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Biopolitics and postcolonial theatre: a comparative study of Anglophone plays in South Africa, India and Sri Lanka

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to our daughter

Meinusha Gamage

To me, she is the most wonderful human being on earth;

Thank you for making life rich.

Abstract

This study interrogates the ways in which biopolitics, as represented in Anglophone theatre from the 1970s to the present day, coerces and regulates postcolonial subalterns within the contemporary socio-political milieu. Using seven plays from three postcolonial regions – South Africa, India and Sri Lanka – the thesis comparatively investigates how internal and global biopolitical operations culminate in overt violence. Research questions explore the nuances of biopolitical trajectories, their tragic resonances and the way these biopolitical stratagems are theatrically articulated and challenged. This study is also concerned with the extent to which biopolitical praxis and consequent violence in these postcolonial territories is shaped by Western colonialism and its legacies. The corpus of plays encompasses: Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972) and *The Island* (1973); Mbongeni Ngema's *Asinamali!* (1985); Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084* (1973); Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest* (1999); Ernest Macintyre's *Rasanayagam's Last Riot: A Political Fiction for the Theatre* (1990) and *Irangani*: *A Tragedy of Our Times* (2009). The research frames its argument through current scholarship on postcolonial criticism, and draws on the works of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben. Foucault's work on the regulation of human beings through the production of power/knowledge serves as an initial medium of investigation into the praxis of biopolitics. Agamben probes the covert and overt presence of biopolitical violence in contemporary society, particularly through his concept of state of exception. By exploring convergences and divergences of biopolitical subterfuges, and through the juxtaposition of the subalterns' subjection to violence, the study reflects critically on contemporary biopolitics through Foucauldian and Agambenian lenses. The thesis suggests that postcolonial Anglophone theatre foregrounds a potential to understand the biopolitical logic more meaningfully, and to be resistant to its strategies of coercion: Anglophone plays may contribute to the decolonisation processes, to react against internal and global forces of suppression.

Contents

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Chapter One

Introduction

*Power is indeed of the essence of all government, but violence is not. Violence is
by nature instrumental; like all means, it always stands in need of guidance and
justification through the end it pursues.*

Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (1970:51)

The focus of the study

This study interrogates how biopolitics affects postcolonial subjects in contemporary socio-
political milieux, in order to reflect meaningfully on the praxis of violence. Biopolitics entails
the employment of diverse stratagems in subjugating and regulating populations: I will
include a detailed discussion later in the chapter. With this aim, this study discusses a corpus
of postcolonial plays and examines the ways in which subalterns' bodies are represented.[1] The
research focuses in particular on the processes of exploitation and resistance to biopolitical
practices, as represented in Anglophone dramas of South Africa, India and Sri Lanka from the
1970s to the present day. This thesis presents a critical analysis of the following play-texts:
Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972) and *The Island* (1973); Mbongeni Ngema's
Asinamali! (1985); Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084* (1973)[2]; Manjula Padmanabhan's
Harvest (1999); Ernest Macintyre's *Rasanayagam's Last Riot: A Political Fiction for the
Theatre* (1990) and *Irangani*: *A Tragedy of Our Times* (2009). This study emerges from
current debates in postcolonial criticism and uses this critical context as a frame for the
argument; it makes a distinctive contribution to the critical field by investigating the ways in

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[1] The working definition of the term subaltern is explained at the end of this section.
[2] *Mother of 1084* was written in 1973, not premiered: this will be discussed in the next chapter.

which these postcolonial plays represent the complex issues of biopolitics and by diversifying the critical approach.

This project draws on the complex nuances of biopolitics in South Africa, India and Sri Lanka. Subtle and covert biopolitical trajectories – racial segregation and national rules and regulations in South Africa, linguistic cartographies and ethnic diversity in Sri Lanka, and the state security mechanisms and socio-cultural stratification in India – are implemented and materialised within these nations and often culminate in violence. When challenged and resisted, these subtle biopolitical operations become more violent – blatant, brutal and overt. These brutalities may include indefinite incarceration, torture, burning, psychological execution, ethnic conflicts, targeted killings, civil war, human trafficking and the assassination of individuals as a measure of prevention. This convention of overt violence is often executed under the pretext of either national security or economic stability, and thus introduced as justified praxis in the name of the wellbeing and safety of the nation at large. Biopolitical stratagems in these nations, thus, visibly move from subtlety to violent coercion. The question raised is how the catastrophic and complex phenomena in such territories can be decoded more clearly. The pervasive and explicit representation of violence in Anglophone political and protest dramas from these nations enables this thesis to participate in a critical forum on biopolitical praxis.

This study focuses on the following questions: What forms of biopolitical operations are represented as being exercised upon subaltern bodies? What are the tragic resonances of these biopolitical operations for postcolonial populations more broadly, and how are they articulated in Anglophone theatre? How are these nuanced experiences of exploitation resisted through theatrical dramatisation? How does postcolonial theatre address locally-situated

forms of oppression that connect with the broader processes of colonialism, its aftermath, and internal and global coercion? My thesis encompasses two interrelated phases. First, it addresses the ways in which Anglophone theatre becomes a tool of political and protest theatre in postcolonial South Africa, India and Sri Lanka; it discusses the historical convergences and divergences that make this a coherent area of comparative study, and offers a critically distinctive way of reading these plays. Secondly, the thesis examines the manner in which the different dramatists portray the processes of biopolitical oppression and resistance. In this regard, the research pays close attention to the ways in which these dramatists represent embodied and dis-embodied killings, incarceration, oppression, economic exploitation, human trafficking and the forms of surveillance.

Since this thesis employs the term 'subaltern', which, according to Spivak, is 'packed with meaning',[3] it becomes necessary to identify a working definition. The word 'subaltern' was initially used by Antonio Gramsci in 'Notes on Italian History' (1929-35) in *Selections from Prison Notebooks* (1971) to refer to a people in a society who suffered from – and were subjected to – the hegemonic ruling classes. El Habib Louai clarifies that the 'only groups' to which Gramsci referred were 'the workers and peasants who were oppressed by […] Benito Mussolini and his agents' (2011:5). Bill Ashcroft et al. also acknowledge that according to Gramsci, subalterns were 'peasants, workers and other groups denied access to "hegemonic" power' (2007:198). Gramsci explains that the subaltern classes are 'not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a "State"' (1971:202), and they are 'subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up' (1971:207). His concept of hegemony, which focuses on the domination of a society by the ruling class, characterises not only the political and economic reign, but also the ability of the dominant class to project its own way

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[3] This is stated in 1991 in an interview with Leon de Kock (1992:45).

of understanding the world so that those who are subjected to it receive it as a norm. This provides insights into how power stratifications describe the existence of subaltern groups in society, and seeks to explain how subaltern groups are situated culturally in ways that invite them to conspire in their own subjection. Hence, Gramsci's notion of subalternity is often used for an analysis of a group's position in society: it is a theory of ideology. Nevertheless, my research is concerned with the ways in which the rulers' domination is not confined to manipulate the socio-political culture of that society, but rather extended to regulate and subjugate human beings by dint of biopolitical strategies, which often give rise to overt violence and brutality. In other words, this research is more concerned with real-world contemporary application of biopolitics – biopolitical subjection, as represented in postcolonial theatre. This biopolitical subjugation encompasses the ways in which a people is subjected to – and objectified and brutalised by – dominant coercion. Thus, it necessitates pinpointing notions of the subaltern which explore the pragmatic conditions of subalternity in contemporary socio-political contexts in postcolonial territories.

Spivak states that 'subaltern' is sometimes understood as 'just a classy word for [the] oppressed […], for somebody who's not getting a piece of a pie' (quoted in de Kock 1992:45). Her explanation is that subaltern historians, by drawing on Gramsci's concepts, mean that 'everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern—a space of difference' (de Kock 1992:45). She poses the question: 'who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern' (de Kock 1992:45-46). In this view, the subaltern is a group 'defined by its difference from the elite' (Ashcroft et al. 2007:200). Spivak agrees that she chooses the term subaltern as 'it is truly situational. […] That word, used under duress, has been transformed into the description of everything that

does not fall under strict class analysis (Spivak, 1991 quoted in Louai 2011:7). Spivak is more concerned in constructing a voice for the subaltern by interrogating whether the 'subaltern has no history and cannot speak' (1995:28). Her focus is on the people who are subjugated due to their exclusion from the formation of power and knowledge created by those who have been in power, particularly through colonial knowledge. She supports her argument through reference to widow immolation in India and asserts that to eradicate the position of the subaltern is to hear them speak.

My usage of the term subaltern in this thesis surfaces from (and considers both) Gramsci's and Spivak's readings on subalternity; however, it slightly deviates from their delineations. Drawing on Gramsci's concept of the subaltern, I consider that they are the 'oppressed'; however, they are not necessarily the individuals from the working class or the peasants, they may emerge from the middle-class as well. They are 'subjected to' the ruling political parties, not to the cultural hegemony of such parties, but to the ferocious coercion of the biopolitical stratagems both subtly and overtly implemented by such ruling parties. The term subalterns in this study signifies the oppressed, not simply because of the denial of 'pie[s]', but owing to the deprivation of their human rights: shelter, livelihood, protection, burial rights/rites, language, the right to bodies (organs) and political ideologies. Their subalternity, in many instances, is mediated by socio-political cataclysms that constitute a suspension of ordinary laws and rights to citizens: Giorgio Agamben theorised this condition as 'the state of exception' (2005), which will be elucidated later in this chapter. 'Subaltern' is herein used with reference to those who can be distinguished from the 'elite'; this elitism is based on political ideologies, racial and ethno-linguistic identities and economic status. Moreover, drawing on Spivak's clarification, they are not gendered individuals who are

essentially silent, whose voice is unheard or excluded due to the formation of colonial power structures. They are the victims of the internal biopolitical anatomy which may allude to colonialism and global coercion. Unlike Gramsci's subalterns, some of them may unite to resist against such biopolitical strategies, while others passively endure or succumb to victimisation. There are multiple mechanisms that people normally adopt in order to show defiance, for instance, passive defiance by creating organisations, voiced resistance without direct confrontation with the authorities, and engagement in violent actions such as uprisings, insurrections and military actions. Similarly, the subalterns who react against injustice and exploitation also express their challenge in diverse degrees and means, attempting to accomplish agency while being exposed to overt coercion and violence. In short, the term 'subaltern' is used in this thesis to refer to those who are oppressed and subjected to dominant socio-political or economic coercion (internal or global), and they may either resist or succumb to violence; consequently they are dehumanised, violated, commodified or objectified. They are the ostracised, subjugated and victimised individuals from South Africa, India and Sri Lanka, as represented in the corpus of plays.

Rationale for the study

Western colonialism has had diverse effects on colonised countries' cultures, economies, languages and societies because it has attempted to exploit and govern occupied lands and the colonised people directly or indirectly. Despite the end of direct colonial rule in the twentieth century, many countries are still affected by the legacies of colonialism, and are subject to internal political tensions and global coercion, often resulting in tragic consequences. In this respect, the human body continues to be one of the main subjects in relation to processes of

internal and global biopolitical operations. This is especially the case for those on the receiving end of exploitation in terms of class, race, political power, economic status or gender. For example, black communities in the apartheid era were subject to the brutality of racial segregation, whilst the economically disenfranchised people in India are exposed to human trafficking at the hands of internal and global economic power hierarchies. The current research addresses embodied violence, such as dehumanisation, sex trafficking, massacres and terrorism, experienced by subaltern groups in contemporary postcolonial nations; it interrogates the ways in which biopolitical coercion regulates people in a postcolonial context.

It is necesary to examine here how aforementioned social conflicts and tensions may be mediated through Anglophone dramas – through the colonial language of English. The argument over the language question is not new but occupies a central position in postcolonial scholarship because of the key role the English language has played in the alienation and subjugation of postcolonial peoples. In other words, colonial rulers imposed the supremacy of their native language over the peoples they colonised. As a reaction to the systematic imposition of this colonial language, on the one hand, a complete return to the use of indigenous languages is advocated in the postcolonial era, in postcolonial literature; on the other hand, English is considered a practical way to counter-attack, to decolonise the colonial past, and to enrich inter-nation communication. My intention here is not to offer an in-depth discussion in this regard, but to examine briefly the use of English language in the plays discussed herein.

As Ngugi Wa Thiong'o asserts, language is the most significant means through which 'power fascinated and held the soul prisoner': as noted, it is mainly through the colonial language that postcolonial peoples were subjugated, thus a way to resist colonial powers is not

to use English language, but to turn away from English (1995:287). As Raja Rao explains, articulating the indigenous 'tempo' in an 'alien language' may be problematic (1995:296): this is especially so when infusing internal political issues with 'alien' means of expressions. Thus, Rao's implication is to use a culturally-specific variety of the colonial language. While Thiong'o articulates a strong position against the use of the colonial language in postcolonial literature, Rao discusses its employment in relation to pragmatic difficulties. Although both statements allow us to problematise the use of English language in postcolonial literature in general, the use of Anglophone plays in this study requires further inquiry.

Unlike Thiong'o and Rao's contentions, Salman Rushdie, who explores the history of postcolonial nations such as India and Pakistan in English, argues that it is the attitude towards the colonial language which should be changed (1991). He explains that:

> [t]hose of us who do use English do so in spite of our ambiguity towards it, or perhaps because of that, perhaps because we can find in that linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggles taking place in the real world, struggles between the cultures within ourselves and the influences at work upon our societies. To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free. (1991:17)

Implicitly, the English language can be used to work out the problems that confront 'independent' colonies such as India and Sri Lanka. It can be employed to explore violence and struggles implemented through biopolitical stratagems operated within postcolonial nations and beyond postcolonial territories. Moreover, Braj B. Kachru argues that English involves 'communication across continents': although the colonial language made the indigenous language 'powerless', it is the weapon of 'power, domination and elitist identity'

as English is 'associated with a small and elite group' (1995:291-292). What is highlighted through Kachru's contention is that although English-language literature is confined to a minority group of people – social elites – within postcolonial nations, it entails a position of strength as it may reach international audiences.

Kachru explains that although English is confined to a small group of elites, 'it is in their role that the *neutrality* of a language becomes vital' (1995:292) [original emphasis]. While citing an example from India which explores how a variety of indigenous languages are presented and perceived through prejudices and attitudes, Kachru affirms that English is not 'associated with any religious or ethnic faction' (1995:292). He describes the attitudes associated with native languages and implies the harm such approaches may cause the neutrality of the presentations. Hence, irrespective of the observation that English caters to a minority group, it 'has been perceived as the language of power and opportunity, free of the limitations that the ambitious attribute to the native languages' (Kachru 1995:292). This assumption that the English language is devoid of attitudes plays a pivotal role in the selection of the current research context as it helps to present, independently and unobtrusively, biopolitical strategies and their consequent effects on postcolonial subalterns.

Moreover, English has been 'instrumental in a vital social change' (Kachru 1995: 295). On the one hand, political tensions, materialised due to biopolitical strategies implemented within the nations, become visible to a wider international audience through English. On the other, exposing postcolonial tensions (from the perspectives of the postcolonial peoples), caused through external coercion, may also be an effort to mediate a resolution of the internal conflicts. For instance, when such global biopolitical trajectories are open for criticism, it may be useful to set up a tribunal to arbitrate and mediate internal

disputes. This is evinced through South African Anglophone plays in the apartheid epoch and will be explored in this thesis. Creating awareness of biopolitical violence at least among English-speaking minority groups within the nations may also open up a space to reflect on the issues because, as Philip G. Altbach writes, '[c]olonial languages have been used as a means of national unification in a number of Third World nations, particularly those in which no one indigenous language commands the loyalty of the entire population' (1995:486). These observations support the possibility of Anglophone plays' meditational effects in postcolonial contexts.

Besides, Anglophone plays may also overcome a language limitation through performances. This is because dramas depend not only on verbal means to communicate messages, but employ other modes of expressions. Referring to Bertolt Brecht, Terry Eagleton writes that '[t]he play itself, […] is less a reflection *of*, than a reflection *on*, social reality. […] the play presents itself as […] encouraging in the audience a 'complex seeing' which is alert to several conflicting possibilities at any particular point' (2002:60). What is highlighted is the power of theatre both in presenting and allowing the audience to perceive the realities in society. Drama is a vital forum for exploring social conflicts, and to penetrate through and perceive biopolitical violence actualized in postcolonial nations because drama allows such socio-political tensions to emerge. This further suggests the importance of performance to drive political and revolutionary messages home since a play involves both language and actions in staged realisation. Hence, drama, irrespective of its language, may be helpful in mediating socio-political tensions of postcolonial nations: this assumption will be examined throughout the thesis.

Moreover, drama is a significant area to explore not least as '[p]ost-colonial *theatre*'s capacity to intervene publicly in social organisation and to critique political structures can be more extensive than the relatively isolated circumstances of written narrative and poetry' (Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins 1996:3) [original emphasis]. As C.L. Innes claims, 'dramatic performance raises so many issues that are central to postcolonial cultures – questions of identity, language, myth and history, issues regarding translatability, voice and audience; problems relating to production, infrastructures and censorship' (2007:29). It is also pivotal because 'theater's representation apparatus […] might offer the best "laboratory" for political disruption, for refunctioning the tools of class and gender oppression' (Elin Diamond 1996:3).[4] More significantly, and in parallel to the great influence on the contemporary society created by dramatists such as Brecht, politically engaged theatre in colonised countries effectively articulates colonial and neocolonial impacts and internal conflicts affecting people in the postcolonial era.[5] Above all, the dramas selected for the study are crucial as they portray the tragedies of biopolitics whilst echoing the ways in which subaltern groups are regulated under the guise of subtle modes of internal and external coercion. Despite the significance of theatre, Gilbert and Tompkins write that 'most postcolonial criticism overlooks drama perhaps because of its apparently impure form'; the explanation given is that scripts are only a part of theatre experience and 'performance is therefore difficult to document' (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996:8).

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[4] Diamond writes this referring to Bertolt Brecht's views on drama.
[5] An influential theatre practitioner of the twentieth century, Brecht contributed to the post-war theatre company in Germany and internationally, through 'Epic Theatre' and techniques such as the 'A-Effect' (alienation effect). 'We need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself', writes Bertolt Brecht in 'A Short Organum for the Theatre' (1964:190) .

The rationale for the significance of these three countries – South Africa, India and Sri Lanka – for this study lies both in their political resonances and the economic circumstances. First is the emergence of the internal political tensions and conflicts in these countries in the aftermath of direct Western colonial rule. Even after independence, European colonial rule occurred in succession, especially through apartheid segregation, slavery and forced labour in South Africa. Thus the majority of black individuals continued to be the victims of internal rulers. In India and Sri Lanka, the minority groups based either on their political ideologies, economic discrepancies or ethno-linguistic diversities were further exposed to injustice. The result is the emergence of conflicts and tensions primarily between the ruling political parties and the subaltern groups. South Africa experienced internal conflict due to the apartheid laws and policies based on racial distinctions implemented by the Afrikaner Government, whilst India and Sri Lanka encountered political tensions, uprisings and subversive activities primarily because of agrarian and ethno-linguistic policies implemented in the countries. In this respect, Sri Lanka is significant as one of these political conflicts culminated in an intermittent civil war. Moreover, in postcolonial South Africa, the apartheid tensions occurred for almost 50 years until 1994; Sri Lanka endured civil war until 2009, after almost three decades of political tensions. Hence, in all three regions, violence was ordinary currency and ruling political systems exercised surveillance, life-imprisonment and killings. It must be noted here that these political tensions will be revisited in detail in the next chapter, as they function as relevant contextual material for the analysis of the plays. These three countries are also significant because of the subaltern groups' vulnerability at the hands of internal and global economic coercion. Due to socio-political tensions, economic vulnerability increases: consequently many individuals are often forced to work as domestic servants, are sold into

prostitution or compelled to commodify their body organs through local or international organ trafficking organisations.

Literature review

Both Loren Kruger (1999) and Martin Orkin (1991) meticulously detail the historical development of South African theatre. Kruger's comprehensive work on South African theatre of the twentieth century presents a detailed historical account since 1910 and appraises the contribution both of the renowned dramatists (such as Fugard) and of less eminent contributors. For instance, in referring to Herbert Dhlomo's (1903-1956) involvement in the field, she states that '[a]lthough now canonized as the black pioneer of modern black drama in South Africa, he was dismissed by some present-day critics in search of authentic and univocal South African cultural expression' (1999:46). Kruger argues that 'South African theatrical nationhood generally, resists attempts to assimilate the drama of South Africa to the influential formulation of postcolonial culture as "all the culture affected by colonization from imperialism to the present day"' (1999:9). However, she asserts that at the end of the twentieth century, '[t]heatre and society' in the country are not 'yet *post*-apartheid but rather tentatively post-*anti*-apartheid' (1999:183). In *Drama and the South African State* (1991), Orkin explores the history of South African theatre by analysing published plays, both of the ruling classes and of the oppressed people. In so doing, he asserts that Dholmo, influenced by missionary education, tended to use the dramaturgy of morality plays whilst Fugard focused on the liberation of black people. In light of this, Albert Wertheim's (2000) work on Fugard explores his plays in chronological order, examines the dramaturgy he employed and

discusses the contemporary issues emblematised in the plays. Wertheim registers Fugard's growth as a dramatist and shows how South African experiences are embedded in his plays. Thus, Wertheim's study is an investigation of the representation of apartheid segregation in Fugard's plays and an exploration of the dramatist's contribution to political contexts.

In contrast to Wertheim, Andre Brink observes that since the beginning of democracy in the 1990s, the interest for political plays has begun to 'wane' in South African theatre (1997:171); he asserts that 'yesterday's theatre no longer meets the demands of today' (1997:172). What Marcia Blumberg and Dennis Walder endeavour to do in their publication based on the 1996 Open University Conference 'South African Theatre As/And Intervention', is to problematise whether South African theatre continues to 'intervene' in the issues of the country (1999:2). In Blumberg and Walder's publication, Ian Stedman asserts the need to focus on the 'legacy of apartheid' (1999:26), whilst Walder proclaims that Fugard's *Valley Song* (1995) makes an inquiry into the role of South African theatre in the 'decolonizing present and the colonized past' (1999:102).[6]

In this respect, Fugard's works are under the spotlight of scholarly attention. Many researchers pay attention to the ways in which adaptations of Greek tragedy address both apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, especially with respect to Fugard's *The Island*.[7] Weyenberg (2008) compares Fugard's *The Island* with Nigerian dramatist Femi Osofisan's *Tègònni*: *An African* Antigone (1994), highlighting the political resonance the Greek tragedy *Antigone* bears for shared African politics. Aktina Stathaki (2009) examines how the reconstruction of Sophocles' *Antigone*, Euripides' *Medea* and Aeschylus' *Oresteia* in South African theatre mediate the formation of new national identities in post-apartheid era. Robert

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[6] See, Kristina Stanley (1999).
[7] For example, Wumi Raji 2005, Elpida Christianaki 2006, Astrid Van Weyenberg 2008, Aktina Stathaki 2009 and Robert Gordon 2012.

Gordon's study of Fugard's *The Island* also brings to the surface the ways in which the play takes an 'intercultural approach', by incorporating European approaches with South African indigenous strategies of storytelling and ritual performances (2012:379).

Harry Garuba compares Fugard's *The Island* with Wole Soyinka's *The Swamp Dwellers* (1958) and Derek Walcott's *The Sea at Dauphin* (1954), and investigates the ways in which these three dramatists 'refocalize the narrative of the island away' from the colonial perspective of exploration and discovery (2001:63). Garuba's study depicts how these dramatists narrativise their islands through the natives' own standpoints by decolonising and deconstructing the colonial representations of the colonised. Caroline Davis' interest lies in Fugard's publication of the trilogy – the Oxford University Press edition of his *Statements: Three Plays* (1974), and the publishers' role in adding meaning to the plays (2013). Davis affirms that Fugard is thus incorporated into the mainstream literary establishment in the USA and the UK. Hence, the study shows how the publication becomes 'safe' despite the ban on its performances in the 1970s in South Africa. Paul Prece's (2008) study also works from a postcolonial standpoint to compare two contemporary renowned dramatists – the Oxford University Press author Fugard with the African-American playwright and Pulitzer Prize winner, August Wilson. Prece's research shows how these dramatists give a voice to the unheard – silenced by racism in general and by apartheid segregation in particular both in South Africa and America. Moreover, in reading Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* Brink explores the difficulties the playwright encounters as a person with 'both artistic integrity and social conscience' in the political milieu (1993:440).

Gilbert and Tompkins claim that they consider plays from a set of countries such as 'Australia, Canada, India, Ireland, New Zealand, various countries from Africa, parts of the

South Asia and the Caribbean' (1996:7). Yet they do not 'analyse Indian drama to any great detail', and clarify that '[s]ince its history/practice is extremely complex it is impossible to do justice to Indian drama in a broadly comparative study' (1996:7). In light of this, scholars working on Indian and Sri Lankan Anglophone theatre tend to focus on its historical development (e.g. Neeru Tandon 2006, N. Sharada Iyer 2007, Yogita Bajaj and Sangita Mehta 2010 and P. Gopichand and P. Nagasuseela 2010). In *Musings on English Writing in India: Drama*, while introducing the historical development of Anglophone theatre in India, Iyer presents a collection of plays, from Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) to Uma Parameswaran's (1938-) Indo-Canadian plays of the present day. Iyer writes that Tagore explores the philosophy of life and the reality of personal bereavement in particular through his drama *The Post-office*, adding that Tagore's concept of theatre predominantly is 'poetic' (2007:23). In many of his plays Girish Karnad uses ancient myths and folklore; *Naga Mandala* (1988) specifically employs the concept of metamorphosis – human beings' transformation from non-human to human loci and vice versa, whilst Dina Mehta's *Getting Away with Murder* (2000) investigates the violence encountered by women due to tradition and superstitious beliefs (Iyer 2007). Iyer is engaged in providing introductions and settings to these plays. What is evident is that many of these dramas tend to depict the complex human experiences such as traditions, folk and religious myths, sexual experiences and cultural praxis. D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke traces Sri Lankan Anglophone literature from 1917 to 2003, and explores the history of this literature through the historical contexts of the country, while also introducing English-language dramas (2007).

Scholarship has not been inattentive to Indian and Sri Lankan plays; reading *Harvest*, Gilbert (2006) discusses how globalisation affects the developing countries through

technology and transnational capital, whereas Shital Pravinchandra (n.d.) argues that human organs should not be considered as objects in a similar vein to the other objects produced in the third world for the consumption of the first world. Moreover, Suchitra Mathur's study of *Harvest* investigates the politics of science in terms of women in third world nations whilst employing a feminist theoretical framework (2004). Writing about *Mother of 1084*, Iyer notes that the play reconstructs the killings of the Naxalites (2007). Jadip Sarkar reads *Mother of 1084* as a play which depicts how the divisions between the personal and the public spheres of life are destroyed and basic existence is circumvented by politics; whilst Gautam Sengupta also focuses on the political orientation of the play (2011). In his analysis of Asif Currimbhoy's *Goa* (1964), which reflects on the 1961 Indian annexation of Goa, P. Bayapa Reddy (1983) writes that the play is an inquest into the significance of this historical event in India. Mahesh Dattani's plays have captured the critical imaginations of their readership: *Tara* (1990) is an 'exhortation' to society to eliminate long-standing prejudice against women in India because the play critically reflects the position of women both in the past and in the present (Jyoti Sharma 2014:3), whereas *Where There's a Will* (1988) is a critical exploration of the patriarchal code and women's disempowerment within it (T.V. Surendranatha Reddy 2014).

To consider some Sri Lankan plays, Qadri Ismail's reading of *Rasanayagam's Last Riot* states that Macintyre attempts to 'intervene on the question of peace' in Sri Lanka (2005: xix); whilst focussing on a 'particular interpretation of Sri Lankan history' (2005:212), the play signals to the reader that '[t]he present has to be responded to on ethical and political grounds, not on historical grounds' (2005:218). Neluka Silva also problematises the politics of class in Macintyre's two plays *Rasanayagam's Last Riot* and *He STILL Comes from Jaffna*

(2000), and explores in this regard the role of the playwright as educator (2008). E.A. Gamini Fonseka notes that, through *The Education of Miss Asia,* Macintyre satirises the middle-class value system which negatively affects the cultural development of ordinary people in Asia (2003). In her examination of the Sri Lankan playwright Ruwanthie de Chickera's *Middle of Silence* (1999), which centres on a female street sex-worker, Neloufer de Mel pronounces its complexity and openness for interpretations (2001), whereas Ruhanie Perera asserts that the play speaks of the marginalised, not for them (2011).

From existing literature, it can be deduced that scholars tend to trace the historical development of theatre praxis in each region, and cover a considerable range of playwrights and plays in each region. In other words, the aim is to trace the development of theatre in general. Regardless of the wealth of English-language dramas from postcolonial nations, many of them are under-researched; the abundance of literature on South Africa and Fugard provides testimony to this assumption. In this respect, existing scholarship focuses on renowned playwrights (as in the case of Nigeria and South Africa), whilst exploring the socio-political context of the countries: South African theatre scholars' main topics are apartheid oppression and its effects in the post-apartheid milieu. It is also noticed that a number of scholars have drawn on the resemblance and adaptability of Greek tragedies for African socio-political systems; Sophocles' *Antigone* for the analysis of Fugard's *The Island* is commonly noted in this regard.

Yet, some plays have gained less scholarly attention. For instance, Ngema's works are under-researched, especially in relation to Fugard's plays. Similarly, while *Harvest* has gained a considerable attention in terms of human trafficking, Sri Lankan plays are on the margin of scholarly attention. Most readings of Indian and Sri Lankan plays – with the exception of a

few (e.g. Gilbert 2006, Pravinchandra (n.d.) and Ismail 2005) – are confined to marginal references or to mere textual explanations, devoid of theoretical assessment or framework (e.g Fonseka 2003 and R. T. Bedre and M.M. Giram 2013). What is also apparent is that most of these studies are isolated in terms of plays, playwrights or geographical locations:[8] only a small number of comparative studies have been conducted on renowned playwrights, dramas or African territories, and on their political milieux. A distinct lacuna in current scholarship is a systematic account of Anglophone theatre, which compares African plays with South Asian plays with regard to biopolitical trajectories and technologies. The plays in my thesis, often overlooked, explicitly depict overt biopolitical coercion either through on-stage or off-stage micro-level holocausts; they are significant for the exploration of violence caused through biopolitical subterfuges within the respective countries. These plays have not enjoyed much critical attention, ostensibly because they are scarcely-performed or published locally or by 'unfamiliar' publishers.

Hence, paying due acknowledgement to the existing scholarship on Anglophone theatre, this thesis brings together three territories: South Africa, which has gained much scholarly attention in terms of Anglophone theatre, and two relatively lesser-known regions – India and Sri Lanka. It compares renowned dramas with under-examined, less-known plays. Given the paucity of available critical work on Anglophone dramas from India and Sri Lanka (despite the commonalities of socio-political tensions in the three countries), this study explores the plays comparatively through the lens of biopolitics. Local and international reputation gained by the playwrights, and the contribution made by them to the development of political and protest theatre in English in each region has encouraged the comparison of plays for this research. A comparative study is compelling and efficacious because many

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[8] With the exception for a few studies: Garuba (2001), Weyenberg (2008) and Prece (2008).

aspects of biopolitical trajectories and their representations of the subaltern bodies are cross-historical and cross-cultural. By juxtaposing these three nations, this thesis considers whether it is plausible to identify biopolitical subjection as a common phenomenon in various postcolonial cultures, rather than a segregated study of biopolitics that is culturally and historically specific.

Whilst being engaged in close readings of the plays to interrogate how the subtle politicisation of human life turns to overt coercion, this thesis creates dialogue between these three nations on the phenomenon of subalterns' biopolitical subjection. It provides an evaluation of how comparative reading may invigorate and elucidate the meaning of dominant perspectives on biopolitics. The project contributes to existing scholarship in two distinct ways: it adds to the existing body of literature on biopolitics by creating a specific account of life-politics as characterised in postcolonial theatre and it provides a supplemental standpoint to debates on biopolitics and specifically contributes to current discussions of modern biopolitics, such as human trafficking and overt violence in postcolonial nations. Thus, this thesis is not simply a rarefied addition to the field, but offers new avenues for understanding the practical implications of subalternity. It proceeds by claiming that often under-investigated postcolonial drama does indeed foreground a concept of biopolitics, and this is something from which postcolonial criticism may make headway. This thesis responds to a number of questions posed by scholarship of postcolonial theatre and makes a new contribution by diversifying the field of literary criticism. The remainder of this introduction sets out the conceptual framework of this project and offers a chapter outline.

Theoretical framework

This thesis explores the ways in which contemporary Anglophone dramas from South Africa, India and Sri Lanka represent the politicisation of human biological life; in particular, it examines representations of the regulation of bodies through diverse corporeal and non-corporeal means, and how such coercion is challenged in theatre. This study roots its argument in the context of postcolonial criticism on the body (e.g. Frantz Fanon 2008, Edward Said 1995 and Homi Bhabha 1994), and such theories will greatly inform the current research because 'post-colonial literature and its study is essentially political' (Ashcroft et al. 2002:221). In this respect, the concepts which explore the relationship between power hegemony and the notion of othering and race will be employed in the thesis, with detailed exposition where necessary. However, biopolitics is the major conceptual framework which underpins this research; the ideas of biopolitics conceptualised by Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben will be examined in detail. It must be clarified here that, while Foucault's works serve as the primary lens for investigations of the plays, his engagement with biopolitics is not without limitations. The project also draws on the work of Agamben who, while decoding the significance of the shift of biopolitics into the centre of modern socio-political contexts, provides a space for understanding the nexus between the theories and practices of biopolitics, in which the contemporary overt coercion of postcolonial nations is entrenched.

It must also be noted that performance histories of the plays will also be incorporated into the analyses when necessary and available because, as Blumberg and Walder write, 'the interaction between text, production and audience is always a central feature of drama, although in Western cultures, in which literature has long been dominated by print, this

interaction is often forgotten' (1999:2). Performance contexts are useful to 'expose the workings of contemporary society to the audience, thereby altering their awareness and preparing the way for change' (Blumberg and Walder 1999:5).

It is important to begin any discussion of Foucauldian biopolitics (1990 and 2003b) with a brief explanation of the concept of biopower – simply meaning holding power over the biological life – for the two are closely linked. In *Society Must Be Defended* (2003b), Foucault explains that the processes of biopower connect both at the level of individuals and at the level of population as a whole: in other words, the process of linking the biological with the political is materialised at two levels in society. The level which is applied individually is 'the anatomo-politics of the human body' (Foucault 2003b:243), which is affected in turn by the aspects related to life in general – death, birth and diseases.

> [It is] centred on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its
> capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and
> its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls, all
> this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the *disciplines:*
> *an anatomo-politics of the human body* . (Foucault 1990:139)

Anatomo-politics induces a particular conduct or behaviour on the individuals' bodies. It ensures the individuals' discipline, enhances their capabilities, and maintains their docility. Thus, above all it is concerned with disciplining and systematising the human body.

The second aspect of biopower focuses not on the individual species' bodies, but as a whole population:

[It focuses on] the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and *regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population*. (1990:139)

Accordingly, biopolitics' primary target is 'birth rate, the mortality rate, longevity' along with 'a whole series of related economic and political problems' (2003b:243). Yet, extending this target in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, biopolitics also aims to maintain 'control over relations between the human race, or human beings insofar as they are species, insofar as they are living beings, and their environment, the milieu in which they live' (2003b:245). Foucault explains that '[a]fter the anatomo-politics of the human body established in the course of the eighteenth century, we have, at the end of that century, the emergence of something that is no longer an anatomo-politics of the human body, but what I would call a "biopolitics" of the human race' (2003b:243), seeking to regulate populations as a whole, while being controlled by political sovereignty. Foucault claims that 'unlike discipline, which is addressed to bodies, the new nondisciplinary power is applied not to man-as-body but to the living man, to man as-living-being; ultimately […] to man-as species' (2003b:242). He adds that this new power is 'not individualizing but, […] massifying' (2003b:243) man as a whole. 'Biopolitics', Foucault writes, 'deals with the population, with the population as political problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as power's problem' (2003b:245). By extending the disciplinary mechanism, biopolitics functions as a control apparatus employed over a population as a

whole. Biopolitics refers to an extension of the power of the state over both physical and political bodies of populations. Man is regulated, not only as an individual body, but as populations, using overall devices, thus, man is not only 'disciplined' but 'regularized' (2003b:247).

Implicit in this debate is the fact that biopolitics describes the ways human beings exist in society, not only as legally recognised citizens of a state, but as biological entities under the coercion of politics. For instance, Foucault contends that 'State racism – a racism that society will direct against itself, against its own elements and its own products' (2003b:62) – is one form of biopolitical operation. It is useful to refer to his explanation of racism here:

> It is primarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control: the break between what must live and what must die. […] It is a way of separating out the groups that exist within a population. It is […] a way of establishing a biological type caesura within a population that appears to be a biological domain. (2003b:254-255)

Foucault adds that through racism '[t]he more inferior species die out […] the more I – as species rather than individual – can live, the stronger I will be, the more vigorous I will be' (2003b:255). What becomes evident is that racism conceptualised by Frantz Fanon in his works, *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks* written in the 1960s,[9] is extended in biopolitics: to Foucault (2003b), racism is a crucial feature of biopolitics.

Discussing biopolitics in his 1979 lectures, Foucault conceptualises his notion of governmentality. To explain it, he refers to the 'art of governing' (2008:2). This art should not

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[9] Fanon's concepts will be explored in the subsequent chapters.

be limited to guiding and directing people and organisations or to maintaining self-conduct, but be extended to explore the 'exercise of political sovereignty' (2008:2); moreover, it should be 'the reasoned way of governing best and, at the same time, reflection on the best possible way of governing' (2008:2). Thus, it is the art of "governmentality" (2008:16) in relation to governing the countries, implying the rationalisation of the state's actions when it exercises its powers. In this regard, Foucault writes that a state must:

> fix its rules and rationalize its way of doing things by taking as its objective the bringing into being of what the state should be. What government has to do must be identified with what the state should be. […] To govern […] is to arrange things so that the state becomes sturdy and permanent, so that it becomes wealthy, and so that it becomes strong in the face of everything that may destroy it. (2008:4)

The strategy here is to make a government steady and secure by taking all possible means to 'arrange things' in order to destroy any forces against its stability. In this strategy, one type of government is 'internal management' through the police, by regulating the country unlimitedly (2008:5): Foucault adds that the 'object of police is almost infinite' according to the '*raison d'Etat*' and the national interests of the state (2008:7). Foucault also explains how the act of governmentality is disrupted:

> What makes a government, despite its objectives, disrupt the naturalness specific to the objects it deals with and the operations it carries out? What will lead it to violate this nature despite the success it seeks? Violence, excess, and abuse? […] What is at issue, what explains this, is precisely that when a government violates

these laws of nature, it quite simply ignores them. […] because it is unaware of

their existence, mechanisms, and effects. In other words, governments can be

mistaken. (2008:16-17)

If governments are oblivious to what they govern, it results in destruction and faulty

governments. If a state abuses its military powers by extending its legal system when

eradicating the forces against the stability of a government, it leads to a questioning of the

rationalisation and the legitimacy of the art of governmentality, which is addressed by

Agamben.

Whilst highly influential in forming critical approaches to biopolitics, Foucault's work

is not without problems: his concepts are problematic in terms of their application to real-life

contemporary socio-political contexts and to postcolonial structures in particular, as I

illustrate here. First, in his otherwise insightful and valuable analysis of the concept of

panopticism, which I use in relation to *Harvest*, Foucault's theory is evidently unengaged with

the material technology deployed in surveillance – with a technically-driven praxis employed

through the panopticon. Foucault's concept of the 'medical gaze' and its coercion (2003a) are

discussed only in relation to the clinic, and not extended to life-politics. Secondly, Foucault

has predominantly discussed technology as *dispositifs* (2008), as the diverse physical,

institutional and administrative apparatuses and knowledge-anatomy which enrich and

preserve the application of power within the social body. Yet, his work engages little with the

very material characteristics of an emerging supremacy of technologies. Thirdly, although

Foucault conceptualises the division of populations, as Agamben writes, he does not explain a

continuum of the caesura. Agamben explains this through the Nazi regime's 1933 legislation.

Aryan descendants are initially differentiated from non-Aryan descendants: Jews are separated from non-Aryans. The next caesura is based on these Jews' genealogy – having one Jewish grandparent or two: then they are divided as deportees or non-deportees. From these displaced people, prisoners are distinguished and some of them are sent to the concentration camps. Agamben writes that '[b]iopoltical caesuras are essentially mobile, and in each case they isolate a further zone in the biological continuum' (2002:84-85), yet this is absent in Foucault. In short, Foucault's analysis is chiefly engaged with the production of knowledge and power into praxis of biopolitical violence. He is interested to a much lesser degree in the material aspects of biopolitical conquest working upon the contemporary world – how the biological bodies exist in relation to physical biopolitical spaces, a synthesis of biopolitics and corporeal spaces.

However, the regulation of living bodies through diverse means – both technologically-driven and human-controlled, such as human trafficking, surveillance, police and incarceration either judicial or non-judicial – is what is commonly witnessed in many political contexts today. For instance, quoting Jaytilak Guha Roy (2004), K.S. Subramanian writes that '[p]olice abuse of power and human rights violations comprise over 60 per cent of the complaints received by the NHRC [National Human Rights Commission]' (2007:26). In certain specific postcolonial contexts, where slavery and military operations are exercised to a great extent, what is evidenced is an extension of such regulation mechanisms to a maximum level. These phenomena characterise, to use Agamben's terms, 'modern biopolitics' (1998:119): Foucault's concepts have little efficacy when applied to such modern biopolitical operations in contemporary postcolonial contexts.

Agamben's work is more attuned to the context of the twentieth century biopolitics. He writes:

Foucault never brought his insights to bear on what could well have appeared to be the exemplary place of modern biopolitics: the politics of the great totalitarian states of the twentieth century. (1998:119)

To explore the status of modern biopolitics, it is usful to refer to Agamben's concept of bare life. In his 1998 book, *Homo Sacer*: *Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Agamben writes as follows:

The protagonist of this book is bare life, that is, the life of *homo sacer* (sacred man), who *may be killed and yet not sacrificed*, and whose essential function in modern politics we intend to assert. […] the decisive fact is that, together with the process by which the exception everywhere becomes the rule, the realm of bare life—which is originally situated at the margins of the political order—gradually begins to coincide with the political realm, and exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside, *bios* and *zoé*, right and fact, enter into a zone of irreducible indistinction. (1998:8-9)

The word 'life', as the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) states, is '[t]he condition that distinguishes animals and plants from inorganic matter, including the capacity for growth, reproduction, functional activity, and continual change preceding death'. Yet, the Greeks used two words to refer to 'life' – *zoé* and *bios* – identifying a semantic divide between these two facets of life. The first expresses the simple element of living common to all living beings

such as animals, men or God; the latter alludes to the way of living proper to an individual or a group of people (Agamben 1998). It is primarily through this distinction between *zoé* and *bios* that Agamben theorises the notion of 'bare life' (1998). *Zoé* and *bios*, in other words, entail mere life and proper life respectively, or the biological existence of the human body and the political existence of the human being. Bare life is the status in which the biological life of human beings becomes subject to political decisions and objectification: it is stripped from the political life. However, Agamben implies that bare life is not equal to *zoé*, the biological life; rather, bare life explains 'a threshold of indistinction and of passage between animal and man, *physis* and *nomos*, exclusion and inclusion' (1998:105). It refers to a threshold between the human and the inhuman in which it is impossible to separate one from the other.

Agamben explains this status further through the obscure political status of the individual identified as *homo sacer* (sacred man), that is supposed to have existed in ancient Rome – "*who may be killed and yet not sacrificed*" (1998:8). This figure in Roman law is a 'banned person', who may be killed by anybody but is not sacrificed in religious contexts. Agamben describes the status of a sacred man by referring to Pompeius Festus'[10] treatise, *On the Significance of Words*:

> The sacred man is the one whom the people have judged on account of a crime. It is not permitted to sacrifice this man, yet he who kills him will not be condemned for homicide; in the first tribunitian law, in fact, it is noted that "if someone kills the one who is sacred according to the plebiscite, it will not be considered homicide." This is why it is customary for a bad or impure man to be called sacred. (as quoted in Agamben 1998:71)

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[10] Festus was a Roman Grammarian, who lived in the later 2nd century AD.

Thus, *homo sacer* may be killed, but not sacrificed: hence it is a 'double exclusion into which he is taken and the violence to which he finds himself exposed' (Agamben 1998:82). Similarly, for Agamben, the killing of bare life is not considered a homicide because it is sacred in a negative manner and the process is under the coercion of political sovereignty. Bare life thus explains the characteristics of the political status of an individual in the contemporary society.

When biological life and political power are inseparable, as Agamben contends, a corporeal space is created. In this regard, Agamben's suggestion is, for instance, that political prisoners of the twentieth century are placed outside the rule of penal and prison law, in 'camps', as opposed to just incarcerated in prisons. Agamben writes that the camp is:

the most absolute biopolitical space ever to have been realized, in which power confronts nothing but pure life, without any mediation. This is why the camp is the very paradigm of political space at the point of which politics becomes biopolitics and *homo sacer* is virtually confused with the citizen. (1998:171)

He states that 'while prison law only constitutes a particular sphere of penal law and is not outside the normal order, the juridical constellation that guides the camp is […] martial law and the state of siege' (1998:20). In order to understand 'the state of siege', Agamben's concept of *Muselmann* is helpful, as it embodies absolute coercion over human beings through imprisonment. *Muselmann* is a derogatory term used to refer to the captives of the Nazi concentration camps during World War II. These captives suffered from starvation and exhaustion, becoming resigned to their death, making them unresponsive to their

environment; Agamben argues that the *Muselmann* 'marks the threshold between the human and the inhuman' (2002:55). Such prisoners are 'living-dead human beings', a status which cannot be comprehended as either dead or alive.

By extending Foucault's works on biopolitics and governmentality, Agamben further contends that in contemporary politics, a state of exception is employed extensively as a 'dominant paradigm' in maintaining political sovereignty (2005:2). He explains it by referring to the politicisation of life and the logic of sovereignty. Agamben argues that the term 'full powers (*pleins pouvoirs*)' which alludes to the 'the expansion of the powers of the government', especially the power 'to issue decrees having the force of law', characterises the state of exception (2005:5). He also explains that '[t]he state of exception is not a special kind of law (like the law of war); rather, insofar as it is a suspension of the juridical order itself, it defines law's threshold or limit concept' (2005:4). The state of exception is closely related to 'civil war, insurrection, and resistance' (Agamben 2005:2). Thus, Agamben adds that the state of exception 'constitutes rather a kenomatic state, an emptiness of law' (2005:6); it is increasingly used 'as a technique of government rather than an exceptional measure, but it also lets its own nature as the constitutive paradigm of the juridical order come to light' (2005:6-7).

Agamben's ideas of the camp and the bare life resonate with Achille Mbembe's work on 'Necropolitics', the politics of death (2003). Whist drawing on the concepts of biopower and its relationship to sovereignty and the state of exception, Mbembe interrogates the politics of death. He conceptualises the enactment of sovereignty in cases where 'the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations' is the central phenomenon of power (2003:14). He argues that bio-power which

is used to decide between the death and life of a human body is inadequate to perceive the power of the continuum of death in contemporary society, and hence needs necropolitics, which explains the 'maximum destruction of persons and the creation of *death-worlds*' (Mbembe 2003:40) in which many populations have to suffer life-long processes of death, not just once-only death.[11] This is quite similar to the status of bare life which is at the threshold of life and death.

A parallel can be drawn here between Agamben's 'camp', which is the 'most absolute biopolitical space', with Mbembe's colonial 'zones', where power is abused maximally. Mbembe's focus is on the colonised for the:

> colonies are zones in which war and disorder, internal and external figures of the political, stand side by side or alternative with each other. As such, the colonies are the location par excellence where the control and guarantees of judicial order can be suspended – the zone where the violence is deemed to operate in the service of 'civilization'. (Mbembe 2003:24)

Western colonisation is extinct in South Africa, India and Sri Lanka today; yet, what remains are such camps and dead zones. As Subramanian writes, '[t]he 20th century was the most violent period in history. Nearly three times as many people were killed in violent conflict in the 20th century as in the previous four centuries combined' (2007:34). Moreover, as Itty Abraham et al. argue, globalisation 'fosters war economies and socio-economic dislocation' (2010:10); consequently, postcolonial populations appear to be, as they demonstrate, 'especially vulnerable to crisis and fragmentation, often related to vagaries of the colonial

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[11] It must be noted here that there are highly diverse populations in terms of class, race and gender. The focus here, as Mbembe notes, is on the socially, politically and economically populations.

legacy: arbitrary territorial borders; insecure ethnic, religious or national minorities; and post-independence nationalist movements that deepen, rather than transcend, divisions' (2010:10). They add that myriad roles of political violence include 'state and non-state behaviours', which are created and sponsored either locally or externally, and take diverse forms such as 'terrorism, guerrilla warfare, sectarian violence, police actions, riots and assassinations' (2010:2). For instance, '[t]he quantity and quality of violence characterising Indian society at all levels today has an irreducibly political context' (Subramanian 2007:35).

Politically, socially or economically 'powerful' people tend to intervene to regulate the biological lives of subaltern individuals, either to fulfil these authoritative peoples' socio-political and economic purposes or to supress subalterns' resistance. For instance, at the hands of national security, anything which threatens the state is removed: citizens are stripped of their rights. Moreover, individuals who are economically under-privileged are considered as biological spare parts for 'industries' dealing with human bodies. To use Agamben's terms, these circumstances are the modern 'camps' where individuals have to live between life and death. According to Mbembe's terms, they are the 'death-worlds'.

Foucault's concepts hold a deep resonance for such biopolitical violence materialised in society because they are core aspects in socio-political contexts. Hence, it is Foucault's works which function as the basis for investigations into biopolitical violence in my thesis. Whilst Foucault shows the art in governing countries, Agamben explains how this art is ruptured through his concepts of the exception of laws. While Foucault discusses how human bodies are objectified in his explanation of state racism in particular, Agamben expands on it in relation to modern socio-political milieux through the concept of *Muselmann*. Furthermore,

Agamben is more interested in how contemporary biopolitics descends into tyranny and brutality – and the treatment of biological bodies as less than human entities, as objects.

My aim in this thesis is to read the plays primarily through a Foucauldian lens on biopolitics by deploying his analytical and critical vocabulary on racism, governmentality, medical gaze and panopticism. Where necessary and applicable, issues with the instrumentality and efficaciousness of Foucault's concepts for an enquiry into modern biopolitics, especially for the overt biopolitical coercion exercised in contemporary postcolonial power edifices, is considered. In such positions, I specifically deploy Agamben's works on the state of exception and the *Muselmann*, which fluently explain modern biopolitical coercion. Additionally, to expand the analyses of the plays – and specifically to link the study to postcolonial contexts – my readings incorporate Mbembe's works on 'death worlds'.

It becomes necessary here to ask further how and why biopolitics finds its engagement with postcolonial concerns, especially for the research contexts of this thesis. Russell West-Pavlov writes, that '[t]he role of biopolitics in postcolonial nations has gone largely unnoticed until recently', with Achille Mbembe as an exception (2015:22). In *Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Fanon describes how the colonial occupation divided the world into two zones for the natives and the colonisers; while the colonised was under the surveillance of the police and other military forces and was marginalised into limited space, colonisers were free in spacious territories. Referring to Fanon's observation, Mbembe develops his argument that the extreme expressions of power of the rulers over the body, which emerged during colonialism through such zones and surveillance praxis, are the manifestation of the nature of sovereign power today in postcolonial nations (2003). Mbembe here takes us from the scrutiny of colonial

history into contemporary configurations of political power. The way national governments'

policing, for instance, is exercised so profoundly over the body has meant that power,

incarceration, surveillance and control have been popular topics within postcolonial literature,

with a focus on biopolitics.

As R. Samaddar explains, there is much scope for employing Foucault's concepts,

'similarly, an increased scope to make postcolonial understanding more relevant to politics in

the wake of globalization. This makes today's study of Foucault more meaningful and

interactive or dialogic' (2013:38). Samaddar supports this contention by taking India as a case

study, and asserts that 'receiving Foucault in India in the late years of the last century to this

day is to receive him in our time, the postcolonial time' (2013:25). His explanation is that

Foucault is mediated in India both through 'the postcolonial as place and postcolonial as a

specific time' (2013:26), to 'find out what we, as the once colonized subjects, are today'

(2013:30). In this respect, one needs to explore the extent to which the political history of

colonialism regulates the biological life of people in a different way in postcolonial territories.

Referring specifically to white settler colonisation, Scott Lauria Morgensen writes that

colonialism 'produces specific modes of biopolitics that sustain not only in settler states but

also in regimes of global governance that inherit, extend, and naturalise their power'

(2011:52). He argues for the need to theorise it 'as historical grounds for the globalisation of

biopower, *and* as an activity producing biopower in the present that requires denaturalising

critique' (2011:73) [original emphasis]. Implicit in Morgensen's contention is the assumption

that biopolitical stratagems used in the colonial era are present even today via global coercion,

in postcolonial nations as well. In this respect, as Michael Peters writes, 'the emphasis on

biopolitics as a new kind of "technology of power", different from disciplinary power, marks

a theoretical departure that has reinvigorated postcolonial studies and given it a new direction'
(2015:95).

This project highlights covert and overt violence as represented in the corpus of plays in the three countries where the biological bodies of human beings exist at the mercy of authorities in power, exercised either internally or globally. In contemporary society technology has given rise to the currency that human bodies can be transformed into, for instance, through organ transplants and surgery. Consequently, human biological life has become a part of the political economy by giving rise to bioeconomy – economic activities derived from scientific and research activities focused on biotechnology. Subalterns in postcolonial nations have become easy and frequent targets in this process of bioeconomic exploitation which is exercised globally, often by first world nations. A case in point is India, which requires exploration into the ways in which medicine, surveillance, human biology and neocolonial global power are closely interwoven with one another in human trafficking actualized through biopolitical practices. It is also necessary to examine whether this coercion is silently accepted and experienced or forcefully challenged by the victimized.

The emergence of reaction against injustice, which is exercised through states' political stratagems, is submerged through governments' coercion which culminates in overt violence, surveillance and killings. Regardless of the brutality of such actions by the states, in many instances the political rhetoric of security of populations, with deferrals of law, is used to justify them. State racism enables the death-function in a biopolitical society through a division of the peoples; when it is challenged by the victimized populations, they become subjected to further violence and discrimination. In brief, subalterns encounter the dispossession of the right of their biological life. What needs critically interrogating, then, is

the processes and the aftermath of such coercion – the regulation and economic exploitation of populations, human tragedies of both individuals and populations by internal or global socio-political powers, through surveillance, killings and incarceration. These are the postcolonial ramifications of biopolitics. The plays chosen for this study provide a substantial context for this purpose.

S. Mezzadra et al. (2013) expounds upon this assumption and reiterates the importance of biopolitics to explore contemporary postcolonial contexts:

Foucault's thought was powerful and influential in India long before it achieved comparable influence and power within much of Europe. And for those who know and have experienced the governmental and biopolitical techniques that have long since shaped the exercise of power in India, this is not surprising. […] concepts of biopolitics and governmentality are immensely helpful for understanding the manners by which the Indian government and affluent Indian elites ensure their security from the Indian urban poor especially. (2013:2)

What S. Mezzadra et al. (2013) emphasise is the existence of the regulation of the biological life in India and the usefulness of biopolitics in exploring such issues in postcolonial India. Hence, biopolitics is an essential critical tool for the examination of themes such as political killings, incarceration, surveillance, non-corporeal deaths and human trafficking in the plays chosen for this project. Whereas theorists such as Edward Said (1995) are concerned with the colonial past, postcolonial studies today have developed an interest in power that is no longer confined to identity-as-authority. The concept of biopolitics has had a key role to play in this process.

Chapter outline

This thesis is structured around the aforesaid interrelated themes for uncovering the postcolonial subalterns' experiences of biopolitical violence, and their resistance towards such biopolitical trajectories. Hence, while theoretically focussing on the concepts of biopolitics conceptualized by Foucault and Agamben, the thesis relates themes such as neo-racism, political-death, incarceration, surveillance and human-trafficking and Agamben's concept of 'bare life' to the plays.

Throughout this thesis I present close analyses of the play-texts, along with the perspectives of the playwrights as represented therein; I explore the contextual and extra-contextual issues that shape the plays. I initially focus on the four plays which narrativise death either on stage or off-stage. The aim is to explore the diverse but comparable moments of protests dramatised through political theatre and the theatre of resistance, while focusing on dead bodies represented in them. In the sixth chapter, more subtle and dis-embodied modes of biopolitical operations – such as incarceration, surveillance and human trafficking – are explored. To conclude, I assess the milieu revealed by the research into postcolonial criticism on theatre, considering to what extent this constitutes a coherent body of work on biopolitics.

The second chapter – 'Historicising Anglophone Theatre in South Africa, India and Sri Lanka' – investigates how Anglophone theatre becomes a tool of political and protest, whilst focussing on plays from the 1970s to the present day in postcolonial South Africa, India and Sri Lanka. In so doing, this chapter explores the relevant historical confluences and divergences of the political contexts of each country. Exploring the political contexts is crucial to the thesis, due to the socio-political resonances demonstrated in the plays. For

instance, while Macintyre relates to the civil war in Sri Lanka, Devi questions how the political uprisings in democratic India are suppressed. Investigation into the performance contexts is also significant, as it helps to understand the role English-language theatre played in nation-building processes of each country, and how such theatre is also subjected to biopolitical operations.

Chapter Three concentrates on *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, and examines socio-political resonance internal to apartheid legislations in South Africa. This chapter, titled 'Political Killings and Neo-racism in South Africa', particularly explores the theme of political killings, which is primarily based on Foucault's (2003b) definition of political death. Drawing on the influx control concerns of the apartheid epoch, this chapter demonstrates the state's direct and indirect murder through state racism. The concept of political death offers perspectives on forming biopolitical frameworks that foreground the non-normative killings and dis-embodied deaths.

Chapter Four, 'Rebels and the Body of Democracy in India', contends through analysis of Devi's *Mother of 1084* that the postcolonial state in India supports injustice whilst attempting to eradicate the political uprisings in the country. How the country exercises the political sovereignty in suppressing such rebels without addressing the root causes of their grievances is analysed here. Hence, although this chapter focuses on the theme of death, it is a broader discussion of the ways in which the state abuses the act of governmentality by using the state of exception, exercised through the states' security stratagem, especially through the police.

The focus here shifts to Sri Lanka to examine to what extent the claims of state racism and violence are borne out of Macintyre's representations. The focus of Chapter Five, 'Ethno-

political Hostilities and Burial Rites/Rights in Sri Lanka', explores how and why the political ideologies and linguistic cartographies manipulated in postcolonial Sri Lanka result in civilians' death; in so doing, the chapter analyse Ernest Macintyre's two plays – *Rasanayagam's Last Riot* and *Irangani*. It examines the country's English-speaking educated elites' contribution to the ethnic violence in the country and interrogates both embodied and dis-embodied stratagem of coercion in the process of regulating people. In this respect, this chapter also portrays the involvement of media, especially the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation), as dis-embodied biopolitical apparatuses bound up with the colonial legacy, and the denial of burial rites (rights).

Chapter Six shifts the focus from death to incarceration. Entitled 'Incarceration and the Mobilised Body in South Africa', this chapter includes works by two South African playwrights: Fugard and Ngema. Although Fugard is an iconic figure, subject to extensive study, Ngema remains on the periphery of critical analysis. This chapter brings these two figures together in a dialogue of incarceration and prisoners' resistance against injustice of apartheid laws in South Africa. Through an analysis of *The Island* and *Asinamali!,* this chapter demonstrates how the prisoners attempt to regain the freedom and exuberance of which the authorities deprived them. Whilst arguing that the root cause of the torture experienced by the incarcerated is the prejudices in the judicial system, this chapter goes on to demonstrate how this violence is resisted on stage, both figuratively and literally.

The penultimate chapter of the thesis – 'Human Trafficking and the Modified Panopticon in India' – moves the discussion from prison surveillance via global e-surveillance to human trafficking; I demonstrate how the clinical gaze, when shifted to residences, results in diverse types of human trafficking, ranging from organ harvesting

through sex trafficking to 'womb-exploitation' – a term I discuss in the chapter. The main argument of this chapter is that economically entrapped populations from the third world become vulnerable to global coercion through modified surveillance and subtle technological incarceration which the first world is engaged in on the pretext of supporting the poor. This is explored through an analysis of Padmanabhan's *Harvest* in relation to its representation of organ trafficking, issues of sexuality and surveillance.

In the final chapter – 'Coda: Biopoliticisation of Life and Vigilance' – I return to the issues of representations that are explored throughout the thesis, by discussing the convergences in the biopolitical operations and the role played by playwrights. The thesis concludes with a comparison of the biopolitical logic conceptualised by the theorists and that is so evocatively presented in these dramas, adding to the existing scholarship on postcolonial theatre. By casting a critical eye on the approach deployed in the research, the chapter reflects upon the findings, and explores future avenues for research. It also interrogates whether Anglophone theatre is a niche mode of art, limited only to the elite (and therefore to a limited audience in these regions) or if it provides a forum to think more widely about biopolitical violence. The chapter suggests the need to challenge biopolitical violence.

Chapter Two

Historicising Anglophone Theatre in South Africa, India and Sri Lanka

> [D]*rama may not be very effective in achieving short term political objectives. In the long term,* [...] *it has been and remains a powerful influence on changing social attitudes, on the gradual development of the collective consciousness. It is not the direct appeal, the surface message that is most effective, but, in keeping with the essential nature of the dramatic, the indirect implications of the dramatic action, the meaning that emerges, as it were, between the lines of the dialogue, from the wider reverberations of the action.*
>
> Martin Esslin, *The Field of Drama* (1988:172)

This chapter explores the ways in which Anglophone dramas in postcolonial South Africa, India and Sri Lanka become a tool of political and protest theatre. It briefly notes the emergence of Anglophone theatre, explores its development into political praxis and discusses the performance or non-performance contexts, as well as their specific socio-political milieux. These plays are compelling because they characterise specific tensions *internal* to these postcolonial nations, while alluding to colonial legacies and global coercion. Historicisation is a crucial phase in this study and a key part of the methodology: it offers a way of reading the plays that establishes their political and aesthetic significance, both at the time of performance and after. The central argument of the chapter is that the Anglophone theatre of these territories is subjected to – and bound by – socio-political and cultural dynamics in each region; the emergence of political and protest theatre is often caused by subtle or overt subterfuges of biopolitics exercised internally within these territories. It must be noted that South African theatre receives more attention in the chapter for it is established to a greater extent in relation to the other two countries' Anglophone theatre.

Political and protest theatre contexts in South Africa

Marcia Blumberg and Dennis Walder state that '[b]oth Brecht and Piscator shared a view of the theatre as a weapon in the class struggle; and it is in these terms that much dissident or oppositional theatre in South Africa was conceived during the Seventies and Eighties' (1999:5). Loren Kruger observes that the theatre of the 1970s and 1980s is distinctive, not simply because of its political themes or the forms, but owing to the growth of an audience both within the country and abroad to 'deflect overt suppression by the state' (1999:147). Theatre in this era is rebellious and devoted to turning against subjugation exercised by the state, especially by sensitising the audience to such a transition. To discuss these claims further, it is necessary to mention the appearance of English-language theatre on stage and the country's political environment.

Dutch, British, German and French plays, which were staged in South Africa in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century during the epoch of Western colonialism, provided the basis for the twentieth century South African theatre; the exposure to English language and European ideologies through the church resulted in the emergence of English-language theatre (See, for example, David Graver 1999, Yvette Hutcheson 2004 and Kruger 1999). In particular, the schools run by the British colonisers trained black people to express themselves through missionary and biblical teachings. The Bantu Men's Social Centre, which was established in Johannesburg in 1924, and the Bantu Dramatic Society (BDS) are two examples of such training, which resulted in the birth of dramatists including Herbert Dhlomo, the first author to publish in English – *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (1936) (Graver

1999, Hutcheson 2004).[12] However, according to Michael L. Greenwald et al.'s categorisation of South African theatre, the BDS's productions were missionary-influenced plays, uncritical of the political atmosphere (2002). These BDS dramatists were impeded by 'fragmentary education and limited access to local and touring performances in the white theatres'; thus, they were 'no more amateur than their white counterparts' (Kruger 1999:47). What is implicit through these observations is an absence of an explicit politics in such theatre.

The enactment of political and protest movements in theatre became gradually visible with the emergence of the Afrikaner Nationalist Movement (ANC), developed as the National Party, and the Black Nationalist Movement as the African National Congress established in 1912 (Daryl Glaser 2001). After achieving independence from British rule,[13] and by winning the election in 1948 on an apartheid platform, the National Party continued to impose apartheid legislations in South Africa; the ANC began to react against the National Party's regulations. The National Party's legislation used a major biopolitical apparatus to classify all the inhabitants into four racial groups – white, coloured (mixed-race), black and Indian – primarily based on appearance.[14] As South Africa was claimed by the National Party as a white persons' country, all other racial groups were denied many human rights, particularly the majority, black citizens (Glaser 2001). In this respect, the impact of the Group Areas Act (1950) and the Pass Law Act (1952) – implemented to maintain influx control (this will be explained in due course) – is significant for its masked coercion in regulating black people.

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[12] Bantu is originally taken from the Zulu word, 'abantu' (Bantu as used by the colonisers) meaning 'people': in Zulu it is the plural word of 'umutu' which means 'person'. Yet, Bantu is used generally to refer to many ethnic groups (approximately 500-600) in Africa (see, for example, Graver 1999 and Daryl Glaser 2001, Akil Kokayi Kalfani et al. 2005).
[13] Dutch people (Afrikaners/Boers) colonised South Africa prior to the British and formed the majority of white settlers in South Africa. The country became a British colony, creating a tension between British and Dutch settlers, which led to the Anglo-Boer War (1898-1902). In 1910, the country became an autonomous state within British rule, and the Union of South Africa was established with Afrikaner rulers (Glaser 2001).
[14] This was according to the Population Registration of 1950.

Consequently, theatre became a platform to respond to the injustice and coercion of biopolitics implemented through apartheid segregation. These two acts are also pivotal as they provide material for my analysis of these plays, especially *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*.

While the National Party was involved in implementing laws and regulating black populations, resistance to them also gradually emerged through political movements and theatre. The involvement of the ANC, led by leaders like Nelson Mandela, and the Black Conscious Movement (BCM) led by Steve Biko, was crucial. Yet, once resistance emerged, the subtlety of the National Party's biopolitical mechanism turned to overt coercion. Having established a Freedom Charter in 1955 and received the support of other political groups, the ANC engaged in non-violent activities and protests. Two overt violent events were the killing of 70 protesters in 1960 in Johannesburg by the police and Mandela's life imprisonment in 1964 at Robben Island. The BCM, which was established in 1969 mainly with the aim of resisting the National Party's language policy to promote Afrikaans as the language of instruction at schools, was supressed: Biko died in police custody in 1977 after a violent police interrogation. The implementation of the National Party's language policy recalls the state language policies in Sri Lanka – this will be discussed in due course. Referring to the BCM movement, Kruger states that '[t]he domestic political atmosphere' also emerged as 'state-appointed administrators of the black universities responded to student protests against apartheid in general and discriminatory educational policy in particular by closing down the universities and detaining student leaders' (1999:130). What is implicit through the National Party's counter-actions is how the state manipulates its power in subjugating the protestors through explicit modes of violence.

To examine theatre's resistance towards the National Party, it becomes necessary to delve into the development of theatre praxis under the National Party's rule. In 1948, a definite Afrikaans theatre came into being with the establishment of the National Theatre Organization (NTO), which developed two significant organizations – the Art, Music and Drama Association, and the Rehearsal (RR) in Johannesburg where Athol Fugard initially worked. As Betine Van Zyl Smit argues, the founding of the NTO is 'evidence that Afrikaans […] had attained […] recognition of cultural parity with English' and Afrikaans had 'left behind' its previous status as "kitchen" language (2010:485). Smit adds that it is a great achievement for people whose mother tongue was Afrikaans.[15] Evidently, despite the establishment of the NTO, black people's participation in it was extremely limited as the NTO favoured 'white people'. This was witnessed through the exclusion of their dramas, on the basis of the apartheid monopoly of the NTO, as evinced through the following observation:

> From its inception this organisation had no place for black creative participation, although reliance upon black labour for the carrying out of all menial tasks was not dispensed with. Members of the Board of Governors as well as actors together with all other theatre practitioners were white: despite the appellation 'national' the two companies formed were Afrikaans and English playing to white audiences only. (Martin Orkin 1991:57)

What is apparent through Orkin's statement is the subjugation and ostracism experienced by black theatre practitioners during the apartheid era; because black theatre is not given a space

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[15] Dutch descendants (Boers/Afrikaners) spoke *Afrikaans* – a language variety that appeared in the 17th century and originated from Dutch. However, with the advent of British colonisation, Afrikaans was pejoratively known as 'Cape Dutch', 'African Dutch' or 'Kitchen Dutch' until the late nineteenth century, until it was recognised as a distinct language, and gained equal status with Dutch and English in South Africa (Glaser 2001).

by the NTO, this exclusion is anomalous to the political milieu. It also showcases 'the social realities' of the era (Smit 2010:486) – racial segregation.

However, Graver and Kruger's claim is that since the late 1950s, a 'distinctly South African theatre' also arose which 'respond[ed] to the vibrant mix of cultures […] and challenge[d] the brutal policies' (1989:272). This attempt to establish a distinctively South African theatre, despite the ostracism experienced through the NTO, culminated in Fugard's *No Good Friday* (1958) and *Nongogo* (1959), and the RR's musical production, *King Kong* (1959) (Graver and Kruger 1989). For instance, *King Kong* had an all black cast: Fugard performed with his black South African colleague, Zakes Mokae, in Johannesburg (Graver and Kruger 1989:272). The emergence of these plays can be regarded positively, providing a forum for black people's participation.

Albert Wertheim writes that Fugard was a pioneer in raising concerns of, and for, black peoples in his dramas, and his plays were staged during the 1950s partly because of Fugard's 'moderation' in presenting political ends (2000:3). Kruger argues that Fugard did not 'inaugurate' writing about South African issues: '[w]hat Fugard did was to make "political theatre in the Western mode" visible, available, and ultimately legitimate to a degree impossible for the small, beleaguered interracial groups associated with liberals or communists in the 1930s and 1940s' (1999:19). Fugard was able to receive a large audience due to the 'moderation' of his works: it may also allude to his non-black identity,[16] and his initial collaboration with the RR, which was supported by the NTO. Implicitly, such plays were not 'dissident or oppositional' and did not 'deflect' the state's biopolitical operations.

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[16] His father was descended from an Anglo-Irish English-speaking family and his mother was Afrikaner (Kruger 1999).

Although the political and student protesters were submerged and counter-attacked by the National Party, theatre practitioners emerged to depict resistance against injustice and violence by criticising the biopolitical trajectories of the National Party. In the early 1970s, especially under the influence of the BCM, much oppositional theatre was produced. In order to resist injustice, protest theatre was created in urban areas allotted to non-whites; this theatre was 'markedly more political', was inspired by black people's lives and played often by a black cast (Graver and Kruger 1989:273). In the meantime, theatre groups which did not have direct links with the BCM were also established: '[t]he two main theatres in this group were the Space in Cape Town (opened 1972, closed in the early 1980s) and the Market in Johannesburg (opened 1976)' (Graver and Kruger 1989:273). Kruger notes that the Space and the Market theatre used 'their national and later international visibility to evade censorship in the turbulent 1970s at a time when the violence of the apartheid state became well known worldwide' (1999:147). One good example is the staging of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972) and *The Island* (1973) both locally and abroad (Dennis Walder 1993).

Nonetheless, as a way to suppress this political awakening, theatre was censored and performers were harassed. Protest theatre since the 1970s was 'curtailed by Afrikaner suppression of political mobilization' (Kruger 1999:73). Because of the intensity of rebelliousness in theatre during this era, '[a]ll the leading groups had folded or were banned by 1975' except those assigned as 'multi-racial' and performed in cities 'where the government need not worry about their rhetoric sparking a revolution' (Graver and Kruger 1989:273). For instance, some plays by Gibson Kente were banned in the 1970s because he was believed to be influenced by the BCM,[17] even though his plays were not overtly political.

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[17] Kente is a Black South African dramatist based in Soweto, and considered as a major contributor to black theatre (Orkin 1991).

The most dishonourable and tragic example was the death of Mthuli Shezi[18] – author of the play *Shanti* – who 'was pushed in front of an oncoming train at the Germiston railway station during a scuffle with Germiston railway policemen'; the play's producers were arrested and the play was banned under the Terrorism Act (Orkin 1991:1). In 1961, Fugard's *The Blood Knot* (revised and re-titled as *Blood Knot* in 1987) was also banned for two reasons: it symbolically protested against the issue of classification of South Africans according to skin colour and explicitly criticised the law prohibiting inter-racial relationships. What is evinced here is Fugard's vital contribution to protest theatre as he 'dared to challenge the social system of his country' (Wertheim 2000: vii) and voiced dissent 'on behalf of those silenced or ignored by their society' (Walder 1993: ix). The 'performative power' of theatre is explicit, according to Graver (1999:1-2); he notes how its power increased, parallel to the direct political protests against apartheid in the 1970s and 1980s. What is also rendered visible is the overt violence used in supressing theatre which helped people to understand black subjugation and subalternity. This was materialised through the closure of the Space in the 1980s and the non-closure of the Market Theatre; the Space was more open for anti-apartheid productions whereas the Market Theatre 'tend[ed] to respond to the tastes and attitudes of the relatively affluent English-speaking liberal whites – slightly less than seven per cent of the population'(Graver and Kruger1989:274). Moreover, the Market Theatre produced European classics ranging from Shakespeare and Brecht to Dario Fo and local history plays (Kruger 1999); thus, after the 'demise' of the Space, the Market Theatre 'dominated' theatre (Kruger 1999:148). It is evident here how theatre was still subject to violence, prejudice and segregation as in the early days of the establishment of the NTO.

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[18] Shezi was also the elected Vice President of the Black Peoples Convention in 1972 (Orkin 1991).

Meanwhile, under the inspiration of the BCM, theatre practitioners also started to realise the need for theatre to go beyond mere protest: they were less interested in the theatre that made complaints about the apartheid laws to the administrators. Instead, they understood the need to position themselves as 'eye openers' and to sensitise the oppressed populations dominated by apartheid exploitation (David Alcock 1999). One way to achieve this was to change the dramaturgy to include Physical Theatre. As Alcock defines, Physical Theatre's 'intervention lies in its exploration of a performance aesthetic, of stereotypes of gender and sexuality, as well as the manner in which the physical body is perceived in society. The body itself becomes the site of exploration' (Alcock 1999:53). What is implicit through this is that the audience observes on stage what they experience in reality, the violence of the National Party's regulations. Alcock justifies the significance of Physical Theatre and writes that:

> [i]n the manner of agitprop theatre of the Seventies and early Eighties in South Africa, the body becomes central to the mobilization of people as audiences. The body is very often used as a weapon. Physicality, rather than what is verbally expressed, as in dramatic dialogue, drives the message home. (1999:53)

Physical Theatre does not merely engage in dance and mime but exposes 'the gamut of expression, both physical and verbal, at their [the actors'] disposal' (Alcock 1999:51).[19] Through Physical Theatre, performers' bodies are emphatically employed to explore tragic encounters and discrimination; hence, Physical Theatre was very significant for black dramas. Kruger also acknowledges that the techniques in Physical Theatre 'including the mimicry of animals and humans, the creation of location through gesture, and knock-about comedy, have

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[19] Alcock notes that Buckland 'makes a conscious intervention in the body politic, in the politics and social conditions of the country, setting out "to activate people" and thereby provide a means of empowerment' (1999:51).

proven particularly effective for crossing barriers of language, culture, and age' (1999:189). Hence, with Physical Theatre, dramatists made their plays explicitly defiant by stimulating the audience.[20]

Parallel to the gradual development of the BCM and PT, the need to address and awaken the oppressed rather than the oppressor became imperative as the apartheid brutality became prominent: consequently, the theatre of Resistance also came into being in South Africa, which is 'distinct from the protest of Town Theatre' (Zakes Mda 1996:201), and sensitised the audience to socio-political conditions. As Mda adds, unlike the Market Theatre, which aimed at awakening the oppressor to the tragic consequences of apartheid, Resistance Theatre (RT) addressed the oppressed directly 'with an overt aim of rallying or of mobilizing the oppressed to explore ways and means of fighting against oppression' (Mda 1996:201) whilst changing the perceptions of the oppressed. Theatre in South Africa gradually became a space to resist and and counterattack the apartheid injustice.

It is amidst this socio-political unrest and performance culture that *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, *The Island* and *Asinamali!* were produced: these plays emerged due to subtle segregation rules both in political sphere and theatre, and as a theatrical reaction to overt biopolitical violence in South Africa. On the 8th October 1972, *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead* was first staged for 'a single Sunday night performance for a members-only audience' at the Space Theatre in Cape Town (Kruger 1999:147). Wumi Raji states, however, that '[n]ot a few people felt revolted by the theme of the play' when it was first performed (2005:140) because of its non-conformist protest nature and apartheid criticism in it. The premiere was subsequently banned by the police even 'before a multiracial audience' (Walder 1993: xxix).

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[20] A fine instance of the use of Physical Theatre and 'physicality' to address resistance against the white dominion will be explored in Chapter Six through *Asinamali!* (1985).

It was staged in its' two actors' (John Kani and Winston Ntshona) home towns in Johannesburg and New Brighton before being 'banned in Cape Town' (Kruger 1999:147). Although it moved its 'predominantly white audience […] to laughter and tears' at the Space Theatre it 'provoked' the black people in the performers' home towns (Kruger 1999:13). These performance contexts show how the play sensitised its audience, especially black communities, to apartheid brutality.

The play 'creat[ed] a stir' in Britain (Walder 1993: xxix) when it 'embark[ed] on an overseas tour' in the 1970s (Kruger 1999:147). Although the play was positively received, it was criticised as it 'contained propaganda […] discrediting the South African Embassy in London, the Government and White South Africans in general' (as quoted in Walder 1993: xxix).[21] Yet, as Alan Shelley notes, many Western critics admired it with 'fervor' (2005:157). The play was successful, despite the themes being specific to South African concerns. When staged in South Africa four years after the premiere, actors were 'imprisoned briefly before an international outcry secured their release' (Walder 1993: xxix); as Kruger argues, '[t]he virtual publicity of anti-apartheid theatre took concrete shape in real time and space in the performance and reception' (1999:13). Shelley agrees that the play's political emphasis was apparent when staged before 'a mixed audience at the Space Theatre' (2005:161). Fugard describes in Ronald Harwood's *A Night at the Theatre* how the play was conceived in 1974 in a black Township in St Stephen's Hall in New Brighton, 'a plain brick building and one of only two usable halls in an area with a population of 250,000' (Shelley 2005:162); Fugard includes a material example of political theatre in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*:

> I have never yet known an audience that did not respond to the first half-hour of
>
> the play as if it wasn't getting its money's-worth of laughter. New Brighton was

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[21] This is originally from 'Plays not anti-SA-Fugard', *Eastern Province Herald*, Port Elizabeth (5 Feb 1974).

more than just 'no exception' […] I couldn't also help feeling that something more than just a response to a brilliant comedy performance was involved. (Fugard 1984:30 as quoted in Shelley 2005:162)

What is clear in these performance histories is how the play was produced and received amidst the state's censorship, and how it became a forum of political contexts, moving beyond their entertainment aspects. The production in St Stephen's Hall also alludes to Shelley's suggestion that what 'all that poor theatre, true theatre, requires is an actor and an audience' (Shelley 2005:163). By referring to an intimate example of the relationship between the audience and players at New Brighton, Shelley writes that a player invited a person from the audience to come to the stage to observe closely an act – how a photograph is taken: this helped to 'abolish the distance between the actor and audiences, by eliminating the stage, removing all frontiers' (Grotowski 1991:41 as quoted in Shelley 2005:163).

> Referring to a performance event of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, Fugard also states that:
> [a]fter watching the first few seconds of the operation […] in stunned silence […] a voice shouted out from the audience: "Don't do it brother […]" Another voice responded …"Go ahead and try. They haven't caught me yet." […] I realized I was watching a very special example of one of theatre's major responsibilities in an oppressive society: to break…the conspiracy of silence…. The action of our play was being matched…by the action of the audience. … A performance on stage had provoked a political event in the auditorium. (Fugard 1993:31-32 as quoted in Kruger 1999:153)[22]

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[22] The original ellipses are used here.

The scene here refers to an event where a black person's passbook photograph is exchanged with a dead person (the significance of passbooks is discussed below). Fugard's observation provides testimony to the play's significant role in provoking the audience to respond to the injustice explored in the play 'break[ing] the conspiracy of silence' towards brutal biopolitical operations. Black people's aversion to injustice is implicit through the voice that came from the audience: "[d]on't do it brother", whereas the calamitous need to break the laws of injustice is voiced from the other. This depicts a political struggle in the audience, as represented on stage. Hence, as Robert Gordon asserts, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* 'achieved an intensity of performance that may be unequaled in the history of South African theater' (2012:384).

The Island was first produced with the title *Die Hodoshe Span* in The Space, a fringe theater located in Cape Town, South Africa on 2 July 1973, followed in December of the same year by another production, using the same cast, at the Royal Court Theatre London (Raji 2005). In 1974, the play, together with *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead*, was taken on a tour of United States. Both plays were produced at the Long Wharf Theatre, New Haven, Connecticut, and on Broadway (Raji 2005). As Gordon writes, it is 'a revolutionary piece' as it constituted a new model for postcolonial South African theatre (2012:379). Raji argues that the play's success lies in its 'dialectical interaction between the content and form' and the theme, which is 'topical' for the era (2005:149). Similarly to *Sizwe Bansi is Dead,* criticism levelled against *The Island* claimed it contained propaganda as it sought an audience in Britain after being banned in South Africa. The aim of propaganda is justifiable as the play and the black people were subjected to the state's coercion. When it was shown many years later in South Africa, actors Kani and Ntshona claimed that every performance is an

'endorsement of the local and international call for the immediate release' of Mandela 'and all political prisoners and detainees' (Walder 1993: xxix). Thus, the actors were outspoken about the political message in the play, further demonstrating how theatre functioned as a political platform. As with *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, performance contexts of *The Island* are significant: the play exposes apartheid regulations and helps the audiences to understand the state's biopolitical stratagems. These plays, Duma Ndlovu confirms, 'introduced agitprop to South African audiences who looked to theatre for musical entertainment' (1986: xxiii).

Ndlovu writes that subsequent to *Woza Albert* (1979) – 'the biggest theatrical event in South Africa' (Ndlovu 1986: xxiv) by Mbongeni Ngema and Percy Mtwa – *Asinamali!* was produced by Ngema. *Asinamali!* indicates how Ngema had 'grown and developed' since *Woza Albert*, using a 'pot-pourri of ideas […] his own theatrical techniques and […] more than thirty youngsters' in it (Ndlovu 1986: xxiv-xxv). The premiere was staged at the Market Theatre in 1985, within two years of the rent strike and the killing of a political protestor (Ndlovu 1986).

The play 'combined the rousing testimony of black men in prison with a rather blunt ridicule of white bureaucrats and black and white women that reduced differentiated testimony to a generalized call to arms' (Kruger 1999:162). The 'direct address in English, punctuated by song, usually in the vernacular, and the masculine testimony […] provide the format for theatre in the wake of the Soweto uprising and in the shadow of the "emergency" in the 1980s' (Kruger 1999:157) for *Asinamali!* to receive much audience. Moreover, *Asinamali!* 'allows a metropolitan audience to have it both ways, to pity the victim and share the sense of outrage' (Kruger 1999:168).

When interviewed by Pippa Stein at Committed Artists Johannesburg in 1989, Ngema narrates his performance experiences of *Asinamali!* Before staging it in the Market Theatre, Ngema states how they underwent the state's harassment after a performance in Lamontville, the place where the political protest had occurred, culminating in death:

> The group were supposed to do only one performance in Lamontville township, […] but they ended up doing six. Three performances a night. People couldn't stop saying, 'We want it! We want it!' […] On the fifth night, […] the police just stopped the show and took one of the actors. In the end they took three actors and released two of them. The third actor, a member of the youth movement in Lamontville was sentenced to eight years. (Stein 1990:104)

Ngema adds that the play became successful after these 'mini' performances in black areas and under suppression:

> I can't remember how many months it took after this for us to get the final script together but eventually I worked it out and gave it to the guys. […] We read through the script and we started our final rehearsals. […] I sent someone to organise performances around Johannesburg: Sebokeng, Retoria and Soweto. (Stein 1990:105)

What is rendered visible through these narratives and performance histories is the courage taken to perform the play amidst the state's suppression. The play 'disturbs' the rulers' political reign and was received positively in black towns. What is also apparent is how Ngema's theatre is devoted to addressing contemporary political issues, similar to Fugard's

works. I will now give an analysis of the two apartheid Acts which provide material for all South African plays and are essential to readings of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead.*

Influx control in South Africa

Influx control in South Africa refers to the rigid limitation and control imposed upon the movement of black people into urban areas through segregation regulations. In this regard, the principal aim of the Group Areas Act and the Pass Law Act was to exclude non-whites from living in the developed areas in the country, which were reserved for white settlers in South Africa.[23] Frantz Fanon writes that '[f]or a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity' (1963:44). It was through the National Party's Group Areas Act that racial groups were assigned to different residential and business lands in the country. The best, most developed areas were reserved for whites, whereas the least developed rural outskirts were allotted to non-whites. Black others were dispossessed of their 'most concrete' assets – lands – and exposed to hunger, disrespect and subjugation.

Irrespective of the country's independence from Western colonisation, this influx control is an avowal of the National Party rulers' racism. Bill Ashcroft et al. write that 'racism is actually *predicated* on speciesism' (2007:198) [original emphasis] – a term used to 'designate the belief of most human cultures that they are superior to and very different from other animals' (2007:197). Racism enables individuals to consider 'a group's unchangeable

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[23] Even before the 1950s, black Africans were deprived of universal franchise – except in Cape Province and Natal – while only whites were permitted to hold skilled jobs in the mining industry (Mines and Works Act, 1911). Black citizens were prohibited from owning land, except in small areas restricted to them by the white rulers – Natives Land Act 1913.

physical characteristics to be linked in a direct, causal way to psychological or intellectual characteristics, and which on this basis distinguish between 'superior' and 'inferior' racial groups' (Ashcroft et al 2007:181). Thus, the belief that the white rulers were superior to the black natives led them to violate the goal of equality in distributing lands.

As a result, ten homelands, also known as Bantustans, were reserved in the rural areas for black citizens, and urban living areas called townships were built on the periphery of towns for the non-white persons. More than 80% of land was granted to white people who made up only about 15% of the total number of citizens. This recalls Fanon's pronouncement made in 1967 in *Black Skin, White Masks* about white colonisers' egocentric obsession and acquisition: '[t]he white man wants the world; he wants it for himself alone. He finds himself predestined master of this world. He enslaves it. An acquisitive relation is established between the world and him' (2008:97). His generalised comment may not be valid to contemporary societies; according to his standpoint when it is applied to apartheid influx control mechanism, racial groups (black and Indian in particular) had either to experience hardships – such as shortage of food and vulnerability to diseases in their homelands – or travel long distances to townships to find work, leaving behind their family members. Being away from their homelands meant that they had no access to emergency services such as hospitals and administrative offices, as anyone living in 'wrong' places was forcibly moved or imprisoned and harassed. An exception was made for domestic workers who were allowed to stay in their white masters' residences; however, their family members were not allowed to stay in the white master's house.

According to the Pass Law Act, also called Passbook Law, all South Africans over 16 years old should always carry a passbook with them, a document similar to a passport. Non-

white citizens without a valid entry into white zones were arrested, incarcerated and subject to other physical and verbal harassment by the Government officials, as I discuss in the next chapter. Furthermore, non-whites had to have special work permits endorsed in their passbooks, which had to be renewed annually, to find employment. Black citizens were obliged not only to carry their passbooks, but also subject to inspection by any policemen or authority. The passbook was a biopolitical device to exercise the Group Areas Act, used in implementing racism.

These two laws acted as a control contrivance applied to a population as a whole: black individuals were collected as masses, marginalised and confined to their homelands and townships in order to exercise the Government's power. It was a way to expel the black majorities from the white zones because, despite the state's coercion, ruling Afrikaner minorities had a 'battle' to dominate the majority South Africans. More than four-fifths of the citizens in South Africa were black natives. Samuel Okoronkwo Chukwu-Okoronkwo wrote that the state 'consolidate[d] on achieving their obnoxious objectives, with political power in their kitty, therefore, the white minority had to come up with several instrumentation to subjugate the black' (2011:19). Hence, the two acts regulated South Africans in an economical and efficient manner. This echoes an objective of biopolitics – to seize and control human beings as a 'global mass' (Michel Foucault 2003b:242-243). The coercion was actualised through racism.

The performance praxis of these plays – *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island* – shows how theatre intervened in eliminating apartheid brutality. South African theatre's contribution to and involvement in socio-political issues are also evinced. When the political leaders were engaged in the process of nation-building through political attempts, dramatists were engaged

in this process through their plays, as supported by Kani's statement that the aim of every performance was the release of political detainees. They acquired what they fought for as evidenced through the release of Mandela in 1989 and the end of apartheid legislations. Black theatre of the apartheid period functioned as a sharp weapon, moving beyond its aesthetic and political spectacle to local and international audiences; they are narratives of biopolitical operations in the apartheid epoch. These are ideas that may be applied to contemporary society as also represented in English-language theatre in India and Sri Lanka.

English-language theatre praxis in India

There are significant parallels between the issues of biopolitical mechanism depicted in the South African plays – *Sizwe Bansi is Dead, The Island* and *Asinamali!* – and the two Indian plays – *Mother of 1084* (1973) and *Harvest* (1999), which signify opposition against internal and global socio-political and cultural coercion experienced in India. Yet, unlike in South Africa, English-language plays in India are not widespread; they are often confined to play-texts or to limited performance contexts. By exploring Anglophone theatre praxis and the relative non-performance of English plays in India, I will address the socio-political milieux related to the plays, particularly the protest movement symbolised in *Mother of 1084*.

Similarly to South Africa, Indian dramas in English were introduced after the arrival of British colonisers who set up English missionary schools for propagating Christianity and creating employees to govern the country (Sidhartha Sawant 2011). During this period,

English and Italian dramatic groups staged English plays in India,[24] mostly Shakespeare's works in Bombay and Madras (Ram Sharma 2010). T.B. Macaulay in his 'Minute on Indian Education' declared that English language be the medium of education for a selected elite group of Indian people:[25] this group included a minority of socio-political elites living in main cities. Macaulay's decision made drastic changes in Indian social life and education (Stephen Evans 2002). Consequently, English literature, especially Shakespearean works, became a source of inspiration among students exposed to English language during the colonial period, which led to the birth of English-language theatre in India: Krishna Mohan Banerjee's *The Prosecuted* (1837) is considered as the first play written by an Indian in English (see, for example, N. Sharada Iyer 2007, Kaustav Chakraborty 2011 and Ankur Konar 2012).

However, it was by the end of the nineteenth century that pioneering efforts were boldly taken to contribute to the growth of Indian English dramas (Sawant 2011). Yet, Iyer comments that, although a few Indian Anglophone plays (such as Asif Currimbhoy's dramas) were performed in Europe, they did not contribute to the 'establishment of a regular school of Indian English Drama at home' (Iyer: 2007:10). Sawant names these plays as stray dramas as they were staged abroad (2011). A major obstacle for the performance and popularity of English-language plays, as Iyer writes, was 'English not being a natural medium of conversation [therefore] a dialogue in English sounds unconvincing', hence, Anglophone theatre was not developed even in the post-independence period (Iyer 2007: x).

By contrast, towards the end of the 1960s dramas in English became successful and popular with the introduction of literary awards for theatre (Chakraborty 2011). Further,

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[24] During this period, Rabindranath Tagore's 'realistic' plays were performed in Bengal (Sharma 2010). To explore any links between Tagore's plays and Western dramatic performances in India is open for future research.
[25] Macaulay was a member of the Supreme Council during the British colonial period in India.

Anglophone playwrights of the 1960s were more successful than their predecessors, mainly because they were 'writing plays to be acted' (Chakraborty 2011:2). This success was enhanced in the 1970s as the state continued to award dramatists (Chakraborty 2011 and Sawant 2011). What becomes evident is that the postcolonial state has contributed to the development of Anglophone theatre by appraising the plays.

Besides, as Sanjukta Das notes, English plays have enjoyed successful performances in India and abroad and have 'broken the jinx between stage and page' (2009:236 as quoted in Ankur Konar 2012:10). Evidently, this is to a lesser degree in relation to South African plays. However, *Harvest* is an exception: it was awarded the 'first prize in the Onasis [*sic*] International Cultural competition' (Iyer 2007:18); according to Helen Gilbert it won 'the Onassis Award for Padmanabhan's script in 1997' (2001:216).[26] This performance success is achieved because, without imitating European dramatic traditions, contemporary dramas in English are thematically and technically experimental and innovative (Chakraborty 2011). This recalls Raji's argument about the success of *The Island*: 'the interaction between the content and form of the work'.

Yet, as Iyer writes, most Anglophone plays are still confined to a couple of performances in big cities in India (2007). Performance contexts are restricted mainly because Anglophone theatre is still received by '[t]he super-sophisticated who live in the cities and the larger towns, in the universities or in certain government offices or business houses' (K.R.S.Iyengar 1985:236).[27] Referring generally to theatre in English in postcolonial India, Iyer comments that 'the Indian English drama has not made any impressive development' despite the 'glorious dramatic tradition' in the country (2007:vii), and the implementation of

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[26] The Onassis Award is offered for the world's best drama script.
[27] This is quoted in Sawant (2011[n.p.]).

Five Year Plans, which were supposed to encourage performing arts for healthy entertainment and 'public enlightenment' (Iyer 2007:9).[28] Iyer shows four main reasons attributable to the lack of development: the scarcity of living theatres (as the dramas were written for the readers not for the playgoers); the language barrier (as English is not their first language); the failure to incorporate indigenous dramatic traditions such as folk theatre into English dramas; and the poor use of the Western dramatic techniques in English-language plays in India (2007).

The education system implemented in India during the British colonial epoch made only one class of Indians fluent in English language because of Macaulay's Minute. This trend continued in postcolonial India to differing degrees, despite India's acceptance of English as a link language within the nation.[29] Furthermore, these artistic forms were expanded only in Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai – the three administrative Presidency Towns established by British rule.[30] These towns are full of middle-class urban audiences with English-speaking backgrounds. Some Indian scholars, who returned to the country after receiving a Western education, also started contributing towards the theatre in English, particularly in these areas (Iyer 2007). Consequently, the theatre in English was not commercially feasible or popular and audiences for English theatre mainly included the social elite, living in metropolitan cities such as Delhi and Mumbai. Hence, performances of English play-scripts were either absent or limited. This contrasts with South Africa, where theatre was used as a way of regaining the subjugated black communities' identity and rights.

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[28] The Indian economy is partly developed through Five Year Plans, which were introduced by the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

[29] The 1991 census identifies more than 1500 mother tongues in India; about thirty languages are given official status. According to the 2011 census, each has more than one million native speakers of the total population; 1.21 billion.

[30] Presidency towns were the administrative units of India under the British rule until 1947 (Iyer 2007).

Nonetheless, as Chakraborty argues, despite their relative non-performance, Anglophone plays in India have the potential to address their 'audience':

[w]riting is only one aspect of the play; the other predominant one is the performance. […] with decades of English education in India, […] the country is home to the largest English-knowing population in the world. Hence there is still a large potential audience for plays written in or translated into English. (2011:18)

Iyer adds that, even with limited 'vogue' and 'minority appeal', Anglophone theatre cannot be considered as inefficacious to society (2007:xi). The potential for social engagement is high in plays that portray contemporary socio-political contexts in India; in this respect, *Mother of 1084* and *Harvest* are significant. The discussion proceeds to explore the performance contexts of *Mother of 1084*.

Mother of 1084's and *Harvest*'s (*non*)performances

Mother of 1084 was originally written by Devi in Bengali as a novel: Samik Bandyopadhyay writes that 'Devi dramatized *Hajar Churashir Ma* in 1973, when Asit Bose, the young actor-director, was planning to stage it. Her script has never been staged, though there have been productions of several "safe" and neutral dramatizations of the novel itself, most of them in Hindi' (2011: xv). Moreover, Devi's story is popular and renowned in the genre of fiction, even in English translation (Bandyopadhyay 2011); a movie version in Hindi was released in 1998 and won several state awards; it was a success in India. Besides, in Devi's next phase of dramatisation of her fiction (in 1976-77), she has changed her style to some extent by

including songs and rituals, as well as incorporating historical events: many were performed by different theatre groups (Bandyopadhyay 2011). Yet, *her script* is not performed.

It is worth, thus, critically exploring the non-performance phenomenon of *Mother of 1084*, when we consider both Anglophone dramas in general (e.g. *Hayavadana*) and diverse versions of Devi's story were appraised even by the state. By translating some of Devi's fictions into English, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues in *Three Stories by Mahasweta Devi: Imaginary Maps* that Devi confronts 'severe truth' in her society and dramatises factual information (1995: xxiii-xxviii). Meanwhile, Bandyopadhyay states that Devi wrote *Mother of 1084* against the backdrop of the 'climatic phase of the annihilation of the urban Naxalites, and its aftermath' (2011: xiii); he adds that the representations of killings in Devi's story 'connect' the murders actualised in society during this era. Bandyopadhyay writes:

> Devi achieves an economy which has been diffused in the productions as they have elaborated the party scene or tried to provide a justification for the extra-legal violence directed against the Naxalites. These productions have actually represented the establishment's endeavour to absorb the exposure with which Mahasweta's novel and play challenged them. (2011: xv)

Jaydip Sarkar concurs, writing that such neutral dramatizations 'had actually represented the Establishment's endeavour to absorb the exposure which Mahasweta's novel and play had challenged' (2011:255). Gautam Sengupta pronounces that 'revolt and rebellion on behalf of the downtrodden have always brought out the best from [Devi's] pen' (2011:251). All these observations support the assumption that the script of *Mother of 1084* is not staged as it 'confronts severe truth' of the Naxalite rebellion and its aftermath.

According to Bandyopadhyay, Devi 'helplessly saw the distortions of her text in an almost deliberate conspiracy'; the play was subject to 'the "commercial" distortions that the semi-professional companies revelled in' (2011: xv). The play was adopted by changing its essential core – the 'truth'. What is explicit here is that the script is damaged through misrepresentations, not through censorship. Implied through the non-performance of Devi's play and the performance of other versions is that 'safe' performances neither overtly nor subtly depict protests against the ruling system, but are conformist. This suggestion can be supported through contemporary playwrights' performance 'success'. For instance, Tendulkar's prominent themes are 'gender relations, sexual norms, institution of marriage and issues of conventional morality' (Chakraborty 2011:6-7), as well as how human nature is related to social practices such as sex and other relationships. Helen Gilbert also asserts that Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana* (1972) 'combines traditional Indian and contemporary Western influences, at the level of both form and content' (2001:180) while dealing with adventures of mythical characters from the *Mahabharata*.[31] Presumably, both Tendulkar and Karnad may have successfully addressed some of the reasons given by Iyer (2007) for the failure of Anglophone theatre praxis in India: their plays may contain indigenous dramatic traditions. It could also be due to the lack of the political 'truth' in their plays. Hence, the 'relative failure' of Devi's play could be due to the challenging nature of protest in it, which criticises the contemporary political issues, especially the biopolitical operations in India. This recalls the harassment experienced by South African dramatists. Although this is not exactly parallel to

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[31]*Mahabharata* is a major epic narrative in Sanskrit of a historical war of ancient India. It contains philosophical and devotional views, and it is believed that the authorships is attributed to a traditional revered figure in Hindu called Vyasa, and the oldest parts of the text is believed to be 400 BC old. The well-known *Bhagavad Gita* is a principal work of *Mahabharata*.

the state-implemented censorship on South African protest dramas, *Mother of 1084* is also exposed to 'banning', owing to its political setting.

Although there are no records of any performance contexts of *Mother of 1084* abroad or in India, *Harvest* has been staged both abroad and locally. While its 'formal premiere [was] in Greek on 20th January 1999 at Karolous Koun Theatre, Athens' (Gilbert 2001:216), *Harvest* was performed in Greece, the USA, the UK; it was also staged in New Delhi by both professional and amateur artists. An adapted version of it was presented on BBC Radio 4. Referring to the first public performance in India, the playwright articulates her thoughts:

> [t]omorrow, at the Sriram Centre, my play *Harvest* will be ready for its first public performance. It's had such a very public gestation […] It's had such an easy time of its life so far, even before it's been performed, that I don't feel the normal surge of protective anxiety that attends the debut of some product from my internal foundry upon the stage of reality. (Padmanabhan1998 [n.p.])

Commenting on the success of the production of *Harvest* by the East Coast Artists in the USA, Martin Denton states that this challenging play, which represents the relationship between the privileged and the deprived, stimulates the audiences (2006). Referring specifically to Benjamin Mosse's production at La MaMa's First Floor Theatre, which was 'mostly terrific, anchored by a quartet of splendid performances', Denton adds that 'Padmanabhan essentially picks up where Orwell left off, crafting a 21st century cautionary tale of enormous resonance' (2006 [n.p.]).

Harvest's relative performance success, especially in the light of the non-performance contexts of *Mother of 1084,* needs further attention. As Denton articulates, the success may lie

in its substantial craft. Yet, the playwright believes it is due to the international recognition: Padmanabhan states that 'I wrote *Harvest* knowing that it too would almost certainly languish unseen in my files if it didn't win anything in the Onassis competition' (1998 [n.p.]). What is implicit here is the importance of global influence, even in the twenty-first century, for the existence and development of English-language plays. Padmanabhan wrote the play in 1997 after the enactment of a legislation banning the organ trade (the Human Organ Transplantation Act of 1994) [32]: despite the proscription, the organ market is still existent in India.[33] Especially in relation to the absence of performances of Devi's work, 'the truth' of India presented in *Harvest* may be implicit and highly symbolic in the play, not explicit. This may have resulted in its circumvention from censorship and distortion. The following section explores the Naxalite movement and the material for reading *Mother of 1084*.

The Naxalite Uprisings

After gaining independence in 1947, the first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru (1947-1964) gave his celebrated independence-day speech – 'Tryst with Destiny'. In this he emphasised that India was ready:

> [t]o bring freedom and opportunity to the common man, to the peasants and
> workers of India; to fight and end poverty and ignorance and disease; to build up
> a prosperous, democratic and progressive nation, and to create social, economic
> and political institutions which will ensure justice and fullness of life to every
> man and woman.

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[32] This refers to the Transplantation of Human Organs Act, India; 1994, Act No. 42.
[33] See, for example, Yosuke Shimazono (2007) and Rajeev S. Jadhav (2013).

What emerges from Nehru's speech is his intention to build the nation, ensuring justice to all, irrespective of class, caste or creed. Suranjan Das asserts that, like many other former colonies, India is an 'artificial [creation]' of 'European powers' and in the successor states there was no 'convergence' between 'the state and the nation': this creates a need for the 'nation-building process' (2001:5). Nonetheless, 'despite certain obvious outward changes in forms of governance or employment of new political hyperbolas, the Indian Government under Jawaharlal Nehru represented in many respects a continuation of British attitudes both in form and substance' (Das 2001:7), specifically through the states' deployment of the police and military. Consequently, people's revolts against the ruling system which claimed justice for all became apparent since the early postcolonial era.

The Naxalites are a militant communist group operating mainly in many impoverished parts of southern and east India with the highest rates of illiteracy, poverty and over-population in India. The group is considered to be supportive of Maoist Political Ideology (e.g. Raman Dixit 2010 and Anjana Sinha and Milan Vaishnav 2012) and, as Iyer states, it 'has now spread over some 165 districts in 13 states' (2007:196). The Naxalite uprisings, the 'second wave of insurgency' (Jonathan Kennedy and Sunil Purushotham 2012:844) in postcolonial India, began in the late 1960s in Naxalbari; the 'first wave of insurgency' (Kennedy and Purushotham 2012:836), the Telengana peasant rebellion, had been crushed in the 1950s (see, for instance, Dixit 2010 and Kennedy and Purushotham 2012).

The Naxalite movement started in West Bengal in the late 1960s, in a village named Naxal (hence 'Naxalite'). '[I]n-spite of the United Front being in power',[34] land reforms in Naxalbari were 'still ineffectual' in the 1960s, and operated by 'class and caste tensions' (Dixit 2010:24-25). Dixit writes, 'this polarized the agrarian classes and created an

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[34] The United Font is the state government in West Bengal formed in 1967.

environment of confrontation' resulting in the birth of Naxalbari uprisings (2010:25). The origin can also be 'traced to the split in 1967 of the Communist Party of India Marxist, leading to the formation of the Communist Party of India Marxist-Leninist' (Raj Kumar Mishra 2011: v). Referring to the Naxalite upsurge, Dixit states that the causes of the movement are 'in essence, socioeconomic' and political because the 'spirit of the law remained confined to paper and the people were left to languish' (2010:23), although there were policies to address agrarian issues. Yet, the Indian Government did not analyse the causes of the unrest, rather they considered it a 'law and order problem' (Dixit 2010:22). They imposed rules and regulations 'to empower themselves to combat Naxals' when the West Bengal Government acted 'to arm itself to repress the uprising' (Dixit, 2010:22).[35] This Naxalbari resistance resulted in many forceful engagements:

> Naxalbari cadres occupied lands, harvested crops, burnt land records, cancelled debts, and passed death sentences on oppressive landlords. By May 1967, the high point of the movement in Naxalbari, the rebels claimed to control three hundred square miles of territory, although the police reports suggest it was not more than seventy. (Mohanty 1977; Sumanta Banerjee 2008, as quoted in Kennedy and Purushotham 2012:846)

In contrast to the ANC's protests in South Africa, which were often confined to non-violent remonstrations, this passage indicates the gravity of the resistance against the discrimination experienced by the marginalised peoples in Naxalbari: it also shows how the hostility was extended to violent actions, such as murdering 'oppressive landlords'. The Naxalites were also engaged in slaughtering officials, as represented in Devi's 1972 play *Water*: one of its

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[35] This is according to Prevention of Violent Activities, Act 1970 (Dixit 2010).

characters says that 'the police are on the lookout for the three Naxals who killed the Chunakhali daroga [village police chief] and slipped away' (2011:130). All these indicate the Naxalites' antagonism towards the state. In addressing the revolution, the Indian Government attempted 'to negotiate with the insurgents', yet commenced 'police operations' to defeat the insurgency (Ray 2002, as quoted in Kennedy and Purushotham 2012:846). The first revolt was crushed by the Government (e.g.Sumanta Banerjee 2002 and Kennedy and Purushotham 2012).

Yet, the uprisings continued elsewhere in the country (albeit suppressed in Naxalbari) and created three main situations: an alteration of the mechanism of rebellion; involvement of urban middle-class populations, especially university students; and student cadres' return to Calcutta and other towns because of 'increased state repression in rural areas' (Kennedy and Purushotham 2012:847). As a result of the intensity of the Naxalite upheavals in rural areas (this recalls the harassment experienced by black people in townships), student cadres in city centres in West Bengal played a pivotal role in the insurgency (Kennedy and Purushotham 2012). As a result, urban Naxalite revolts became more prominent. As Sarkar writes, the Naxalite revolt in the 1970s 'remains an unforgettable decade in Bengal's memory, as poignant and historic as the 1960s' political and civil rights in the USA' (2011:255).

The geographical location of the second phase of the Naxalite unrest (urban revolts) is significant to *Mother of 1084* as it focuses on the urban context and Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi's repressive biopolitical stratagem in the 1970s.[36] It is worth giving a few details of Gandhi's authoritarian Government because they directly allude to the dramatic representations in the play. In response to the second phase of the Naxalite revolution, the state's military operations to crush the revolutionary movement extended to mass murder by

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[36] Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India from 1966 to 1977 and from 1980 until her assassination in 1984.

employing extra-judicial methods (Bandyopadhyay 2011). Two particular incidents referring to the Barasat (in West Bengal) massacres in 1970 and 1971 were revealed: 'the bodies of eleven young men with their hands tied behind them were found slaughtered on the road' and 'more than hundred Naxalites were hounded out of their dens and decapitated and killed in broad daylight' (Bandyopadhyay 2011:xii). These events provide testimony to oppressive governmentality and to overt biopolitical violence.

Moreover, the central Government of India from the mid-1970s increased 'the amount of troops, equipment, and coordination it provided to the states' (Kennedy and Purushotham 2012:849) – measures taken to eradicate the Naxalite movement. In West Bengal:

the police and military were empowered by a series of laws, some which originated in the colonial period and others that were specially enacted to deal with the insurgents. Areas of Calcutta were cordoned off and searched house by house […]. "Non-committed" Naxalite students were co-opted with promises of protection from the police and jobs (Banerjee 2008). They were even encouraged to join Indira Gandhi's Congress Party. Criminal or "lumpen" elements were given a monthly salary of 150 rupees to join "home guards" that helped security forces identify other Naxalites. And finally, those students thought to be ideologically committed were shot or held indefinitely in custody. This strategy was remarkably successful; by the beginning of 1972 the movement's support base was destroyed and almost all top leaders were either dead or in prison. (Kennedy and Purushotham 2012: 849-850)

This passage is significant as its reference to 'lumpen elements' provides direct material for *Mother of 1084*, which I discuss in the fourth chapter. Implicit here is Gandhi's involvement in exploitive measures to curb the uprisings in the 1970s, following Nehru's reign: her government's ignorance in identifying the root cause of the unrest and failure to find solutions to the grievances of the marginalised populations is also indicated. As Dixit notes, 'in-spite of [*sic*] the government's muscle power and legal teeth the Naxal movement has continued to spread its base because the rural poor and oppressed identify with its ideology' (Dixit 2010:23). Dixit refers here to the brutal violence meted out by the state in curbing the Naxalites. 'The history of the last four decades of the Naxalite movement in India is a painful record of attempts – both heroic and loutish at times – to bring about a revolutionary transformation in the benighted economic and social conditions of the Indian poor' (Iyer 2007:194). This led the ex-Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, to state in 2008 that 'Naxalism is the greatest threat to our internal security' (Dixit 2010:22), and the current Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, to make his appeal to the youth 'to get the guns off your shoulders and get a plough in its place' (2014).[37] *Mother of 1084* dramatically presents the relevance of this 'threat' and the appeal ahead of time; its first English translation appeared in 1997 and in the original Bengali language in 1973 (Bandyopadhyay 2011).

This situation in India is analogous to the political milieu in South Africa: echoing black South Africans' protests to abolish apartheid policies which disenfranchised them, the Naxalites' aim was also to eliminate the feudal land system which disenfranchised certain agrarian populations in India. However, the difference here is that the black populace is a majority group based on skin colour, whereas the Naxalites are the minority. Although the Naxalite members originally emerged from the peasants and economically oppressed people,

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[37] This appears in the article, 'Prime Minister Narendra Modi urges youth to give up violence' (2014).

they were joined by middle-class youth in urban areas. Moreover, unlike the situation in India, there were no policies even confined to paper in South Africa to eradicate injustice levelled against black populations. Further, the Naxalites are identified as an armed militant group whereas the protests of black populations were mainly confined to non-violent activities or non-armed activities, despite the use of necklacing.[38] The political ambiance and Anglophone performance culture of India resemble Sri Lankan contexts, and will be explored in the next section.

English-language theatre praxis in Sri Lanka

English-language theatre came to Sri Lanka 'as part of the colonial process' (Ashley Halpe 1995: iv), an aftermath of a 'metamorphosis through migration' and the exportation of Shakespearean plays and 'drawing-room comedies and "popular literature"' during the period of British colonization (D.C.R.A.Goonetilleke 2007:153-154). Pre-independent Sri Lanka watched English plays infrequently; such plays were restricted to European classics (Goonetilleke 2007).[39] Consequently, even after independence (especially before the 1970s), only translations or adaptations of European plays were common on Sri Lankan stage (Goonetilleke 2007).

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[38] Necklacing is a type of vigilante execution which involves putting a rubber tyre with some fuel (e.g. petrol) around the victim's body and setting it on fire. It occurred in South Africa 'against suspected police informers under apartheid' (Nombulelo Damba and Kate Gerber 2012). Embarrassing the anti-apartheid community, Winnie Mandela, in 1986, delivered a speech saying that 'we shall liberate this country' with 'our boxes of matches and our necklaces', which is interpreted as political killings by burning (David Beresford 1989).

[39] Performance included Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* (1603); Bertolt Brecht' *Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1948) and *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1941); Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879); Garcia Lorca's *Blood Wedding* (1933); Peter Shaffer's *Black Comedy* (1965) and Sophocles' *Antigone* and *Trojan War* (5 BC).

However, Sri Lankan theatre in English gradually started developing since the 1940s (Goonetilleke 2007 and Macintyre 1990), through academic experiences at the National (State) Universities in Sri Lanka, primarily through English education: this phenomenon is analogous to Indian contexts described above. The contribution of a Sri Lankan Dutch Burgher – Evelyn Frederick Charles Ludowyk – is ground-breaking:[40] he introduced English literature and dramas to undergraduates at the University of Peradeniya, beginning in the early 1940s and founded the University Dramatic Society, which trained undergraduates, including Ernest Macintyre, in the production of drama. Goonetilleke notes that the impact of British and American drama on the Sri Lankan theatre, to some extent, shifted with the introduction of local playwrights such as Macintyre and Reggie Siriwardene (2007). Ludowyk made it possible for Sri Lankan audiences, not only to sample European theatre, but also to develop a sense of Sri Lankan-ness through the plays in English (Macintyre 1990:14).

In the 1960s, the Colombo Theatre Company *Stage and Set* was established by the alumni of Peradeniya University; Macintyre was one of the pioneers in it and his involvement in the development of English language theatre is significant. Beginning with the direction of European classics, he gradually started directing original plays or adaptations of such plays (Goonetilleke 2007). Arguably, his choice of plays seemed to have been influenced by Lydowyk's Western education and the European plays shown on stage. This assumption is supported through the format and content of his plays; Macintyre's first adaptation is *The Full Circle of Caucasian Chalk* (1967), a 'sequel' (Halpe 1995: V) to Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1948), and echoing Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* (1959), he followed the absurd style in *Loneliness of a Short Distance Traveller* (1971). Yet, *Stage and Set* faltered

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[40] Ludowyk joined University College in 1932 being a 'Shakespearean scholar' and was appointed the first Professor of English in 1936. When the College became the University of Ceylon in 1942 (the first university in Sri Lanka with its seat in Peradeniya, Kandy), he started the drama society (Macintyre 1990).

(Halpe 1995 and Goonetilleke 2007), partly due to Macintyre's migration to Australia in the early 1970s.

Coupled with Macintyre's migration are other socio-political reasons for the decline of Anglophone theatre. Writing in English was 'discouraged' by 'the social climate of the time' and, consequently, 'the academic community tended to look down on Sri Lankan writing in English' (Rajiva Wijesinha 1998:26). Although Wijesinha's quotation specifically relates to fiction and poetry, it is also true for English-language theatre. This hostile attitude towards English was partly due to a political decision – a language policy implemented in the country, which will be explored later in the chapter: it was also a way of showing patriotism after being an independent country (Chitra Fernando 1996, Wijesinha 1998 and Neil De Votta 2007). Moreover, while university education has been limited due to resources, English education at secondary and higher level of education has also been 'unsuccessful'.[41] Due largely to scarcity of opportunities and the system of education, English language was confined to the upper-middle class. It must be noted here that the language of the majority was Sinhala; English was limited to a socially and educationally elite group.[42] Hence, despite the emergence of original plays, Sri Lankan theatre in English was a marginalised and isolated art, confined to English-speaking minorities. We can see links here with the development process of English-language theatre in India. Consequently, there was a decline in the number of dramatic productions. English-language plays became less popular and commercially less viable (Halpe 1995), as with Indian English plays. The 'hostile' attitudes towards English language and lack of English education contributed to this decline, as did the fact that the

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[41] Although English as a second language is taught as a compulsory subject in all state and non-state schools from primary grades, and in National Universities in the country, English education is relatively a failure in the country (see, for instance, Wijesinha 2013 and Chitra Jayathilake 2013).
[42] See for details, Fernando (1996), Wijesinha (1998) and Thiru Kandiah (1984).

English-speaking community was confined to Colombo, the capital city of the country. Again, this is similar to India, where the affluent English-speaking community was confined mostly to the three presidency towns.

Meanwhile, with the implementation of the language policy, English theatre diminished, whereas Sinhala theatre flourished, as the policy promoted Sinhala language – a subtle biopolitical apparatus. It is significant how the language policy, a political decision, partly yet indirectly affected the development of English-language theatre. Understanding this isolation of English-language theatre, Macintyre attempted to change it by working in collaboration with some popular Sinhala dramatists (Halpe 1995),[43] yet was 'concerned more with the ethos of middle class, urban, and particularly, English-speaking Sri Lankans, rather than with the specificities of the moment or the place' (Halpe 1995: VII).

After his immigration, Macintyre continued to be involved in to English-language theatre in Sri Lanka; he followed a tradition of writing and producing plays relevant to contemporary socio-political issues of Sri Lanka, deviating from his initial adaptions of European dramas.[44] Explaining what motivated him to start writing for the stage, Macintyre states in 2003 that:

> the audience perhaps began to dwindle in Colombo, seeking material closer to home probably and that may have been the reason that I started working on writing plays for, *writing* [original emphasis] plays, writing for the theatre. (as quoted in Tamara Mabbott Athique 2006:359)

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[43] For instance, he worked with Henry Jayasena, a renowned dramatist in Sinhala theatre (Halpe1995).
[44] He revisited Ludowyk's *He Comes from Jaffna* in a production in Sydney, Australia by slightly adapting the script to address the contemporary social values of Sri Lanka.

Macintyre thus developed 'from a non-realist dramatist to a realist dramatist' (Goonetilleke 2007:166), and gradually entered 'a political phase in his career' (Goonetilleke: 2007:192). Arguably, this is because of the intensity of the biopolitical violence in the country, which will be explored in due course.

> Ruwanthie de Chickera (1999) also recalls that:

> [t]reated to the sophisticated craftsmanship of his production and provoked by the thematic relevance of [Macintyre's] plays, the expanding English-speaking audience developed a taste for political and social drama and grew to proportions that could easily sustain a play for several days at the Lionel Wendt Theatre in Colombo. (as quoted in Tamara Mabbott Athique 2006:178)

In 1990 Macintyre first staged his *Rasanayagam's Last Riot*: *A Political Fiction for the Theatre* at the Belvoir Theatre, Sydney, focusing on ethnic riots and exploring linguistic diversity in the country. In 2009 he wrote *Irangani: A Tragedy of our Times*;[45] based from Sophocles' *Antigone*; this play problematises the exploitation experienced by the JVP, a political group, which I will discuss later. It was premiered at the Belconnen Theatre, Canberra in 2009 and later at the Riverside Theatre in Sydney. Later, it was performed in Tamil language in Jaffna in 2011 and the original English script was published in 2012 in Colombo. Athique describes how Macintyre's works have been received:

> More recently, in 2003, Macintyre travelled back to the Wendt [Colombo] with two new plays to take part in the theatre's fifth anniversary celebration. He

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[45] 'Irangani' is a Sri Lankan female name.

received an enthusiastic promotion by the local press who described his arrival, after three decades of absence, as 'The Return of the Godfather'. (2006:178)

This leads us to explore how his productions are received in Australia. In responding to a question about the key differences of the way his works are produced, promoted and received in Australia and Sri Lanka, Macintyre (2003) replies as follows:

[y]es there are major differences. For one thing, in Sri Lanka we were what is clichétically called the mainstream. We were the mainstream so the big press, […] all regarded us […] here of course, we are not considered the mainstream theatre […] unless you believe that you are in the act of doing something that you have to do for your own sustenance and not for connecting up with the big society then it is pointless doing drama here, it is like going to church – you don't only pray at St. Peters in Rome you can pray in any village church […]. (as quoted in Athique 2006:360)

What is explicit through Macintyre's clarification is the relative non-recognition of their productions in Australia: this is to be expected when referring to different cultures. Implicit from Macintyre's expression, however, is that plays which dramatise specific socio-political tensions within a nation would be more significant internally than internationally.

What also emerges through these plays is that there is a transition registered in Macintyre's intervention from one form of colonial-influenced English language theatre to a more postcolonial form as he focuses on contemporary socio-political issues of Sri Lanka, which is highly significant for the development of English-language theatre. However,

Macintyre's contribution to the process of nation building, in comparison to South African plays, is less due to his plays' lack of performances in Sri Lanka. Nonetheless, Macintyre's plays are read as literary texts in educational institutions, functioning as testimonies to political tensions in the country. It must be noted here that these socio-political strains are explored in the country through other sources such as media.

Despite the 'demise' of *Stage and Set* theatre group, there were a few theatre groups emerging in, and contributing to, the development of Anglophone theatre. Similar to Macintyre, de Chickera was prominent in this respect primarily because of her accomplishment on the international stage (e.g. Farah Macan Marker 2005). Her first play *Middle of Silence*, which gives insights into human behaviour and pressurised relationships by the economies of the country, was first performed in 1998 in London's West End, as the Royal Court Theatre picked it up for the production. Subsequently, it was staged at the Lionel Wendt in Colombo in the late 1990s. In 2000, by founding a theatre group in Colombo, *Stages Theatre Group*, she attempted to produce new plays, encouraged new writing, and attempted to use the workshop method to develop her own plays. Her recent play, *Kalumaali*, produced and performed in Colombo in 2013, is bilingual. She acknowledges that 'I have always wanted to bring the English and Sinhala theatres together. I think there is potency in this mix' (Dilshan Boange 2013: [n.p.]). Her attempt to mix English and Sinhala theatre resonates with Macintyre's effort to combine with the Sinhala theatre personnel in the early 1990s in Colombo. Macintyre understood the alienation of the theatre of English in Sri Lanka as being quite different to the popular theatre in Sinhala language. By employing bilingualism in her productions, de Chickera seems to have taken further steps in bridging the gap between English-language theatre and Sinhala-language theatre. Her attempt may also imply social and

linguistic trends in the current society, and may create positive influence on English-language theatre in Sri Lanka. Bringing together Sinhala and English theatre is efficacious as it makes theatre more popular, thus commercially productive.

However, Sri Lankan theatre in English, even in the 21st century, embraces a handful of dramatists, performances and a small minority of audiences: it is still limited mostly to Colombo and to the English-speaking minority for social, educational or professional purposes. Nonetheless, predicting its potential Goonetilleke writes, '[i]t looks as through in the last fifteen years, Sri Lankan drama in English has spurted and offers more novelty and experimentation, wider horizons, in a word, more promise' (2007:192). The rest of the chapter critically outlines the socio-political context necessary to read *Rasanayagam's Last Riot* and *Irangani*.

Black July and JVP riots

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) – simply known as *Tigers* – is a separatist militant organization, in Gamini Samaranayake's words, 'the most ferocious guerrilla organization in South Asia' (1997:109). It fought to create an independent Tamil state called Tamil Eelam in the north and the east of Sri Lanka by claiming a separate state for the Tamil minority (approximately 11%) and demanding almost one third of the geographical area in the north and the east of the country.[46] It must be noted here that Sri Lanka has a population of about 20 million, of which, about 15 million are Sinhalese, 3 million are Tamils, and the rest

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[46] See, for example, Samaranayake (1997), Nira Wickramasinghe (2006) and A.R.M. Imtiyaz and Ben Stavis (2008).

belongs to Malay, Burger, Moor and other ethnic groups approximately (according to the 2012 Census).

Since independence there were a number of crises around ethnic tension in Sri Lanka, which created ethnic riots and resulted in many deaths of Tamil and Sinhalese people – both armed forces and civilians – and much destruction to property. One of the root causes of the emergence of ethnic tensions was the language diversity and the political decisions of postcolonial Sri Lanka (A.R.M. Imtiyaz and Ben Stavis 2008). Sri Lanka implemented a new language policy – *Swabhasha* – in 1956 (the Official Language Act No. 33 of 1956).[47] Despite the resolution passed at the dawn of independence from British colonisation that English be replaced by both Sinhala and Tamil – the indigenous languages – as official languages of the nation, what materialised through this *Swabhasha* (self-language) policy in postcolonial Sri Lanka is the 'Sinhala-Only language policy' until it was reformed later (see, for instance, Neil De Votta 2007 and Imtiyaz and Stavis 2008).[48] Alongside this divisive linguistic cartography, the importance given to English was also 'diminished' in the country as the usage of English language was partly considered as 'treason' and 'non-patriotic'.[49]

The aftermath of this policy on linguistic differences echoes the racial segregation rules in South Africa, and indirectly intensified the ostracism of English-language theatre in Sri Lanka. Being a former colony, its history is inextricably bound up with the period of colonisation, as Ashcroft argues:

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[47] *Swabhasha* and *Swabasha* are used interchangeably when it is written in English.

[48] Only three languages are used in the country, Sinhala, Tamil and English: both Sinhala and Tamil are considered as two national languages now. English language is used as a link language and is used as the first language only among a small minority of social elites.

[49] It was also witnessed that many people continued to cast aside their English names 'bestowed' on them by colonial encounter, and men adopted the native dress, replacing the Western attire, as a spectacle of resistance to colonialism and a compliance to patriotism (De Votta 2007).

[the] post-colonized nation, that wonderful utopian idea, proved to be a focus of

exclusion and division rather than unity; perpetuating the class divisions of the

colonial state rather than liberating national subjects. (2009:12)

'[T]he contemporary pattern of ethnic relations in Sri Lanka have been largely shaped by its

colonial history', and the '[p]roblems arose when colonial rulers favoured and allied with a

particular group, often a minority, to help in colonial administration' (Imtiyaz and Stavis

2008:4), which created 'fissures' between the two ethnic groups (De Votta 2007: 77). Thus,

British rulers' administration which partially favoured Tamils had a largely negative impact

on the unity between Tamil and Sinhalese populations (De Votta 2007 and Imtiyaz and Stavis

2008). Consequently, when independence was granted, Sinhalese political leaders attempted

to recoup political and economic coercion, even by extending their power to marginalise the

minorities in economic and political conditions. In this respect, the *Swabhasha* policy was a

stratagem implemented during the early period of postcolonial Sri Lanka which favoured the

majority populations in some respects.[50]

Eventually, the LTTE demanded a separate government and extended its military

operations to Sinhalese civilians as well: their attacks included suicide-bombing, massacring

civilians (including religious leaders) and shooting politicians, destroying the places including

airports, religious institutes and the like all over the country. The LTTE also stirred tensions

among the Tamil population especially because they used Tamil children as soldiers for their

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[50]The British colonial policy of 'divide and rule' has led to tensions between Tamils and Sinhalese after independence because Tamils had been disproportionately given administrative jobs by the British rulers ('Sri Lanka: The ethnic divide' (n.d.).The language policy implemented according to the Act No. 33 of 1956 was one way rectify it, with the Government of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, then Prime Minister, with Sinhalese majority. Tamil language was accorded the status of official language in the Northern and Eastern provinces only according to the Act of 1958 (Special Provisions). The 1978 constitution added Tamil also to be an official language (see, for instance, De Votta 2007, and Imtiyaz and Stavis 2008).

military operations. In response, the Government relied on its three armed forces, the police and sometimes international support in curbing the LTTE attacks. The tensions between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE culminated in a thirty-year intermittent civil war, 'ending' in 2009 with the death of the LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran.

Black July was an anti-Tamil riot which occurred on the 23rd of July 1983 and led to the war; it is considered to be the worst of such ethnic riots in the country, as it marked a blight on the country's history. Torture and killings were exercised to a great extent on Tamil civilians mainly through language diversity by Sinhalese mobs. The immediate cause of the riot was the death of thirteen Sri Lankan Army soldiers, who were ambushed and killed by the LTTE (Samaranayake 1997 and Basil Fernando 2012) in the north of the country, Jaffna. The state armed forces were outraged by this killing, and the Government was ready to bury the soldiers' bodies in the main cemetery, in Colombo. However, these soldiers were not from Colombo and this prevented their family members from deciding on burial locations and ceremonies (Fernando 2012). According to both Sinhalese and Tamil funeral customs, death ceremonies are highly elaborate and conducted by the family members of the deceased according to a variety of religious practices and rituals with the guidance of an officiant: I address this phenomenon, especially the denial of funeral rights/rites, in a later chapter. However, boycotting this planned 'state funeral' created tensions, and the cemetery was crowded with Sinhalese people. In response to the killing of these soldiers and the planned state funeral, riots against Tamils began in Colombo and gradually shifted to other areas of the country, destroying the property of Tamil civilians and killing Tamil people.

Fernando (2012) asserts that '[m]any things are said about Black July, 1983. That there were many culprits who caused the havoc that virtually destroyed the image of Sri

Lanka and which gave justification for a prolonged period of violence. However, there was one man who was the creator of this havoc. It was then-President of the country, Junius Richard Jayawardene'.[51] In the same article, Fernando quotes from *President Premadasa and I* (2002) by B. Sirisena Cooray, a former mayor of Colombo and a fervent UNP politician.[52] Fernando bases his argument on Cooray's narration.

It is worth quoting an excerpt here as it shows some direct links to the play, *Rasanayagam's Last Riot*, and helps understanding of the riot and the responsibility both of the elite politicians and the state's security forces in the light of Black July: it is also significant to interrogate biopolitics actualised in the country as it provides testimony to it. Cooray wrote that:

> *Like Mr. Premadasa I too had no choice but to do what had to be done, given the situation. The Kanatte is owned and managed by the CMC and as Mayor my tasks were clear.[53] […] After that I went to the cemetery. As soon as I entered I could feel the tension. There was an organized crowd present, making a huge show of grief, weeping hysterically. I walked up to DIG […] asked him why they allowed this madness. He and the other senior police officers present told me that they had nothing to do with the decision, that they were just following orders. I warned them that this drama would end with a riot. Though the bodies were not brought yet, the crowd was organised and ready. I realized that if I stayed here I too would be thrashed. [….] rioting started immediately afterwards. I later heard*

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[51] Basil Fernando is a Sri Lankan jurist, author and human rights activist.
[52] It is commonly known that Cooray was a strong and close supporter of R. Premadasa, President Jayawardene's successor. During this riot, Premadasa was the Prime Minister of the country.
[53] The CMC is the Colombo Municipal Council.

that the Army wanted the bodies to be brought to Kanatte and that the President succumbed to their pressure.[54]

It was a terrible time and the worst part was that we were almost powerless. We could do nothing to stop the killing, the destruction. The President made a mistake in putting the Army in charge of restoring law and order. After the killing of the 13 soldiers the mood in the military was a very dangerous one and they were not really motivated in stopping the violence. If the Police had been given a free hand they would have done a better job. During this period President Jayawardene was reduced to a state of helplessness. [...] The Army was not taking orders and I think we were very close to a state of mutiny. That was why the Air Force was called in eventually and they quelled the riot. (2002: 60-63)

Cooray implies that it was partly due to the powerlessness of the state and the questionable decisions undertaken by certain politicians that the '83 riot intensified and the country experienced states of chaos and unrest. How his prediction of the '*riot*' and the '*state of mutiny*' become visible will be explored through a reading of *Rasanayagam's Last Riot*. Cooray's implication also alludes to Imtiyaz and Stavis' claim that 'elite political leaders believe they can win support and strengthen their positions by mobilizing along ethnic cleavages' (2008:7). In short, the actions undertaken by the political milieu of the country can be directly linked to the 'fuelling' of ethnic tension between some populations of Sinhalese and Tamil populations in the country. This situation resembles the apartheid segregation in South Africa and the emergence of the Naxalite movement in India, allowing us to interrogate

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[54]*Kanatte* is the Sinhala word used to refer to the Cemetery.

the biopolitical subterfuges within the three regions. The discussion proceeds to explore political tensions emerged through JVP riots.

The People's Liberation Front – also known as *Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* (JVP) – led by the leader Rohana Wijeweera – is identified as a Marxist-Leninist communist political group. The JVP claims it was established to bring about a socialist revolution to address the needs of the working class ignored by the major political parties which ruled the country since 1948 (Tisaranee Gunasekara1999 and Samaranayake 1997); the JVP's proclamation was that the Government did not address the needs of socially and economically disadvantaged populations in the country since independence. Hence, they attempted, while creating a political awareness among the 'working classes', to change the ruling politics. The JVP was, thus, involved in two major uprisings against the ruling parties, in 1971 and during 1987-1989, although the JVP is currently an accepted political party in the country and joined the general election in 1994.[55] The revolts occurred in all over the country, except in the north of Sri Lanka, where the LTTE held its 'reign'.[56] Most of these JVP insurgents were university undergraduates, school children and young people of the country, also similar to the Naxalite members.

The first JVP insurrection against the ruling party of the SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party) caused much damage to the property of the Government; although the JVP insurgents were poorly armed and trained, they created tension in the country. The 1971 insurrection lasted only for a few weeks as the Government resorted to a repressive policy which resulted in a high death toll. Consequently, Wijeweera was imprisoned, while many others, especially

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[55] See, for instance, Ranil Wijayapala (2010).
[56] The political party headed by then Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike in 1971 and the UNP headed by then President R. Premadasa in the late 1980s confronted the JVP insurrections.

younger members, lost their lives. Wijeeweera was released during the incumbency of the next United National Party (UNP) Government.

The second JVP insurrection culminated during the period of 1987-1989. During this second insurgency, the JVP made the country chaotic by diverse means: they destroyed much of the government property, made the country stand still by imposing curfews and assassinated a number of politicians, government informants, government servants, security and police personnel, as well as several civilians who were against the JVP's rules and regulation. By killing these civilians who did not abide by their rule, the JVP aimed to frighten civilians and create turmoil in the county. The revolt lasted until Wijeeweera was killed and many other members were subject to murder and detention. This action recalls Mandela's life imprisonment and Biko's death in custody as biopolitical means of curbing the protests.

Nonetheless, Samaranayake asserts that:

[t]he JVP did not have a clearly developed political ideology and it was more eclectic in nature. The JVP believed that their ideology was a localization of Marxism-Leninism according to the indigenous socioeconomic conditions in Sri Lanka. To the JVP, the primary contradiction in Sri Lanka is not the ethnicity but the class. However, the JVP focused on the students and the unemployed youths rather than on the working class. (1997:112)

The JVP's involvement with students and youth recalls the motives of the BCM in South Africa and of the second phase of the Naxalites: why students are encouraged to be engaged in resistance against injustice is a phenomenon which needs further investigation, although

not within the scope of this research. Whatever the JVP's root cause, violence coupled with destruction and killings was witnessed across the country during these periods. The JVP uprisings were so crucial, as Gunasekara notes that '[g]iven the JVP's refusal to compromise, the Premadasa Government "fighting for its very existence with its back to the wall" had only two options: either to hand over power to the JVP, or to try to face the challenge of the JVP (1999:65). [57] The Government 'opted the latter and succeeded in crushing the movement in late 1989' (Gunasekara: 1999:65). Again, similarly to the actions taken to submerge the Naxalite uprising, diverse methods were employed in response to the JVP revolt: some of them were brutal and extrajudicial (similar to slaughter and 'necklacing').[58] As Jonathan Goodhand et al. note, these two revolts were brutally put down, causing around 60,000 deaths (2000:393); the ruling parties exercised their 'top-down' might to curb the violence committed by the JVP: a microcosm of this overt biopolitical aspect will be explored by reading the play *Irangani* in Chapter Five.

To sum up, Anglophone theatre praxis in each region, albeit originating from colonial encounters and initially influenced by Western education and missionary teachings, underwent a transition in relation to the political ambiance of the independent domains. The actualisation of this evolution in theatre is more conspicuous in South Africa than in India and Sri Lanka. Quite parallel to the socio-political tensions, which occurred through segregation laws (yet often culminated in overt violence), political theatre emerged as a response to the National Party's biopolitical procedures in South Africa. As this theatre drew the audiences to

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[57] It must be noted that from 1978 until 1989, the UNP was in power headed by the President J.R. Jayewardene, and R. Premadasa as its Prime Minister. In January 1989, R. Premadasa became the President, the leader of the UNP and of the country: he was assassinated on the 1st of May 1993. At the general election held in 1994, the UNP lost its ruling power and the JVP entered the politics by participating in the parliamentary general election in 1994.

[58] The Sri Lanka method which is akin to this in is 'tyre pyre'. This is described, for instance, by A.A.M. Nizam (2010).

interrogate the state's mechanism of regulation, the state extended its dominance to dramatists and plays. Anglophone theatre in India and Sri Lanka, though often confined to play-texts or to limited audiences of English-speaking communities (and focussing on Macintyre and Devi in particular), explored the contemporary burgeoning political issues such as the Naxalite uprisings, the JVP insurrection and the ethnic conflicts driven by the linguistic cartography in Sri Lanka. Anglophone political theatre's emergence, existence and performance in South Africa, India and Sri Lanka are diversely affected by the political milieux of each territory. Noticeably, Anglophone theatre praxis represents how the movement from colonies to independent nationhood in each region of these different contexts was shadowed by biopolitical procedure that worked to shut down the potential for more equal and emancipated societies to emerge.

Chapter Three

Political Killings and Neo-racism in South Africa

A man must have a Secret, and as a result of that,
an Act which takes others by surprise.

Athol Fugard, *Notebooks* (1983:219)

In his lectures (1975-1976), Michel Foucault outlines the inclination to commit murders in political circumstances:

> When I say "killing", I obviously do not mean simply murder as such, but also every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection and so on. (2003b:256)

The implication here is that political killings encompass both corporeal and psychological execution exercised through diverse means such as murder, manslaughter, genocide, social ostracism and exposure to deadly environments. Foucault shows the importance of racism in such killings – 'a power that has the right of life and death, wishes to work with the instruments, mechanism, and technology of normalization', and asserts that it is 'racism' which is the 'indispensable pre-condition' for exercising 'the right to kill' (2003b: 256). The focus of this chapter is to examine political killings prompted by racism and to interrogate the ways and means by which these murders are actualised and rationalised, but ultimately rendered invisible. The chapter specifically refers to South Africa and engages with the

phenomenon of dis-embodied death as represented in Athol Fugard's play-text *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972).[59]

Racism is perceived in diverse ways in different socio-political contexts. Ann Laura Stoler notes two noteworthy polarities: 'evidence of prejudice' and 'structural, institutional edifice and its practical consequences' (1995:89). Foucault observes that, at the end of the nineteenth century, racism moved beyond prejudice; in his own words, it 'removed from the ordinary racism that takes the traditional form of mutual contempt or hatred between races'; instead it is 'bound up with the workings of a State that is obliged to use race, to exercise its sovereignty power' (2003b:258).

Foucault further suggests that in the early 1990s racism was embedded in political power; this parallels Zygmunt Bauman's definition of it – 'an effective instrument of political practice' (1989:61). According to Bauman, racism is 'a thoroughly modern weapon used in the conduct of premodern, or at least not exclusively modern, struggles' (1989:61). In this respect, it is used for political ends and administrative means in contemporary societies. In political contexts specifically, it is a regular means of controlling subjugated persons. Yet, in such environments it often appears camouflaged, echoing Frantz Fanon's perception of racism. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Fanon writes that even though the Western Bourgeoisie is 'fundamentally racist', they often 'mask this racism by a multiplicity of nuances which allow it to preserve intact its proclamation of mankind's outstanding dignity' (1963:163).

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[59] The play-text which appears in Dennis Walder's (Ed.) *Township Plays* (1993) is used for the analysis: original formatting is also taken from the play-text thourghout the thesis.

Although racism first 'develop[d] with colonization' (Foucault 2003b:257), it is not a static phenomenon, but functions recurrently in diverse ways depending on the contemporary socio-political needs and prejudices of a society. A case in point is Boer racism. As Daryl Glaser claims, 'Boer racism was more explicit than that of the British colonies' (2001:27). As I discussed in the previous chapter, in the aparatheid era, racism functioned in a more powerful manner with a façade; masking it by 'a multiplicity of nuances', and with apartheid laws being politically implemented, particularly through influx control means, the risk of death for black colonised people increased. Referring specifically to political tensions, Stoler also asserts that racism 'always appears *renewed* and *new* at the same time' (1995:89) [original emphasis]. In this sense, racism is a modern biopolitical weapon in disguise – neo-racism used for corporeal and psychological murder.

Developing Foucault's view, Stoler also argues that '[r]acism does not merely arise in moments of crisis, in sporadic cleansings. It is internal to the biopolitical state, woven into the weft of the social body, threaded through its fabric' (1995:69). Unlike biopower, which intends above all to discipline individuals, biopolitics aims to '[use] overall mechanisms […], to achieve overall state of equilibration or regularity […], [by] taking control of life of biological process of man-as-species' (Foucault 2003b:246-247). Foucault explains that the objects of biopolitical operations are not individual human beings, but masses, with the aim to exercise power over them. This links to Fanon's clarification of the relationship between racism and existence explained in *Toward the African Revolution* – '[t]he object of racism is no longer the individual man but a certain form of existing' (1967:32). Developing his concept of necropolitics, Achille Mbembe also agrees that racism is 'the ever present shadow in Western political thought and practice, especially when it comes to imagining the

inhumanity of, or rule over, foreign peoples' (2003:17). Moreover, while referring to the political sovereignty and biopolitical operations in the contemporary world, Mbembe writes that '[t]o exercise sovereignty is to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power' (2003:12). These death conditions create mass destruction and deadly environments in communities. Although Mbembe's observation focuses on contemporary warfare, his perception is relevant to political death through racism. In view of such perspectives, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, the sole focus of this chapter, is outstanding; it theatrically testifies to indirect and invisible political death.

Most scholars agree that *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* portrays insidious processes of dehumanisation of the apartheid regime in postcolonial South Africa, and resists this injustice theatrically. Albert Wertheim characterises the play as a forceful account of the 'terrible effects of South African pass laws and the establishment of black so-called homelands' (2000:84); Dennis Walder states that the play offers 'explicit statements about the injustice of apartheid laws' (1993: xxx), whilst Paul Prece adds that it presents 'the reality of passbook identification for mobility' (2008:220). As Alan Shelley (2005 and 2009) notes, the play exposes the political aspects of South Africa and the strategies used to survive those politics. In Andre Brink's words, the play shows the 'dialectic in different phases and on different social and cultural levels of South Africa under apartheid' (1997:162). Caroline Davis' argument is that the play attacks 'apartheid legislation and enforcement' (2013:3). Fundamental to the politics and aesthetics of the play is apartheid segregation: *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* is often distinguished for its representations of injustice exercised through internal politics during the apartheid era.

Many of these critics also argue for the relevance of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* beyond apartheid segregation. Brink positions the play within the 'sociopolitical and the existential' (1993:439) dimensions of human nature. Wertheim's examination of the play reflects on ways in which it 'adroitly universalizes' its representations of apartheid injustice. (2000:86). By deviating from such scholarship, Davis recalls the publishing history of the play and states that, with two other plays in Fugard's *Statements,* it was 'packaged as a literary and commercial product that circulated free from censorship'; the publisher intervened in its 'meaning and value' (2013:1). Davis' observation shows the phenomenon of subjugation and domination in the aesthetic frameworks.

Inherent in the historical fact of apartheid regulations is the dimension of biopolitics; this is present in the scholarship on *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*. However, what becomes apparent from readings of the play is a gap in scholarship on the complex nature of 'political death', particularly the concept of dis-embodied death: *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* is rarely read through Fanon and Foucault's biopolitical lenses. This is where my reading departs from the existing scholarship on the play; I offer a contribution to the long-standing critical vocabulary of one of Fugard's most acclaimed works.

The aim of this chapter is to explore the representations of political killings exercised through the 'weapon' of 'renewed' racism, by a detailed textual investigation of the play. Drawing on the influx control concerns of the apartheid epoch and paying due acknowledgment to the scholarship on the play, this chapter approaches the subject primarily from Fanon, Foucault and Mbembe's perspectives on direct and indirect murder and neoracism. The chapter argues that the concept of political death offers perspectives on biopolitical frameworks that foreground non-normative killings – and dis-embodied deaths –

while attending to ever-pressing economic demands. It demonstrates how postcolonial dramas may help orientate the postcolonial nation-building process, supporting citizens' unification within the state by making the nation more viable and stable politically. As Brink writes, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* is 'constructed in two circles: the story of the photographer Styles and that of his client Sizwe' (1997:168); the main focus of both the play and this chapter rests with Sizwe's story.

'Bloody circus monkey': Styles in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*

Set in the township of New Brighton in Port Elizabeth, the play opens in a photography studio with the owner Styles delivering a monologue. It begins with Styles reading newspaper headlines to the audience before Sizwe's (Robert's) arrival. The theatrical importance of Styles' narrative is apparent as his lengthy one-way dialogue with the audience lasts for more than twenty or thirty minutes in performance (e.g.Wertheim 2000, Shelley 2005 and Samuel Okoronkwo Chukwu-Okoronkwo 2011) and comprises fifteen pages in the script (1993:149-164). The headline about a car plant expansion without any increase of the 'pay-packet' of the employees (1993:149) triggers the narration of a previous incident, a visit to the Ford Factory by Henry Ford the Second (the owner from America), where Styles worked before setting up his own photography studio. As Brink states, Styles' narrativisation 'contains a strong and explicit political text' and 'signs of more problematic ideological subtext': Styles' revelation is a 'political satire' and explores the 'economic choice' of black subjects (Brink 1993:441).

To explore this 'political context', it is necessary to examine further the spectacle of indirect political murder provided through Styles' narrative. Styles' service in the factory for a

year – in 'the dangerous hot test section without an asbestos apron and fire-proof gloves', as the authorities did not 'replace the ones [he] had lost' (1993:152-153) – is a stark testimony to incongruities of exploitation. Working in a factory without safety and protective clothing is hazardous: the authorities' lack of concern and ignorance towards Style's life intensifies the creation of deadly environments for black workers, recalling Foucault's definition of political murder. Thus, for Styles, the fortune of survival is challenged in the factory, epitomising the disavowal of black South Africans' existence.

In addition to the physical danger, Styles' narrative tells of the verbal harassment encountered by the black workers at the factory. Their Afrikaner boss, the General Foreman named Bradley, insists that they must 'impress Mr Henry Ford that they are better than those monkeys in his own country, those niggers in Harlem who know nothing but strike, strike' (1993:154), a depiction of racial prejudices and pejorative attitudes experienced by black individuals both in America and South Africa. It is a powerful recapitulation of colonial history. Discriminatory identification in particular implies that black workers are exposed to psychological persecution, as Fanon writes in *Black Skin, White Masks*, in a 'system based on the exploitation of a given race by another, on the contempt in which a given branch of humanity is held by a form of civilization that pretends to superiority' (2008:174). This recalls the postcolonial notion of 'primitive other' which degrades colonised subjects in Western discourses (Ashcroft et.al 2007:79). Foucault's observation of the removal of the 'ordinary racism' of 'contempt' since the late 1990s is unsupported here, as evidenced through Styles' description. Yet, Fanon's suggestion that the 'major artery [of such stereotyping] is fed from the heart of those various theories that have tried to prove that the Negro is a stage in the slow evolution of monkey into man' (2008:8) is, thus, reinforced in the play.

Colonial legacies exist in postcolonial South Africa as the oppressed are still subjected to disparagement and exploitation, as evidenced in Bradley's reference to the factory workers. Stoler (1995) posits that racism is not simply a biological science but is materialised frequently on a daily basis is supported here. Black workers' involvement in strikes in Harlem shows their relatively more empowered status compared to their counterparts in South Africa; when employers institute unfair practices by abusing workers and intimidating them, a strike may empower the workers. Explicit here is South African black workers' disempowerment at the hands of white employers.

Ironically, Bradley advises Styles and his co-workers to display their contentment by singing and dancing whilst working – by hiding their 'true feelings' (1993:153-154). Bradley's intention is to influence Ford, who is part of the process of oppression. This recalls Fanon's assumption that white colonisers 'mask' racism. Styles is given a new safety apron and fire-proof gloves in preparation for Ford's visit, further confirmation of Bradley's hypocrisy and racism. Styles recalls with bitter humour how he was an 'Armstrong on the moon' (1993:153) in his new clothing, satirising his phony elevation from a monkey to an astronaut. This again alludes to Fanon's observation about white colonisers, and functions as 'objective evidence that expresses reality' (2008:8), camouflaged racism.

Nonetheless, referring to animal images used for discrimination, Fanon writes that the black subject:

> laughs to himself every time he spots an allusion to the animal world in the other's words. For he knows that he is not an animal; and it is precisely at the moment he realizes his humanity that he begins to sharpen the weapons with which he will secure its victory. (1963:43)

Securing 'victory', Styles subverts Bradley's humiliation by being a translator to Bradley. The words '[t]ell the boys in your language, that this is a very big day in their lives', are translated by Styles as '[g]entlemen, this old fool says this is a hell of a big day in our lives' (1993:153). Styles' ploy – the transformation of 'boys' into 'gentlemen' and Bradley into an idiot – is an indication of black workers' animosity towards their boss. This is an 'important weapon of survival and resistance' in the factory (Crow 2002:139), because it relieves them from their hard work, labour exploitation and social ostracism, while adding humour to their lives. Moreover, in his dramatisation of the factory event, Styles acts all four roles himself, Bradley, the factory workers and Henry Ford, using their languages: Xhosa, Afrikaans and English. In doing so, he not only enhances his verbal victory, but also turns the white oppressors' prejudice upside down. The play's political intervention against racism notes that identities are constrced by the oppressors as a way to rule black citizens.

Unlike normal days (on which the black workers are always under strict surveillance), Styles narrativises the role-rehearsal on the day of Ford's visit: '[w]e were watching them, nobody was watching us' (1993:154). This alludes to what Homi K. Bhabha writes in the foreword of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*: '[t]he fantasy of the native is precisely to occupy the master's place while keeping his place in the slave's *avenging* anger' (2008: xxviii). Styles dramatises Ford's visit as follows:

Let me tell you what happened. The big doors opened; next thing the General Superintendent, Line Supervisor, […] like a pack of puppies! […] In came a tall man, six foot six hefty, full of respect and dignity […] I marveled at him. Let me tell you what he did.

(*Three enormous strides*) One…two…three… (*Cursory look around as he turns and takes the same three strides back*).

One…two…three…OUT! Into the Galaxy and gone! That's all. Didn't talk to me, […] or anybody […] And what did I see when those three Galaxies disappeared! […] 'Double speed on the line! Make up for production lost!' (1993:155)

Ford's visit provides no benefit to the workers as evidenced through his '*cursory look*' and the brief stay at a factory where black workers' survival was jeopardised. Instead, the owner's supremacy is visible, shown in his physical stature and his desire for respect. His massive, unreachable power is implied through the allusion to the 'galaxy', as a rich, independent ruler in the world. The image of 'puppies', whilst recalling the domestication of dogs as loyal to men, also represents the non-reciprocal relationship between Ford and the workers. Ford's visit increases the risk of death for the workers, as they have to 'double' their labour to cover the lost production.

Nothing at the factory – including the working conditions and the physical and psychological conditions of workers – was openly revealed to Ford, exhibiting Bradley's hypocrisy and dishonesty. Ford's visit itself was a deception, as displayed through his lack of genuine interest in the workers. Similar to Bradley's tactics of exploitation, Ford's ignorance as the owner of the factory recalls the state's marginalisation of the natives. Styles' anecdote, which parallels the newspaper headline where underpaid workers are misused in expanding the products of the car plant, is useful in revealing the oppressed's tragic livelihood. This recalls Fanon's assertion that '[a]ll forms of exploitation are identical because all of them are applied against the same "object"' (2008: 65): in this context, the object is the black person.

Referring to the settler colonisers' exploitative apparatus, Fanon writes that '[t]he oppressor, in his own sphere, starts the process, a process of domination, of exploitation and of pillage, and in the other sphere the coiled, plundered creature which is the native provides fodder for the process as best he can' (1963:51). This colonial stratagem reappears in Styles' narration of his bonded servility to the factory owner. Ford considers Styles a consumable inferior resource for his act of plundering: he exploits Styles' labour ruthlessly. Styles symbolises 'fodder' for Ford's 'pillage'. Bradley's statement that Ford 'owns the plant and everything in it' (1993:153) is a verification of Ford's masked violence. This articulation induces Styles to identify himself as a puppet which is moved and controlled by strings from above his position, in his words, as a 'bloody circus monkey! [s]elling […] to another man' (1993:156). Styles' perception that his life was possessed – and that he was at the mercy of his employer – culminates in his departure from the factory: he begins a small business of his own – the photoshop in New Brighton. Brink notes that Styles' story 'beats' the brutal apartheid system (1997:168). His intention is to become an independent person, '[t]o stand straight in a place of [his] own' (1993:157); in Fanon's terms he wants to stop being 'the coiled, plundered creature'. Read as a fictional reconfiguration of Fanon, through Styles, the play generates its own theatrical intervention into postcolonial cultural politics.

Despite Styles' decision to be independent, his liberation, however, is insecure. On the one hand, at the outset of the play he acts with fear and vigilance as '*if someone might be eavesdropping on his intimacy with the audience*' (1993:149). The revelation of ill-treatment, which Styles experienced at the factory, may be a threat to his life, hence his freedom is problematised. On the other hand, Styles' independence is also represented through the cockroaches' 'invasion' of his photoshop. He narrates the insects' intrusion, stressing that

they were 'in *my* place' [original emphasis] (1993:157) until they were eliminated by introducing a cat on the premises. Brink considers this intrusion as a metaphor of 'the black masses infesting the white capitalist's "condemned" premises' (1993:442); rather, the intrusion allegorises the white colonisers' encroachment on South Africa as emphasised through the use of the personal possessive pronoun. Brink also recognises Styles' dependence on a cat as Styles' 'alli[ance] to the forces of white repression' as he uses 'strong tactics' of a cat (1993:442); rather, Styles' dependence on a cat signifies his reliance on another for his freedom. Black communities' liberation is also theatrically questioned in the play through the parallel between Styles' departure from his subservience – being '[s]ix years a bloody fool' (1993:155) *from* white employers – and Sizwe's arrival in looking for a job in Port Elizabeth *under* white employers. This situation (despite Styles' 'freedom', Sizwe enters the scene to be a 'victim' of white supremacy) symbolises the incessant process of oppression experienced by black South Africans at the hands of white citizens.

By recalling the diverse needs of his customers, Styles extends his monologue to the audience to show the significance of their dreams, and the need not to 'interfere with a man's dream' (1993:160). He poses a rhetorical question:

When you look at this, what do you see? Just another photographic studio? Where people come because they have lost their Reference Book and need a photo for the new one? […] No, friend. It's more than just that. This is a strong-room of dreams. The dreamers? My people. The simple people, who you never find mentioned in the history books, who never get statues erected to them, or monuments commemorating their great deeds. People who would be forgotten, and their dreams with them, if it wasn't for Styles. That's what I do, friends. Put

down, in my way, on paper the dreams and hopes of my people so that even
their children's children will remember a man. (1993:159)

Implicit here is the erasure of a black nation – citizens of his race as emphasised by Styles as '[m]y people' – in celebrating the history of the country; their contribution to the nation is disregarded and diminished. The argument becomes strong with Styles' clarification that black communities 'own nothing' because the 'world and its laws, allows [them] nothing […] except the memory of [them]selves' (1993:163). This statement about the elimination of a people is significant. If a particular group of people is erased from the history of their country, it represents their political death: above all, it metaphorically functions as genocide of that nation.

In such contexts, Styles says that photographs preserve the memory of men and women who would otherwise be lost to history. His articulation indicates the significance of photographs as symbols of black population's unfulfilled dreams. It is only through them that black individuals can gain existence. As Prece states, Styles is a 'social critic' (2008:223); he raises the socio-political concerns of the apartheid era. As Shelley writes it, Styles is 'one of Fugard's most charismatic characters […] more enterprising than most and seems to have absorbed some socialist philosophy' (2005:164). Styles' competence as an independent businessman is evident through the efforts he takes to persuade his customers and promote his business. His enactment reiterates to the audience that black people have the skills, not only for menial jobs at factories, but also for the commercial and business sectors. The rest of the chapter discusses Sizwe's catastrophe.

'What's wrong with me': Sizwe in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*

It is during Styles' monologue about the importance of dreams and photographs that Sizwe Bansi, now calling himself Robert Zwelinzima, enters to get a photograph of himself, to be sent to his wife along with a letter. Styles introduces Sizwe to the audience as '[a] Dream' (1993:164); his metaphor is a prognosis of the impact of ostracism on Sizwe's life to be explored in the play. He makes Sizwe pose at different angles, adopting elegant postures which black people are 'denied' in real society: '*Styles finds a cigarette, lights it, and gives it to Robert to hold. The latter is now ready for the "card"... pipe in one hand and cigarette in the other*' (1993:167). This scene recalls Bhabha's statement that 'there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler's place' (2008: xxviii). Posing for a photograph in a happy mood signifies unachievable dreams for most native South Africans; Sizwe epitomises their dream, stripped away from them by white rulers. The theatrical gesture also implies the attitudes towards social dignity: to be a smoker indicates respect and power, a dream for a black person; again, this echoes Bhabha's (2008) notion that the native fantasises to reach his master's position.

Sizwe Bansi's story is presented through flash-backs and improvisation techniques when he reads out his letter. He is a black Xhosa who has left his homeland, King Williams Town, the 'capital town of Ciskei' (1993:234), 'hundred and fifty miles' (1993:179) away from Port Elizabeth, to come to New Brighton for job opportunities. As discussed in the second chapter, black communities were confined to homelands in rural areas and townships in the periphery of urban cities in South Africa in the apartheid era. It was an easy and economical way to segregate and regulate them: to use Foucault's words it is to control the

'environment, the milieu in which they live' (2003b:245).The play problematises this regulation of black South Africans through Sizwe's narrative.

A week after his arrival in New Brighton, while residing with a friend named Zola, Sizwe becomes a victim of a raid by the state representatives: his 'crime' is the inability to produce a valid entry document to the township. Elleke Boehmer defines these types of authorities as the 'lower-rung or secondary colonizers in 'their' new lands, local oppressors of the indigenous inhabitants' (2005:178). Boehmer's ironic emphasis here on the ownership of the lands directly links to the play because both New Brighton in Port Elizabeth and King William's Town in Ciskei (located in the Eastern Cape Province) were the traditional homes of the Xhosa natives, the second largest ethnic group in South Africa after the Zulus,[60] although they are now owned and administered by internal colonisers. Paradoxically, Sizwe's life is in danger because of his arrival in a place formerly owned by native South Africans.

Poverty and deprivation in his homeland made him leave King William's Town. He says that '[t]he place where we stay is fifteen miles from town. There is only one shop there. […] King William's town is a dry place, […] very small and too many people. That's why I don't want to go back' (1993:174). Sizwe explains that cultivation is not fruitful in the parched lands given to them, and the resources there are insufficient for the densely-populated area in King Willams town. As Sizwe is the bread-winner of a family with a wife and four children, he is compelled to leave his homeland to find work. Without addressing these reasons for Sizwe's entry into the township, he is 'repatriat[ed] to home district' within three days (1993:171). Thus, he is subjected to a re-expulsion, a 'legalised banishment' from the township. Sizwe's enigmatic position, with no perceptible solution or exit, problematises the

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[60] King William's Town is the birth place of many prominent black South Africans such as Stewe Biko, and Winston Ntshona who plays the role of Sizwe in the play (Dennis Walder 1993:234).

rationale of the Group Areas Act based on skin colour. This also resonates with Foucault's contention that 'racism is inscribed as the basic mechanism of power' (2003b:254) of government laws.

The struggle between life and existence in Port Elizabeth is narrativised through the encounter between Sizwe and Zola's friend, Buntu. Finding a domestic job under a white employer is impossible as Sizwe does not know any white men personally and does not know anything about flowers to be employed as a 'garden-boy' at a white residence (1993:172). He cannot work as a seller as he does not possess a 'Hawker's License' on his passbook (1993:173). Getting a work permit endorsed on a black person's passbook is also a challenging process, as shown through the lengthy, repetitive process that Buntu describes. He reveals the difficulty in obtaining work permits, not only for the inhabitants who move to Port Elizabeth, but also non-whites who are born in Port Elizabeth. What is shown here is the tragic life 'bestowed' on black people. This tragedy is further supported through Buntu's narration of Outa Jacob's claim that '[t]he only time we'll find peace is when they dig a hole for us and press our face into the earth' (1993:176). Analysing *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* through a sociological perspective, and parallel to Jacob's statement, Chukwu-Okoronkwo writes that the black person's 'peace […] can only be ensured when he is dead and buried' (2011:22). Wertheim suggests that '[t]he reality that emerges all too pellucidly is that whether in rural Ciskei or urban Port Elizabeth […], the life of blacks in South Africa is a pointless, demeaning, dehumanizing wandering whose only terminus is death' (2000:86).

Yet, Sizwe cannot easily give up this struggle because of his obligation to ensure the survival of his family. The two options Bantu suggests – either to return to his homeland or to find a job at the mining industry – are impractical for Sizwe because of his need to live. As

Buntu articulates, these instances are 'the only time they don't worry about Influx Control' (1993:174). Sizwe's unwillingness to work in mines is understandable because, as he explains, '[t]here is no money there' and '[m]any black people get killed when the rocks fall' (1993:174). Here the play problematises why the Passbook Law is not implemented in hazardous contexts such as mining: it questions the rationalisation of the Pass Law Act, while providing evidence of the injustice and inequality of passbooks. We can recall Stoler's observation that 'racial formations are shaped by specific relations of power' (1995:90). What is explicit here is the indirect way in which black people are exposed to 'political killings', an insidious means of extermination: black men are compelled to choose the mining industry, which is hazardous. Passbook Law is not exercised in mines so that all those who are deported from cities are expected to work in mines. This alludes to Bauman's statement: '*racism is inevitably associated with the strategy of estrangement.* […] Expulsion and destruction are two mutually exchangeable methods of estrangement' (1989:66-67). Mbembe's observation, as explored in Chapter One, of the destruction of human bodies and populations is also supported here (2003).

Through Sizwe and Buntu's encounter of a Member of the Advisory Board of running Bantustans, who collects information about Ciskeian Independence, at a 'shebeen' at Sky's place, [61] Sizwe receives an opportunity to be critical of the Independence bestowed to his hometown.

> (*To the audience*) I must tell you, friend … when a car passes or the wind blows
>
> up the dust, Ciskeian Independence makes you cough. I'm telling you, friend …
>
> put a man in a pondok and calls that Independence? My good friend, let me tell
>
> you … Ciskeian Independence is shit! (1993:178)

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[61] A shebeen is an unlicensed bar, selling alcohol to black people (Walder 1993).

Explicit in this extract is the hypocritical and unsatisfactory nature of Ciskeian Independence. 'Pondok', as the OED defines is a rough shelter made of scraps of wood, cardboard, or corrugated iron. In South Africa, they were the only available form of state housing available to black people, and were seen as places of derogation and insult. Black communities are confined into unsuitable lodgings built of reeds and tin sheets. They recall Robert's residence called 'Single Men's Quarters' which is a '[b]ig bloody concentration camp with rows of things that look like train carriages (Robert's character is introduced below). Six doors to each! Twelve people behind each door!' (1993:181). Similar to concentration camps, what the people experience in their dwellings in Ceiskei is a form of incarceration although they have not committed crimes. People in Ceiskei have to depend on the Government to be employed elsewhere or in urban areas where they find job opportunities under white supremacy. What is evident is that the independence granted to homelands is just a stratagem of apartheid rulers, an easy way of exterminating the oppressed by concentrating them. Naming Ciskeian independence as 'shit' Sizwe shows the Ciskeians' animosity towards the state's policies. This is a subtle but sharp criticism of 'independence' offered to homelands and supports Glaser's (2001) statement that although independence was granted to a few Bantustans for self-government, they had to be dependent economically and politically on the central Government of South Africa. Again, we see echoes of Foucault's (2003b) examination of racism as bound up with the state's mechanisms.

Returning home from Sky's place with Sizwe, Buntu notices a dead body in a street. The arbitrary encounter with a dead body amongst the rubbish becomes a turning point in the play, as well as for Sizwe's ostracism. Buntu's inadvertent urination on the corpse and

deliberate collection of the dead body's passbook, as it contains a work permit, is pivotal to explore further how racism functions as a biopolitical weapon for political murder in the apartheid era. In the middle of the lengthy argument between Sizwe and Buntu on the importance of passbooks, Sizwe, strongly manipulating his own body, reiterates his humanity and the right to live:

> What's happening in this world, good people? Who cares for who in this world?
> Who wants who?
> Who wants me friend? What's wrong with me? I am a man. I've got eyes to see.
> I've got ears to listen when people talk. I've got a head to think good things.
> What's wrong with me? (*Starts to tear off his clothes*)
> Look at me! I am a man. I've got legs. I can run with a wheelbarrow full of
> cement! I'm strong! I'm a man. Look! I've got a wife. I've got four children.
> How many has he made, my lady? (*The man sitting next to her.*) Is he a man?
> What has he got that I haven't…? (1993:182)

Sizwe's nakedness epitomises black people's dispossession: it also references what David Alcock calls 'physicality' in Physical Theatre – to drive the meaning home (1999). Wertheim claims that Sizwe poses 'basic questions of human existence' (2000:87) deprived due to skin colour. In a similar way to Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* who strongly questions why Jews are dehumanised and ill-treated in Christian society, [62] Sizwe raises his voice against the rulers who dehumanise black subjects. Through rhetorical questions, the play politically

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[62] Shylock, a Jewish moneylender in Shakespeare's play, (Act 3 Scene 1) speaks against the unequal treatment of Jews and Christians stating, '[h]ath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?... If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that' (William Shakespeare 2000).

sensitises the audience to the injustice experienced by black South Africans through the Passbook Law.

The irony of the introduction of passbooks to South Africans is voiced when Sizwe announces, while Buntu is holding the passbook of the dead man, that '[t]hey never told us it would be like that when they introduced it. They said: Book of Life! Your Friend! You'll never get lost! They told us lies' (1993:181). As Shelley states, the passbook is 'a concrete symbol of the all-pervading control exercised over the majority of South Africans in the name of apartheid' (2005:152). 'Book of life' is an apt definition because the passbook regulated all aspects of black citizens' existence. In brief, passbooks were used to expose these populations to 'political death'. The uselessness of passbooks to black individuals is further symbolised through Sizwe's illiteracy: he is unschooled, not even literate enough to read the identification number in numerals. Sizwe's monologue – '[m]y passbook talks good English too… [original ellipsis] big words that Sizwe can't read and doesn't understand' (1993:180) – satirically emphasises the fact that passbooks are for the rulers' means of regulation, not for black people's benefit. Giving the passbook for Buntu to read, Sizwe asks: 'does that book tell you I'm a man?' (1993:182). As Prece states, the play is 'an indictment of the South African Pass Laws' (2008:220). The passbook is often used as apparatus to identify black people and subjugate them. The play problematises the introduction of passbooks as a 'friend' to black people who are illiterate. This is not a friend for these citizens, but a wicked spirit disguised as a friend.

However, Buntu's suggestion is an exchange of passbooks for Sizwe's survival: he encourages Sizwe to take the dead man's passbook. Sizwe's reluctance and sense of disgust at the place is voiced through his interrogation – 'how do I live as another man's ghost'

(1993:185). It is, of course, impossible to live as a 'ghost'. Yet, Buntu's counter-argument suggests that Sizwe is already an 'apparition'.

> When the white man looked at you at the Labour Bureau what did he see? A man with dignity or a bloody passbook with an N.I. number? Isn't that a ghost? When the white man sees you walk down the street and calls out, 'Hey, John! Come here'…to you Sizwe Bansi …isn't that a ghost? Or when his little child calls you 'Boy'…you a man, circumcised, with a wife and four children…isn't that a ghost? Stop fooling yourself. All I'm saying is be a real ghost, if that is what they want, what they've turned us into. Spook them into hell, man! (1993:185)

What becomes visible is that an N.I. number is more powerful than black peoples' humanity; recognition can turn them into phantoms. Buntu tells Sizwe that when black men are considered as boys even by little white children, their dignity is destroyed: they are subject to white supremacy and transformed into non-existence.

> Fanon identifies the native in the hands of Western colonisation as an 'object'. This object man, without means of existing, without a raison*d'être*, is broken in the very depth of his substance. The desire to live, to continue, becomes more and more indecisive, more and more phantom-like. (1967:35)

What Buntu reminds Sizwe of is his 'phantom-like' status, not in the authority of Western colonisers but under the custody of internal colonisation: Buntu is deprived of his right to live through passbook laws. Buntu's justification for the exchange of passbooks is that 'pride isn't a way' for black subjects; his advice is to 'shit on [their] pride' (1993:190). As Wertheim sees

it, Bantu's argument is 'tragic pragmatic wisdom' (2000:87). His judgment sounds logical and recalls Fanon's suggestion that pride is not a way to gain 'salvation' from the oppression and segregation of the Negro nation (2008:93); it encourages the natives to resist injustice. Buntu's aim, however, is to liberate Sizwe from his dilemma and provide succour.

Sizwe's surrender to Buntu's suggestion transforms Sizwe from his early phantom-like status in the hands of Afrikaner rulers to a dis-embodied ghost. Losing one's own name makes man invisible: it deprives him of dignity. Moreover, the knowledge that one's own identity can be destroyed and left to rot is painful. It symbolises Sizwe's non-corporeality – his 'political death'. In addition, Sizwe's dis-embodiment signifies the elimination and the incorporeal death of the whole black society; Wertheim notes 'sizwe' means 'nation' and 'banzi' means 'broad or wide' in Xhosa (2000:86). This provides theatrical testimony to Foucault's argument that biopolitical operations target populations as masses, represented through the noun 'sizwe'. It must also be noted here that the stratagem used to 'kill' Sizwe is also invisible: that is, he is not subject to political murder through corporal weaponry or physical torture like in war environments, but through dis-embodied means – self-transformation into an apparition. This phenomenon of non-corporeality links to the dis-embodied ploy, used in Ernest Macintyre's plays examined in the fifth chapter.

As Robert Gordon posits, '[t]he questioning of identity emblematizes the existential interrogation of what it means to be human' (2012:385). Yet, Buntu reiterates that Sizwe is already bodiless and incorporeal, through Sizwe's non-existence to the white officer at the Labour Bureau who 'takes the book, looks at it – doesn't look at [Sizwe]!' (1993:172). Eventually, as Wumi Raji states, Sizwe 'discards his true identity' (2005:139); Shelley writes, 'the only way Sizwe Bansi can survive is to surrender his identity' (2009:134). Sizwe's failure

to find a work permit, coupled with Buntu's argument, forces him to accept reluctantly the identity of the dead. That is how Sizwe Bansi appears as Robert Zwelinzima – the dead man's name – in Styles' studio. Brink notes that Sizwe's story 'cheats' the apartheid system (1997:168). Nonetheless, what Sizwe obtains is dis-embodied existence because his corporeality is already subject to political murder. Killing his own identity – the suicide – is the climax of the effects of the regulation of Sizwe's life.

His suicide also recalls what Fugard writes in his *Notebooks* about the black nation's survival:

[A] black man in S. A., how far can he, short of suicide, really afford to be honest with the world in which he lives? [...] What price survival? One's soul? Survival can involve betrayal of everything – beliefs, values, ideals, – except Life itself. (1983:164)

Sizwe's 'suicide' is a metaphorical indirect murder exercised by the sovereignty in postcolonial South Africa, recalling Foucault's statement: 'killing or the imperative to kill is acceptable only if it results not in a victory over political adversaries, but in the elimination of the biological threat to and the improvement of the species or race' (2003b:256). Murdering Sizwe is neither a victory over political opposition (as Sizwe is not a direct political opponent), nor a 'biological threat'. Rather, Sizwe's death characterizes a 'victory' over black majorities. Sizwe's death epitomises such murder. It shows how racism is embedded in regulating biological processes in political contexts, echoing Stoler's words that 'a new mode of racism [is] inscribed' within the political milieu (1995:33).

Wertheim states that the play asks the audience whether 'naked' Sizwe can be 're-dressed and redressed' (2000:87). Buntu is a 'comically magical micturition' (Wertheim 2000:87), as he gives life to the dead by finding 'clothing' for Sizwe. Prece compares Buntu's 'operation' of the exchange of photographs, to 'an organ transplant' – on completion, 'new life, new possibilities will exist' (2008:223). Sizwe is re-dressed as he begins to live in Port Elizabeth as a 'ghost'. However, rectifying the consequences of racist influx control policies is hard. As Wertheim explains '[t]he sad reality however, is that Sizwe's exchange of identity can only be a stopgap measure because he will be caught out by the authorities if he gets into trouble and his finger prints are checked' (2000:87). Similarly, Shelley's prediction is that 'the authorities would deal severely with the forgery that enabled him to assume another man's identity' (2005:167). The unreal existence may further expose Sizwe to deadly conditions such as incarceration. With his new identity he has to remain vigilant about authorities and may frequently experiences near-death situations. This recalls Mbembe's explanation of necropolitics – how circumstances created death-zones for the colonised slaves (2003); the circumstances create similar death-zones for Sizwe. As he renounces his identity, he has to live with the knowledge that he is Robert's dead-soul, which is also recurrent psychological death. Fugard writes that a man must have a secret to take others by surprise; as noted in the epigraph of this chapter, Sizwe's secret will make him a victim for a second time. Both Styles' and Buntu's roles are performed by one actor. Prece claims that '[t]his doubling subliminally serves to re-iterate and echo Sizwe's dilemma in dual identity in the context of performance' (2008:223). The actors' double-performance underscores Sizwe's 'secret act' and adds dramatic impact to the play: yet whether Sizwe has symmetrical 'dual identity' is speculative as Sizwe's identity is dis-embodied and non-existent.

Sizwe's incorporeal death is staged theatrically through gesture. At the outset of the play, he '*walks nervously*' into the studio, and his behaviour is '*hesitant and shy*' (1993:164). When introducing himself to Styles, Sizwe '*hesitates as if not sure of himself*' by '*swallowing*' (1993:164). Later, when reading out the letter, he is seen '*frozen*' (1993:169). Moreover, when Sizwe and Buntu improvise a scene where Sizwe's *new* passbook is under the police's scrutiny, Sizwe becomes '*impassive*' and '*frightened*' (1993:189), and is '*carried away by what he is feeling*' (1993:188). Sizwe is also seen as '*desperate*' (1993:184), '*confused*' (1993:187) and in '*maudlin tears*' (1993:185). All these dramatic gestures demonstrate his fear and sorrow, caused by negative life experiences and subsequent feelings involving insecurity. Sizwe's physical and psychological expressions show his dis-embodiment and how his *human* existence is destroyed and rendered invisible. This also supports Mbembe's (2003) contention that human existence is rendered instrumental and destructed by means of political sovereignty.

Juxtaposing two types of death and situating two dead bodies – Sizwe's non-corporeal death and Robert's corporeal death – the play further complicates the phenomenon of death in the apartheid era. The first death is an indirect oblique murder, supported and commended by law of the apartheid regime as a mode of regularising peoples. The latter is an offshoot of direct thuggery, an act punishable by law in the apartheid era. Buntu says, 'I thought I was just pissing on a pile of rubbish, but when I looked carefully I saw it was a man. Dead. Covered in blood. Tsotsis must have got him' (1993:180). This term, 'tsotsis' (hoodlums), as the OED defines, is used to refer to township gangs in South Africa: 'young black gangsters belonging to a group prominent in the 1940s and 1950s'. Why Robert is killed and why his body is left on the street amidst rubbish is not explained in the play. This

omission is explored in Gavin Hood's 2006 film adaptation of Fugard's novel *Tsotsi* (1980), set in Johannesburg; tsotsis are a product of poverty and the huge socio-economic gap between wealthy and socio-economically downtrodden communities. These factors compel gangs to engage in stealing and other criminal activity for their survival, as demonstrated through the character of a teenaged orphan who later becomes a tsotsi.

To revisit the significance of Robert's corpse, the bitter irony the play focuses in the context of killing is the similarity between the dead body and rubbish in a passageway in New Brighton. Urination on a dead body symbolically enhances the non-value given to humanity. Despite this worthlessness and Robert's dis-embodiment, the corpse paradoxically embodies 'power' as it possesses a work permit. The audience notices how this dead person can be 'reborn' to life; a ghost can be taken as a powerful symbolic force against the white's authority; Robert's ghost can survive in this apartheid society counteracting the apartheid laws. The difficulty in differentiating a dead body from garbage – and the acceptance of the identity of a dead man for survival in Port Elizabeth – underscore the tragic effects of influx control. It sensitises the audience to the stark realities of the mechanism of the oppression. This recalls Foucault's notion of political power which has, as noted earlier, 'the right of life and death' (2003b:256). Both Sizwe's life and political death are indirectly coerced by the political sovereignty exercised through racism.

'[S]kin is trouble'

Styles' and Sizwe's ordeal explains the importance of dreams for black South Africans as narrated by Styles because in reality black people's dignity is brutalised. In William

Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953), an awareness of life emerges stripping away pretensions, hypocrisy and deceptions as characterised by Lear and Estragon respectively; similarly, Sizwe raises the question in the end whether 'a black man stay out of trouble? Impossible […] our skin is trouble' (1993:191). His articulation is the result of his perception of the tragic nature linked to skin colour, exercised by influx control. It is not only ordinary racism but a type of neo-racism used in killing masses of unwanted black South Africans.

What is implicit through the perilous working conditions at the factory and Sizwe's provisional life through Robert's ghost is that black individuals are 'alive' under deathly conditions. They are subject to dis-embodied death while struggling for existence: in other words, they have to encounter invisible deaths throughout their lives. Foucault's argument that, through political circumstances, people are exposed to death and deadly environments is supported here, because Styles and Sizwe are subject to apartheid laws. In Foucault's terms, they are 'pre-condition[ed]' to become subjects due to their skin colour.

Moreover, Mbembe's (2003) explanation is that '[t]he human being truly *becomes a subject* – that is, separated from the animal – in the struggle and the work through which he or she confronts death […] Becoming subject therefore supposes upholding the work of death' (2003:14). Both Styles and Sizwe are compelled to embrace death because of their subjectivity. As explored in Chapter One, Mbembe's contends that contemporary society creates the 'maximum destruction of persons and the creation of *death-worlds*' (2003:40) in which many populations have to suffer life-long processes of death – a continuum of death – a 'status of *living-dead*' (2003:40). Some people are exposed to catastrophic circumstances through socio-political settings; consequently they live with the possibility of death. Thus

they live in a liminal space between life and death, as living dead people. This is particuarly demonstrated through Sizwe's dilemma; after being a phantom for years under white supremacy as Sizwe, he is compelled to transform himself into a dis-embodied dead-body. The drama focuses on how the dehumanising treatment of South Africa's black communites causes an individual to give up his identity to survive in a society governed by the internal colonisers.

According to the representative strategies of the play, biopolitical operations in South Africa aim at keeping its subjects 'alive' through two modes: first, through labour exploitation creating 'death', risky worlds, exportation, expulsion and vilification of the black communities as depicted through Styles' anecdote of the factory; secondly, through 'personality suicide', as represented through Sizwe' tragic experiences. Both these situations highlight how the state keeps people 'alive' but 'kills' them without slaughtering them corporeally, regulating them through racism. Conversely, the tsotsis' killing is not based on racism. Instead, it is due to socio-economic poverty and disparity in apartheid society. An assumption can be made here: if Sizwe failed to find a way for his provisional survival in a '*death-world*' (Mbembe 2003:40) through Robert's passbook, he would become a tsotsi.

Chapter Four

Rebels and the Body of Democracy in India

[G]overnments can be mistaken.

Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008:17)

This chapter, devoted to an analysis of Mahasweta Devi's play-text, *Mother of 1084* (1973), moves the discussion from South Africa to India while maintaining conceptual and theatrical parallels with the previous chapter.[63] While Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972) represents the disenfranchised and oppressed black communities at the peak of the apartheid period in South Africa in the 1970s, *Mother of 1084* epitomises the Indian Government's reaction to the resistance that emerged during the Naxalite insurgency in the 1970s in West Bengal. The play dramatises the methods exercised by the state to suppress and regulate the Naxalite uprisings. Of all the plays examined in this thesis, *Mother of 1084* offers the most explicit representation of the state's violence as it *stages* death, torture and violence. It is particularly the spectacle of '[*f*]*ive dead bodies, covered by sheets*' (2011:5) on stage that forms the basis of my investigation into the play's significance as a narrative of biopolitics.

In contrast to the dramaturgical and conceptual significance of displaying dead bodies on stage as a direct reference to Naxalites and the state's biopolitical apparatus, *Mother of 1084* is often renowned for its referene to feminist ideology in a patriarchal society. The play is frequently acknowledged by scholars as a critique of the marginalisation of women (e.g. G. Gulam Tariq 2011). S. Prasanna Sree argues that the play represents how 'the subjugation of

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[63]Throughout the thesis, the play-text in Samik Bandyopadhyay's (Tr.) *Five plays* (2011) is used for the analysis.

women crosses boundaries of classified schooled Feminism' and 'portrays "Mother" as the symbolic significance and representation of the Revolution' (2008:77). Sree also suggests that the play contributes to feminist theatre seeking 'liberation of women from the power of history' (2008:76). The play has also been read in relation to the process of a mother's identification of her son and his political commitment. In this sense, Samik Bandyopadhyay writes that the play depicts how a mother gradually understands 'a moral rationale' for her son's political actions (2011: xiv). Extending Bandyopadhyay's argument to the mother's political status, Jaydip Sarkar states that the play 'presents the tragedy of an "apolitical" mother who awakens one day to create a locus of resistance' (2011:256). It is also read as a political play because it 'actually declassifies a mother; out of a deprived mother a new woman is born' (Gautam Sengupta 2011:253). These readings of the play focus on a mother's societal and political perceptions. Recent historiography has also turned its attention to women's roles in Naxalbari: For example, through a personal narrative, Krishna Bandyopadhyay (2008) reflects on why middle-class women joined the movement in the 1970s[64]; her account is analogous to Nandini's voice in the play (which will be explored in the chapter), and its reflections shed light on gendered perspectives.

Existing scholarship has overlooked the manifestation of torture and dead bodies on stage in *Mother of 1084*. Contemporary readings appear to focus on motherhood – key in title of the play '*Mother*' – and give secondary attention to its 'appendix' – the prepositional phrase '*of 1084*', which represents a corpse. The drama's end bears a powerful reference to

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[64] 'I am trying to explain why I or other women like me from middle class backgrounds joined this movement. Was it merely going with the flow arid tide of the time, or was it the influence of a hero, or was it something completely different? Perhaps it was in search of that "something different" that we women associated ourselves with this movement' (Bandyopadhyay 2008:53).

this 'appendix', *of 1084*. The focus of this chapter is to explore its significance, taking us beyond the existing literature on the play.

Devi's extensive use of the body to represent the tensions between the state and the Naxalite revolutionists can be read through the lens of the 'art of governmentality' and 'the state of exception' conceptualised by Michel Foucault (2008) and Giorgio Agamben (2005) respectively. The discussion on the strained socio-political state portrayed in the play is also supported through Bertolt Brecht's (1949) and Martin Esslin's (1970) ideas of theatre. The play recalls the first Prime Minister of postcolonial India, Jawaharlal Nehru, and the pronouncement made in his acclaimed independent day speech in 1947. Nehru reiterated the state's intention to develop the country by ending poverty, inequality and disparities in society. He stated:

> [b]efore the birth of freedom we have endured all the pains of labour and our hearts are heavy with the memory of this sorrow. Some of those pains continue even now. Nevertheless, the past is over and it is the future that beckons to us now. […] The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity. [It is] to wipe every tear from every eye.[…] for all the nations and peoples are too closely knit together today for any one of them to imagine that it can live apart. Peace has been said to be indivisible; so is freedom, so is prosperity now, and so also is disaster in this One World that can no longer be split into isolated fragments.[65]

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[65] See, 'Nehru's speech to the nation on the Independence day'

This speech implies that, during the period of colonialism, the country was rife with socio-economic disparities and class stratifications. It also assures a democratic country, a de-colonised nation *par excellence* in the era of independence, and inspires the Indians to forget the painful memories of Western colonialism. However, the play offers microcosmic critique on the arbitrary activities of the despotic state of India; it indicates that a politics of democracy does not work on a national level at this point for independent India. The central argument of this chapter is that the postcolonial state of India created injustice as it attempted to eradicate the Naxalite movement, employing a dominant political strategy of torture. What existed is an internally-colonised country – a postcolonial colony – with divisions, injustice and sufferings, extending beyond the independence India achieved in 1947.

'A cancerous growth on the body of democracy' in *Mother of 1084*

Set against the milieu of a climatic period of the suppression of the urban Naxalites in the early 1970s, the play focuses on the young Naxalites; little attention is paid to the older rural Naxalites, who are drawn to the movement due to direct socio-economic agrarian exploitation. The main focus are the youth from disadvantaged populations residing in urban areas, as well as educated youths from the middle or upper middle-class, who joined the movement to speak for the oppressed. Devi develops her plot by concentrating on those who are direct victims of the repressive state due to their involvement in the Naxalite revolt, as well as the indirect, passive victims.

Even though the events in *Mother of 1084* cover a two year span, everything happens *de facto* within a single day – the 17th of January 1972 – and follows the experiences of a middle-class woman, Sujata Chatterjee. This is the day of the engagement party of the

youngest daughter in the Chatterjee family, Tuli, during which her husband-to-be, Tony, will be introduced to their society. Though the play's action is based on this one day of Sujata's life, Devi uses flashbacks to develop the story of Sujata's youngest son, Brati, and his involvement with the Naxalite movement. Brati is a college student who was killed because of his connections with the Naxalite group; though he is from a middle-class family, he joined the Naxalite movement to speak for the oppressed. 17th January is the anniversary of Brati's death, as well as his birthday.

The play opens at dawn, with an unknown voice repeating the phrase '[s]eventeenth January, Nineteen Seventy' three times (2011:3); the stage is 'dark' (2011:3). This scene, which is the first recollection in the play, creates suspense and foreshadows the forthcoming terror. Intensifying the sense of uncertainty, an 'impersonal voice of an officer' (2011:3) from off-stage rings the Chatterjee's house telephone, waking the family. Despite Sujata's repeated inquiry, the caller gives neither explanation of the event nor identification and summons the Chatterjee family to 'Kantapukur' to 'identify Brati Chatterjee' (2011:3). The dis-embodied caller creates tension at the outset of the play and this event begins Sujata's journey to the world of the Naxalite movement.

The immediate reaction of Dibyanath, Sujata's husband, is to conceal the news from the media by bribing the police, because he knows that Kantapukur is the police morgue. Moreover, in line with the anonymity of the police officer, Dibyanath is not willing to identify Brati, not even 'rushing to have a look' (2011:11): he is supported by Jyoti, the eldest son of the family.

DIBYANATH: (*oblivious of Sujata's presence*). Jyoti, there may still be time.

Isn't there a relation of your mother-in-law's in the police?

JYOTI: A maternal cousin.

DIBYANATH: Ring him up. Chaudhuri must help hush it up. He had warned us.

SUJATA: (*uncomprehending, in a panic*). What will you hush up? What are you talking about? (2011:4)

Although Dibyanath and Jyoti know the peculiarity of 'Kantapukur', Sujata finds out only by asking Jyoti. She is unable to connect the morgue and Brati at this moment. What she encounters at her visit to the morgue is a display of five covered bodies and a woman's voice, from '*somewhere at the back*' (2011:5) crying 'My Somu …' (2011:6). Sujata is shocked and terrified as she recognises that it is Brati lying dead there among them: her son, who left home the previous night promising to return the following day for his birthday, is reduced to a mere numeral – the corpse number 1084. At that moment, Sujata is unable to understand why or how her son is dead and assigned a number. The absence of the other woman from the stage, despite the '*continuity*' of her '*lamentation*' throughout the scene (2011:6), intensifies Sujata's confusion. Her visit to 'identify Brati' results in her disillusionment, for what she experiences in the police morgue is confusion and uncertainty. As later revealed in the play, the deceased are young boys killed through the repressive strategy the state used to suppress the Naxalite movement. Nonetheless, this remains unquestioned and unanswered, signifying the illegality of the actions.

Identification of dead bodies is a complex process which usually includes collecting ante-mortem data and medical examinations; however, a rushed, brief identification of a

'mole on the throat' (2011:6) confirms that it is indeed Brati's body. The mystery of the identification process is enhanced by the police officer, Saroj Pal, who forbids her to uncover Brati's face. Sujata's forceful gesture to disclose Brati's body – she '*tears off the sheet*' displaying the '*unnatural angle*' of Brati's body (2011:7) – indicates her resistance to the state's military coercion. Brati's unusual posture is an indication of the legacy of violence and depicts the reality of the body exposed to brutality.

The state's power is made explicit when Sujata's request to take Brati home is refused: her plea – '[c]an't I take him home?' – is denied – '[n]o. You won't get the body'(2011:7).[66] The two different references to Brati, Sujata's use of the personal pronoun 'him' and Pal's use of 'the body', symbolise the overall dehumanisation of Naxalite members. Sakar writes, '[t]hough the Establishment had dehumanized him by giving him a number to his corpse, Brati is still a human being' (2011:261). The stage directions given in the play-text states that '[*t*]*he sentence –"No. You won't get the body." – reverberates in different voices, in different pitches, each time striking Sujata's face like a whiplash*' (2011:7). This emphasises the coercion of the police and depicts the injury caused, not only to Brati and his group but also to Sujata. Pal's words parallel the dis-embodied '*lamentation*' of the (aforementioned) woman at the back of the morgue in manipulating tension on stage. A parallel reading will be explored in the fifth chapter with Ernest Macintyre's *Irangani* where the state denies the funeral rites and rights to a political rebel from Sri Lanka. Corpse number 1084 is denied respect by the

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[66] According to the Indian tradition among the majority of Hindus, the death of a person is given much importance, as it is believed that the soul of the person is on its path to the next existence. Therefore, the departed soul is highly respected and helped to have a peaceful crossover to the next existence. Those who are close to the dead would ceremonially commit to the funeral ceremony, taking the dead body with them. Funerals are arranged to show reverence to the dead, while the living engage in many religious and ritual activities during a period of mourning. On the anniversary of the death, family members and relatives usually observe this practice in favour of the dead.

police. This recalls Foucauldian concepts on governing 'according to *raison d'Etat*': he states that one way is through the 'police, or the unlimited regulation of the country according to the model of a tight-knit urban organization' (2008:5).

The play, however, stages no violent activities committed by the Naxalites. Nonetheless, as P. Shahanaz points out, when they 'raised their voice against the injustice, they were labeled as rebels and many atrocities were afflicted to them by the police' (2012:43). This resonates with Raman Dixit's observation that '[n]o particular national act has been enacted so far specifically to counter the Naxal movement, but various "anti-terror" acts have been used to curb Naxal violence and too often, to target sympathizers by stamping them as Naxalites' (2010:24). The Naxalites are considered a malignant entity: in Pal's words, they are '[a] cancerous growth on the body of democracy' (2011:11). How the rhetoric of the body is used here is significant: Pal uses the word 'cancer' to identify Naxalites as a menace, justifying the brutal power inflicted on their bodies. Democracy, which describes how power is vested in the people through a particular governing system, is represented as a damaged human body which requires medical attention. Devi dramatically represents Nehru's failure to build the nation legitimately.

The celebration of the engagement two years later is oblivious of the fact that it coincides with the anniversary of Brati's death.[67] Sujata claims that Tuli has 'chose[n]' (2011:10) the date – it is a deliberate choice, even though Tuli justifies it saying that it is the religious leader's decision. What emerges is a father's reluctance to accept his son's corpse and a sister's ignorance of her brother's death. Moreover, Sujata tells Tuli: '[t]o Tony, and his crowd, to the others, you, your father, Jyoti, Neepa [other members of the family], the way

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[67] In India it is unusual and unethical to celebrate any special event on the day of a death anniversary of a close relative.

you all speak his name, as if …as if Brati was a criminal' (2011:10). This explains Brati's exclusion from his family. Sarkar writes that Sujata 'finds herself caught in a conflict between a sympathetic mother and a silent protester against the immoral tendencies of the members of her family' (2011:256). She articulates her belief that Brati is not an unlawful person, but his 'belief was so different' (2011:9) from other family members.

Except for Sujata, the Chatterjees' actions metaphorically reveal how in the nation-building process India marginalises the grievances of those who are not at the centre and those who speak for the ostracised. Dibyanath's effort to 'hush up' the event and his disinclination to identify Brati's body are akin to the Government's intention to suppress the uprisings without endeavoring to find solutions to the causes of the revolution. Brati's ostracism emblematises Suranjan Das' assertion that in most postcolonial nations, as noted in the second chapter, the relationship between the nation and the state is distant and their objectives are irreconcilable (2001).

The invisibility of the actions taken by the police to materialise Brati as a corpse number is rendered visible to Sujata through Somu's mother's and Nandini's narratives.[68] Somu and Nandini are members of Brati's Naxalite group, and Sujata visits them before Tuli's engagement party. Somu is among the five corpses on stage and it is his mother who is heard at the morgue. Sujata's pronouncement '*on tape*' – 'I went to Somu's mother in the evening. One can now visit the colony' [as there is] 'no terror, no sirens, no gun shots' [and] 'screaming young men' (2011:11-12) – is significant. The use of the word 'colony' should be noted in relation to the de-colonised India – despite the intention to establish freedom and equality in the country, what is seen ironically after independence is a system of internal

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[68] It is interesting to note here that Somu's mother is not given a name throughout the play, but is identified as 'Somu's mother'; this warrants future research.

colonisation through which subalterns continued to be susceptible to injustice and violence because of economic and class disparities. Moreover, within this system of internal colonisation, due to their political beliefs and ideologies, individuals are made subalterns by the state; they become subject to biopolitical violence.

Somu's mother recounts how Naxalites had meetings in the colony and her one room-house was a frequent venue for them: on the night of his death, Brati was in her house, with Somu and two other Naxalite members when a mob attacked them; it is implied that the mob was hired by the police. Her description of her son, '[m]y Somu was rough – those who don't have a thing to call their own, and get kicked about by all and sundry, turn rough in the process' (2011:14), while signifying their poverty-stricken status, seems to rationalise Somu's involvement in the Naxalite movement. She narrates Somu's father's vulnerability as 'a poor shop keeper' with 'no savings' (2011:14). What emerges is that the people in this colony are extremely destitute, without 'a thing' to possess, and are socio-economically ousted from society. Their dispossession resonates with the Chatterjees' grand celebration of Tuli's engagement, characterising class disparity in postcolonial India. Somu's father becomes a passive victim of discrimination when desperately attempting to save his son from the mob's violence. Somu's mother says that:

> [h]e ran all the way. He had such faith in the police, but they wouldn't even take
>
> his complaint. They didn't do a thing. They only sent their vans when it was all
>
> over to collect the dead bodies […] he died of the shock. O God! Is there no

justice in this country? God! No justice? He went on and on asking till he was dead (2011:22).[69]

The denial of Somu's father's right to make a complaint about his son signifies the disenfranchisement of his political rights and paradoxically alludes to Dibyanath's power in influencing the police to cover up Brati's involvement with the Naxalites. The collection of dead bodies also suggests how biopolitics is utilised, to use Foucault's term, for 'massifying' accomplishment (2003b:243). Biopolitics employs a 'seizure of power' to capture people not just as individuals, but as populations, as a 'human race' (Foucault 2003b:243). In the Naxalites' context, the 'massifying' action is not based on ethnicity or the race, but on political ideology. Brati and his group are dehumanised as masses and they become subject to the state's violence because of their ideologies.

For Sujata, this is a moment of realisation of a different existence to her middle-class status: Somu's mother's narrative talks about poverty, brutality, disenfranchisement and class divisions experienced by the colonised; her description recalls both Das' view that Nehru's reign represented (in diverse ways) a continuation of British attitudes, and Kennedy and Purushotham's statement about Gandhi's repressive sovereignty. Despite Nehru's claim to offer 'justice and fullness of life' to everyone, what is apparent is the exclusion of people in the colony: the idealistic vision of the nation is dismantled as the state continues to marginalise vulnerable populations. The play portrays a postcolonial country rife with class divisions which reproduce colonial power dynamics; this is a form of internal colonisation extending beyond the decolonisation in 1947. (The class distinctions and conflicts enforce my

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[69] The police' ignorance of Somu's father's complaint about the mob's attack and the police's collection of bodies immediately after are just two reasons to suggest the relationship between the mob and the police; the mob is used by the police. This is verified later through Nandini's narrative.

argument about the need to look beyond the gendered interpretations of the play in literature). Sujata's initial claim that the colony is now without terror implies the eradication of the Naxalite ideology and the 'absence' of the Naxalite movement *in* the colony. Yet, paradoxically, Somu's mother's account demonstrates the 'existence' *of* the colony in postcolonial India.

Referring to the meeting between the two women, Sengupta states that '[t]he true encounter that [Sujata] has had is with Somu's mother – it is one culture confronting another and one getting educated by the other' (2011:254). Nevertheless, the relationship is non-reciprocal because it is Somu's mother who passes knowledge to Sujata while the latter acquires it, as suggested by Sujata's '*voice on tape*' – '[w]hen I visit her [Somu's mother], I find Brati' (2011:11-12). Somu's mother's voice holds narrative authority over the account of Brati's death. She also possesses familial and social credentials to speak with authority about Somu's commitment to the Naxalite movement. Although only an observer of the Naxalites, her role in the narrative involves an awareness of identity, as indicated in expressions such as '[i]t's all before my eyes now', 'I've made chapatis for all of them',[70] and '[d]idn't you ever realize what your son [Brati] was up to?'(2011:13-14). Her enquiry aims to rebuke Sujata for not having realised what Brati was up to. Somu's mother possesses knowledge of her son whereas Sujata is in need of knowledge of her son; knowledge empowers her in the narration.

Her voice is convincing and compelling; it invites the reader/audience into a situation that she has experienced and witnessed. It is the sharing of this experience that establishes her as an authority in the narrative and allows for the possibility of power and solidarity. Somu's mother's reliable voice involves an erasure of the presence of any other narration, and she achieves superiority over Sujata because of her knowledge about the colony and the event of

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[70] Chapatis are '[h]omemade unleavened bread' (Devi 2011:13).

Brati's death. Moreover, Somu's mother tells Sujata that 'you're rich. There is no comparison between you and us' (2011:23); by commenting on the class divisions and power mechanisms, she speaks not only to Sujata, but to the hegemonic structures.

Furthermore, through her knowledge of truth, Somu's mother subverts class power relations; despite her position as a subaltern, her narration epitomises authority and agency. Despite her namelessness, Somu's mother strikes at the centre; her narrative voice functions as a metaphor for empowered marginalised voices, the subalterns in the peripheries. Hers is a form of resistance against the social subjugation encountered by the *colonised* in postcolonial India. Somu's mother's power of knowledge recalls Foucault's belief that 'truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power […] Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power' (1980:131). Foucault exposes the importance of – and the relationship between – truth and knowledge for power. However, he does not provide a description of resistance developed through this power. Thus, when applying his concept to practical socio-political forms, it is to be debated whether truth does indeed hold power. Although Somu's mother speaks with both knowledge and truth – holds power over Sujata within the context – whether she can act on this power in the public sphere is problematic.

In midst of Somu's mother's narrative, Devi uses a flashback, giving further proof of the reliability and credibility of her voice:

Brati and his group occupy one end of the stage. Mob enters from the other end.

Even as the groups move towards one another, they play out their awareness of

a space for the house.

MOB: Come out Somu. Or we'll set the house on fire. Come out Bjit, come out

Partha. Or we'll burn up the whole lot of you. [...]

MOB: Come out. You claim you're not scared of death. Then why do you hide

in your hole?

BRATI: (*moves closer to the door, and shouts defiantly*). Don't shout. Wait a

bit, we're coming out. (*Brati is the only one who speaks in standard*

Bengali, the other language of Calcutta and West Bengali, unlike the rest

who use the dialect of East Bengal. The contrast is striking).

MOB: (*hooting, jeering, triumphant at having trapped yet another prey*). The

bastards have got a new one. Come out, you son of Calcutta!

SOMU'S MOTHER: (*finds her voice, only to break out in a helpless shriek*).

Don't go Somu-u-u-u…

MOB: (*mimicking*). Don't go Somu-u-u-u…

SOMU: (*in defiant determination, snaps at his mother*). Stop whimpering,

Mother! Father, hold mother tight. *(Somu's father tries to hold his wife*

back.) Don't let her go. Let's get out, or they'll set the house on fire.

(*Somu and Brati are weaponless*). (2011:20-22)

The mob enters a darkened stage and '*the whole stage is now enveloped in a red glow*'

(2011:20) creating tension and signifying danger. To emphasise the frightening atmosphere, a

'*chorus of threats from the stage and from off stage, on the tape, like a collective slogan*'

(2011:21) is heard. The on-stage torture of the mob represents the state's insidious

deployment of extra-judicial strategies in curbing the uprisings, and Naxalite members'

vulnerability in grappling with the extreme underhand violence committed by the police, as shown in the fact that Brati and Somu are weaponless. Through Somu's mother's and Nandini's narratives (which are discussed below) the play implies that the police used the service of the mob.

Furthermore the mob enjoys a contemptuous gesture of glory at this moment as they have '*trapped another prey*'. Their cruel action, which is ostensibly pleasurable and even exciting for them, reveals their inhumanity; like a nasty chorus, they mimic Somu's mother's lamentation. What is also pivotal here is how voice and tone are used on stage, not only to enhance tensions and terror but also to create trepidation and distress. Paradoxically, the mob's sadism is controlled by the police because, as I previously mentioned, they are a puppet, under the control of the police. Thus, the mob too becomes the police's prey. Moreover, Somu's father is also seen to be '*shaken*' (2011:20) like a '*panic-stricken animal*' (2011:21) signifying the dehumanisation of the passive victims of the attack. The verbal threat to set fire to individuals and property recalls the 'tyre pyres' used for torture in Sri Lanka.[71] These extra-legal modes employed to kill populations, without addressing the root causes of peoples' poverty, deprivation and injustice, question Nehru's concepts of democracy which promised equality to all walks of life, and problematise Foucault's (2008) concepts of the rationalisation of government praxis. Consequently, the impact of these representations on actors and audience function as a catalyst in defence of justice and humanity, and as a potential to stir the audience.

The other '*striking*' (2011:21) feature explicit in the mob scene, is the distinction between languages used by the Naxalite members, echoing the aforesaid assertions of the colony. Brati is the only one who speaks standard Bengali; all others at Somu's house use the

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[71]See the second chapter of the thesis.

dialect of East Bengali. Even the mob recognises him as 'a new one […] a son of Calcutta' (2011:21) from his language. This echoes Somu's mother's statement, when she wonders why Brati who has a 'rich home […] chose such a course' (2011:14). It must be noted here that the other members of the group, Bijit, Laltu and Partha, 'belonged to apolitical poor refugee homes' [in the colony] (2011:29).[72] The fact that those from the colony have no access to the standard language implies a lack of education and alludes to inequality and social privileges. Brati has taken steps to cross a linguistic, social and spatial boundary coming to the colony to raise his voice against the discrimination of the oppressed. In this respect, Brati's attempt can be read as a symbolic contribution to the nation-building process as he has made connections across class and educational divisions. Brati's re-position also recalls the 'binarism of centre and margin' (Ashcroft et al. 2002:113) concept which puts constraints upon the colonised's engagement with the colonisers and vice versa.

Nandini: a 'legally unnamable and unclassifiable being'?

While Somu's mother exposes the Naxalite movement from the perspective of a spectator, Nandini – one of the surviving revolutionaries of the Naxalite movement and Brati's girlfriend – offers first-hand experiences of the repression. Unlike Somu (but similar to Brati), Nandini is from a middle-class family. Nandini tells of the Naxalites' aims and causes as well as the present circumstances of the movement. The stage directions indicate that Sujata and Nandini meet at a public restaurant, denoting the symbolic publicity given to the Naxalite movement in the play.

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[72]Somu's mother tells Sujata that the other member subjected to the mob's attack is Laltu; he was not in Somu's house but the mob dragged him out of his house in the colony.

Nandini and Sujata sit at a table. Nandini wears dark glasses. Everything about her – her form, the way she sits, the way she speaks – gives the impression of a tight secretiveness, a self-imprisonment. When she speaks, she has the manner of a storyteller, as if she is speaking of other people, not about her own people. Nandini never softens except when she utters the name Brati with tenderness. (2011:24)

The dramatic gesture of vigilance and secrecy here recalls Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*: when Styles narrates the anecdote of the Ford factory to the audience, he is wary of any eavesdroppers because he is revealing the exploitative nature and hypocrisy of the white employers. In a similar vein, Nandini's behavior in Devi's play also demonstrates that she is ready to expose something secretive, something which might disturb the authoritative state. Moreover, an audience is immediately drawn to trust a narrator who has an impersonal '*manner of a storyteller*'. Thus, Nandini is granted narrative authority and reliability from her fisrt appearance. That she has to be self-imprisoned in a public place signifies the torture a 'living' Naxalite may have to undergo in the 1970s. This recalls Foucault's notions on self-surveillance: 'he who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it […] becomes the principle of his own subjection' (1995:202-203). Nandini's consciousness of her position under the state's surveillance results in her self-scrutiny: she becomes complicit in her subjugation. Frantz Fanon writes in *Black Skin, White Masks* that the white person's surveillance of the black colonised interpellates the black subject as inferior and other: successively, the black person 'proceeds from humiliating insecurity through strongly voiced self-accusation to despair' (2008:43) by dint of a self-regulating surveillance process. Nandini too is subject to self-surveillance: this is neither to circumvent the colonisers' or the internal

rulers' gaze of denunciation, nor to shun her Naxalite identity, but in an attempt to escape from the state's biopolitical surveillance. Although she experiences her own debilitating version of Fanonian self-gaze, she does so to preserve her agency as a Naxalite.

Nandini's narrativisation introduces Naxalite subjectivity to the state's 'rampant' 'programme of betrayal' (2011:25-26). First, echoing Indira Gandhi's Government which offered ransom to the non-loyal members to help security forces to identify Naxalites (Jonathan Kennedy and Sunil Purushotham 2012), Nandini says that '[m]oney, jobs and power didn't mean a thing to us. But these were the temptations that seduced those who had joined us only to betray us' (2011:25). She discloses the betrayer responsible for Brati's death, wondering how they 'could afford not to know that with all that has happened since 1947, all human loyalties had dissolved by 1970' (2011:26). Implicit here is the state's strategic targeting of this weakness of human loyalties. Secondly, Nandini narrativises the Naxalites' vulnerability to policies as 'a political party will not make a stand until it has been able to determine how it'll serve its own interest and affect its standing with the Centre' (2011:27). She is worried as politicians pay attention to their own interests to comply with the central Government in India, while ignoring the issues of the Naxalites. Thirdly, Nandini considers media betrayal, saying that '[t]he worst reactionists make avowals for their sympathy' but they 'spoil' Naxalites' 'image in the public eye' (2011:27). She critiques the misrepresentation exercised by the media, which does not give the Naxalites the opportunity to explain their grievances and the reasons behind the development of the movement. She affirms that the Naxalites' cause is not a motive born out of hatred of the state, but their love of the nation. Yet, as a consequence of the state's betrayal, they become incarcerated as '[t]he

prison walls rise higher, new watch towers shoot up, there are so many young men still in the prisons' (2011:27).

Devi shifts the action at the restaurant to a flashback: it is an encounter between Nandini and Pal in a cross-inquiry in the police. Throughout the questioning, '*Nandini fidgets from time to time, trying helplessly to rise to her feet, making it obvious in the process that her hands and her feet are tied to the chair*' (2011:30). It was during this inquiry that Nandini discovers the group's betrayal by a police informant: this instance of the police's indirect treacherous action recalls the use of the mob. The spectacle of tying Nandini to a chair alludes to tethering animals and the image of Nandini as an untamable beast shows how detainees are brutalised and dehumanised. A similar manifestation of violence is observed in Chapter Six in Fugard's *The Island* (1973), where the incarcerated political protesters are objectified by the prison guard. Yet, Nandini's position is a significant case in point of a cessation of law, for Nandini endures police violence prior to any juridical edict. She is subjected Pal's torture while she is in police custody as a suspect. The police's use of brutality here alludes to the state of exception and its kenomatic nature: as Agamben theorises, alongside the emergence of modern praxis of governance, a state of emergency has been implemented in response to any threats such as protests, insurrection and revolts (2005). This situation enables an exception of laws. Nonetheless, Nandini's effort to stand on her feet can be considered as a metaphor for the rise of the Naxalite ideology: it is defeated as she is physically restrained.

In addition to corporeal torture, Pal ignores her strong objection and shows Nandini the pictures of dead bodies, including Brati's corpse: while turning '*her head away violently, Saroj Pal insistently holds the picture up before her eyes […]*' (2011:33). Pal also '*bends closer to her, lights a cigarette, presses the lighted cigarette to Nandini's cheek. She screams*

[…] *He puffs at the cigarette, and then presses it again to Nandini's cheek. Nandini screams. The questions and the pattern continue*' (2011:33). This non-verbal depiction is significant for its explicit demonstration of police brutality on stage through inhumane interrogation: it parallels the mob's on-stage violence in the colony. Both represent the expansion of the powers of the government or the state's '*full powers*' (Agamben 2005); yet unlike the mob's torture, Pal overtly characterises the state, which inflicts both corporeal and psychological pain on the detainees. Similar to the demonstration of the mob, the dramatic and textual effect of this flashback scene creates tension as the audience becomes a witness to the torture exercised on Naxalite members at the hands of the police.

Although Nandini's voice is not powerful at the beginning – as indicated by her '*self-imprisonment*' – she gains authority in the course of her narrativisation. Her voice denotes objection and power over Pal as explicit through her refusal to speak, despite his forceful efforts to extract information from her. For instance, her expressions during Pal's questioning such as 'I don't know them', 'I won't say a thing', 'I don't believe you', 'I don't want to hear anything', and 'No, I won't look at them' display Nandini as an active subject, not as a passive victim (2011:32-33). She intensifies her hostility to Pal's inquiry commanding him to 'stop it' and screaming (2011:33). Even though the scream here is caused by physical pain, it reinforces the objection to Pal's torture. Hence, her voice promptly enhances the scene, insinuating the authority she possesses over Pal and her resistance to him; this recalls Sujata's non-verbal gesture of uncovering Brati's face at the morgue, in spite of Pal's objections.

In response to Sujata's comment – 'it's all quiet now' (2011:34) – Nandini '*screams*' (2011:34) loudly, startling the audience. This is the second instance of Nandini's screaming

on stage, and with this her authoritative power of voice reaches a peak. The scream also functions as a metaphor for the Naxalite movement's explosion in the play:

> No. No. No. No! It was never quiet, nothing's quiet. Nothing's changed. Thousands of men rot in the prisons without trial, they are denied the status of politicals, and yet you say it's all settled down again? Torture continues with greater sophistication and more secrecy, and yet you say it's all quiet? All quiet? What do you need to get it into your heads that nothing's quiet? (2011:34)

Legal systems usually ensure the accused's basic rights such as the right to trial and to call witnesses in their defense: a defendant is also protected from inhumane treatment or punishment before conviction. Yet, Nandini discloses that thousands of young men and women are arrested and deprived of their basic human rights. Before formal convictions are passed, they are imprisoned: they are neither detainees nor prisoners according to regular legal systems.

This parallels Agamben's example of a contemporary state of exception. In the context of the wars in Afghanistan, he refers to '[t]he USA Patriot Act issued by the U.S. Senate on October 26, 2001' which 'erases any legal status of the individual, thus producing a legally unnamable and unclassifiable being' (2005:3): accordingly, captured members of the Taliban become '[n]either prisoners nor persons accused, but simply "detainees", they are the object of a pure *de facto* rule, of a detention that is indefinite not only in the temporal sense but in its very nature as well, since it is entirely removed from the law and from judicial oversight' (2005:3-4). Similarly, Naxalite members rotting 'without trial' in prisons are 'unclassifiable being[s]', subject to the state's cruelty. They are subjected to arbitrary detention; then interrogators torture them – both psychologically and physically. This provides credible

evidence to Kennedy and Purushotham's (2012) observation that students who were ideologically committed were either killed or detained indefinitely in custody by the Indian Government. What is also shown here is the Indian Government's employment of extrajudicial strategies in curbing the Naxalite movement. In governing the countries, as Foucault conceptualises, the police force ensures a stable state: yet when it violates laws irrespective of the outcome, the state becomes unstable (2008). Evidently, the Naxalites' incarceration without judiciary decisions demonstrates this lawlessness: it is an instance where constitutional rights are superseded and rejected by the state. Agamben elucidates that '[i]n every case, the state of exception marks a threshold at which logic and praxis blur with each other' (2005:40). What is evinced through the Naxalites' experiences is how the prolonged state of exception dispossesses the Naxalites of their human rights.

Nandini '*takes off her glasses*' (2011:35) and states that her 'right eye's blind from the gleam of the thousand-watt lamps. There's little sight left in the left eye' (2011:35). This provides testimony on stage to the extent of the state's torture. It also metaphorically represents the state's exertion to crush the Naxalite movement (even after the death of Brati and other members), because when applied indiscriminately, torture is used as a tool of repression and deterrence against rebellion and Naxalite empowerment. We also see conceptual parallels between the treatment of 'vision' in Nandini's partial blindness and Jeetu's impaired vision in Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest* (see Chapter Seven). Consequently, Nandini is now 'out on parole. For medical treatment' (2011:35). Although the sores on the skin are healed, she'll 'never be normal again' (2011:34) because the psychological damage affects her future. She also foretells that '[s]ome day you'll learn that I've been arrested again' (2011:35). While suggesting the continuity of the police actions,

Nandini's claim also implies that she may protest again in the future; her ideology was not broken in the wake of Pal's brutality.

The play dramatises the illegal mechanism of internal politics of the country despite aspirations to build the nation through democracy and justice. Nandini's visibly tortured presence on stage is a formidable spectacle and she speaks about her body being placed under the internal power of the police. Her experience epitomises the ways in which the country uses a form of biopower focused on the body of the insurgent, using verbal and physical harassment. The state's persecution extended to sexual assault is implied through Nandini's articulations, 'I won't be able to tell you [Sujata] all that happened after' and '[a]fter what I went through in prison, every man approaching me seems to be a policeman' (2011:34).

The process here aptly resembles, in Achille Mbembe's words, '*death-worlds*' and '*living-dead*' people (2003:40). Mbembe explains that these death-worlds encompass 'new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*' (2003:40). Through necropolitics (Mbembe 2003), people are subject to the continuum of death in contemporary society. Death here embodies not only literal death, but also psychological, political and civil death manifested through diverse technologies of power. Nandini provides a dramatic testimony to necropolitics as she undergoes a continuum of torture, even after her release on parole. Biopolitical operations in *Mother of 1084,* represented through torture on the bodies of Naxalite members, problematise the art of governmentality employed by the state.

Nandini states that her co-members of the young Naxalite group are from different backgrounds: Brati is 'from a household of a certain kind'; 'Sanchayan, Dipu and Samaran came from a smug, high middle class.' […] and 'Mani and Kushal had parents involved in

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left-wing politics' (2011:29). With the exception of Brati, the members attacked by the mob were from poor homes in the colony. What is implied here is that a group of young people, irrespective of their social backgrounds, have shared a common aim – to fight against the marginalisation experienced by the downtrodden land sharecroppers, and to resist the state's coercion. The diversity of the group acts to add credibility and legitimacy to their grievance in that they all shared a 'common feature' (2011:29). This alludes to Dixit's statement that, '[t]he Naxalist [Naxalite] movement found enormous support among the educated youth. These young men and women belonged to the petty bourgeoisie. Many […] who went off to the forests were medical and engineering graduates. […] Some went to rural areas to mobilize the people there and some stayed back in Calcutta, perpetrating acts of violence in an attempt to overthrow the state' (2010:26).

While playing the role of educator, Nandini's voice also characterises the Naxalites' power and solidarity. Her narrative is haunted by recurring images of corporeal and psychological brutality such as incarcerating, raping, burning and killing; she provides seamless transparency to the Naxalite ideology and the state's repression to Sujata. The more Nandini narrates her experiences, the more authority her story gains as an authentic human experience. The haunting aspects of her narrative, the traumatic depictions of brutality make her narrative authentic.

Thus, Sujata realises that, as Sree states, Nandini's comments offer 'a severe probe into the social, political and cultural conditions of the society' (2008:79). Through the credibility of her narration Sujata realises that '*it's more tragic for a living Nandini than for a dead Brati*' (2011:34). The way Nandini uses her experiences as a Naxalite activist resonates with Foucault's delineation of the intellectual in the political sense. Foucault writes that the

intellectual is 'the person who utilizes his knowledge, his competence, and his relation to truth in the field of political struggles', an 'offspring of the jurist, or at any rate of the man who invoked the universality of a just law, if necessary against the legal professions themselves' (1980:128). Nandini passes on her knowledge and judgment of the Naxalite ideology; hence, she can be regarded as an intellectual in the Indian political milieu. The play provides a space for Nandini to freely voice her accusation against the state; ironically – and most dramatically – this happens when she is being tortured. It is interesting to note here that fiction is used as a space to articulate alternative narratives of history, traumatic experience, the voices of the voiceless. This is a role-reversal of the state's power and an affirmation of marginal and suppressed voices. She poses a rhetorical question – '[how] can you be smug and complacent?' when Naxalites are brutalised (2011:35); and her rebelliousness and self-determination to grow 'sharp like a dissectors' knife' (2011:35) enhance this.

Nandini's and Somu's mother's narratives nourish and revitalise Sujata politically. Sengupta writes that Sujata's understanding of the political system is 'late, but firm. In fact it is a hindsight by means of which she is able to analyze her past, her unfulfilled yearnings' in terms of Brati's self-sacrifice (2011:253). Rather than a self-analysis, Sujata's efforts to understand Brati's commitment to the Naxalites lead her to, as Shahanaz notes, 'reflect on her own alienation from the complacent, hypocritical, bourgeois society' (2012:42). Moreover, Sujata realises the need and urgency to speak for the Naxalites' ideology, and to attack the middle-class people's antagonistic attitudes to the movement. In other words, she reaches an understaning to be involved in the youths' 'common fight', thus to break out of the class boundaries to some extent. It is really interesting that it takes the death of her son to push Sujata to understand this, and to attack middle-class antagonism. In this way, it seems that at

least in this instance, the state's repressive and violent tactics are somewhat ineffective, as they result in Sujata's sympathy with and commitment to the revolutionary movement.

'Stiffened corpses' and the Naxalite's blast

Having explored the representations of the oppressive government and the power of the two narrative voices, the rest of this chapter addresses how the play functions as a resistance to the state through Sujata's monologue. Despite the relative absence of Sujata's narrative voice in the play, the focus given to her at the end – the party scene – is highly emblematic. A speechless encounter between Pal and Sujata is dramatised at the party to create a tension between those who embody the cruelty of the Government and the understanding of the state's extra-legal repression and those who sympathise with Naxalite ideology.

Pal's invitation to the party, which verifies the Chatterjees' lack of respect for – and ignorance of – Brati's death, triggers Sujata's suppressed animosity towards the officer. The resentment is reflected through her thoughts – '*Sujata shuts her eyes. Inscription in shadows pass across the screen at the back of the stage*: "*Saroj Pal, bloody cur of the police, no forgiveness for you*!" "*Quick promotion for Saroj Pal, in recognition of his heroic, role in the suppression of the Naxalite revolt.*"...' [original ellipsis] (2011:10). Her choice of words, '*bloody cur*' in particular, and the comparison to an animal, expresses the intensity of her anger and the bestiality of his action. Sujata's antagonism intensifies when she sees Pal's badge: '*flaunting 'DCDD* [Deputy Commissioner, Detective Department]' (2011:40). His promotion from the position of the O.C. to the DCDD signifies his commitment to the police; his success is built on the lives of Brati, reduced to corpse number 1084, and Nandini,

transformed into a partially blind prisoner on parole. It must also be noted here that the play gives no explanation as to why Brati's body is given the specific number. Assumedly, Brati is the 1084th youth slaughtered during a specific period of Naxalite suppression by the police, headed by Pal.

Pal excuses himself from the party, mentioning a 'mass action' (2011:41); contradictorily, his voice on tape sounds more like an 'escape' from Sujata – 'I knew I'd have to face her, and that's why I didn't want to come [to the party]' (2011:41). This is interesting in contrast with the more animalistic depiction of Pal above; it suggests a kind of conscience, not wanting to face her. Further, parallel to the sound of the '*screeching siren*' (2011:41) of Pal's vehicle, Suajta articulates her outburst of indignation. It is worth quoting in detail Sujata's monologue which brings the play to an end.

> SUJATA: Still in uniform? Still on duty? Mass action again in Baranagar? (*Turns to the dancers, all absorbed in their whirling movements*) Still the Black Maria, the revolver in the holster, the helmeted policemen within the van? Where's the job this time? Where will the siren screech? Where will the streets resound to the pounding boots, the threatening van? Where will bullets pierce the wind? Where – again? Where will Brati run to? Where? (*Addressing the audience*) Why don't you speak? Speak, for heaven's sake, speak, speak, speak! How long will you endure it in silence? Where is the place where there's no killer, no bullets, no prison, no vans? (*Goes round the stage*) Where can you escape it all, Brati, in Calcutta, in West Bengal, from north to south, from east to west? You can't be on the run any longer, Brati. Brati, come back. I found you

today, Brati. If the siren screeches again, if the vans race and Saorj Pal chases another young man somewhere, you'll be lost again. (*Pointing to the audience and the dancers*) Corpses, stiffened corpses, all of you! (*Pointing to herself*) And I myself ? Did Brati die so you could carry on your cadaverous existence, enjoying and indulging in all the images of the world, all the poetry, the red roses, the neon lamps, the mother's smile, the child's cry, forever, till infinity? Do the living die, only to leave the world to the dead to enjoy? No! Never! (*The dancers break off from the dance and stand in an immobile row at the back of the stage with Dibyanath and the Kapadias* [Tuli's in-laws].) Let this 'No' of mine pierce the heart of this city, […] Let it tear down the happiness of everyone cooped up in his own happiness (*Pause*) Brati… (*She falls down. Pause. The rest break their freeze and rush up to her*).

DIBYANATH: (*shouts out*) It must be the appendix! It's burst. (*Curtain*).

(2011:41-42)

The significance of Sujata's lengthy speech addressed simultaneously both to the audience and to the attendees of the party is manifold; it highlights the importance of voice as a mode of resistance. Firstly, the intensity of her voice is used to compete with the screech of Pal's police van, hence articulating a metaphorical resistance to Pal, who is ready for a 'mass action' to murder Naxalites. Then, Sujata's identification of the people in the theatre – both the characters and the audience – as 'stiffened corpses' suggests they are politically dead at the hands of the authoritarian state's illegal operations. Paradoxically, Sujata suggests that the middle-class characters at the party scene in the play and the people in the audience are the

living-dead people as they are blind to the state's injustice and lawlessness. She reiterates her strong appeal, both to the audience and to the attendees at the party, to 'speak' against the injustice on the Naxalite movement, of the infringement without silently 'endur[ing]' it. Her monologue implies the necessity of the continuation of the Naxalite cause; this is in contrast to Singh's and Modi's statements about the Naxalites, as noted in the second chapter. Sujata takes Pal's claim that Naxalites are malicious and cancerous and reverses it, implying that Brati is not dead and his political ideologies are desirable. Through her reference to 'helmeted' police men 'within the van' and with their 'revolver[s]' Sujata implies that the state is safeguarded in mass actions.

In addition, Sujata's articulation of the Naxalites' strength is a threat, not only to her husband's prejudices about the Naxalite movement, but also to the political naiveté and indifference of the attendees of the party – the self-righteous middle-class society. This relates to Jaya's reaction towards the symbolical male figure of the neo-colonial coercion, as represented in Manjula Padmanabhan's play *Harvest* (see Chapter Seven).[73] Implicit here is the revolutionary power of the Naxalite members, whose actions destroy the happiness of those who are insensitive to their claims. In that sense, the play signifies the dismantling of an oppressive colonial system in postcolonial India. Quite in contrast with the notion that Sujata was 'neglected' and 'not respected' by family members (Shahanaz 2012:42), this scene shows how she gains attention. All the dancers at the party 'obeyed' her command; they become motionless and broke off the dance. The woman abandoned by her own family manages to render the moving dancers motionless and frozen. Sarkar suggests that 'Sujata's discovery of Brati and his cause helps her to rediscover her "self" and her cause as mother, a woman and a

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[73] This action also alludes to Nora's shutting of the door in the face of her husband, Helmer, in Henrik Ibsen's play, *A Doll's House* (1879).

human being' (2011:261). Yet, it is more than self-discovery as an individual. Sujata, as Sree writes, 'identifies the need for severe revolt and greater sacrifice to safeguard human values' (2008:80). She gains agency while being outspoken symbolically of the middle-class' hypocrisy, the state's brutality and the Naxalites' strength to withstand the state's pressure.

The dramatic action of Sujata's '*fall[ing] down*', contrary to Dibyanath's announcement, is caused by a burst 'appendix' (the audience is told earlier in the play about Sujata's need to seek medical treatment for her appendix). It is a metaphorical outburst of Sujata's strong feelings of belligerence and her discovery of the need for revolt. The primary source for this discovery and rebellion is Brati's dead body which is identified on stage merely as a four-digit numeral. Therefore, Sujata's collapse can be considered as a consequence of the metaphorical explosion of the appendix in the play's title, '*of 1084*', quite contrast to Dibyanath's simple 'diagnosis' of appendicitis.

This assumption can also be supported by two means: through Dibyanath's hypocrisy and Sujata's voice. Dibyanath is portrayed as a pretender, especially because of his reactions to Brati's commitment to the Naxalites. His diagnosis can be regarded as an insidious effort to hush up the metaphorical explosion of the corpse number 1084 materialised by his wife's collapse. Sujata's voice implies that corpse number 1084 is metaphorically living, and the Naxalite movement is alive. This emerges when she questions '[d]o the living die, only to leave the world to the dead to enjoy' while naming the party attendees as 'corpses'. What becomes apparent is the tenacity of the resistance movement and the symbolic power of the corpse, in spite of the state's attempt to kill it off. Despite the relative corporeal invisibility of the corpse as it is covered with a sheet, Brati's corpse is alive throughout the play, thus, the 'appendix' indicated in the title '*of 1084*' is the key figure in the play. In short, what

Dibyanath *mis*identifies as the bursting of Sujata's 'appendix' is the metaphorical explosion of the relatively dis-embodied corpse number 1084, the appendix of the title: this is the explosion that Nandini warns and foretells by way of her narrativisation.

'Mother of 1084' is mentioned only once in the play in Pal's '*voice on tape*' (2011:41) when Sujata and Pal see each other at the party. Despite this 'nonappearance', what becomes apparent throughout is the function of the title. It is the metaphorical existence of the corpse 1084 which makes Sujata strong and vigorous: it is the power '*of 1084*' in the title which metaphorically explodes through '*Mother*'. Thus, the title adds paradoxical significance to the play.

The play shows that the stature of India – created in the light of its achievements, culture and tradition – is corpselike because the middle-class society is blind to the concerns of the downtrodden. This is implied when Sujata identifies both '*the audience and the dancers*' as 'corpses', to bestow responsibility on the audience (this aspect is discussed in the next section). The corpse number 1084 shows that these groups are not merely appended to the country and should not be excluded in the nation-building process. Sujata's monologue has some conceptual parallels with Sizwe's reading of the letter to his wife and to the audience in Fugard's play as both speak of the embodied exploitation operated by the state.

Despite the drive for democracy and desire to construct a nation on the basis of equality for all groups in postcolonial India, certain populations are discriminated against and even vilified by the oppressive state. Sengupta notes that the play is 'the cacophony of the spent-up intellectuals meeting each other in cocktail parties' and 'the pretense of so called radicals in poetry and politics to upload the cause of the Naxalites' (2011:253). Yet, it is not only a type of protest against middle-class people but also an awakening to the illegal

violence exercised by the state. It represents a forceful defiance of the forces which curb the Naxalites, who in turn speak for the oppressed, disenfranchised populations. As the play ends, the audience is supposed to leave the theatre with this tension.

Explaining Antonin Artaud's views on drama, Martin Esslin writes that 'to have any kind of artistic effect you must make the audience sit up and, if possible, undergo a really harrowing experience because art is essentially a waking-up process, not a putting-to-sleep process' (1970:208). Esslin further notes that Artaud's belief is that such theatre administers 'shocks' (1970:208) on the audience. He explains that 'if you have audiences who don't really want art but merely somnolence—what Brecht called a "culinary theatre" that you can consume and excrete without its leaving any trace inside you—then you don't have these effects, but you don't have art either' (1970:207-208).

As the middle-class party attendees become frozen and dumbfounded by Sujata's words and actions, the audience are also expected to respond to the play by 'sit[ting]-up' and taking notice of the symbolical resistance of the Naxalite movement, as represented through Nandini and Sujata. Sujata's implication that Brati is not dead and that the audience and the party attendees are corpses, is a blow to the audience. Through the burst appendix, the audience in *Mother of 1084* realises the power of the suppressed Naxalite ideology. They are expected, to use Esslin's words, not just to 'consume and excrete' the Naxalite ideology represented in the play, but are discomposed and disturbed to possess its 'trace inside' of them. This is evinced through Sujata's claim that the Naxalites' existence should 'pierce the heart' of everyone, 'set[ting] the past, the present and the future atremble'. Hence the political messages in the play are significant.

This form of political theatre is also reminiscent of Bertolt Brecht's (1949) theories on alienation effects. Brecht states that '[t]he theatre has to become geared into reality if it is to be in a position to turn out effective representations of reality, and to be allowed to do so' (1964:186). Without just providing the raw material of reality, the theatre should make ready for effective operation of reality, while the audience is allowed to appreciate and assess reality. The killings in *Mother of 1084* parallel the historical events including the massacre in Barasat in the early 1970s: Kennedy and Purushotham's (2012) text reminds us of these historical events. The knowledge of this reality is operated through Brati's corpse and Sujata's discovery of the Naxalite movement, when the audience is put in a position both to enjoy and to assess the actions in the play. The play attempts, not only to have the artistic effect of 'waking-up' the audience, but to document the 'severe truth' (to use Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's term 1995: xx) of the resistance exercised in Naxalbari during the period of late 1960s.

In conversation with Spivak, Devi reveals that 'tribal land is being sold illegally every day, and usurped by mainstream society all over India, especially in West Bengal' (Spivak 1995: x). Devi justifies her role in documenting truth by saying that she has no capacity to 'create art for art's sake', but finds 'authentic documentation to be the best medium for protest against injustice and exploitation' (as quoted in Bandyopadhyay 2011: xvi). As noted, the killings and torture represented in the play overtly represent the repressive action used to curb the Naxalites in the1970s (Kennedy and Purushotham 2012). The play shares the experience of torture inflicted on Naxalites with theatre-goers and creates a space to question the praxis of justice in society. The theatrical shock produced in the play resonates with political leaders' – Singh's and Modi's – pronouncements about the Naxalite movement.

Sarkar states that the play is 'the voice of a universal protest against the seemingly immovable and heartless society in which we live' (2011:262). Nevertheless, as examined in the second chapter, Devi's script is not performed, but limited to a play-text; her script has been revised by other playwrights and performed in India. The revised scripts focus not on the repressive state and its 'extra-legal violence directed against the Naxalites' (Bandyopadhyay 2011: xv), but on other themes such as feminist concerns and family relationship. Devi's play-text, as far as its performance context is concerned, receives no significance as a socio-political play. This fact itself asserts the inequality and repression experienced by the subalterns, marginalised populations and the Naxalites, and problematises the body of democracy in India. These phenomena – the deprivation of political ideologies and funeral rights/rites, and the state's overt violence – are analogous to the Sri Lankan poltical context.

Chapter Five

Ethno-political Hostilities and Burial Rites/Rights in Sri Lanka

[W]e have then two great classes: living beings (or substances) and apparatuses. And, between these two, as a third class, subjects. I call a subject that which results from the relation and, so to speak, from the relentless fight between living beings and apparatuses.

Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays* (2009:14)

This chapter presents a reading of Ernest Macintyre's two plays – *Rasanayagam's Last Riot: A Political Fiction for the Theatre* (1990) and *Irangani: A Tragedy of Our Times* (2009) – with a particular focus on their representations of biopolitical operations. Macintyre's plays share many similarities with Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and Mahasweta Devi's *Mother of 1084*; his works also address the political milieu of the postcolonial nation and, in response, narrativise and dramatise death. Yet, Macintyre's representation of the impact of 'apparatuses' (to use Giorgio Agamben's words) on human beings require an approach to his plays that foregrounds the 'relentless fight' specific to the politics of Sri Lanka (as quoted in the epigraph).

Rasanayagam's Last Riot refers to the thirty-year old intermittent civil war in Sri Lanka between the state and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which lasted from the late 1980s until 2009. The play *Irangani* represents the outcome of political hostility between the state and the JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) which culminated in revolts and death. Both of these dramatic reconstructions represent postcolonial representations of political conflicts in Sri Lanka; they overtly state their political significance through the

repesentations of the denial of burial rites – and by extension political rights – for those killed and violated during ethno-political hostilities in the country. Burial rites are significant in Sri Lanka, which will be explored in due course through the plays.[74]

Due to the political ideologies and ethno-linguistic stratagems at work in Sri Lanka, populations – who either belong to a minority ethnic group or believe in non-mainstream political ideologies – are marginalised, objectified and discarded. This process is intensified either through local or international political coercion, such as the internal security mechanism and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC); their deceitful illegal actions and biassed news coverage are two examples. This chapter is devoted to explore such issues through the two plays. In this regard, *Rasanayagam's Last Riot* receives relatively more attention than *Irangani* because of its reference to the war in Sri Lanka; *Rasanayagam's Last Riot* is outspoken on the subject of political significance of ethnic tensions. Through a reading of *Rasanayagam's Last Riot*, this chapter portrays the ethnic cleansing during the riots, specifically exercised through ethno-linguistic cartographies, a biopolitical apparatuses happened on a national level. This chapter portrays the involvement of media, especially the

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[74] According to funeral customs of Sinhalese, the dead body, subsequent to a medical process, is returned to the family: then the body is kept at home of the deceased for a few days (usually from three to six days) for the relatives, the friends and other members of the community perform their religious and ritual rites around, and to offer merits to, the body. During this period, people's sympathies and condolences to the family members are extended. Just before the burial or cremation (the decision to burn or to cremate the body is also taken according to some customs), religios leaders are also invited to the place to conduct religious practices.

When the body is kept at home, food is usually not prepared in the house, and the tradition is that neighbours and friends provide meals for the family of the deceased and for the visitors during the whole period until the body is cremated or buried. Immediately after the cremation or burial, a meal called 'malabatha' (a meal to give further honour to the deceased) is prepared at the house where the body has been kept and the prepared meal is shared with all laymen who have attended the funeral. This is followed up with other intermittent religious ceremonies to honour the deceased. It must be added, however, that the tradition of keeping the dead body at home for days is now being slowly changed among some middle-class people living in urbanised cities, especially in Colombo: here, the dead body is kept at a funeral parlour for them. A significant reason for this change of custom is the limited space in houses in urban areas and/or the changes in social life and attitudes.

There are many parallels between the Sinhalese funeral customs and Tamils in Sri Lanka. Yet, Tamils are often required to articulate that the dead person has reached the world of Shiva; they also either cremate or bury the dead– the decision is often taken according to castes.

BBC, as dis-embodied biopolitical apparatuses bound up with the country's colonial legacy, while demonstrating a minority group of English-speaking educated elites' perspectives on – and detachment from – the ethnic tension.

Dis-embodied victims of ethno-linguistic cartographies *in Rasanayagam's Last Riot*

In *Wasted Lives: Modernity and its Outcasts*, Zygmunt Bauman describes that the 'population of those who either could not or were not wished to be recognized or allowed to stay' as the 'excessive' or 'redundant' populations; they are depicted as 'wasted humans' (2004:5). He summarises the condition as follows:

> To be 'redundant' means to be supernumerary, unneeded, of no use – whatever the needs and uses are that set the standard of usefulness and indispensability. The others do not need you; they can do as well, and better, without you. There is no self-evident reason for your being around and no obvious justification for your claim to the right to stay around. To be declared redundant means to have been disposed of because of being disposable – just like the empty and non-refundable plastic bottle or once-used syringe, an unattractive commodity with no buyers, or a substandard or stained product without use thrown off the assembly line by the quality inspectors. (2004:12)

Bauman's metaphors of objectification are used to refer to the unwanted populations and show the degree of social uselessness of these individuals. However, this futility is decided by the *non*-wasted, productive people – in Bauman's words by 'the others' – according to their

apparatuses. As Agamben writes in *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*, an apparatus is 'literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions or discourses of living beings' (2009:14). In this sense, it is not only Michel Foucault's contrivances such as prisons, panopticons and schools which regulate human beings but also:

> the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones and – why not – language itself, which is perhaps the most ancient of apparatuses – one in which thousands and thousands of years ago a primate inadvertently let himself be captured, probably without realizing the consequences that he was about to face. (Agamben 2009:14)

Agamben argues that apparatuses are 'rooted in the very process of "humanization" that made "humans" out of the animals' (2009:16), yet emphasises the political power of language especially in contemporary societies. In *Means without End: Notes on Politics,* he posits a link between the pejorative treatment of certain populations and languages. Those produced as 'wasted humans' are stripped of dignity because of 'the vicious entwining of language, people, and the state' (2000:67); they are made '*peoples without a state'*, for instance, 'Palestinians and Jews of the Diaspora' by the language and exercise of the state (Agamben 2000:67) [original emphasis]. They are 'oppressed and exterminated with impunity, so as to make clear that the destiny of a people can only be a state identity and that the concept of *people* makes sense only if recodified within the concept of citizenship' (2000: 67-68). Thus, languages with no political dignity equate to populations with powerless existences because '[t]he existence of life is the proper manifestation for the existence of language' (David

Kishik 2012:5). What Kishik refers to here is the relationship between human life and speech. Kishik writes that Agamben admits that 'there is one possible way to express the fact that I speak: *that I live*' [original emphasis] (2012:5). *Rasanayagam's Last Riot*'s protagonist, Rasa (Rasanayagam), is rendered a wasted human by the fashioning of language into an apparatus; the discussion proceeds to show how Rasa becomes a dis-embodied victim lacking any physical source, due to ethno-linguistic discriminations in postcolonial Sri Lanka.

By taking Black July as its backdrop, the play narrates the political conditions related to ethnic tensions and explores how human bodies become victims of violence and torture. Developed ostensibly as a personal account of a middle-aged, interracial couple and a male friend of the husband – Sinhalese husband Philip Fernando, Tamil wife Sita and Tamil friend Rasa – the play represents a section of middle-class English-speaking educated elites' perspectives on, and responses to, the ethnic tension prevalent in postcolonial Sri Lanka since the late 1950s.[75] Similarly to *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *Mother of 1084*, this play focuses on embodied experiences of political violence. While in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* Sizwe kills his identity and becomes a member of the living-dead for the sake of his family's survival, in *Rasanayagam's Last Riot* Rasa refuses to camouflage his Tamil identity and chooses suicide. Unlike *Mother of 1084* which represents the Naxalites' political ideologies and the repressive state's extra-judicial stratagems, *Rasanayagam's Last Riot* represents the victimisation of a civilian who is not directly engaged in politics. While exposing the voice of two contrasting perspectives of the married couple through their confrontational, critical dialogue about the ethnic tension (especially the continual riots), the play focuses on Rasa's death due to his Tamil identity during Black July in 1983 in Colombo. The play also narrativises death as

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[75]As two partners are from two ethnic groups – Sinhala and Tamil nationalities – the marriage is identified as a mixed marriage. It must be noted that such marriages are very rare among Sri Lankans and not welcomed by many people in the country.

experienced by both ethnic groups. Thus, *Rasanayagam's Last Riot* may be read as a representation of the ethnic tension fuelled by the political condition of the country, from the perspective of a socially-constructed minority (the educated middle-class). The following sections will explore the representations and narrativisation of these deaths by focusing on Rasa.

The play comprises two acts and one epilogue, and is set at Fernandos' Colombo residence. When the play opens, the married couple is seen preparing to migrate to Australia to live with their children and to welcome Rasa in order to provide him with safety and shelter from the violence of Black July. As they pack their bags, the sound that is heard outside their home is that of mobs shouting or chanting as they do their '*business of destruction and killing*' (1990:155). This first act is a critical dialogue between the husband and the wife: Sita urges Philip to open up a conversation with Rasa about the ethnic tensions. Macintyre writes that:

> the allegory becomes very pronounced towards the closing moments of the first
>
> act. The audience is conscious, that it is the Sinhalese and Tamil races they see,
>
> struggling on stage, to survive in their marriage to each other, within the same
>
> island. (*The Muse, Canberra* as quoted in Macintyre 1990:151)[76]

In the second act, which begins with Rasa's arrival at Fernando's place and ends with his death, Rasa describes what is happening outside. Sita's attempts to initiate a dialogue is,

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[76]The term 'allegory', used here to refer to the struggle between Sinhalese and Tamils, is problematic, especially in relation to postcolonial concepts. Although the term is used to refer to a symbolic narrative in a general sense, the term is a debated topic among postcolonial critics, particularly because allegories have been frequently used in colonial discourses to depict imperial coercion. For instance, some postcolonial scholars argue that it is derived from Eurocentric notions, hence should be rejected. Hence, the use of the term here needs further observation; this is beyond the scope of this project (Ashcroft et al. 2007:7-8).

initially, a failure; however, she gradually manages to open up a relatively critical dialogue about ethnic tensions, winning over Philip's initial resistance and Rasa's reticence to it. Rasa later goes to a refugee camp nearby as the intensity of the riot increases. On his way to the camp, Rasa, escorted by two policemen, is killed by a Sinhalese mob. In the epilogue, while Philip and Sita are seen waiting at Singapore airport to migrate to Australia, the play narrativises Sinhalese civilians' deaths at the hands of the LTTE through Philip reading a Singapore newspaper. Despite Rasa's death, the epilogue is a pointed anti-climax.

According to Foucault, one aim of racism is to separate people according to hierarchical population groups. He explains that:

> [t]his will allow power to treat that population as a mixture of races, or to be more accurate, to treat the species, to subdivide the species it controls, into the subspecies known, precisely, as races. That is the first function of racism: to fragment, to create caesuras within the biological continuum addressed by biopower. (2003b:255)

Based on this hierarchical division, the populations positioned at lower levels gain no political dignity. Rasa's death provides testimonies not only to a division among populations, but also shows that this biological fragmentation is further materialised and ruptured through the linguistic diversities present in Tamil and Sinhalese populations. The play-text represents an exercise of expropriation of a population through the apparatus of language. In a similar way to the 'primate', Rasa lets himself be 'captured' (as noted in Agamben's explanation on apparatuses). Rasa's choice to identify himself with his language (Tamil) is deliberate, and he is well-aware of the consequences of his choice; his choice is made through a realisation that

his sense of subjugation is directly relative to the powerless existence of the language which has been his mother tongue for years. This merits a further observation of language politics in the country.

Aligned with the implementations of the language policy in postcolonial Sri Lanka, the medium of instructions in almost all the schools and other educational institutions became either Sinhala or Tamil. Hence, populations of the two races studied in their own mother tongue and had scarce access to the language of the other, which led to the creation of a language barrier between the two ethnicities.[77] This policy can be read as a counter-response to the colonial rulers' administrative policies which favoured the minority group, Tamil. This recalls A.R.M. Imtiyaz and Ben Stavis' argument that ethnic relations in the country are linked to colonial history (2008). Implicit here is the current political condition of the country as being bound up with the colonial era. This also supports Foucault's claim that '[r]acism first develops with colonization, or in other words, with colonizing genocide' (2003b:257). This language stratagem is parallel to the status quo in South Africa; as noted in the second chapter, apartheid segregation, arose in South Africa when the country was under European colonisation. What is revealed in *Rasanayagam's Last Riot* is that this language barrier has been employed as a tool in ethnic conflicts, which typically culminated in torture and killings. Rasa's death is a powerful example of this.

When Rasa is escorted by two policemen to the refugee camp he becomes a victim to Sinhalese mobs. Despite Philip's unwillingness to send Rasa to the refugee camp, Rasa leaves Philip's residence with Sita's agreement. Rasa says:

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[77] It must also be noted here that a small minority of upper middle-class elite populations from both the ethnicities continued to have access to English education.

I think I go to the refugee camp. From 1956 I have been given safety of your home at every riot. We have enjoyed drinking and talking of old times, till the next riot, and the next riot, and so on and so forth…and it became a …(*he gestures a sense of futility*)…today I think I'll cross over, to see what it is like on the other side. (1990:224)

Rasa's decision to 'cross over', leaving his previously camouflaged identity, ends with his death. It is worth noting in detail that Rasa's departure from Philip's home represents not only how violence is exercised on bodies through linguistic apparatuses, but also how the materiality of the body is addressed. Philip, who has gone to the refugee camp to return the briefcase which Rasa left at home, arrives back revealing:

Sita listen,

You listen to me carefully.

Listen, how Rasa died.

When I got there, he was already,

A stiff burning log,

On the ground.

Just like a log, burning.

And in the darkened street,

There was no one else,

Only I was there at his funeral pyre,

No one else,

His cremators had fled.

And as I turned around to return,

After the pyre was spent,

I saw a policeman, weeping, coming towards me.

He told me it was not their fault,

He told me they were blameless.

That as they entered Madangahawatte lane,

A huge mob confronted them,

With the BUCKET held in front.

The policeman walked quickly to Rasa's side,

And stood confidently,

Waiting for the question and answer.

And the mob pointed to the bucket,

And asked, "What is this"?

Rasa's chest heaved, a big heave,

And the two policemen thought,

He was preparing for the password, "BALDIYA"

At the top of his heave,

He slowly deflated,

His head went limp,

And bowed.

He didn't,

He failed,

To use his knowledge.

The huge crowd went berserk,

The policemen lost control,

They clubbed him on the head,

He fell.

They poured the petrol,

They struck the match,

The policeman, weeping, fled,

Back to his station.

He couldn't understand,

Why Rasa had DISHONOURED,

The contract. (1990: 233-234)

I quote this lengthy passage in order to illustrate not only the power of the apparatus, language, but also the biopolitical coercion bestowed on one group of language speakers through linguistic discrimination, and how the materiality of the body is addressed. It must be reiterated here that this language discrimination emerged mainly due to language policies implemented in the 1950s.[78] Language testing is a strategy used by mobs during the riot to

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[78] See the second chapter for reference.

identify Tamils:[79] Sinhalese mobs test Tamils' ability to speak accurately in Sinhala, especially through the pronunciation of a word employed to signify bucket. The Sinhala word for bucket, 'baldiya' – /bɑːldɪjə/, beginning with the bilabial consonant /b/, is the 'password' for Tamil civilians to remain alive during this riot. In the Tamil alphabet, unlike in Sinhala, there are no alternative letters for the voiced bilabial stop and the voiceless stop: there is no /b/ in the Tamil alphabet and Tamils use the same letter to indicate both the sounds, and do not phonetically distinguish between the voiced and voiceless consonants, but depending on the position of the consonant, they vary the pronunciation.[80] Although Rasa has 'passed this test' by accurately pronouncing it before coming to Philip's home, when Rasa goes to the refugee camp he has, as implied, chosen the Tamil pronunciation despite his ability to pronounce it in accurate Sinhala. Hence, he is identified as a Tamil, and killed. Rasa's death is directly linked to the racism operated through language diversity, actualised by the ethno-linguistic divisive cartographies of the region. Implicit here is the role language plays in dealing with political coercion and killing subjects who speak the language with no 'state identity'. Moreover, for the word bucket, Tamils employ 'vaali' and when Tamils use it in Sinhala language, they pronounce it as 'vaaliya'– /vɑːlɪjə/; Philip's declaration that this pronunciation is 'bastardis[ing] language' (1990:194) acts as a metaphor of illegitimacy. Although Tamils and Sinhalese are not confined to one geographical terrain, especially in Colombo, the refugee camp that Rasa moves into also indicates a geographical space that

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[79] This phenomenon is described in the Bible: the code word is a 'Shibboleth' (a word which one group could not pronounce easily).

[80] When the /p/ sound comes after the /m/ sound, it is pronounced as /b/. For instance, the spinning toy (top), in Tamil is 'pambaram': the /b/ sound here represents /p/. That is, it is written in Tamil as 'pamparam', but pronounced as 'pambaram'. However, Indian Tamils use the /b/ sound for the initial /p/ as well, and they often pronounce it as 'bambaram'.

draws Rasa back in, linguistically. These events signify a repercussion of the cartographies of alienation present.

The use of the term 'bucket' is poignant. A 'bucket' is a vessel, often connoting emptiness and nothingness as figuratively indicated through the phrases such as 'a drop in the bucket' and 'to kick the bucket'. It is also commonly used to collect waste. This arbitrary relationship between the signifier and the signified – the bucket and its connotations – is powerfully employed in demonstrating the extermination of Rasa. This ethnic cleansing alludes to Bauman's (2004) concepts of 'human waste'.

Rasa's redundancy is further materialised through the burning of his body, to use Bauman's words, as a 'once-used syringe', according to the decision taken in line with language disparity. To explore further this displacement, his corpse is presented as a 'stiff burning log'. His body is removed from the scene; he is absent: Rasa becomes a dis-embodied victim. Rasa's tragedy hence represents an instance where not only are people tortured and killed, but their bodies are also objectified. This is a powerful instance of the biopolitical objectification of bodies, especially in such violent operations, a strong metaphorical transposition of the removal and rejection of an ethnic group.

The role of the police during the riot is also problematic. Evidently, Rasa is killed by a mob armed with clubs, petrol and matches, in the presence of two policemen. It states that in front of the 'berserk' mob, the police 'lost control'. As Cooray's (2002) text reminds us,[81] the state police was powerless during the riot in reality; this is dramatically represented when the policemen's expectations are shattered while Rasa attempts to utter the password and then fails, dishonouring the contract.[82] To recall, the mobs are engaged in a *'business of*

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[81] See the second chapter for details.
[82] The use of the word 'contract' in this context is a legally mechanistic way of explaining the extermination.

destruction and killing', reworking the population into trade commodities and implying that this industry may be networked and run by hierarchical apparatuses as a (politically) profitable act. This image resonates with Foucault's caesura of populations according to their race (2003) and suggests how it is continued through linguistic discrimination.

The portrayal of Rasa's funeral links to the soldiers' state funeral – to be held at the main cemetery in Colombo, but boycotted (as stated in the second chapter). In the second act, Rasa reveals that the crowd gathered at the cemetery 'seem to be opposed to a state funeral' because they want 'to hand the [soldiers'] bodies over to the next of kin' (1990:190). Rasa also says that the 'crowds are violently filling up the graves with sand, to prevent the burials' (1990:189). It must also be noted here that Rasa's narrative of the cemetery parallels Cooray's (2002) revelation of the organised crowd and the riot, suggesting that the play is in dialogue with documentary representations of Black July. The refusal of a state funeral to the government soldiers ends in Rasa's funeral, which is conducted without honour and respect. Ironically, Rasa's 'funeral pyre' is attended by Philip alone; even the 'cremators had fled'. Further, Rasa's death is shown through an off-stage narrativisation. Hence, whether the impact of the torture is fully articulated is speculative because, as Elaine Scarry argues, there is a covert contempt even among people shocked by such killings, and '[t]his disdain is one of many manifestations of how inaccessible the reality of physical pain is to anyone not immediately experiencing it' (1985:29). The way Rasa 'fell', 'bowed' and how 'his head went limp' are inadequate representations of embodied pain because, to use Scarry's explanation, they 'convey only a limited dimension of the sufferer's experience' (1985:51).

It was expected that Rasa would identify himself as Sinhalese by pronouncing the 'password' while being escorted to the camp as he had previously done; this pronunciation

had been Rasa's life saver during all riots since the late 1950s. As Qadri Ismail (2005:218-219) argues, why Rasa let himself be killed deserves further attention. Although the policeman could not understand '[w]hy Rasa has DISHONOURED' the contract, Rasa's gesture of '*futility*' before his departure to the camp suggests that he is refusing to live in disguise as Sinhalese during the riots. This leads back to the dialogue between Rasa and Philip. Rasa's statement – 'Sri Lankan Tamil culture belongs in Sri Lanka', not to Tamil Nadu (a state in India, literally meaning 'the land of Tamils'), but 'pressure is applied to that culture by the Sinhalese' (1990:219) – further explains Rasa's breach of the 'contract'. It is this 'pressure' which ultimately induced Rasa to make decisions about being with other 'unprotected' Tamils; before extending his wishes to the couple for their migration, Rasa's last words on stage also allude to this: [w]hat about the people burning on the streets? They took no public political decisions. They didn't even deliberately choose to be Tamils. Many of them must have tried to pass off as Sinhalese (1990:225). Thus Rasa chooses suicide in a dramatic gesture of solidarity with Tamil citizens, who have been subjugated, de-humanised in their objectification as 'waste', and with the Tamil language which has not been allowd state dignity.

Unlike Brati's death in Mother of 1084, Rasa's death is not directly associated with the actions of the state. Brati is killed, as implied, by the state police due to his involvement in Naxalite revolts; his death is a part of the process of the state in controlling the bodies of Naxalite members and in governing the country. Rasa is neither involved in any uprisings nor in any other action which needs to be curbed and regulated by the state. Although he is of Sri Lankan nationality, Rasa does not belong to the Sinhalese population; albeit a civilian, he belongs to a population which is, to use Foucault's words, a 'political problem' as the LTTE

activities relate to the power and politics of the Tamil populations. Foucault states that biopolitics targets not only the issues related to mortality, but also to economic and political problems (2003:243). Rasa's tragedy can be read as an instance of the use of biopolitics, in Foucault's words, 'to "make" live and "let" die': Foucault describes it as 'one of the greatest transformations political right underwent' in using power (2003:241). Language acts as an instrument of political power by becoming the agent of Rasa's death. We see how the middle-class civilian becomes a dis-embodied victim of the state's underhand biopolitics manoeuvred through the 'vicious entwining of language, people, and the state', to use Agamben's terms (2000:67). As Rasa speaks the language which is given no political dignity, he is considered as 'redundant'.

The attack by the Sinhalese mob requires further analysis as it is not a crime committed directly by the state to bring law and order in the country. To identify Tamil residences, the mobs have found documentation containing voters' names and addresses: information which is usually kept under the control of the state. Evidently, these mobs have received access to such documentation through links with the state. As the narrative develops, we see political prisoners in jail also being attacked and killed by mobs, despite the assumption that a prison is typically a place where state security is high. Rasa is also killed in the presence of two policemen. These instances recall how the mob's violence is introduced as a '*business*' of extermination and demonstrate that mob violence is influenced and supported assumedly by politically powerful groups in society. Human Rights Watch – a non-governmental organisation – has described Black July as 'state sponsored' Sinhalese riots (Imtiyaz and Stavis 2008:9), authenticating the representations of the play. This points to a process of corruption whereby democratic societies transform themselves into autocratic

societies through the endorsement of mob-led violence, torture and civil unrest; this is analogous to the Indian context represented in *Mother of 1084*. This unusual extension of power is related to the concept of – to use Agamben's words, 'the state of exception' (2005).

Similar to Rasa's death and Black July, the epilogue shows massacres committed by the LTTE against Sinhalese civilians. While Philip and Sita are seen waiting at Singapore airport to migrate to Australia, the play narrativises Sinhalese civilians' deaths through Philip reading a Singapore newspaper. Philip reads out: 'Tamil Terrorists kill 150, wound 300, in ATTACK ON DEFENCELESS SINHALESE PEASANTS' (1990:236). The reading continues as follows:

> Separatist Tamil guerrillas yesterday killed at least 150 people including 5 nuns, several old women as well as children, wounded more than 300 in an attack on the town of Parasangawewa, south of the railway junction of Medawachchiya in the North Western Province. The killers first attacked a police post at Mankulam, then commandeered a state bus and drove into the predominantly Sinhalese town of Parasangahawewa and sprayed bullets indiscriminately for almost half an hour. They first fired at a bus stop killing several peasants waiting to board and then went on to a Buddhist shrine half a mile away and killed five nuns.
>
> The smell of death still hangs over Parasangahawewa as workers begin the grisly task of identifying the bodies of the Sinhalese peasants killed by the Tamil terrorists. (1990:236)

How Sinhalese civilians become targets of the LTTE attacks and oppression, susceptible to torture and embodied violence is evident here. Despite Rasa's death, the epilogue is a pointed anti-climax. With regard to the structure of the play, one may argue that Macintyre's attempt here is to follow the regulations of a well-made play:[83] the epilogue 'present[s] the "other side" of the conflict, the atrocities committed by the Tamil militants to counteract the play's depiction of the brutality of the Sinhalese during the 1983 riots' (Neluka Silva 2008:10). The massacre of Tamil civilians by Sinhalese mobs, and the execution of Sinhalese civilians by the LTTE cadres demonstrate the intensity and extent of violence related to political sphere. In both cases it is mostly the civilians – the passive victims of both ethnic groups who experience killings, torture and oppression. Foucault aptly theorises the killing of populations: he shows how one wages war not only on 'one's adversaries', but also on one's citizens. His argument is that 'war is […] not simply a matter of destroying a political adversary, but of destroying the enemy race' (2003:257). In light of this, we can argue that the motives of the LTTE are to kill not only the soldiers who confront them in battle, but also to eliminate the enemy race: a comparative link can thus be drawn between the actions of the LTTE and the killings committed by Sinhalese mobs in that each desires to eliminate the enemy race.

Although the play is about extermination and destruction, Macintyre, unlike Devi, does not situate dead bodies on stage; death and violence are narrativised. While removing the body from the stage, the materiality of death and other experiences of violence are removed even from the off-stage narrativisation, as in the case of Rasa's body being represented as a log. Moreover, this de-materialization of the body is enhanced and taken further in the

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[83] Well-made plays were popularised in the nineteenth century by the French playwrights, Eugene Scribe and Victorien Sardou, following the contentions of Aristotle. Accordingly, one of the key elements of a plot of a tragedy is to have a scene involving a reversal of the tragic situation (see, for instance, Martin Esslin 1970 and Amy Holzapfel 2014).

narrative as death is announced and recounted mainly through dis-embodied voices: the BBC news, the Singapore newspaper and the telephone. The section to follow elucidates these narrativisations and disembodied voices, focussing on the BBC.

It is Cynthia – Sita's friend, who is never seen on stage, wife of Anton, the DIG (Deputy Inspector General of Police) – who telephones Sita giving updates of the violence in Colombo, information Cynthia holds thanks to her husband's position in the police. It is only through the ringing of the phone followed by Sita's exclamatory responses and revelation to Philip that the audience comes to know of the brutality and material destruction caused by the riot. For instance:

> (*The phone rings, SITA picks it up*)
>
> Yes…..ah…..hr….hr….hr….hr….finished…hr….hr….nopolice…hr…thanks…. keep us informed…ah……ah….thanks….. (Now to Philip) MYSORE CAFÉ – GONE – CYNTHIA! (*Like reading telegram*). (1990:164-165)

The plan to send Rasa to the refugee camp (which is just a five-minute walk from the Fernandos' residence) under 'SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS', with police escorts, given that mobs are checking whether Tamils are being given 'sanctuary' in Sinhalese houses (1990:223), is also communicated over the phone. Silva writes that '[t]he increasing intensity of the riots in *Rasanayagam's Last Riot* is mapped through a series of telephone calls, the Fernandos' link with the world outside' (2008:3-4).

Nevertheless, initially it is through Rasa's communication with Philip and Sita about Rasa's first hand encounters with the riots, that the intensity of Black July is explored in the play. Rasa appears on the stage revealing:

(*Beginning out of sight of the audience*) Very bad this time, very very bad, never been like this before, never, never. Must be all over the island as well, but we can see only what goes in Colombo. Crowds, crowds, everywhere, and the government seems to be unable to control the situation. (1990:188)

Rasa also tells the audience that:

Galle Road is very bad! Burning all over, and crowds challenging you to speak Sinhala. […] I had to give a hell of a performance! […] this test of being able to speak Sinhala against such a big crowd! (1990:191)

This is first-hand experience narrated by Rasa, which authenticates the second-hand information revealed by Cynthia. Macintyre relies much on narrativisation to demonstrate these embodied experiences: an explicit and direct representation of embodied violence in a dramatically captured moment of war is problematic and inadvisable.

However, it becomes necessary to explore the role of the BBC. It is because of the BBC international news that all three characters become more preoccupied. As Rasa tells Sita that the next stage has to be a war, '*the internationally recognized signature tune of the British Broadcasting Corporation joins the action, sharp and loud, coming from the direction of PHILIP's room*'(1990:214). Philip '*emerges, carrying the radio*', and explains how the BBC has explicitly revealed the violence, the killing and massacre of political prisoners in jail (1990:214).

It is after this report that Rasa becomes increasingly worried and is urged to reveal his opinions on the political atmosphere of the country and the ethnic violence. The BBC news

leads Rasa to learn that his friend, Doctor Rajasunderam, is in danger due to the mob's attacks: Doctor Rajasunderam is currently in jail, as Rasa says, having been 'arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, but only for leading a demonstration' (1990:215); yet Philip responds that Rajasunderam is, according to the government, a 'political activist' (1990:222). This difference signifies the diverse attitudes towards involvement in political action. Through Cynthia's follow-up telephone calls they come to learn that Rajasunderam is among the killed prisoners. After learning this, Rasa '*remains seated, head down*' (1990:221), and '*remains limp in his chair*' (1990:223). Rasa's question to Philip – 'how could this have happened inside a government prison?' (1990:222) – problematises the role of the security forces in the country. Similar to Devi's (2011) revelation through Nandini that thousands of young men rot in prisons without trial in India by denying them the status of political citizens, Rasa's questioning leads the audience to contemplate the actions of the mobs. This obliteration of law is conceptualised by Agamben: while explaining that the state of exception is 'neither external nor internal to the juridical order' (2005:23), he argues that it has been employed internationally by abolishing the norms of law, 'with impunity by a government violence that – while ignoring international law externally and producing a permanent state of exception internally – nevertheless still claims to be applying the law' (2005: 87).

Macintyre's text also shows the '*sharp*' international intervention through the BBC in light of Black July. Philip is critical of the BBC's explicit reporting of the violence as it plays 'a jaunty' tune telling the 'whole world our agonies' by 'hover[ing] high above us, like carrion, […] look[ing] down upon' Sri Lanka when the country is 'being torn apart' (1990:217). His argument is that it is not that the BBC reports lie, but the times the BBC reveals it 'wholesale' are not good; 'this kind of publicity is not reporting history, it adds to

history by creating further division in the country' (1990:216). Philip believes that the BBC is 'gloating' and thus making the situation 'worse' (1990:215), as it is 'not woven into [Sri Lankans'] social fabric': '[o]ur own media *is* our society' (1990:217). The BBC's report – '[w]ithin one afternoon and part of a night, the physical division of Sri Lanka has occurred in the minds of the people' (1990:216) – is an apposite case in point for Philip's criticism levelled against the BBC's act of gloating. Evidently, the BBC plays a dual role in revealing the truth and making the situation worse.

Moreover, Philip adds that:

in twenty seven years this is the first time this has taken the lead over all other world news, just shows how the Tamil lobby has grown, it is they who are using the BBC […] it's the international Tamil lobby that's doing all the damage! (1990:215-216)

It is typical that narratives of war and genocide have limitations in their representations because they tend not be omniscient reporters of the situation; this is especially so when these narratives are influenced by certain socio-political forces. Hence, Philip's statement prompts us to ask whether the BBC provides only a one-sided picture of the tension by favouring the 'International Tamil lobby', and complicates the image of a dis-embodied colonial legacy in the country and of a global coercion. Ann Laura Stoler (2008) argues that:

[t]o speak of colonial ruination is to trace the fragile and durable substance and signs, the visible and visceral senses in which the effects of empire are reactivated and remain. […] It is also a political project that lays waste to certain peoples and places, relations, and things. To think with ruins of empire is to

emphasise less the artifacts of empire as dead matter or remnants of a defunct regime than to attend to their reappropriations and strategic and active positioning within the politics of the present. (2008:196)

Stoler's reading can be linked to the representation of the BBC news. As noted previously, colonial rulers' bias administration, trusting the minority group – Tamil – has created problems in postcolonial Sri Lanka, in terms of language issues (De Votta 2007 and Imtiyaz and Stavis 2008). Philip also tells Sita that Tamils 'have had their unfair advantage through the British occupation' (1990:177). This supports Stoler's (2008) view that colonial debris is reactivated within the internal political system of postcolonial Sri Lanka. My contention is that this condition seems to continue through the news emerging from the dis-embodied voice of the BBC: it announces the violence 'triumphantly' and assumedly in favour of the international Tamil minority. This is further supported because the Singapore newspaper, which narrates the massacre by the LTTE, is not given an equal weight in the play: the BBC voice outshines the newspaper's impact in relation to dis-embodied global influences on Sri Lanka. Thus, Macintyre's use of dis-embodiment to represent violence through the BBC can be read as a portrayal of the invisible presence of the colonial legacy. It is worth noting that the colonial processes can still emerge from the subsoil of postcolonial Sri Lanka and how these are related to the regulation of internal politics of postcolonial nations. Before exploring English-speaking elites' concern towards ethnic tensions in the country as represented in the play, the following section is devoted to examine the play, *Irangani*, and its representations of death and political violence.

'Corpses can't be illegal rebels!' in *Irangani:*

As Rasa, the Tamil middle-class subaltern, is objectified due to language discrimination in the country, Robert – a young middle-class Sinhalese JVP activist – becomes a victim of diversities in political ideologies in *Irangani*. Introducing the play, Macintyre notes that '[t]housands of members of the families of the dead were deprived of funeral rites. In my contemporary play, *Irangani,* the sister of a dead brother articulates to the President of Sri Lanka the full implications of that deprivation' (2012:10). Through this foreword, Macintyre channels readers'/spectators' critique into political killings related to the JVP uprisings, how the denial of rites to such dead bodies is resisted and articulated on stage. *Irangani* grapples with questions which resonate with the biopolitics exercised in Sri Lanka during the two JVP revolts.

The JVP was engaged in killings and violence in an attemp to paralyse the state; many who were involved in the JVP riots were killed by the state in the early 70s and the late 80s. Robert is one such victim who meets a premature death during the JVP insurrection. He is a relative of the President, the leader of the country. His sister, Irangani, like Antigone in Sophocles' *Antigone*, while arguing with her uncle for the rights of political rebels, insists on a family burial for Robert, at the President's residence. However, the President pronounces the impossibility to favour Robert with a burial when hundreds of other bodies are burnt *en masse* and not handed over to their family members for funeral rites.

Irangani is set at the President's residence in Colombo, where the title character lives, with her relatives and the 'care taker/maid' Alice; the play, subtitled '*A tragedy of our times*', reveals a chain of tragic events culminating in deaths. It is stated that Irangani and Robert

have been brought up since their childhood by their uncle Sidat, their mother's brother, as they lost their parents in a motor accident: their home is also the President's residence. Irangani is in love with her cousin Mahinda, the son of the President, and they are to be married soon. After completing his education at Oxford University, Robert had been working as a school teacher, later living at Mrs. Navaratnam's residence in Handala, where he got involved in JVP politics; yet it must be noted that his involvement in politics is not represented in the play.

Similarly to *Rasanayagam's Last Riot*, *Irangani* does not situate dead bodies on stage, but uses the strategy of off-stage narrativisation to depict these killings. The story is narrated primarily through Alice, especially at the beginning and at the end of the play, and through the DIG – Deputy Inspector General of Police. Alice's announcement to the audience at the outset of the play is what Mrs. Navaratnam has told Irangani over the phone: how Robert was taken out at night from his residence in Handala. It is worth noting here that Alice re-narrates what has been narrated over the phone (Robert's death off-stage) reducing the materiality of the body further; she repeats Mrs. Navaratnam's words:

> I think they were policemen. They went upstairs quickly. I heard sounds, and I started to follow, but they were coming down dragging your brother. […] They passed me on the stairs and your brother held on to me around my legs. They beat his hands with a gun and they pulled him to the door […] and out. Then I heard the van moving. (2012:20)

This passage indicates the brutal nature of the authority's illegal sanctions on individual bodies. The Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) tells the President how Robert 'was

already dying…inside the interrogation room' (2012:29), when the Inspector General of Police (IGP) announces that a young man has been identified as the President's nephew. The DIG also tells the President that Robert's body 'was washed ashore on Hendala beach, eight days after it was dropped far out at sea by helicopter…' (2012:36). This is a key representation of violence on the Sinhalese youth exercised by the state. Robert was tortured and killed for his political beliefs of the JVP.

More than a week later, Irangani's repossession of Robert's body, from a pile of corpses ready to be cremated *en masse* by the police, changes the situation. She claims a family burial for Robert. Similar to the critical dialogue between Philip and Sita over the issue of the ethnic tensions in *Rasanayagam's Last Riot*, an argument between Irangani and the President develops over bodies deprived of funeral rites. When Irangani raises her voice stating that her brother should be given a family burial, the President thinks of other bodies that are deprived of funeral rites:

> Shanthi de Almeida was a young woman who read the news on the instruction
> of the minister of broadcasting. She was taken by your people [JVP members] to
> the beach, raped and killed. Her body lay there. One of many hundred cases.
> Your insurgents, your terrorists, have they returned bodies of those they brutally
> killed, to their families? (2012:74)

The President's response to Irangani's claim, narrativises the violence committed by the JVP and thus attempts to justify the actions taken by the police. It also seems an indication of fair and equal decision of the President. However, torture and killings extra-judicially committed by the state are more problematic than the JVP's violence since it depicts the injustice of a

government. The DIG informs the President that in the 'last twelve hours' 'two hundred and thirty bodies' have been collected in trucks and brought to a 'marshland disposal station' and among them was Robert's body (2012:30).

Irangani's relation to the President enables her to stop the truck and collect Robert's body (identifying her relationship with the president to the officers there) to be given to a funeral parlour for burial rites. However, the President expresses (with the DIG) that 'I feel very sorry for my nephew, I bear the pain … but because I am the President I am powerless to give his body separate treatment from all the other young dead bodies' (2012:35); he then orders Robert's body to be taken back to be cremated *en masse*. Although Irangani's claim for a family burial is denied, she wins to a certain degree as she is allowed to attend the mass burial, accompanied by the DIG and her husband-to-be, Mahinda.

The burning of Robert's body ends in a chain of deaths. Irangani falls down; the DIG narrates that 'from our distance we thought her body began to move' (2012:103) towards the fire. While attempting to save her life, Mahinda also dies. Hearing this news, the President's wife shoots herself and the President is 'left with a state' (2012:107), in Alice's words. The word 'state' here ostensibly implies the state as a sovereign political entity and as a messy state of affairs. The President, taking his responsibility as the leader of the country, continues his role until he is killed while heading to chair a meeting with the ministers of the state. As Alice recounts, his killing is a mystery linked either to the JVP or to the LTTE in the north (2012:108-109).

Referring to David Keen (2000), Jonathan Goodhand et al. reveal that there are two categories of violence in Sri Lanka, namely top-down violence and bottom-up violence, existing either in combination or in isolation. They are, respectively, violence caused by

leaders and violence committed by ordinary people for diverse reasons such as psychological, safety, socio-political and economic motives (2000). However, when the state is engaged in extra-judicial measures to curb revolts, there is what Agamben defines a 'state of exception' – the state ceases to observe the law in force in a country: to recall, he clarifies that it is not a special type of law, but a cessation of the legal system – an apparatus of government (2005). This can be related to the increase of power structures employed by some states in times of crisis by reducing the rights of people. In this light, individuals detained without trial and corporeal torture exercised not only on political adversaries, but also on citizens in extra-juridical manners are two instances of this suspension of the juridical order. Robert is a victim of the state of exception; the government exercises torture on his body in an extra-juridical manner as he is a political adversary. Similar to Brati, he is a middle-class man made a subaltern by his political ideologies; unlike Rasa, Robert also belongs to the majority ethnicity group. Yet, the state of exception is considered as a justifiable technique of the government; this is apparent in the play because, for instance, the JVP activists' *en masse* burial, subsequent to their illegall arrest, is accepted both by the DIG and the President.

The play shows resistance towards the acts of the government and the denial of burial rites for the victims. In Sophocles' *Antigone*, the eponymous character shows her defiance while demonstrating courage during a phase of adverse socio-political conditions. At the heart of the tragedy is the conflict between Antigone, who sets out to bury her brother (Polynices), and her uncle (King Creon), who has issued a decree according to Thebes' laws and regulations, forbidding the burial as Polynices killed his own brother. Antigone opposes the written law to the unwritten laws, and buries her brother's body without letting it rot. Similarly, when several JVP victims killed by the state are carried in a truck to be burnt,

Irangani takes Robert's body for a decent and honourable burial. There is also a resemblance between the sounds of the last two syllables of the two names (Antigone and Irangani); similar to Antigone, Irangani raises her voice against the deprivation of burial rites to the JVP rebellious members. She attempts to challenge the ruling system which states that all rebellious youth are to be cremated unidentified in 'tyre pyres'. What is interesting to note here is that, unlike Antigone who opposes the written law, Irangani opposes unwritten/unrecognised laws which burn bodies collectively, and appeals to written laws.

Irangani announces that 'I have saved my brother's body from the place […] where you would have burnt it en masse' (2012:49), and questions the President about the state's decision to burn the bodies (of those killed in the JVP revolts) without identifying them. She argues:

> (*In tones of great sadness*) If you were a civilized man, you would have ordered that each and every one of those bodies be identified and tagged, and sent to their families with an accompanying letter stating your position. That because they rose, armed, against the state they had to die, but that you are returning the bodies to their families. That's the least you could have done for civilization. Corpses can't be illegal rebels! Corpses have passed beyond legal and political classification! (2012:73-74)

Irangani's claim that corpses are not 'illegal rebels' needs further consideration; the word 'illegal' is defined by the OED as 'contrary to or forbidden by law, especially criminal law'. Although a living person can be involved in an act of that nature, as Irangani explicitly questions, corpses are unable to violate any rules and regulations, and cannot comprehend any

political ideologies. Thus, Robert's corpse is not a rebel and not punishable; it should not be deprived of burial rites. The denial of burial rites here indicates the privation of political rights not only to Robert, but also to Irangani. It is worth revisiting Rasa's burial in *Rasanayagam's Last Riot* here. Although he is a civilian who has not rebelled against the state, he is also deprived of any funeral rites. Rasa is burnt as a 'log' without even allowing any next of kin to claim for burial rights. Hence, Rasa's political rights are also burnt – that is, unclaimed.

As noted above in relation to *Rasanayagam's Last Riot,* the materiality of the body is often shown through narrativisation and off-stage events. Macintyre employs the same strategy of narrativisation and off-stage events in *Irangani.* In this respect, the voice of Alice takes a prominent place in narrating the state's oppression on Robert and other tragic deaths. As Alice states, 'in a tragedy, some small people are always left on the stage in the end, to show that there is some life still left, to take things up again, and to tell the story' (2012:105). Alice's character as a narrative authority is also significant as there is a link between the JVP and the working-classes. As Gamini Samaranayake (1997) points out, the JVP's political ideology is driven by an interpretation of Marxism, and as the JVP also claims, its fight is mainly for the working-class people who have been marginalised by the mainstream politics. Robert's political engagement is for the freedom of those like Alice. This warrants a brief exploration of Alice's role.

Alice was brought to Colombo to look after a one-week old baby, Irangani's mother (Sidat's sister); she eventually became a domestic aid in the family. Although Irangani's father has arranged for Alice to be taught English to find a 'good job' (2012:23) by leaving her job as a domestic worker to his wife's family, she has remained with Irangani even when she is brought up by Sidat. What makes Alice's character significant in the play is her fluency

in English; as discussed in the second chapter, in postcolonial Sri Lanka English is not the language of the working-classes, especially of domestic aids, who are at the receiving end of discrimination and poor education opportunities. As Braj B. Kachru states, English is 'the language of power and opportunity' (1995:292). Although Alice can read and speak in English with the family members at the President's house, her position remains the same there. It is also worth reiterating here. Alice belongs to the working-class population, who are subordinates due to their socio-economic vulnerability. Particularly referring to women, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak interrogates whether subalterns are able to speak (1995). Alice 'tell[s] the story', she speaks, not of/for herself, but of/for the others – the middle-class populations – telling the tragic story of Robert, Irangani, Mahinda, Sidat and his wife, representatives of dominant social-elites. Her voice is also in English, the language of upper middle-class social elites in Sri Lanka. Hence, she is able to speak and is heard because '[t]he power of English is so dominant' (Kachru 1995:295), and she tells a story of dominance. Kachru also argues that through English, a 'new caste' of English communities has developed: '[i]t may be relatively small, but it is powerful' (1995:295).

Nevertheless, whether Alice is made powerful, and truly belongs to this 'new caste', only through her acquisition of English language, needs further analysis. Kachru adds that this new caste's 'values and perspectives are not necessarily in harmony with the traditional values of these societies' (1995:295). Alice is left alone at the end, only with this dominant language: this problematises her future. Will she be able to identify herself with the elite middle-class populations or with her working-class populations, and will she be able to resist against the socio-political dominance which has created her current social position as a

domestic aid? It is pertinent to make a comparison here with Caliban in *The Tempest*.[84]

Caliban acquired the alien language through his master and, as he claims, he can use it to

curse the master. Yet, Bill Ashcroft argues that Caliban has 'no future' except for this

language – 'cursing as the only response the colonized subject have to the colonial language'

(2001:82). In Alice's case, she uses English to narrate her masters'/mistresses' dominant

stories. Alice's position could be read in relation to Ngugi wa Thiong'o's (1995) rejection of

English as a means to restore national identity and to resist against the political dominance.

He argues that '[l]anguage is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human

beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the

world' (1995:290). Alice, in this sense, masters the dominant language, but whether she has a

future and an identity in this 'new caste' is speculative as she does not belong to the middle-

classes. In Sri Lankan contexts, this new caste is the minority group of English-speaking

people; this will be the focus of the following section.

English-speaking middle-class elites – 'irrelevant to this country'?

It is initially due to colonialism that the English language was introduced to Sri Lanka, and

this created a minority group of English-speaking elites from both ethnic groups, especially

concentrated in Colombo. *Rasanayagam's Last Riot*, as introduced in the beginning, is a

critique of this Anglophone middle-class elite and its attitudes towards ethnic tensions in the

country. This section discusses whether the play represents them as an irrelevant group in the

postcolonial nation, especially in relation to the issues of ethnic tensions in the country. All

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[84] In *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare (premiered in the early seventeenth century) Caliban is the son of a witch who has ruled a small island before the Duke of Milan, Prospero, arrives.

three characters in *Rasanayagam's Last Riot* belong to the English-speaking, university-educated middle-class elite living in Colombo. Both Sita and Rasa are Tamil whereas Philip is Sinhalese; although Sita is originally from Colombo, Rasa has moved from the North (Jaffna).

In the second act, Rasa appears at Philip's residence, describing the catastrophic situation outside and revealing his plans for the riot. Being '*out of the sight of the audience*', Rasa's description of the cemetery in Colombo – 'eight thousand' Sinhalese (1990:189) 'violently filling up the graves' and asking the government to 'hand the bodies over to the next of kin, the police can't control…' (1990:190) – depicts not only the chaotic atmosphere in Colombo but also his disturbed mentality owing to the ethnic violence. However, paradoxically, Rasa happily tells Philip that 'I didn't know how long it would be this time, so I put in a few extra bottles [alcohol]. As soon as I got the first wind of this, I rushed to Victoria Stores and got an ample quota' (1990:189).

To understand Rasa's implications here, it necessitates examining the dialogue between Sita and Philip. As Philip reveals in the first act, there has been a continuous history of such riots in postcolonial Sri Lanka since the 1950s – ''56, '58, '61, '74, '77 and '81' (1990:162) – and Philip has been providing protection for Rasa since their university days in the mid-1950s. Sita recalls that in 1961 she 'had to tell the thug at the gate that there were no Tamils in the house, at the very moment that Rasanayagam was under the bed here' (1990:157). She also tells of a Sinhalese salesman's warning, '[t]his time [during Black July] those traitors who hide Tamils in their houses will be found out and be given the same treatment' (1990:159). In the second act we are told of Rasa being protected by Philip from a 'gang – of seniors' at the university when they came to rag the new comers. Philip recounts that:

I had to protect him from a gang – of seniors […] trying to get in, to rag us. […] After ragging me for a while, Rasa heard for the first time, from under the bed, the question that would bind him to me for the rest of our lives. "Is there anybody hiding there"? […] Ever after that whenever Rasa rushed in here for safety during a riot, he would never fail to mention that incident. (1990:157)

In response, Rasa rhetorically asks: 'who would have thought that you'll have to tell the same lie for me so many times in our history?' (1990:157). What is significant is that the body of Rasa has been a target of some gangs: although it started as an act of ragging at the university, as an act of amusement, his body has intermittently been subjected to the violent gaze of the mobs and thereby to fear. This is an example of perpetrated material and psychological violence on civilians by some groups of gangs.

Nonetheless, what is implied through Rasa's paradoxical preparation is that he has been trying to celebrate Black July, and has given priority to buying bottles for him to enjoy during the riot. Both Philip and Rasa have been enjoying these riots as they represent an opportunity to spend their time talking about the pleasurable memories of their university days over drinks. During these riots, the government imposes curfew and both Philip and Rasa being deaf and blind – politically-dead – to the concerns of the riots, the violence outside, taste alcohol and university life reviving past memories. This recalls how Sujata identifies both the middle-class audience and party attendees in *Mother of 1084* as living-dead. Despite the violence outside, and the on-going curfew, riots have been happy occasions for these two representatives from both ethnic groups. This represents the English-speaking, educated middle-class elites' poor grasp of the strength of ethnic tensions.

In contrast to Philip's and Rasa's previous curfew parties, Sita this time urges Philip to talk about the ethnic tension with Rasa, showing its urgency and necessity. Both Philip and Rasa's belief is that such a dialogue is not necessary as theirs is a strong friendship. Philip maintains that their friendship 'transcends' Sinhala-Tamil politics (1990:178), and elucidates that 'while that politics grasps each of us separately and in opposite directions, at the same time our friendship goes beyond the grasp of that politics!' (1990:178). Rasa's reluctance to open a discussion on ethnic violence is due to the belief that they are 'good friends' (1990:213). Despite Philip's acceptance that their friendship is beyond politics, his reluctance to open up a dialogue with Rasa about the 'Tamil problem' (1990:180) is in itself political. This is rendered visible through his statment – '[s]ince the Tamil problem became acute I have got passionate about it with my Sinhalese friends, […] my relationship with them [Philip's Sinhalese friends] grew only after Tamil terrorism became a serious threat. […] With Rasa it's different […] it's more the biographical' (1990:180). Implied here is Philip's belief that the subject of ethnic tensions between Sinhalese and Tamils will not work and will be 'tragic' (1990:180). This unwillingness to open up a dialogue about ethnic pressures at a personal level and two friends' happy meetings during the previous riots while being politically-dead have indirectly allowed the ethnic tension to continue and reach its peak; this will be discuused below. Sita's assertion is that if this issue of ethnic violence cannot be discussed 'openly, at a personal level' between friends, there will not be any positive hope for a future of 'a settlement at a national level' (1990:165). Her argument here is that being of the English speaking middle classes is like being irrelevant to this country … I hope it's a false perspective, but the heightening of things has certainly produced that feeling' (1990:171).

Sita's statement – if the issue of ethnicity is not discussed at a personal level, there is no hope of it at a national level – requires analysis. It is Sita who makes Rasa and Philip know that there should be a discussion on the political scenario. It is Sita who realises that even at the risk of damaging their long-lasting friendship, Rasa and Philip should engage in a critical forum of the ethnic riots without just enjoying their nostalgic memories over drinks. Deviating from the usual casual dialogue between Philip and Rasa about their university memories, Sita manages to open up a relatively critical dialogue, gradually winning over Philip's initial resistance and Rasa' reticence to it.

Sita's voice implies some resistance to the violence exerted on the bodies of Tamil populations, and she insists on a dialogue about the ethnic tension. Now a retired University lecturer of English literature, she pours out her inner feelings towards the political scenario of the country, saying that 'the state is in default of its duties to its Tamil citizens, when it expects its citizens to hide their identity inside a bucket, to be able to remain alive' (1990:230). This status quo is similar to the condition of Sizwe in South Africa (as represented in *Sizwe Banisi is Dead*), who has to hide his own identity and become a ghost of another for survival. Sita manifests her disgust at belonging to the English-speaking middle-class (1990:171) married to a Sinhalese, and not belonging to the majority Tamil population. She expresses it saying that 'I was only a nominal Tamil' (1990:167), not knowing any concerns of the Tamils, and developing some distance from other Tamil people. She states:

> I have never taken an interest in the language policy, the colonization schemes, the university admissions system, the employment ratios in the public service, Tamil kingdoms of the past, and the so-called traditional homelands and all that kind of thing. I have no feel for these things. (1990:170)

This reflection is a self-criticism of Sita's politically-dead condition. Sita becomes proactive about the racial issues and the riot (although she tells Philip that she felt it in 1981) only after she is personally hurt by it. Firstly, it occurs to her as she is marginalised at the Old Girls'Association (OGA); secondly, when her colleague Professor Kurukulasooriya induces her to question of her own inability to use Tamil language.[85] She tells Philip that when Tamil members were talking at the OGA meeting about the burning of the Jaffna library,[86] she was excluded from the discussion and was ostracised as she is married to a Sinhalese. She says that, at the OGA meeting, 'I felt terribly rejected…unfairly excluded. Throughout the rest of the meeting I took it upon myself to feel isolated' (1990:168). She adds that '[o]n that day, for the very first time I felt that being married to a Sinhalese…was not…entirely inconsequential for my personality' (1990:168). Arguably, Sita starts to profoundly self-question her marital status as a Tamil woman married to a Sinhalese man, only after her ostracism from Tamil society. She also tells Philip that Professor Kurukulasooriya's inquiry causes her to question her own position as a Tamil. What is evidenced is that Sita has been politically-dead – blind to the ethnic riots – as she has not been personally affected by them. The implications are two-fold: people are tempted to address national level politics if national political concerns affect their personal lives and personal level politics transcends national level politics.

It is imperative here to examine whether personal level politics transcends burgeoning national concerns. It is especially after Rasa hears about the killing of some prisoners in jail by the mobs, where his friend, Doctor Rajasunderam, is also incarcerated, that his submerged

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[85] As she belongs to the English-speaking middle-class from Colombo, she is not fluent in Tamil language.

[86] Jaffna is in the north of the country where many Tamils live and the LTTE operated its guerrilla activities all over the country by locating mostly there. The Jaffna library, one of the biggest in Asia, was burnt in 1981 after ethno-political tensions in Jaffna – a brutal instance of ethnic-biblioclasm; as commonly believed the government ruling at that time played a role in the violence.

thoughts about the racial tension are gradually triggered and revealed. The readers and audience are also led to question here the attempts taken to save Rasa's life. Rasa is provided safety and security as he is a friend of a Sinhalese man. Special arrangements are made to escort Rasa to the refugee camp by the DIG, also a friend of Rasa; their friendships transcend ethnic tensions (people in the refugee camp are typically deprived of such safety). In addition, even Rasa becomes more sensitive and outspoken about the ethnic violence and the elimination of people through political means only after he comes to know of the killing of his friend Doctor Rajasunderam in jail. This asserts that friendship can outdo ethnic diversities and supports Sita's view that a personal level dialogue on ethnic tensions will create positive effects.[87]

It is also worth noting here the final dialogue between Philip and Sita, as it relates to unity at a personal level.

> PHILIP: I suppose that policeman, like so many Sinhalese, like me too, expects
>
> the minorities to take an accommodating position.
>
> SITA: (*Smiling warmly at him*) Tell them not to not to expect it from me […]
>
> SITA: But at least between the two of us there must be something called a Sri
>
> Lankan. (1990:238)

All three characters – Sita, Rasa and Philip – are university graduates and speak in English – indicating how personal bonds developed through class, education and language outshine national bonds. Moreover, by introducing the play, Macintyre agrees that his text is an allegory of the racial conflict on stage, and all three characters react to actual events of the

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[87] It must be noted that Rasa's final decision to 'cross over' – to go to the refugee camp to be with the Tamils who took 'no public political decisions', and who 'didn't even deliberately choose to be Tamils – is a denial of privileges.

1983 riot. However, he also pronounces that the character of Sita is a 'total lie […] in relation to July '83' (1990:142). Characters such as Sita who belong to the Anglophone elite, yet speak against the ethnic violence while requesting a critical dialogue on ethnic tensions in the country, are totally fictional; they do not exist in reality. When asked to elaborate on the point he made in the introduction about fiction, Macintyre (2003) replied that:

> Oh yes, fiction is vital for any play because that's the one that gives its engine, right, and there I point out that because nobody in Colombo would have brought out their innermost feelings, that's right, yes. (quoted in Tamara Mabbott Athique 2006:364)

Macintyre reiterates that Sita is fictional as there were no Sitas in actual events; no one in Colombo was outspoken about the riot. Instead, through Philip and Rasa's curfew parties, which are not lies as implied in the play, what Macintyre attempts to show is the ignorance and the political death of a section of educated middle-class people from both the ethnic groups. With reference to his awareness of the middle-class elites, Macintyre (2003) declares that '[t]he middle classes is [*sic*] the class that I know. I could never write of the village people because I am not able to write about them' (as quoted in Athique 2006:184). He refers to the educated, English-speaking middle-class people living in cities, especially in Colombo. Hence, as represented in the play, the play is also a critique of Anglophone middle-class elites' attitude towards the issue of the ethnic tension.

If the educated minority is more interested in going down the 'memory lane' of their university days than in exploring the issues of the ethnic tension – and if they become sensitive to the issues of ethnic violence only once they are personally-affected, as

represented through Sita – such disengagement creates negative impacts on the country, resulting in wars, which not only destroys material assets, but culminates in massacres. What the play shows is the necessity of discussion at least through personal level politics.

Imtiyaz and Stavis claim referring to Black July, that '[n]either the Sinhala ruling elite nor state institutions openly condemned or took any meaningful immediate measures to prevent the violence against the Tamil civilians from spreading to the other parts of the island from Colombo' (2008:10). Macintyre's play-text indicates that, despite the need for an open discussion of the political scenario, the subject has not been a dialogue between two ethnic groups. The play similarly problematises the role played by the educated cream of society in dealing with the racial issues in the postcolonial country, hence the nation-building process.

Macintyre's work suggests the reluctance of the social elites to engage in such talk has led the country to a desperate situation: it demonstrates that they are too late as it is the 'last riot'. It is worth analysing the play's title here. The multiple connotations of 'last riot' complicate death and instead encourage scrutiny of the processes by which living bodies become dead bodies due to the political conditions. This is Rasa's last riot with the Fernando family because Philip and Sita are due to emigrate to Australia from Sri Lanka. Ironically, it is also Rasa's last riot as he is killed. The word, 'last', is significant because after this crucial riot when many others died, the country underwent, intermittently, civil war for almost 30 years. In other words, it is the beginning of the civil war and the end of minor riots (minor in relation to the civil war). Rasa tells Sita that:

> (*Uttering his thesis as obliquely as possible*) From 1956 it has been slowly
>
> coming to this…when it is impossible to expect the police and army to protect
>
> the Tamils…because slowly the Tamils have developed their own police and

army for their own protection. […] The next stage has to be a war between the

Sri Lankan army and the armies of the Tamils. It is the last riot. (1990:214)

Although the title connotes something positive of the riot with the word, 'last', indicating an

end, it signifies the peak of embodied experiences – brutality, violence, and massacre. It

signifies a future war which became a reality in the country; the voice of Rasa is that of a

soothsayer for the country, resembling Cassandra in the *Aeneid* as she prophesies the downfall

of Troy.

Macintyre's contribution

It is also necessary to highlight Macintyre's contribution to the nation-building process,

through *Rasanayagam's Last Riot* and *Irangani*. When questioned about the social relevance

of his plays, and the purpose and status of political theatre Macintyre (2003) admits that:

all activity in the final analysis can be classified as political, […] when you say

political theatre it means involvement with the human condition […] [I] take the

risk [original emphasis in the transcript] of exploring the human condition

because you can also by doing that probably drive audiences away [from

peoples' sad life]. (as quoted in Athique 2006:359-360)

Furthermore, as Macintyre writes, the three characters in *Rasanayagam's Last Riot*, 'react to

actual events' (1990:141), those of the 1983 riots in Sri Lanka. He justifies the subtitle of the

play – '[*a*] *political fiction for the theatre*' – by stating that '[f]or it is true even of a play that treats of real life events, that there has to be crucial fiction to make it a play' (1990:141).

Hence, unlike Devi who believes in 'authentic documentation' as the best mode to write against injustice (Samik Bandyopadhyay 2011: xvi), Macintyre fuses fiction into the fact. He develops a critical forum to interrogate the injustice and brutality which emerged due to ethnic tension, urging for a dialogue of the political condition of the country. As A.J. Goonewardena states, *Rasanayagam's Last Riot* 'does more to open our eyes and touch our hearts than a thousand learned essays [on the riot and the ethnic tension]' (quoted in Macintyre 1990:151). Ismail (2005) asserts that although the play demonstrates attacks similar to genocide on Tamils, it does not encourage any separation of the two communities. He adds:

> [the play] is not a separatist text; it does not believe in an exclusivist notion of community; none of its actants promote one. Indeed, they all explicitly distance themselves from it. […] it advocates […] a lesson to be learned by reading it. (2005: 213)

As implied through these views, the creative élan of the play – especially portrayed through the relationship between Rasa and Philip as friends, and Sita and Philip as husband and wife – holds the potential to deconstruct the binarised logic that presents Sri Lanka's civil war as a never-ending conflict of majority and minority populations. On the one hand, as the play indicates through the unity and harmony among the three characters, this literary contribution envisages a united nation – not fractured groups of populations. On the other hand, the play sheds light on why the biopolitical strategies operated in the country needs to be

deconstructed. In this context, it highlights the re-negotiations of the Sri Lankan linguistic and ethnic cartographies in the face of conflicts.

In relation to *Irangani*, Macintyre writes that '[d]uring the Sinhala youth uprisings of the 80s, *which I have treated, together with the 70s uprising of the same group, as a single event for the purposes of my play* [original emphasis], tens of thousands of dead bodies took the place of the body of the single Greek "traitor" Polynices' (2012:9). As Radhieka Peeris (2012) writes, the killing of Robert resonates with the death of a prominent Sri Lankan journalist-cum-poet named Richard de Zoysa. 'BBC drama on Richard de Zoysa' (2008) states that:

> [i]n the early hours of February 18th 1990 a Sri Lankan government death squad abducted journalist and television newsreader Richard de Zoysa from his home in Colombo. The next evening his body was washed ashore on Lunawa beach. He had been shot in the head. He had burn marks on his body. Richard was 32 at the time of his death. (2008:[n.p.])

By quoting a speech delivered by Macintyre, Peeris also writes that the words Irangani says before jumping into her brother's funeral pyre are from a poem by Otto Rene Castillo, which Richard de Zoysa had by his bedside when he was abducted.[88] Although this play is an adaptation of *Antigone*, Macintyre uses its status to address the issues of the 20th century in postcolonial Sri Lanka. It is also important to note the references evoked in the title. The title, *Irangani* is a common Sri Lankan female name, used during the period of these revolts, especially in the early 70s. The violent status is indicated especially through the sub-title of the play, '*A tragedy of our times*'. Macintyre's ability to link contemporary tragic

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[88] Castillo is a Guatemalan poet and revolutionary.

circumstances with classical tragedies also adds to the resonance of his drama, with *Irangani* he critiques a pressing socio-political issue of the postcolonial nation by referring to actual events.

Nevertheless, Macintyre's contribution to the nation-building process may be limited as his plays are more frequently presented as play-texts than performances: as noted in the first chapter, three facets – text, production and audience – are pivotal for theatre (Marcia Blumberg and Dennis Walder 1999). Macintyre is well aware of the limitations of its performances. Yet, he emphasises the significance of his play-texts by drawing a parallel with the limited performances of Ariel Dorfman's play *Death and the Maiden*:[89] Dorfman's play is available as a published text in Chile, not as performances, because:

> not by the act of the censors or government authority; [well-wishers of the play]
>
> decided that it was best to let Chile gradually return to democracy without
>
> digging up the past in the enigmatic form of art that performance is. (1990:143)

This adds to the concern of whether biopolitical operations and corporeal violence can be performed in a context where the civil war between the LTTE and the state forces in reality is at its peak. Moreover, in responding to an inquiry about *Rasanayagam's Last Riot*'s performances in Australia in English, Macintyre (2003) claims that:

> though the language is English the content and culture is not anglocentric. So,
>
> for example, the largest circulating English newspaper in the world is the Times
>
> of India but the content of the Times of India is no way anglocentic, it's very

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[89] This play is primarily about complexities of embodied torture and rape encountered by a political prisoner and exercised under a military dictatorship in Chile. The play by the Chilean playwright, Dorfman, premiered in 1991 at the Royal Court Theatre in London.

Indian in culture. So the language is not necessarily the thing to be guided by.

(as quoted in Athique 2006:360)

What is implicit is the significance of his plays on Sri Lankan political culture, even though they are in English, and played abroad. Both the LTTE and the JVP revolts created much negative impact on the country, and resulted in a process of corporeal and non-corporeal violence.[90] Despite being a migrant writer, living in Australia, explicit in both his plays are the re-visitations of postcolonial concerns in Sri Lanka. Notwithstanding their limited performances, the plays contribute to the nation-building process as they are available in printed versions in Sri Lanka.

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[90]The warfare, both of the JVP and the LTTE, was a challenge to the socioeconomic structure of the country, and both are more 'action-oriented than ideology-oriented', and their 'ideology is a mixture of ethanol-nationalism and various interpretations of Marxism' (Samaranayake 1997:111).

Chapter Six

Incarceration and the Mobilised Body in South Africa

[W]e decided to explore the subject of Robben Island. To start off with, we put a blanket on the ground. We stood on it and began to move with Athol watching. We began to halve the blanket, halve the blanket, until there was just enough space for four feet to stand.We realised the restriction of space, and there it was—confinement. And there it was—prison.

John Kani, [Interview] (1991)[91]

This chapter focuses on incarceration and prisoners' resistance to apartheid laws in South Africa. In *Discipline and Punish*: *The Birth of the Prison*, Michel Foucault (1995) explains how the spectacle of corporal punishment that continued to operate into the eighteenth century gave way in the nineteenth century to a dis-embodied practice in prisons; reformist approaches to crime and punishment, focused on the individual, became more pervasive. Although Foucault adds that torture was avoided with the advent of prisons, he highlights that incarceration encompasses corporal pain. He explains that:

> the hold on the body did not entirely disappear in the mid-nineteenth century. Punishment had no doubt ceased to be centred on torture as a technique of pain, it assumed as its principal object loss of wealth or rights. But a punishment like forced labour or even imprisonment – mere loss of liberty – has never functioned without a certain additional element of punishment that certainly concerns the body itself: rationing of food, sexual exploitation, corporal punishment, solitary confinement. Are these the unintentional, but inevitable, consequences of imprisonment? In fact in its most explicit practices,

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[91] As quoted in Robert Gordon (2012:385).

imprisonment has always involved a certain degree of physical pain. (1995:15-16)

Foucault states that, although bodily torture was avoided with the introduction of prisons, prison punishments have never functioned without affecting prisoners' bodies. His argument suggests that even though corporal torture is not explicit in prisons, the mechanism of punishments employed in them indirectly affects the body. Once prisoners are restricted in the consumption of food or their social company through solitary confinement, the rights of their physical body are affected. Foucault explains this as 'a trace of torture […] enveloped increasingly, by the non-corporal nature of the penal system' (1995:16). This 'enveloped' torture is the invisible corporal punishment in prisons.

According to Foucault, prisons should be 'the gentle way in punishment' (1995:104-127). He argues that 'the ideal punishment would be transparent to the crime that it punishes' (1995:104-105): in order to do justice to people who have been 'wronged' by the crime, the punishment must be considered as 'retribution' (1995:109). What Foucault stresses here is the damage caused by the crime committed: the punishment should act as a way of retaliating, in a positive way. He adds that:

> [t]he punishment and correction that it must operate are processes that unfold between the prisoner and those who supervise him. They are processes that effect a transformation of the individual as a whole – of his body and of his habit by the daily work that he is forced to perform, of his mind and his will by the spiritual attention that are paid to him. (1995:125)

Implicit in his statement is the idea that imprisonment should create positive effects on individuals, transforming and enhancing them psychologically, spiritually and physically. Nonetheless, whether imprisonment is 'transparent to the crime' and results in creating a society with individuals is unsupported by evidence in reality, especially in political contexts.

In this respect, by referring to the politicisation of life and the logic of sovereignty, Giorgio Agamben argues that political prisoners of the twentieth century cannot be viewed through Foucault's biopolitics as what is witnessed, as explored in Chapter One, is 'modern biopolitics: the politics of the great totalitarian' (1998:119). He explains that political prisoners of the twentieth century are put in camps, not just incarcerated in prisons. Comparing with the captives of the Nazi concentration camps of the World War II, he argues that the prisoners in modern political contexts are on the threshold between death and life, thus they hold bare life.

To explore prison brutality what is useful is prisoners' evidence. Agamben explains that '[t]estimony, however, contains a lacuna' (2002:33), because the true witnesses are those who are dead, those who 'touched bottom […] the drowned' (2002:34). His claim is logical – those who are not dead only bear witness to a part of the story. Agamben adds that many testimonies come from the 'obscure' people – people who are 'invisible' and who comprise the camp inhabitants (2002:12-13). Prisoners who undergo brutal violence similar to camp occupants' experiences also provide much evidence of visible or invisible corporeal punishment.

Achille Mbembe's discussion of the plantation system and its aftermath on the lives of black slaves is pertinent here: he explains that the humanity of the slave is a 'perfect figure of

a shadow' (2003:21) as slaves were deprived of political rights and the rights over their body.

He adds that this loss was manipulated through the violent gaze of the administrator:

> As an instrument of labor, the slave has a price. As a property, he or she has a
> value. His or her labor is needed and used. The slave is therefore kept alive but
> in a *state of injury*, in a phantomlike world of horrors and intense cruelty and
> profanity. The violent tenor of the slave's life is manifested through the
> overseer's disposition to behave in a cruel and intemperate manner and in the
> spectacle of pain inflicted on the slave's body. (Mbembe 2003:21)

Although Mbembe's example specifically refers to plantation workers, what is interesting here is the gaze of the plantation supervisor. Surveillance was used in manipulating the bodies of slaves, making them 'phantoms' without physical death, instead using their labour, and depriving them of their physical and psychological rights. Similarly, during the apartheid era, black South Africans were also subject to diverse modes of surveillance. One of the significant modes of surveillance is brutal incarceration.

Athol Fugard's *The Island* (1973) and Mbongeni Ngema's *Asinamali!* (1985) provide significant theatrical testimonies of prisoners and incarceration: both these plays demonstrate corporeal and psychological dehumanisation processes in prisons during the apartheid era in South Africa. Existing scholarship's devotes varied attention to the plays: *The Island* and its use of metatheatre has been a focus of scholarly analyses, while *Asinamali!* is largely read in terms of gender [92]and has remained on the periphery.

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[92] It is worth noting here that gender analysis is a significant intervention in reading these plays especially because of the non-appearance of female characters but the employment of them in metatheatre; yet as the research focus is on biopolitical violence, a gendered reading is left for future analysis.

Why these dramas have gained unequal attention from scholars can mainly be attributed to the dramatists' varying degree of contribution to the field of theatre and the varying mode of expression in the two plays. For instance, Fugard uses the language of standard or canonical English to a great extent, whereas Ngema is bilingual and his English is less canonical. This gained unequal attention to these dramas could also be attributed to the ethnicities of these two dramatists: Fugard is of mixed white origin (Afrikaner and English) whereas Ngema is Zulu. David Graver and Loren Kruger (1989) argue that the plays written and directed by whites fall into the European literary tradition pioneered by Fugard; they add that since the 1976 Soweto uprising, black dramatists' plays have developed a noticeably South African style. Their claim supports the assumption made on ethnicities. The following extract referring to the publication of Fugard's apartheid plays by Oxford University Press also supports this assumption to a certain extent. Caroline Davis (2013) records that Kani and Ntshona [two actors in *The Island* and some other Fugard's plays] were not given the chance by the publisher to approve Fugard's introduction; the two actors were not allowed to add their own descriptions. Davis (2013) also describes how Fugard entered into negotiations with the Press, transcribed the plays and made revisions to the manuscripts without consulting Kani and Ntshona; Fugard acted as a spokesman for his co-actors assuming he is the sole writer. Davis emphasises that Fugard's introduction was constructed at the publisher's request although Kani and Ntshona had 'an eighty per cent contribution' (Vandenbroucke 1985:126 as quoted by Davis 2013:10). Moreover, Bernth Lindfors states that Ngema 'committed a form of professional suicide', due to a 'fuss […] over money' and since 1996 has been 'assailed' in the media (1999:181): this could be another reason for the marginalisation of his works among scholarly criticism (1997).

Whilst engaging with the existing scholarship on the two plays, I employ Foucault's and Agamben's concepts of imprisonment in my analysis. This chapter seeks to argue primarily that South African black prisoners were in a prolonged period of oppression and offensive restrictions and in a sphere outside the normal law, in Agamben's words, in a 'state of siege' (1998:20). I also argue that both *The Island* and *Asinamali!* dramatise, figuratively and literally, the resistance towards discrimination and cruelty exercised especially during the 1970s and the 1980s.[93] The distinction between the figurative and literal resistance – verbal argument and body movements on stage – will be explored through the focus on each play's dramatic techniques. I consider how the incarcerated body is mobilised as the focal point of the struggle against apartheid in postcolonial South Africa, and how it is linked to decolonisation. The chapter shows that the root cause of this physical and psychological torture in incarceration lies in prejudice against the prisoners and judiciary judgements passed on them according to apartheid laws. However, as shown through the analysis, prisoners attempt to regain their freedom and agency irrespective of their living circumstances in apartheid segregation. The chapter briefly revisits the circumstances surrounding the imprisonment of black South Africans during the apartheid epoch. It then explores the testimonies of prison brutality and resistance, represented in *The Island* and *Asinamali!* respectively.

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[93] The plays which appear in Dennis Walder's (Ed.) *Township Plays* (1993), and Duma Ndlovu's (Ed.) *Woza Afrika! An Anthology of South African Plays* (1986) along with original formatting are used for the analysis.

Incarceration in South Africa

In South Africa during the apartheid era, segregation by race was an intentional socio-political economic strategy to preserve a supremacist monopoly for the Afrikaner rulers. Abject poverty and awful modes of marginalisation were a matter of policy toward black populations. As a reaction, the apartheid system ignited internal resistance and violence: uprisings and protests were met with imprisonment and violence. In the meantime, political activists who resisted apartheid laws were imprisoned: some were involved in non-violent activities, whereas others were engaged in violent activities. Consequently, those who broke apartheid rules for their basic needs of survival and those who raised a voice against apartheid injustice were imprisoned.

As stated in the second chapter, Nelson Mandela and Steve Biko were detained for being political activists; Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment, while Biko suffered a major head injury while in police custody (without trial) and died in prison. Referring to Robben Island – the prison where Mandela and many other political activists were detained for years – Mandela writes that:

> [i]n jail, all prisoners are classified by the authorities as one of four categories: A, B, C or D. A is the highest classification and confers the most privilege; D is the lowest and confers the least. All political prisoners, or what the authorities called 'security prisoners' were automatically classified as D on admission. The privileges affected by these classifications included visits and letters, studies, and the opportunity to buy groceries and incidentals – all of which are the

lifeblood of any prisoner. It normally took years for a political prisoner to raise

his status from D to C. (1995:473)

He also confirms that '[p]rison and the authorities conspire to rob each man of his dignity' (1995:464). What is explicit is how an absolute power over black prisoners was exercised through imprisonment, by depriving them of their 'lifeblood' and 'dignity'. Paul Prece names this situation as 'the Auschwitz of South Africa' as it is 'emblematic of punishment and inhumane treatment exerted under the apartheid system' (2008:224).

Prisons in South Africa during the apartheid era occupied a space of biopolitical exception, functioning in tandem with (and as exception to) apartheid laws. While people were imprisoned in line with apartheid laws, they were also further dehumanised through processes such as 'solitary confinement and the loss of meals' (Mandela 1995:466), and 'stamping out that spark that makes each of [the incarcerated] human' (Mandela 1995:463). After being imprisoned, they were also subjected to a 'state of exception' (Agamben 2005) in which law is mere judgement divorced from justice. Agamben asserts that 'law is not directed toward the establishment of justice. Nor is it directed toward the verification of truth. Law is solely directed toward judgement, independent of truth and justice' (2002:18). Similarly, apartheid law was also directed to pass 'judgement' on black populations, often culminating in imprisonment.

It is worth drawing a comparison in this regard with violence against migrants in the world today. Whilst referring to the violation of migrants' human rights, John Lechte and Saul Newman explore how the state of exception is extended to locations of imprisonment such as detention camps: they add that '[t]o further emphasise this exclusion and policy of the

exception – as if the barbed wire, prison-like walls and surveillance cameras were not enough – some of these camps are located offshore' (2013:15). The politics of exclusion and exception were systematically allied in apartheid South Africa as well. For instance, Robben Island was located on an island which is about 7 km west of Bloubergstrand, Cape Town. The praxis of exclusion of prisoners through the locality is salient in this case. Incarceration rendered black prisoners invisible in society, the location compounded their invisibility because even the prison buildings were inaccessible and distanced from largely populated areas. As articulated figuratively in the epigraph, incarceration resembles absolute confinement, marginalisation and restriction, giving only 'space for four feet to stand'. This helped apartheid's administrators to keep prisoners under control, at a distance.

Although prisoners were invisible in society, they gained strength when they were together in prison, usually while working, cleaning sanitary buckets or bathing.[94] Mandela reveals that 'the authorities' greatest mistake was to keep us together, for together our determination was reinforced' (1995:463).

The abysmal prison and the *Muselmann* of South Africa in *The Island*

Fugard's plays are about the human facts of apartheid laws (Dennis Walder 2003) and 'about the human toll [of] racism' (Albert Wertheim 2000: xi). This is especially evident in *The Island*. Set in a South African prison which represents the prison on Robben Island, the play is centred on two political prisoners and cellmates – Winston and John (using the actors' own

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[94] Mandela states that they had sanitary buckets called ballies instead of toilets: when they cleanse these ballies, the warders did not linger as the smell was unpleasant; "[t]he only pleasant thing about cleaning one's ballie was that this was the one moment in those early days when we could have a whispered word with our colleagues (1995:465).

names). As Prece writes, '[a]rmed and inspired by stories of actual experience, Fugard and his actors improvised the daily routine of prison life as they activated the strategies for withstanding the physical and psychological press of torturous confinement' (2008:226). Moreover, the imprisonment in *The Island*, according to Mandela's description, represents the lowest category of prison conditions – D group.

The play demonstrates how John and Winston spend their prison life – during the day time, at futile physical labour, and in the night, stimulating their experiences. The focus of the time at night, however, is given to their rehearsal and performance of Sophocles' *Antigone*, which is to be presented at an imaginary concert in their prison cell. Throughout *The Island*, only John and Winston appear on stage, although there are references to the invisible prison guard, Hodoshe. John represents the organised resistance of 'educated blacks' who looked for non-violent protests directed at the white economy, the constituted forms of indirect struggles against the apartheid system. Winston symbolises the majority who assumed that physical attacks and sabotage were the only ways to earn freedom. Prece states that Hodoshe 'is as invisible as the undisplayed prison bars, by convention. The fourth and looming allegorical character in the drama is South Africa, dressed as apartheid' (2008:228).

It is the prisoners who (*mis*)name this invisible guard 'Hodoshe', a Xhosa word for a carrion fly that lays its eggs in dead bodies,[95] is used in the prison cell to refer to this unseen guard. The word 'Hodoshe' carries negative connotations as it is a parasite which depends on the others, habitually taking advantage of others without contributing anything in return. It is also a 'dirty' parasite as it lives off dead bodies. By naming the dis-embodied guard Hodoshe, the prisoners, at one level, demonstrate the vicious and harmful nature of the guard. At another level, it represents how the Afrikaner rulers nourish themselves on the human and

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[95] Xhosa is a Bantu language and is spoken by more than eight million people in South Africa.

non-human resources of South Africa through black populations' labour and property. Hodoshe characterises both the brutality and callousness of apartheid South Africa.

It is interesting to note here that the initial title of *The Island* is, as Walder (1993:194) and Wumi Raji (2005:139) state, *Die Hodoshe Span,* and as Prece reminds us, *Hodoshe Span* (2008:241). Both these titles focus on Hodoshe, but the imperative 'Die' indicates a strong rejection of his authority. The play is renamed as *The Island* (Prece 2008:241) due to the Prisons Act of 1959, which considered public discussion of the prison system as a crime subject to imprisonment. Whilst renaming helps to camouflage the direct references to Hodoshe and Robben Island, the direct references to Sophocles' *Antigone* obscure the play's criticism of the apartheid legal system.

The first set of stage directions of the play gives a clear, concise picture of the abysmal conditions of the prison and these prisoners' ruthless experiences – 'torturous confinement'. It is worth quoting it here in detail as it provides dramatic testimonies to prison brutality, and helps the discussion in the chapter. First, it is a scene in the prison which represents a cell on Robben Island: *'Blankets and sleeping-mats – the prisoners sleep on the floor – are neatly folded. In one corner are a bucket of water and two tin mugs'* (1993:195). Then, a day of these two prisoners is represented in this cell.

> *The long, drawn-out wail of a siren.* […] *the two prisoners* […] *mime the digging of sand. They wear the prison uniform of khaki shirt and short trousers. Their heads are shaven. It is an image of back-breaking and grotesquely futile labour. Each in turn fills a wheelbarrow and then with great effort pushes it to where the other man is digging, and empties it. As a result, the piles of sand never diminish. Their labour is interminable. The only sounds are their grunts*

as they dig, the sequel of the wheelbarrows as they circle the cell, and the hum

of Hodoshe, the green carrion fly.

A whistle is blown. They stop digging and come together, standing side

by side as they are handcuffed together and shackled at the anklets. Another

whistle. They start to run…John mumbling a prayer, Winston muttering a

rhythm for their three-legged run.

They do not run fast enough. They get beaten … Winston receiving a bad

blow to the eye and John spraining an ankle. In this condition they arrive at the

cell door. Handcuffs and shackles are taken off. After being searched, they lurch

into their cell. The door closes behind them. Both men sink to the floor.

(1993:195)

From this set of stage directions emerges a picture of the degrading living conditions allocated to them, the psychological damage inflicted on them and the endless, brutal exploitation of prisoners' labour. They are given tin mugs instead of cups or glasses as drinking vessels. They are deprived of their hair to symbolise the extermination of their identity: black people's distinctive hair is an important signifier of their identity.[96] Therefore, shaven heads represent the erasure of identity. Moreover, Winston and John are also given 'short trousers'. Mandela asserts that '[a]partheid regulations extended even to clothing. […] Short trousers for Africans were meant to remind us that we were "boys"' (1995:455). It must

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[96]Although shaven-head has varying implications depending on the context, during the apartheid era, it carried negative connotations. Frizzy black hair compared to straight hair was viewed negatively during this period. The Pencil Stick Test, used to determine the identity of people during the apartheid era, was a tool to eradicate this disparaging identity. According to this test, a pencil was pushed through a person's hair to distinguish whether he or she was a white, a coloured or a black. If the pencil came out easily, that person passed the test, and was not deemed black. This test recalls the language test and its 'password' used in *Rasanayagam's Last Riot*.

be noted that during the apartheid era, black men were usually named 'boys' by white people (as represented through *Sizwe Banis is Dead*). The term was used, above all, to indicate that they were not considered as gentlemen (or even men) and they were secondary citizens. They were also psychologically deprived of their manly strength and bravery traditionally ascribed to men. Similarly, short trousers also signify emasculation, rendering these prisoners less 'male'. While the removal of Winston's and John's hair symbolises the abolition of their inherited black identity, short trousers signify the new menial identity imposed on them by white rulers. Besides, the exploitation of their labour is endless as the pile of sand is never reduced: the labour is non-productive and is a punitive end in itself, symbolised by the inexhaustible supply of sand and the continuity of their work. The dehumanisation process through interminable labour is further brutalised as they are made torsos – three-legged and handcuffed. Further, the two contrasting sounds heard are the prisoners' 'grunts' and the 'hum' and the 'whistle' of the prison guard, Hodoshe: grunts symbolise the prisoners' adversity and wretchedness, whereas the hum and whistle signify the guard's power, privilege and pleasure. All these instances of corporal and mental torture show how these prisoners are treated inhumanely as machines and not as human beings. In short, their dignity is denied, and their labour is exploited by Hodoshe's inhumane actions.

Winston and John encounter both visible and invisible corporeal punishment, and psychological pain caused by apartheid politics, recalling Agamben's concepts of the *Muselmann* and modern biopolitics (2002). As noted in the introduction to the thesis, '[t]he *Muselmann* is a limit figure of a special kind, in which not only categories such as dignity and respect but even the very idea of an ethical limit lose their meaning' (Agamben 2002:63). Unlike the *Muselmann* who 'no longer had room in his consciousness for the contrasts good

or bad, noble or base, intellectual or unintellectual' (Amery 1980:9 as quoted in Agamben 2002:41),Winston and John remain sensitive to, and aware of, the dehumanisation processes.

What needs to be questioned further in this respect is the degree to which the body is implicated in this regime of prison punishment. As noted above, Foucault acknowledges that modern incarceration includes corporal punishment and that imprisonment helps the social invisibility of the punishment (1995). *The Island* makes the invisible corporeal punishment visible; for instance, through the injuries on the two prisoners, or the 'bad blow' to Winston's eye and John's sprain on his ankle. Winston and John are more susceptible to the enclosed torture – the invisible corporal punishment as represented through their physical movement subject to the siren and the whistle. Although Foucault states that the embodied spectacle of punishment of the early modern period has given way to 'sobriety in punishment' (1995:14-15), the seriousness of imprisonment is obvious from its representation throughout the play. The display of torture may have been removed from social consumption by the development of prisons, but *The Island* presents a spectacle of prisoners' corporeal and psychological pain to its audience and readers.

After the scene of dehumanisation at the outset of the play shown through mimes, the play begins with Winston's voice. He calls out the name 'Hodoshe!' (1993:196), but tells John:

I want Hodoshe. I want him now! I want to take him to the office. He must read my warrant. I was sentenced to Life [life imprisonment], brother, not bloody Death! (1993:196)

Implied here is that he prefers death to life imprisonment because Winston knows that life imprisonment is harder, more brutal and inhumane than death; it is a sentence of intense cruelty. Winston's worry about life imprisonment is momentarily submerged as they nurse the wounds inflicted by Hodoshe. John confesses that, even though he is a 'man', he would have broken down in tears as a 'baby' had Hodoshe forced them to work five minutes more with wheelbarrows (1993:197). John also says that '[t]his morning when he said: "You two! The beach!" … I thought, Okay, so it's my turn to empty the sea into a hole' (1993:197). Implied in John's complaint is that the degraded status already imposed on black men by addressing them as boys is doubled in prisons as the prisoners are made to cry like babies. John's reference also adds bitter humour to the play when he refers to the ridiculous absurdity in empting the sea. This questions whether these kinds of absurd processes in prison, as Foucault states, 'effect a transformation'. If Winston is sentenced to life imprisonment, the knowledge about the brutality imposed on prisoners, as represented through Hodoshe's endless brutality, will intensify the non-corporeal pain experienced and felt by him. That is why he prefers 'bloody Death' to life imprisonment. As Raji (2005:141) asserts, Hodoshe's harsh orders and regulations can be considered as a metonymy of the apartheid laws in South Africa.

Nonetheless, by using inborn physical and vocal power, the two prisoners attempt to regain their physical and mental strength through their simulations. Robert Gordon states that 'inherited kinaesthetic sense of African storytelling and tribal dance forms' are transformed into 'diction and a gestural poetry' in the play (2012:382). This is apparent through these prisoners' imitations. Taking turns each day, after returning to their cell, they recount stories such as going to a movie, making imaginary telephone calls and preparing for the prison concert. It is through the jovial but bitter imaginary encounters between cell mates that the

prisoners find life amidst abysmal prison conditions in South Africa. In other words, Hodoshe's unbearable cruelty is 'tolerated' as the prison mates are together and can simulate fun out of it.

I wish to discuss three such cheerful instances and their implications. First, when Winston reminds John of the previous night's actions, Winston says '[d]on't you remember last night I took you to bioscope' (1993:204). John confirms saying it is '"Fastest Gun in the West" with Glenn Ford' and '*whip[ping] out a six-shooter and guns down a few bad-men*' (1993:204). This is a reference to the Western film, *Fastest Gun Alive* (1956) starring Glenn Ford. Inspired by this film, John enacts gunning bad men in the cell: he says that he has practised it even on the beach (1993:204). This indicates how they are in touch with the world outside, and how they make fun out of labour exploitation. It is also interesting to note their use of the word bioscope, which, according to the OED, is a term chiefly used in South Africa to refer to cinema. What is significant is the link between South African language and Western art, and the prisoners' awareness and usage of it.

Another jovial instance is when John, with his '*clenched teeth*' (1993:196), reads out a parody of a news bulletin and weather forecast. He says:

> Black Domination was chased by White Domination. Black Domination lost its
> shoes and collected a few bruises. Black Domination will run barefoot to the
> quarry tomorrow. Conditions locally remain unchanged—thunderstorms with
> the possibility of cold showers and rain. Elsewhere, fine and warm! (1993:196)

The significance of John's words is two-fold. At one level, they show the prison conditions, 'Black Domination' signifying the prisoners, especially John and Winston, whereas 'White

Domination' representing Hodoshe. The encounter leads Winston and John to become injured. At another level, these two dominations symbolise black and white South Africans. As John reveals, black people lost their 'shoes' – a way to stand on their feet comfortably – when they were invaded and chased by the white rulers. One of the defining features of human beings and their growth in life is their bipedal posture; John's reference to the loss of their shoes and running 'barefoot' whilst being chased by white supremacy signifies the deprivation of human rights to black people. It further problematises Foucault's contention that an ideal punishment should be 'transparent to the crime that it punishes'.

In the third cheerful instance enacted in the cell, John and Winston are engaged in an imaginary call to the city which also indicates their excitement and fun. A set of stage directions there states that '*Winston can no longer contain his excitement. He scrambles out of his bed to join John, and joins in the fun with questions and remarks whispered into John's ear. Both men enjoy it enormously*' (1993:205). As Raji states, these simulations and the rehearsal of their play (which will be discussed below) represent 'a test of the brotherhood and solidarity' established between the two inmates (2005:140). Through their simulations, what they dramatise is the horrible prison conditions and how they attempt to recover from the corporeal and non-corporeal pain experienced during the day.

When John, who faces ten years imprisonment, is informed that his sentence has been reduced, the news gives joy to both the prisoners. As Winston announces, John will be transferred to Victor Verster prison on the mainland after he is released in three months. At Victor Verster prison:

[l]ife will change for you there. It will be much easier. Because you won't take

Hodoshe with you. He'll stay with me, on the Island.[…] There are no quarries

there, Eating grapes, oranges …they'll change your diet…Diet C, […] you'll

play games … […] Then one day they'll call you to the office, with a van

waiting outside to take you back. […] This time they'll let you sit. You won't

have to stand the whole way like you did coming here. And there won't be

handcuffs. Maybe they'll even stop on the way so that you can have a pee.

(1993:218)

That John will be moved into another prison within two months, where life will be much

easier as Hodoshe is not there and as punishment is less strict, makes them happy. However,

what merits observation here is the unequal nature of their sentences. Both are political

prisoners in the same cell, and both work in the same quarry: the play does not indicate that

one prisoner is 'less criminal' than the other. Nevertheless, Winston is sentenced to life

imprisonment whereas John's imprisonment is 'reduced from ten years to three' (1993:213).

Winston has to remain in prison with no hope of release, subject to Hodoshe's surveillance.

He is aware that this discrimination and hopelessness make him a 'living dead' person. The

authorities have raised only John's status, according to Mandela's description of Robben

Island prisoners, 'from D to C' (1995:473), by considering the appeal he has made. How the

judgement is made is not known except for the arbitrary decision: John repeats Prinsloo's

words to Winston – 'you are very lucky. Your lawyers have been working on your case. The

sentence has been reduced from ten years, to three' (1993:213). The judgement is made and

pronounced by the authorities, leaving the convicted silenced; this symbolises how the

segregation decisions were taken during the apartheid era. As discussed in the second chapter,

apartheid laws ensured that whites were free citizens who could enjoy privileges whereas blacks could not be considered free.

As Raji states, Winston becomes 'devastated by the news' because when John is around Winston can 'share his pains and test his humanity on a daily basis' (2005:141). Moreover, Winston is distressed because he realises that he is left alone, while John can wait for his release, which is the unequal judgement. He articulates his resentment and heleplessness:

> Fuck slogans, fuck politics…fuck everything, John. Why am I here? I'm jealous of your freedom, John. I also want to count. God also gave me ten fingers, but what do I count? My life? How do I count it, John? One…one…another day comes…one….Help me, John!…Another day…one…one….Help me brother! …one….[original pauses]. (1993:221)

Winston's question, 'My life', resonates both with his own life (prior to imprisonment) and his life imprisonment: his life has already been victimised by apartheid rulers as a martyr for black people's struggle. Although both John and Winston have put their reputation and life at risk by proceeding with the action of freedom, it is only Winston who cannot count. Winston's knowledge that he cannot have any expectations by counting days for his liberty puts him into a desolate status. Despite his inherited right to count, as represented through his ten fingers, he is disabled by the circumstances. This reference to counting implies two meanings. First, it suggests that he is not accounted or worth in the apartheid system: his inability to determine the date of his release, and the realisation that he is worthless simply because of his black skin, make him desperate. Secondly, counting emphasises humanity

against animality, because the human hand symbolises the rationality of human beings: Winston's inability to count is symbolic of the dehumanising process of incarceration. The suggestion that imprisonment should result in prisoners' positive transformation is turned upside down here because Winston's status as a human is symbolically transformed to that of an animal.

What also emerges from Winston's desolation is an understanding of the reality and a need to be optimistic. Raji writes that Winston 'has gathered himself together. […] he has reconciled with his fate' (2005:141). Yet, it is not a mere acceptance of his fate – or the establishment of a relationship with his fate: it is his realisation of the truth which gives him a sense of positivity, as represented through his expression: '[o]thers will come in here, John, count, go, and I'll forget them. Still more will come […] then one day, it will all be over' (1993:221). John's optimism for freedom resonates with Mandela's words – the challenge for every political prisoner is to 'emerge from prison undiminished' (1995:463).

Through Hodoshe's surveillance, commands and prison treatment, the prisoners' dignity is disparaged; identity is re-construed; labour is exploited and manhood is suppressed. This brutality is exercised through diverse means of corporeal and psychological disenfranchisement such as prison uniforms and laborious work in the quarry. Mandela adds that one of the first attempts of a political prisoner to be 'undiminished' is 'learning exactly what one must do to survive' (1995:463). 'Survival' is not the need to gain material conveniences, such as food or sanitary conveniences. He writes that their 'survival was dependent on understanding what the authorities were attempting to do to us, and sharing that understanding with each other' (1995:463).

It is with the self-realisation and optimism emerging through his own desperation that Winston is encouraged to rehearse Antigone's role in *Antigone*. It must be noted here that from the beginning, Winston has been practising the role reluctantly, because he has been under the impression that John makes Winston Antigone because he 'wants a woman in the cell' (1993:211). Winston has also been arguing with John:

> I am not doing your Antigone. I would rather run the whole day for Hodoshe. At least I know where I stand with him. All *he* wants is to make me a 'boy'… not a bloody woman. (1993:208)

Gordon argues that the 'racist hierarchy produced by colonialism is echoed in the rigidity of tribal African patriarchy' (2012:391), and what is implicit through Winston's complaint is these prisoners' 'unconsciously misogynistic attitudes to women' (2012:392). This contention needs further observation, because the play shows Winston's early reluctance to play a female character. What is interesting to note here is Winston's alacrity to play the female role later with a correct perception: the brutal prison conditions coupled with Winston's understanding of the injustice provide stimuli for him to perform Antigone's role enthusiastically. Prece adds that *The Island* is not an allegory because it shows 'distinct and identifiable' reality (2008:229); this is a valid claim, as the play exposes through incarceration the political truth of the country. Moreover, the closed prison is a microcosm of the open society where blacks are deprived of human qualities and attributes. In other words, *The Island* is a synecdoche of apartheid segregation.

'The Trial and Punishment of Antigone'

The Island figuratively functions as an act of resistance to apartheid laws at two levels: first through the play, secondly through metadramatical strategies.[97] Metatheatre can simply be defined as drama about drama which is usually employed to enhance a play's artistry and interpretations amongst the audience. Above all, it helps to go beyond realistic representations and to replace reality with imagination, especially when reality lacks what is expected. As Astrid Van Weyenberg states, metatheatre usually helps to 'draw on elements from other cultures, other traditions, other historical moments, and other theatrical texts in overt and self-reflexive ways' (2008:126). It is specifically useful in demonstrating apartheid prison injustice in camouflage, especially because, as noted earlier, any public discussion of the prison system was prohibited according to the Prison Act. Emphasising the resistance emerged through it, Gilbert and Tompkins argue that:

> the use of metatheatrical devices enables the prisoners to enact their protest against the system in discourses that circumvent the rigid censorship which is usually a component of their punishment. In particular, parodies of the prison hierarchy – almost always found in the subversions enacted by a play-within-a-play – rehearse ways in which to resist the wider social and political structures underpinning the dominant society's construction and administration of (in)justice. (1996:228)

Metatheatrical techniques help demonstrating psychological and physical dehumanisation in prisons whilst critiquing the white domination of black people. Referring to surveillance, they

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[97]Two terms, metadrama and metatheatre are used here interchangeably.

note that 'the most prevalent' technique to 'subvert the gaze' is through plays-within-plays (1996:250). The metatheatre employed in *The Island* is the prisoners' performance of Sophocles' *Antigone*, the play-within-the play named 'The Trial and Punishment of Antigone'.

Diverse political effects, irrespective of the locality and time, are drawn through *Antigone* of the Greek tragedy. Ernest Macintyre uses *Antigone* in *Irangani* to claim rights for dead political rebels, and to address the postcolonial revolts, especially the JVP struggle in twentieth century Sri Lanka. In the South African context, *Antigone* resonates with the apartheid political struggle Mandela and other inmates engaged with in reality. Being incarcerated on Robben Island, Mandela recalls that he drew strength and courage from performance, even performing the Greek tragedy, *Antigone*. This is evident through his reference to their amateur drama society in prison. Mandela writes that:

> I performed in only a few dramas, I had one memorable role: that of Creon, the king of Thebes, in Sophocles' *Antigone*. I had read some of the classic Greek plays in prison, and found them enormously elevating. What I took out of them was that character was measured by facing up to difficult situations and that a hero was a man who would not break down even under the most trying circumstances. (1995:540)

Mandela also states that '[i]t was Antigone who symbolized our struggle; she was, in her own way, a freedom fighter, for she defied the law on the ground that it was unjust' (1995:541). As Gordon writes, 'at the time of the play's premiere, [South African] history's Antigone was Nelson Mandela' (2012:389). It is worth noting here the symbolic comparison drawn by

Mandela between *Antigone* of the Greek tragedy and the South African political struggle against apartheid. During the apartheid era, the ANC became proactive in showing resistance to apartheid regulations imposed by the National Party: it was engaged in protest movements and non-violent activities, claiming freedom for black people. Although Mandela's emphasis is on heroism and elevation in the prison performances of *Antigone*, he also highlights the role of Antigone as the representation of their protest for liberty in the twentieth century in South Africa.

Fugard brings *Antigone* to the fore as a metadrama. Thus, *The Island* 'foregrounds the relationship between the real and the fictive' and highlights the reality 'by creating an intentional slippage between the three-level division of reality, stage and stage-on-stage' (Weyenberg 2008:127). As Gilbert and Tompkins emphasise, the metadrama in *The Island* makes 'a location from which it *is* possible to escape the authoritative gaze of apartheid's representatives' (1996:251). 'The Trial and Punishment of Antigone' stresses the figurative resistance to the apartheid system which is specifically implemented through the dis-embodied coercive figure of Hodoshe.

Fugard's play has gained much scholarly attention; it 'revises Sophocles in accordance with the modern liberationist tradition of interpretation' (Gordon 2012:390). Fugard's choice to engage with *Antigone*, a Western canonical play, in *The Island* supports his claim; yet, as Walder argues, Sophocles' play is used to show how political prisoners 'articulate a meaning for their suffering through another kind of dream' (1993: xv). The 'dream' here means Antigone's claims for human rights, especially the rights for an honourable burial of her brother. Implicit in his argument is the idea that *The Island* uses *Antigone* to claim rights for the political prisoners of the apartheid era. Gilbert and Tompkins state that rewriting

canonical texts helps in 'interrogating the cultural legacy of imperialism' (1996:16). What they argue is that when canonical texts are rewritten, it helps to deconstruct the canon's authority and power represented in texts. Similarly, Harry Garuba also positions *The Island* as a narrative of 'writing-back'.

> [In *The Island*] issues of colonialism, of race and color, of political
> disenfranchisement and tyranny come to the fore and the resistance assumes the
> 'writing back' dimension of postcolonial discourse. (2001:71)

In Raji's words, *The Island* 'stretch[s] the theme of the original play further, […] to make it accommodate the context of the South African struggle against racial segregation' (2005:149). In this sense, as Walder asserts, *The Island* 'transcends itself, as it transcends the immediate circumstances of its making, and creates suggestive links with other times and places, other situations of tyranny' (2003:57). By taking a canonical play based on Greek mythology as the base for *The Island*, the play explores the apartheid legal system exercised through racism. As Garuba argues, the play is rewritten but it 'inscribes their own meanings within the text' (2001:71). Thus, *The Island* plays a major role as a postcolonial discourse. *Antigone*, a story from 5 BC, is not counter-constructed, but rephrased and modified by incorporating apartheid law and political imprisonment of the twentieth century.

After labouring under the sun, John and Winston return to their prison cell to rehearse the play. Winston rehearses the role of young Antigone who defies the laws of the state for the sake of her conscience. John, representing the educated black organisations, rehearses the role of Creon, the king who is desperate to hold onto power. Rehearsals in the cell test their friendship and demonstrate their resilience in their degraded living circumstances. Realising

that prisoners should emerge from prison 'undiminished', they perform their play at the imaginary prison concert. The metadrama in *The Island* is simultaneously presented to the *imagined* audience of warders and prisoners, and to the *actual* audience in the theatre.

At the beginning of the metadrama, John, in his prison uniform, addresses the audience in the theatre assuming them as the audience at the prison concert and announces that:

> Captain Prinsloo, Hodoshe, Warders, […] and Gentlemen! Two brothers of the House of Labdacus found themselves on opposite sides in battle, the one defending the State, the other attacking it. They both died on the battlefield. King Creon, Head of the State, [...] [Antigone] was caught and arrested. That is why tonight the Hodoshe span, Cell Forty-two, presents for your entertainment: 'The Trial and Punishment of Antigone'. (1993:223) [98]

John, still appearing as the prisoner, adds that Antigone attempted to secure a respectable burial for her brother Polynices, even though he was pronounced a traitor, and the law forbids even mourning for him, on pain of death. Although this introduction to the metadrama has obvious references to the Theban socio-political context of the tragedy, especially through the mention of names such as Labdacus and Creon, it implicitly echoes the political struggle of South Africa during the apartheid era. The context, with phrases such as 'Hodoshe Span', also resonates with the horrible life-style of the two political prisoners who, as John articulates, lay their 'head[s] on the block for others' for the apartheid struggle (1993:221). John's introduction reminds the audience in the theatre both of the Greek tragedy and of the current

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[98] According to Greek Mythology, Labdacus is a king of Thebes.

political conditions in the country; his appearance as the prisoner is a challenge to the white adminstrators and the audience. Only after this introduction, John appears as Creon and explains what law is.

> The law! Yes. The law. A three-lettered word, and how many times haven't you glibly used it, never bothering to ask yourselves, 'What, then is the law?' [...] The law states or maintains nothing, good people. The law defends! The law is no more or less than a shield in your faithful servant's hand to protect YOU! But even as a shield would be useless in one hand, to defend, without a sword in the other, to strike…so too the law has its edge. The penalty! […] The shield has defended. Now the sword must strike! Bring in the accused. (1993:224)

John/Creon's definition of law suggests that law is just a word which upholds nothing, but it is a tool of protection for people. John's prominence given to the people, through 'YOU' is important. The metadrama is shown to the imaginary audience of the 'Captain Prinsloo, Hodoshe, Warders, and Gentlemen', and simultaneously to the audience in the theatre. When the play was performed in South Africa in the apartheid era, the actual audience usually comprised white people because apartheid laws restricted black people's participation, and segregation laws were applied even to the theatre audience. In this respect, the referent 'YOU' signifies white, not black people. What is implicit then is that the shield of law is to protect the white people, and it becomes powerful with its 'edge', when penalties are identified.

Agamben states that 'if the essence of the law – of every law – is the trial, if all right (and morality that is contaminated by it) is only tribunal right, then execution and transgression, innocence and guilt, obedience and disobedience all become indistinct and lose

their importance' (2002:18-19). If so, he adds that '[j]udgement is in itself the end and this, it has been said, constitutes its mystery, the mystery of the trial' (Agamben 2002:19). What is visible in the above court case in *The Island* is that law is practised in order to pass judgements without concerning about truth and justice. Creon's interest is to pass the judgement, to materialise Antigone's 'execution', without noting the justice of 'transgression'. Thus, Creon's trial scene demonstrates the 'mystery' of the trial, while Creon is shown as a puppet of this mystery trial; in Gordon's words, 'John's speech as Creon is a parodic version of the typical solecism used to justify the detention of people such as those found guilty at the infamous Rivonia Trial in 1964 (2012:394)'.[99] Thus, the comparison of Creon's trial scene with the Rivonia trial drives home the argument. John's attempt (as Creon) is to provide a rationale for judicial decisions. As the metadrama resonates with South African apartheid politics, John's (as Creon) argument is to justify the apartheid political decision.

Nevertheless, Winston, appearing as Antigone, counter-argues it, showing the power in manifesting rules and regulations for the state.

WINSTON: Who made the law forbidding the burial of my brother?

JOHN: The State

WINSTON: Who is the State?

JOHN: As King I am its manifest symbol.

WINSTON: So you made the law.

JOHN: Yes, for the State. (1993:225)

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[99]Rivonia is a place in Johannesburg, and a farm located there was a 'hideout' for many ANC leaders, including Mandela during the apartheid era until they were arrested: the Rivonia Trial was well-known in South African history because it resulted in the imprisonment of many ANC leaders (Glaser 2001).

Gordon claims that metatheatre in *The Island* symbolises 'John's attempt to assert the meaning of resistance' (2012:386). It is true that it is John's idea to perform *Antigone* at the imaginary prison concert, and it is John who teaches Winston the words of their metadrama. However, the 'meaning of resistance' is strongly articulated through Winston/Antigone's actions and voice. John's (as prisoner) attempt is materialised through Winston. Thus, the metadrama performs a symbolic resistance to the apartheid system and helps to restore to visibility and enshrine in process the justice needed for black individuals.

In that sense, the final dialogue of the metatheatre is more significant in confronting the apartheid laws, and is worth quoting in detail.

> JOHN: [*again addressing the audience*]. You have heard all the relevant facts. Needless now to call the state witnesses who would testify beyond reasonable doubt that the accused is guilty. […] There was a law. The law was broken. The law stipulated its penalty. My hands are tied. Take her from where she stands, straight to the Island! There wall her up in a cell for life, with enough food to acquit ourselves of the taint of her blood.

> WINSTON: [*to the audience*]. Brother and Sisters of the Land! I go now on my last journey. I must leave the light of day forever, for the Island, strange and cold, to be lost between life and death. So, to my grave, my everlasting prison, condemned alive to solitary death.
> [*Tearing off his wig and confronting the audience as Winston, not Antigone.*]
> Gods of our Fathers! My Land! My Home!

Time waits no longer. I go now to my living death, because I honoured

those things to which honour belongs. (1993:227)

A parallel is constructed between the cavern where Antigone is imprisoned and then buried alive, and the Island where Winston (as Antigone) is placed in a '*living dead*' position, to use Mbembe's terms (2003:40). This extract is also pivotal as it draws another analogy: like Antigone, Winston as a prisoner (being sentenced to life imprisonment) must lead a life 'between life and death'. As Gordon claims, there is no suggestion that Antigone may 'actually be wrong in her defiance of Creon; as played by Winston, she can only be viewed as a victim of state oppression, whilst in performance it is virtually impossible to respond sympathetically to John's portrayal of Creon' (2012:390). *The Island* is a 'ritual enactment of political martyrdom' and 'a ceremony in honor' all South African political prisoners like Mandela who 'share the mythical fate of Antigone' (Gordon 2012:393). Moreover, Winston's resistance, demonstrated through his argument about justice with John/Creon, and his final claim – 'My Land! My Home!', and articulated by 'tearing off' his wig (used to appear as Antigone), surpasses the aim of honour. As Raji also stresses, the play is 'an act of open defiance, an assertion of human dignity, and an unequivocal affirmation of the inherent nobility of humanity' (2005:140). The play extends its representation of political execution and ceremonial 'honor' to a position of insubordination. The incarceration on the Island represents the imprisonment of many political prisoners during the apartheid era on Robben Island and the figurative resistance to the *Muselmann* status of South African prisoners.

Fugard's interest in taking a Western canonical play based on mythology as *The Island*'s focus, and deconstructing it to address South African political concerns harmed by

white colonisers directly refers to the nation-building process of South Africa. The play also sheds light on its postcolonial nature in general as the metadrama shows resistance to power for the purpose of decolonisation. *The Island* contributes to the development of the play as a postcolonial drama, in displaying resistance against apartheid laws. The play helps construct an identity for black South Africans independent of the imposed colonial perspectives. Colonialism has construed referents for the colonised bodies such as barbarity, inadequacy and subordination (e.g. Edward Said 1995, Bill Ashcroft et al. 2002, Elleke Boehmer 2005 and John McLeod 2010). As Gilbert and Tompkins (1996) show, when a black prisoner appears in a classical tragedy, traditionally played by white actors, it helps to deconstruct the binary opposition that white people are superior whilst black people are inferior: such perfromances by black actors become politicised resistance towards the white rulers. In this context, both John and Winston, who are beaten, exploited and considered to be disposable by the prison guard, represent political coercion as they perform two royal characters as Creon and Antigone. What is more interesting is, as also noted previously, that it is John who addresses the audience, not a character of their play. Stage directions note that:

> [*t*]*he two men convert their cell-area into a stage for the prison concert. Their blankets are hung to provide a makeshift backdrop behind which Winston disappears with their props. John comes forward and addresses the audience. He is not yet in his Creon costume .*(1993:223)

John, being in his prison robe, addresses the guard using the word, Hodoshe, in a pejorative manner. It challenges the power of the guard, and it reverses the power balance. This indicates the symbolic resistance as the incarcerated bodies publicly criticise the powerful guard at the

concert (by that time, the audience knows that two prisoners use this word to refer to the prison guard).

However, Winston is prominent in this respect as he plays the role of a heroine who defies the law and challenges the rulers. Winston's role gives a different rebellious identity to him, challenging the audience at the prison concert. In postcolonial theatre, the incarcerated body is recouped and the prejudiced stereotypical view of the colonised body is revolutionised. That is, Hodoshe through his strict observation objectifies John and Winston in the quarry; the prisoners are interpellated by the ideology of the colonising power, both before their imprisonment and whilst being incarcerated. The prisoners are always considered as 'stupid' by Hodoshe: they are under his command. Yet, whilst performing the canonical play, they recuperate their power and identity. In this regard, much attention is gained by Winston, who is sentenced to life imprisonment: the role he plays as Antigone – daughter of Oedipus – helps in recovering his identity. He gains power though his voice, through his argument with Creon:

> [y]ou are only a man, Creon. Even as there are laws made by men, so too there are others that come from God. He watches my soul for a transgression even as your spies hide in the bush at night to see who is transgressing your laws. (1993:226)

This extract explicitly challenges Creon and his laws as Antigone articulates her defiance stating that Creon's law is man-made, not imposed by God. Hence, the sovereignty of Creon's law is degraded; this is a challenge to Creon's mode of surveillance. Antigone stresses that while Creon's policing secretly watches for any breach of the rules, God waits for a

transgression of the man-made law. The gaze from both modes of watching is directed towards transgression. Antigone's argument is that Western justice, represented through Creon, is under the scrutiny of human justice.

Both prisoners in the *The Island* have become subject to incarceration due to their resistance to the cruel praxis of segregation, 'transgressing [apartheid] laws', similarly to the life of Mandela. Winston as Antigone pronounces that:

> [y]our threat is nothing to me, Creon. But if I had let my mother's son, a Son of
> the Land, lie there as food for the carrion fly, Hodoshe, my soul would never
> have known peace. Do you understand anything of what I am saying Creon?
> (1993:226)

Although Antigone openly addresses Creon here, there are references to the invisible guard, challenging his coercion. The play allows John and Winston to escape from the strict surveillance of the dis-embodied guard who represents the coercion of the state. As Gilbert and Tompkins state:

> [t]he play presents the prison panopticon which ostensibly defines the prisoners
> as those who are always watched; yet these prisoners devise a way – by means
> of metatheatre – both to escape the confining gaze and to implicate the audience
> in the looking relations sanctioned by apartheid. (1996:251)

The metadrama also enables the prisoners to challenge the gaze of the guard; the dominant gaze is here fractured by the prisoners as the guard has to simultaneously gaze upon the two players and two prisoners on stage (1996).

It is evident that despite Hodoshe's corporeal absence, his presence is constant on the stage of *The Island* as the visible players constantly mime or talk about him. Hodoshe represents the sole vantage point of observation while maintaining constant vigil over these two incarcerated bodies. He represents the invisible power over the prisoners. Although the coercion is invisible and dis-embodied, often represented through whistles and humming, it is pervasive and punitive: the prisoners are physically and psychologically dehumanised. For the observer, visibility confirms the power to coerce, whereas for the observed, visibility is subjection as those observed are always under surveillance (e.g. Foucault 1995; Ashcroft et al. 2007). When the observed are under invisible surveillance, they become more subject to the power of the observed. As shown through the mimesis of Winston and John at the outset of *The Island*, this dis-embodied surveillance objectifies the two prisoners, by inflicting pain on them and by dehumanising them.

Nonetheless, as Gilbert and Tompkins note, through their rehearsal of their play the prisoners attempt to escape from Hodoshe's constant surveillance: Hodoshe's gaze is challenged to the highest degree, when the 'The Trial and Punishment of Antigone' is presented at the prison concert (1996). Weyenberg (2008) also discusses how the authoritarian gaze is subverted through the metadrama. Hodoshe's gaze is split between the guards watching the play and guards surveying the prisoners. As Gilbert and Tompkins argue, the fractured gaze 'activate[s] a considerable resistant energy' (1996:251). This resistance becomes sharp when these two prisoners reverse their roles by reconstructing the power relationship between them and Hodoshe. They 'succeed in retrieving a sense of agency, transforming act into action' (Weyenberg 2008:127), and the metadrama helps them create a displacement of authority and empower the status of the prisoners. Weyenberg adds that,

rather than observing an account of suffering, the audience is 'involved in an experience of suffering' (2008:127). Although the resistance towards Hodoshe's gaze is figurative as it is expressed through their metadrama, it becomes literal to a certain extent as it makes the audience share the prisoners' pain and claim.

Foucault affirms that the major effect of the panopticon is 'to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even it is discontinuous in its action' (1995:201). The permanency of the surveillance in the prison of *The Island* is employed through the invisible guard, not through an automatic function mode. In 'The Trial and Punishment of Antigone'*,* the permanent surveillance of the guard is exterminated by the two incarcerated bodies as the guard's gaze is constantly ruptured; this symbolically damages the commanding gaze of the apartheid system in South Africa. Although the prisoners are constantly watched, they could devise a way to sabotage this surveillance, breaking it. John and Winston remain 'unrepentant', as they continue to struggle; 'Winston remains defiant' hoping that the apartheid system will 'crumble' (Raji 2005:142). 'The Trial and Punishment of Antigone' provides the prisoners with an opportunity to show their superiority: it helps them to deconstruct their subjugation and Hodoshe's authority.

Gordon asserts that the play, while building on the canonical play, 'complicates it in its deliberately eclectic implication of contradictory intertexts' – the reference to South African historical events and the metatheatre in the play (2012:385). *The Island* assumes the twentieth-century reading of Antigone as 'liberationist martyr' (Gordon 2012:389). In this regard, it is interesting to draw a comparison with the role of Antigone presented in Macintyre's *Irangani* and in Sophocles' play. The prominent difference in *Antigone, Irangani*

and *The Island* is that, Winston and John have already experienced the consequences of their rebellion, unlike Antigone and Irangani. Before imprisonment, Winston and John protested against apartheid laws: the outcome is their incarceration. Through their performances in prison what they expect is to resist their guard. While Irangani may not have previously thought of the outcome of her rebellious actions, Winston and John perform in prison having a good understanding of their future experiences; as shown in the play, John's sentence is reduced whereas Winston faces lifelong incarceration. They perform at the concert, not for physical liberation, but to recapture their freedom, irrespective of the dreadful living circumstances in the prison. Their attempt is to challenge, and escape from, Hodoshe, who represents the oppressing state and to problematise the apartheid laws in a trial scene, as represented through the adapted title of *Antigone.*

The resistance is figurative because John and Winston are well aware that in reality, after their concert, they will have to return to their cells and endure Hodoshe's brutal treatment. Amidst Hodoshe's brutality, they show their resistance to the apartheid system. Although the two texts are different in terms of the time, the canon and the backdrop, the Greek tragedy resonates with *The Island* as both challenge the existing legal system. What is highly contradictory is that whilst Sophocles' Antigone and Macintyre's Irangani raise their voices against injustice in order to secure a respectable burial for their own brothers, Antigone in *The Island* articulates her voice for all the *Muselmann* and against the 'modern biopolitics' of the apartheid legal system.

The political significance of *The Island* is related to the performance contexts of the play. As noted in the second chapter, *The Island* was performed by Fugard, casting two black people, John Kani and Winston Ntshona, when apartheid politics since 1948 prohibited black

and white people's collaborative work.[100] *The Island* transgressed this law, showing resistance through the play itself, contributing to the ANC sacrifice for decolonisation, through two Robben Island prisoners. The discussion is extended below to the dramatisation of five prisoners and the narrative of an ex-Robben prisoner with a foucs on the play's resistance, which moves beyond its figurative sense, to apartheid.

'We have no money and cannot afford high rents': *Asinamali!*

Asinamali! takes its title from a Zulu slogan,[101] meaning 'we have no money and cannot afford high rents!' (Duma Ndlovu 1986: xxv), which was the rallying cry of a 1983 rent strike, led by a political activist, ex-Robben Island prisoner Msizi Dube in Lamontville Township. Ndlovu – the editor of *Woza Afrika! An Anthology of South African Plays* where *Asinamali!* appears – writes in a preamble to the play that: 'Dube was later gunned down by government forces, a martyr to his cause; but from his leadership emerged a group of "committed artists" whose primary goal was the revelation and ultimate eradication of racial and social inequality in South Africa' (1986:179).

Set at Leeuwkop Prison in Johannesburg, South Africa, *Asinamali!,* while focusing on Dube's political commitment, brings together five young black men from different parts of the country such as Durban and Port Elizabeth. Explaining why the play is set in a prison, the playwright, Ngema, notes that 'because I think we are in a kind of prison, all of us, even those

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[100] Since the establishment of the NTO, National Theatre Organisation, black participation in theatre was marginalised. This was further enhanced through apartheid policies gradually imposed. For instance, the Group Areas Act (1950) separated residential areas; the Bantu Building Performing Workers Act (1951) prohibited black people engaged in skilled work; and the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (1953) enacted segregation in all public areas.

[101] Zulu is the language spoken by the Zulu population in South Africa, and there are approximately more than ten million Zulu speakers in the country. It is one of the widely-spoken home languages and it also became one of the eleven official languages in 1994 (Census 2011).

who are outside, because of what South Africa is like' (Pippa Stein 1990:103). He admits that he has been imprisoned 'more than once and there is a language and a certain friendship which you develop there because you are just in the cell everyday together' (1990:103).

The five characters' offences in *Asinamali!* are varied, unlike Winston and John in *The Island*. They are incarcerated for different reasons: poverty and unemployment, disenfranchisement and political protest in the apartheid era; they are thieves, unlawful citizens, rapists and political activists. Bhoyi is a young political activist who has worked with Msizi Dube, raising his voice against apartheid. Bongani is a migrant labourer whose desperate need to find a job has driven him to commit murder. Solomzi has been practicing pick pocketing in order to meet his basic needs, whilst Thami has violated the Immorality Act by having sex with a white woman; thus, he is considered a rapist. [102] Bheki is also an indirect victim of his own skin colour in many ways: he is accused of being in an unlawful gathering, living with a woman without a marriage certificate and allowing his step-son to engage in subversive activities.

Despite the diverse nature of their offences, these five men are imprisoned in one cell in *Asinamali!*. As explored through Mandela's experiences, prisoners were usually classified and put into different prisons according to their crimes during the apartheid era. *Asinamali!* does not provide any reasons for the non-classified incarceration in the play: it shows that they are in the same cell as they are all in one category – victims of apartheid segregation. The play stresses that the common cause for their criminality and incarceration is racial segregation, and the prisoners' unity, harmony and strength in fighting to eliminate apartheid

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[102]This is an Act of the apartheid law: mixed marriages between black people and white people were banned and considered a criminal offence. This was followed by an amendment to it banning extra sexual relations between white and black South Africans. The black partner had to pay the price, not the white counterpart.

injustice; it also points to the fact that political activism is treated at the same level as other forms of criminality.

The play is developed through these five prisoners' dramatised narratives, songs and dance. They are policed and guarded by an Afrikaner oligarchy represented through an unseen prison guard, recalling Hodoshe. Similar to Sizwe in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, they failed to meet their basic livelihood needs because of corrupt segregation policies which compel them to violate the rules. They are incarcerated for being both active and passive victims of the apartheid system. On stage, the prisoners perform their stories to each other, unveiling their individual stories prior to imprisonment. They enact the roles of each other's stories while being narrators of their former lives, combating the conditions within a society polluted and corrupted by apartheid laws. When *Asinamali!* shows each prisoners' crime from their perspective or voice (which is absent in reality) and the reasons for them to be incarcerated, it allows the audience to re-judge the judicial decisions already taken: while each prisoner speaks about his crime, both the audience and other actors automatically become the judges. Through these prisoners' stories, *Asinamali!* displays, not only the violence of the apartheid system, but also these five prisoners' united resistance to that system while being incarcerated.

In spite of the play's significance in apartheid politics and incarceration practices, *Asinamali!* has gained less scholarly attention in terms of postcolonial reading than *The Island*: with a few exceptions, scholars' focus is on the marginalisation of women and gender issues in the play. To get a cursory view of the existing scholarship on gender concerns, Ian Steadman states that South African theatre practitioners of apartheid era focus:

on the repugnant realities of apartheid's racial oppression, many of the plays reveal their creators' discriminatory attitudes to women and to different ethnic and language groups. *Asinamali!* is an example of this. (1994:29)

Similarly, Loren Kruger claims that *Asinamali!* 'underplays the role of community women who, often as heads of households, were at the forefront of the [apartheid] struggle' (1995:48). Implicit is the subaltern role and prejudiced attitude to women represented in the play. Carol Steinberg also argues that 'the gender ideology of the play detracts from its imperative to mobilise against racism' (1991:23). The assumption here is that the play fails in its attempt to resist racism. Steinberg's argument is based on the notion that sexual oppression is as violent as racial violence and has 'a material existence' which cannot be 'reduced to an ancillary' position (1991:23). Moreover, Bhekizizwe Peterson's criticism is levelled against black theatre of the apartheid era; passing a general comment, Peterson says that the issue of 'sexism is, silently, contentious' as African women are kept on the 'periphery in both numbers and status' (1990:245). In this sense, while responding to the inquiry – 'why don't you do plays about women?' – Ngema replies that 'we as blacks have a problem, traditional problem', that is, 'a girl to be away from her mother, traditionally' is 'not correct' and 'that's why women have been so laid back' (as quoted in Stein 2011:103-104). Ngema's response is, rather, about the non-appearance of women players in his works, not about the relative absence of discussion about women in his plays. While acknowledging that any form of violence and oppression – sexual or racial – is vicious, it must be, however, noted that the absence about women does not diminish a play's 'imperative', if the main concerns are skilfully developed and well-performed.

Gilbert and Tompkins write that '[t]he body's ability to move, cover up, reveal itself, and even 'fracture' on stage provides it with many possible sites for decolonisation' (1996:204); *Asinamali!* is a fine example of their claim. While providing testimonies to the practices of dehumanisation in South Africa during the apartheid era, the play explicitly depicts on stage the body's ability to address politicised situations.

Five prisoners' physicality

Theatrical devices employed in *Asinamali!* play a pivotal role. Describing his dramatic techniques, Ngema also asserts that the focus is on body language in order to 'bridge the barriers of language and culture' (as quoted in Stein 1990:103). He believes that 'the body tells the story much more than the words', and states that 'even if we don't know what the actors are talking about, [body language] can go right straight to the heart' (as quoted in Stein 1990:103). Roberta Uno identifies the dramatic devises in *Asinamali!* as Ngema's 'trademarks', and adds that:

> a startling and constant physicality, the use of powerful choral singing and dance, strong use of the African oral tradition, precision ensemble acting, and a story based on actual events and the present realities of South Africa. (1994:27)

While admitting that physical expressions are crucial to the play, the verbal expressions also enhance the effects of the play. With its manifold roles the actors play, the numerous uses to which stage props employed, the minimalist stage set and the political songs and dialogue, *Asinamali!* reinvests the South African body with a power that the apartheid era attempted to

erase and erode. I explore the play *Asinamali!* in line with its corporal and vocal strategies in resisting to the apartheid system.

Boehmer writes that '[i]n colonial representations, exclusion or suppression can often literally be seen as "embodied". From the point of view of the colonizer specifically, fears and curiosities are expressed in concrete physical and anatomical images' (1993:269). 'The colonised subject's body', Gilbert and Tompkins write with reference to Boehmer's contention, 'has been an object of the coloniser's fascination and repulsion' (1996:203). Stereotypical views about colonised people were also constructed during the colonial era as represented in postcolonial discourses. An example which supports the discussion of deconstructing stereotypes is Leonard Woolf's *Village in the Jungle* (1971), first published in 1913 during British rule. To examine it further, Woolf 'others' a village he came across named Beddagama, whilst he was residing in Sri Lanka as a colonial administrator; he describes men in the village, associating them with bestial qualities and appearances.

> They are simple, sullen, silent men. In their faces you can see plainly the fear
> and hardship of their lives. They are very near to the animals which live in the
> jungle around them. They look at you with the melancholy and patient stupidity
> of the buffalo in their eyes, or cunning of the jackal. And there is in them the
> blind anger of the jungle, the ferocity of the leopard, and the sudden fury of the
> bear. (1971:11-12)

This shows how colonisers, through discourse, constructed identities of the colonised people: similar views were held also in a decolonised and 'independent' South Africa by the internal colonisers during apartheid. Consequently, black people were viewed according to Eurocentric perspectives; they were subject to apartheid's dehumanisation, hence, racial

stereotypes of black people as submissive, stupid, animal-like and violent were rampant during apartheid.

In *Asinamali!*, the five prisoners' physical movements play a major role in deconstructing these racial perceptions; degrading stereotypes are demonstrated topsy-turvy through the players' bodily expressions on stage, and black people are presented as physically and cognitively capable in confirming their resistance in the play. Unlike *The Island* which relies much on verbal communication in showing resistance against apartheid laws, *Asinamali!* uses physical expressions to support Uno's comment that Ngema's skill is 'an exuberant physical style' (1994:17). The five characters enact the roles of each other's narrations, each of their narratives undeniably includes white characters or the supporters of the apartheid monopoly; on stage, black prisoners perform all the roles, ranging from powerful white authorities and rulers, to black people belittled and marginalised by the apartheid system. This is similar to Styles' portrayal of his employers in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*; in *Asinamali!* prisoners play the roles of their regulators when the play requires. This shows the potential of the incarcerated bodies – how a single character is embodied in diverse ways in various sites, employing the body as a tool of resistance. The performitivity of the body thus frustrates the viewer's desire for a fixed object, subverting and problematising the role of identity of the colonised.

The play refers to the idea of race identity as performance. According to segregation laws, as noted in the second chapter, all South Africans were categorised as White, Asian, Coloured or Black. Racial passing – crossing these racial categories through performances – especially from the coloured category to white, and from the black group to the coloured class, actually occurred in society. It enabled racially disenfranchised individuals to adopt

certain roles and identities from which they had been restricted in apartheid society. Thus, the performativity of the body in *Asinamali!* resonates with this concept, crossing racial categories. [103]

When black prisoners perform the roles of white people, it disrupts the stereotypical coloniser/colonised binary. Contrary to the assumptions inherent in binary oppositions of coloniser and colonised, this supports Bhabha's (1994:70-80) view that the colonised is never always impotent and the coloniser is never always powerful. For instance, similar to *The Island*, where the two black prisoners perform *Antigone* to the prison audience, in a scene of *Asinamali!*, the prison cell is transformed into a High Court with the prisoners taking on all the 'white' roles, except for the accused black person. They dramatise this actual court case on stage with their bare stage props.

> *The stage is bare, save for five prison chairs at the center and to the lefthand corner a coat rack that is suspended from the roof. It serves two purposes, as a coatrack, then a window. There are two coats and a hard hat.* (1986:181)

In this instance the prison cell becomes a high court where a criminal becomes a judge and pronounces his judgment whilst others play the roles such as the interpreter, the court clerk, the court orderly and the accused. As *The Island* shows how the oppressed black character can play canonical tragedies on stage, *Asinamali!* demonstrates the potential of the body of the colonised to adopt the roles of power restricted to white people under the apartheid regime.

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[103] Fugard's (1991) play *Blood Knot* (premiered in 1961) and Zoë Wicomb's novel *Playing in the Light* (2006) are two literary representations of the issue on racial passing. Despite the 'advantages' the individuals gain by 'playing white', these works explore the psychological trauma experienced through this racial performance and its after-effects.

Asinamali! thus symbolises black subjects' ability to act out all the roles from oppressor to oppressed, through mimicry. The OED defines mimicry as 'the action or skill of imitating someone or something, especially in order to entertain or ridicule'. In this sense, *Asinamali!* attempts to entertain the audience by 'ridicul[ing]' white authorities. Bhabha extends and problematises this definition arguing that mimicry is like:

> camouflage, […] a form of resemblance, that differs from or defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically. Its threat, I would add, comes from the […] prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory 'identity effects' in the play of a power that is elusive because it hides no essence, 'no itself'. (1994:90)

Bhabha's concepts of mimicry refer to the dichotomy between the colonised and the coloniser – one of the major aspects in colonial discourse. The Colonial 'Other', through discourse, visualises its power over the colonised 'other'. Bhabha's argument is that mimicry, extending its mere imitation, challenges the colonisers' perceptions. As Boehmer also explains, '[m]imickers reflected back to colonizer a distorted image of his world; they undercut his valorized categories of perception' (2005:164).

The difference between the white and black population therefore is shown to be only a politicised construct produced by the oppressors developed through political intervention. As Wertheim asserts, 'if blacks can play white roles convincingly on stage, they understand those roles and could easily, were the society a just one, take on those roles off stage, in real life' (2000:80). The concept of otherness, which is considered of secondary importance and peripheral to the centre, even according to the apartheid laws exercised via internal

colonisation in South Africa, is paradoxically turned upside down in *Asinamali!* through the strategy of play-within-the play. This supports Toby Silverman Zinman's assertion that '[t]he power of otherness as a concept, a vision of life, is necessary more central to a play about apartheid than any other idea' (1999:97). The rest of the chapter proceeds to explore further how resistance against politicised construct is extended even to 'attacks'.

Beyond figurative resistance?

Throughout *Asinamali!,* five young men confined to the prison cell become subversive, challenging the confines of the apartheid system on stage; the culmination of their challenge is achieved when they approach a white person in the audience and challenge her/him for making black people's lives miserable. The prisoners performing on stage pick people in the audience and accuse them of being government informers.

To explore this resistance further, it is worth quoting this scene in detail.[104] Whilst being in the chant (mentioned in the extract below), the prisoners repeatedly say slogans and mention the names of their heroes: then Bhoyi says that 'I am going crazy because there is a spy here' (1986:211).

> BHOYI: COME along
>
> *They all jump up and grab placards with slogans, similar to those used during*
>
> *political demonstrations in the townships. They join in the chant*.
>
> […]
>
> *All sit down except BHOYI who moves forward.*

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[104] All the square brackets in the extract were originally used in the play-text.

BHOYI: […] What triggered the whole Asinamali protest in Lamontville Township was the death of Msizi Dube.

SOLOMZI: An ex-Robben Island prisoner.

BHOYI: Awui' nsizwa amakhosi [a man among men]. It was him and me next to him and my friend Bhekani next to me and the children in the streets and the people all over. In the cars, in the busses, in the trains, at work…

SOLOMZI: (*shouting*) We will not pay the rent increase!

ALL: AAASSSIIINNNAAAMMMAAALLLIII!

BHOYI: We don't only have no money. We refuse to get out of these tiny houses they have given to us. Niyabesahana? [Are you afraid of them?]

ALL: Hai, Asibesabi, siyabafuna! [No we are not, we want them!]

BHOYI: Shhhh…and the government informers killed him. I think I see an informer in the audience.

ALL: WHERE?

They all jump and go to different places in the audience picking out people indiscriminately and warning them. After a few hot moments they all come back to the center of the stage.

BHOYI: That anger was not only the problem of Lamontville township. But it became the problem of the whole of South Africa. But, now, understand. It is not only about the language Afrikaans, It is not only about rent increases. It is not only about job reservations and working conditions. It's not only about gold. It's not only about diamonds, not about sugarcane plantations in Natal, nor the wineries in the Cape, it's not only

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about bloody fucking passbooks. Not only about the vote. What is it? hey! What is it? You. (*Points to a white member of the audience*). You, stand up. HeymthatheniBafana! [*Go for him boys*!]

ALL: (*jump up and go towards the person in audience*) STAND UP!!!

BHOYI: What is it? Talk? You think I'm playing games with you. You think I'm acting. Sit down. My friend. You've got to look for it. It's deep down in your heart. Niyabesabana?

ALL: Hayi asibeshbi siyabafuna…

SOLOMZI: (*stands up as the rest of the cast retreats to sit in a semi-circle behind him*) Heeeeee…Bra Tony! Majita. HE took me to this factory on a Friday afternoon. Payday. He knew how to deal with workers on a payday. But inside the factory, it was happening.

They all jump up and assume different positions to symbolize machines in a factory. After the song starts all of them mime different machines in unison with the song. The song is more a rhythmic chant without specific words. (1986: 210-212)

The significance of this extract is manifold. First, a link between *The Island* and *Asinamali!* can be made with reference to the destiny of 'released' political prisoners. Fugard shows how the rigidity of imprisonment is lessened through John's transfer to a better category of incarceration: Winston implies that John will be released – 'straight out of your cell to the Discharge Office' (1993:219). While *The Island* resembles the prison on Robben Island where political prisoners in reality were incarcerated, *Asinamali!* states that Dube, the ex-Robben

Island prisoner – was killed by the state. Dube's destiny shows that despite his liberty from Robben Island, he is re-victimised by the state. This provides a likely aftermath of political prisoners released during the apartheid era. Implied here is that even prisoners like Winston and John in *The Island* can also be subject to the same destiny as long as they continue to be freedom fighters against the apartheid system.

The extract also shows how the death of the political activist – an ex-Robben Island prisoner, Dube – creates tensions in society, and how this death reveals the insidious relationship between imprisonment and socio-political concerns in South Africa during apartheid. Thirdly, the passage also sums up the reason why blacks were incarcerated. Bhoyi claims that their protest is not only against one or two issues of injustice, but against the whole apartheid system. Significantly, the scene shows a political protest with placards and slogans: although such protests are attacked by the state, and are not welcome in reality by white rulers, the audience is now compelled to witness it. What is significant here is that the surveillance system, extensively employed by the apartheid government through policing and government informers to arrest black people, is reversed: surveillance is also employed, as explicitly noted in *The Island*, through prison warders such as Hodoshe. The apartheid system here comes under scrutiny and the audience becomes the observer of the unjust regime. Prisoners' movements in the audience to pick up informers and warn them indicate their metaphorical freedom; his also shows that the prisoners take on the role of the police, not only on stage, but even among the audience.

The most striking aspect of this extract, however, is the prisoners' corporeal and verbal approach in resisting this injustice. The rhetorical question raised by Bhoyi – 'what is it?' – functions in two ways. While it helps the audience to criticise the actions of the state, it

also helps the individuals in the audience to self-criticise the roles each of them has played in this process of victimisation. Through this action, the audience is verbally harassed: the corporeal actions of the prisoners are also a physical threat to the audience. Although only one white person in the audience is 'caught' by the prisoners, the whole audience becomes subject to their authority: during this scene the audience is under physical and psychological subjugation. When all these prisoners command saying 'STAND UP', it is a shocking experience for the audience. This occurs in the ninth scene, and by then the audience has already seen on stage how these prisoners were verbally and physically oppressed by the representatives of the state, especially through policing. The prisoners' attack on stage here is the reversal of the state's off-stage role: they stress that they are not playing a drama/game on-stage indicating the impact of their intention. Their objective is to create an awareness of the apartheid violence by allowing the audience to experience the physical, verbal and psychological torture of the state. They end the attack asking the audience to analyse it according to their conscience.

These theatrical devices provide testimonies to the extent to which Bertolt Brecht's dramatic stratagem – the alienation effect ('A effect' or *Verfremdungseffekt*) – is employed in the play. The audience's role is made significant at this moment as the audience is neither engaged in the fictional reality on the stage nor is overtly empathetic with characters. When Bhoyi directly addresses the audience and acknowledges its presence, by breaking the fourth wall, it prevents the audience from emotionally identifying themselves with characters and striking incidents in the play, thus directing the audience to be critical spectators rather than emotional onlookers. This is designed in order to perceive the real world, apartheid violence, depicted in the play, and to sensitise the audience to the political mission of the theatre.

Accordingly, the audience is easily transformed to an active role by encouraging them to ask questions about the real life issues they experience, and to interpellate the politics exercised in society: as a result, the audience is encouraged to criticise society constructively; the audience tends to take decisions on the message(s) being passed. The audience cannot be detached: they have to be actively engaged in the political dialogue performed on stage, which also demands from them a judgment. The effect here is to politicise the audience's reactions to the on-stage action. These decisions in turn help to re-scrutinise the judgments made on stage, in reality, in real political issues. In South African apartheid contexts, such judgements may contribute to the process of decolonisation.

Actors' enactments also show how body politics is used in postcolonial theatre as a mode of resistance. The body of the colonised, which is degraded as savage and subordinate (Frantz Fanon 2008 and Ashcroft et al. 2002), turns to be powerful, threatening the coloniser: this gives evidence of the use of body in postcolonial theatre to revise the colonised subjectivity. Prisoners' body movements are used not only in creating resistance, but also to demonstrate the processes of dehumanisation. In symbolising the exploited nature of their labour, *Asinamali!* employs these prisoners' body movements on stage. For instance, in representing a pigsty where one of them has worked, the prisoners become pigs on stage walking on all fours. Other times, their bodies are used to symbolise machines in a factory – this further enhances their mechanised, regulated and dehumanised lives, as exemplified in the extract in the next section. Hence, *Asinamali!* is a play where the body is extensively used to dramatise how black people are objectified and dehumanised, and asserts the effects to drive the message home effectively.[105]

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[105]Physicality was explained in Chapter Two.

The players' physical expressions, especially through their mimicry and role-playing events, create humour. Whilst this is a way for the prisoners to regain psychological energy and happiness irrespective of their atrocious prison life, it also entertains the audience. Myles Holloway's criticism, levelled against the plays' entertainment aspects, notes that 'the tendency to package the South African situation in a palatable form for New York and London or for local consumption is disturbing' (1993:24). In this sense, Holloway adds that *Asinamali!* is 'controversial' (1993:24). In constrast, Peter Brook asserts that:

> [w]hat I found profoundly right and extraordinary about *Asinamali!* was that this horrifying situation was being presented pitilessly, through a joi[e] de vivre. The events were not softened by it, but heightened to the last degree, because they were presented, not through sentimentality, but through a vitality. (1988:2 as quoted in Uno 1994:17)[106]

Brook's contention supports Bernth Lindfors' claim that the '[s]uccess on the stage has been [Ngema's] hallmark. In the past fifteen years no other South African has won so many prestigious local and international awards in the performing art' (1999:182). Holloway notes that *Asinamali!* entertains its audience to a great extent, however, as Brook explains, the entertaining aspects of the play are not merely for 'consumption' because these entertaining features reflect apartheid horrors: the legal system and incarceration of the apartheid epoch is skilfully critiqued through hilarity in *Asinamali!*.

Verbal means are also used in the play in challenging apartheid incarceration; it is worth exploring the play's language use as a way of deconstructing the colonisers' literary

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[106]As quoted by Uno, the reference is from John Guare's 'Peter Brook and Mbongeni Ngema' in *The New Theater Review,* Spring 1988:2-4.

canon, according to postcolonial criticism. Unlike *The Island* which heavily employs the standard or canonical English, *Asinamali!*'s language is highly colloquial and employs non-standard English. Furthermore, the play uses not only the English language, but also Zulu expressions. The scenes where the prisoners enact a court case and where they sing in Zulu language are two fine examples.

First, the following extract is from the court case for Thami's imprisonment. Bongani, Bhoyi, Thami, Solomzi and Bheki act as the 'court orderly', the 'interpreter', the 'judge', the 'court clerk' and the 'accused' respectively (1986:184).

BONGANI: Rise in court! Sukumani. Silence. The court is now in session.

SOLOMZI: Does the accused speak Afrikaans?

BHEKI: No Baba.

SOLOMZI: Ok. Mr.Ngema [Bhoyi Ngema] will translate into English.

THAMI: (*speaking in Afrikaans*) Is jy Bheki Makhadi?

BHOYI: Are you Bheki Mqadi?

BHEKI: Baba

BONGANI: Khuluma kakhulu kuzwakale mbombo kanyoko. [Speak louder so
you can be heard.]

THAMI: Waat was daai? [What was that?]

BHOYI: It's his name, your worship.

THAMI: Op die vyf en twintigste Mei was u in onweaste vergadering in St.
Simons Kerk, Lammontville gevind.

BHOYI: On the twenty-fifth of May, you were in an unlawful and undesirable
gathering in St. Simon's church, Lamontville township.

BHEKI: (*shaking*) Cha!

BONGANI: Thula! [Shut up!]. (1986:184)

The scene, above all, while showing the prisoners' multilingual abilities, implicitly satirises the judge's language inability and dependency. 'Baba'– the polite form of address for any older person, showing respect (according to the OED) – is perceived as an agreement to the question denoting the monopoly of the court system. The injustice practised in courts is also represented through the way of probing the accused of his crimes: the interrogation in the above extract is not processed through questions, but through statements, and the accused is forced to be silent without giving freedom for him for any explanations.

Secondly, demonstrating a sense of brotherhood and implying to face their future with heroism, they sing their final song in Zulu:

Elamanqamu namhlanje, namhlanje, zinsizwa

Elamanqamu, elamanqamu, namhlanje

Kwaphel'izinsizwa, kwasal'amavaka ayobaleka

Elamanqamu, elamanqamu, namhlanje.

[(Today is the D-Day, today is the day)

Gone are the brave men,

only the cowards remain

and they will run

Because today is the day

It is the day of reckoning.]

They then come together to form a phalanx of resistance. (1986:224)

Through the references to D-day in their song, they imply their preparedness and confidence to initiate combat.[107] Singing the song in Zulu helps to challenge the language of the apartheid rulers. Referring to the use of Zulu language in his plays, Ngema asserts that African's strength and valour emerges through it as the Zulus are known for 'warrior sprit'; he adds that:

> Black people are always seen as people who do not have heroes. They always talk about Greek heroes or English heroes, but they never talk about African heroes. No one talks about African queens; they talk about English queens. One of the important things I do with my work is to reveal African heroism. (as quoted in Uno 1994:24)

The use of Zulu language is an attack on the perceptions of heroism, which also deconstructs the Western literary concepts about black populations. Uno, referring generally to all Ngema's works, asserts that '[w]ith the culmination of each of Ngema's plays, one can almost see or sense the presence of the dead, as if the actors are speaking from atop a mountain formed by the bodies of their fallen leaders and heroes' (1994:24). Before singing the song, '*all the prisoners jump up and start shouting out names of heroes past and present*' (1986:223) such as Steven Biko, Nelson Mandela and Winnie Mandela who struggled for black liberation.

The deviation from canonical English in postcolonial literature, as Ashcroft et al. argue, can be attributed as a 'medium of power' of the colonised (2002: 37). They stress that:

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[107] D-Day is typically used to refer to a day on which a successful attack is initiated. For instance, on D-Day in 1944, during the Second World War, allied forces invaded northern France.

the appropriation and reconstitution of the language of the centre, the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new usages, marks a separation from the site of colonial privilege. (2002:37)

Although the reference here is to colonialism, in *Asinamali!,* this can be attributed to the resistance to the politicised contexts of the apartheid era, in this instance, a legacy of Western colonialism. *Asinamali!* deconstructs, not only the dominion of English language but also Afrikaans, by using both these languages in tandem with Zulu, and by showing the audience that black prisoners are capable of using them through appropriation. The verbal coercion is heightened when all five prisoners form a '*phalanx'* of determined resistance to the apartheid legal system. As Uno states, *Asinamali!* is a 'consistent voice of criticism of the South African government', and 'contains an unyielding message of black liberation' (1994:15). *Asinamali!* is a play about hope emerging from despair through resistance against apartheid era.

The two dramatic representations not only deconstruct the stereotypical rendering of colonised bodies, but also display the prisoners' potential strength in resisting the existing socio-political system. *The Island* and *Asinamali!* provide a means to express a mode of empowerment and a form of resistance to apartheid incarceration and inhumanity – against the *Muselmann* status in South Africa. The plays depict how prisoners are mobilised on stage against apartheid restrictions. They help in the process of decolonisation by creating awareness of the corrupt segregation rules of apartheid laws. In this way, theatre politicises and challenges the audience to consider possible causes and alternative ways of negotiating social problems.

Chapter Seven

Human Trafficking and the Modified Panopticon in India

We need to trust in the efficacy of surveillance devices to give us the comfort of believing that we, decent creatures that we are, will escape unscathed from the ambushes such devices set – and will thereby be reinstated and reconfirmed in our decency and in the propriety of our ways.

Zygmunt Bauman and David Lyon, *Liquid Surveillance: Conversation* (2013:90)

According to the Joint Council of Europe/United Nations (JCE/UN), human trafficking is a 'real and growing problem all over the world' (2009:5); this chapter offers an investigation into the nuances of this burgeoning phenomenon through a critical reading of Manjula Padmanabhan's play *Harvest* (1999). The play is read as an aesthetic representation of 'modern biopolitics' (to use Giorgio Agamben's (1998) words) realised through human trafficking.

The JCE/UN study explains that '[t]rafficking in human beings, including for the purpose of the removal of organs' is:

> the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other

forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices

similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (2009:13)[108]

This definition encompasses a tri-faceted categorisation of exploitation which includes enslavement, sexuality and removal of organs: it is the unscrupulous manipulation and regulation of biological life through human trafficking. Yet, organ trafficking has become more commonoplace since the beginning of the twentieth century, as revealed through current news and the research data (see, David Matas and David Kilgour 2007, and Hyuksoo Cho et al. 2009).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) reveals that 'an estimated 10,000 black markets involving purchased human organs now take place annually, or more than one an hour', as quoted in the article titled, 'Illegal kidney trade booms as new organ is "sold every hour"' (2012). India, Pakistan and China are popular desitnations for organ transplanting; where one can buy a kidney for approximately $200,000 from gangs harvesting organs from vulnerable people who receive just 2.5% ($5,000) of the profit. Tom Phillips writes that Chinese Police dismantled a major illegal organ trafficking trade in organ harvesting, arresting 137 people including 18 doctors who performed operations on socially-deprived people (2012). Heimo Fischer claims that villagers in rural Bangladesh sell their kidneys for just 1,400€ – 1,900€, while African refugees on the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt are vulnerable to 'kidney theft' (2013). Fischer adds that '[i]n China, the kidneys, lungs and hearts of executed

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[108] As the JCE/UN study quotes, the source is from 'Article 3 of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and Article 4 of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings' (2009:13).

death row inmates are used for transplants, [while] [i]n the Balkans, the trade in human organs is also well established'. Fischer writes:

> [a]t the end of April of this year [2013], an EU-led court in Kosovo convicted five men of buying human organs for customers from Israel, Germany, Canada and Poland. During the court case it came to light that the donors received 12,000€ per kidney. The organs were sold on to patients for ten times that amount. (Fischer 2013[n.p.])

Moreover, investigating the allegations against the Chinese government's exploitation of Falun Gong prisoners, David Matas and David Kilgour write in the report 'Bloody Harvest' that the Chinese government 'has put to death' these prisoners since 1999 and their organs such as 'kidneys, livers, corneas and hearts, were seized involuntarily for sale at high prices' (2007:58).[109] These news reports, especially the removal of organs from prisoners on death row, show the exercise of human trafficking at a maximum level.

Besides the examples described above, there are other forms of organ exploitation including surrogacy, which moves beyond mere organ trafficking. A surrogate mother is a woman who is impregnated through artificial insemination to bear the child for another couple; although she does not undergo the removal of her body organs, she is subject to womb-exploitation, as following the birth, the child is then handed over to others; she undergoes this process due to her economic vulnerability. Hence, this is a mode of trafficking for the purpose of reproduction. To explore it further, a May 2012 edition of the *London*

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[109]According to the article titled 'Falun Gong prisoners used in organ harvesting' (2006), Falun Gong, which was founded in 1992, is an organisation based on three principles – truth, compassion and tolerance. Falun Gong practitioners aim to achieve a higher spiritual state by pursuing these principles, a practice similar to Buddhism. Yet, the Chinese government restricted and outlawed Falun Gong in 1999 as the Government felt threatened by it. Consequently many Falun Gong practitioners have been incarcerated.

Evening Standard revealed that 'as many as 1,000 British couples are estimated to have travelled to India and paid up to £ 25,000 to have an Indian woman bear them a child';[110] there are also 'up to 1000 clinics, "all unregulated" in [India], many specialising in helping Britons become parents', despite the ban of commercial surrogacy in Britain.[111] 'In spite of the robust legal basis for the prosecution of trafficking crimes, many of the Indian government's acts do not effectively criminalize the clients and profiteers of the trade, and several do not define "trafficking" *per se* in human beings' (Sadika Hameed et al. 2010:18). Meanwhile, identifying factors related to human organ trafficking using secondary data from forty countries, Hyuksoo Cho et al.'s empirical study contends that there is a positive relationship between economic and cultural globalisation, and human organ trafficking (2009). The WHO adds that '[i]n more developed Asia the forces of poverty bring many girls and young women into [sex] trafficking networks and agents' (2001:7).

Judith Butler asserts that '[t]he body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency: the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of others, but also to touch, and to violence' (2004:21). Human trafficking provides a very specific testimony to Butler's argument that the body is subject to the gaze of the other, and hence becomes subject to violence under the alibi of medical intervention, health benefits, and reproduction. Yet, what is apparent through the aforementioned examples is that, whether through legal or illegal measures, it is economically or socio-politically marginalised populations that are mostly vulnerable to human trafficking, especially to organ harvesting and sex trafficking; poor communities are doubly-victimised in the international and national markets of human trafficking. Consequently, as Helen Gilbert states, 'the organ commerce has become a hotly debated topic' because human organs are

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[110]See, 'No ban can stop the march of baby factories' (Sam Leith 2012).
[111]See, 'Parents stuck in India amid legal fight to bring surrogate babies home' (Shekhar Bhatia 2012).

considered as 'tradable commodities' (2006:126). Today, this trade is not confined to body parts, but extended to a wholesale market, which includes sex trafficking, womb-exploitation, and the abuse of the power of reproduction.

Harvest provides a literary testimony to diverse modes of human trafficking actualised through various means such as deception, seduction, abduction and coercion, as introduced in the JCE/UN definition. As noted in the second chapter, the play has received little attention from scholarship. Existing criticism of the play tends to focus on its depiction of the commodification of body organs. For instance, Ayesha Ramachandran writes that *Harvest* reveals the extreme outcome of the international trade in human organs as a metaphor for neocolonialism' (2005:165); Shital Pravinchandra also acknowledges that the third world body is commodified to the first world (n.d.),[112] while Sujatha Moni's study focuses on subalterns' involvement in transplant tourism (2014). Helen Gilbert argues that power in *Harvest* is manifested through 'biomedical technology and digital technology' (2006:123); comparing *Harvest* with two other fictional narratives, Suchitra Mathur explores developing world's women and the politics of science in terms of postcolonial feminism (2004). Without a doubt, the play's representation of the globalisation project and science pertain to the way of being in the contemporary world. What is under-developed in existing scholarship about *Harvest*, however, is a comprehensive reflection of the nuanced complexity and diversity of the processes of human trafficking targeted on the economically disenfranchised, subaltern bodies, and an interrogation of the ways in which those victimised attempt to react and resist against this coercion of biopolitics. For instance, exploitation in *Harvest* is not limited to the removal of organs but extended to womb-exploitation and reproduction, which is challenged in the play; this is another aspect which has received little attention in scholarship.

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[112]The year of publication is not stated in the article.

The play specifically portrays how poor populations in India are haunted, seduced, commoditised and exploited by the spectre of the developed world, through technology: human trafficking in *Harvest* is mostly seen through electronic surveillance, or e-surveillance.[113] Hence, the focus of this chapter is on the processes of exploitation in trafficking human beings. In this chapter, I argue that *Harvest* displays an aesthetic representation of diverse means of human trafficking, to which developing countries are subject, and may consent to or resist; the rich nations, in the meantime, operate it with the help of technology, and in the guise of aid to poor populations.[114] While ackowledging the existing scholarship on *Harvest*, this chapter offers a close textual reading through the lens of surveillance praxis used for the biopoliticisation of life.

Surveillance praxis

The conceptual approach to *Harvest* can initially be traced through an engagement with self-surveillance concepts within postcolonial contexts. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008) Frantz Fanon explores a black person's awareness of being different from white people, by referring to an encounter with a white person:

> On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white
> man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own
> presence, far indeed, and made myself an object. What else could it be for me but

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[113]See, for instance, Harshini Shankar (n.d.) and Pritesh N. Munjal (2009).
[114] In this discussion, the distinction between developing or rich worlds are mainly based on the difference between economic and technological advancements of the otherwise known as 'Global North' and 'Global South'.

an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood? (2008: 85)

Fanon argues that the consciousness of the body is 'a negating activity' (2008: 83), which results in an 'amputation' – a figurative self-removal of blackness. He develops this contention through the epoch of European colonialism that justified its existence and rightfulness on the inferiority of the black race.

> Every colonized people – in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality – finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. (2008:9)

The colonised's self-amputation is a form of collusion with the colonisers, caused by self-surveillance, through which they attempted to appropriate the coloniser. Yet, the colonised is also subjected to others' observation. In this respect, Foucault's concepts on the medical gaze and panopticism are significant because, as Lyon states, 'Michel Foucault stimulated new approaches to understanding surveillance' (2006:3).

In the early 1960s, whilst tracing the development of the institution of the clinic, Foucault coined the term, 'medical gaze' or 'clinical gaze':

> It was this constant gaze upon the patient, this age-old, yet ever renewed attention that enabled medicine not to disappear entirely with each new

speculation, but to preserve itself, to assume little by little the figure of a truth

that is definitive, if not completed, in short, to develop, below the level of the

noisy episodes of its history, in a continuous historicity. In the non-variable of

the clinic, medicine, it was thought, had bound truth and time together.

(2003a:65)

The medical gaze helps to unearth the alleged hidden truth of a patient's body. Once an

understanding of the body is acquired, a doctor can diagnose problems and suggest solutions;

thus, he maintains and obtains power over the patient's body. Foucault's assertion is that the

clinical gaze is not 'an intellectual eye' as it is a gaze which 'travels from body to body and

whose trajectory is situated in the space of sensible manifestation. For the clinic, all truth is

sensible truth' (2003a:148). Through this gaze, it is not possible to understand the 'unalterable

purity of essences beneath phenomena' (2003a:120). Hence, the belief in the gaze suggests an

exaggeration of the practical knowledge of the body. Moreover, Foucault notes that a doctor's

'intervention is an act of violence if it is not subjected strictly to the ideal ordering of

nosology' (2003a:8). Accordingly, the medical gaze renders the body an object through which

medical knowledge is generated while the patient's identity as a person is erased. The

separation of a patient's body from his or her identity is dehumanising, so is the medical gaze.

Harvest shows how the clinical gaze, once operated in the clinic to see through the patients'

bodies, has now shifted to healthy peoples' homes: the medical intrusion represented in

Harvest's organ trafficking is explored in the analysis of the play.

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, written in the 1970s, Foucault

explains his social theory of panopticism. This theory, which describes how surveillance can

be used for order, punishment and discipline in any institution in society, is built on Jeremy Bentham's physical architectural structure of the panopticon – a circular building with a tall observation tower at the centre and an open space surrounded by an outer wall in the periphery that contains cells for occupants (1995). The cells are situated in ways which radiate from the centre. From the observation tower, it is possible to observe each cell located in the periphery in which the occupants are incarcerated. 'They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible' (1995:200). These incarcerated bodies could range from school children to prisoners. Each of the incarcerated is observed carefully, but is not allowed to communicate with each other nor with outsiders; they are invisible to each other, with concrete walls dividing their cells. This particular panoptic structure induces a sense of permanent observation and ensures the functioning of power; hence, discipline is enforced. What Foucault suggests is when the incarcerated are isolated in their own cells, there is no danger of any 'collective escape', 'plot' or 'violence' (1995:200-201). For instance, referring to workers, he notes that 'there are no disorders, no theft, no coalitions, none of those distractions that slow down the rate of work, make it less perfect or cause accidents' (1995:201). It is assumed that by individualizing the subjects and placing them in a state of constant visibility, the efficiency of the institution is maximised in any society; panopticism is effective to 'increase both the docility and the utility of all elements of the system' (1995:218).

The complexity and the advancement of surveillance praxis, due to changes in society and the development in technology today, is salient to our contemporaneity through the use of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), data collection for medical and biometric purposes, and military or civilian drones used for aerial security. People today are under regular

surveillance, through street cameras, social media, internet banking, and swipe card technology to name a few examples. These modes of surveillance move beyond the purposes to impose 'docility and the utility' on human bodies through institutions because their aim is to collect data and regulate human beings; this problematises the applicability of Foucault's panopticism to such instances. Despite the criticism leveled against Foucault's panopticism – that it is unable to address the complexity and modernity of surveillance – David Lyon asserts, that '[t]he Panopticon refuses to go away' mainly because it is a 'rich and multifaceted concept' (2006:4).

Bauman states in *Liquid Modernity* that the panopticon is just one form of surveillance and today's world is 'post-Panoptical' (2000:11). Bauman describes the difference as follows:

> What mattered in Panopticon was that the people in charge were assumed always to 'be there', nearby, in the controlling tower. What matters in post-Panoptical power-relations is that the people operating the levers of power on which the fate of the less volatile partners in the relationship depends can at any moment escape beyond reach – into sheer inaccessibility. (2000:11)

In *Liquid Surveillance: A Conversation*, Bauman expounds that today the panopticon is 'alive' and 'armed' with 'cyborgized muscles' but has 'stopped being universal' (Bauman and Lyon 2013:51). Hence, people in such institutions are subject to individual surveillance, as Bauman figuratively states that 'just as snails carry their homes, so the employees of the brave new liquid world must grow and carry their personal panopticons on their bodies […] keeping them in good repair and assuring their uninterrupted operation' (Bauman and Lyon 2013:54). Lyon describes, 'the new ways that surveillance is seeping into the bloodstream of

contemporary life' concluding that 'the ways it does so correspond to the currents of liquid modernity' (Bauman and Lyon 2013:128). The word 'liquid' is used to refer to the 'lightness' of the present nature of society – 'the mobility and inconstancy' of the modern world (Bauman 2000:2). 'Bauman's notion of liquid modernity frames surveillance in new ways and offers both striking insights into why surveillance develops the way it does and some productive ideas on how its worst effects might be confronted and countered' (Bauman and Lyon 2013:9). In modern liquid surveillance situations, unlike Foucault's panopticism, '[t]he inspectors can slip away, escaping to unreachable Realms' (Bauman and Lyon 2013:10) because 'power now exists in global and extraterritorial space' (Bauman and Lyon 2013:11). What becomes apparent from Lyon and Bauman's dialogue is that today's surveillance practices are 'fluid' and 'liquid'; they operate in a mobile manner. As Lyon states, while in liquid surveillance the operators escape from visibility and accessibility, the coercion is never withdrawn, but made invisible through e-technology making it more powerful. Implicitly, the more a society uses technology, the more people in that society are likely to be subject to surveillance; the more the forms of surveillance that are cyber-controlled, the more people are violated, dehumanized and biopoliticised.

Surveillance is utilised for diverse means, irrespective of the territories. Since *Harvest* focuses on how surveillance is used for human trafficking, on economically subjugated subalterns from India in the twentieth century, it is worth briefly referring to the neo-colonial condition in postcolonial India. During colonialism, colonised countries' material wealth such as gold, land profits and human labour were commoditised and exploited. Today, the legacies of colonialism manifest themselves, amidst the advancement of technology, in a neo-colonial guise. As Bill Ashcroft et al. have it, neo-colonialism is 'any and all forms of control of the

ex-colonies after political independence', and presumes the 'inability of developing economies […] to develop an independent economic and political identity under the pressures of globalization' (2007:146). It is 'the continuing economic control by the West of the once-colonized world under the guise of political independence' (Elleke Boehmer 2005:9). Both these definitions stress that neo-colonialism refers to economic control of once-colonised countries.

Yet, not all ex-colonies are subject to the pressures of this new power; some, such as Australia, have established economic stability today whereas India and Sri Lanka are subject to neo-colonialism. Direct colonial rule is not required for this coercion because 'the economic (and social) relations of dependency and control ensure both captive labour as well as markets for European industry as well as goods' (Ania Loomba 2005:11). Homi K. Bhabha, writing a foreword to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth,* argues that the economic solutions introduced to overcome poverty and inequality by the International Monetary Fund [IMF] and the World Bank prioritise concern for the colonial ruler while rendering poorer people [third world governments] more vulnerable (2004).

Harvest provides literary testimony to these relations. As noted earlier, human trafficking represented concerns a number of processes including the removal of body organs, total control over bodies through deception, seduction and coercion, attempts of sex-trafficking and womb-exploitation between India and America. The power relationships represented in *Harvest* illustrate what Ashcroft et al. call the 'new superpower of the United States'(at least since 1947) and the 'new form of imperialism' (2007:146). *Harvest* narrativises the economic solutions which make poorer populations more vulnerable in the neo-colonial world. The neo-colonial coercion that operates through e-surveillance for the

process of human trafficking is dis-embodied and invisible, far removed from Foucault's panopticism. *Harvest* moves beyond, and problematises, Bauman's conceptualisation of the post-Panopticon because it combines medical gaze and e-surveillance for the purpose of human trafficking in the pretext of economic support. What *Harvest* displays is a modified panopticon, and how economically deprived subalterns in India are subject to it.

Om's decision: a neurosis status '*with* [his] *consent*'?

Harvest was written in 1997 but formally premiered in 1999 in Greece (as stated by Helen Gilbert 2001); it presents a futuristic plot set in 2010 Bombay,[115] and focuses on an Indian family of four who live in a small one-room apartment. They are Om Prakash, his wife Jaya, his mother Ma (Indumati), and his brother Jeetu – aged twenty, nineteen, sixty and seventeen years. Although Om is the bread-winner of the family, he is currently unemployed. Hence, he becomes a donor of the 'InterPlanta Services [C]ompany', which means that an unspecified 'American "Receiver"' from the 'First World' owns the rights to his unspecified body parts (2003:1597)[116]. Since married people cannot be employed as donors, Om introduces himself to the InterPlanta Services Company as unmarried; Jaya is introduced not as his wife, but as his sister.

At the beginning of the play, the audience sees Jaya and Ma waiting for Om. Returning home after the selection test for the 'job interview', Om tells Ma and Jaya the

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[115] *Harvest* appears both in William B Worthen's *The Wadsworth Anthology of Drama* – 4th edition (2003) and in Helen Gilbert's *Postcolonial Plays: An Anthology* (2001); the texts are slightly different. The play-text in Worthen's anthology is mostly used for this current analysis unless otherwise stated, because stage directions and some expressions are often given in detail. Hereafter, page numbers are indicated parenthetically in the text according to the editions. Formatting is also taken from the original play-texts.
[116] This is quoted from the introduction given in the Worthen edition to the play.

surveillance process he has undergone in order to be recruited for the job. He describes the place as being like a 'heaven', where 'the ground was moving under' (2003:1601). He adds: '[t]hen there is a sign: REMOVE CLOTHING' until the next sign appears in another 'tunnel' which says 'RESUME CLOTHING' (2003:1601). The 'tunnel' here, recalling the liminal space used to refer to Om's family and the apartment (this is discussed later in the chapter), represents the 'in-between space in which [the colonised subjects'] cultural change may occur' (Ashcroft at el. 2007: 117). As Ashcroft et al. explain, by dwelling on this liminal space, the colonised takes a new identity. Accordingly, the removal of Om's clothes in the tunnel symbolises, to use Fanon's words, the 'self-amputation' of Om's identity.

> Om describes the strange experiences he had while nude as follows:
>
> Then—a sort of—rain burst. (*He laughs shakily.*) I wonder if I am dreaming! The water is hot, scented. Then cold. Then hot air. Then again the water. It stings a little, this second water. Smells like some medicine. Then air again. Then we pass through another place ... [original pause] I don't know what is happening. Ahead of me a man screams and cries, but we are in little separate cages now, can't move. At one place something comes to cover the eyes. There is no time to think, just do. Put your arm here, get one prick, put your arm there, get another prick—*pissshhh!–pissshhh!*—Sit here, stand there, take your head this side. (2003:1601)

Foucault's account of the medical gaze can be used to interpret this passage. Om's body is under the medical scrutiny of e-surveillance of the American Receiver, keeping him naked. Yet, the difference is that Om is not a patient and he is not under the medical examination of a

doctor to diagnose illness. The removal of Om's clothes symbolises the unearthing of the hidden truth of the body. It also emblematises what Fanon writes about the black colonised – as noted above, the 'burial of its local cultural originality', a desire rooted in his 'inferiority' complex (2008:9). Om's subjection to surveillance supports both Lyon's and Kirstie Ball's observations about the body; Lyon writes that 'body data' is increasing in society, and 'surveillance is turning decisively to the body as a document for identification, and as a source of data for prediction' (2001:72). Similarly, Ball describes how the body has emerged as a 'legitimate surveillance target because of the immense level of detail and "truth" about the person it is thought to provide' (2006: 299). Om is subject to this body data and prediction; nevertheless, the knowledge is not for nosology, it is a violation manifested through the e-gaze and as Om becomes a medical object, he is dehumanised. To use Fanon's terms, Om is 'unmercifully imprisoned' by the Receiver of the organ trade; Om 'ma[kes himself] an object' (2008:85).

Om reveals there were 'six thousand men, […] like goats at the slaughterhouse' (2003:1600), waiting for a job and all wanting to become rich by selling their body organs. Om adds that:

> once we were selected, each man would get special instructions. That we would
> be monitored carefully. Not just us but our ... [original pause] lives. To remain
> employed, we have to keep ourselves exactly as they tell us. (2003:1601)

The developing nations' willingness to be consumed and self-objectified, as described by Sartre, seems apparent here. In his preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Jean-Paul Sartre notes that '[t]he status of "native" is a neurosis introduced and maintained by the

colonist in the colonized *with their consent*' [original emphasis] (2004: lvi). Om's acceptance of the 'job' is a willing neurosis.

Yet, his – as well as that of the other six thousand men – consent is problematic, and requires further analysis. Ramachandran writes that their 'voluntary complicity' is accountable for their 'own corruption and decay' (2005:166). Shital Pravinchandra argues that populations in developing countries become 'willing to be preyed upon' by the first world market because, unlike sweatshop exploitation,[117] organ trafficking 'requires no labour in order to fetch a price' (n.d.:1-2). These readings sound valid because both Om and Ma are happy that no labour is actually needed for the job as Om says that '[*e*]*veryday* is off' (Gilbert 2001:222) and what he has to do is to 'be in the house' (Gilbert 2001:220) staying healthy.[118]

However, describing the job, Om says, '[w]e'll have more money than you and I have names for! […] Who'd believe that there's so much money in the world' (2003:1600); Om adds that at the cost of calling Jaya his sister, they will be '[v]ery rich! Insanely rich!' (2003:1604). This recalls Ashcroft et al.'s observation that 'political independence has not effected the kinds of changes in economic and cultural control that the early nationalists might have expected' (2007:57). The world economy is globalised, and colonial powers have left behind 'internal discriminations and hegemonic educational practices' to maintain colonial structures in ex-colonies (Ashcroft et al. 2007:57). Consequently, developing nations such as India, as represented in the play, are still subject to a subaltern economic position by the developed (first world) nations. Om gives his consent to the organ trade, based on his

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[117]'Sweatshop' is a negatively connoted word to refer to working conditions where labour is exploited to a great extent, usually paying meager salaries to the workers. Third world populations are usually subject to sweatshop exploitation.
[118] Today, human labour is being rapidly substituted with machines in virtually every sector of industry in the global economy: this has resulted in the de-valuation of human labour, and has affected employment. As 'New Technology and the End of Jobs' reveals '[m]ore than 800 million human beings are now unemployed or underemployed in the world' (Jeremy Rifkin (n.d.)).

economic and material deprivation. His desire to raise his financial status comes at the cost of becoming a commodity for the first world.

Furthermore, Om is clueless and unaware of the job or what the selection process entails, until he is recruited. This alludes to a mode of deception mentioned in the JCE/UN's definition of human trafficking realised by means of deception and by abusing the position of vulnerability of the victim. Om's willingness to go up for selection originates not from the fact that the job requires no labour, but the fact that he is jobless. As noted, due to his financial situation, Om is *compelled* to give his consent to the InterPlanta Services Company. He reveals this when Jaya challenges him by asking: '[w]ho forced you? You went of your own accord!'(2001:238).

> No. I went because there wasn't anything left to do. I went because I lost my job
>
> in the company. And why did I lose it? Because nobody needs clerks anymore!
>
> There are no new jobs now, [...] It's all over! The factories are all closing! There
>
> was [*sic*] nothing *left* for people like us! Don't you know that? There's us—and
>
> there's the street gangs –and the rich. (2003:1617)

This statement explains Om's tragedy and vulnerable economic situation. It also draws attention to the economic diversity in Indian society: street gangs represent the poorest and the marginalised populations, while Om represents workers who become disenfranchised due to unemployment in their society, especially with the introduction of technology as a replacement for the human workforce. Om says that clerks are no longer needed and factories are closing. Implicitly, the financial crisis in India affects the closure of small factories; manual services offered by lower middle class, educated populations are displaced and

substituted by the introduction of science and technology and people like Om become unemployed and made redundant. The global market and power relations deprive Om of any choice, he loses his agency. Om's consent for the job does not simply originate from a desire to be 'preyed upon', but is also and mainly due to the complexities inherent in global economy dominated by first world countries. As Ashcroft et al state, 'individual distinctions of culture and society become erased by an increasingly homogeneous global culture, and local economies are more firmly incorporated into a system of global capital' (2007:101). Om has no choice but to give his consent to the organ trade of the global market; his decision to give his consent to the organ trade is a socio-political decision.

Although Padmanabhan mentions that it is for the purpose of coherence that the play is set in Bombay and 'the DONORS are Indian and the RECEIVERS, North American', she stresses that there should be a 'highly recognizable distinction between two groups, reflected in speech, clothing and appearance'; above all donors should represent 'Third World citizens today' (Gilbert 2001:217). This suggests that economically disenfranchised third world populations, irrespective of the territory, are subject to first world powers of globalisation. As explored by Ashcroft et al., 'internal discriminations' and the education system introduced by the colonisers created economic diversity and vulnerability; consequently, postcolonial populations are economically entrapped in the global world (2007). Bauman states that '[g]lobalization divides as much as it unites' (1998:2). He explains the double-standard of globalization: '[w]hat appears as globalization for some means localization for others; signaling a new freedom for some, upon many others it descends as an uninvited and cruel fate' (1998:2). Om's decision to offer his service as an organ donor symbolically reveals how

postcolonial populations are susceptible and vulnerable to the seduction of the global economy and how they can be manipulated by rich countries like America.

Harvest is a futuristic play, implying a particular future for India. Gilbert states that the futuristic nature of the play highlights 'the potential of global capital to strengthen already profound divisions between first and third world subjects' (2006:124). Although India is considered to be a developing country, it is still poverty-stricken because millions of economically-marginalised people live below the poverty line and poverty and hunger render children and women, more specifically, highly vulnerable to human trafficking (WHO 2001 and Sadika Hameed et al. 2010); America, on the other hand, is one of the most developed nations in science and technology, especially in computer technology. Om chooses the path of organ donation with his consent – the path offered through neo-colonial, globalised coercion. The discussion below shows how this subjugation is extended to victimise and coerce him and his family through a contact module, which functions as a metaphor for the dis-embodied global coercion of the third world.

'[H]uman goldfish bowls' in *Harvest*

After Om is recruited as a donor, Om's family have to submit to the unannounced visits of the three commando-like InterPlanta representatives – Guards – who put into practice the unspecified Receiver's commands. Hence, three robot-like Guards visit his house for the installation of a contact module and to fulfil the Receiver's commands. The only mode of communication between Om's family members and the recipient of the organ trade from America is this contact module – '*a white, faceted globe at least three feet in diameter*'

(2003:1603) – fixed in the ceiling of their small apartment by the Guards, which projects a video image of the recipient –'*a young woman's face* [...] *blonde and white-skinned*' (2003:1605). The stage direction given in Gilbert's edition indicates: '*The CONTACT MODULE comes to life. It displays a young woman's face, beautiful in a youthful glamorous First World manner*' (2001:223). Both descriptions allude to stereotypical traits of female beauty in the first world.

The recipient later appears via the contact module and introduces herself as 'Virginia – Ginni' (2003:1605), and although the contact module is fixed, Ginni only appears when she needs to interrogate Om's family. Ginni shows concern for the family's hygiene and sanitation as it will affect her target. Hence, in addition to the payment the family receives as remuneration for Om's agreement, they are also given all the modern 'facilities and conveniences' of life; their old stoves are replaced with a stainless steel trolley while they are ordered to consume the food sent by Ginni. Jaya later names this food 'pellets' (2003:1604), a reference which recalls food given to domestic animals. Their shabby room in the flat is also turned into a modern apartment with a mini-gym, a computer-terminal, TV set, and a toilet. In return, Om's family have to live according to Ginni's needs, wishes and orders. The only exception is Jeetu, who stays out of home, and so has no need to contact Ginni. Although Ginni is visible only when she needs to contact the family members, it is revealed in the play that through her invisible presence she is able to see and hear all the concerns, practices and secrets of Om's family.

The globe-shaped contact module functions as a metaphor for the powers of globalisation to which the third world nations are subject: indeed, as described through stage directions, the contact module is a '*white faceted globe*'. Thus, the globe in the play

represents the 'reality of globalization' (Moni 2014:321); as Gilbert states, the contact module 'operates as both a means of communication between donors and receivers and a panopticon' (2006:129), because it is used for surveillance praxis. Since Ginni is not always visible to Om's family, the contact module, to use Bauman's words, is a 'post-Panopticon', as its operator [Ginni] 'slip[s] away'. It symbolises the globalised economy and technology, but maintained and controlled remotely by the first world.

To return to the Guards' visit, the initial communication between the Guards and Om's family members indicates that the relationship is non-reciprocal: they give commands and instructions while Om's family usually remain either dumb-founded or silent, with the exceptions of Jaya and Jeetu (Jeetu chooses to live in the street to avoid contact, whereas Jaya questions the Guards' actions and is against them). The robot-like Guards' instructions include the following details:

> [a]ll implements of personal fuel preparation will be supplied exclusively by InterPlanta Services. Henceforward, you and your domestic unit will consume only those fuels which will be made available to you by InterPlanta. We will provide more than enough for the unit described in your data sheet, but will forbid you from sharing, selling or by any means whatsoever, commercially exploiting this facility. (2003:1602)

Family is replaced with 'unit', adopting the technical connotations of the computer which watches over them, and food with 'fuel' denoting technology and a dehumanisation process. Moreover, the family is deprived of the human practice of 'sharing'. While 'pledging his body as a commodity in the international market for healthy organs' (Ramachandran 2005:166),

Om is initially subject to a form of dehumanisation. Paradoxically, while making Om's family 'consume' fuel – a term that usually refers to a substance burned to produce heat or power – the Receiver is ready to consume Om's organs and family.

To remain employed, the family members have to be healthy and live according to the instructions given by the Receiver; they live without being exposed to even the mildest of illnesses, such as the common cold. They are also deprived of social contacts such as talking with neighbours. This is why the Receiver installs a toilet within their home to replace the practice of sharing a toilet with 'forty families' (2003:1606). In addition, a 'mini-gym, an air-conditioner, bed-cum sofa, computer terminal' (2003:1608) are all installed in the same way.[119] As Ramachandran states, this 'fear of pollution alludes to the colonial fear of contact and contamination with the natives' (2005:171). Eurocentric binary discourses constructed the colonised identities as primitive, uncivilised and cannibal; this resulted in the colonisers' fear of contamination by absorption into the colonised's customs (Ashcroft et al. 2007). Ginni's attempts to isolate Om's family from the rest of society – as she calls it, to make them 'quarantined' (2003:1610) mainly from their usual daily habits – are presented as precautions taken to avoid health hazards. Yet, they represent the colonial mentality, and an enduring legacy of the colonial era.

This colonial mentality is further visible through Ginni's double standards: during her first encounter with Om's family, it emerges that she is interested in their language and culture; for instance, when she sees Ma's sari, Ginni is excited, and '*sings an old tune*' (2003:1605), saying '[i]t's magical. It's wonderful! I'm really talking to India' (2003:1605).

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[119]The attempt to make the family different from others within their society recalls the colonial exercise of making a comprador class in colonies, in order to maintain a hierarchical structure among the colonised (e.g. Fanon 2008, Ashcroft at el. 2007).

Ginni goes on to express an interest in Jaya's language; on her first entry into Om's apartment she says:

> Haha! That's quaint! That's really quaint. You know what? Even if I didn't need transplants and if I wasn't so sick and all—I'd get the kick of my life from these conversations! It's like, it's like I dunno. Human goldfish bowls, you know? I mean, I just look in on you folks every now and then and it just like—blows my mind. Better than TV. Better than CyberNet. Coz this is Real Life (2003:1610).

This extract emphasises the extent to which Ginni is interested in Om's culture and language. Expressions such as 'blow my mind' and 'get the kick' indicate how amazed she is by the Indian culture and language; making a strong impression on her. Om and his family are further romanticised when Ginni says that 'people in my country, at my age, they just don't have any worthwhile friends [...] nothing to hold on to – nothing precious' (2003:1610). Yet, the analogising of them with 'CyberNet' and 'TV' implies that Indian culture and language are also perceived as means of entertainment, based on a consumer's approach. Ginni, who at times considers Om's family as exotic, also sees them as weak and feeble. For instance, she tells Om: '[y]ou don't confront your booboos. Now – you've gotta learn to control it, [...] it's a part of your culture – it's what your people do when they want to Avoid Conflict and it's even got a name: it's called face saving' (2003:1609). Om's family is here identified as cowardly and frightened, hence, as a subordinate group. Ginni's twofold attitude towards Om's family is here apparent: her contempt is coupled with fear and interest with an intention of consumption. Thus, she constructs an identity for Om's family members, that of 'Human goldfish bowls'.

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Constructing an identity for the *other* can be examined through the power relationship between the constructer and the constructed and recalls the concept of Orientalism. Western colonisers viewed the Eastern or the Orient as exotic, under-developed and placid; they placed Europe at the centre as the norm, thus distorting the reality, abilities and cultures of the colonized (Edward Said 1995). Spivak states that identity construction is materialised through 'othering', a 'process by which the empire can define itself against those it colonizes, excludes and marginalizes' (Ashcroft et al. 2007:158).[120] Ginni's act of constructing Om's identity – of 'othering' him and his family – reproduces colonial practices: Om's family members gain their identity through Ginni's gaze. Their identity is subjected to Ginni's coercion and subjective interpretations. Ginni's perception of Om's family echoes the first world nations' surveillance strategies over the third world nations, and reminds us of the concept of the panopticism.

Referring to the human goldfish bowl, we can also consider that Om, Jaya and Ma are incarcerated and observed in their home through the contact module in the apartment ceiling. Their predicament functions as a metaphor of postcolonial power relations, and Ginni is situated at the centre (both of their humble dwellings and of the metropolitan West) while Om's family inhabits the margin. The tower is replaced here with the contact module while the incarcerated bodies are immobilised in their own place. Unlike the original panopticon where the prisoner 'is seen, but he does not see, he is the object of information, never a subject in communication' (Foucault 1995:200), Om's family is imprisoned in one small apartment and can only communicate amongst themselves. In the original panoptical

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[120]During the colonial era, assuming the 'naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture' (Ashcroft et al. 2007:155), the binary division between the coloniser and the colonised was established by locating the observed subjects as Europe's others, and by considering these others as primitive and exotic, the European colonisers interpellated the colonised (Ashcroft et al. 2007).

structure, as the occupants are not allowed to communicate, their thoughts are also not revealed and the observers have no idea of their views or visions. Om's family are allowed to communicate, but their interactions are spied upon by Ginni. Thus, Ginni's coercion becomes more powerful as she becomes aware of all of Om's family secrets. Foucault suggests that 'visibility is a trap' (1995:200); *Harvest* uses not only this trap of visibility but also a trap of audibility: the incarcerated are invisibly observed and inaudibly listened to. In contrast to the incarcerated in Foucault's Panopticon, Om's family is under the dual-surveillance of a modified panopticon.

In the play, Virgil who represents the covert global power (this character will be explored below), reveals the following:

JAYA: And you heard ….every, everything?

VIRGIL: Saw too. I know about the toilet being loaned out to half the city!
About the water being sold! About the food being shared! Every sneeze, every belch. And you Zahya—I knew when you bled and when you passed wind. I even saw you …pleasure yourself Zhaya, lying there, alone. I even knew that. (2003:1625)

The family become more vulnerable as surveillance destroys the privacy of their lives, as if it is 'seeping into the bloodstream' (Bauman and Lyon 2013:128). Because of this surveillance, Ginni becomes authoritative in order to regulate Om's family members. As Ginni secretly observes them she comes to know the truth that Jaya is Om's wife, not his sister, and that Jaya is Jeetu's secret lover. She also learns that Jeetu is a prostitute – something which denotes his sexual abilities – and Jaya wants to have a child (a wish yet to be fulfilled by her husband

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Om). Ginni has extended her trap of visibility and audibility even to Jeetu and Jaya's secret encounters that occur outside the apartment. Hence, she realises that Jeetu is healthier and has more potential for reproduction than Om.

Foucault argues that surveillance results in the self-discipline of people who need to be taken care of:

> He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (1995: 202-203)

Yet, *Harvest*'s modified panopticon, with its e-surveillance, is in contrast to this; it displays the nature of 'mobility and inconstancy' of liquid surveillance in the world today (Bauman 2000:2). It collapses the family relationship and gradually attempts to turn all four family members, who are healthy enough, into pulverised individuals – 'living dead' people, in Achille Mbembe's words (2003), and 'bare life', according to Giorgio Agamben's concepts (1998) – because they are biologically and psychologically vivisected. In this respect, the discussion proceeds to explore further the modified panopticon.

Referring to surveillance technologies, Bauman argues that technology, similar to modernity, functions as a 'sword', […] '[b]ut swords are usually double-edged; they are usefully applied to deal with the task at hand, but they can cut both ways, and swinging swords are by their nature dangerous tools to use' (Bauman and Lyon 2013:84). Similarly, '[a]part from their intended goals, chosen for their assumed propriety and goodness, they

[swinging swords] are known to hurt and damage unintended targets' (Bauman and Lyon 2013:84). Ma is a fine example of an unintended target of Ginni's technologies. Representing the older generation, initially Ma has no understanding about Om's job. She questions the nature of the employment that 'makes a wife into a sister' (2003:1603) and the fact that she needs 'permission [for her] to take a leak' (2003:1606), especially, when she has been used to sharing a toilet with many families. However, she is gradually seduced by the technology and conveniences introduced by Ginni. This even leads her to neglect Jeetu who disapproves of Om's job and lives on the streets. For instance, when Jeetu comes home with a disease, Ma is not worried about him, but by the possibility of its transmission to other family members, which in turn would affect Om's job and risk the loss of the facilities they have received. Jeetu confronts Ma about this: 'your love for me has been bought for the price of a flush toilet' (2003:1611). Ma says that 'there's no place for him now' and '[t]here won't be enough [food] for him' (2003:1611). This shows how familial relationships are ruined by the invasion of the contact module – Ginni's intrusion through the modified panopticon severs the unity between the mother and her son. As Gilbert writes, the contact module's 'deterritorialised power […] precipitates the breakdown of the family as a social unit' (2006:124). *Harvest*'s modified panopticon moves beyond its action of collapsing the family relationship: it destroys family members.

The technology introduced by Ginni has successfully seduced Ma; she is seen buried in the 'VideoCouch' and the 'Phantasticon which is programmed to receive seven hundred and fifty video channels [...] ten modes, seventeen frequencies' with access to 'satellite, bio-tenna' (2003:1622). All of this is provided by Ginni, and delivered by agents, at Ma's request: '*the AGENTS huddle around her, connecting her up to various pouches and tubes. […] There*

is a breathing mask on her face' (2003:1623). Jaya's question, 'how will she breathe!' (2003:1623), shows her far-sightedness of the danger. Yet, the Agent's reply implies Ma's need to be dependent on technology: 'We have a fully-recycling and bio-feed-in processor! Your relative will have no further need of the outside world from now till – (*He coughs delicately*) till she chooses to delink' (2003:1623). At this moment, 'Ma retreat[s] from biosocial space into the media-saturated oblivion' (Gilbert 2006:129); Mathur enquires whether this 'cyborg' immobile existence of the third world, represented through Ma, resists the first world's coercion (2004:131). Furthermore, whether the 'cyborg' Ma will survive in the VideoCouch is doubtful because of her inability to operate it; she admits that she does not understand any of the instructions given by the Agent. This dubiety of Ma's life is increased as Jaya's question – 'what happens if there's a malfunction[?]' (2003:1623) – remains unanswered. Moreover, in the introduction to *Harvest* in *The Wadworth Anthology of Drama*, Ma's VideoCouch is referred to as a 'video sarcophagus' (2003:1598), her electronic coffin. Hence, although Ma's demise is that of her own choosing, she – the eldest 'human goldfish' – is seduced, into following an e-suicide, an image which encapsulates the JCE/UN's definition of seduction in human trafficking and Fanon's self-amputation. Ma is the 'unintended target', to use Bauman's term, of the modified panopticon.

Om's collapse begs inquiry. He is already trapped in the process of human trafficking while being recruited for the job. As the JCE/UN study defines, human trafficking includes the recruitment of a person for the purpose of exploitation by paying the recruited. Although Om is at first happy about the benefits of his employment, he is not ready to accept the consequences he and his family must pay for the trade. When Jaya reminds him of the organ transplanting as the 'time to collect their fattened broiler' (2003:1613) after undergoing

Ginni's orders for two months, Om becomes psychologically and physically weak and feeble as he understands the true price of the illusion. He realises that '[t]he smallest pimple on [his] chin is more precious […] than a diamond mine in someone else's fist!; he regrets for being deceived : 'What sort of fool am I?' (2003:1613). Om here realises the insidious process of his contract with the Receiver: by means of deception Ginni obtains Om's consent and control over him at the cost of his own decay. Om's symbolical demise is indicated through his new status of infancy – although he is a twenty-two-year-old man, he is seen '*lying in a foetal position*' and hiding on stage as a frightened animal waiting to be slaughtered (2003:1614). Yet, it must be noted, Om is seen for the last time on stage waiting for the Guards to take him '*like a dog for its master, by the door*. [...] *wriggl*[*ing*] *out*' for the second transplant (2003:1622).[121] What becomes apparent from both these images is that Om is animalised and infantilised by the modified Panopticon. Despite Om's awareness of the illusion, his willingness to be Ginni's 'dog' and desire to be under her servitude and control, however, recalls the Fanonian 'inferiority complex'.

Hence, unlike the discipline expected from Foucault's Panopticon, Ginni's contact module creates Om's and Ma's metaphorical demise: Ma experiences a cyborg death, while Om is animalised and meets an embryonic death. Although Mathur states that the contact module 'allows the Donors to see and interact with a facsimile of the Receiver' (2004:129), Donors can only see the Receiver when the latter is willing to adopt self-exhibition, whereas the Donors' every movement is under the visible or invisible scrutiny of the Receiver. What the modified panopticon leaves for the goldfish bowl is two carcasses; their substance is lost both through the remote medical gaze and liquid surveillance operated remotely through

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[121]In Gilbert's anthology, Om is seen going back to InterPlanta Services saying that 'It's only my chance. What's left for me here?' (2001:244).

technology. These are Ma and Om's transformations, materialised through Ginni's '*globe*', the neo-colonial gaze of the first world used to police and dispose of the third world. The discussion proceeds to inquire if Om's brother is also subject to the modified panopticon.

Jeetu's metamorphosis

In the preface to *Surveillance as Social Sorting*, Lyon states that modern surveillance is not simply a risk to people's freedom, but a powerful deceptive means to create social differences (2003). Lyon explains that surveillance systems obtain data and categorise populations 'to determine who should be targeted for special treatment, suspicion, eligibility, inclusion, access, and so on' (2003:20). Although Jeetu is not at home and exposed to the modified panopticon, Ginni is still able to extend a dis-embodied medical gaze to him to test his 'eligibility' for harvesting.

To explore this surveillance further, I will briefly discuss Jeetu as a character and his relationship with Jaya. It is during Jaya's and Jeetu's secret encounter in a *'moonlit night, on the roof of the tenement building'* (2003:1606), that the audience learns about their affection for each other, and their clandestine sexual relationship, as well as Jaya's desire for children and Jeetu's job as a sex-worker.[122] Jaya pleads with Jeetu to return home by giving up his job as he is officially her husband according to Om's organ contact; she also warns that if he does not come home he will be deprived of the facilities given by the Receiver – the 'permit' given by Ginni for facilities will be cancelled (2003:1608).

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[122] 'Prostitution in India' [n.d.] states that '[a]s per the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, prostitution is legal in India. However, soliciting sex, owning or operating brothels and pimping are illegal'.

JAYA: You should be ashamed of yourself! A man—behaving like a vagrant

    bull!

JEETU: Why? I'm not fussy—cows, pigs, horses, I'll service—for a price.

 JAYA: You don't need to sell yourself anymore. There'll be enough money in

    the house now!

JEETU: But not for me—

JAYA: Yes—for all of us. For the whole building—

JEETU: No. I don't mind being bought—but I won't be owned. (2003:1607)

Yet, as this extract depicts, Jeetu is aware of the difference between 'the ownership of bodies and the purchase of labor, that is, the difference between slavery and employment' (Ramachandran 2005:167). Moreover, it reveals Jeetu's willingness to be independent; he makes a clear distinction between his and Om's job: '[a]t least when I sell my body, I decide which part of me goes into where and whom!' (2003:1608).

    I wish to reflect on Jeetu's job as a sex worker and Om's as selling organs; '[i]n effect, both men are engaged in the same activity, using their bodies as currency in an economy in which physical utility is the only criteria of value' (Ramachandran 2005:166). Yet, as Jeetu says he is 'overdosing on freedom' (2003:1611) [referring to his job as a prostitute], whereas Om is, as Jaya says, like a 'chicken' (2003:1604) ready on the table of the American 'vampire' (2003:1606). This implies Om's servitude to the American receiver of the organ trade, while Jeetu is independently employed. The difference also lies in the degree and the mode of processes – in the local or the global market and through visible corporal means and invisible dis-embodied biotechnology.

Through surveillance, Jaya's desire for children and Jeetu's alleged hyper-sexuality are the two roads that Ginni eventually attempts to take for her human trafficking. Thus, the clinical and medical gaze shifts from Om to Jeetu. Through 'liquid surveillance', Ginni realises that Jeetu's vision of life prevents him from being seduced by the video paradise, the modern conveniences installed or the monetary gains. Thus, knowing family secrets and Jeetu's desire to be independent, Ginni forcibly takes Jeetu while he is at home due to illness. In other words, InterPlanta employees forcefully take Jeetu as their donor instead of Om. When Jeetu objects, the employees grab him, administer a 'hypo' injection and then take him off-stage (2003:1616). Moni states that Jeetu, as a 'disembodied subaltern', is not in a position to alter his 'material conditions' (2014:323); his 'self' is removed by the robotic Guards. Jeetu's abduction is his metaphorical death (it is at this point that Om, assuming that he is the real target, becomes frightened and hides on stage).

When Jeetu reappears on stage, he is 'blind' with 'sightless sight'; as he tells Om and Jaya, he is 'in a place worse than death' with his 'poison-vision' (2003: 1618-1619). '*In the place of his eyes are enormous goggles, created to look like a pair of imitation eyes. They fit flush with his skin, without ear pieces and cannot be removed. His voice is a hoarse whisper*' (2003:1618). This description shows Jeetu's transformation. The biopolitical violence implicit in Jeetu's blindness is worth reflecting upon. Jeetu has not been under the direct surveillance of the contact module fixed in the ceiling, but the contact module has monitored his vision and movements. Lyon argues that as societies are on the 'move' today, everyone is 'monitored, tracked and traced', hence 'surveillance slips into a liquid state' (Bauman and Lyon 2013:6). It is with 'liquid surveillance' that Ginni has been able to see Jeetu's *correct* vision before transplanting his eyes off-stage, away from the audience's sight and that of his

family members. Far-sighted Jeetu who desired independence is transformed into a person with a sightless vision – a paradoxically oxymoronic condition. Controlled by Ginni and her technology, Jeetu now is, to use Agamben's words, 'a purely bare life': he is like a 'neomort' –'which would have the legal status of corpses but would maintain some of the characteristics of life for the sake of possible future transplants' (1998:164).

'Blind' Jeetu later announces on stage that his 'blackness is lifting' and he can see some patterns appearing on the contact module (2003:1619). Ginni's figure is visible *only* to Jeetu through the contact module, as she asks him 'in a seductive voice' to be ready for 'the next phase of transplants [...] willing[ly]' (2003:1620). Moni points out that Jeetu, at 'first refuses to comply, before extreme poverty and sickness drive him into this vortex' (2014:320). Nevertheless, it is not because of Jeetu's poverty or disease that he agrees to Ginni's 'seductive' request for the second phase of the transplant, but because of the blindness forcefully inflicted upon him by the removal of his eyes. It is '*blind*' Jeetu who is seduced sexually when Ginni's contact module shows a woman's body. This is also a case of human trafficking by means of deception; yet it is sexual deception through electronic technology – e-sexception.

Both Om and Ma, metamorphosed, died metaphorically. After Ma's e-demise and Om's embryonic decease, and after Jeetu's second transplant (off-stage) through e-sexception, Jeetu again appears, not on stage as himself, but on Ginni's contact module fixed in the ceiling of the apartment as a *globalised Jeetu*, a transformed male named Virgil. He reveals that Virgil, who has until then been camouflaged and digitalised as female Ginni, is the actual Receiver of the organ trade from the first world. In Virgil's words, Ginni, who has appeared to contact Om, Ma, Jaya and Jeetu, is a 'computer-animated wet dream', and 'was something

we needed to bait the hook' (2003:1625). He explains that as he is 'old and sick', now he enters into Jeetu's 'young body', signifying his impotency, and adds that his Virgil is the 'fourth body in fifty years' (2003:1625-1626). He tells Jaya that '[w]e're interested in women where I live, Zhaya [Jaya], Child-bearing women' (2003:1625). Hence, as Gilbert argues, Jeetu is now a 'cybernetic organism, a human-machine hybrid' (2006:128). Moreover, it is clear that this 'organism' is created by using Jeetu's body, especially his assumed sexual strength, in order to produce children for America.

Mathur states that '[t]he moment that Jeetu begins his virtual cyborgian existence is also the moment that deprives him of his body, and hence his agency' (2004:131). However, I argue that Jeetu loses his agency when he is forcefully taken off-stage for the removal of his eyes, for the first transplant. Blind Jeetu has his body, yet is without his agency. That is why he succumbs to the seductive figure that emerges from the contact module, and in response willingly goes for the next transplant. It must be reiterated here that it is only 'blind' Jeetu who sees the seductive body on the contact module; the other family members can neither hear her voice nor see her face. In other words, it is only 'Jeetu's prosthetic eyes [which] can access [Ginni's] digital image' (Gilbert 2006: 129), signifying a forceful neo-colonial seduction.

Moni states that '[h]aving appropriated Jeetu's body as his own, Virgil has also now become a "colored" man in his own community' (2014:323); the appearance of Jeetu's 'brown body' on the screen of the contact module demonstrates 'cultural mixing':

Lying as it does in a reified space breaching the boundaries of "selfhood" and "otherness", "mind" and "body", "first world" and "third world", "subject" and

"cyborg", Jeetu's body, taken over and "occupied" by Virgil, has now become

the physical site for enacting "hybridity". (Moni 2014:322)

Referring to Bhabha's concept of mimic men, Gilbert also argues that this hybrid character is a 'liminal figure' (2006:128). Nonetheless, whether this combination creates a balanced transcultural form is arguable not only because every encounter is location-specific (Ashcroft et al. 2007:118-119), but also because the hybrid nature between Jeetu and Ginni's encounter is not reciprocal. Hence, this cannot be categorised as, what Bhabha calls, 'almost the same, but not quite' (1994: 86). This becomes apparent as Virgil tells Jaya: '[t]his body which once belonged to Jittoo [Jeetu] now contains a red-blooded *all*-American man!' (2001:247) [my emphasis].[123] The Indian man's absence in the hybrid figure is further revealed when Virgil admits that Jeetu now has a 'casing', but 'no body' (2003:1625).

Jeetu's eyes are replaced with 'goggles'; his vision of independence is killed, his body is invaded by Virgil and his sexuality is seized. This recalls Bhabha's claim that globalisation's concern is for the colonial ruler, not for the colonised (2004). In this case, it is for the first world that Jeetu is transformed – to be a sex-puppet of and for America. It is the transformed Jeetu (Virgil) – a mixture of the impotent American male and the sexually able Indian male manifested through technology – who later attempts to impregnate Jaya. As noted, the aim in the overall InterPlanta scheme is to use Jeetu and Jaya for the first world's harvest.

Jeetu's sexual-labour, which is *helplessly offered* to the local market in India being a prostitute, is *seductively obtained* to be used in the international market by America. In other

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[123]The utterance –'[t]his body which once belonged to Jittoo now contains a red-blooded all-American man!' – does not appear in *Harvest* in *The Wadsworth Anthology* edited by William B Worthen (2003).

words, Jeetu's body, which is already a commodity in the national market due to his financial instability, is doubly-victimised at the hands of the global market for the benefit of the first world through a technologically sophisticated medical gaze. Jeetu's metamorphosis is not only a physical transformation; it is also an attitudinal conversion. That is, his initial objection to Om's job and desire to be independent is also transformed because, as Virgil reveals, Jeetu 'was willing to sell, I was willing to buy' (2003:1625). Irrespective of his initial vision of independence, this suggests how Jeetu, similar to Om and Ma, gives his consent to the process of human trafficking. Ginni, who is initially seen by Jaya as a 'vampire', is now reborn through technology as Virgil – who represents the e-empire in the neo-colonial world. Mathur states that the first world experiences 'a seamless connection between science, technology and development', while this connection is 'disjointed' in the third world countries (2004:128). Hence, third world nations become easily vulnerable to the global market, to its 'benign face' which is a 'mask' for its 'inherent violence' (Mathur 2004:128). Ma, Om and Jeetu surrender to this e-empire's modified panopticon; however, as the following sections show, Jaya responds differently to this coercion.

'Womb-exploitation' in the alibi of 'life support' to 'poorer sections of the world'

One way of showing resistance to colonial oppression is through 'agency', an 'ability of post-colonial subjects to initiate action in engaging or resisting imperial power' (Ashcroft et al. 2007:6). Contrary to Spivak's concerns for 'the difficulties and contradictions involved in constructing a "speaking position" for the subaltern' (Ashcroft et al. 2003:8), Jaya voices her defiance. She 'looks older than her nineteen years' (2003:1599); not only her appearance, but

also her reactions imply that she is strong, she has insights into both understanding and resisting oppressive forces (such as Virgil's attempts at reproductive coercion) and she gradually overcomes the difficulties in constructing a 'speaking position'.

At the outset of the play, Jaya explains Om's job to Ma, who is excited and happy about the material benefits; Jaya foresees the consequences and implication of Om's employment.

> He's sold the rights to his organs! His skin. His eyes. His arse. (*Sobs again*) Sold them! […] (*Sobs, To OM*) How can I hold your hand, touch your face, knowing that at any moment it might be snatched away from me and flung across the globe! (*Sobs*) If you were dead, I could shave my head and break my bangles— but this? To be a widow by slow degrees? To mourn you piece by piece? (*Sobs*) Should I shave half my head? Break my bangles one at a time (*Succumbs to her tears.*). (2003:1604)

Jaya's reference to the 'globe' implies her overall understanding of the exploitation: she is aware that the material possessions offered to them come at the cost of Om's dis-embodiment and objectification. 'Snatch[es] away' shows Jaya's understanding of the organ receiver's forceful gesture; also, when she later explains the nature of Om's job – the removal of body parts – to Jeetu as 'spare parts in someone else's garage' (2003:1608), she echoes cannibalistic praxis (Gilbert 2006:127). Cannibalism not only refers to primitive customs and practices for ritualistic or religious purposes, but it also refers to modern practices which entail the removal of parts, assets or equipment from one product to be used for another, resembling the practices of a motor-garage. What Om has succumbed to is the second mode

of cannibal praxis. It is operated through the medical gaze that Om undergoes while being recruited for the organ trade, as Gilbert states, through 'biomedical technology' (2006:127). I also note Jaya's allusion to the traditional cultural praxis of mourning, such as *Sati* in India.[124] She prefers Om's death to the removal of his organs, and the sacrifice of her whole life to a gradual and slow psychological killing.

Despite Jaya's moaning at the play's beginning, what the audience notices towards the end of the play is not Jaya's sobbing tone, but her demanding voice. When the transformed Jeetu named Virgil, who is 'all-American' and interested in 'child-bearing women', initiates a dialogue with Jaya, she demands clarifications. Her doubts about Om's job and Jeetu's abduction and seduction are answered.

> VIRGIL: So we look for young couples, without children—
>
> JAYA: ...Om said he wasn't married
>
> VIRGIL: His [Om's] polygraph showed he lied. All donors lie. They think we
> need singles. We let them think that. That way only the very desperate
> apply. That suits us. We search for skin and blood matches. Auwm [Om]
> matched mine.
>
> JAYA: Yet you've taken *Jeetu's* body!
>
> VIRGIL: Jittoo [Jeetu] is Auwm's brother. He was an even better match—
>
> JAYA: —and now you say that all the while you've wanted me! (*Shakes her
> head*) What can I believe? You sew a crooked seam and call it straight!
>
> (*There is a silence while he looks at her.*)

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[124]When a husband dies, the widow expresses her mourning in different ways. Sati is one such practice among Hindus in India, in which the widow immolates herself on the funeral pyre; this is now abolished by law.

> VIRGIL: But this seam now is true. We look for young men's bodies to live in
>
> and young women's bodies in which to sow their children—
>
> JAYA: Why! Don't you have your own?
>
> VIRGIL: We … lost the art of having children. (2003:1625)

The above excerpt reveals that under the surveillance of the 'polygraph', Om continues to be under the medical gaze of the organ receiver, as Virgil is able to detect not only Om's lies, but also his bodily activities in order to identify a 'skin blood match'. Hence, Ginni has violated not only the physical organs, but also the victim's words. The extract also deals with the issue of deception. On the one hand, Om has 'lie[d]' to Ginni, as 'all donors' do. Virgil reveals, it is the most 'desperate' people who try to apply for organ selling, hence they pretend to be unmarried, as 'singles' are assumed to be preferred. Om is introduced as an unmarried man to secure the job. On the other hand, the receiver of the organ trade has not yet disclosed her ultimate aim of reproduction until Virgil appears on stage. Both parties lie to each other, Om for his survival, and Ginni for an expansion of her population. All these become explicit through Jaya's cross-questioning.

The above extract also signifies the culmination of human trafficking as Virgil attempts to use Jaya's reproductive ability for his own benefits: Virgil is interested in young men and women's bodies, more specifically male bodies to 'live in' and young women's bodies 'to sow' children. *Harvest* dramatises the organ trade in America where women have 'lost the art of having children', and have become interested in child-bearing women. Virgil's attempt to use Jaya for reproduction, treating her as a child-bearing machine, recalls the newspaper report about womb-exploitation quoted above in the introductory part of this

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chapter. Thus, the play represents human trafficking processes, exerted in the neo-colonial world and experienced by third world populations – a metaphor for global, Western economies which place monetary value on reproduction by asserting it as a natural act.

Virgil tells Jaya that 'I'm real and warm and willing. (*Pats himself.*) This body is hot with life and heavy with desire! This body aches for you and to give you what you yearn for' (2003:1626). Yet, unlike Ma, Jaya does not surrender to the first world's seduction or deception; Virgil pleads Jaya further by explaining the simplicity of the process. He says that '[t]he guards will make the child possible, Zhaya. It's just a formality, a device' (2003:1626), it is 'an implant. Something I sent for you, which they are ready to deliver. But you can take your time. About two or three days are still within your fertile cycle—' (2003:1626). However, recalling Jaya's initial resistance towards the Guards when they replaced her kitchen with modern kitchen appliances, she resists Virgil. She is aware of Virgil's deception and challenges, as implied through her reference to 'a crooked seam'. Jaya's realisation of this crooked construction defies Virgil who is left silent on stage.

Virgil's desire for an e-relationship bespeaks a fear of contamination; indeed he says to Jaya that 'the world you live in is too dangerous for me' (2003:1626).[125] This fear and distance between Virgil and Jaya's worlds is further emphasised by Virgil's failure to identify with the 'field' which he aims to 'sow', and with Jeetu, who has the seeds for repopulation. His interest is only in the harvest. This is apparent through Virgil's interest in Jaya, Jeetu and Om's biological parts, despite his lack of interest in their culture. Virgil's self-interest is also explicit through Virgil's mispronunciation of their names as 'Zhaya', 'Jittoo' and 'Auwm'. A name denotes one's culture, one's identity; referring to the colonial practice of (re-)naming former colonies, Ashcroft et al. note that this is a 'primary colonizing process because it

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[125]The play-text in Gilbert's anthology says it as 'the environment you live in is too polluted for me'(2001:247).

appropriates, defines and captures the place in language' (2007:165). Hence, by giving names to Om's family members that he has constructed, Virgil also exercises power over them.

This claim of the neo-colonial supremacy can be further supported through Virgil's explanation of his impotency.

> We began to live longer and longer. And healthier each generation. And more demanding—soon there was competition between one generation and the next— old against young, parent against child (*Shrugs*.) [...] We secured Paradise—at the cost of birds and flowers, bees and snakes! [...] So we designed this programme. In exchange for the life support we offer poorer sections of the world, we gain fresh bodies for ourselves. (2003:1625-1626)

Virgil admits that he wants Jaya's healthy body for reproduction as they [the first world] have 'lost the art of having children'. Whilst 'secur[ing] Paradise' – the ultimate power and material development – at the cost of natural assets, they [the first world] have become unhealthy, and lost their natural ability to reproduce. Virgil further laments that '[w]e fixed the car, but not the driver!' (2003:1626). This process of reaching paradise resonates with the technological zenith achieved by first world countries. It is this technological advancement which is used by Virgil for human trafficking. The reference to paradise also uncannily echoes Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*: Dante himself, guided in part by the Latin poet Virgil – whose name is uncannily conjured up in *Harvest* – is on a journey to the underworld, visiting the souls in Hell, until he reaches paradise.

Virgil's claim that '[i]n exchange for the life support we offer poorer sections of the world, we gain fresh bodies for ourselves' (2003:1626) demands examination. As Virgil

states, their aim is to offer support for the poorest nations, in exchange for 'fresh bodies' (2003:1626). This shows how once-colonised, third-world countries become commodities for rich nations in the first world, and how this commodification is exercised on the pretext of support and aid; echoing Bhabha's claim about the economic solutions introduced to poor nations by dint of globalisation (2004).

Virgil's intention to employ the 'very desperate' people in their programme ensures an economic relationship of, in Loomba's words, 'dependency and control' (2005:11). Barbara Bush's claim – '[t]here would be an increase in the "imperialism of aid", more cultural imperialism and the supremacy of American technology' (2006:213) – is also fitting here. Virgil's attempt to help Om's family is a metaphor for 'aid' to the third world nations. Yet, in the guise of the support, what Virgil really sets out to achieve is his ultimate aim – to make children for the first world, particularly for America; the first world needs young men's and women's bodies from the third world for their reproduction. The technological advancement implied by Virgil's plans supports Bush's views on 'American technology' and the notion of 'cyborcized muscles' of the post-Panopticon (Lyon and Bauman 2013:51). As Mathur argues, modern technology is not a 'passive additive element' to the third world, but an 'invasive controlling' phenomenon (2004:128). *Harvest* 'envisions an inescapable cyborg existence' as third world populations are integrated into 'bioengineering' and Virgil is a 'cyborg figure' (Mathur 2004:131). Whether Jaya succumbs to cyborg survival begs for further analysis.

In different ways, Om, Ma and Jeetu all become subject to Ginni's forces; as Moni states, their 'surrender [...] stands out in stark contrast to Jaya's reactions' (2014:320). It must be noted that Jaya also undergoes an outward metamorphosis through the modified panopticon. At the outset of the play, she is 'barefoot' […] wearing 'a cotton sari […] faded

with repeated washing', and 'with glass bangles […] with no make-up aside from the kohl around her eyes and the red bindi on her forehead' (2003:1599). This description bespeaks her poverty and traditional Indian customs; yet, her appearance changes drastically after Ginni's intrusion into the family home. She is later seen, parallel to the transformation of their room, transfigured – 'doing her nails […] overdressed, her face is heavily made-up, jewellery winking from her ears, wrists, ankles and throat' and 'in heels' (2003:1608). Jaya's outward appearance seems, to use Fanon words, to elevate her 'status in proportion' to her 'adoption' of the first world's standards (2008:9).

However, despite the removal of the Indian traditions represented through her dress, her agency is not surrendered. The refusal of Virgil's demand (for reproduction) functions as a metaphorical resistance to the coercion of America. Jaya states:

> Do you think I haven't understood you by now? You'll never let me have what you have, you are only willing to share your electronic shadows with me, your night visions, your "virtual" touch! No, no—if the only clothes I can afford are these rags of pride then let me have those! Unlike Om—unlike Ma—and Jeetu— (2003:1627)

As Ramachandran claims, Jaya 'celebrates embodiment, corporeality, and the gritty, hard-won but deeply humane pleasures of a mortal life' (2005:170). Symbolically, Jaya's defiance shows how third world postcolonial countries resist the intrusion of the first world. Jaya makes a suicidal attempt as a weapon against the neo-colonial power. She tries to win by losing and says 'If I don't hear the sound of your own hand on my door before that time, I'll take my life. […] If you do anything at all other than come here in person—I'll take my life!

(2003:1627). As implied, Jaya's demand for Virgil's corporeal presence is not merely to satisfy her physical desires; it is to show her resistance to him. It represents Jaya's power over neo-colonial biopolitics, to 'win' by losing her life.

Although Virgil reveals further his biopolitical coercion by revealing that 'Zhaya—the food you take contains anti-suicide drugs. You are physically *incapable* of taking your own life' (2003:1627), Jaya continues to challenge Virgil amidst her suicidal attempts.

> JAYA: And in the meantime, I want you to practise saying my name correctly:
>
> It's Jaya—"j" as in "justice", "j" as in "jam"—
>
> VIRGIL: Zhaya—
>
> JAYA: I won't talk to you unless you say it right!
>
> VIRGIL: (*Pause*) Zh…Jaya. Jaya. Jaya—listen—to me—
>
> JAYA: NO! You listen to me! […] For the first time in my life and maybe the last time of my life, I'm going to enjoy myself, all by myself!
>
> (2003:1627-1628)

The two words Jaya uses here to refer to her name – justice and jam – connote, respectively, her righteousness of her position, not to be subject to the virtual touch of Virgil for America's harvesting, and the tight position into which Jaya is wedged by Ginni. Jaya's articulation becomes sharp when she demands Virgil to pronounce her name correctly, challenging further his '"virtual" touch' for reproduction (2003:1627). Apparently, Virgil has succumbed to Jaya's command because he, at the end, calls out her name correctly – a symbolical loss of Virgil's agency. The imperial gaze represented through Ginni's gaze is turned upside down here, as the American Receiver becomes the target when Virgil loses his agency. Jaya, as well

as the audience look at the computer image of Virgil when he surrenders to her interrogation and pronounces her name – a powerful metaphor of acknowledgement and recognition.

As Mathur states, 'Om and Jeetu are seduced by the unattainable angelic white sex-goddess' (2004:130). However, Jaya turns upside down the power relations in the play: knowing that all her family members have at last surrendered to the powers of America, Jaya is encouraged to continue with her intelligent verbal argument until the last moment. Mathur writes that Jaya is 'enticed by the promise not just of sexual satisfaction, but also of motherhood' (2004:130). Nevertheless, despite her desire to have a child of her own, and her love and attraction for Jeetu, she vehemently rejects the command of power, voiced through the transformed body of Jeetu. Jaya demands that if Virgil wants to repopulate America using her, he will have to come to her in the flesh, not through 'cyborcized muscles'. Mathur argues that it is 'through this manipulation of desire, this illusory reversal of the (first-world) seeing "I" becoming the object of the (third-world) gaze, that science en-genders the native' (2004:129). It is Jaya who challenges the e-technology by commanding Virgil to appear in person; she challenges the 'ghosts of miscegenation and hybridity' (Ramachandran 2005:171). Her metaphorical resistance to the e-empire is highlighted through her awareness of Virgil's failure:

> —but I'll die knowing that you, who live only to win, will have lost to a poor, weak and helpless woman. And I'll get more pleasure out of that first moment of death than I've had in my entire life so far! (2003:1627)

This image epitomises the resistance of postcolonial bodies against the first world coercion. The stage directions which close the play also suggest that she '*looks happy, and relaxed. She*

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points the remote and turns the sound up loud. Rich, joyous music fills the room' (2003:1628), a significant reversal of the opening scene with her weeping.

Harvest represents a microcosm of the exploitative nature of human trafficking, specifically the trade of human organs and sex-trafficking between third world and first-world nations.[126] The play shows how surveillance is employed today in the form of a modified panopticon where liquid surveillance is coupled with medical gaze. Furthermore, it sheds light on human harvesting through its title in three ways. First, the word 'harvest' which traditionally refers to cultivation is echoed when Virgil says that he needs to 'sow' on Jaya's 'field'. Second, it refers to organ harvesting – an actual surgical procedure that removes organs for reuse – and the play dramatises Jeetu's young body being transplanted into Virgil's. Third, the play's title also resonates with repopulation, harvesting humans through e-miscegenation and womb-exploitation, as Virgil says that he wants Jaya to 'produce' children. All three references confirm the continuity of economic dominion by the West (Boehmer 2005), because the harvesting is controlled and processed by Virgil, and the harvest is owned by him. The metamorphosis of Om's family, caused by Ginni's dis-embodied intrusion, is not a threshold to a positive path but a cross section of the first world nations' consumption of third world populations through technology.

However, what is represented through Jaya is that subalterns, amidst the biopolitical coercion materialised through the power of e-technology and surveillance, 'speak back' and challenge neo-colonial oppression. Thus, *Harvest,* while narrativising the destruction technology entails and modern means employed to regulate human beings (bodies), brings to light Lyons' 'conundrum' of surveillance:

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[126] It echoes the high-technology human tracking systems that are emergent in the twenty-first century as also shown in Stephen Frears' movie *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002).

[T]he more stringent and rigorous the panoptic regime, the more it generates active resistance, whereas the more soft and subtle the panoptic strategies, the more it produces the desired docile bodies. (2006:4)

In *Harvest,* the efficacy of surveillance, as far as the collection of data is concerned, may lie in the technology used in the panopticon. Yet, as Lyon implies, the soft end of surveillance seems to seduce the 'incarcerated' and to make them docile; its sharp end may generate resistance and refusal to discipline. Jaya represents the sharp end of surveillance that may cause the destruction of the observer's coercion.

Chapter Eight

Coda: Biopoliticisation of Life and Vigilance

Like the human eye, every thinker has a lacuna, which can be compensated for in two ways: either through constant movement [...] or by the employment of another perspective (even though another thinker, like a second eye has a blind spot exactly as the first one does, using them together enables us to have an unobstructed view of the matter at hand).

David Kishik, *The Power of Life: Agamben and the Coming Politics* (2012:2)

Hannah Arendt writes in *On Violence* that '[p]ower is indeed of the essence of all government, but violence is not' (1970:51). She explains that these two phenomena – power and violence – often appear together, but are distinct in the political realm. Power is not the 'property of an individual' but 'belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together' (Arendt 1970:44); thus it emerges when people 'act in concert' (Arendt 1970:52). Violence is 'distinguished by its instrumental character' (Arendt 1970:46); it 'can be justifiable' but is never legitimate (Arendt 1970:52). Her observation is that '[n]o government exclusively based on the means of violence has ever existed' (1970:50), thus she emphasises that although violence 'can always destroy power; […]. What never can grow out of it is power' (1970:53). Arendt's words are resonant with the argument of this thesis. By examining violence in relation to biopolitics, this thesis ascertained that governments' subtle biopolitical trajectories often culminate in explicit or implicit violence. Arendt's explanation of violence, thus, sits in paradoxical correlation to my argument.

While revisiting the research context and questions, and reflecting on the significance and the findings of this project, this chapter seeks to cast a critical eye on the approach

deployed in the research, especially in relation to biopolitical execution and subalterns' resistance to biopolitics. The purpose here is to reach an 'unobstructed view of the matter at hand', to use Kishik's (2012:2) words stated in the epigraph. The chapter also considers the limitations of this study and suggests some directions for future research. By emphasising the importance of Anglophone play-texts in achieving a change, this chapter argues that through a reflection on biopolitical violence, it is possible to open these biopolitically informed categories and subjectivities for debate and to subject them to continual contestation.

This study set out to explore the inclusion of human beings' natural life in the apparatuses, assessments and judgements of power to enable meaningful reflections on biopolitics. I explored how power is utilised to regulate and coerce human beings; how it is used to render human beings redundant; how its subtle trajectories are abused to objectify and kill human beings; and specifically how it brings about violence towards postcolonial subalterns. Through a corpus of Anglophone plays from South Africa, India and Sri Lanka, this study examined the way these biopolitical stratagems are articulated and resisted theatrically.

The significance of this comparative study lies in its value as an original interdisciplinary contribution to an increasingly globalised study of literature. The corpus of work herein discussed construes a postcolonial position and represents the postcolonial subalterns; above all, it calls for sustained politicised responses to the biopoliticised oppression of people and vigilance within postcolonial nations. The thesis discussed elements that had previously received little interest in scholarship. At the time of writing, there are no studies which explore plays comparatively from these three regions; it is especially noteworthy as it combined South Africa with two South Asian countries. The thesis is

significant as I have juxtaposed the works of prominent playwrights, such as Fugard, with play-texts which might otherwise have remained invisible within the academy, notably *Irangani*, *Rasanayagam's Last Riot*, and *Mother of 1084*. I provided a new framework for critically analysing postcolonial theatre as a genre since much of postcolonial criticism does not take a biopolitical approach, specifically through the lenses of Foucault and Agamben. Thus, what I aimed to contribute in this research is a better understanding of the politicisation of life. This exploration of biopolitics creates a space to reflect profoundly on the praxis of violence, to contest the politicisation of the subaltern lives, and to resist against the biopolitical violence.

The initial impetus for this research was a group of postcolonial individuals' subjection to violence – a currency of the contemporary socio-political milieux in South Africa, India and Sri Lanka. Subjugation, regulation and extermination – manifested through ethno-political conflicts, incarceration, surveillance, civil war and human trafficking – were noticed as predominant phenomena following the end of European colonisation. I also observed that these biopolitical practices are operated internally and globally on the three nations addressed in this study. To explore the phenomenon of biopolitics, postcolonial theatre was identified as a substantial research context; as C.L. Innes writes, it is pivotal and significant in portraying concerns and issues related to postcolonial cultures (2007). Moreover, Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins' (1996) observation that drama has been positioned on the periphery of postcolonial criticism still seems to hold credence; Innes (2007) also notes that drama has received relatively little attention in postcolonial studies. It is observed that their claim is particularly valid in relation to Anglophone plays emerging from Asian countries. A further influence on the choice of research context was Bertolt Brecht and

Erwin Piscator's notion that theatre can function as a tool in the battle against class disparity (Blumberg and Dennis Walder 1999). Above all, given the pervasive characterisation of violence in the political and protest Anglophone dramas from these nations, it was identified as a fruitful context to explore the politicisation of life and its violence exercised on the pretext of biopolitics.

It is worth reflecting upon the phenomenon of 'killing' operated through biopolitical stratagems: the diversity and the complexity of biopolitical execution is a crucial commonality in the findings of this study. Concepts such as 'political death', 'bare life' and 'living-death' – as delineated by Michel Foucault (2003b), Giorgio Agamben (1998 and 2002) and Achille Mbembe (2003) – were used in the thesis to explore death. The study began with an analysis of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, in which the black protagonist narrativises his virtual suicide; Sizwe becomes a living dead person by renouncing his identity. His non-corporeal death is legally and implicitly exercised through influx control means in the apartheid era in South Africa. *Mother of 1084* confirmed how the Naxalites in India are tortured, culminating in both corporeal and non-corporeal death. I focused here on how the biopolitically-technologised coercion serves to abstract the human as an arithmetically embraced entity. By exploring the brutality committed either through the overt or underhand internal security mechanism of the police, the analysis problematised Foucault's concept of 'governmentality' (2008) and supported Agamben's notions of the 'kenomatic status' of law (2005). The protagonist in *Rasanayagam's Last Riot*, who has inhabited a living dead existence throughout the years of intermittent ethnic tensions in Sri Lanka, finally chooses not to adopt a camouflaged identity in order to escape death. Thus, he is burnt to death by the mob. The analysis showed how ethnic cleansing is materialised through language discrepancies caused

by ethno-linguistic politics. The reading of *Irangani* portrayed the way in which the people in Sri Lanka, whose political ideologies are divergent to the mainstream politics, are objectified and given no space, except for overt illegal violence ending in corporeal death; Robert indubitably undergoes the pulverisation of his flesh, then is killed and drowned in the sea (assumedly by the police). The analyses of *Mother of 1084*, *Rasanayagam Last Riot* and *Irangani* confirm that biopolitics render not only human beings as wasted humans, but even after death their bodies are redundant, not considered even as husk.[127] They are even deprived of their funeral rites/rights.

The Island, *Asinamali!* and *Harvest* depict how subalterns are kept under surveillance and regulated; the consequent fact is their living dead positions, similar to Sizwe. South African black prisoners are in a 'state of siege' – a status where people are oppressed for a prolonged period through restrictions which are outside the normal law (Agamben 1998) – as represented in *The Island* and *Asinamali!* The incarcerated in these two plays experience *Muselmann*-deaths because they are at the threshold of life and death. The thesis concludes with *Harvest* which focuses on an attempted suicide as a mode of resistance to the regulation of bodies exercised remotely and globally. It also depicts how humans and humanity are perceived predominantly in somatic terms – as objects which are made up of scientifically detectable and ascertainable processes and patterns. The analysis showed how the 'medical gaze' (Foucault 2003a) is moved to subalterns' residences to regulate them. A significant point drawn from these findings is that biopolitical death experienced by subalterns should be re-assessed in order to reconsider the nuances of biopolitical violence.

Despite the supremacy of the biopolitical operations over the subalterns, the oppressed challenge biopolitics figuratively and literally in theatre to different degrees. Sizwe's act of

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[127] Unlike subalterns' bodies, husks carry some value and may be useful for different purposes.

deceiving the authorities (at least temporarily), Rasa's bravery in facing death, Nandini's dedication to the Naxalites amidst torture and suppression, Sujata's warning to the politically-blind people (including the middle-class audience), Winston and John's criticism of the legal system, *Asinamali!* prisoners' verbal and physical threat to the white people in the audience and Jaya's challenge and victory over the global force are all examples of resistance. Subalterns' resistance moves beyond the concepts of postcolonial challenges, such as counter-discourses because they experience overt violence and terror. Further research is needed to re-examine subalterns' challenges through different theoretical lenses.

It is also worth reflecting upon the distinct socio-economic stratification of the subalterns affected by biopolitical violence. Some characters – Rasa, Robert, Irangani, Brati, and Nandini – belong to the middle-class and are members of educated elite. Others – Sizwe, Styles, Somu, Somu's mother, Om, Jeetu, Jaya and Ma – represent the economically deprived, lower classes, who are doubly subalterns primarily due to their socio-economic vulnerability. The incarcerated have become subjected to subalternity either owing to their political protests or to their economic subjection. Moreover, only Brati, Nandini, Somu, Robert and the political prisoners in South African plays are involved in political movements; the others have no direct connection to politics, yet are biopoliticised. Biopolitics affects individuals irrespective of their involvement in politics, class, economic stability or gender. Explicit then is the excessively powerful coercion of biopolitics operated in postcolonial territories and the complexity of subalterns' experiences. People are oppressed due to skin colour, ethnicity, linguistic diversity, political ideologies or economic instability, and are easy targets of biopolitics, regardless of whether biopolitics emerges through Western colonialism, global coercion or internal politics.

Re-examining the approach

These reflections on the findings necessitate a re-examination of the approach deployed in the research, especially in relation to biopolitical execution and subalterns' resistance to biopolitics. In this respect, the focus is on Agambenian concepts because of its impact for the research. Thomas Lemke argues that Agamben's 'reformulation of the concept of biopolitics is only partially convincing' (2005:4). Lemke writes that Agamben's analysis does not probe into bare life's 'hierarchisations and evaluations' and how life is 'classified and qualified as higher or lower, as descending or ascending' (2005:8). In fact, what Agamben interrogates is the constitutive link between the concepts of life and biopolitics; readers are expected to find examples of 'differentiation of bare life'. Thus, Lemke's criticism of Agamben as 'partially convincing' sounds less significant. Lemke also criticises Agamben's approach to reading biopolitics, stating that it is 'excessively' legalistic (2005:10). He argues that the approach should not be confined to people without 'legal rights' but should be related to all who are 'confronted with the social processes of exclusion', even to those who enjoy 'political rights' (Lemke 2005:10). His criticism of Agamben's biopolitics is grounded on the allegation that 'it is less the state regulates by direct interventions and restrictions, since the capacity and competence of decision-making is increasingly ascribed to the individual subject to make "informed choices" beyond political authoritarianism and medical paternalism' (Lemke 2005:9). However, in relation to the findings of this research, it is clear that these plays, except for *Harvest*, overtly depict the respective internal states' direct regulation of populations, and the states' involvement in exercising violence and illegal dehumanisation on human beings. That is, the state is more powerful than individuals in operating biopolitics;

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individuals almost have no power in regulating their lives. Furthermore, those who *seem to enjoy* political rights, such as Rasa, also fall prey to biopolitics. Simply, postcolonial subalterns are subjected to biopolitics exercised within nations, often by their own governments. Hence, Lemke's criticism is less convincing for my research findings.

Simone Bignall argues that Agamben is a 'Continental' thinker like 'Foucault and Gilles Deleuze', whose frameworks on the whole underscore the 'exclusion' and 'attempted annihilation' of 'Europe's *internal* others', not of 'its *external* others' – the non-European subalterns (2014:30). In fact, Agamben focuses on Western politics as noted in his *Homo Sacer*: *Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998). However, whether Agamben's approach is Eurocentric offers grounds for debate; Eurocentric refers to the focus on European culture or history to the exclusion of a wider view of the world while regarding European culture as pre-eminent. It is worthy referring here to Edward Said's seminal work in postcolonial criticism, *Orientalism* (1995). Evidently, *Orientalism* is written by taking a cue from Foucault's concepts, a 'Continental' thinker's perspectives; Said admits that 'I have found it useful here to employ Michel Foucault's notion of a discourse, as described by him in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and in *Discipline and Punish*, to identify Orientalism' (1995:3), and 'to whose work I am greatly indebted' (1995:23). Thus, the fact that Agamben focuses on Western political paradigms does not necessarily entail Eurocentrism.

Bignall's contention is drawn from a specific situation where indigenous Australian life is regulated through property rights, following the British invasion of Australia. When traditional burial sites of indigenous ancestors are owned by settlers as private property – 'within the fenced territory as an individually held land title, which bars common access to the land' – ancestors are deserted and indigenous people are deprived of their cultural rights to

the burial site (Bignall 2014:32). Although the 'Ancestor' buried in the land is not a 'living body', it is a '*vital* element to the Aborigines' culture (Bignall 2014:33). This is a specific postcolonial issue, and an issue of European's 'external others'. Thus, Bignall conceptualises that what now exists is an 'excolonial' status where 'an ideally decolonized form of future community that is "yet to come" in the postcolony' (2014:41). Bignall acknowledges that the issue of the ancestor's living body can be perceived through Agamben's notions of bare life; nevertheless, she worries that Agamben's concept 'lacks redemptive force' in applying this situation in postcolonial contexts (2014:38). However, it must be reiterated that Agamben's diagnosis of bare life and the state of exception provide a profound basis to understand the excolonial issue. For instance, his reference to 'neomorts' is 'preciously a question not of a natural life but of an extreme embodiment of *homo sacer*' (1998:165): as shown in Chapter Seven, Jeetu is an apposite case in point.

To examine colonial legacies on postcolonial subalterns, Ann Laura Stoler's (2008) explanation of ruin and ruination is useful. She suggests that ruins are the vestiges of imperial pasts; ruination entails 'what people are "left with"' (2008:194), and it is alive and active in the present, and appears both in physical ruins and in the people's mindscapes. Ruination does not end with independence granted by the colonised nations; but it may continue to exist violently as implied through the 'vibrantly violent verb' – 'ruin' (2008: 194). Colonial processes of ruination leave their 'material and mental marks' and may continue destroying the decolonised nations (2008:204). In terms of the findings of the current research, it is noticed that in spite of Western colonialism's 'material and mental marks' on the postcolonial nations, they are not always accountable for the violence the postcolonial subalterns experience. For instance, apartheid injustice in South Africa and linguistic discrepancies in

postcolonial Sri Lanka are consequences of colonial ruination. Sizwe's non-corporeal death and Rasa's corporeal demise are attributable to it. Nevertheless, the states' brutal biopolitical operations against the Naxalites in India and the killing depicted in *Irangani* presumably cannot be attributed to Western colonialism. Brati, Somu and Nandini are brutalised by the Indian state as they are Naxalites; as noted in the second chapter, the Naxalite movement emerged as a reaction to the injustice of agrarian policies implemented within the postcolonial territories. Thus, Bignall's notion of excolonialism may be only partially useful to reflect on the findings of this research.

Moreover, by particularly referring to asylum seekers' resistance by means of lip sewing, David Farrier and Patricia Tuitt question 'what is *right* and what are *rights'*(2013:253):

> Lip sewing occurs as the embodiment of an imposed abjection; in postcolonial terms, it represents the appropriation of the body of the language of asymmetrical power relations, offering in the most compelling fashion the configuration of the asylum seeker as the new subaltern. (2013:254)

Lip sewing shows a form of resistance by the subalterns to the regulation of peoples, exercised not within the postcolonial nations but beyond their territories – powerful nations oppressing people arriving from other (usually former colonies) territories.[128] This is a specific phenomenon which involves the legal aspects of two territories – asylum seekers' *home country* and the *dream country,* the zone to which they try to access. As with asylum seekers, the subalterns in *Harvest* are also subject to global biopolitical forces operated

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[128] This mainly refers to the lip sewing actions taken by irregular immigrants as a protest against authorities.

remotely; they are also left with violence, in need of a specific legal status which moves beyond the internal legal system.

To return to the research approach and its significance for postcolonial others, Achille Mbembe's (2003) concept of necropolitics and living dead status are based on postcolonial issues: Mbembe focuses on situations of military occupation, war and colonisation, yet pays less attention to internal colonisation. His suggestion that the contemporary world is marked by necropolitics as a unique form of social existence in which many populations are exposed to livid-dead status is mostly based on Israel's colonial occupation of Palestine. Further, as Anna M. Agathangelou notes, Mbembe does not refer to the 'financial crisis and its dramatic effects on different bodies in the world' (2013:157). In this respect, Lemke also states that Agamben's concept of '[b]are life is no longer simply subject to death; it falls prey to a bioeconomical imperative that aims at the increase of life's value and the optimalisation of its quality' (2005:10). This notion of 'bioeconomical imperative' can be supported especially through *Harvest,* which depicts how postcolonial subalterns are seduced to be subject to it. However, contrary to Lemke's notion, 'bare life', as explicit through the findings of my research, is 'subject to death' – either corporeal or non-corporeal execution.

Esther Peeren writes that Mbembe perceives the 'relationship between the autocrat and his subjects not as oppositional but as convivial' (2014:52). Nevertheless, a significant finding in this research is subalterns' resistance to biopolitics. In almost all the circumstances, the subalterns express their 'oppositional' relation to the oppression either verbally or through 'physicality' (David Alcock 1999).[129] In this respect, it is effective to draw on Lisa Guenther's contention that '*life is never bare*' because there is a 'relation to alterity' which provides a form of 'resistance' (2012:59). Guenther theorises that bare life has a 'source of

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[129] Physicality is explained in the first chapter.

resistance' (2012:74). Her argument is that '[w]hat we end up, even in the most extreme exploitation of the body's vulnerability, is not the inhuman in the human, but rather the still-human in the dehumanized, and so a basis for the sort of resistance that would rebuild support for an individuated subject' (2012:74). She explains that consequently, oppressed subalterns do not gain 'salvation' or 'victory', but announce an 'incomplete victory for the powerful' (2012:77).

> Humanity makes sense only as an irreducible relation to alterity which cannot be destroyed, not even through murder or mass extermination. As such it retains a degree of resistance against everything that violates and exploits it: torture, poverty humiliation, slavery, racism, and all the other ways that human beings have created to destroy one another. (Guenther 2012: 75)

Thus, Guenther proposes a new theoretical language for biopolitics as 'a biopolitics of resistance', a 'post-Agambenian biopolitics' (2012:75). The findings in this research also show that subalterns express their resistance. Guenther's work on 'a biopolitics of resistance' may be a valid avenue to reflect afresh on the research findings.

Moreover, recent scholarship has also moved 'beyond biopolitics'; for instance, Francois Debrix and Alexander D. Barder posit that biopolitical violence exercised in war settings may require a specific approach beyond biopolitics.

> To consider terror […] and the other modes of destructive violence, we may have to step out of the biopolitical frames of representation, vision, and intelligibility, […]. We may have to look beyond biopolitics. […] Beyond life and beyond death, the scene of horror works on individuality and singularity […] Biopolitical

frameworks cannot fully capture the horror present in contemporary war and many other instances of geo- or bio-political violence. (2012: 18- 20)

They highlight the diverse forms of gruesome biopolitical violence that shed light on the ghastly scenes of violence which move beyond humanity: thus they suggest moving beyond biopolitics. This may also be a fruitful avenue in reconsidering post-human aspects of biopolitics, torture and brutality experienced particularly by Rasa, Robert and Nandini in my research.

Limitations and directions for future research

What emerges from all these reflections is that there is a form of re-colonisation through the biopolitical management of population; this re-colonisation occurs either because the subalterns are surplus and redundant, as in the case of Rasa and Sizwe, or because they are advantageous like Jeetu and Jaya for the powerful. Hence, the subalterns must find a space of their own making that transcends the problems of the politicisation of their lives to regain agency in society. This in turn will enable them to react against the biopolitical oppression, at least not to offer the powerful a complete 'victory', to use Guenther's (2012) concept. The assumption here is that the understanding of the biopolitical violence will eventually help the subaltern, irrespective of their status, gender or the region, to resist injustice and violence, as theatrically demonstrated. These reflections provide a means of thinking more broadly about how the intersections between violence and the regulation of biological life anticipate further

biopolitical reconfigurations that can be aligned with progressive thinking in postcolonial criticism.

In the course of the study, a number of unexpected findings emerged, which reflect the disparity in subalterns' cultural backgrounds and the socio-political legacies within their nations. The plays were selected for the research according to their representations of biopolitical violence: the choice was not based on gender. Nevertheless, it became evident that South African plays employ no female characters except in metatheatrical performances; yet, Indian and Sri Lankan plays use female characters and they show much resilience to biopolitical injustice and violence on stage. For instance, Devi's female characters – Sujata, Nandini and Somu's mother – dramatise and voice their challenge to the state's injustice and middle-class elites' politically dead attitudes. Padmanabhan maintains a balance in the characterisation of women figures; while one female character, Ma, succumbs to global coercion, the other, Jaya, not only raises her challenge verbally but defeats the global coercion which attempts to violate her. It must also be reiterated here that both Devi and Padmanabhan are female playwrights. From Sri Lanka, Macintyre brings to the fore female characters who daringly question the regulation of human bodies in political settings and the middle-class society's reaction to biopolitical injustice. These female characters (except for Ma) recover their voices and release themselves from internal and global colonisation, by articulating their resistance in a political dialogue to criticise the biopolitical violence. This suggests that they have risen from their enclosure (boundaries of colonisation and gender) to enter into a struggle in which females' output is prominent, demonstrating the agency in female subalterns. The current study did not reflect on gender due to feasibility aspects, and owing to its focus on biopolitics; this consideration on female characters could be a significant route for

exploration, perhaps extending to compare the representation of male and female characters, and their modes of resistance.

Moreover, the analyses highlighted the crucial roles Anglophone dramas play in promoting challenges to dominant biopolitical regulation. The problem emerges then whether biopolitics represented in the play-texts always compels their audience to attend to the plurality, the diversity and the complexity of them in a responsive manner – to be proactive to biopoliticisation and to be vigilant of it. A definite response to this is beyond the scope of this thesis, especially due to the paucity in performances. South African theatre, specifically Fugard's works, and the plays from India and Sri Lanka are not performed or received in a homogeneous manner. Anglophone theatre is limited to an elite community, thus isolated especially in India and Sri Lanka mainly because English is confined to particular social groups of the middle-class living in main cities. Thus, the findings could not verify if Anglophone plays from these two regions will remain an isolated mode of art or not.

Irrespective of the paucity of performance contexts, English dramas in India and Sri Lanka may play a noteworthy role in constructing a space for subalterns who are beleaguered through biopolitical operations. This is because, on the one hand, the characters serve as icons and participants in national and political movements in ways that are both restrictive and potentially liberating. On the other hand, English is a means to gain a wider attention to the play-texts. For instance, South African dramas played a major part in challenging the segregation laws as the plays were in English, thus were performed abroad to gain international attention. Since Devi's original drama in Bengali was translated into English, the Indian state's stratagem deployed to restrain the Naxalites have also been exposed to a considerable number of readers now, despite the absence of its performances. Ostensibly, the

plays which explicitly critique the injustice and oppression of their states and the internal biopolitical subterfuges are censored, officially or unofficially, within the nations. Yet, dramatists have been able to perform their plays abroad: Macintyre is a case in point. *Rasanayagam's Last Riot* was performed in Australia irrespective of the civil war in Sri Lanka as it was in English; Macintyre was able to share the issues discussed in the play with an audience abroad. Assuredly, Anglophone theatre from India and Sri Lanka may gradually make its headway as protest and political theatre. There is no doubt that as the plays explicitly and critically explore biopolitical violence, they encourage their audience and readers to form a response to biopolitics. Yet, it is open for future studies to explore if other genres such as films overtake the role of theatre in this respect.

In order to tease out the subtleties and nuances of biopolitical representations, this research focussed on plays only from three postcolonial territories. There is much more work to be done on the presence of biopolitics in postcolonial theatre. Further multi-disciplinary engagements with biopolitics in postcolonial contexts are useful. Therefore, it might be insightful to extend this area of research to explore whether more postcolonial dramatists have made significant contributions to the argument of biopolitics. Future research could address issues around the divergences and convergences in characters in the corpus selected in this thesis; for instance, Jaya in *Harvest* could be compared to Devi's Sujata or Nandini according to their modes of resistance to biopolitics and the violence inflicted on them. Similarly to many other readings of mainstream postcolonial literature, this thesis is also limited by its English-language framework. It would be enlightening to compare plays from the national languages of these regions about biopolitical phenomena, translating them into English for a wider readership. Moreover, as implied throughout this chapter, the approach deployed in the
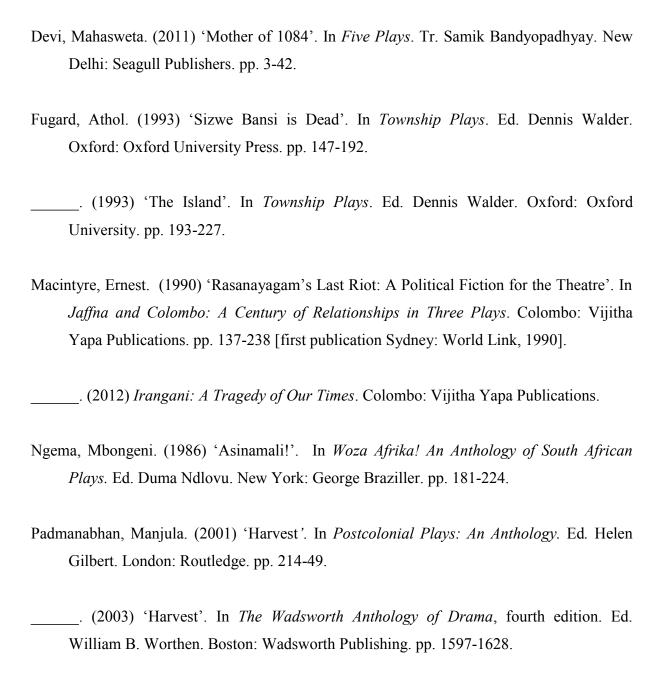
thesis can be incorporated with concepts such as 'biopolitics of resistance', 'excolonialism' and 'bioeconomical imperative'. All these fall within the responsibility of further and much needed research.

Despite the current shift in scholarship beyond biopolitics, the biopolitical perspective remains pertinent and applicable for contexts of such socio-political violence in contemporary settings and perhaps even more within the milieus of a post-human future. However, the content and meaning of biopolitics is not fixed, and as the concept develops within a growing range of research areas, it may be useful then to diversify the concept further, creating sub-fields such as medical-biopolitics, techno-biopolitics, war-biopolitics and internal-biopolitics. As implied in the epigraph to this chapter, in future studies, the approach should be moved constantly and anew, in order to understand this phenomenon of biopolitics afresh in new ways and with application to specific contexts.

This thesis, nevertheless, fulfilled its intention in revealing, through a comparative study, aspects of these play-texts which had been previously under-examined. This project provides insights into how postcolonial nations are biopolitically affected. I have sought to show the trajectory through which the biopolitical perspective, emerging in the early 19th century, has given rise to an altered perception of the human and the political. This thesis is a space to consider freshly and critically the biopolitical actions operated within the nations and globally. It was helpful to understand a need to acquire agency against violence. Ultimately, this study suggests imperatives for increasing equality in legal practices and the need to abolish biopolitical violence.

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