to be sterile or retarded (250).

Ultimately this lead to the "fear of collapse, dissolution, and entropy" (250). The construction of this notion is in part derived from the idea that human cultures once existed in pure, "unpolluted" forms, presumably in isolation from the influences of other cultures. John Hutnyk points out that "[t]he idea of borrowing is sometimes taken to imply a weakening of culture, and it is exactly this that belongs to the essentialist nationalisms and chauvinisms that are arraigned against the hybrid, diasporic and the migrant" (2005: 81). However, perspectives on what it means to be hybrid have been changing, and syncretism has begun to be used as the study of a positive emergence of culture, instead of as a sign of loss. For example, Hutnyk points out that the first time the word "syncretism" was used in an anthropological context was in a 1940s study of migrant communities along Zambia's copper belt. He states that

> Anthropologists had previously only been interested, in a diminutive, salvage kind of way, with the 'loss' of cultural forms under 'contact' and acculturation. Salvage anthropology was concerned with documenting 'disappearing worlds' and lost customs, survivals and traditions, and it was only in belated recognition of the resilience of indigenous communities that they began to think in terms other than decline and fade (84).

Gradually, then, over the course of the past sixty years, the idea that syncretic cultures display signs of resilience, adaptation and survival has gained currency. Instead of seeing hybridity as a negative and possibly destructive consequence, post-colonial studies are beginning to view it as an act of positive engagement with changing circumstances[85]. For example, Andrew Smith contrasts the previous conception of hybridity as designating weakness and impurity with a current prevailing liberal view which sees "hybridization" as being able to take place within an environment of equality and mutual respect (2004: 251). Also, one of the most important functions of discourses on hybridity, as Andrew Smith indicates, is that they inevitably foreground "the 'constructedness' of culture" (252), and "postcolonial literary studies...[have] tended increasingly to disclose the hybridity of *all* cultural traditions *at all times*" (245).

In other words, the positive re-evaluation of hybridity has been coupled with an increasing awareness that there is no such thing as an undiluted culture. In fact, the very notion of hybridity has itself been challenged as misleading in that it implies that pure strains of culture existed from which the hybrid has been created. As Hutnyk has it: "A key question would be: to what degree does the assertion of hybridity rely

[85] It should also be borne in mind that these terms (positive and negative) imply a fixed point of judgement, whereas it must be remembered that these interpretations come after the fact. In other words, they are a reaction to an inevitability, to the truth that nothing stays the same, that everything is changing all the time.

on the positing of an anterior 'pure' that precedes mixture?" (81). Or, as Paul Gilroy says:

> Whether the process of mixture is presented as fatal or redemptive, we must be prepared to give up the illusion that cultural and ethnic purity has ever existed, let alone provided a foundation for civil society (in Hutnyk 2005: 83).

Some of the dangers of an exclusive, insular focus have already been mentioned in the previous chapter, specifically with concerns raised about "ethnomania", which insists on the prioritisation of one's own ethnic division. There is also the misleading idea that there might be something to get back to, something which can be restored. I think it safe to say that an approach which seeks out the essence of a culture in a mythic past is unlikely to provide South Africans with a beneficial means of negotiating current constructions of identification. The question arises of whether it is possible – and if so whether it is necessary, or desirable – to refer to a shared past at all? If it is, then, on which terms would such a shared past be premised? Perhaps the question of the origins of the various strains contributing to the syncretic product are less important than the evidence of the new creation. For Homi Bhabha

> the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity...is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom (1990: 211).

The fusion of cultural sources and an acknowledgement that there is no such thing as a pure and distinct culture are then very important concepts in the formation of a new South African identity. Trinh T. Minha-Ha writes of the post-colonial sense of self as fragmentary, seeing the post-colonial subject as hybrid and unfinished and "not tied to colonial ideals of completeness and unity" (in Fortier 1997: 130). This also

describes, to a large extent, the postmodern[86] conception of identity. Perhaps syncretism could be seen as an intersection of the post-colonial and the postmodern, in that both of these contemporary schools of theory acknowledge that an important aspect of studies in the humanities concerns ways in which different cultures have fused and formed new currents. Both the postmodern and the post-colonial share the sense of uncertainty in the foundations of identity, and yet the post-colonial examination of power is able to reflect on political or social arrangements, which is something the postmodern is less well-suited to doing. Nevertheless, in this chapter, I would like to consider the various syncretic practises (which arises out of both post-colonial and postmodern demands) of two of the foremost innovators in post-apartheid theatre.

[86] I realise that it is problematic to refer to "postmodernism" as if it is a single entity, a bounded theory; and not the porous, uncertain tendency to which the term refers. And yet, I would here invoke Wittgenstein's "family resemblance model" in terms of which an identified group may be posited, even if all members of the group do not have the same feature in common (1953: 66-77).

5.2 SYNCRETIC THEATRE IN SOUTH AFRICA

> African drama...must borrow from, be inspired by, shoot from European dramatic art forms, and be tainted by exotic influences... (H. I. E. Dhlomo in Barnett 1983: 228).

Temple Hauptfleisch describes syncretic theatre as emerging particularly out of the "the last two decades of the twentieth century" in the creation of a "festival culture". He says that it was during this period "that artists in the country seriously began to syncretize and hybridize various forms of performance, combining 'African', 'European', 'American', 'Eastern', and other styles to create...distinctive South African theatre and performance forms" (2006: 182). And yet, Hauptfleisch also acknowledges that syncretism formed part of South African theatre from its very earliest beginnings, and cites, as an example, H.I.E. Dhlomo (1903-1956), one of the founders of African drama.

Dhlomo's case is an interesting one, in that some have referred to him as pandering to the dominant English culture (when South Africa was still a colony of the empire). Michael Chapman, for one, refers to Dhlomo's "often derivative, literary-romantic idiom" (2001: 218)[87], and Loren Kruger notes that South African academics have mostly tended to stay silent on his writings since he has been criticised for displaying "neo-Victorian bombast" (1993: 124). She goes on to say, however, that "his exploration of African past and present, rural and urban life demonstrates a critical respect for the syncretic character of 'new African' culture"[88]. During the course of his

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[87] In noting this, Chapman is specifically referring to Tim Couzens' work on Dhlomo – *The New African: A Study of the Life and Works of H.I.E. Dhlomo* (1985).

[88] Also, as Ursula Barnett notes:

> Dhlomo has sometimes been criticised for being too strongly influenced by English literature in his writing. It must be remembered, however, that black students who received a high

long career, there is a trend from the Progressivism[89] of his earlier works, such as *The Girl Who Killed to Save*, which seems to justify white policy; and the more radical works of his later career, with plays such as *Cetshwayo* (1936) which protests against white domination[90]. And as Carolyn Duggan points out:

> In 1936 H. I. E. Dhlomo...claimed that, while he accepted that all modern drama has developed from similar disparate roots, he nevertheless decried a clinging to the past simply for the sake of the past, especially a xenophobic, inward-looking cultural expression. Dramatic expression, he maintained, benefits from outside influence and, paradoxically, we become better able to express our selfhood when there is an outside reference. More specifically, African drama should not be exclusively African (1999: 1).

Since the very first contact between Europeans and Africans, it has been impossible for either culture to remain completely detached from the other. The interaction between different cultures was speeded up considerably in the twentieth century, with its enhanced innovations in terms of transport and communications technology. David Graver, in his introduction to *Drama for a New South Africa* (1999), points out that "developments in twentieth-century European drama...have brought it closer to African performance forms, but before this century, the two were far apart, offering fundamentally distinct approaches to theatre" (3). Graver does not specify ways in

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> school education before the Bantu Education Act, mostly attended missionary and other church schools run and staffed by British teachers, and therefore received an education even more English-oriented than that of English-speaking white students at this time. It was never Dhlomo's aim to Westernise African literature or to discard African heritage. As early as 1939, he advocated the formation of an African archives department for African scholars planning to write on African historical and anthropological subjects, and the granting of research funds and scholarships for delving into the background of African drama...he also advocated a study comparing African life and literature with Greek, Hebrew and Egyptian life and literature, and the translation of Shakespearean and Attic drama (1983: 12-13).

[89] In the context of Dhlomo's time, to be "Progressivist" implied that one was content to adopt a subservient role as an African and that one accepted white modernity as a superior achievement which one attempted to emulate.

[90] For more on this subject, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_Isaac_Ernest_Dhlomo>. Accessed 21 September 2007.

which European Drama has been influenced by African performance, though I suspect that, for one thing, he is referring to the renewed emphasis on physical performance. Ursula A. Barnett is more explicit. She says that "The rhythm of dance and song, improvisation and audience participation were deliberately brought back to Western drama in the late nineteen-sixties" (1983: 227). She also points out that the divergence between highbrow and popular theatre has been increasingly broken down on European stages of the twentieth century; and since these distinctions did not exist in African drama, this may well have been an influence from Africa on Europe (227). In this sense a syncretisation between European and African forms of theatre has been occurring, not only in South Africa, but in Europe as well, over the course of the twentieth century.

In addition to the terms "syncretic", "hybrid" and "crossover" theatre, Keith Bain adds the definition of "hypertheatricality" which he defines as "a merger between old and new, Western and African, ritual and commercial performance cultures" (2003: 146). A playwright who provides an excellent example of this sort of hybridised synthesis in post-apartheid theatre is Brett Bailey, who draws on Africanist mythology and spirituality, as well as his European background, in order to create a South African hybrid form. The playwright Charles Fourie describes Brett Bailey as effecting a merger between European and African modes in his work, saying that his plays surpass the "colonialist legacy of the stage" (in Jamal 2000: 206). Fourie points out that Bailey's productions contribute to the mainstreaming of new forms associated with "township theatre", predicting that "[d]ance, music, puppeteering, ritual, and storytelling will shape the stage itself, and reshape theatre as we know it". And Keith Bain, writing in 2003, describes Bailey as the *"enfant terrible* of the moment" (158), describing him thus

> An eclectic provocateur who draws on diverse elements strewn together in performances that resemble either ritual enactments or hodge-podge cultural stews, Bailey's remarkable talent is for concocting overwhelmingly visual and visceral theatrical experiences that draw the audience into an almost trance-like immediacy with the performance (158).

Brett Bailey's three published plays – *Ipi Zombie* (1997); *Mumbo Jumbo* (1998) and *The Prophet* (1999), collected in *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder* (2003) – seem to rely on a range of what might be construed as essentialist spiritual practices of the Xhosa tradition (an issue which will be returned to later), but his methodology is far from purist. Here is his description of his way of working in the introduction to the anthology:

> METHOD: Take township traditions and styles, throw them in the blender with rural performance and ceremony, black evangelism, a handful of Western avant-garde and a dash of showbiz, and flick the switch (9).

Elsewhere, Bailey has described the aims of his company, Third World Bunfight, as being

> to utilise African performance modes...to posit African performance modes mixed up with Western performance modes as equal in strength and whatever to Euro-American modes, which have tended to sit on the throne here (in Solberg 2003: 277-278).

Instead of presenting a unified cultural vision, these plays depict embattled, fragmentary selves struggling within the uncertain terrain of the liminal as the identities of both performers and characters are caught up in crises of transformation. His works deal with the clash and fusion of various belief systems. As he himself has said about his plays:

> They've been placed in real life – what is real, what is myth? They have been based on true events, on historical events, most of them in the recent past....But a lot of them relate to dreams, to prophecies, to witchcraft, to creation myths, to ancestral collisions between Christianity and ancestral beliefs (281).

And Keith Bain claims that:

> Bailey's is a style far removed from the structured narratives, introspective poetry and character-driven interactions of a playwright such as Fugard, yet his work points the way to a theatrical style that is capable of activating suppressed memories and speaking to the makers of history to come....This is theatricality that escapes the Eurocentric, linear, literarily text-based and effectively highbrow traditions of mainstream theatre as it developed under apartheid, placing emphasis instead on something that is highly visual, visceral, physical and ultimately "theatrical" (2003: 160).

Many of these interests in the meeting points of history/mythology and dream/reality, are also part of Reza de Wet's plays, which use dreamscapes to subvert their own probing into identity formations. Her plays take place in a world which is eerily similar to – though which can never be wholly identified with – South Africa. They represent an imaginary realm rather than attempting to portray a lost reality. The "mindscapes" they present leave viewers confronted by a sense of their own subjective awareness of history and value, rather than prescribing an adherence to a group identity. For example, *Breathing In* (2004) takes place in a setting which bears a strange resemblance to the Boer War, but where magical and mythical qualities transform the setting into an unreal and uncanny space. This is not the settled dream of origin, this is not the confident space of the unfolding of a collective ethnic reality; this is an erotic nightmare, a form of blood-letting, rather than a fortification of identity. Similarly, in *The Unspeakable Story* (1996), De Wet collaborated with Gary Gordon of the First Physical Dance Company to produce an elusive work which explores a synthesis of image, music and texts concerning the mother of the painter

René Magritte. The piece challenges notions of representation and its text slips and slides under and over other signifiers of image, physical movement and music.

There is a distinct difference, however, in the way in which these two authors make use of syncretic practices. Whereas Bailey has taken his European perspective and leapt into a world of African spirituality, De Wet has drawn elements of African spirituality into her own, distinctly Afrikaans frame of reference. These playwrights have involved themselves in a process of experimenting with identity constructions, and their works reveal – and revel in – transgressions of stable identity structures. They both share elements of Magic Realism, in that the characters in their plays accept manifestations of supernatural forces and powers as possible, and in plays by both writers there is an emphasis on folklore and legend as being valid depictions of reality. Both of these writers warrant closer examination.

5.3 BRETT BAILEY – BLACK MASK ON A WHITE FACE?

5.3.1 Introduction

Brett Bailey is one of the most important writer/directors in post-apartheid South Africa. He came to prominence with three plays first presented from 1996-1999. These plays had their origins in actual historical events relating to Xhosa culture and involved explorations of traditional beliefs in witchcraft, divination, animal sacrifice, ancestor worship, and trance dance. Since Bailey is, himself, very much a white man, whether he has a right to explore African religious beliefs has, at times, become a contentious issue. In his foreword to *Plays of Miracle and Wonder* (2003), John Matshikiza writes:

> To be a white man dabbling in black territory is still taboo – to both sides. Whereas [Athol] Fugard and [Barney] Simon might have been skating on the surface of social issues that affected the lives of black people, Bailey breaks through into forbidden territory – the fractured inner spiritual world of black African culture (5).

Brett Bailey is a third generation South African of British descent who grew up in Cape Town. He writes that the only black people whom he encountered while growing up were either domestic servants from small villages in the Transkei, or ex-convicts. (This was because they lived near Pollsmoor Prison, where Nelson Mandela was also incarcerated for a time.) Bailey relates that his only encounters with African people while growing up in the seventies and eighties were thus either with "tamed black women" or "wild black men" (8).

Bailey graduated from the University of Cape Town in 1991. Over the next few years he tried a number of innovative experiments in performance – Dada cabarets,

township happenings, and a play about Helen Martins of New Bethesda lit by lorry headlight in a dry ravine in the Karoo. It seems, then, that from the outset he was experimenting with, and pushing the boundaries of what he refers to as traditional white "colonial" theatre. He felt himself alienated from both the plays imported directly from what he terms the "Euromerican models" (10), as well as from the tradition of protest theatre, which, by the early nineties, had lost much of its *raison d'être*.

Bailey spent a few years travelling around Southern Africa, in Zimbabwe and the Transkei, on what he would later refer to as a spiritual quest. He went on to India, and it was while he was studying meditation in the foothills of the Himalayas that he wondered what he was doing so far away from home. In an interview with Rolf Solberg, he says that he realised he "was looking for roots in the wrong place" (in Solberg 2003: 279). It was then that Bailey decided rather to come back to South Africa; to identify himself as an African, and to explore the traditional indigenous spiritual traditions of the land of his birth[91].

As relayed in his introduction to *Plays of Miracles and Wonder*, Bailey spent some time in the village of mTambalala in 1996, near the settler town of Port St. Johns in the Transkei. Here he lived with the Xhosa *sangoma* (a traditional healer, diviner and herbalist) Zipathe Dlamini. Bailey worked for a number of months with Dlamini in his mud and thatch homestead where he helped to hoe fields and learnt how to do beadwork. He was also introduced to the practice of gathering roots, herbs and barks. Most importantly, he participated in traditional ceremonies of dancing, drumming,

[91] Does an ancestor of European origin have the right to claim African roots? How long does a lineage have to be in a country before it can claim to belong? And who can challenge another's claim to the subjective feeling of belonging? As Mahmood Mamdani asked in the title of his inaugural lecture as AC Jordaan Professor of African Studies at the University of Cape Town: "When Does a Settler Become a Native?" (1998).

singing, chanting and took part in the *iintlombe* (communal trance ceremonies) in which bridges are constructed between the material and the spiritual worlds; between the present and the world of the ancestors.

This was the beginning of Bailey's exploration into the ways of the Xhosa. His interest was neither anthropological nor sociological, but spiritual. Like Antonin Artaud in Bali, he was in search of a more vital, primal, sacred form of ritual in theatre which, in his view, white Western theatre had forgotten. When using the words "spiritual", or "religious", one must be clear on exactly which forms of religion Bailey endorses, since these forms might be considered as more "pagan" than "religious" by members of Judeo-Christian faiths. In fact, he is quite outspoken about "hackneyed old genres that have all the appeal of Calvinistic church services" (9). Instead, Bailey provides the following example of the intersection between drama and spirituality which he is looking for:

> Let the theatre be rich and thriving and humming like a Hindu temple, with flowers and cows and children running and bells clanging and incense smoking and devotees dancing and offering libations! or like a voodoo ceremony, with people flipping into trance, chanting and sacrificing, dust and blood and beer and gods (9-10).

This is a theatre of possession, which transports an audience beyond the confines of the rational, which pulls them out of the ordinary representations of the everyday. Elsewhere, Bailey has said that he wants to create "the energy of ceremony":

> when people are in a ritual space together, dancing, clapping, singing... exposure to it has a healing quality to it...[and] I wanted to bring that energy into the theatre" (in Solberg 2003: 280).

Asked to define his themes, Bailey claims that

> The pattern tends to be about cultural collisions between the West and Africa, spiritual collisions. Christianity versus traditional ways of thinking: theatre in a Broadway sense, or in a conceptual sense, or in a Stanislavski type drama sense and African performance modes and African theatre and ritual and ceremony. The themes tend to be about dreams, about mixing dreams with the supernatural and the natural world...things that invade from that side, and people that move between the two realms...themes about Africa (284).

Here this thesis runs into a few complications. When trying to describe the mystical realms of the ephemeral, language runs into difficulties of description. Perhaps it might be best to follow Wittgenstein's final proposition in the *Tractatus*[92], since this is a world about which one hesitates to speak too emphatically. And yet, I would still like to make the attempt here at least to allow these words to indicate if nothing else, the general direction of the spiritual explorations implicated by these endeavours. As in the Zen parable, these words try to indicate the moon, without mistaking the hand indicating the direction of the moon for the moon itself[93].

5.3.2 Three Xhosa Plays

Perhaps it would be useful here to try to summarise the stories of the three plays of Bailey's trilogy – *Ipi Zombi?*, *Mumbo Jumbo* and *The Prophet* – before moving on to other aspects of his style and methodology in the construction of his characters.

The first play, initially called *Zombie*, premiered at the Grahamstown National Arts Festival in 1996. It was later reworked and titled *Ipi Zombi?* (a play on *Ipi Tombi*, "Where's the Girl", a 70s musical). The story is based on an event which took place in

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[92] "What we cannot speak about we must consign to silence" (1961: 151).
93 This parable is relayed in many books on Zen. One example can be found in Anne Bancroft's *Zen: Direct Pointing to Reality* (1979: 6).

a community in the Eastern Cape township of Bhongweni the year before, in which a minibus overturned on the road and twelve schoolboys were killed. One of the survivors claimed to have seen fifty naked women in the dark as the van rolled. Witchcraft was suspected and as a result, the local community was in uproar.

One of the facets of much traditional African belief is that nothing happens by chance, and that there is always a cause – usually a spiritual reason, often a curse – behind all misfortune. Ultimately, an angry mob lead by high-school students and comprised mostly of schoolboys set about hunting down the fifty witches whom the survivor claimed to have seen. Two women were killed before the police could intervene and quell the bloodlust[94]. The mob also set about mutilating the corpses of the boys so that they could not be turned into Zombies (familiars, or slaves of witches).

This was the subject matter of the first Third World Bunfight Production, the community theatre project which Bailey began in 1996 with Miranda Williams. It is a story, based on fact, but also filled with myth and magic. David Graver, in his introduction to the first publication of *Ipi Zombi* (1999), says that while Bailey "does not take seriously the charges of witchcraft...he does take seriously the belief in magic and spiritual possession that lies behind such charges" (201)[95].

The second work in this Xhosa historico-mythical trilogy is *iMumbo Jumbo*, the story of Tilana Gcaleka, a sangoma who, though called a "chief" by his adherents, does not actually have a legitimate right to the title. In 1996, "Chief" Gcaleka made a highly

[94] "[F]or the period 1st April, 1994-16 February, 1995: 97 females and 46 males were killed as a result of witchcraft accusations." (*Witchcraft Violence: We Have a Plan*. 1999. Report by the Commission on Gender Equality on the Witchcraft Violence Conference. South African Government Information.)

[95] A distinction must be made between witches and witch doctors (*izangoma*). Witches cast spells (curses) which witch doctors try to reverse.

publicised journey to Scotland in order to retrieve what he claimed to be the skull of the late King Hintsa, which had allegedly been carried off by colonial troops as a souvenir in 1836. Lead by his dream guide ("the Hurricane Spirit"), Gcalaleka was informed by his ancestors that South Africa would not be healed of crime and violence unless the skull was returned to its proper resting place and accorded a suitable burial.

Gcaleka duly arrived at Heathrow in flowing leopard robes with his entourage. Once in the U.K. he had a dream in which the name *Invernessy* appeared to him, and he, consequently, descended on the Scottish highlands. There he found a farm and the startled owners did, indeed, manage to produce a skull of unknown origin sporting a bullet hole. The triumphant chief took his trophy home, but was met with scorn back in South Africa. The Xhosa king Xolilizwe Sigcau claimed that he was a fraud and no true chief at all, and scientists from the University of Cape Town claimed that DNA testing proved the skull to belong to a European woman and not an African man. And yet, as with the first play, despite the uncertainties of the conclusion, this story is not told dismissively as an example of science conquering superstition. Instead, the narrative is relayed with a sense of respect for the power of dreams and myths, and the possibility of spiritual encounters with the dead. Where the worlds of science and spirituality contradict each other, science is not automatically permitted the final word. And yet, unlike *Born Thru the Nose,* tradition is also not automatically venerated as superior to science. Instead, both views are presented and no final conclusion is drawn by the writer.

In her review of the London run of *iMumbo Jumbo* at the Barbicon in London (2003), Pamela McCallum enumerates the fusion of elements which went into the production, from the ritualistic ceremony taking place as the audience entered (127),

to the sight of the actors wearing masks fashioned into images of cameras, which represented the reporters greeting the Chief on his arrival in London:

> Such a defamiliarizing image of the camera – its lenses become probing eyes and noses all at once – not only foregrounds the metaphorical masks worn in Western public spaces, but also draws attention to the "life" with which media are endowed (128).

By showing how modern media can be described in terms of the ancient representation of masks, one finds aspects of Bailey's playful crossing not only of genres but also of cultures and forms of media. His play is not situated purely in the traditional world, but in scenes such as this one he portrays zones between rural and urban, and shows how a first world activity can be reinterpreted from the point of view of a third world encounter.

The third play, *The Prophet*, is possibly the darkest of the three and also deals with an intermingling of the spiritual and material worlds. This story concerns a fairly well known historical incident in 1856, when on the banks of the Gxarha River, a fourteen year old Xhosa girl, Nongqawuse, had a vision. This occurred at a time when the Xhosa had suffered heavy defeats in warfare with the Zulus and were also suffering from colonial incursions which had taken much of their land and fractured their nation. In addition to this, a terrible cattle plague had arrived from European stock and was in the process of decimating their herds. Nongqawuse believed that she had been visited by her ancestors, ancient chiefs and warriors, who instructed her to go to the Xhosa king Sarili and to tell him that if they wanted to regain their former power they would have to slaughter all their cattle, burn down all their fields, and empty all their stores of grain. If they did as instructed, a mighty ghost army would arise from their dead ancestors and defeat their enemies. Eventually, they obeyed her

instructions, and an estimated four-hundred-thousand cattle were killed. Over fifty – thousand (some put the figure as high as one-hundred-thousand) Xhosa subsequently starved to death.

The Xhosa people are still in some places of the country split between "believers" (who believed in the prophecy) and "unbelievers" (who doubted its veracity). According to Zakes Mda's novel, *Heart of Redness* (2000), many descendants of the "believers" still claim that it was the lack of faith of the "unbelievers" which lead to the catastrophe. The story of Nonquwase has also been explored in other literary works, including a text by H. I. E. Dhlomo in the 1930s, a version by the painter George Pemba in 1962, and most recently in a collaboration between Speeltheater Holland and Sisonke Arts in a play called *Rode Aarde* ("Red Earth") in 2006.

These were, then, the three plays which put Brett Bailey on the map as a writer and a director, three stories dealing with a part of Xhosa history, which delve into the spiritual, mythical worlds of the Xhosa people. These three plays won a clutch of awards, culminating in the Standard Bank Young Artist of the Year award for Bailey in 2001. When premiering these plays at the Grahamstown festival, Bailey always used unconventional venues, normally situated outside of the picturesque country town. The first of these plays was set in a three-quarter round, and *The Prophet* was completely in the round, structures which are reminiscent of a *kraal* (a traditional tribal enclosure). In this way the audience becomes part of an actual "audience with" a chief, king, or *sangoma*. This circle is also the place where spiritual ceremonies are performed, and by using this staging technique, the spectators become part of the ritual. Sometimes members of the cast are planted in the audience, such as the spirits of the dead in *The Prophet*, and in this way the audience is invited to be complicit in the events which they are witnessing. Needless to say, this is a role which not all

audiences are happy to adopt, and there were a few raised eyebrows and something of an environmental ruckus when Third World Bunfight performed *iMumbo Jumbo* at a traditional venue, The Baxter Theatre in Cape Town, and set about slaughtering a live cock on stage as part of the proceedings. Bailey also uses real *izangoma* in his shows. He claims that although he works with them as performers, he also sees them "as priests":

> They have other functions as well. I was trying to make use of those other functions, dealing with the liminal aspects, the realm between wake and sleep....I wanted the drama to have a ritualistic quality to it...(2003: 280).

This is theatre which goes beyond representation. As Jacques Derrida writes in his essay on Artaud ("The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation"):

> The Theatre of Cruelty is not a *representation*. It is life itself, in the extent to which life is unrepresentable. Life is the nonrepresentable origin of representation (1993: 234).

To re-enact a real ritual is very different from paraphrasing it in terms of a symbolic representation. In this sense, Bailey is not only saying something, he is doing it by saying it, complying with Austin's criteria of performativity[96]. In each of these plays there is a prologue (reminiscent not only of Greek and Renaissance theatre, but also of the role of an African praise poet), in which a "narrator" introduces what is about to occur. An illocutionary act thus precedes the speech of the performance in which the language of the presentation is defined. More importantly, in the course of his plays, Bailey's performers really are calling up the ancestors; they really are offering sacrifices to spirits; they really do go into trances[97]. So there is an interesting overlap

[96] "[T]he performative should be doing something as opposed to just saying something..." (1990: 133).
[97] Going into a trance is also part of Bailey's actors' daily warm-up routine.

here between "play" and "seriousness". The *izangoma* are not actors in the usual sense, in that they are also "acting out" a cultural role as well as a role which represents that culture. In this sense, one might say they are "acting as" intermediaries between the spirit world and the human world, performing functions while also demonstrating how they are performed. They are not only performing on behalf of the audience in terms of an aesthetic function, but also – and perhaps more importantly – on behalf of the ancestors in the spirit world. At times the audience does not give its consent, and this has been a contentious issue. For example, Judith Rudakoff writes that Bailey's use of African ritual has not always "endeared him to all audiences" (2004: 81) [98].

In some ways, the type of theatre with which Bailey is engaged is reminiscent of the work of Włodzimierz Staniewski (a student of Jerzy Grotowski) and his theatre of Gardzienice in Poland. Staniewski's troupe initially go on expeditions to gather – or, more accurately, to assimilate – the folkloric tales and songs from rural villages (Staniewski 2004). Similarly, Bailey's troupe have also travelled in rural areas of Kwazulu-Natal and the Transkei, exchanging songs, swapping stories and learning from indigenous storytellers, shamans, healers and artists while performing at street crossings and in community centres. They then take this work to urban centres. The focus for both of these troupes is the religious significance of theatre, a veneration for tradition, as well as an interest in the transformation of traditions. Both also seem to share a form of pagan Romanticism. Perhaps Staniewski is more overt about his Romanticism than Bailey, in that he more explicitly refers to "nature" as a source of spiritual sustenance. The power which they are able to evoke from their respective

[98] In her report on a performance of *The Prophet* at the Baxter Theatre, Rudakoff writes that "[a]s the audience begins to realise that without much warning and without having given their permission, they are actively participating in a ritual, the feeling in the house shifts dramatically....It is apparent that not everyone is happy with the way the play is going" (85). She also feels that "enacting the ritual outside of sacred and consecrated space...without a fully aware and engaged host of participants is disrespectful, sacrilegious and, ultimately, dangerous" (86).

troupes is due in part to the manner in which they have been able to fuse traditional and modern sensibilities. Neither is merely re-enacting or recreating "traditional", "folkish" performances; both are interested in intercultural experimentation while remaining fascinated by the "primitive" aspect of specific cultures.

Here certain difficulties arise, since "primitivism" means very different things in a European context than it does in a developing nation such as South Africa. For the European, it may well be easier to conceptualise a certain nostalgia for cultural traditions, rituals and customs; whereas in a developing country the allusion to primitivism is more often than not taken as an insult. Nicholas Ellenbogen, who works with community theatre in South Africa (concerning himself, in particular, with environmental issues) says that theatre makers should not be afraid to explore aspects of the "primitive":

> 'Primitive' is a word African people really don't want to hear at the moment if they are in government[99]. But you know within art we continually seek the *primitive* because of its energy. And it's about birth, about the beginning of something (in Solberg 2003: 102).

So although it may be interest to explore, for example, the influence of "the primitive" on a European artist like Picasso, it may not be as simple a matter to identify a South African artist like Noria Mabasa's work as primitive. If one examines the terminology of "development", it carries with it connotations from child psychology, from the idea that there is a natural progression towards maturity, which is, ostensibly, the technologically urbanised "North", or "West", or "First World". So, Bailey's greatest

[99] Marthinus Basson points out that "[t]erms like Eurocentric and Afrocentric are really meaningless in this country, because our government is living very Eurocentric lives. That's not Afrocentric, the life they are living, and the role models they are creating." On the other hand, when it comes to the arts: "*that* has become such a battering ram, you know, Oh that Eurocentric art! – Batter-batter-batter! Kill 'em!" (in Solberg 2003: 141).

critics have often been urban, black intellectuals, who see his obsession with the traditional customs and superstitions of the Xhosa as a misrepresentation of a nation which has "developed" beyond the rituals and customs represented on stage. Simon Lewis describes *Ipi Zombi* as follows:

> Bailey's dazzlingly experimental play takes all sorts of risks, and with its frenzied drumming and the emphasis on witchcraft has even been accused of racism (2000: 1).

And yet, Lewis also points out that for him

> in *Ipi Zombi* a white South African comes closer to the metaphysical concerns of a play like *Death and the King's Horsemen* in which Soyinka's fascination with transition claims a specifically Yoruba origin, unlike the familiar notion of postcolonial hybridity which tends to have a Western stamp (2).

The writer Duma Ka Ndlovu states emphatically that Bailey should not be permitted to "tell black stories", but that he should have collaborated with a "senior black member" of the community before being permitted to deal so intimately with African spirituality. In his interview with Rolf Solberg, Ka Ndlovu says that South African theatre must be Afro-centric, it must be first and foremost about the black African experience, and that this experience must be relayed by blacks (in Solberg 2003: 272). In a sense, Ndlovu is accusing Bailey of acting as a coloniser, illegally appropriating the stories of others. Similarly, John Matshikiza writes about the performance of *iMumbo Jumbo* at The Market Theatre, saying that while white audiences were "stunned by the spectacle, a bold mix of sangoma ritual, [and] stylised movement...[m]ost black people [he] spoke to disapproved of exactly those combinations. The bottom line was the perceived lack of respect for black history and culture" (in Flockemann 2002: 278). On the other hand, the reverse has also been true and Bailey's work has also been criticised by white critics and praised by black

commentators. For example, Ines Watson, the reviewer for the *Daily Dispatch*, writes:

> *Ipi Zombi* is good theatre, but it is also exploitative of black culture and has extremely worrying aspects about it...beating drums, chicken feathers and violent death – is that really the reality? (In Bailey 2003: 151-152).

While Zakes Mda, says of *Ipi Zombi?:*

> This is total theatre...the predominant tradition is harvested from African ritual which has been refined in a most creative manner, leaving one breathless and spellbound. A work of genius that maps out a path to a new South African theatre that is highly innovative in its use of indigenous performance modes (in Bailey 2003: 89; also in Graver 1999: 201).

And another, unnamed reviewer from the *Sowetan* said that Bailey provides "a true picture of African spirituality...a ritual in which the audience is not just observing but participating" (in Bailey: 88)[100]. As to the question of whether or not Brett Bailey, as a white man, has the right to dabble in black cultural beliefs, perhaps one could agree with John Matshikiza, who claims that, ultimately, one should

> take Bailey at his word when he says his art and his spirituality are inextricably linked, and that, in his search for a spiritual truth, he has stumbled on a rich vein that springs from beneath the ground on which he stands (in Bailey: 6).

What is interesting is that these reviewers all take Bailey's work at face value and do not seem to question the representation with which they are presented. This begs the

[100] And the *Cape Times* said that his work "throw[s] political correctness in the dustbin where it belongs" (89). The *Sunday Independent*: "thrilling...spectacular in its spiritual intensity" (196); and *The Argus*: "brilliantly created and magical ritual theatre..." (196). (All in Bailey 2003. Reviewers' names not listed.)

question of whether theatre is accepted as an imaginary activity, or whether it, rather, posts signs which are interpreted as "natural" by an audience. For example, the real Chief Gcaleka – or, should I say the person "acting as" or playing the role of the Chief – came to see *iMumbo Jumbo* with his entourage of advisors and disciples and, by all accounts, he thoroughly approved of the performance, vouching for its authenticity as a representation of actual events (Bailey 2003: 145). And yet, Bailey himself eschews simplistic one-to-one representations of reality.

There seems to be a paradox here, in that Bailey both supports essentialism – in claiming African roots, and in reproducing these reviews in his book by people who claim historical and cultural rootedness and veracity of his product – and yet, he is also irreverent about traditions, for example, in his statement about his methodology. Which is it then? Does Bailey appeal to whichever view is expedient for his purposes in any given time and place? If so, would this be problematic? Perhaps this might be an occasion on which one might invoke Paul Feyerabend's dictum opposing stringent methodologies in science. In his book *Against Method* (1987) Feyerabend writes that the only principle "that can be defended under *all* circumstances and in *all* stages of human development...is the principle: *anything goes*" (28). Is there any need to limit Bailey's use of traditions, genres, styles or belief systems?

Whatever the case may be, one must acknowledge that the views on the kinds of identities being constructed by Bailey's plays are extremely diverse. On the one hand, he is said to be exploiting stereotypes of traditional black identity, and yet, he is also seen as supporting and strengthening certain forms of ethnicity. A third explanation for his forays into "traditional" identities lies in the aspect of "intercultural" exchange, in the sense that he is neither supporting nor undermining a particular tradition, but rather providing a syncretic resistance to different traditions, a new form which

challenges all preceding forms. Beyond the two polarised camps who see Bailey's work as either embodying an essential truth embedded within ritual practices, or as denigrating the sacred, there may be a third view which lies somewhere between the two. Ashraf Jamal describes some of the achievements of Bailey's work in his book *Predicaments of Culture in South Africa*:

> These include a destabilisation of an authoritative perspective, the implication of reason in the irrational, the daemonisation of sense and the senses, the imbrication of seriousness and laughter, the refraction of integrated characterisation, the uneasy blending of the familiar with the horrific, the melodramatic with the dramatic, and most important, the manifestation of an aesthetic and ethical *resistance* to balancing these coeval and incommensurable positions (2005: 145)[101].

In this sense, Bailey's plays do not seek closure, they do not reconcile opposites, they do not dissolve difference into sameness. Instead, they maintain a radical heterogeneity. Similarly, Jane Taylor sees *Ipi Zombi?* as "keenly ironic" in that it

> situates several characters within a deep and reverent relation to traditional cultural belief and performance, and explores what happens when these codes come into critical contact with other paradigms, for example modern, urban political youth culture....So while [Bailey] is in part, celebrating, through recapitulation, the mode of being in a traditional ethos, the deeply ironic contradictions and conflicts played out through the bricolage of modern cultural identity provides, at the same time, an internal critique of such tradition...(in Jamal 2000: 204-5).

[101] Jamal also links Bailey to Kentridge, saying that "[w]hat links the works of these dramaturges is the syncretic combination of elements, an interest in repetition and ritual, and a commitment to the artistic possibilities, which an exploration of irrationality and enigma and terror and eroticism afford" (2005: 136).

I suspect that Bailey is conscious of this irony, that he is aware of the paradoxes of his approach. Perhaps it is not necessary to make an "either/or" decision here between issues concerning Bailey's "respect" or "disrespect" of Xhosa customs. Perhaps he is doing both, as well as something else entirely. Perhaps he is both venerating the traditions *and* making fun of them; perhaps he is both parodying the rural African environment *and* revealing its strengths. So although he has been accused of exploitation and encouraging "primitivism", I do not believe that his work is merely what Marvin Carlson calls "Living History" (2003: 108-109)[102].

Bailey is certainly not the first to explore intercultural forms of theatre and to engage so intensely with cultures other than his own. One of the most important names which springs to mind in this regard is that of Peter Brook, who built his troupe on the principles of intercultural exchange. Richard Schechner and Jerzy Grotowski also spent a good deal of time and energy exploring the ramifications of intercultural exchange, though in very different ways from each other (the former as history and the latter as practice). So perhaps Bailey is not concerned with identity issues at all, that he is not trying to be ethnic or not, but that he is, rather, trying to reach for a mystical space beyond conceptions of identity, into realms I have referred to here as "spiritual". On the other hand, one might wonder to what extent it really matters whether or not he truly respects Xhosa culture, or whether he has simply been pretending to respect it. As Nietzsche points out in a quotation picked up by Marvin Carlson:

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[102] Carlson uses this term to describe the contemporary fad for restoring entire communities for tourists, such as the Plymouth Plantation in Massachusetts where visitors wander through an array of costumed, generic performers recreating a semblance of historical life (109). A similar theme park is described by Mandy Lee Jandrell in *Itch* (2004:82-89). This is a "China Folk Culture Villages" park in Shenzhen, China, where real ethnic minorities can be seen behaving like real ethnic minorities. In both instances, identity is promoted as existing (or having existed) within a stable, static totality which can be restored in terms of dress and gesture.

> The profession of every man, even the artist, begins with hypocrisy, as he imitates from the outside, copies what is effective...if someone wants to seem to be something...for a long time, he eventually finds it hard to be anything else...(in *Performance*, 2003: 39).

Or, in the words of Don Juan, the teacher of Carlos Castaneda: "My acts are sincere, but they are only the acts of an actor" (Bancroft 1976: 308). Does it, after all, matter whether someone is sincerely performing their identity with the knowledge that it is a role they are playing; or whether they truly believe themselves to be commensurate with a certain role?

5.3.3 Later Work

Brett Bailey's later works – *Big Dada* (2001), *Safari (2002), Macbeth* (2002), *Medea* (2003), *Voudou Nation* (2004), *House of the Holy Afro* (2004), and *Orfeus* (2006) – mark a departure from these first three productions, in that they move away from the specifically Xhosa cultural base, and sometimes away from South Africa entirely. Instead, these pieces reference Uganda (*Big Dada*) and Haiti (*Voudou Nation*), as well as the European colonial view of Africa (*Safari)*. When I asked him about the apparent shift in his work away from the overtly "spiritual", Bailey told me that

> *Big Dada* was a turning point, because I saw Idi Amin as the destroyer of everything spiritual or sacred, so made this an anti-spiritual / anti-ritual work. [Since then]...I've been investigating other things; [with] possibly more of an interest in structure, design, concept and spectacle (2006: 324).

It seems then that a very specific shift has occurred from inside to outside, from archetypal to external. What remains is Bailey's interest in the syncretic. In terms of

the future, he is optimistic about the resources available to South African artists, saying that

> the cultural resources here are incredibly rich. They are vast. The areas of possible intermingling – African, Western, Eastern strands....It really is completely inexhaustible (in Solberg 2003: 283).

5.4 THE HETEROGENEOUS INDIGENE IN THE PLAYS OF REZA DE WET

5.4.1 Introduction

In her interview with Rolf Solberg, Reza de Wet mercilessly dissects the work of other South African playwrights, finding most of them severely lacking. When questioned on the sort of direction she thinks South African theatre should be taking, she says that Brett Bailey might be the "man we are looking for", since he is able to take things from disparate cultures and transform them while "creating visual excitement" (in Solberg 2003: 191). On the other hand, she deplores what she considers to be the sterile tradition of English theatre (190) which has been the South African inheritance. She says that she does not "resonate at all with white South African theatre", since it is "what Peter Brook called *deadly theatre*" (189). In some ways, De Wet's own plays share some of the ethos of Bailey's magical representations which delve into the spiritual world. In an interview with Ashraf Jamal, she expands on this theme, stating more explicitly what she has against the tradition of realism, which she sees as prevalent in South African theatre:

> Realism, which deals with psychological complexity, is described by Meyerhold as 'peeping-tom theatre' which has betrayed its aboriginal function. Since theatre – both in the East and the West and in an African context – has always evolved from ritual invocations of the unknowable, the 'truth' of theatre is still linked to magical thinking, to transformation, to exorcism, and to heightened states of consciousness, which in more recent times have been described as – and to a certain degree have been degraded by the term – fantasy. If...fantasy has a direct link to the ecstatic function of theatre, then it must surely be clear how fantasy in this context can nourish and revitalize our theatre, which has become so radically impoverished by particularly political and social realism. Death to peeping tom (in Jamal 2000: 205).

De Wet's notion of theatre is that it should be more than a means of conveying history, and also more than entertainment. Instead of trying to mirror a social reality, theatre, for her, should rather concern itself with mysteries, rituals and "the unknowable". Whereas many South African playwrights try to create a sense of familiarity for their audience, De Wet's plays are known for transporting hers into unfamiliar territory; for arousing a sense of the uncanny; for their element of *vervremdung.* As already mentioned in relation to Brett Bailey, these are not terms which can easily be accessed by academic discourses. They are not easily circumscribed by text, and yet in this chapter I will be seeking to approach, if nothing more, at least a sense of the reverence with which De Wet moves towards these ideals.

Although a number of her plays were written before the fall of apartheid, they were only translated after. Since she claims to be disinterested in politics, it might come as no surprise that there seems to have been little difference in the style and content of De Wet's work since 1994. Perhaps the only distinct change has been that she has now started publishing English plays. Earlier works have also been translated into English (by herself, and in collaboration with Steven Stead) and have been published and performed internationally. In this sense, perhaps her English work may be considered definitive of her post-apartheid writing.

In this thesis, I would like to highlight a few fairly consistent themes in De Wet's plays which make her ideally suited to the exploration of and experimentation with new South African identities. Although De Wet writes mostly about Afrikaners[103], she also acknowledges her debt to African folklore and mythology which, she claims,

[103] De Wet's scripts routinely advise that her characters "are not English-speaking South Africans, but Afrikaners and as such a 'South African' accent is not required" (2005: 17).

inevitably inform every Afrikaner experience. For example, being brought up by a black nanny was an experience common to many white Afrikaans children of her generation, and De Wet talks about her "black mother" who raised her, saying that

> for her the stories were not myths, they were true...and for me they also existed, of course....She made me realise there are many realities. More than meets the eye....It depends on how you take it in, you see. You make it part of you, in which case it is unforgettable and it forms you utterly... (in Solberg 2003: 183).

Furthermore, she goes on to describe a curious symbiosis which she sees as having developed between the Afrikaner and the black cultures of South Africa; an encounter which has the potential of leading to richly syncretic amalgamations. She says that "there is a *long* history" preceding the current events in South Africa, particularly as concerns the Afrikaners, whom she describes as "really a kind of white tribe, not a nation". She goes on to say that Afrikaners have

> an understanding of a kind of myth, the magical thinking that has been integral to the black experience in Africa. But then tinged with, or mixed with, a more European consciousness (108).

Talk of an Afrikaans identity arising out of this kind of mixture is a radical departure from the identity mooted by Hendrik Verwoerd, who described the Afrikaner's history in Africa as having taken place in isolation from other cultural influences. It was under Verwoerd that what has come to be referred to as a "laager mentality" developed[104]. (A laager is a circle of wagons which the Voortrekkers traditionally formed as a defensive measure against attack from other tribes while they were

[104] "In the 1960s, the ruling Afrikaner nationalist elite developed a 'laager' (or 'circle the wagons') complex, especially under President Verwoerd. This complex led Afrikaner nationalists to see themselves as an ethnic and religious minority and as 'God's chosen people', surrounded by 'black heathens' and 'godless communists' and betrayed by the West" (Purkett and Burgess 2002: 231).

forging their way into the interior). Also, one of Verwoerd's policies underscoring his theory of apartheid concerned "Separate Development", a name which seems to imply that a trajectory of development can be described as unrelated to that occurring in surrounding cultures. This seems a rather absurd way of describing the 300 odd years during which the Afrikaner people developed their culture and language within Africa. To speak of syncretism and fusions between Afrikaner and black cultures does seem to be a more accurate perspective, and in this view, forty years of apartheid become a misinterpretation, a kind of illusionary gloss of reality, as ideals of racial purity inevitably are. So although de Wet is certainly indebted to a European literary tradition of playwrighting (particularly Chekhov), one of the things which her earlier works do is to describe the insistence on cultural and ethnic purity as a kind of perversity.

5.4.2 Three Translations: *African Gothic; Good Heavens; Crossing*

I would like to begin by referring to the early works of De Wet, before moving to a fuller analysis of her later English work. *Diepe Grond* was her first play. It won the ATKV[105] award in 1985 and provided a stinging critique of the notion of stable Afrikaner identity by portraying two incestuous children who respond to years of Calvinistic repression by murdering their parents. The play was initially written as a parody of Alba Bouwer's *Stories van Rivierplaas* (1957), an idyllic Afrikaans pastoral and the characters originally had the same names as the Bouwer characters (Alie, Hennie, Ou-Melitie). However, after strong protest by Bouwer these names were later changed to Sussie, Frikkie and Alina.

[105] *Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging* (Afrikaans' Language and Cultural Association).

One is never sure exactly what the relation is between Sussie and Frikkie[106]. Part of what created such a stir, I believe, was the degree to which familiar identity structures (the traditional *boere* family on the farm) were subverted. Simon Lewis describes the play (in English, literally "Deep Earth", later translated as *African Gothic* [2005]) as "a critical re-examination of Afrikaner myth and mentality...an incestuous, confined parody of '30s Afrikaans drama aimed at forging a national identity" (2000: 2). In a sense, this kind of instability and transgressive uncertainty harks back to the very early days of Western theatre, which Anne Duncan describes in *Performance and Identity in the Classical World* (2006):

> As seen in all of these spectacles, it was the line between mimesis and reality that fascinated audiences....There was a *frisson*, a thrill of transgression, perhaps even danger, in blurring or crossing this line (217).

In a similar way, De Wet's play challenges the stability of meaning. It mixes familiar elements of folkish fiction, and yet, at the same time, it arouses disconcerting suspicions that everything is not as it appears to be; that dark undercurrents underscore perceptions of idyllic domesticity. In some way it is almost as though forces at play in the unconscious are breaking through into the terrain dominated by the surveillance of the conscious mind. Chief among these undercurrents is a vein of erotic desire, heightened through years of suppression. For example, Sussie has been taught to believe that because Grové's wife has "red nails and a red mouth" that she is "bad", since her mother has told her that "women who want to improve on God's work are wicked and damned" (2005: 34).

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[106] Madeleine Shaner, who reviewed a London run of the play, introduces the disturbed siblings as follows: "This is a strange pair, whose weirdly disturbing relationship keeps the first act on its mystified toes. Are they, or are they not lovers? Are they, or are they not siblings? Are they, or are they not, stunted adults with white-trashy, morally and ethically deficient standards?" (2005: 16).

Op Dees Aarde was the second of De Wet's plays, and she later translated it as *Good Heavens*. Here we again encounter a strictly Calvinistic Afrikaans family, whose insular world leads to the emergence of both psychic and psychotic phenomena. The family is constantly worried about ways in which the community will categorise and judge them due to a previous indiscretion. They have already been cast out by a church community, and yet they still fear that their every action is being watched and evaluated by a vigilant and merciless God who stands ever-ready to punish them. As in *Diepe Grond*, the greatest sense of guilt (and the consequent fear aroused by this guilt) is created by the threat of carnality. Similar to the society portrayed in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), this puritanical community believes that being swept away by a Don Juan or a charlatan constitutes the greatest disgrace from which not even death will ever free one.

In *Op Dees Aarde*, the girl who has fallen into the murky trough of desire is "Baby", the apple of her mother's eye. In sharp contrast to her, two spinster sisters remain bitter after years of neglect. By dying, Baby has managed to stay young and charming, and she haunts the two sisters, who have become crones. The sisters want her to repent, to admit to her guilt, but Baby never will, and there is in some way a sense that she is part of her mother's dream, since, when her mother dies, Baby disappears. And yet, Baby returns to sort out the will and the other two sisters are consequently cast out, which also implies an indictment against other sins, such as pride and self-righteousness.

As with all of De Wet's plays, there is a sense of foreboding throughout; a tone of disharmony, a subtle unease. The play also delves into the ghosts of the Afrikaner past, exploring secrets which have maintained the Afrikaner psyche. There is an overbearing sense of privacy, which is used to mask a fear of disgrace coupled with a

constant awareness of shame. This permeates throughout the family's relationships and creates an insular existence shielded from exchanges with the outside world. It is fitting that the family are undertakers, since they are kept busy burying the secrets of their past, which could equally be seen as a metaphor of the Afrikaner past. There are skeletons in the cupboard and secrets which will never be revealed. (For example, we never learn how Baby died.) The long shadows of the past which haunt the family have been created by a fundamentalistic dogma and have been sustained by guilt, and the family suffers under the burden of maintaining their repression.

Reza de Wet translated her third play *Drif*, initially as *The Crossing* in Graver (1999) She later simplified this title to *Crossing* in the collection *Plays One* (2000)[107]. Simon Lewis describes the play as subverting the "stolid national-familial Afrikaans drama of the 1930s" (2000:2). He also describes the play as "actively participating in forming the drama *for* a new South Africa (not 'from' or 'of') by reclaiming and popularizing hidden histories" (1). Similarly to her previous work, *Crossing* creates a world comprised of a strange alternative reality which makes it impossible for an audience to draw on ready-made political or socio-sexual definitions to come to terms with the identities of the characters portrayed. For example, neither the strange power relation between Frikkie and Sussie *(*in *African Gothic*) nor the mysterious Svengalian connection between Maestro and Ezmerelda (in *Crossing*), are ever entirely clarified. The "rules of the game" are not always known. Again, as in her two earlier plays, there is a sense here that a primordial desire suppressed by the forefathers has lead into a psychic quagmire from which a younger generation are attempting to extricate themselves.

[107] On the other hand, removing the article from the title is not necessarily a simplification, since it opens the title up to greater ambiguity.

Each of these early plays can also be read as an indictment of patriarchy. For example, in *Op Dees Aarde*, the absent husband and charlatan have abandoned the women, and in *Drif* Maestro is a hypocritical seducer. All three plays also deal with the consequences of a heightened fear of impurity; or, in other words, a paranoia of the hybrid, a fear of intermingling. These plays show how an insistence on the purity of bloodline, lineage and culture creates a horror of – and a consequent obsession with – desire, which leads to crippled, incestuous families.

5.4.3 Two English Texts: *Breathing In* and *Concealment*

Breathing In (2004) and *Concealment* (2004) were both originally written in English and, to my knowledge, have not been translated into Afrikaans, marking a departure for De Wet from work originally in her mother tongue. In *Breathing In* (a reworking of *Nag Generaal* [1987]), she again achieves intimations of the uncanny in that the world she creates seems both familiar (in terms of portraying a scene related to Afrikaner mythologies of the Boer War), and frighteningly strange (in terms of the central thesis that a beautiful young girl has maintained her youth by breathing in the last breath of dying men). It is a play about a mother and daughter and contains many paradoxes: showing, for example, how a mother's love can destroy a man for the sake of her progeny; how the nurturing and healing skills associated with maternity can be used to crush and destroy the masculine. The mother is the sort of female character which De Wet has described as embodying "the masculine principle" (1995: 92). She says "I find this masculinity more macabre than seeing it in a man and also more treacherous." In other words, although this play may be read as being "opposed" to patriarchy, the most patriarchal figure, ironically, turns out to be the mother!

In this sense, De Wet does not allow easy identifications with her characters. Anna (the mother) is a scavenger who is out to feed off the strength of men, continuously seeking out life forces to subsume in order to keep on reviving her daughter. As with all of De Wet's plays, the text contains a gothic element, and is suffused in mystery. The setting is a world in which spirits and dreams are as substantial as flesh. In many ways it is an anti-romantic play, which ridicules the romanticist notions of a man giving his life for a woman, mocking notions of sacrifice; a parody of Plato's myth of the soul mate. Instead of representing the dream of pure love, it is about the power of seduction. Anna deftly manipulates the soldier (Brand), by means of guilt, playing on his ideals of loyalty and self-sacrifice. Her daughter needs his last breath and Anna eventually persuades him to go against his General, and everything he has ever believed in – duty, patriotism, fatherland – all for the sake of love, out of pity for a beautiful young girl. The play seems to be about a kind of domination women are able to exercise over men by means of their powers of persuasion. It deals with the power inherent in the pull of attraction rather than the force of brute strength.

In the course of the play, masculine concerns of patriotism are derided. The relation between the soldier and his general reveals some of the ways in which national identity is maintained in terms of idealised notions of country and the role of honour in warfare. For example, the Boer soldier does not want to wear his dead enemy's shoes, but Anna, the forager, is prepared to take whatever she needs from anyone for the sake of her and her daughter's survival. Anna and her daughter are cut loose from commitments towards a collective identification.

In this way, expectations concerning affiliations to gender, nation and language are subverted. The play's action continues with no hampering restrictions of a moral perspective, and without the censure of a politically correct view it explores ways in

which love can make the world grow smaller, how an obsession with caring for one's kin can bring the borders in, how an ostensibly valuable human emotion, such as a mother's love, can contribute towards an insular world which thrives on egocentric self-interest. There may also be a sinister undertone here of the way mothers might rule daughters; how they might pass on their knowledge and power; how they might teach them to seduce. The play thus goes beyond the confines of a discussion on a gendered, ethnic or national identity and presents us with a frightening new form of individual identity, shorn of its connections to the outside world, unshackled from its ties to community.

Another play which is more directly concerned with patriarchy and colonialism is *Concealment* (2004)[108], which deals explicitly with the colonial fear of the hybrid. As previously discussed, hybridity was at first a botanical and then a biological description which only later came to be applied to races[109] (Young 1995: 6). The analogy made from animal husbandry was that it was through sexual contact that hybrid forms were created which would produce inferior species, in the same way that the sterile mule was a hybrid of horse and donkey. Robert Young explores a history of this suppression of sexuality between races in *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (1995), and comes to the conclusion that this sexual censorship often had the opposite effect of intensifying desire for the unknown other, a theme which drives *Concealment.*

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[108] *Concealment* draws on themes of suppressed feminine desire which are also dealt with in De Wet's earlier play *Worm in the Bud* (1995).

[109] One should bear in mind that at the turn of the century, in which the play is set, Afrikaners and English were considered as two different races. This is pointed out by Dan Jacobson in an essay on Kipling (2007: 18). The fact that English and Afrikaner are today easily conflated into a single racial category is an indication of how thinking along racial lines can change. It is, therefore, not impossible to imagine that in another hundred years, ostensibly "white" and "black" races might also be reduced to a single human "race".

In this play a father arrives in a nameless African country, which is, perhaps, again, more of a mythic place than an actual location. He has returned to fetch his daughter, May, whose husband, John, has recently died due to heat-stroke, after having stepped out into the African wilderness without his hat. Instead of finding May in mourning, he discovers that she appears to be in good spirits, although her appearance is unkempt. Her skin is changing colour and – according to Father – she is beginning to look distinctly local. When Father and Amy (May's sister) first see May, the Father does not recognise her and when Amy insists that it is his daughter he says:

> Don't be ridiculous. That woman is completely dishevelled. And she doesn't have a complexion. She must be a half-breed at least (2004: 306).

When her identity is confirmed, he stares "in horror" at what has become of his daughter. It appears that she is being assimilated into the African climate which is associated with heat, dryness, colour, in contrast to Europe, which is depicted as cold and damp. As the play progresses, the audience discovers that there is a sexual connection between May and the black gardener Samuel. Also, Amy discovers John's hat among May's "underclothes", lending credence to the idea that – in collusion with the African sun – she is responsible for his death by withholding this protection from him, and hiding it in the one place he wouldn't look. From this one could also assume his lack of interest in her sexuality.

"Amy" and "May" are anagrams of each other, and yet they each come to represent very different aspects of femininity. Perhaps the word "May" also indicates a permissiveness denied the constrained Amy. They are further distinguished in terms of the character descriptions, and in particular with reference to their hair, a potent trope of sexuality. Whereas Amy's hair is "worn in a bun", May's "long, abundant hair is loosely tied back". Also, whereas Amy is characterised by her "large, luminous

eyes", May is described in terms of her skin, which is "rich, golden brown from the sun" (302). In this sense, Europe is associated with the cool, aloof, distant gaze, in contrast to the visceral description of May's body which, browned by the sun, has taking on the appearance of the hybrid, the in-between. The sun provides an extended metaphor for acculturation to African conditions throughout the play. For example, Dr Frost (the father) warns his girls that "the heat is enough to kill you" (305). He also repeatedly warns the girls about going into the sun since this will damage their "fair skin" (303). Elsewhere he says to Amy, "you look quite pale" (304) and warns her that "a young, pale-skinned woman is a terrible temptation!" (336).

Throughout the play, the natural world, the outdoors, is contrasted with the interior, domesticity of the household. There is a similar sentiment in *African Gothic* where the natural world is contrasted with domesticity, when Sussie says that flowers are not allowed indoors because she carries with her the warning from her mother that "they bring germs into the house" (2005: 30). In *Concealment* it seems there is also a relation between colourful flowers and disease. The metaphor of a tended garden is taken further when Amy speaks to Samuel. She draws a parallel between the gardens of Europe and those of Africa, saying that in England they are "[n]eat and well tended. Everything in its place" (2004: 315), and that flowers grow there which are "too fragile to survive here". When Samuel will not respond to Amy's flirtations, she loses her temper, knowing that he speaks freely to May. Eventually, fuelled by jealousy and stoked up to righteous zeal by her father, Amy colludes with him in drugging May and carting her off back to England where she is to be incarcerated.

It is not only May's possible infringement of the laws of purity that condemn her, but also because she reveals what has remained repressed within the family history: namely that her father molested her when she was a little girl. Perhaps it is bringing

this truth out into the light of consciousness which is her chief crime. She recalls the carbolic smell of his hands: "I would be filled...with a kind of...horror...and fear...because I knew...that you were coming up...to say good night. That you would...come and kiss me good night...that you would...touch...my hair!" (334).

On the one hand, there is the fear of the exotic; on the other there is an indictment of the moderation and restraint preached throughout by the father to his daughters. Again, themes which De Wet has reiterated in previous plays come to the fore – the incestuous relationship of the colonisers, who dread any mixing with (perhaps for fear of humanising) the local population. Also, the fear of revelation, the fear of the exposure of repressed desire turns in on the family unit and sinks it into a quagmire of obsession and shame. The very censoring of the desire for the other becomes a neurotic fascination. As Robert Young points out in *Colonial Desire* (1995):

> Racial theory, which ostensibly seeks to keep races forever apart, transmutes into expressions of the clandestine, furtive forms of what can be called 'colonial desire': a covert but insistent obsession with transgressive, inter-racial sex, hybridity and miscegenation... (xii).

There is thus simultaneously a desire for exotic sexuality, but also a fear of breaching the borders of one's identification and crossing over into unknown terrain. This desire also creates fears within those in the colonial community who are associated with the person who has overstepped the mark. For example, Dr Frost feels threatened by the power which the invisible Samuel has over his daughter, since he wishes to keep her to himself, and to keep her English. Young describes Bhabha's view that hybridity also serves to unmask authority (22) since it reverses structures of domination when knowledge which is denied is exchanged. There is also a threat that the concealed knowledge of the father's molestation of his daughter will be revealed. His greatest fear is that his daughter will have sex with the black gardener; and yet he does not see

his own sexual contact with his daughter as anything but part of his means of civilizing her, and goes as far as to refer to it as his "fondest...most cherished memory" (334). Whereas a healthy sexuality (which might mean crossing the line of identification between coloniser and colonised) represents a terrifying danger, Dr Frost appears to tolerate incest, possibly since it keeps the culture inside the family circle. There is thus a metaphoric turn-around here, similar to the one described in *African Gothic* – what is cloistered, nurtured, protected within the purity of family, becomes exactly that which, by the end of the play, is seen as perverse.

De Wet's plays seem always to be, in some or other way, related to questions of sexuality. In the incestuous relations between the inheritors of the Afrikaans farm in *Diepe Grond*, there is a sense that Afrikaner culture is insular, mistrusting of outsiders, and this desperate desire for purity becomes a vicious obsession. This obsession must then also be hidden – for example in *Good Heavens*, Sophie rebuffs the concern of her neighbour by saying "a wound...is a private matter" (2005: 85). And Minnie says "everywhere there are townspeople who whisper behind their hands and who look at us over their shoulders" (87), while the mother talks of "the watchful eyes" (97), and Sophie is afraid of the people coming out of church, because, "what will they think?" (103). In this way the cycle of repression and suppression is maintained.

5.4.4 Conclusion

Marthinus Basson, one of the most innovative theatre directors working in South Africa today, has directed most of De Wet's plays in South Africa. He says that

> Reza de Wet's plays can seem quite simple and straightforward and could easily be grouped under labels like Fairy-tale, Magic Realism or Postmodern,

> yet they are unique in many ways and very, very deceptive, in the same way that the reflection of the sky in a pond with floating leaves is a pleasant illusion, masking a rich soup of rotting vegetation or worse.
> (2005: 10)

Perhaps I have over-simplified De Wet's plays by writing that they are indictments against patriarchy and repression, as if there is a moral lesson to be learnt by reading them. And yet, change and transformation are certainly a part of what she sees as the significance of theatre. She agrees that her plays have been described as "Magical Realism, with gothic elements, or dark elements", though she qualifies this by saying that she is interested in

> the re-enchantment of theatre, which has become...very pedantic in most countries...the magical theatre is the opposite: it creates! Theatre is a place of transformation, and a crucible of mysterious forces (in Solberg 2003: 178-179).

In this thesis, I have theorised the hybrid as a possible "good" (with reference to Charles Taylor's description of the framework required to construct an identity), however, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what De Wet might posit as a "good". When she was asked whether changes in the South African political situation have influenced her writing, she said, "I have not been aware of the need to write politically. My work has always been personal, so it has not affected me greatly" (95). Clearly she refuses to propagate specific political ends in her plays, saying that she writes "out of a purely personal impulse" (1995: 90). Also, she consistently rejects any feminist agenda, and does not promote gendered readings of her work, saying

> I don't agree with categorising people. It falls into the patriarchal trap of needing to define and separate. If you accept divisions then you are accepting those structures. I believe to become psychically androgynous is the answer (90).

So what might De Wet consider a "good" or even a worthwhile end for her creations, particularly in the post-1994 environment? She does note that "[t]here is now a sense of more creative freedom" (95), and in some way her work is about liberation from repression, since she sees fantasy – a category with which she hesitantly associates her work – as "a primary way of expressing repression in society" (91).

Here there are ties to Jung's conception of the shadow[110] which has already been discussed in the first chapter. As already explained, I feel that this theory provides a useful vocabulary with which to approach issues of South African post-apartheid theatre generally[111]. The interesting thing about Jung's construction is that although the conscious mind is perceived as being in control, it is actually the forces bubbling up from the unconscious that hold the real power. One might say that the real "identity" in this case, as a cause of action and behaviour, is not the conscious, analytical mind. What this means is that those with firmly established shadows are not who they think they are. As Stuart Hall says:

> you can't map the unconscious because you don't know it. But you sort of know it when it erupts on you, when it sneaks up from behind you and hits you over the head. That's when you know that something has been repressed. It keeps on coming back, disturbing your discourse from underneath (1997: 4).

The shadow is an intensely personal construction, and yet, it can also apply to groups. In the first chapter of this thesis I have already mentioned how the entire system of apartheid provides an example of the ideal conditions in which a collective shadow might be created and that the shadow aspect of a collective white psyche would have been developed within the attempt to consistently relocate, hide, and deny access to

[110] Though De Wet does not specifically refer to Jung's notion of shadow, she does mention her indebtedness to Jung (94) and mentions the benefit she received from undergoing Jungian analysis.
[111] To re-iterate: the shadow consists of all the elements within the personality, both positive and negative, which a person deems to be unacceptable.

black populations. There is thus an urgent necessity for the integration of this shadow side. As Reza de Wet says: "if you repress something it will shatter you. Any deep repression that is never faced will destroy you" (1995: 94). Her plays, then, can in many ways be read as ways of permitting access to unconscious material, of allowing what has been repressed back into consciousness, whether this is something out of one's past which one considers to be destructive, or whether it is a positive aspect of one's identity which one has never acknowledged.

It seems that De Wet is consciously working with elements which attempt to free the mind from its repressions. For example, she says of *Crossing* that "hopefully the structures of the play are liberating" (94). So there is an element of integrating repressed desire, as well as accepting the inherent hybridity of the Afrikaner culture. Most crucially, her analysis of Afrikaans culture relies on accepting its debt to both a European and an African consciousness, and an understanding that "there is an exchange between these two cultures":

> I can only speak from an Afrikaans point of view, how close the Afrikaners are brought up with the African experience or the black experience. It's very close, there's an enormous bond between these two 'tribes'. So I believe there is a new reality being created here... (in Solberg 2003: 180).

This double hope for integration with Africa and liberation from repression sustains Reza de Wet's oeuvre, making her one of the most stimulating playwrights of the post-apartheid era.

5.5 SITUATING SYNCRETISM WITHIN THE POSTMODERN

I first came across the definitions of a "Protean Self" in Robert Jay Lifton's essay "The Protean Style" (in *The Fontana Postmodernism Reader* 1996: 126-131). It refers to a new type of self which Lifton finds emerging, an identity described as follows:

> The Protean style of self-process, then, is characterized by an interminable series of experiments and explorations, some shallow, some profound, each of which can readily be abandoned in favour of still new, psychological quests....To grasp this style, then, we must alter our judgments concerning what is psychologically disturbed or pathological, as opposed to adaptive or even innovative (126-127).

As my analysis of Reza de Wet's plays has sought to show, many of her characters certainly seem to be "psychologically disturbed or pathological", and yet, they are unquestionably also "adaptive" in their attempts to deal with the situations in which they find themselves. One would hardly call Sussie (*African Gothic*), Baby (*Good Heavens*), Anna (*Breathing In*) or May (*Concealment*) "moral" characters, and yet the way in which each of these constructs her identity – in terms of a bricolage of available sources – certainly makes them "innovative". It seems that each of the plays examined in this thesis up to the present chapter have presented value systems of some form or another. Scratching the surface one invariably locates some or other suggestion as to how one "should" behave; whether these systems are endorsed on the grounds of their gendered, ethnic or political value systems, or even if they are seen as "relevant" in terms of being "cross-over productions". In other words, to return to Charles Taylor's original definition of what constitutes identity, they all, in some sense or another, rely on a value statement, or a notion of a "good".

For example, in the works of Athol Fugard and Jane Taylor, even though there are a number of ironies and ambiguities, there is still a prevailing anti-apartheid stance, or in other words, a division of the world into "good" and "bad" sides. In Coetzee and in Mda we might locate suggestions that holding onto the past too firmly is bad, and adaptation is good. But with Bailey and De Wet we enter murkier terrain, where what is presented cannot so easily be aligned into these categories. Consequently, notions of identity which previously rested confidently on structures of good and evil seem increasingly insecure.

Taking my cue from Charles Taylor, with whom I began this thesis, this identity structure seems to be related to the postmodern, since for Taylor, identity depends on a framework of beliefs and judgements which rely on the possibility of a stable truth. In his all-too-brief two page rebuttal of modern French philosophy, Taylor criticises Derrida, Foucault and Lyotard for their neutrality, or their alleged lack of interest in the question of "the good". For Taylor, this is the defining hallmark of the postmodern, and it is this which he considers as its greatest weakness (1989: 488-489). However, instead of seeing this lack of a clear value system as problematic, I would consider it to be liberating, and possibly even necessary in a post-apartheid context, since one of the great shifts which has occurred in South African literature is that it has moved away from "judgemental" texts. As Attridge and Jolly point out in *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid and Democracy* (1998):

> South Africa has passed through a period that has for obvious reasons produced a large body of what might be called judgemental texts, both critical and creative; texts that assume an ethical sufficiency to exist in the condemnation of apartheid and its agents. For this reason the current South African situation forms a productive arena for the exploration of the uses and limitations of, as well as alternatives to, judgmental writing (7).

Perhaps it is necessary, then, to move away from the idea of creating literature which conveys judgements of value.

In her inaugural address at the University of Zululand, Lynn Dalyrymple draws attention to the ways in which "[m]issionaries said playing in the African way was wrong" (1992: 15). She goes on to argue that Christian education did not permit the luxury of imagination or play "because of the possibility of being wrong". But playfulness is surely crucial to transformation, since it opens up possibilities, since it allows the description of different ways of being without necessarily prescribing the identity structures which will emerge. As opposed to a didactic form of theatre – with which South African drama has, for so long, been intimately associated – Reza de Wet posits an eclectic, transformational approach, in which being right or wrong is not necessarily important, wherein no clear guidelines are presented as to which would be a preferable course of action to follow. In doing so, these texts permit the possibility of play; they allow a space in which a sense of the freedom both to play within a multiplicity, as well as the freedom to engage with paradox, can occur. In this way, postmodern works are able to change not only what is represented, but also the processes of representation. As Marvin Carlson notes:

> postmodern performance provides resistance precisely not by offering messages positive or negative, that fit comfortably into popular representations of political thought, but by changing the processes of representation itself, even though it must carry out this project by means of representation (2003: 155).

With further assistance from Carlson's book *Performance* (2003), I would like to summarise ideas by three key thinkers which might be useful in elaborating this approach. Firstly, one of the earliest proponents of a postmodern literary theory is Ihab Hassan, who claims that

> postmodernism veers towards open, playful, optative, disjunctive, displaced, or indeterminate forms, a discourse of fragments, an ideology of fracture, a will to unmaking, an invocation of silence...[it] veers towards all these and yet implies their very opposition, their antithetical realities (138).

Secondly, Fredric Jameson sees the modernist paradigm as involving "valorisation of myth and symbol, temporality, organic form and the concrete universal, the identity of the subject and the continuity of linguistic expression" (148). In opposition to this is the postmodern paradigm which stresses "discontinuity, allegory, the mechanical, the gap between the signifier and the signified, the lapse in meaning, the syncope in the experience of the subject". And finally, Jean-Francois Lyotard – whose *The Postmodern Condition* (1984) was the first book to use the word "postmodern" in its title – sees the main thrust of postmodernist theory as occurring in the erosion of meta-narratives that formerly provided legitimacy for a wide variety of cultural practices, norms and procedures[112].

In the plays of Brett Bailey and Reza de Wet, no clear guidelines are given as to ways in which the audience should understand the configurations of identity. For example, Bailey's plays present one with the worlds of Spirit worship, ghosts, demons and witches. These elements may be seen as irrational, and yet they are presented as having a material reality which places an individual's identity within a world much larger and more complex than that of the visible. Although both writers deal with myths, these are not seen as universally applicable, or even as being understood in similar ways within different cultural collectives. Also, as in the example already presented with the camera masks in *iMumbo Jumbo,* the line between mythic presentation and mechanical devices is not entirely clear.

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[112] According to Lyotard, the two main "myths", or "grand narratives" of science have been the "Dialectics of Spirit and the Emancipation of Man" (151).

At a first glance then, both Bailey and De Wet's work could be considered to be postmodern, however, as already mentioned, there are also difficulties in trying to align them completely with the postmodern grid. For example, Pamela McCallum cites the programme notes which describe the work of Third World Bunfight:

> Our works dig deep beneath the surface of post-colonial Africa: we explore sensitive and contentious issues, and dramatise them in ways that valorise and celebrate the extraordinary wealth of cultural modes available here (2003: 128).

An interest in "depth" is surely not a postmodern priority, since postmodernists tend to be more interested in issues of surface and structure, as opposed to "substance". The programme for *iMumbo Jumbo* goes on:

> Art can be a powerful spiritual source. It is artists who give form to the Spirit of humanity, and it is up to artists to protect that Spirit against the dehumanizing numbness that surrounds us.

This vocabulary ("spirit of humanity") sounds eerily similar to one of the grand narratives Lyotard describes as less than useful in *The Postmodern Condition*, namely, "The Dialectics of Spirit". If "spirit" is posted as a substantial concern, then one is perhaps moving away from the postmodern. And yet, McCullum goes on in her review to say that this vocabulary

> might seem to situate these conceptions of performance within traditional discourses on the role of art, [but] quite the opposite is true. Art and performance are acts of resistance against modes of domination that can be as different as the daily humiliations of life in the struggle to survive in relentless poverty or the mindlessly repetitive glass and concrete cities of an increasingly globalized world (129).

In this way she describes Bailey's show as non-traditional, in the sense that it is an act of resistance, and not an endorsement and valorisation of a status quo. Although I do not feel entirely comfortable in calling Bailey's shows postmodern, his approach does seem to support at least some of the claims made by postmodern writers. On the other hand, Reza de Wet's plays have been dealt with more conspicuously and specifically as postmodern; for example, in P.C. van der Westhuizen's doctoral study *Parodie en Pastiche in die (Post)modernistiese Drama/Teater*[113] (1997) and Hester Rossly van der Waal's Master's thesis *Vrouefigure in Reza de Wet se Drama-Oeuvre* (2005)[114]. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, her settings and characters portray many of the qualities associated with postmodern fiction, as described by Hassan. They are "open, playful, optative, disjunctive, displaced, or indeterminate forms". Her plays also depict "an ideology of fracture in that they are disjunctive". In terms of Jameson's definition, they certainly reveal a "lapse in meaning" and "the syncope in the experience of the subject". Furthermore, her characters portray what Kenneth Gergen has described as selves who live with "uncertainty, paradox, ambiguity, and constant change" (1996: 146). Finally, in terms of Lyotard's description, it seems very difficult, if not impossible to define any of her plays in terms of a meta-narrative.

One might argue, however, that postmodernism itself has become a style of meta-narrative, so perhaps it is not ever entirely possible to escape Taylor's "framework" after all. Suffice to say, then, that although it may have been useful to identify certain aspects of the postmodern within the playwrights discussed in this chapter, it might not necessarily be helpful to fix them forever to some sort of perpetually postmodern grid.

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[113] "Parody and Pastiche in (Post)modern Drama/Theatre," University of South Africa.
[114] Female Characters in Reza de Wet's Dramatic Oeuvre," University of South Africa.

5.6 REACTING TO THE SYNCRETIC

In concluding this chapter on appearances of the syncretic in new South African plays, I would like to consider ways of reacting to the sorts of conflicts roused by the hybridity suggested by post-colonial studies and the loss of value posited by postmodernism. Kelly Lynn Latchaw contrasts two views on hybridity in her PhD thesis *Performance in the Wilderness: Identity Formation in Neo-, Para-, and Post-colonial Contexts* (1999). On the one hand, she cites Gloria Anzaldua who says that living in more than one culture creates "multiple, often opposing messages". Anzaldua goes on to say that the "coming together of two self consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference causes *un choque*, a cultural collision" which results in "perplexity...insecurity, or indecisiveness" (35). And yet, this self-same event can also lead to the arising of a new consciousness created in this "borderland", a way of thinking which accepts "multiplicity as inevitable" (36).

Gugu Hlongwane, in her PhD thesis *Simunye (We are One): Discourses of Nation Building in South African Texts*, also contrasts two views of the new. She warns that:

> While optimists rush towards a theorization of South Africa's globalized hybrid cultures where black and white are happily merging, cynics exercise not only a necessary caution but a suspicion of a usurping language that encourages race blindness (2002: 102).

For Hlongwane, multiplicity is not a desirable option, since she believes that "[c]ultural hybridity means naught if Africans themselves are not reconciled to their own cultures" (140). Perhaps this reveals a certain misunderstanding of what hybridity means; particularly her reference to the idea that it is possible for one's own culture to not be hybridised, the notion that it can somehow exist separately from other cultures. And yet, I would agree that there might also be a certain danger in

creating a dogma out of hybridisation. For example, it seems that today multi-culturalism is not only encouraged, but it has also at times become enforceable in terms of the funding made available to artists.

For example, Lynn Maree, an independent consultant in Arts and Education, writes in her report on "The State of the Arts" (2005) that in 2003 a recommendation by the NAC Theatre Advisory Panel to fund a play called *At Her Feet*, by Nadia Davids, which "deals with a Muslim girl growing up in multicultural South Africa, and has been acclaimed by audiences of all race groups" was overturned by the chairperson of the board of the National Arts Council "on the grounds that the play to be funded to tour 'only deals with one culture'" (305). This seems to have been an unfortunate decision, as Maree points out: "Racism and racially-structured thinking still affects [sic] the arts deeply" (306).

On the other hand, Maree cites The National Action Plan and Strategy to Combat Racism by the South African Human Rights Commission as proposing the following points, which recommend a respect for all cultures, and cultural exchange in terms of mutual validation:

> We agree to share a culture: bits of it do not 'belong' to bits of our society.
> We *value* the 'ways of life' of all – not tolerate, not even merely respect, real (sic) value.
> We encourage borrowing and innovation, but from a sense of equality. Art forms and traditions, unlike sacred relics, necessarily evolve, borrow from what's around them, and are creatively improvised. We let the arts massage the cultures to allow for flexibility (306-307).

It seems then that there may be a danger in trying to enforce an idealistic vision of the society which should be represented on stage. Ironically, trying too ardently to enforce tolerance could lead to an even greater measure of intolerance! Furthermore,

there is also the danger which Eugenio Barba points out in his description of his own multi-ethnic, multi-national group, Odin Teatret. In his essay on "Eurasian Theatre" (1988), he writes of the cross-cultural exchanges and influences between Western and Asian theatre, warning that "there remains an undeniable embarrassment: that these exchanges might be part of the supermarket of cultures" (126). John Hutnyk offers a similar caution on embracing hybridity when he asks: "is it merely the case that hybridity offers up no more than festivals of difference in an equalization of cultures...?" (2005: 95). He goes on to say that "[t]he charge is that a flattening of differences is secured at the very moment that celebrates difference and the creative productivity of new mixings" (96).

A further difficulty, as Rey Chow indicates, is that "these concepts all serve to 'obliterate' questions of politics and histories of inequality, thereby occluding 'the legacy of colonialism understood from the viewpoint of the colonized' and so are able to 'ignore the experiences of poverty, dependency, subalterneity that persist well beyond the achievement of national independence'":

> The enormous seductiveness of the postmodern hybridite's discourse lies...in its invitation to join the power of global capitalism by flattening out past injustices in a way that accepts the extant relations of power and where 'the recitation of past injustices seems tedious and unnecessary' (in Hutnyk: 96).

Finally, the most glaring attack against hybridity is surely that of Robert Young who writes that it represents "a monstrous inversion" which leads towards a "raceless chaos" (1995: 23). These are all rather strong arguments against the syncretic, although I read these oppositions more as warnings against a false gloss of syncreticisation, a sleight of hand manoeuvre which allows power to be maintained by colonial or global capital. And yet, resisting the syncretic is no longer an option. As Keith Bain states (perhaps without realising the paradox): "the true roots of

contemporary local performance lie in the hybridisation (or crossover or syncretisation) of a variety of indigenous and imported performance forms" (2003: 154). The irony, of course, resides in the predicament of whether a syncretic production can be said to be "rooted" at all. Cultures are continually merging and it may not be preferable – and perhaps not even possible – to keep these cultures distinct. In her introduction to the special issue of *World Literature Today* (1996) on South Africa, Ingrid de Kok notes that

> the "multicultural" celebratory impulse also connoted a deep break in the cultural hegemony of the past. At best, it opened a public space for examining the complex intermingling and interacting (called variously..."confluence," "interpenetration," "interfluence") of modern South Africa's various cultural traditions. At worst, it introduced a fuzzy blurring of profound contradictions, and a multiethnic confusion, under the soft-focus light of Archbishop Tutu's much-quoted phrase, "the rainbow nation" (5).

But I wonder whether "fuzzy blurring" is necessarily undesirable. Perhaps what we require is a good deal more fuzziness; more blurring of boundaries; more insubstantial delineations. One need only recall the clear sharp lines and specific designations which are commensurate with fascism and apartheid, to be scared off forever from the dangers of clarity. Hutnyk concludes his essay on the syncretic with the conundrum that

> Maybe it is the mongrel, interfering mix that undermines racialist absolutism, and it is the corrosive friction of intercourse and exchange that destabilizes purity and property by right. But is it also perhaps the message of hybridity that reassigns fixed identity into what becomes merely the jamboree of pluralism and multiplicity? (99).

The trick then, would lie in not fixing identity finally to anything, not even to hybridity. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, to talk too strictly of hybridity

in itself creates a false sense that clear roots are distinguishable out of which the hybrid has been formed, even if it has now been idealised, in sharp contrast to its former derogatory connotations. In fact, Andrew Smith indicates Gayavotry Spivak's contempt for the search for origins when she says that she "distrust[s]...despise[s] and [has] contempt for...people looking for roots" (2004: 249). Or as Paul Gilroy states, rather forcefully,

> Who the fuck wants purity?...the idea of hybridity, of intermixture, presupposes two anterior purities.... I think there isn't any purity; there isn't any anterior purity...that's why I try not to use the word hybrid....Cultural production is not like mixing cocktails (in Hutnyk 2005: 82).

I have highlighted De Wet and Bailey, here, as examples of syncretism, and yet, other writers previously mentioned could also be described as syncretic to a greater or lesser extent. Certainly *Ubu and The Truth Commission* provides a confluence of styles, races, languages and media. And in *The Bells of Amersfoort*, Zakes Mda brings different continents, languages and styles of music into conflict with each other. Mda's work has also been described as a "symbol of a fluid sensibility and a dynamic hybridity that seem to be the hallmarks of African theatre today" (Olaogun 2001: 147). For Ashraf Jamal, there is no avoiding the immanence of the syncretic, since:

> syncretism has become the most strident characteristic of contemporary culture, a culture in which traditions have been supplanted by makeshift influences and each and every sacred order desacralised – converted and perverted – so that what today has come to be accepted as truth is nothing more than the bastardised remnants of a long-forgotten and – putatively – once-integrated and essential system of values (2005: 62).

And yet, Jamal describes two different kinds of syncretic practices. Contrasting "reactive syncretism" to "radical syncretism", he finds it increasingly necessary "to shift the syncretic from its predominantly enervated and reactive mode to one that is

more critically and reflexively engaged with the processes of change" (2005: 64). Reactive syncretism tries simply to gloss over differences, it consists of a "displaced, nullified and hapless fusion of influences" (74), whereas the "radical syncretism" of Brett Bailey, for example, is revealed in a "Dionysian dimension" (146) arising "from within the unresolved heterogeneity of South African culture" (150). If we bear in mind what Deleuze terms the "rhizomatic" approach, it may be argued that encouraging a multiplicity of cultures to be produced syncretically is preferable to the attempt to subsume different cultures into a single fusion.

One can never arrive at a final conclusion, never be satisfied that a culture has been completely circumscribed. Eugenio Barba concludes that:

> It is possible to consider the theatre in terms of ethnic, national, group, or even individual traditions, but if in doing so one seeks to comprehend one's own identity, it is also essential to take the opposite and complementary point of view: to think of one's own theatre in a transcultural dimension, in the flow of a 'tradition of traditions'. All attempts to create 'anti-traditional' forms of theatre in the West, as well as in the East, have drawn from the tradition of traditions (1988: 126).

To work from "the tradition of traditions" implies a respect for the idea of traditions, without valorising any one specific tradition as superior to all others and to be "anti-tradition" is also to respect this "tradition of traditions". This is, I believe an indication of a healthy syncretism. It is no longer possible to avoid being multi-cultural and resistance to the ebb and flow of the many traditions in which we are caught can only lead to an unnecessary stagnation, to repression. In the conclusion to this thesis, I will attempt to address a number of questions which have been raised, specifically concerning the question of whether it is necessary (or even possible) to forge a discrete identity at all.

CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSIONS

6.1 RACE AND THE RAINBOW

6.1.1 Racial Constituencies

In the course of this thesis, the many limitations not only of this particular study, but of this *type* of study have become increasingly apparent. After having explored some of the ways in which identity has been approached by various disciplines in the humanities, I considered four very broad means of constructing an identity – gender, political dispensation, nation and amalgamation. Each of these approaches is relevant to the types of identity descriptions which have emerged in the plays published since the harsh segmentary categorisations of identity by apartheid. And yet, as I have repeatedly tried to indicate, there are also many other ways of charting identities in South Africa, many alternative routes to mapping this landscape. This has then not been the search for a "real" identity, but more an indication of some of the identities represented in terms of the characterisations developed in a few texts published since apartheid.

I have so far avoided bringing the issue of race directly into these investigations and have instead referred to race – in terms of Robert Young's description – as belonging to the outmoded science of eugenics. The theatre which I have been specifically promoting here is a radically syncretic strain which shies away from the essentialism of racial categories. And yet it may be of concern to some that the authors I have discussed in greater detail in this thesis are all white, with the exception of Zakes Mda. It may, therefore, be argued that I have not adequately represented writing by "other" racial groups – black, coloured, Indian.

There are a number of reasons for this, including the initial decision made to limit this study to published works, since the published material since 1994 has been overwhelmingly white. From the outset, the scope of this thesis was very broad, and limiting it to published texts was one way of narrowing down the study into a manageable representation of works. I have also deliberately shied away from anthologies which pre-empted questions of identity, such as collections specifically focused on fixing and promoting a particular racial identification. These include *Black South African Women* (1998), and *South African Indian Writings in English* (2002). The ethos surrounding the creation of such anthologies seems to me to promote the very segmentarity and racialised classifications which this thesis has been opposing. As I have repeatedly tried to show, the move away from definition in terms of race seems to me to be the single most important liberatory gesture required to free ourselves from the legacy of apartheid.

Still, there are a number of plays which deal with issues of race in interesting and exploratory ways which have not been dealt with here. There are writers who deserve entire studies dedicated to their work alone, even if they have not necessarily been published. For example, among the more remarkable productions by black writers are Aubrey Sekhabi's harsh kitchen-sink realism in *On My Birthday* (1996) and *Not With My Gun* (1998). There is also Sello Maake ka-Ncube's[115] *Koze Kuse Bash* (1997) about the unravelling lives of black urban youth caught within a spiralling cycle of self-indulgence. And worthy of particular mention is Mpumelelo

[115] Ironically, Ncube left South Africa for London, because he claims he did not feel black enough in South Africa. When asked why he initially left the country, he responded that "being in South Africa, everything becomes so 'rainbow-y' that you end up not knowing what colour you actually are", and went on to say that he would "rather go and be a hybrid in a foreign country than in [his] own homeland" (2007). It seems that rather than attempt to be part of a syncretic identity, he would rather leave South Africa entirely to live on a continent where he will invariably be defined as "other", which would then bolster a more stable sense of his estranged African identity. Recently he has returned to take up a role in *The Lion King*.

Paul Grootboom, whose remarkable pieces *Cards* (2005), *Relativity* (2006), and *Telling Stories* (2007) have defined him as one of the most idiosyncratic new voices of South African theatre. Grootboom's plays are delivered in a harsh, uncompromising style which includes a cinematic approach to playwriting and directing. His works typically feature large ensemble casts and multiple levels and scenes. They are plays saturated with eclectic sound tracks and feature rape, crime and unparalleled levels of violence. These are works drenched in blood and harsh laughter. There are also many other black writers who warrant further exploration and in depth analysis, such as Gcina Mhlophe, M. M. Masondo and Lesego Rampolokeng, whom I have, unfortunately, not been able to consider in any detail.

In terms of a coloured identity, this racial categorisation seems to be as problematic for the present government as it was for apartheid authorities. In Pieter Dirk Uys' most recent production at the time of writing (*Evita for President* [2007]) he refers to the predicament of many coloured people of having been too black for preference during apartheid, and now finding themselves too white to qualify for the benefits of Affirmative Action. This indicates a set of concerns which I briefly touched on in my opening comments on the portrayal of Demetrios Tsafendas as a man caught between races in a world which emphasised racial identity. (I will return to the question of coloured identity in the next section, where I discuss the theatrical representations of Demetrios Tsafendas further.)

It seems that coloured theatre makers rely to a large extent on comedy, and their unique style of self-deprecating humour – exploited most visibly by Marc Lottering – remains a feature of any festival. At the time of writing, Oscar Petersen and David Isaacs' successful series *Joe Barber* is in its fourth incarnation playing to audiences who consist largely of what Malcolm Purkey has referred to The Market Theatre's

"coloured constituency"[116]. Similarly Kevin Athol Ehrenreich's popular comedy series based on the character of "Gatiepie" – of which the most recent was *Gatiepie Sien Vrou Spoke*[117] (2006) – also plays principally to coloured audiences and relies on a particular "coloured" identification. Earlier I mentioned Abduragman Adams' play *Angels Everywhere* (2005) which examines a coloured identity from a slightly more serious angle, though it could also be described as a comedy. Another important play is *Suip* (1997) by Heinrich Reisenhofer and Oscar Petersen which tells the story of a group of *bergies*, disenfranchised coloured people living on the streets of Cape Town who are descended from the original Khoisan inhabitants, most of whom are today homeless alcoholics. Despite the tragic nature of this theme, it is remarkable that the play still manages to be a comedy, relying on the natural storytelling gifts of the *bergies* themselves. The origins of many coloured people in the slave trade was also highlighted in David Kramer and Taliep Petersen's *Ghoema* (2006).

Indian theatre in South Africa is represented by writers such as Ronnie Govender, whose 1972 play *The Lahnee's Pleasure* remains one of the longest running shows in South African theatre history. His more recent play, *At the Edge* (1996) has been invited to countries all over the world. Rajesh Gopie's one man show *Out of Bounds* (2003) has also been highly acclaimed. These are both one man shows firmly rooted in an Indian identity, and relate Indic theatre to the generations of Indians descended from the original migrant workers. Although Indians constitute one of the smallest racial communities in South Africa, Indian theatre as a genre has attracted more attention than the theatre of any other racial group, in terms of being the focus of academic articles[118].

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[116] Statement made during a seminar held at Parktonian Hotel, Braamfontein, on 26 May 2007.
[117] "Gatiepie Sees Lady-Ghosts".
[118] Articles on Indian theatre include: (1) Muthal, Naidoo. 1997. "The Search for a Cultural Identity: A Personal view of South African 'Indian' Theatre". *Theatre Journal*. Vol. 49, Issue 1. (29-39). (2) Hansen,

Despite this very brief mention of writers divided according to racial categories, I must re-iterate that I have deliberately tried to avoid raising issues of racial identity, since I feel that we must begin to dispel categories of race in favour of what Xolela Mangcu calls "transculturation" (2008: 5). In *To the Brink: The State of Democracy in South Africa*, Mangcu claims that "our heritage of racial syncretism is being overwhelmed by...racial nativism" (xiii). Furthermore, he sees "racial nativism" as opposing "the long traditions of racial syncretism that have always characterised South African political and intellectual history" (2). In this sense, focusing on issues of race and trying to restore an essentialised racial identity are antithetical to the demands of democracy.

It is interesting to note the emphasis which many white writers and directors have placed on staging "cross-over", or multi-racial pieces. I do not think it would be an exaggeration to say that most plays today by white writers and directors include characters from other races. It remains rare, however, that "non-white" pieces involve white actors. For example, the works previously listed by Sekhabi, Grootboom, Ngema, Ehrenreich, Govender, Rubnick and Gopie do not include any white actors at all. In fact, Paul Grootboom's latest play, *Inter-Racial* (2007), goes as far as to use black actors to play white roles! And yet, every play by a white writer which has been discussed in any detail in this thesis (with the exception of some of the plays by Reza de Wet) has used a multi-racial cast of characters.

Thomas Blom. 2000. "Plays, Politics and Cultural Identity Among Indians in Durban". *Journal of Southern African Studies*. Vol. 26, Issue 2. (255-269). (3) Govender, K. 2001. "Subverting Identity after 1994: The South African Indian Woman as Playwright". *Agenda*. Vol. 49 (33-43). (4) Mesthrie, Rajend. 2005. "Assessing Representations of South African Indian English in Writing: An Application of Variation Theory". *Language, Variation and Change*. No. 17: (303-326).

It seems, then, as though white writers have been at the forefront of adaptation and transformation in terms of their racial identities, whereas the compulsion on black, Indian and coloured identities has been to reinforce and strengthen their sense of identity in terms of race. Perhaps this is unsurprising, given the history of South Africa, and the fact that in the past black characters have generally involved subservient roles. Perhaps the emphasis in plays by "non-white" races has often been on reclaiming previously disenfranchised racial identities, whereas the focus in white plays has been on finding a middle ground in which to create a shared South African identity. Perhaps one could also interpret this as a demonstration of "white guilt" or see it as a response to the perceived threat of marginalisation, in that whites are hoping to assure their place within a black majority. It could also be a means of trying to secure government funding, in terms of the of the NAC policy discussed in the previous chapter.

Whatever the case may be, it appears that white writers are more visibly concerned with promoting a racially syncretic identity. And yet, there may also be a certain risk in efforts to enforce a sense of multi-culturalism, not least of which is the risk of promulgating an artificial, inauthentic and "politically correct" identity which kowtows to the dominant power structures within the country. As already mentioned, for Ashraf Jamal there is a danger in a "reactive syncretism" which glosses over differences in the attempt to try to enforce a state of unity. On the one hand, then, "the syncretic promotes a more positive engagement with difference", and yet Jamal goes on to make the claim that "the dominant deployment of syncretism in contemporary South Africa merely constructs the illusion of a positive engagement or merger of difference" (2005: 66). So although the syncretic may seem to be the obvious antidote to the cellularised society of the past, an illusory, forced syncretism becomes a cynical exercise.

Ironically, an emphasis on "multi-culturalism" *per se* might also reinforce notions of essentialism in terms of an essential universalised "humanity", instead of creatively engaging with the differences inherent in various constructions of identification. Even though a writer like Reza de Wet, for example, does not always write "multi-culturally", the identities revealed in her plays are most often transgressive in terms of their Afrikaner identities and in this way, De Wet's plays reveal a greater interest in the syncretic than many deliberately "cross-over" productions.

6.1.2 Over the Rainbow?

On the eve of the dramatic end of apartheid, Karen Press cited one of the goals of the new dispensation as being "to create an independent, unitary nation out of a diverse range of social groups that were previously seen (and saw themselves) as separate political entities" (1990: 23)[119]. This ideal has been expressed in terms of the popular "rainbow nation" analogy first made public by then Archbishop Desmond Tutu after the 1994 elections[120]. And yet there are a number of possibly unintended associations attached to this trope. Presumably the ground connecting the tenor and the vehicle of this metaphor refers to a rainbow as a promise of God's mercy, appearing as it does in the Biblical account of the deluge. In this sense it could be read as a sign of grace after punishment. And, of course, it also represents a unity of diverse colours. Temple Hauptfleisch reads the trope of the rainbow to signify that diversity should be respected, writing that

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[119] Ironically, the state motto of the apartheid government, "Unity in Diversity", sounds like a very similar proposition.

[120] According to Henk van Woerden's *Mouthful of Glass* (2000), Demetrios Tsafendas was the first person to use the expression in 1964 when he cause a ruckus in a bar in neighbouring Mozambique by standing on a table and proclaiming loudly that there would be a new country whose flag would have "a rainbow on it" (85).

> the rainbow cannot exist if the various bands in its spectrum are not secure in their own identity. Perhaps much of what has made the country recover and grow over the past decade has to do with its ability to recognize, accept (or tolerate), and use the differences that it previously feared and despised (2006: 195).

And yet, there are also other, rather more unsettling properties of rainbows. Besides the fact that there is neither white nor black in a rainbow, one should also bear in mind that a rainbow is an illusion, a trick of the light, insubstantial. Rainbows appear and disappear, they do not actually exist. Perhaps this is also an apt description of how identity works, in that it exists only momentarily, as an assemblage of circumstances at a particular juncture. Gilles Deleuze's concept of an assemblage may here be of interest. J. Macgregor Wise describes it as "a collection of heterogeneous elements" (2005: 78) which can be objects and qualities, but which are more aptly described as "lines and speeds" (79). In this sense an assemblage is a collection of functions and activities demarcated as going in a certain direction and taking possession of a territory over which it stakes a claim. The configuration of the "rainbow nation" as an assemblage thus goes some way to explaining how it can be used as a means of controlling the flow of meaning for certain ends. It also underlines the danger of defending and fighting for an identity as a substantial, permanent, unchanging essence when it is constantly being altered or reinterpreted for specific ends. Collective identities, like languages and cultures, also have a certain life span, so it is completely natural to expect that they will also, eventually, die out and that new ones will be born.

Further criticism of the "rainbow nation" trope has been made by a number of academics, most notably Ashraf Jamal, Leon de Kock, Bhekizizwe Peterson and Gugu Hlongwane. Although they may disagree as to how the metaphor operates and why it

is less than helpful, they all seem to agree that one of the reasons why it may be dangerous is that it seeks to flatten out differences and simplify complexity. For example, Ashraf Jamal says that "in glossing difference it has failed to address a radicality or heterogeneity that subsists at the core of South Africa's differential condition. The problem lies first in the elision and suppression of the incommensurability of difference" (2005: 66). And De Kock refers to the "rainbow nation" trope as an "imagined singularity" which is, in fact, a "tatty patchwork" (2001: 290). Bhekizizwe Peterson says that the "nebulous celebrations" of the "rainbow nation" are "suffocating the arts" (1995: 584), claiming that this is a result of a reluctance to deal with the "complexities of identity". And Gugu Hlongwane sees the analogy as faulty since, according to her, whites are still "the social and economic beneficiaries of an apartheid regime that supported a lopsided accumulation of wealth and social power" (2002: 3) and, therefore, whites are not entitled to share in a national identity with blacks.

Another question arises of how accurately "multi-cultural", "cross-over", "rainbow" plays reflect daily reality. For example, a survey by the *Sunday Independent* on inter-racial relations revealed a few interesting statistics. A report by Nonkosi Mngxali and Ntuthezelo Vananda on "young, recently employed black Africans" (2006: 17) claims that a majority of respondents stated that their family and friends only socialise "with others from the same racial group". Jan Hofmeyr also writes that one of the main problems with reconciliation is "the lack of informal social contact between individuals from different racial groups" (2006: 17). Furthermore, Hofmeyr cites the most recent SA Reconciliation Barometer Survey (Sarbs) and finds that there is very little informal contact between races, with 31 percent of respondents saying they had no contact at all, whether formal or informal, with anyone from a different race, while 72 percent indicated that they "rarely or never socialise with somebody from a

different population group". And yet, tuning in to any one of the SABC television channels on any given day of the week, it is more likely than not that in terms of both broadcasted programs and the advertisements shown, one will come across a representation of an egalitarian, multi-racial society fully integrated in terms of economic, social and sexual relations. Perhaps what is being portrayed is the hope for integration, since 76 percent of Hofmeyr's respondents "believe that it is important to pursue the cause of a united nation" (17). So perhaps instead of providing a reflection of society, the "rainbow nation" trope may be an indication of the aspiration for, paradoxically, a multi-cultural homogeneity.

I have repeatedly lauded syncretism as a crucial tool towards the definition of a new South African theatre. And yet, as Jamal indicates, syncretism does not necessarily promote transformation and change. Most importantly: "change can never be achieved through the sustenance of a master narrative" (98) and the "rainbow nation" ideal is in itself simply a new master narrative, a stifling and constrictive construction. Similarly, Malcolm Purkey warns of the danger of lumping "transformation" together with concepts such as "national unity", saying that it could rob one of a necessary objectivity. He asks whether theatre can "be involved in the struggle for transformation, reconciliation and national unity, and strike a necessary critical distance at the same time" (1996: 155). If theatre (and culture, generally) are employed in the services of a unifying master narrative, can they still be aesthetically and creatively challenging?

6.1.3 Choosing to Identify

It seems that all of the writers quoted who fault the "rainbow nation" trope do so because they read it as trying to subsume many different identities into a single

formation. These authors are then in agreement that there are more identities in South Africa than just one; but how many identities are there? Are there, as Hlongwane (2002: 4) states, principally two – one white (rich, powerful) and one black (poor, still disadvantaged)? Are there as many identities as what there are languages? By referring to the "radical heterogeneity" of South African identities, De Kock and Jamal both seem to support the notion that there are an endless variety of identities. Certainly at one level one could say there are as many identities as there are people living in South Africa, and when one considers that each person is aligned with different identities at different times, there could be even more than this number! And yet, I believe that the interests of those who talk of "identity" lie in finding out where individual identities overlap, where sets which are used to define them intersect. In other words, how groups form. The definitions of collectives may be neither essential nor permanent, but the assumption, nevertheless, remains that it is possible to refer to people in some or other way as forming part of collectives. Descriptions of shared qualities, values, interests, properties, ideals and so on could be imposed from outside (as they were during apartheid) or they could arise out of the subjective perceptions of individuals.

There is also another meaning of identity, related to the use of the word as a verb. To "identify with" involves a choice and a response. As Stuart Hall says, all advertising is an attempt to call us (1997: 11), and yet we must respond to the call to be identified as a user of a certain product. So one identifies oneself in terms of the call to which one responds. In this sense the "Rainbow Nation" trope forms part of a discourse perpetuated by certain forms of institutionalisation. It is a call which has gone out from government bodies, religious organisations, and big business, and it asks for our acquiescence. How one responds to this call would form part of how one chooses to identify oneself.

Steven Connor elaborates three definitions introduced by Michel Pêcheux, three responses to attempts at responding to institutionalising discourses which seek to identify one – Identification, Counteridentification and Disidentification:

> Identification means living within its terms; 'counteridentification' is the mode of the trouble-maker who stays within a governing structure of ideas, but reverses its terms; while 'disidentification' is the attempt to go beyond the structure of oppositions and sanctioned negations supplied by a discourse (1997: 267-8).

In terms of this definition, much of the apartheid era theatre which resisted the state might have been characterised by counteridentification, whereas now – with the exception of playwrights like Mike van Graan – this is possibly the least popular form of writing for theatre[121]. In plays like *Green Man Flashing* (2004), *Hostile Takeover* (2005) and *Die Generaal* (The General, 2007) he has directly attacked the present government and its policies, satirically dealing with bribery, corruption, rising crime, language policy and a range of other issues which have beset the South African government in the years since the end of apartheid.

Reza de Wet's *Concealment* (2004) could also be read as providing a counteridentification in terms of its critique of patriarchy and colonialism. I would say, however, that the majority of De Wet's plays could be read as "disidentifications". Judging from interviews with her which have been published, I would venture a guess that this is also the mode in which she prefers to work, particularly when one considers that she sees her work as personal, rather than political. This is what makes her plays different from the dominant mode in most of the other plays which have

[121] Although there are other examples of writers attacking the government – such as stand up comics like Pieter Dirk Uys and Cokie Falkow – Van Graan is the most publicised playwright writing in this vein.

been discussed here. While some of the writers in this study may resist complete submersion within the status quo, many of them still identify with the notion that it is a good thing to have a strong, stable sense of identity. Extreme examples of this belief are demonstrated in performances which endorse a strong sense of ethnic or national identity, such as the plays mentioned by Mbongeni Ngema. Public pageants staged by the government at the Union Buildings in Pretoria and in stadiums across the country on holidays such as the Day of Reconciliation (December 16), National Women's Day (9 August) and Freedom Day (27 April) are also strong appeals towards *both* identification in terms of racialisation as well as in terms of a national "multi-cultural" agenda. Identity, in terms of both a racialised ethnicity *as well as* the story of the "rainbow nation", can thus be described as responses to the invitation by specific organisations to identify with particular categories on which their structures have been premised.

6.1.4 Bastard Identities

During the course of this thesis I have been struggling to find the balance between seeing identity as overly rigid, on the one hand, and entirely formless on the other. I began by referring to Anthony Sher's play on Demetrios Tsafendas, *I.D*, and highlighted Tsafendas' struggles with identity under the severely restrictive classifications of apartheid. Sher was not the first to write a play on this enigmatic figure in South African history. L.D. van der Merwe wrote a play called *Tsafendas* which was based largely on the court proceedings of his trial, and Ian Hadfield wrote *Conversations with a Tapeworm*[122]. Matthew Krause and Robert Colman also cast Tsafendas in a satirical musical *Famous Dead Men* (1985) and Liza Key made a

[122] These two plays were sourced from DALRO (Dramatic Artistic and Literary Rights Organisation) but I was unable to determine when they were written.

documentary about him called *A Question of Madness* (1999). I also wrote a biographical play about the assassin called *Living in Strange Lands* (2003). In one scene from this work, I had Tsafendas railing against purity:

> Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd believed in purity. He believed that the races should be kept apart, that there should be no mixing; but how can you have progress, growth, development – how can you have evolution with one-hundred percent purity? You can't have evolution if you're too pure. You must have new blood for things to change...purity is like incest....It makes you weak, sick, deformed (18).

Ultimately, I had Tsafendas advocating racial miscegenation as an hysterical solution to his plight. In a scene inspired by Van Woerden's discovery of the arrest made in Mozambique (when, as mentioned earlier, he caused a disturbance in a bar by demanding a flag with a "rainbow on it"), Tsafendas rants from on top of a table:

> And I said 'That rainbow represents the many colours of our nation'...and I showed those blacks my hair and I said, 'Look at these curls my friends, that's why the whites don't want me....That's why they won't have me near them....But one day there will be a mixing of all the races...white, black, yellow, pink, brown, everybody...the answer is in coming together, not staying apart...we must inter-breed, we must conceive a new race to which we all belong....It is the only way forward! To integrate. To become one race. To mix our flesh and blood so that one day everybody will be bastards!' (19).

This desire to become bastardized is a revelation of Tsafendas' fragile state of mind, and yet it also refers to a profound dis-ease within the South African landscape. Gilles Deleuze makes an interesting reference to G.M. Lory's study of Breyten Breytenbach at the end of *Feu Froid* (1976) in which Lory points out Breytenbach's desire to be "a bastard, with a bastard language" (in Deleuze 1993: 272). And Athol Fugard refers to himself in his notebooks as having a "bastardised identity" (1983: 7). Granted, this total rejection of a type of hierarchical eugenics masked as purity may only be one

side of the coin. On the other side, there is also Jung's warning that a "[l]oss of roots and lack of tradition neuroticize the masses and prepare them for collective hysteria" (1972: 164). In a sense, Tsafendas' outcry in this play is a frenzied outburst as a result of his having been pushed too far. It indicates an extreme attempt to balance the severe restrictions of state classifications.

Even this appeal towards a mixing of races still relies on the notion that there is a distinct difference between races, yet I think one must be wary of describing inter-racial encounters between black and white as being only between "Europe" and "Africa". What is at stake in the syncretic encounter, after all, is not only this confluence between continents (an encounter which has been continuing for at least half a millennium), but, as Paulin Hountondji says, it is also between different aspects of African society:

> Pluralism does not come from any society from outside but is inherent in every society. The alleged acculturation, the alleged 'encounter' of African civilization with European civilization, is really just another mutation produced within African civilization, the successor to many earlier ones about which our knowledge is very incomplete, and, no doubt, the precursor of many future mutations, which may be more radical still. The decisive encounter is not between Africa as a whole and Europe as a whole: it is the continuing encounter between Africa and itself (1983: 165).

Plays which explore identities being forged within the new African experience, without necessarily being founded on myths of "African", "European" or even "global", (least of all "universal") identities, seem to me the most interesting. Hopefully this thesis has moved beyond a general celebration of hybridity towards a specific examination of the dangers of being caught up in many of these identity issues. These ongoing struggles with identity do not necessarily require specific resolutions and the failure of identities in many instances may, paradoxically, turn out

to be part of their strength. For example, one of the reasons I admire the plays of Reza de Wet is that by positing fantastic, phantasmagoric reference points she is freeing one from the idea of the importance of specific identifications. One has to wonder what South Africa might be like if racial identity were not required on every official form. What would it be like to not be reminded constantly of one's racial categorisation? How would it be if one were not required to report, to state, to keep on telling the story of this classification? Would we be more free?

6.2 CHANGING THE BODY

6.2.1 Transformation, Again

This thesis has, to a large extent, turned out to be specifically an examination of ways in which narrative identity within plays has changed. For Eugenio Barba, all important theatre has to do with transformation, with transition, as well as with the production of meaning, not simply its reification. He says that "[t]ransition is itself a culture...it is essential for a culture to produce meanings. If it does not, it is not a culture" (1995: 5). In this sense, he claims that theatre is "not museum, but metamorphosis" (36) and that a crucial aspect of it is that it is "an activity in search of meaning" (36). One of the most important functions of theatre, according to the examination posited in this thesis, is that the stage creates the opportunity for change, for transformation, for the nurture and growth of culture. Similarly, according to Reza de Wet, the crucial function of theatre is neither to educate nor to entertain, and least of all to perform a socio-political function. Instead, she says that theatre has

> the profound function of transforming. To enlighten or to inform is deadly. Transformation is radiant. To inform does nothing. It only goes into your mind. The other, as Artaud says, goes into your whole body (in Solberg: 188).

De Wet is here referring, I believe, to an ancient, *ur* interpretation of the theatrical ritual whereby enactment not only demonstrates transformation, but is transformative in itself. Richard Schechner says:

> Modern Western theatre is mimetic. Traditional theatre, and...I include the avant-garde in this category, is *transformational*, creating or incarnating in a theatre place what cannot take place anywhere else. Just as a farm is a field where edible foods are grown, so a theatre is a place where transformations of

> time, place, and persons (human and non human) are accomplished (2003: 186).

In this sense, De Wet and Bailey both attempt to access a much older, primal mode of theatre, in opposition to the mimetic realism often associated with many European theatre movements. Mimetic theatre has been associated with a colonial era where South African concerns were depicted as subservient to the priorities of an imperial government. Long after direct influence in terms of legal and political ties were severed with a European metropol, much South African literature continued to nurture the famous "colonial cringe", as if the country were still a far-flung colony hoping to impress the motherland.

In this sense, one of the most necessary transformations might be to outgrow the influence of the cold northern lands separated from us by a vast continent, *as well as* the influences of the central African cultures which informed much of the Nguni imagination. For South African culture to develop (or, to use a psychoanalytic metaphor, to "individuate") it must first separate from the influences of its "parent" cultures. This involves a separation from not only the European cultural influences, but also from the traditional African models. Transforming identities thus depends more on experimentations with the new, than with reifications of the old. Our various traditions may have been nurturing, but they might also prove to be limiting.

This process of cultural transformation involves a degree of fear, since one is moving from the known to the unknown. Transformation is always dangerous, since one can never fully know where one is going and one does not yet know what one will become. In order for transformation to take place, one requires the freedom to experiment, to play; and this is what is so important to the ability of drama to transform identities.

In her inaugural address at the University of Zululand, Lynn Dalrymple (1992) sets out a number of considerations in the creation of a new curriculum after apartheid. Her field is Drama in Education, and she describes, in particular, the importance of drama in the process of learning to create new identities. She says that it is no accident that a "play" (14) is known as such, since it describes a "hypothetical situation" which "provides an opportunity to rehearse different possibilities and learn from the rehearsal without real danger to existing relationships". To play with theatre makes one aware of some of the many possibilities of "making different choices"[123]. Transformation becomes what Dalrymple sees as one of the most important aspects of an arts education, particularly of theatre, when she says that "our attitude towards arts education at this stage in our history must be tilted towards discovering ourselves as a transformed society rather than simply conserving any of the various heritages" (6). In this sense, there can be no prescribed routes in search of identity, certainly not in a thesis such as this one. The place in which transformation occurs, in which the outcome is not yet certain, could also be called a liminal zone. According to Viljoen, Lewis and Van der Merwe:

> A liminal zone is...a zone of playful transformation. Like any boundary it is a zone of heightened semiotic activity....Liminality is the result of processes of separation, transformation and re-incorporation. Periods of ambiguity, transition and marginality can be termed liminal in this sense (2004: 18).

How long this liminal space might last before a "settled" culture emerges is not the issue, since culture is always in a state of transition. It is important to keep playing, to

[123] In this way one could see the choice made by Jimmy in Greig Coetzee's *Happy Natives* as a repetition of the past. Dawid Olivier in Fugard's *Sorrows and Rejoicings* is, perhaps, instructive in how not to be a man. (And yet I do not think that Dalrymple means that play should necessarily have a didactic function. Instead, plays permit one to explore new terrain, rather than framing a moral lesson.)

keep in mind Barba's definition, to remember that theatre is "metamorphosis", not "museum". One alternative to the "mimetic" tradition of theatre is physical theatre.

6.2.2 Physical Theatre

At the start of this thesis, I referred to legal means of identifications in terms of the individual body. This is the sort of identification in which state structures are interested – height, eye colour, age, and so on. The most individual of identifications may reside then, with the body. I also mentioned issues of text and body, and considered to what extent the body could represent a type of text, or whether it would be more accurate to read text as a type of performance. I settled, eventually, on the pragmatic choice – albeit rather conservative – of focusing this study on published plays and grounding my more detailed explorations in the printed word. And yet, mention must be made, if only in this cursory fashion, of the immense contribution made to the development of post-apartheid drama in South Africa by physical theatre. By not being bound overtly to textuality, this form of theatre-making may be able to work with and transform identities perhaps more easily than text-based work. Textuality conceptualises, abstracts; whereas the move towards a physical theatre challenges an emphasis on intellectualisation. It does also not rely on any specific language.

One of the first modern Europeans to take an interest in a non-textual theatre is Antonin Artaud who, in his appraisal of the Balinese funeral rites, praised the physicality of highly ritualised performances. In *The Theatre and its Double* (1970) he describes the text as being a tyrant over meaning, and demands a break – violent, if necessary – from the restrictions imposed by the definition of words and the confinements of grammar:

> Dialogue – something written and spoken – does not specifically belong to the stage but to books....I maintain the stage is a tangible, physical place that needs to be filled and it ought to be allowed to speak its own concrete language. I maintain that this physical language, aimed at the senses and independent of speech, must first satisfy the senses (27).

Artaud's suggestion for a theatre of sensation implies a theatrical language beyond the verbal, which involves spectacle and emphasises visual and rhythmic elements, rather than dialogue. Although Reza de Wet invokes the name of Artaud in liberating theatre from realism[124], she does, paradoxically, seem to insist on a fairly rigid textual definition of the stage script. For example, Temple Hauptfleisch describes her saying "the script's done", implying that her "written script [is] meant to be performed that way" [in Solberg 2003: 54.] Hauptfleisch contrasts De Wet with Mark Fleishman, who relies on improvisation and non-textual elements in his productions.

Brett Bailey is primarily a writer and director who remains very concerned with the visceral and visual elements of his productions. In Bailey's collection of published plays the visual component of the text is as important as the words themselves. Every page is covered in photographs and colourful designs, so these are not purely textual representations. His plays also involve fusions of different performance forms – including dancing and music – and are not reduced to the text. This is a form of theatre which is well suited to a country where people speak many different languages. For example, Nicholas Ellenbogen sees the language of the physical body as very important in his production. His troupe, *Theatre for Africa* is involved mostly in projects which educate audiences on issues involving the care and conservation of the

[124] "Unfortunately theatre practitioners seem to be trapped in a rather ordinary world. It is all the political theatre that was done, which was terribly realistic, that has blunted artistic sensibilities. I think someone should bring Artaud into this. His amazing vision is required now to make theatre vital exciting, dangerous" (De Wet in Solberg 2003:187).

environment and he sees physical theatre as a way of reaching a wide number of people who might not speak English, since his plays do not need to be translated:

> A lot of our theatre has to be very physical, and depends less on language than first world theatre does....Language is a big problem (in Solberg 2003: 91-2).

An emphasis on the body bridges many of the gaps between speakers of different languages. This is not to say that the language of movement is necessarily universal, but that the codes inscribed within gesture may be more easily decoded into the signification systems than the lengthy process of interpreting into, say, the eleven official languages of South Africa. Mark Fleishman claims that while formal theatre has declined in many ways in the years following 1994, dance, on the other hand, has enjoyed huge growth "because it contains the idea of untranslatability, of being able to house things that language can't". He continues: "There has definitely been a move away from 'theatre' towards a more inclusive concept of 'performance', which combines various disciplines" (in Jamal 2000: 199).

Other important contributors in the field of post-apartheid physical performance theatre include Gary Gordon, Jazzart, The Junction Avenue, Andrew Buckland, Rob van Vuuren, Bheki Mkwane and Ellis Pearson. The collaborations between the Handspring Puppet Company and William Kentridge have already been touched on in chapter four (albeit from a slightly different perspective), but they are certainly also immersed in a theatre which is distinctly different from text-based work. The text of *Ubu* is also noteworthy for its rich use of visual representations.

Here, I will only briefly consider the work of two other contributors to this field, namely Mark Fleishman and Sylvaine Strike. Fleishman directs Magnet theatre, and writes in his essay "Physical Images in the South African Theatre" (1996):

> I would suggest that for most people making theatre in South Africa the written word on its own is woefully inadequate to portray or explain the full complexity of the reality they face....A complex subject requires complex treatment and gives rise to a complex text in which the written word, the spoken word and the transformative material body amongst others are in a constant state of dynamic dialogue. There is no essential hierarchy where one mode of expression, one process of making meaning can be seen as more important than another (174).

Furthermore, he sees the body as a type of text, which challenges the logo-centrism of the written word[125]. Eugenio Barba goes further in his emphasis of the physical, contrasting a theatre "sustained by *logos*" with one which is "above all, *bios*" (1988: 128) and favouring the emphasis on the body and its biology over textuality. Perhaps Fleishman is principally concerned with complexity, rather than necessarily favouring physical movement over language. He certainly does not discount language, as he says in his interview with Rolf Solberg (2003):

> we're not rejecting language. Language is there, but the language operates in a less literary way, if you like, than in the well made play, the literary dramatic text (64).

In this way, Fleishman's work embraces the complexity of the codes elaborated by the physical as another system of meaning alongside the textual, verbal signs of language.

Sylvaine Strike, who won the young artist of the year award in 2006, works, amongst others, with James Cunningham and Helen Iskander of Fresco Theatre. Both Cunningham and Strike are graduates of the Lecoq School of Mime in Paris[126] and

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[125] "In South African theatre...the body isn't simply a vehicle for the embodiment of the text; it serves as part of the text in its own right. The physical body in South African theatre is a source of primary meaning which constantly challenges the hegemony of the written word in the meaning-making system" (175).

[126] Other South African performers who have graduated from the Lecoq School are Ellis Pearson (who works with Bheki Mkwane) and Jenny Resnick (who works with Magnet Theatre).

continue the particular tradition and style of this establishment, which makes the performer's bodies the centre of any production. The productions with which Strike has been involved include themes such as suicide (*Black and Blue* [2004]), incest (*The Travellers* [2005]) and alienation (*Coupé* [2006]). It may be difficult to access ways in which these plays present identity, and even more tricky to align these identities with any collective descriptions, since they are reliant on a performer's particular engagement with movement, mime and gesture, rather than with narration. That is not to say that gesture is not also part of a coded system, but it is, perhaps, a series of codes which is more open, more fluid and flexible to interpretation than language.

In *Black and Blue* (2004), for example, the dialogue would hardly fill two pages. Instead, the presentation of the piece focuses on a symbiotic energy between two performers, involving a fine attention to physical details of voice, movement and gesture. It is a strangely light piece, which comes across as almost frivolous, even though it deals with themes such as suicide, mourning, loss and recovery. It poses as a children's pantomime while addressing deep-seated fears in the South African psyche. The play strips away layers of coding inscribed by the grand narratives of race in its attempt to portray the compassion of one person for another which becomes more important than the story of their enculturation. It is not only a new story about the transformations of white and black identities, but is also a new way of telling a story.

All three of Strike's plays mentioned here make use of a small revolving stage. Each presents a world which can easily be turned around and reversed, indicating the instability of any contextual setting. Each work thus appears to depict a stage within a stage, which also emphasises the constructed nature of the performance, the "theatre-making" involved. These plays all rely on richly imaginative metaphors and symbols to open up sites of ambiguity.

Mark Fleishman endorses physical theatre as a viable means of transformation since it is not restricted to cultural interpretations embodied in a particular language. He says:

> We in South Africa have to learn to re-invent ourselves in a most active way and the theatre has a part to play in this process. Our challenge is to present images of the body in various forms constantly re-invented and transformed (1996: 182).

Fleishman mentions two kinds of transformation that occur. The first is when the performer's body "changes in front of the spectator into a multiplicity of characters and images" (176). This type of transformation is typical of township theatre, in plays like *Woza Albert!* (1983). It is also notable in one man shows, including the work of Andrew Buckland, Greig Coetzee (including *Happy Natives*), James Ngcobo and Pieter-Dirk Uys, where these consummate performers are able to change characters through the slightest shifts in postural and gestural alignments[127].

But there is also a second, more significant type of transformation which occurs. This "involves a physical action or gesture which begins as one thing and metamorphoses into something else passing through a range of possibilities" (177). According to Fleishman, it is in particular this second type of transformation which can be liberating. This is not simply the adoption of a new role, or a different image, it is not only exchanging one identity for another; but an act of transformation which reveals that the alternative identity was already part of the original formulation. It is not so much simply a change of role, as the transformation and reinterpretation of an image. In this way, theatrical movement is able to open up some of the ambiguities of identification.

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[127] See footnote to page 156 for a more detailed list.

For Jerzy Grotowski, the aim of theatre was to change both performers and spectators. He wanted the audience to also achieve the "translumination" which the actors undergo. There have been other radical theatre practitioners who have described this state of transcendence. For Artaud and Barba it is called "presence", for Mnouchkine "state", and for Grotowski "translumination" (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 88). This is the "Holy Theatre" of Peter Brook, which "presents the invisible on stage" (155). It may not be possible to transcend language in a thesis such as this one which is wholly based on language; and yet, one might, as the surrealists suggested in their first manifesto, use language to demonstrate "the cry of the mind turning back on itself" (in Nadeau 1968: 241). Perhaps to turn away from language is the only way to demonstrate identities which are permeable and perpetually changing. If one wishes to leave behind nationalistic, gendered, and even syncretic identities and instead encourage the mysterious element of transcendence of "total theatre" or "holy theatre" conveyed in "a language beyond speech" (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 170), then one may need to turn away from a dependence on language itself.

Physical theatre thus has a vital role to play in the presentation and representations of identities in South African theatre. Theoretical investigations into the terrain of the physical presence of the performer involve an intricate set of theoretical tools which have been elaborated by writers such as Philip Auslander, Peggy Phelan, Baz Kershaw, Richard Poirier and Henry Sayre, to name but a few. I have no doubt vastly oversimplified the field of physical theatre by means of this brief excursion. Yet I felt that at least some mention should be made of the enormous contribution to new South African theatre by this genre. This brief section has provided little more than an indication of some of the possibilities it presents and an entire thesis on its own

would be required in order to do it justice. For now, it is time to bring the many strains of speculation begun in this particular thesis to a close.

6.4 EXPERIMENTS IN FREEDOM

6.4.1 Theatres of Freedom

In Ashraf Jamal's *Predicaments of Culture in South Africa* (2005), he examines responses to Albie Sachs' seminal speech "Preparing Ourselves for Freedom" (1990) in which Sachs asked that ANC members place a moratorium on "culture as a weapon of struggle" for five years. Sachs was calling for an end to ostensibly "political", agit-prop art which emphasised injustices in terms of power and materials. According to Jamal, the first steps towards freedom require a move away from a theatre of opposition:

> The first proposition that Sachs makes is that for culture to become free, it must cede its pathological attachment to the oppressive regime that shaped and constrained its deliverance. Culture, to attain this freedom, needed to be active and not reactive. For while it may be both necessary and worthy, reaction remained the insistence of the slave, of the unfree. The very reactive nature of resistance culture, therefore, ensured that it remained implicated in the very specular and juridical economy that it sought to undo (2005: 3).

In this sense, post-apartheid culture in general and theatre in particular needs to rid itself of its dependence on the categories imposed by apartheid. After all, to be perpetually caught within the "reactive" mode of "resistance culture" is not to be free, but to be trapped by the parameters defined by that struggle. To become free means not only being free to challenge, but also being free to explore.

Since the end of stringent censorship, there has also been more freedom to explore controversial topics such as, for example, sexuality. Peter Hayes has been one of a number of theatre makers who have been exploring homosexuality with productions which include *The Homosexuals: Out in Africa* (1992); *Get Hard* (1992); *Journey* (1995); *The Stories I could Tell* (1996). Pogiso Mogwera's plays also typically deal

with queer identity, including *Dumela Bangani* (1995), which deals with violence against gays in the townships, and *Hanging Oopside Down* (1996) a dance work featuring male partnering[128]. More recently, there is *The Boy Who Fell From The Roof* (2006) by Juliet Jenkin, which tells the story of adolescent infatuation and desire.

Another controversial topic which has been addressed is violence in society, from the brutal plays of Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom such as *Relativity: Township Stories* (2006) – in which a gangster kicks a pregnant woman for approximately fifteen minutes on stage – to the horrors of baby rape portrayed in *Tshepang* (2005) by Lara Foot-Newton. Whether these controversies are raised in order to be liberatory, or sensational, or whether the incentive to produce them arises from a more polemical aim, the debates encouraged by these plays explore the limits of freedom in that they test the parameters of convention.

Perhaps "true freedom" will remain an unattainable ideal, since one might never be entirely free from one's situatedness in language, culture, and the consensus of meanings in which one finds oneself. In this sense, the dream of freedom must be tempered by what Homi Bhaba refers to as our task to be both "human and historical" (1994a: 256). The exploration of what is meant by "freedom" has formed a pivotal role in this thesis, which has attempted to undertake an exploration of ways in which freedom has been defined and displayed by theatre makers in South Africa. Coming to terms with what it means to be "free" and struggling to become free from the impositions of specific identity structures are what this thesis is largely about.

[128] Further details about these works can be found in Michael Arthur's essay "Gay Theatres in South Africa" (1999: 147-153).

6.4.2 Gilles Deleuze on Identity – Segmentarity and the Minoritarian

Gilles Deleuze constructs an interesting theory on identity which involves the designation of different types of lines which demarcate certain territories. He says that "[w]hether we are individuals or groups, we are made up of lines" (1993: 226). He goes on to describe an initial division as forming "segmentary" units. These rigid descriptions "cut us up" into "packets" involving various roles we are asked to adopt. These segments rely on "binary machines" (228) such as classes, genders and races, which operate on certain planes. Segmentary lines are also devices of power "each fixing the code and the territory of the corresponding segment" (228).

In a sense, this thesis has dealt largely with segmentary lines, with broad divisions of identity within contemporary South African society. For example, in discussing gender, ethnicity and nationalism, I have been assuming that these divisions are valid interpretations of identity. From a particular point of view, in terms of the inscriptions which exist, these are significant defining properties of identification. But there are also lines which are much more supple, which Deleuze refers to as "molecular": "They trace out little modification, they make detours... [b]ut rather than molar lines with segments, they are molecular fluxes with threshold or quanta" (226). These smaller divisions, lines which cut across and become entangled in the broad segmentary lines, undermine the solidity and power of the larger divisions. For example,

> molecular sexuality...is no longer that of man or woman, molecular masses...no longer have the outline of a class, molecular races...no longer respond to the great molar oppositions. It is certainly no longer a matter of synthesis of the two, of a synthesis of 1 and 2, but of a third which always comes from elsewhere and disturbs the binarity of the two, not so much inserting itself in

> their opposition as in their complementarity. It is not a matter of adding a new segment onto the preceding segments of the line (a third sex, a third class, a third age), but of tracing another line in the middle of the segmentary line, in the middle of the segments, which carries them off according to the variable speeds and slownesses in a movement of flight or of flux (230).

For Deleuze, some of the key questions concerning identity include discovering the existence of "rigid segments" and areas of description which have become binarized and are now, according to his definition "overcoded" (253). To be "overcoded" implies that the significations have become concretized or fixed in such a way that they resist all attempts to alter them. In other words, they become "fascistic". It is not simply a matter of doing away with these descriptions completely. Deleuze also asks "what are the dangers if we blow up these segments too quickly?" (254) since this could harm the organism itself. Since one is inevitably already caught up in these segments, it becomes a question of first realising when and where they arise, and the reasons they have been invented – before one can become aware of the terms in which they have been operating.

In this thesis, I have been attempting to draw the broad strokes of segmentary identifications, and then to move closer into the molecular lines of description. According to Elizabeth Grosz, Deleuze is for processes which are "'minoritarian' and molecular, rather than majoritarian and molar" (207), and these are the concerns finally highlighted here in this thesis. At the start of this study I introduced Deleuze's definition of two types of structure: the "arborescent" and the "rhizomatic". Instead of installing a foundation of fixed variables with which to define identity, I have tried as far as possible, in line with the operations of a "rhizomatic" schema, to keep definitions open and to tease out different identity structures from a number of published plays themselves. True, I have used the frame of conventional structures (gender, nationalisms and so on) and yet, in every instance these large groups of

identity structures were found to be lacking, and it seems that the identities revealed in the plays under investigation either resisted these classifications, or ultimately showed the inconclusive nature of being identified in these terms. Paradoxically then, it seems as though the search for identity has revealed the advantages of casting off definitions of identity.

6.4.3 Accepting Paradox – Learning to Let Go

One of the advantages of fiction is that it allows one to explore approaches to identity which might contradict each other. Whereas, for example, a legal identity demands a limited number of what Higgins and Leps refer to as "fixed markers"[129], fictional identities are permitted a larger degree of freedom. And yet, this also makes it difficult to focus a study of identity in fictional entities onto particular forms or types. Instead of using theatre as a means of fixing a sense of identity – as frequently happened with theatre under apartheid, where revolutionary counter identities were deliberately employed to subvert these definitions – theatre might instead now be used as a means to open up an exploration of identity, and to experiment with emerging identities.

At the start of this thesis, I introduced Ricoeur's notion of describing identity as either "body" (sameness) or "sign" (self). To experiment with the physical body is perhaps more easily done than to experiment with identity at the level of the sign. Because the body is visible, its permutations and borders can be measured and controlled, whereas the sign is fundamentally unstable and depends on a consensus among a

[129] "Literary texts are especially useful for a discursive critique of the problematic of identity: whereas in legal terms, individuals and nations can be identified through a limited umber of fixed markers, literary fictions can display them as discursive processes of elaboration, in which conflicting forces converge, disperse and even at times annul each other" (Higgins, L. and Leps. M.C. 1999: 119).

social body which is outside of the control of the individual, in a way that the individual body is perhaps not. Furthermore, to experiment with meaning at the level of the sign, where the guise of identity is most elusive and most powerful, always has profound ramifications for the body.

What does it mean to be free? If South African writers are now more free than they were before, what, exactly, have they been doing with their new-found freedom? According to Daniel Roux, "there has been a surprising paucity of writers who have made use of...new freedoms in genuinely interesting and resourceful ways" (2000: 243). And as Jamal (2005) says, "the struggle towards a transcendent and celebratory cultural imagination continues" (2005: 17). Jamal goes on:

> The South African imaginary has by no means overwhelmed, bypassed, or ignored the conditions for its continued oppression. Imagination remains in abeyance; freedom is but a word... (17-18).

What does one need to do in order to be free? Shane Phelan says that "[i]f we are to be free, we must learn to embrace paradox and confusion" (1989: 170). Is it possible to imagine a "stable" freedom, which is not disruptive, which is not flavoured by doubt and contradiction? Jung also states that "the paradox is one of our most valuable spiritual possessions, while uniformity of meaning is a sign of weakness...only the paradox comes anywhere near to comprehending the fullness of life" (1993: 15-16). And Nietzsche warns that "[e]verything absolute belongs in the realm of pathology" (1955: 154), while Deleuze claims that "[p]aradox is initially that which destroys good sense as the only direction, but it is also that which destroys common sense as the assignation of fixed identities" (1993: 41).

What these comments suggest is that, instead of destroying notions of identity, uncertainty and paradox are crucial for the experimentation required in order to

create and assess emerging constructions of identities; whether this is in terms of collectives, or in terms of individual responses. To be free then might mean not only avoiding the creation of a sense of stability within identification, but becoming free from clinging to the idea of having to have a particular identity at all, since having a strong, clear-cut sense of one's identity is a threat to the possibility of ambiguity because it creates a strong sense of right and wrong and in so doing dispels paradox.

It may thus be a healthy sign if we do not agree as to the definition of identity. Lyotard points out that the assumption that the goal of dialogue is consensus is false (1984: 65). Instead, he says that "consensus is only a particular state of discussion, not its end. Its end, on the contrary, is paralogy" (65-66). Furthermore, he goes on to say that "[c]onsensus has become an outmoded and suspect value" (66). Instead of trying to reach agreement, "dissension...must be emphasised. Consensus is a horizon that is never reached" (61). Lyotard overturns the standard meaning of a paralogism as an invalid argument and instead he makes it an intentional part of easing a conversation open into new terrain. What he is perhaps implying is that one sometimes needs to be intentionally wrong, to refuse to be "right", and possibly avoid the self-righteousness of one's own arguments. In a sense, anti-apartheid theatre was "right", since it was part of the "good"; whereas the experiments of the post-apartheid have become more reckless and deal with less "serious" issues, responding playfully to the world in which South Africans now find themselves. To be paralogical is to be deliberately illogical; to accept the terms of the game, but also being prepared to change them. It is not the rejection of a speaker, but a questioning of all his or her statements. If there is no such thing as a stable, essential identity, then South Africans are in the very fortunate position of having their multiple allegiances made visible to them on a daily basis. A loss of identity may in this sense be cause for celebration in that this permits

perpetual constructions of entirely new forms of identification. Complex identities might not necessarily be problematic, as Robert Thornton says:

> It is the very complexity of all possible allegiances, together with the fact that maintaining multiple identities and cross-cutting allegiances has remained possible, that helps to make South Africa uniquely stable and violent at the same time (1996: 152).

In terms of Thornton's postulation, then, there may be a distinct advantage in not resolving differences of identity in South Africa, since this might lead to the strengthening of collectives which might then seek to dominate other groupings. Uncertainty becomes a measure which checks the ability of some to limit the freedom of others, and a country of minorities such as South Africa is thus ideally suited to embody this sense of paradox. Perhaps violence on an individual level is the price one has to pay for relinquishing violence at the level of the state. Our heterogeneous community makes us realise the fragility of community and the uncertainty of identifications. The transformation of South African society does not imply that it will ever be finally transformed into an ideal society. As Thornton says about the nature of "transition": "South Africa is not simply in 'transition' to a final state, or to some other 'end of history'" (158). In this sense it seems necessary to remain permanently in a state of transition, constantly transforming, rather than to have in mind a clear idea of the ideal end of one's transformation.

Paradoxically, then, the plays which I have emphasised in this thesis are not texts which discover or fix an agreed upon identity, but works which show the failings of too rigid adherence to past identifications. In other words, they are plays which *let go*. They do not necessarily tear down old identities in the hopes of erecting new forms in their place; but they let go of the idea that holding on to an identity is a vital part of engaging with a culture and creating meanings. In this sense, it is not

differences in identity which are the problem, but rather the style of identities, their tone and attitude, the directions of their flux and flight. Most importantly, the faithful adherence to a particular identity with which one identifies is seen as not only restrictive, but dangerous. The more identities are reinforced, the more dangerous they become. As Karen Press said at the beginning of the process of transformation: "Like so much in South African cultural life, it is not what must be learnt that is important, but what must be unlearnt" (1990: 307).

South Africans are in the process of unlearning the grand narratives of the past; unweaving the many strands which fixed them into differing segments of society, which aligned them with separate races, classes, genders, ethnicities and nations. Although micro-fascisms which cling to these structures and proliferate them still exist within South Africa, I believe that there is now, more than ever before, the opportunity to experiment with the exploration of performances of identities which are syncretic, minoritarian, fractured, unstable and uncertain. Perhaps being permitted to develop paradoxical identities is what it means to be free.

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