Post-millennial South African theatre: politics, legacies and futures

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Abstract

During both the apartheid and post-apartheid eras, South African theatre has been a vital source of resistance and creativity. South African theatre-makers have proven the continuing vitality of representing resistance through postcolonial drama. The theatre of the post-apartheid era has been relatively understudied, and theatre since the year 2000 has seen even less sustained critical attention. In this thesis I explore the politics that have shaped six plays from the post-millennial period. This thesis bridges a gap in scholarship by conceptualising the complex ways in which the definition of political theatre has developed and changed in the last decade and a half. I explore how the material and ideological environment of the period following apartheid is staged through theatre. My chapters use a range of critical frameworks to focus: (i) on the politics of burial and haunting; (ii) satire and truth and reconciliation; (iii) friendship and democracy; (iv) theatre festivals and (v) the animal-human. Furthermore, the thesis' primary texts range from well-known published plays to under-studied texts. Athol Fugard, for example, is considered through his unproduced play *The Abbess* (2006) and *The Train Driver* (2010). The post-apartheid theatrical tradition of adaptation and appropriation is considered through the satirical *MacBeki* (2009) by Pieter-Dirk Uys, and the visceral syncretic play *Molora* by Yaël Farber (2008). The political implications of storytelling and friendship in *London Road* (2010) by Nicholas Spagnoletti and *The Snow Goose* at the 2015 National Arts Festival (NAF) turn attention to the potential future of South African politics as represented through politicised theatre. My fieldwork, involving conducting interviews and being a spectator at the NAF enables a conceptual discussion of the Festival experience, alongside a performance analysis of *The Snow Goose* drawn from ethnographic notes rather than published material.

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List of Abbreviations

ANC: African National Congress.

ARV: Antiretroviral drugs.

HIV/AIDS: Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

NELM: National English Literary Museum.

PANSA: Performing Arts Network of South Africa.

TRC: Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Dr. Anthony Carrigan (1980-2016). A wonderful scholar, teacher, friend and mentor whose encouragement led me to take on this project.

Introduction

Politics

In April 1994, the Republic of South Africa held democratic elections that ended the system known by the unique, notorious Afrikaans concept of *apartheid*, or 'separateness'.[1] Apartheid was an elaborate system of racial capitalism and organic nationalism. As Harold Wolpe argues, this system 'cannot be seen merely as a reflection of racial ideologies and nor can it be reduced to a simple extension of segregation. Racial ideology in South Africa must be seen as an ideology which sustains and reproduces capitalist relations of production.'[2] Apartheid ideology worked on the level of both of Louis Althusser's Ideological and Repressive State Apparatuses, because schools, universities, urban planning, the police and military, all ensured the oppression of non-white labour power and the reproduction of South Africa's 'capitalist relations of production'.[3] After the 1994 elections, however, apartheid was dismantled by its long-term opponents through negotiation, not violent revolution.[4] The African National Congress (ANC), meanwhile, transitioned from being a banned protest movement to a ruling party in a span of four years.

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[1] *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3 edn (WordWeb Software, 2010), 'apartheid'.
Apartheid is, henceforth, non-italicised.
[2] Wolpe, Harold., 'Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa: From segregation to apartheid', in *Segregation and apartheid in twentieth-century South Africa*, ed. by William Beinart and Saul Dubow (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 87.
[3] Althusser, Louis., 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation,' in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2006), pp. 85-126.; Wolpe, p. 87.
[4] Waldmeir, Patti. *Anatomy of a Miracle: The End of Apartheid and the Birth of the New South Africa*, (London: Viking, 1997), for an historical account of the 'negotiated revolution'.

The anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa had nurtured a highly developed, internationally successful form of political theatre, with theatres providing politicised spaces for contesting controversial and censored subjects. Urban theatre-makers were uniquely placed to perform resistively against the postcolonial state. Theatre brought together South Africans who had been separated and alienated from one another by apartheid. Plays were made representing the human suffering and injustice caused by apartheid law and order, mocking the legitimacy of white supremacist rule. There were other forms of performance culture during the apartheid era, of course, but the radical political theatre associated with city venues like The Space in Cape Town, The Market in Johannesburg, and companies like the Junction Avenue Theatre, was defined by its implicit and explicit opposition to the apartheid economy and value system. Protest theatre was staged in a country where racially-mixed casts and audiences were illegal or taboo.

The 1994 elections, however, which ended apartheid, also created a crisis for a generation of polemical theatre-makers, robbing them of their principal target. Without the system of apartheid, South African political theatre no longer had a clear enemy. A post-apartheid South Africa lacked a systemic focal point for grievances, blurring the lines which had made the political 'enemy' identifiable and locatable. Rather than a figure of fun or derision, apartheid's last leader, President F.W. De Klerk, shared a Nobel Peace Prize with the new President Nelson Mandela; the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) would not be a Nuremberg Trial of apartheid's leaders, but an attempt to heal the nation and restore the historical record of state oppression and oppositional struggle. Within

the leadership of the struggle movement itself, the usefulness of oppositional theatre continuing into the new era was contested by Judge Albie Sachs, who was also appointed to oversee the creation of the new Republic's constitution.[5] Instead of making protest art, Sachs suggested, 'we have to ask ourselves now […] whether we have an artistic and cultural vision that corresponds to this current phase in which a new South African nation is emerging.'[6] What was once an important form of opposition to an unjust, racist political system would now be incongruous, in the eyes of activist leaders like Sachs, with the new democratic system. Theatre, considered a vital part of the anti-apartheid political struggle, would need to take part in the new era of nation-building to stay relevant.

This thesis begins its focus at the turn of the millennium, running a decade and a half to the 2015 National Arts Festival in Grahamstown. Several scholars have attempted to offer more complex periodisations than that offered by the singular, 'post-'apartheid label.[7] The most germane is Marcia Blumberg's estimation of the period from 2000 to around 2011 as being 'a 'second interregnum'' that followed the 1990s, which had been an 'initial period of euphoria, patience and hope, starting with the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the first president of democratic South Africa'.[8] Why have I focused on the post-millennium era in this thesis? I argue that although many critics have seen

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[5] Sachs, Albie. 'Preparing ourselves for freedom', in *Writing South Africa: Literature, apartheid and democracy, 1970-1995*, ed. by Derek Attridge and Rosmary Jolly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 239-248.
[6] Ibid., p. 239.
[7] Blumberg, Marcia. 'Reconciling Acts', in *SA Lit: Beyond 2000*, ed. by Michael Chapman and Margaret Lenta (Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011), p. 139: 'Greg Homan categorises […] three periods: 'pre-post-apartheid (1990-1996)', 'early-post-apartheid (1996-2002)' and 'post-apartheid (2002-2008)'';
Kruger, Loren. *The drama of South Africa: Plays, pageants and publics since 1910* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 200: Kruger argues that '*post-anti*-apartheid' theatre had begun to emerge and dominate the local theatre industry.
[8] Blumberg, 'Reconciling Acts', p. 139.

the plays of this period as essentially apolitical or lacking the political force of apartheid-era drama, these plays contribute post-apartheid political messages that are as forceful and sophisticated as the 'protest' messages of apartheid-era theatre. Several plays in this thesis have escaped critical attention, despite their conceptual complexity, because they do not fit into the received scholarly definition of political theatre established in the 1980s.

My original contribution to knowledge in this thesis is thus to argue that modern South African political theatre, particularly since the turn of the millennium, remains radically political, just in a different way to the protest theatre of the apartheid era. Given this, the definition of political theatre should be broadened, in order to acknowledge the ways in which playwrights and theatre-makers have responded to the challenges and crises of the post-apartheid era. Protest theatre was necessarily associated with a narrow focus and style, but the post-apartheid theatre is not limited by a central goal or political manifesto. Political theatre is no longer part of a broader movement; it is independent from the nationalist politics of the ANC, such as the 1990s Rainbow Nation and from President Mbeki's African Renaissance. Being freed from the necessity of producing protest theatre has liberated artists, rather than condemning them to irrelevance. Polemic is not required to make political theatre in South Africa, particularly since the turn of the millennium. Rather than being a type of theatre in the doldrums, political theatre is freer than ever. Plays do not even have to be about South Africa or feature South Africans as a necessary condition for political readings.

In South Africa, scholars and theatre-makers have 'an unavoidable yet symbiotic relationship'.[9] With the end of apartheid, both critics and writers queried how a new generation of theatre-makers could thrive without apartheid as a focus. In practice, both were wrong, as Neethling and Hauptfleisch argue: 'The sheer amount and variety of activity and the creative energy being generated by a new generation of multilingual, multi-skilled and intensely physical performers has confounded even the most optimistic of us.'[10] Just as venues and companies were founded and formed in the anti-apartheid era, the post-apartheid industry has developed an 'abundance of festivals, performance venues, theatre companies, theatrical forms and theatre-related activities and events taking place daily'.[11] Post-apartheid theatre is thriving, even if it has its own institutional challenges, such as the over-reliance on a potentially fragile arts festival system.[12] The academic study of South African theatre has developed in tandem with this rich performance culture. As Yvette Hutchison asked in 1999, 'finally, the burning issue for those of us here, be we artists or critics: What is our role in the theatre to come? In the new era of redefinition, how will South Africa and her public define itself?'[13] While the contexts have shifted, South African life remains highly politicised, with apartheid's legacies, and the future of South Africa open to critical and artistic discussion.

The history of South African theatre is, arguably, its relationship to the fluctuations of power. Cultural materialist and historicist studies such as Loren

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[9] Neethling, Miemie., and Temple Hauptfleisch, 'Homegrown theory for a new theatre', *South African Theatre Journal*, 15.1, (2001), 5-6 (p. 5).
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] See Chapter Four.
[13] Ross, Robert., *A Concise History of South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 128.

Kruger's show that theatre has been deeply involved in the politics and power struggles of the region for centuries.[14] Well-established traditions and histories include the importing of European colonial culture, the use of theatre within Afrikaner nationalism, and the anti-apartheid theatre's programme of 'culture as a weapon'. Two critical concepts are central to understanding the oppositional theatrical movement against apartheid's organic nationalism and racial capitalism. Firstly, is the postcolonial theoretical concept of hybridity, established by Homi Bhabha in the 1990s.[15] The colonial history of segregation and oppression stretches back to the seventeenth century. Apartheid was, in part, an attempt to break apart the long, fraught relationships that had formed between the different communities and social groups within South Africa. Apartheid, as separation, would go much further than segregation, denying the hybridity of South African history. The second key concept is that of syncretism. Syncretism is the process by which those who made drama in acting groups and workshops brought together a variety of styles and aesthetic influences from their own various cultures: a way of crafting performances which remains important in post-apartheid theatre. Syncretism is thus a creative practice, while hybridity is a social principle. The syncretic theatre that resulted from this practice has been retrospectively read as foreshadowing post-apartheid South Africa: Anton Krueger refers to 'the syncretic practices of workshop theatre during apartheid, and specifically works like *Sophiatown* (1993), which predict and prefigure a multi-racial post-apartheid society.'[16] Racially separated creators making hybrid

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[14] Kruger, (1999).
[15] Ashcroft, Bill., Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 2nd edn (Abingdon, Oxon.: Routledge, 2007), pp. 108-111.
[16] Krueger, Anton., *Experiments in Freedom: Explorations of Identity in New South African Drama* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), p. 149.

theatre together was an act of defiance within a society dominated by a state driven by concepts of white supremacy and organic nationalism.

As I have previously said, the end of apartheid presented an existential question to a generation of theatre practitioners. In the immediate years following apartheid, the collaborative and syncretic mode of theatre that had developed in the 1960s and 1970s was deemed to have lost its focus – 'protest' – throwing practitioners into disarray and giving rise to a search for new subjects appropriate to a new era and a 'new' South Africa. One result of the radical transformation of the country's politics from the apartheid to the post-apartheid era was the 'collapse of the secure framework in which drama and theatre in South Africa has evolved over the past three centuries, due to the strong Eurocentric socio-cultural context provided by the rigid political structures'.[17] In the new South Africa, theatre festivals, in particular, influence audiences and practitioners to experience plays and cultural celebrations that exemplify the idea of South African-ness as being syncretic and fluid.[18]

Through the politics of the ANC, the 'Rainbow Nation' conceptualised the new South Africa as a hybrid body politic, addressing the 'divisions and malformations of apartheid'.[19] The TRC aimed to disentangle the past through public hearings, bringing the process of transitional justice to the so-called 'negotiated revolution'. Apartheid may have ended, fundamentally altering the political landscape, but its legacies and anxieties about the future of the country

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[17] Hutchison, Yvette., 'Present trends in South African Theatre', in *The Dancing Dwarf from the Land of the Spirits*, ed. by J. Smit (Durban: Centre for the Study of Southern African Literature and Languages, 1999) p. 120 (pp. 119-130).
[18] Krueger, (2010) p.147.
[19] Ross, (1999), p. 200.

contributed to two decades of uncertainty about the nature of social transformation.

Finding its feet, South Africa's theatre in the post-apartheid period was as open to change as the nation's other ideological state apparatuses. Established theatre-makers who had cut their teeth in the anti-apartheid struggle took a well-documented turn towards themes such as reconciliation, healing, truth, confrontation and nationhood.[20] The positive image of the Rainbow Nation, however, has not assuaged concerns that the new South Africa still contends with racial and economic inequality. Post-apartheid crises like HIV/AIDS, issues related to migration and xenophobia, and government corruption have made a mockery of the hopes for a fair and equal society that seemed so possible at the 1994 ballot box. The lack of social transformation following the TRC has been exacerbated by the uneven social development that is a legacy of the apartheid era. Moreover, inequality and poverty has deepened, as the state took an increasingly neoliberal stance on the economy in the Mbeki presidency, with unemployment and crime at levels that have created intense reactions, such as the victimisation of refugees and African migrants in the *Amakwerekwere* riots.[21]

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[20] Hutchison, Yvette. *South African performance and archives of memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp. 57-72.

[21] Seekings, Jeremy., 'Poverty and Inequality in South Africa, 1994–2007', in *After Apartheid: Reinventing South Africa*, ed. by Ian Shapiro and Kahreen Tebeau (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), p. 24, 28; Simple measures of inequality and poverty have been challenged by the explosion of data following 1994, but Seekings outlines two consensuses: (1) 'There is, nonetheless, broad academic consensus that income poverty worsened in the late 1990s, although precise findings vary according to the specific data used and the assumptions made in the analysis. The poverty headcount grew both in absolute numbers and as a proportion of the total population, and the poverty gap widened also.' (p. 24), and (2) 'Income inequality worsened after 1994, including in the early 2000s. This trend has been found by studies using a variety of data sets and stands in contrast to the picture of stable levels of overall income inequality in the final decades of apartheid.' (p. 28); Gumede, William Mervin., *Thabo Mbeki: The Battle for the Heart and Soul of the ANC*, 2nd edn (London: Zed Books, 2007). Mbeki's strategy intended on turning the ANC 'from a broad based liberation movement to a governing political party', pivoting the country towards a fully marketised

To summarise, these conflicts have called into question the nature of post-apartheid South African democracy; democratisation, established in the 1990s as a force for transitioning the country, has met roadblocks**.** Politics has been continually recalibrated as the country has both changed and stagnated.

In response to this, playwrights, continuing and evolving the tradition of political theatre, have shown it is possible to move beyond both protest theatre and the propaganda of 'rainbow' nationalistic grand-narratives. The 2000s are an important period of study because, in anticipation of the future, scholars and theatre-makers looked to the new millennium as a time when the post-apartheid South Africa could re-define itself.

A growing attention on the postmodern individual within South African identity politics has been emphasised by scholars such as Krueger, re-examining plays in the light of the fact that: 'The political in current anti-apartheid art seems to be a reification of revolutionary ideology rather than an appeal for transformation given that the desired revolution (universal suffrage) has now occurred'.[22] Furthermore, without the pressure of emphasising theatre as part of the anti-apartheid struggle there is now a broader scholarly acknowledgement of the diversity of significant theatre in the country, even that which does not fit the model provided by pioneers like Athol Fugard.[23] As Hutchison argues:

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economy in order to 'modernise' South Africa (Gumede, p. 150). For example, Mbeki's government changed its macroeconomic policy from the Renewal and Development Plan (RDP) to the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) plan; Klein, Naomi., *The Shock Doctrine* (New York: Metropolitan, 2008) Critics of Mbeki have emphasised that such policies demonstrated the post-apartheid ANC's position as having compromised its fundamental principles of left-wing social revolution (Klein, pp. 194-217).

[22] Krueger, (2010), p. 92.

[23] Hutchison, (1999): 'To a large extent the [Eurocentric] definition of 'theatre' has determined the kinds of histories that have been written, particularly in emphasis and interpretation. For example, many practitioners outside of the protest forms were hugely successful in SA, but because of the specific socio-cultural emphasis, much has not been recorded or commented

> With the opening out of resources, cultural interaction and the pluralising of festivals, one hopes that South African theatre will continue evolving as a critical, subversive, paradoxical combination of multiple worlds and languages. Perhaps only cultural forms can both explore and express the complexities of the contradictory histories and identities that constitute South Africa.[24]

Because of theatre historians and anthropologists in South Africa, the twentieth century history of local forms of performance culture is well-established and developed.[25] Through this mid-to-late twentieth century history, critics and practitioners contributed to a consensus about the purpose of the nation's apartheid era political theatre:

> For decades theatre in South Africa had a specific role: to 'protest' injustices, to break silences, to provoke debate on issues in spaces that could facilitate discussion, often actually during performances. This theatre was about lived experiences that were often officially denied.[26]

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on. One such example is Gibson Kente, the highly successful pioneer of the township musical.', p. 120.

[24] Hutchison, Yvette., 'South African Theatre', in *A History of Theatre in Africa*, ed. by Martin Banham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 368 (pp. 312-379).

[25] Hauptfleisch, Temple., *Theatre and performance research in South Africa* (2010) <http://esat.sun.ac.za/index.php?title=Theatre_and_performance_research_in_South_Africa&oldid=1833> [accessed 1 November 2018].

[26] Hutchison, (2013), p. 1.

Since the end of apartheid, scholars have widened the theatrical canon, to include forms of theatre and performance that had been overlooked by the dominant, Eurocentric conception of theatre.[27] Forms of storytelling such as praise poetry, oral literature, song and dance had previously been excluded because of the effacement of black culture, in favour of the 'dominant critical practices' built on European 'textual' form of performance culture.[28] The Handspring Puppet Company and William Kentridge's inventive, multimedia collaborative work in the 1990s, Hutchison argues, is '[i]n a significant way […] the culmination of many of the traditions of South Africa, beginning with storytelling, European popular theatre, the intervention of cinema, Fugard and previous artists 'bearing witness' to their own and other people's lives.'[29] The problem with the label of protest theatre was not that it was unrepresentative, but that it created a narrow definition of what theatre should do. The work of Kentridge and Handspring is a testament to the ways in which the post-apartheid dispensation challenged and enabled theatre-makers to finesse the 'many […] traditions of South Africa', in order to respond to the post-apartheid milieu.

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[27] See Hutchison, in Banham (ed.) (2004), which addresses this issue. A précis is: 'The writing of such history is controversial, especially in this decade of transition. One of the most pressing issues is terminology. As many people have pointed out, *theatre* is a European term with specific meaning. Kole Omotoso addresses some of the debates and suggests how notions of theatre can be broadened. This includes engaging with inter-cultural, syncretic performances. However, there are still profound silences […] In order to support the shift towards filling these gaps, this chapter foregrounds areas of performance that have not been discussed in detail in many available South African theatre histories, and suggests how the interaction of these diverse forms have defined the nature of contemporary South African theatre. This choice of focus means that there is less detail on well-published mainstream South African theatre history.' p. 312.

[28] As Hutchison argues, 'The suppression, or omission, of oral literary histories in favour of the textual has a long history and is related to dominant critical practices. These practices were exacerbated in South Africa by the country's particular past socio-political repressions and oppressions. Oral forms have been largely associated with black societies, and thus been used as a way of controlling and separating cultural histories.', Ibid: p. 315.

[29] Hutchison in Banham (ed). (2004), p. 367.

South African theatre is diverse so I will clarify the kind of theatre on which this thesis focuses: what Hutchison calls 'Contemporary text-based drama'.[30] I examine the works of two writers who came into prominence during the protest era, staging performances at venues such as The Space in Cape Town and the Market Theatre: Athol Fugard (Chapter One) and Pieter-Dirk Uys (part of a comparative analysis in Chapter Two). The continuing presence of the syncretic and hybrid tradition of theatre-making, described above, is represented by Yaël Farber's *Molora* (Chapter Two). The creative drive towards storytelling is exemplified by Nicholas Spagnoletti's *London Road* (Chapter Three) and Jenine Collocott, Taryn Bennett and James Cairns' *The Snow Goose* (Chapter Four).

The question of how playmakers might creatively move forward from the collective politics of the apartheid era has been mirrored in the conceptual development of South African theatre studies. In the 1990s, the most influential school of thought in South African theatre studies was Marxist-derived cultural materialism, and the profound ideological shift prompted by the transition from the Nationalist Party to Mandela's ANC Presidency provided ample material for scholars working with a politically historicist perspective. Scholars like Martin Orkin established the deep links between colonial culture, theatre, literature, social ideology and resistance.[31] Greater attention to sociolinguistics, historical details, and the pluralisation of theatre studies evidence, and therefore what constitutes a resistive performance event, has led to a diverse, if well-defined critical paradigm.[32] The post-apartheid theatre may have fragmented from the

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[30] Ibid., pp. 365-8

[31] Orkin, Martin., *Drama and the South African state* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991)

[32] The key examples of this trend include Hutchison (2013) and Kruger (1999), with examples of South African theatricality and performance culture ranging from Nelson Mandela's inauguration as President to the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

days of protest theatre, but post-apartheid issues have provided their own focus for politically minded analysis. This can be seen in the recent criticism produced by scholars such as Hutchison, Krueger and Kruger, whose criticism of a multiplicity of playwrights, texts and performance events sheds light on previously overlooked forms of resistive, politically interesting aspects of South African theatricality.[33] The sensitive integration of late twentieth century critical theories, drawn from poststructuralism, historicism and postcolonial theory define the field. I am contributing to this established openness with a series of play-readings that unpick the legacies and futures of South African democracy through post-apartheid theatre.

Legacies

Two ways that scholars and critics have focused on the legacies of apartheid are, firstly, the restaging of anti-apartheid texts, which has seen the re-assessment of canonical figures, including Fugard, in the light of post-apartheid politics.[34] Secondly, the TRC has influenced the exploration of the trauma of the past in the present.[35] The importance of legacies is covered, in particular, by the case studies and comparative analysis found in Chapters One and Two of this thesis,

[33] Hutchison (1999), anticipating her work in the following years, 'These histories can now be re-evaluated, and perhaps filled in', p. 121.
[34] Fugard, Athol., *Township Plays*, ed. by Dennis Walder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Such revivals can be read as productive, in particular the re-staging of township and workshop plays like *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island*; as Walder argues, from the 1970s to the present such productions "have proved, [these texts] continue to exert a certain power.' (p. xiii); Fugard's solo works like *The Road to Mecca* (1985) have, also, been reinterpreted as forward thinking. This dynamic in Fugard's career is explained vis-a-vis *The Abbess* (2004) and *The Train Driver* (2010) in Chapter One of this thesis.
[35] Critical attention on the theatricality of the TRC and its relationship to TRC-esque theatre (Hutchison, and Blumberg).

which focus, respectively, on Fugard and on the role of appropriation and adaptation in modern South African drama.

The re-evaluation of Fugard provides an opportunity for exploring in greater depth the critical reception and political aesthetics of South African theatre and drama. Scholarship on Fugard has been central to the development of the field, with his work dominating the conversation for a time. Fugard's theatre as the 'witnessing' of the oppressed is a model for reading postcolonial theatre in South Africa. As Kruger writes, 'Fugard's mature plays created a South African idiom that could be national, local, and intimate all at once.'[36] This 'fully colloquial South African English' was a result of the contributions of the diverse and skilled collaborators with whom Fugard was able to work.[37] These influences, from traditional African and avant-garde European theatrical traditions, were the basis of the alternative theatre's success. Christopher Heywood explains that, 'in 1956 Guy Butler lamented the absence of an English theatre tradition in South Africa. Seeing little hope, he described Cape Town and Johannesburg's theatre culture as '"a temple whose censers emit stale whiffs of the West End in London".'[38] In direct contrast, Fugard's characters use local phraseology and dialect, interwoven with spoken English. Fugard's plays were the most successful local example of a *South African* English language theatre tradition.

There were antecedents to Fugard, like Stephen Black, but they did not gain the international or national success that Fugard did, and figures like Black were rediscovered by critics rather than audiences.[39] By contrast, the Serpent

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[36] Kruger, (1999) p. 20.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Heywood, Christopher., *A History of South African Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) p. 79.
[39] Ibid.

Players' township plays introduced privileged audiences, first in Port Elizabeth and later elsewhere, to communities that had been systematically separated from them. This separation was achieved even while the inhabitants of townships lived in thrall to the racialised capitalism that separated bourgeoisie and proletariat by skin colour, providing labour for white urban areas. The Serpent Players did not just perform in these conditions, but performed plays that spoke against them, such as *The Coat* (1966), an acting exercise about township life performed for a white audience, at the Hill Presbyterian Church in Port Elizabeth, that had heard of the acting group's success in the city's New Brighton township.

Since the end of apartheid Fugard's less overtly political plays, not made in the workshop style, have been reconsidered as prefiguring or anticipating the post-apartheid theatre. This re-evaluation has occurred because of new productions: as Flockemann argues, 'the re-stagings of some of his early works in the post-TRC context have been hailed as exemplifying moments which track the development of peculiarly South African consciousnesses.'[40] Fugard's theatre was unique within local Anglophone theatre because it sought to depict South African life, rather than be 'influenced primarily by Western, predominantly British models'.[41] Fugard's liberal politics, and his willingness to work against separation, contrasted with the culturally conservative mainstream. Instead of focusing on importing safe styles and broad entertainment, Fugard's theatre is reflective of local life and its problems, told with a deliberately distinctive voice. Walder explains that, 'the characters in many of Fugard's plays would normally

[40] Flockemann, Miki., 'The aesthetics of transformation: Reading strategies for South African theatre entering the new millennium', *South African Theatre Journal*, 15.1, (2001), 25-39 (p. 25).
[41] Walder in Fugard, *Township Plays*, p. xii.

speak Afrikaans, which he 'translates' into his own Eastern Cape English idiom', his characters speaking a mix of languages 'reflecting the polyglot nature of their world'.[42] But, as playwright Pieter-Dirk Uys emphasises in the documentary *Falls the Shadow*, it is Fugard's specificity and the rich South African-ness of his texts, manifesting in 'the musicality of the *South African* language', which makes his writing so compelling and distinctive.[43] Uys's description of the 'musicality' of Fugard's local language is important because his choice of language was a conscious creative choice. As a bilingual English and Afrikaans speaker, he made the choice to blend them with the African languages of those with whom he created plays.

As a champion of theatre during the apartheid era, Fugard has often been the starting point for theories and histories of South African theatre in the mid-to-late twentieth century since his rise to international prominence in the 1970s. Fugard is the chronological starting point in most historical narratives because his contribution is a key part of the story of South Africa's postcolonial theatre culture, encouraging a generation of theatre-makers, and allowing audiences to connect with locally produced work. Fugard himself found the interrelated processes of creating theatre and the political and social impact of those productions highly motivating, writing in 1991 that:

> I am more in love with my craft as a playwright – more passionately committed to theatre and excited by its extraordinary power, its

[42] Ibid., p. xxxi.
[43] 'Falls the Shadow: The Life and Times of Athol Fugard', dir. by Tony Palmer (Portobello Pictures, 2012) [on DVD].

> extraordinary imaginative freedom, than I have ever been and I think one of the main reasons for this is the powerful dynamic that exists in South African theatre. […] the relationship between the event on the stage and the political and social reality out on the streets.[44]

Fugard's work was, in many ways, a celebration of the form itself, demonstrating the capacity for theatre to witness the oppressed, criticise laws and social taboos, and explore feelings of trauma. His creative awareness of the materiality of the stage was crucial for grounding the work, participating in the local and global movements against apartheid when the plays left the townships and radical theatres of Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg, for the cultural metropoles of Anglophone theatre – London and New York. Fugard is a theatre practitioner well aware of his own particular role in the network of collaborative creation, a network of syncretic change, performing postcolonial strategies of resistance. The openness of Fugard's creative process meant he worked closely with his actors, frequently appearing in his plays during the 1960s and 1970s, as well as directing, which meshed with the intention of his plays to bring together local communities that had been separated by the laws and structures of apartheid.[45]

The theatre influenced and related to Fugard and his collaborators has become a key focus for evaluating the recent history of the local form. The Fugardian 'idiom' has, in a large part, formed the bedrock of South Africa's

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[44] Fugard, 'The Arts and Society', in Fugard, *Plays One*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), pp. 241-242.
[45] Ibid.

postcolonial theatre and criticism.[46] His work showed how South African theatre could represent the realities of struggle, oppression and hope.

The TRC provides the second illustrative example of the legacies of apartheid. The post-apartheid 'miracle' transition fitted into worldwide, post-conflict, transitional contexts such as the end of the Cold War, and the history of decolonisations and the experience of postcolonialism.[47] Such narratives, however, do not truly convey the complexities of the situation. South Africa, after all, had been an independent, 'democratic' republic since a referendum in 1960, driven by the white-supremacist National Party which had ruled for almost half a century from 1948 to 1994. It is natural to think of such histories in terms of decades. The 1960s were the years that the apartheid system had been legally enshrined after centuries of European colonial rule. The 1970s saw rising resistance and change, typified by the Soweto uprising in 1976. The 1980s had seen an official State of Emergency imposed by the government of President P.W. Botha. His successor, F.W. de Klerk, and President Mandela made sure that the 1990s were to be remembered as a decade of extraordinary social and political change, where the watchwords of the state were not slogans such as Botha's 'adapt or die', but Archbishop Tutu's 'Truth and Reconciliation'. There were many hopes vested in this process, though there was some healthy scepticism about how it could take place. In a post-apartheid pattern of affirmation and contradiction, there was a significant 'fear that reconciliation may become synonymous with amnesia.'[48] Both of these viewpoints on the Truth and

[46] See Hutchison in Banham (ed.), (2004).
[47] For an account of the 'miracle' deal, see Waldmeir, (1997).
[48] Blumberg, (2011) p. 138.

Reconciliation Commission's impact capture something about the post-apartheid milieu; in a paradoxical sense, both sides are right. In practice, the Commission could not bear the weight of expectations. As Blumberg summarises: 'In the final analysis, no process can adequately redress the massive injustices, no commission can fully solve the problems or provide sufficient compensation for the horrors.'[49] The TRC, while imperfect, promised a great deal, and provided important moments of collective remembering.[50]

On the stage, the first significant trend, during the early 1990s transition and post-1994, were plays that enacted and explored Archbishop Tutu's creed of truth and reconciliation.[51] It is important to emphasise that the TRC was an example of 'transitional justice', and that the theatre culture that surrounded it was about how and why exactly this transition could take place, and who would carry it out.[52]

Futures

With the post-apartheid came a sense of urgency to question the Eurocentric nature of theatre now that apartheid was dead, even though its ghost could not quite be put to rest.[53] Despite the self-consciousness and soul-searching of many South African artists, theatre-making itself remains a powerful means of

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[49] Ibid., p. 139.
[50] Hutchison, (2013) pp. 54-57.
[51] For example Athol Fugard's *Playland* (1992) published in Fugard, *Plays One* (1998); Taylor, Jane., *Ubu and the Truth Commission: from the production by William Kentridge and The Handspring Puppet Company*, (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1998).
[52]Cole, Catherine M., *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission: Stages of Transition*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010) For an analysis of the TRC from a theatrical and transitional justice perspective.
[53] Hutchison, (1999), 'This change has resulted in a desperate need to redefine drama theory and theatre history.' p. 120.

articulating ideas about the nature of South Africa's democracy. The sheer breadth of opportunity for practitioners is summed up by van Graan's introduction to his influential play *Green Man Flashing* (2006): 'South Africa today is a much more interesting place to explore creatively. Rather than the stark polarities of the past, there is much more fascinating room for contradiction, for complexity and for irony in our nascent democratic, non-racial and non-sexist project.'[54] Given the perpetual and enduring nature of inequality and the non-teleological nature of the kind of 'democratic…project' suggested by van Graan, and by Jacques Derrida's 'democracy to come',[55] the plurality and creative possibilities of the post-apartheid attempt to change South African society and culture are not dead ends, but terminals for a fresh kind of political theatre that expands the notion of democracy beyond the ballot box:

> I've always believed that if we are serious about democracy and about the exercise of our constitutional right to freedom of creative expression, then we must simply practise it. Not to do so, is to risk compromising democracy by leaving it to others to define in their potentially self-serving image. Rather than wait for 'the right time' for issues to be debated or questions to be asked, theatre-makers should provide thought, stimulate debate, challenge current dogmas and provide the intellectual and emotional spaces for these. And do it in a way that entertains.[56]

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[54] van Graan, Mike., 'Playwright's Note' to *Green Man Flashing* in *New South African Plays*, ed. by Charles Fourie, (London: Aurora Metro, 2006), p. 172.
[55] See Chapter Three of this thesis in particular, and Wortham, Simon Morgan., *The Derrida Dictionary*, (London: Continuum, 2010), pp. 34-35.
[56] van Graan, (2006) p. 172.

The past decade or so has been a period of brilliant creativity within South African theatre, bringing with it the emergence of new careers that have broadened the scope of the form. It has seen new phases of the careers of veterans like Fugard and Uys; and the international success of *auteur*-esque directors (such as Yaël Farber, Bret Bailey and Lara Foot Newton) with texts that politically engage with key and marginalised issues within post-apartheid politics.

Fugard's writing about post-apartheid South Africa is an illustrative case of how formerly hopeful visions of the future have shifted towards ambivalence. In 2004, promoting his play *Exits and Entrances*, which celebrated his early exposure to professional theatre-making, Fugard expressed his opinion that: 'Admittedly it's a very complex moment for South Africa, but I have every confidence in the future of theatre in this country. Disillusionment, no. Exactly the opposite.' [57] Between 2004 and 2009, Fugard's liberal ideals about social progress were contradicted by the real crises of post-apartheid South Africa. A transition from 1990s optimism to post-millennial pessimism is explicitly charted in the character of Veronica between the plays *Valley Song* (1996) and its sequel *Coming Home* (2009). *Coming Home* is Fugard's first direct sequel, and it is a devastating one. The naive young singer Veronica is emblematic of the first post-apartheid generation in *Valley Song*. She is talented and sees an opportunity in the desegregated city, dreaming of a career as a singer. In *Coming Home*, Veronica returns home to the Karoo, as a single parent living with HIV/AIDS, having lived in a temporary camp where her husband was killed by thugs. *Coming Home* looks to the future via the character of Veronica's talented son, projecting

[57] van der Walt, Judy., 'Time to Tell His Story', *Cape Times,* 18 May 2004, p. 5 [Held at NELM Grahamstown].

the possibility the so-called 'born-free' generation will be able to break free and build a new way of life. The positive future imagined in *Valley Song* is deferred by the direction of the HIV/AIDS crisis. The intergenerational politics of both plays is emblematic: Veronica, more hopeful for the next generation than her grandfather was in *Valley Song*, must invest her own hopes into her son. Given the contemporary economic realities of HIV/AIDS treatment, it is suggested that Veronica's future is bleak, setting a more pessimistic tone for her son's journey than that established by the end of apartheid in 1994.

Methodology

From the beginning, my selection of texts and ways of reading have been influenced by the ways in which texts' political and philosophical traces affect and reflect post-apartheid contexts. In this methodology section, I outline the theories that underpin my reading strategies. By using a range of methods, including case studies and comparative analysis, I can closely analyse the development of political theatre in the post-millennial period, in a range of contexts. The legacies of apartheid are addressed in Chapters One and Two, while the potential futures of South African society are analysed in Chapters Three and Four.

Poststructuralism and deconstruction have a significant role as starting points for conceptualising texts within this thesis, by following the politicised method that Jacques Derrida turned to late in his career.[58] Derrida's political deconstructions are key starting points throughout: burial and spectrality (Chapter One), forgiveness (Chapter Two), friendship (Chapters Three and Four), and

[58] Glendinning, Simon., *Derrida: A Very Short Introduction,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

animal-human relationships (Chapter Four). Derrida's late work sought to integrate such concepts within a wider politicisation of deconstruction. These approaches are not programmatic, as Derrida outlines: 'All texts are different. One must never try to measure them 'on the same scale.' And never to read them 'with the same eye.' Each text calls for, so to speak, another 'eye.''[59] My readings exemplify the ways in which each text demonstrates South African political theatre's diversity in the democratic era. By broadening the definition of 'politics', concepts and texts which had hitherto been excluded from political discussion are placed within the context of South African political theatre.

As I introduced above, South African theatre in the post-1994 era has been criticised for being either apolitical or outmoded. Instead, the focus in this thesis is the innovative ways in which South African theatre-makers have represented aspects of post-apartheid life. Deconstruction is well-suited to this re-reading of the post-millennial theatre because, as Miki Flockemann argues: 'instead of lamenting the paucity of innovative new works which is somehow associated with the demise of old enemies, […] what are needed are "different" ways of reading both new and familiar texts.'[60] To take the examples of *London Road* and *The Snow Goose*, from Chapters Three and Four, their representations of friendship are read as countervailing relationships, within oppressive political contexts. Further, their stylistic focus on storytelling, rather than alternatives such as satire or visceral staging (as in Chapter Three), is read as a political strategy.

Earlier in this introduction I outlined the impact of cultural materialism and Marxist forms of literary theory on the study of South African literature. The focus

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[59] Derrida, Jacques., *Points...: Interviews, 1974 - 1994*, ed. by Elisabeth Weber, trans. by Peggy Kamuf et al. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995). p. 216.
[60] Flockemann, (2001), p. 25.

on politics and context are key starting points in my reading strategies. Materialist concepts such as ideology, power and resistance are particularly germane within the discussion of South African theatricality, past and present. The loose confederation of cultural producers making forms of art that resisted or called into question the apartheid system has, clearly, shifted with the cultural impact of the post-apartheid transformation of South Africa.

Mark Fortier argues that: 'A basic task of materialist theory is to understand the elaborate relations between language, literature and art, on the one hand, and society, history and the material world, on the other.'[61] My analysis of subjects ranging from burial, political satire, and the institutionalisation of theatre festivals are examples of materialist criticism, extended to the implications of the materiality of theatre itself on the stage and the ways in which theatre is a microcosm of the 'elaborate relations between' culture and context. The structure of the thesis, moving as it does between the discussion of legacies and futures, follows the implications of such materialism. Reading the post-apartheid in postmodern and postcolonial terms is achieved through the lens of materialist literary study popularised by figures like Terry Eagleton and the British cultural materialists.[62] Furthermore, Derrida's political turn with texts such as *Specters of Marx* exemplify how deconstruction and Marxist analysis have become intertwined.

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[61] Fortier, Mark., *Theory/Theatre: An Introduction*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 153.
[62] Eagleton, Terry., *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, (London: Routledge, 2002); Fortier, (2006): 'Terry Eagleton's stridently Marxist work has moved to a more flexible materialism', p. 157; 'Some materialist thinkers have tried to posit a materialism without a centre, […] cultural materialism, as practised in such works as Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield's *Political Shakespeare,* opens materialism onto a more heterogeneous, *ad hoc,* and non-systematized understanding of the interplay of cultural, economic and social forces.', p. 157.

South African theatre studies itself has played a role in the framing of contemporary theatre. Robert Kavanagh, for example, is both a playwright and a scholar. During the 1970s he founded Theatre Workshop '71, which made experimental political theatre. In the 1980s, Kavanagh published both his critical history *Theatre and Cultural Struggle in South Africa* (1985) and edited the important collection of plays *South African People's Plays* (1981).[63] Kavanagh's interdisciplinary work across scholarship and theatre-making exemplifies how the creation of political theatre was a critical process, in the sense of being both politically engaged and analytical. The importance of politicised forms of philosophical scholarship, namely cultural materialism, in conceptualising South African theatre continues in my thesis's attention to historical detail, and the mapping of networks of power and resistance. During the post-apartheid period, however, scholars have shifted from appraising the ways in which theatre-makers fit within the grand narratives of collective political movements, towards the ways in which contemporary theatre itself is a post-apartheid microcosm, symbolising fresh forms of political action:

> While in the past the [scholarly] emphasis has been on the ways in which theatre 'reflected' or served as a barometer of ideological and socio-political shifts, in the post-election period the emphasis seems more appropriately placed on the way performance events themselves foreground processes of transformation.[64]

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[63] Kavanagh, Robert Mshengu., *South African People's Plays*, (Oxford: Heinemann, 1981); -- *Theatre and Cultural Struggle* (London: Zed Books, 1985).
[64] Flockemann (2001), p. 28.

Loren Kruger writes of the post-apartheid dilemma of how 'to grapple with the conflicts arising with the falling-away of anti-apartheid certainties in the absence of radical social transformation'.[65] For scholars and artists alike, the post-apartheid period has introduced an ambivalence that contrasts with the former 'anti-apartheid certainties'. Scholars like Kruger have played an important part in the continual reconceptualisation of political theatre. Post-apartheid theatre, rather than leaving behind the social ethic of the apartheid-era scene, has developed so that the 'political' nature of the medium is implicit. Scholarship has been particularly important in emphasising the role of ambivalence in the interpretation of South African politics.

The topic of each chapter in this thesis reflects how the South African milieu is much more complicated and rich than the periodisation 'post-apartheid' suggests. Post-millennial studies like Yvette Hutchison and Anton Krueger's have integrated the analysis of the contemporary context with political drama. The field is much more than the polemical explanation of how impactful its subject is, echoing similar developments within South African literary studies.[66] Theatre remains, as it did during apartheid, a means of mapping the 'national imaginary'

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[65] Kruger, (1999), p. 21.

[66] Easton, Kai., and Derek Attridge (eds.), *Zoë Wicomb & the Translocal: Writing Scotland & South Africa*, (New York: Routledge, 2017). Take, for example, the diverse and rich work showcased in this edited collection, where the exploration of fictive writing and the spatialities of Scotland and South Africa are interwoven in a fashion that develops the (close) reading of an author in fresh and engaging directions and contexts, from fiction to exhibitions.; Van der Vlies, Andrew., 'The Archive, the Spectral, and Narrative Responsibility in Zoë Wicomb's *Playing in the Light*', *Journal of South African Studies*, 36.3, 583-598. Similarly, the impact of historicism has led to the reading of South African authors through the lens of book history. Van der Vlies, for example, integrates the perusal of the archive with the poststructural *Archive Fever* theory of Jacques Derrida (whose work's impact on this study is outlined below), in order to trace Wicomb's interrelation of ethics, haunting and narrative. We can contrast post-millennial criticism such as this with foundational work like Kavanagh, (1985).

of South African culture and politics that cannot be captured by the operations of official narratives such as 'newspapers and history books'.[67]

Postcolonial theory is key in providing a means of interpreting theatrical resistance and interpellation. The post-apartheid is, of course, its own very particular postcolonial context. Within the study of postcolonial theatre generally, South Africa is one of the most developed areas of research. As established by Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins's *Postcolonial Drama*, published in 1996, the anti-discursive nature of postcolonial and anti-colonial theatre is one of the key aspects that helps define postcolonial performance. Postcolonial theory presents a 'challenge [to] the canon of western art, a challenge which takes myriad forms, from outright rejection to reappropriation and reformulation.'[68] Postcolonialism provides its own lexicon for interrogating the multivalent nature of post-apartheid political theatre and performance. Postcolonial concepts of agency, spectrality, and resistance, in particular, are continually employed as frameworks for interpreting texts.

As Fortier outlines, 'deconstruction… is a reading process whereby the hidden and unacknowledged metaphysical assumptions (of truth, presence, identity, essence and so forth) and complicities of any particular text are unravelled from within and in the text's own terms.'[69] To use Fortier's metaphor, unravelling the post-apartheid interplay of past, present, future, of contemporary politics and historical injustice is both intellectually constructive and

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[67] Homann, Greg., 'Preamble', in Homann (ed.), *At This Stage: Plays from Post-apartheid South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009): 'South Africans continue to forge their new national imaginary after apartheid, and the role of theatre in that task is ongoing. In many ways, the theatrical canon, both performance-driven and literary, that became known during the apartheid era documented the country's fraught history far more aptly than that was allowed to be recorded in newspapers and history books'.
[68] Fortier p. 194.
[69] Ibid., p. 65.

deconstructive. Viewed from this differential perspective, South African theatrical writing and performance in recent years have been highly deconstructive, because the colonial ideology that dominates the past and present created forms of racial categorisation that are open to the reading processes of deconstruction. The poststructural perspective on theatre and literature can make sense of this dynamic because, as Fortier argues, 'The free play inherent in writing means that categorizations, identities, unities arising inevitably in western language and thought are always undermined by slippage.'[70] Literature, defined by Derrida as an institution free of censorship, has the ability to break down ideological barriers and speak freely: 'The institution of literature in the West, in its relatively modern form, is linked to an authorization to say everything, and doubtless too to the coming about of the modern idea of democracy'.[71] Derrida's association of democracy and literature is particularly important in terms of my methodological usage of deconstruction, as my reading strategies challenge the assumptions that limit the scope of post-apartheid democracy within theatre. Derrida was deeply interested in the inter-relation of concepts such as the politics of friendship, democracy, the state, the animal/human, cosmopolitanism, forgiveness and hospitality in this late period. Indeed, Derrida often used South Africa as an exemplary case or subject; his writing on apartheid and Mandela in the 1980s was joined by his analysis of the TRC in 'On Forgiveness', and of international politics in *Rogues*.[72] Derrida himself, a Jewish French-Algerian

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[70] Ibid: p. 64

[71] Derrida, Jacques., Derek Attridge (ed.), *Acts of Literature* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 37: 'Not that it depends on a democracy in place, but it seems inseparable to me from what calls forth a democracy, in the most open (and doubtless itself to come) sense of democracy.'

[72] Derrida, Jacques., 'The Laws of Reflection: Nelson Mandela, in Admiration', in *For Nelson Mandela*, ed. by Jacques Derrida and Mustapha Tlili, trans. by Mary Ann Caws and Isabelle Lorenz (New York: Seaver Books and Henry Holt, 1987), pp. 13-42; Derrida, Jacques., preface

citizen, was deeply aware of the lingual and textual nature of racism.[73] Derrida's focus in his later years on forms of responsibility and 'learning how to live (finally)'[74] are crucial to the politicisation of deconstruction. The exploration of freedom, underpinned by a sense of responsibility, is a key trait of South African theatre's political-aesthetics.[75]

W.B. Worthen summarises the traditional opposition in the methods of reading underpinning modern theatre studies:

> Stage vs. page, literature vs. theatre, text vs. performance: these simple oppositions have less to do with the relationship between writing and enactment than with power, with the ways that we authorize performance, ground its significance.[76]

Scholars like Hutchison and Kruger exemplify how South African theatre studies has not opposed 'text vs. performance' in the post-apartheid period, but instead

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by Simon Kritchley and Richard Kearney, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, ed. by Bernd Magnus and Stephen Cullenberg, trans. by Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 30.; Derrida, Jacques., *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 29.

[73] Derrida, Attridge (ed.), (1992): 'Racism was everywhere in Algeria at that time, it was running wild in all directions. Being Jewish and a victim of anti-semitism didn't spare one the anti-Arab racism I felt everywhere around me, in manifest or latent form. Literature, or a certain promise of 'being able to say everything,' was in any case the outline of what was calling me or signaling to me in the situation I was living in at that time, familial and social. But it was no doubt much more complicated and overdetermined than thinking and saying it in a few words makes it now. At the same time, I believe that very rapidly literature was also the experience of a dissatisfaction or a lack, an impatience.' (p. 39).

[74] Derrida, Jacques., *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, ed. by Bernd Magnus and Stephen Cullenberg, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 2006), p. xvi.

[75] Derrida, Attridge (ed.), (1992): 'In the end, the critico-political function of literature, in the West, remains very ambiguous. The freedom to say everything is a very powerful political weapon, but one which might immediately let itself be neutralized as a fiction. This revolutionary power can become very conservative. The writer can just as well be held to be irresponsible.', p. 38.; see Krueger, (2010).

[76] Worthen, W.B., 'Disciplines of the text: Sites of performance' in Bial, Henry., (ed.), *The Performance Studies Reader*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 12 (pp. 10-25).

broadened the definition of 'performance' itself to include public forms of performativity, pageantry and statecraft like the TRC. Early studies of Athol Fugard, such as Russell Vandenbroucke's, largely focused on the playwright's literary qualities;[77] scholars like Dennis Walder, who focuses on Fugard's collaborative methods of making theatre, have eroded the implicit opposition between the veteran as a literary figure and a theatre-maker. Worthen argues, above, that these oppositions reflect networks of 'power, […] the ways that we authorize performance.' Political studies of South Africa during apartheid focused on exploring theatre's own power, whether read in collections like Kavanagh's (1981) or viewed on stage at an anti-racist venue like The Market. Both text and performance have their 'significance' in evidencing the richness of South African theatre-making as a countervailing means of displaying diversity and enacting resistance to injustice.

Rather than engaging at length with the internal methodological politics of theatre studies, within this thesis I have analysed performance and staging, where appropriate, as a key aspect. My analysis looks at theatre in both text and performance as post-apartheid microcosms, for how the politics of South Africa is deconstructed in light of post-apartheid subjectivities.[78] Separating the study of theatre into a choice between text *versus* performance (and vice versa), as Worthen outlines, has a much greater impact on the status of the form than that of a semantic discussion: 'The desire to ground the meaning of theatrical

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[77] Vandenbroucke, Russell., *Truths the Hand Can Touch: The Theatre of Athol Fugard*, (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985).

[78] Pavis, Patrice., *Analyzing Performance; Theater, Dance, and Film*, trans. by David Williams (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003), p. 3. Pavis argues that a scholar should have access to a live performance, notes of that performance, a video, and a script if applicable. However, it is attendance of a live performance that distinguishes performance analysis from 'the *reconstruction* of past performances' (original italics).

production by attributing its authority either to the work or to the institutions of the stage afflicts both the popular and the academic conception of theatrical meaning.'[79] My extension of this methodological development is in opening out, where possible, the field of discussion to encompass the myriad forms of authorship that contribute to theatre.[80] Theatre-making also encompasses practices such as directorial styles, scenographies, and the technologies used in theatre (lighting, costume, set, puppetry etc.).[81] The political implications of creative collaboration is a key focus throughout the thesis. In Chapter Four, for instance, ethnographic interviews provide the testimony of practitioners who are, potentially, overlooked within theatre. Celebrity plays an implicit role in the soliciting of such opinions, as demonstrated in the readily available comments about figures like Fugard. By talking to practitioners about their history with theatre, and how their careers began, my ethnography is used to inform my wider analysis. The discussion of industry-wide trends, such as the increasing importance of festivals, is particularly enriched by the perspectives of those working within and through these post-apartheid processes.

Conceptual debates surrounding performance inform my analysis of South African theatre. Issues of authority and integrity are particularly key to the debates

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[79] Worthen, (2007), p. 13.

[80] Fortier approaches this issue, regarding the effect of the focus on 'drama' over 'theatre' in literary theory, arguing that: 'Unlike drama, theatre is not words on a page. Theatre is performance (though often the performance of a drama text) and entails not only words but space, actors, props, audience and the complex relations among these elements. Literary theory has often ignored all this.' (p. 4); For my purposes an inclusive perspective on the form has helped bring my attention, where I can, to elements of theatrical practice and design. Within my method, this binary of 'drama' and 'theatre' is less stable than Fortier's discourse suggests. Through focusing on texts on a case study basis, the value of focusing on 'words on a page' *and* 'performance' has become key to my process of selecting and analysing plays.

[81] Baugh, Christopher., *Theatre, Performance and Technology: The Development of Scenography in the Twentieth Century*, (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Balme, Christopher B., *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); McKinney, Joslin., and Philip Butterworth, *The Cambridge Introduction to Scenography*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

surrounding the established figure of Athol Fugard; and by extension, the interrelation of text and performance as a process, rather than as binary, is key to the differential discourse surrounding less 'established' plays covered by this thesis. The Derridean notion that 'there is nothing outside the text' grounds the discussion in terms of the specific case studies of how concepts and debates are fleshed out and reconfigured in light of post-apartheid concerns.

Outline of chapters

Chapter One concerns the post-millennial theatre of Athol Fugard. The analysis proceeds by tracing the themes of burial, haunting and spectrality, drawing on the theory of Jacques Derrida, through four of Fugard's plays. From the apartheid era, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972) and *The Island* (1973) are deconstructed via their representation of spectrality, addressing how their characters, resisting apartheid ideology, experience haunting. Sizwe Bansi's undermining of the racist economy is read through his exploitation of spectrality and the material flaws in apartheid's passbook policies. The relevance of burial within Fugard's theatre is explored via Foucault's theory of heterotopia, traced through the playwright's notebooks while conceiving of *The Train Driver* (2010). Fugard's 2010 play was promoted as a 'return' to the political themes and aesthetics that defined his apartheid era work (for instance *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*). The play demonstrates the continuing haunting nature of trauma, inequality and the spectral power of healing and the debt of responsibility. The play's hauntology is read as a way of reconciling and 'claiming' the oppressed, represented by the nameless occupants of the play's graveyard location and by the ghost who haunts the protagonist. The

unstaged play *The Abbess* (published in 2006), meanwhile, is linked through its depiction of the metaphysics and politics of burial and spectrality. *The Abbess*'s historical setting facilitates my analysis of spectrality and burial as related to creativity and resistance in the new South Africa. *The Train Driver* and *The Abbess* exemplify Fugard's creative exploration of the haunting of apartheid, and the potential that spectrality has as a means of exploring post-apartheid phenomena.

Chapter Two explores the tradition of the appropriation of classic, European texts in South African theatre. By reading the canon (and literature) through the concept of the rhizome, this chapter analyses dramatists' appropriations as strategically intervening within contemporary structures of power, oppression, and resistance to corruption. Pieter-Dirk Uys's history of using Shakespearean characters to mock the powerful provides a backdrop to his satirisation of *Macbeth*. *MacBeki* targets the post-apartheid politicians' farcical pursuit of power via the comedic retelling of President Thabo Mbeki's rise to the presidency and his fall from grace. Uys's self-reflexive recycling of the character of the Porter, and a retelling of the original ending, construct a pessimistic image of contemporary South African politics as being a corrupt farce that can never end.

Yaël Farber's syncretic play *Molora* is interrelated with the politics of trauma, family and vengeance. The retelling of Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, via a version of the 'Truth and Reconciliation', shifts forgiveness and reconciliation between South Africans from being a historical project, towards being a continual force within the country's postcolonial politics. Farber's recycling of ancient Greek characters and scenes from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are related

to the processes of transitional justice in a country shaped by trauma, guilt, and the choice between violence or peace.

Chapter Three centres on a single play, Nicholas Spagnoletti's *London Road*. The chapter deconstructs and politicises the central premise of the play, the friendship between the text's two characters Stella and Rosa. The politics of their friendship, following the theories of Jacques Derrida, are explored as countervailing the characters' experience of marginalisation and xenophobia. The characters exist in challenging circumstances by reflecting on living with HIV/AIDS and illness, crime, ageism, xenophobia and migrancy, gentrification and sexism, their friendship presents an alternative, critical form of political organisation. In this chapter I analyse a video of the play's performance alongside analysis of the published text.

Chapter Four outlines my fieldwork at the 2015 National Arts Festival (NAF) in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape. Theatre festivals have come to dominate the post-apartheid theatre industry in South Africa, and are integral to the career paths of practitioners. The National Arts Festival is a microcosm of the possibilities and inequalities present in the South African theatre industry. The marketisation of the arts via festivals is critiqued, given the hierarchical structures created by funding within the festival itself, and its influence on the industry. The NAF has accrued the status of a 'big audition' for a professional career in the arts. The chapter explores how, as exciting as the Festival is, there are open questions about the agency of artists within contemporary institutions. Interviews with members of the KB Theatre company provide personal, anecdotal evidence for discussing the impact and place of the Grahamstown Festival in the mid-2010s. *The Snow Goose* provides an example of the ways in which contemporary theatre

can interweave storytelling, politics and performance. The play's adaptation of Paul Gallico's novella exemplifies how South African theatre is politicised, as the marginalisation of a character from a British novel has resonances with xenophobia in South Africa. The representation of the animal-human provides a theoretical route into politicising the caring friendships depicted in the play. Performance analysis explores how the materiality of staging provides evidence for the chapter's political conceptualisation of the play's storytelling and characters. Finally, the chapter considers how, as discovered through interview, practitioners perceive recent theatre like *The Snow Goose* as being part of 'another phase' in local theatre, distinguished from the protest theatre of the past.

Chapter 1 – Burial and Spectrality in the Post-Millennial Theatre of Athol Fugard

A significant undercurrent within Athol Fugard's work since the year 2000 has been the representation of burial and ghosts. Two contemporary plays, in particular *The Abbess*[1] and his 2010 hit *The Train Driver*,[2] epitomise the philosophical and political anxieties, and potential, of spectrality and the cemetery. *The Abbess* and *The Train Driver* centre on the politics of burial and haunting, providing a focal point for reckoning with the past and future. I also draw on Fugard's landmark 1970s plays *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972) and *The Island* (1973), in order to establish the longevity of Fugard's thematic exploration of spectrality and haunting.[3] I argue that, since 2000, Fugard has represented post-apartheid South African society as being 'out of joint'; echoing Jacques Derrida's philosophy of hauntology and spectrality, Fugard's ghosts haunt the living, and pose ethical and political questions about how to live in relation to 'the other'.[4] This chapter utilises these key themes to develop a reading

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[1] Fugard, Athol., 'The Abbess', *South African Theatre Journal*, 20.1, (2006), 339-375; McDonald, Marianne., *The Craft of Athol Fugard: Space, Time, and Silence* (Los Angeles, CA.: Murasaki Press, 2012), p. 203: Sole theatrical reading 2004 at Fountain Theatre, Los Angeles; Fugard, Athol., *A Catholic Antigone* (2008) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kk8J7v13_2Y> [accessed 1 November 2018]. Partial reading by the author as part of Fugard's lecture 'A Catholic Antigone' in 2003, at The University of California at San Diego.

[2] Fugard, Athol., *The Train Driver and Other Plays*, ed. by Marianne McDonald, (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2012), pp. 1-47. The play toured to London and the United States, and played its part as the opening production of Eric Abraham's venue in Cape Town's District Six, The Fugard Theatre.

[3] Fugard, Athol., *Township Plays*, ed. by Dennis Walder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[4] A conceptualisation by Derrida that, itself, draws from his friend Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy. See below.

of this veteran playwright's political contribution to the post-apartheid milieu, a period of Fugard's career, and a set of texts, that has attracted scant study.[5] This chapter begins by tracing the themes of spectrality and haunting within Fugard's career, providing the context for the conceptualisation of *The Abbess* and *The Train Driver*. Derrida's theory of spectrality and hauntology is applied to the 'ghost' of apartheid, as represented by the trauma experienced by Roelf, the central character of *The Train Driver*. Further, Fugard's longer-term representation of South Africans as being haunted by the postcolonial experience is explained through readings of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island*. Next, the Chapter turns to conceptualising the importance of burial and the cemetery through Fugard's thematic exploration of the living's relationship with the dead. In turn, how hauntology provides a means of deconstructing the post-apartheid experience, and providing a means of reconciling with the realities of oppression, is analysed with regards to *The Train Driver*. Finally, the implications of despair and haunting are explored via *The Abbess*; the hold of the past on the present, and the characters' search for meaning in a bleak situation reflect on the contradictory role of change and oppression in post-apartheid South Africa. This Chapter explores why haunting and burial are pertinent themes in post-apartheid South Africa, developing traditional models of Fugard's theatre as 'witnessing' oppression towards the 'claiming' of the dead and ghostly as teaching the living about themselves in times of upheaval and despair.

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[5] See McDonald, *The Craft of Athol Fugard*, introductory material in Fugard, Athol., ed. by McDonald, (2012), 'Preface to *The Abbess*', *South African Theatre Journal*, 20.1, (2006), 334-338; Walder, Dennis., 'Remembering Trauma: Athol Fugard's *The Train Driver'*, *South African Theatre Journal*, 27.1, (2014), 32-41. Furthermore, while there is a fairly established lexicon created by specialists for discussing Fugard's work, such as the focus on witnessing, workshop methods, resistance etc., this chapter's usage of spectrality and burial is a fresh angle on Fugard, that fits, as stated, with a period of creative work that has been un- or under-studied.

Within this analysis there are several important intertextual links that criss-cross the period. Starting chronologically, *The Abbess* had its source in 1994, when Fugard purchased a CD of Hildegard of Bingen's music, which inspired him to find out about the twelfth century German abbess.[6] Hildegard lived a remarkable life contributing to Christian theology and music, as well as creating artwork and writing natural history. Hildegard, now recognised as a Saint by the Catholic Church, typifies Fugard's fascination with strong, rebellious, women. Through his long career Fugard has frequently recycled themes, leading to strands in his work from one period to the next. The character of Antigone, for example, has appeared in various forms from the 1960s and into the present.[7] Fugard's lecture-cum-reading 'A Catholic Antigone', delivered in 2003, weaves autobiography with the exploration of *The Abbess*'s themes, in particular how the play connects to the rest of his career. Fugard explores the differences between the rebellion of Antigone against the state of King Creon and the crisis dramatised in *The Abbess*.

The Train Driver, meanwhile, also had its genesis in the early 2000s, despite its production at the end of the decade. Fugard's notebooks from 11th-30th June 2002, published for the promotion of *The Train Driver,* are a key starting point.[8] Fugard had read the online report in the newspaper *Mail&Guardian* a year and a half earlier, in December 2000, of the suicide of the destitute Pumla Lolwana, a

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[6] McDonald, (2012), p. 198.

[7] Both with the Serpent Players in the mid-1960s and eventually in *The Island*'s play-within-a-play, written with John Kani and Winston Ntshona. The workshopped plays' links to the chapter's themes are analysed below.

[8] Fugard, Athol., 'Pages from a Notebook' (2000), in *The Train Driver and Other Plays*, ed. by Marianne McDonald, (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2012), pp. 175-213. Note that these Notebooks are wrongly dated as the year 2000 in this edition; Fugard, Athol., 'Appointment with Despair: Pages from a Writer's Notebook', *American Theatre,* (November 2012), pp. 26-28, 73-76. Note that the *American Theatre* version of this text is heavily edited for the magazine format, and elides several key sections together. Thus, 'Pages from a Notebook' is the 'definitive' published version.

mother who took her children onto railway tracks and stood in front of an oncoming train.[9] Fugard recalls that: 'I immediately recognized hers as one of those stories I would have an appointment with some day'.[10] The story of Pumla Lolwana is represented in *The Train Driver* as a mother wearing a 'Red Doek', the detail which the traumatised train driver latches onto when assigning her a name. But, crucially, Red Doek is *never* named otherwise, a naming that continually conjures the haunting image of her standing on the tracks with her baby, poised between a hopeless life and a nameless death. Having abandoned attempts to write a play from Lolwana's perspective, Fugard found the persona of the unnamed train driver the most productive route in communing with the spirit he had found in the newspaper story. Discussing the writing process, Fugard said: 'I didn't want to use her name, I didn't want to use her story. The only thing I used was an image of a woman with a child'.[11] It is striking that this image is one that resembles a spectre: an image that powerfully indicts those who heed its hauntological statement about the radical failure of post-apartheid South Africa to (truly) spread 'hope'. There is a religiosity to this image too, conjuring the Christian painterly motif of 'The Madonna and Child', explaining the intense spiritual impact of this mental image on Roelf.[12]

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[9] Fugard, 'Pages from a Notebook' (2000), p. 176, 178.

[10] Taking an 'appointment' is a strategy that Fugard uses to explain his career-long attraction to fragmentary stories of the destitute, as bearing 'witness', a phrase that has greatly informed the critical, postcolonial biographies by Dennis Walder. This quotation is also an example of how Fugard himself has actively pointed out threads in his career, contributing to the vast amount of biographical information about his creative life, and helping to create the authorial image of Fugard that dominates so much of the specialist scholarship.

[11] Fugard, Athol., (et al.) *Athol Fugard: 'The Play-Writing Process'* (2008) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpDvg8D5SlA> [accessed 1 November 2018].

[12] Further, Fugard's own mother is a profound influence in his work. The image of the mother and child appears in other Fugard works. Lena and her stillborn child in *Boesman and Lena*; the baby and mother in the novel and film of *Tsotsi*; Elsa and the mother she meets on the highway in *The Road to Mecca*. This is a theme worthy of in-depth study in itself.

Later in his entries, Fugard pivots between three intertextual memories: the *revenant* (haunting) influence of *Antigone*, the tragedy of Pumla Lolwana's story, narrativised in the South African press, and 'another personal connection […] one going back fifty years to London where my wife Sheila and I are in the Everyman's Cinema in Hampstead […] watching [Kon Ichikawa's 1956 film] *The Burmese Harp*.'[13] The imagery of the devastation of war, of 'a Japanese Buddhist monk traveling through a war-ravaged Burmese landscape, burying the bodies […] left to rot on the battlefields', made a 'deep…impression' that Fugard scarcely appreciated at the time. And yet, it was also a 'deeply religious work of art', a feeling that has developed over that half-century to be 'the genesis of a theme – burying the dead – which has been there in my work from fairly early on and very much so in recent years'.[14] While Fugard does not state this in his notebook, it seems incredibly likely that *The Abbess* was on his mind, too; for not only is a central character of *The Burmese Harp* a (Buddhist) monk, but the collective camaraderie and healing power of music and the power of burial also resonate strongly with the plot of *The Abbess*.[15] Both Ichikawa's film and Fugard's play represent the unitary power of music and collective singing; the characters must confront their mortality and the unsettling presence of bodies through finding joy in life. One of the soldiers in Ichikawa's film remembers that, 'The songs encouraged us to come to; through suffering and

[13] 'Pages from a Notebook' p. 210. An example of this would be the involvement of South African troops in Namibia and Angola, as addressed in *Playland* (1993).
[14] 'Pages from a Notebook', p. 210
[15] Further, Fugard records his weekly visits in 'Pages from a Notebook' to a Thai Buddhist monastery near to his Californian home. The Buddhist chanting became a way of inciting the names of Pumla Lolwana and her children. Perhaps Fugard felt that by dedicating his play to Lolwana, by dramatising the dilemma of Roelf Visagie as the traumatised spectator he was able to preserve the journey that he went through in forming the sentiments into a play. Of course, the role of a monastic organisation has echoes of his then-active interest in *The Abbess* as a text.

sorrows.'[16] Fugard's tentative language, that 'Now I see it [*The Burmese Harp*] as possibly the genesis of a theme', provides insight into his introspective practice, the adverb 'possibly' carrying the weight of intertextual history that Fugard loads onto this memory of a trip to the cinema.[17]

Themes of haunting and spectrality have preoccupied many poststructural literary critics since the 1994 English translation of Jacques Derrida's *Spectres de Marx*.[18] As Colin Davies summarises,

> Hauntology is part of an endeavour to keep raising the stakes of literary study, to make it a place where we can interrogate our relation to the dead, examine the elusive identities of the living, and explore the boundaries between the thought and the unthought. The ghost becomes a focus for competing epistemological and ethical positions.[19]

In this chapter I consider the ways in which Fugard's spectres are reflective of the contradictory nature of post-apartheid South Africa, standing as they do on the boundaries of life and death, the material and the ideal. The establishment of democracy on an institutional level has been stymied by the haunting role of the past and the enduring, evolving nature of oppression despite constitutional change. *The Abbess*'s spectres are the 'focus' for debates about the continuing efficacy of

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[16] Kon Ichikawa., *The Burmese Harp (1956) song scene english sub* [sic] (2011) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bmJ_z50LHXc> [accessed 16 December 2017].
[17] 'Ghost Dance', dir. by Ken McMullen (The Other Cinema, 1983). Features Derrida prominently, regarding the relationship between the medium of film and the phenomenon of ghosts and haunting.
[18] Original French (1993). Derrida, Jacques., *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, ed. by Bernd Magnus and Stephen Cullenberg, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 2006).
[19] Davis, Colin., '*État Présent:* Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms', *French Studies*, 59.3, (2005), 373-379 (p. 379.)

individual rebellion and ethical resistance. The spectre in *The Train Driver* challenges the haunted railway worker's sense of being and identity, having experienced a feeling of devastation and connection with someone whose death he cannot help but feel responsible for, and whose suicidal choice challenges his sense of complacency about how much South Africa has changed. The existential anxieties produced by being haunted stem from the dead proving that 'living' identity is 'elusive' and as transient as the dead.[20] Fugard's central characters, in their differing contexts, have their assumptions about life and what they know about life challenged by the dead.

Derrida's spectre is not something to be feared or banished; it is to be embraced, because it captures the paradoxical relationship between a supposedly finalised, post-Soviet 'end of history'[21], and the ghost of Marxism not-yet-laid-to-rest. *Specters of Marx* contrasts the Marxist teleology offered by dialectical materialism's interpretation of class struggle with that offered by the neo-conservative and liberal democratic teleology. Derrida's deconstruction of Marxism via metaphysics and textuality laid the groundwork for his political 'turn' in the late 1980s onwards. Derrida's hauntology playfully fuses his deconstructive philosophy of deferral and alterity, as a reading of ontology and metaphysics, to propose a 'new international' that radicalises hegemonic models of democracy.[22] At its heart, Derrida's hauntology engages the ethical demands of Emmanuel Levinas's insistence on

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Fukuyama, Francis., *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin, 1992). In Francis Fukuyama's theory of the 'end of history' read the collapse of the Soviet system as proof of neoliberal economies' inherent moral and economic superiority.

[22] It is worthwhile noting that the 1994 general elections in South Africa emerged out of this discourse on the proper meaning of 'democracy', buttressed by economic organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and political schools of thought associated with Fukuyama and other triumphalist liberal-democratic and neoconservative thinkers, who were publicly prominent in the aftermath and tail-end of the Cold War.

living through the other: 'Hauntology supplants its near-homonym ontology, replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive.'[23] The dead cast an 'ethical injunction' akin to the 'Levinasian Other' because they force the living to confront life's possibilities and responsibilities.[24] Derrida's lead example of a spectral injunction comes from the Ghost in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, who commands the Prince to overthrow the guilty King and restore justice to Denmark. The ghost forces us to ask how we can '*learn to live*', a process which Derrida read as leading to new kinds of revolutionary thinking about justice, led by the 'death' of the Soviet system and the rereading of Marx.[25]

Ghosts are tricky subjects because, being dead (and, possibly, buried), they are beyond reality (beyond ontology), deconstructing the boundaries between the living and spectral. The ghosts are able to 'speak' in *The Abbess*, privately addressing and unsettling the haunted Abbess; in *The Train Driver* the spectre appears through the continually returning memory of the suicide on the railway tracks. Roelf is unable to find Red Doek, but he continually feels her presence. Through their status as *revenant*, ghosts are always non-silent, because they place demands on the living.[26] They are beings without being (and thus, the transition from *ont*ology to *haunt*ology is made). Derrida's opening 'Exordium' provides the most succinct summation of how ghosts challenge the living to 'learn how to live finally' and create an ethics that is able to bridge the demands of the living and the dead:[27]

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[23] Davis, (2005), p. 379.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. xvi, original italics.
[26] That which returns (the French term for ghosts that Derrida puts at the heart of his deconstruction),
[27] This forms the opening line of Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. xvi, and of course Derrida and Birnbaum's text (2007), see fn. 23.

> This is, therefore, a strange commitment, both impossible and necessary, for a living being supposed to be alive […] If it — learning to live — remains to be done, it can happen only between life and death. Neither in life nor in death *alone*. What happens between two, and between all the 'two's'[28] one likes, such as between life and death, can only *maintain itself* with some ghost, can only *talk with* or *about* some ghost.[29]

The philosophical function of ghosts forms a striking comparison with Fugard's expansion of his subterranean 'theme [of] burying the dead' during the 2000s.[30] Derrida, long accused within philosophical circles of being apolitical, used *Specters of Marx* to make his connections to his post-Marxist peers within the French academy explicit, all built on the strange, deconstructive encounter between Shakespeare and Marx.[31] During his political turn Derrida wrote extensively about apartheid South Africa, as shown in his essays on Mandela and racism.[32] *Specters* was dedicated to the Communist Party of South Africa's leader Chris Hani,

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[28] Note that this possessive apostrophe is a correct quotation; indeed, this grammar reflects the ethical theme of possessing the ghost, being able to 'talk with or about some ghost'.
[29] Ibid. xvii.
[30] Fugard, 'Pages from a Notebook', (2000), p. 210.
[31] And, with that, the connections between Marx and the egoist Max Stirner, whose own theory of the individual conquering their 'spooks', or social constraints, contrasts with Derrida's embrace, and Marx's fear of the ghost.; Derrida, Jacques., 'Racism's Last Word', trans. by Peggy Kamuf, *Critical Inquiry*, 12, (Autumn 1985), 290-299.
Specters of Marx's monographic turn was prefigured by Derrida's writing about South Africa, in particular – his 1985 essay.
[32] Derrida, Jacques., 'The Laws of Reflection: Nelson Mandela, in Admiration', in *For Nelson Mandela*, ed. by Jacques Derrida and Mustapha Tlili, trans. by Mary Ann Caws and Isabelle Lorenz (New York: Seaver Books and Henry Holt, 1987), pp. 13-42.

assassinated in 1993 by far-right activists. The dedication argues that apartheid, like a ghost, is a past *and* present 'metonymy' of epistemic, 'historic violence'.[33]

Fast-forward to 2010, Fugard's play *The Train Driver* presents the rather ordinary, employed, white South African character Roelf Visagie. Visagie is haunted by the death of a woman and child he cannot even name. The traumatic visions of the woman compel him to seek her grave to face his feelings of responsibility and reconcile his lack of agency. Roelf must deal with the factuality of the burial of 'Red Doek' (the name that he and the gravedigger assign to the dead mother[34]), and the metaphysics of her nightly wandering as a ghost. Searching for the graveyard allows Roelf to 'explore the boundaries between the thought and the unthought' politics of living in post-apartheid society, a hauntological exercise that introduces him to a marginalised world he naively thought he understood.[35] Whether Roelf believes in the ghost of Red Doek matters not, it is his realisation of the injustice and politics of haunting that gives the ghost its power over him.[36] Roelf epitomises the middle- or working-class that stands on the margins of wealth and powerlessness in neoliberal consumer societies.

The haunts of Fugard's ghosts in *The Abbess* and *The Train Driver*, however, could not be more different, in terms of their time and place (the twelfth century,

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[33] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. xiv; The paradox of post-apartheid South Africa, with the alliance of the ANC, Communists and Trade Unionists coming to power, offered both a counter-narrative to the anti-socialist thought of neo-conservatives like Fukuyama, and a confirmation of neoliberal power, with the revolutionary coalition's defanging in the negotiated revolution. Derrida's dedication was written in the centre of this storm, with Hani having given 'up important responsibiltiies' as an ANC leader to 'devote himself once again to a minority Communist Party riddled with contradictions.' (ibid: xv)

[34] There is an uncanny relationship between Red Doek and Pumla Lolwana that speaks to the haunting effect of Lolwana's very real tragedy on the play's representation of burial and trauma.

[35] Davis, Colin., (2005), p. 379.

[36] Ibid.: 'Hauntology is thus related to, and represents a new aspect of, the ethical turn of deconstruction which has been palpable for at least two decades. It has nothing to do with whether or not one believes in ghosts', p. 373.

Benedictine community of Hildegard's independent convent at Rupertsberg; a squatter camp in Port Elizabeth, deep into the post-apartheid, 'new' South Africa).[37] And yet, both are about two (diverse) characters dealing with their ethical responsibility to other beings. In a sense, the ghost empowers both *The Train Driver* and its intertext *The Abbess* to range across space, addressing immense philosophical problems: 1) The rights of the individual as realised in post-apartheid South Africa, 2) the culpability of the state and society for the destitute, and 3) the need to relate to the (Levinasian) other via the ghost.[38] Derrida, in the final interview before his death, definitively presented hauntology as a way of reconciling alternative propositions to contemporary capitalism, and of moving 'beyond' them to a new type of politics.[39]

In considering the subject matter of his plays, it is important to note that *The Abbess* was not the first time that Fugard focused on a non-South African subject, or on a historical figure; but by going 'beyond', to paraphrase Derrida, the boundaries of the autobiography Fugard made an intervention akin to Bertolt Brecht's historical dramas like *The Life of Galileo*.[40] The character of Hildegard, The Abbess, uncannily represents both a historical figure and a kind of cipher for Fugard as an aging, respected artist constantly facing new challenges to his sense of

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[37] 'Haunt' of course is a word that can refer to a personal experience, but also to the space that is associated with the spectre. One of the key critical influences on analyses of spectrality, Freud's 'The Uncanny', of course, has at its root the 'unhomely' (*das unheimlich)*.

[38] I.e. The rights of the individual, the culpability of the state, and the need to relate to the (Levinasian) other.

[39] Derrida, Jacques., and Jean Birnbaum, *Learning to Live Finally: The last interview,* trans. by Pascal-Anne Bruit and Michael Nass, (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

[40] Brecht, Bertolt., *The Life of Galileo*, ed. by Hugh Rorrison, trans. by John Willett, (London: Metheun, 1986). Brecht's play also stages a conflict with the Roman Catholic church and an exceptional individual. Fugard's interest in Brecht was formative in his early-career, in the 1950s-60s, alongside Samuel Beckett's influence.

ethics.[41] *The Abbess* and *The Train Driver* do more than simply recap enduring themes within Fugard's work for a post-apartheid audience. However, while ghosts and burials are a theme in Fugard's *oeuvre*, the specificity of these hauntings is shown in how strongly they contrast to one another. Certain patterns remain, however, in terms of how the characters are isolated and challenged by the ethical injunction of the spectres they encounter (The Abbess, alone, has her living light as a connection to God; Roelf, alone, understands what it was like to see Red Doek and her child die on the tracks).

The differing manifestations of the dead and buried are focal points in Fugard's plays for incisive questions about how to live as South Africans. *The Abbess* and *The Train Driver* place their central characters on the edge, unsettling their everyday lives to the point where the things that allow them to make sense of their lives are the ghosts that haunt them. Roelf's dilemma is about the relationship 'between' him and his train, and the people who represent his first 'hit'.[42] The Abbess's connection with God, through the voice of her 'living light', comes into conflict with the earthly politics of the Church, summoning the spectres of her dead advisor Volmar, and her lost 'daughter' Richardis von Stade.

The presence of ghosts is a theme that intersects several of Fugard's post-apartheid plays, but it is also a key point of contention within enduring apartheid-era work, namely the workshop play *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*. Sizwe Bansi lives *as* a ghost to exploit the apartheid system; The Abbess' phantoms expose her suppressed

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[41]As rendered in her own theological and musical writings and in the various letters that have been published in a huge scholarly boom of interest at the tail-end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century. Take the argument and structure of Fugard, 'A Catholic Antigone' as evidence of Fugard's historical-cum-metatextual mode.

[42] Fugard, Athol., 'Pages from a Notebook' (2000). Fugard found when writing *The Train Driver* that the trauma of the 'first hit' is an inevitable, traumatising rite of passage for Cape Town's train drivers, p. 189.

feelings of isolation and force her to stand by her faith; Roelf Visagie learns the therapeutic possibility of 'claiming' his connection with the mother whose despair led her to die under his train. Fugard's differing interpretations of ghostly experience allow his characters to escape the boundaries of conventional experience and access new forms of knowledge which challenge their determination to live through an unjust situation. The dead become key focal points for each characters to make life choices which grapple with their place within society and politics.

1.2 The ghost within apartheid

> MAN. I'm afraid. How do I get used to Robert? How do I live as another man's ghost?
>
> BUNTU. Wasn't Sizwe Bansi a ghost?[43]

The 1972 workshop play *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* revolves around the conflict of how to live a meaningful life in the racist capitalist system of apartheid. To escape the life of a fugitive, unable to work in the industrial metropolis of Port Elizabeth under his real name because of the passbook system,[44] the migrant worker Sizwe Bansi[45] must declare himself dead, to 'live as another man's ghost'. Sizwe must trade

[43] Fugard, Kani and Ntshona, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, in Athol Fugard, *Township Plays*, p. 185.
[44] The passbook system was an elaborate work permit system designed to control where individuals racially classified as 'non-whites' were allowed to work in the apartheid-era Republic of South Africa. The passbook was the focus for protests at the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960, which motivated critical and dissident voices like Fugard to intensify their activism. Fugard and his wife, Sheila, moved back to South Africa from London in response to the Massacre. It is heavily implied in the workshop play *The Island* that Winston is jailed as a political prisoner for burning his passbook, probably at Sharpeville.
[45] 'African Jim', [a.k.a. *Jim Comes to Jo'burg*], dir. by Donald Swanson, (Apex, 1949). Bansi is part of a trope in South African culture, related to this 1949 film, of a confused and well-meaning worker from a rural areas attempting to ingratiate themselves in urban life. Fugard's first successful play, *No-Good Friday* (1958), is also part of this milieu (published in Fugard, *Township Plays*, (1999)).

passbooks with the entitled worker Robert Zwelinzima, lying dead in the street, and surrender his identity. It is a compromise that hinges on the inadequacies of the ruling ideology's bureaucratic system. The apartheid state's control of labour power becomes a technical flaw because the textuality of the passbook can be exploited by switching the identification's photograph. He burns the material summation of his identity within the apartheid economy when Buntu, Sizwe's streetwise companion, burns Sizwe's passbook. This work of textual immolation introduces Sizwe into a new economy where his true self and the ghost of Robert Zwelinzima are one and the same. Buntu encourages him to exploit the spectral nature of South African capitalism: '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!'[46] *Sizwe Bansi* connects the ontology of working in South Africa's apartheid economy with the performative hauntology of living as a wage slave. Sizwe's individual struggle to survive in the impersonal and mercilessly corrupt system, with his worries about his wife and children, becomes a kind of rebellion in the name of the collectively oppressed.[47] The apartheid system creates a proletariat who are denied basic dignity, having 'turned us into' ghosts. The play's impassioned analytical response to apartheid is a theatrical exercise in hauntology; the racist capitalism imposed by

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[46] *Sizwe Bansi*, p. 185.

[47] Marx, Karl., and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848), Preamble, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm> [accessed 1 October 2018] (Translated by Samuel Moore and Friedrich Engels)
Derrida's *Specters of Marx* takes as its starting point the opening of *The Communist Manifesto*: 'a spectre is haunting Europe, the spectre of communism.' The manifesto of Marx and Engels is based on the idea of a collective party political movement. To draw an analogy, Bansi's individual struggles spoke to the collective platform offered by the banned, anti-apartheid political parties, most prominently the African National Congress and South African Communist Party, both of which were founded on socialist and Marxist political footings. As shown by the changes in government ideology brought into effect by the 1994 South African constitution, the idea of a 'non-racial' South Africa was one prominent spectre haunting the Republic's white rulers.

the government rests on the spectrality of labour value, as illustrated by Sizwe's encounters with the state and his desperation to enter into industrial wage slavery.

Sizwe Bansi might 'die', but in the process, Buntu reflects, Robert comes alive (temporarily), passing his luck to Bansi and his family through the revenant power of the ghost.[48] Buntu sees this stroke of luck as divine intervention for both men: '*he's* alive again. Bloody miracle, man.'[49] Robert's life can continue to have meaning, and Sizwe's family can be supported by the industrial wages obtainable through the new passbook. The performance will last so long as Sizwe evades the forensic trouble of police interference –fingerprints will dispel the ghostly identity and reality will return. Sizwe must be prepared to lose his new found security, an eventuality that is painfully inevitable because, as Bansi says, 'Our skin is trouble' in the South African police state.[50] And as such the hauntological, uncanny doubling of Robert/Sizwe is synthesized.[51] *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* is not a text about being scared of ghosts; rather it encouraged apartheid era audiences to recognize the impermanence of dignity in a society dictated entirely by racial ideology.[52]

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[48] Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1971). The concept of 'luck' used here is adapted from the concept elaborated by the egalitarian philosopher John Rawls, who centers his ideas on social justice in *A Theory of Justice* around the idea of the 'luck' of a citizen's social standing, which coincidentally was originally published around the same time as *Sizwe Bansi* and *The Island*'s production, in 1971 (and revised later).

[49] Fugard., *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, p. 190, original italics.

[50] Ibid. p. 191. The role of the security police is pulled apart further in Chapter Two; what Styles fears is the use of forensic, finger print testing combining with the general prejudice shown by police officers, which would expose Bansi's fraud.

[51] When the audience first meets the character he introduces himself as Robert Zwelinzima at Styles' photographic studio. And yet, we soon find out his name is also Sizwe Bansi. The influence of existentialism leads to a blurring in identities around these names. Relatedly, the dual role of Styles/Buntu is a role that links the two halves of the performance.

[52] N.b. this conceit depended on the audience. The workshop plays were intended for playing to both white and non-white audiences. Famously, at the St Stephen's Church Hall in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, the performance was halted by the township's audience, leading to a political meeting-style debate about whether Bansi should go through with the passbook scheme.

Sizwe Bansi's dilemma of living *as* a ghost, in order to deal with the painfully 'real' existence of working for the accumulation of white capital, poses questions about the nature of freedom being pursued in the play. Sizwe, as Robert, goes to the township photography studio of Styles, dressed in all his finery. His nervousness becomes clear in his letter to his wife, inscribing his rebellion, as he tells her of his clandestine plan to earn money for their family at the Feltex plant by posing as Robert. Winston Ntshona and John Kani themselves gave up industrial jobs to become professional actors, so as to work with Fugard. In order to do so, they had to pose as Fugard's domestic servants within the passbook system.[53] The creative process of making professional, illegal theatre was a dissident form of labour. Like the other workshopped plays helmed by Fugard, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* was a self-reflexive exercise about the challenge posed by acting and theatre-making to ruling ideology.

Sizwe Bansi is Dead, as a precursor to *The Abbess* and *The Train Driver*, also depicts tensions around burial and death. The savvy Buntu tells Sizwe about attending the funeral of Outa Jacob, an acquaintance. Buntu is trying to convince Sizwe of the need to do anything in order to succeed in the city. Adopting the cadence and tone of the 'sermons at the graveside', he arrives at the hard truth of his 'sermon':

> BUNTU. […] No matter how hard-arsed the boer on this farm wants to be, he cannot move Outa Jacob. He has reached Home. [Pause.] That's it, brother. The only time we'll find peace is when they dig a hole for

[53] Walder, Dennis., 'Introduction', in Fugard, *Township Plays*, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

> us and press our face into the earth. [Putting on his coat.] Ag, to hell with it. If we go on much longer we'll do the digging for them.[54]

For the dispossessed, the burial place becomes a kind of eternal home, something that trumps the property of any racial 'superior'. Through his burial Outa Jacob wins a lasting, if Pyrrhic, victory over the 'hard-arsed' white farmer. Buntu, of course, is the one who cooks up the scheme for Sizwe to defy life and death. The metaphor of 'digging', here, is one that symbolises both defiance and service of white power; rising out of the metaphorical grave, as a ghost, is a potential route of rebellion.

This sense of defiance in the face of oppressive incarceration and political annihilation runs into *The Island*, workshopped and toured at the same time as *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*. The play begins with an absurdist scene of digging, the laborious action required to make burials. Under the aegis of the guard Hodoshe, the Afrikaner carrion fly, the men toil on-and-on, a la Sisyphus.[55] In workshopping *The Island*, Winston Ntshona and John Kani created characters named after themselves, as a commentary on the intentionally provocative act of performing as two of Robben Island's political prisoners. 'John' is inspired to adapt *Antigone* for the prison stage, a play that centres, of course, on the conflict over the burial of Polynices. The star will be the less-than-confident 'Winston'. John is (unreliably)

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[54] *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, p. 175.

[55] Because it was illegal to critique Robben Island, the original performance had to obliquely refer to it. An alternative title for the play was *Die Hodoshe Span* ('The Hodoshe Team'), as a reference to a notorious prison guard nicknamed Hodoshe, and the brutal shift that he presided over in the prisoners' daily labour. The pointlessness of this labour made the tasks absurd – such as the opening sequence in *The Island*, where John and Winston must shovel sand into a wheelbarrow, swap places with their fellow prisoner and dump the contents of their wheelbarrows back onto the ground, in an endless cycle. Fisher, Iain., *Athol Fugard glossary* (2012) <http://www.iainfisher.com/fugard/fugard-glossary.html> [accessed 1 November 2018]: 'Hodoshe is a Xhosa word for a carrion fly, which lays its eggs in dead bodies. So Hodoshe became the nickname of a hated prison guard. John and Winston are on the team of Hodoshe. (Afrikaans/Xhosa)'.

informed by the warden of the prison that his appeal has been successful, and that he is to be released. The performance of *Antigone* comes into focus as a final struggle for the characters to share, and as an opportunity to attack the cultural underpinning of white European 'superiority'. In the classical story, Antigone believes that the state must not interfere with her burial of her treasonous brother Polynices. Thus, in Antigone's view, the wishes of the family are paramount; her uncle, the new King Creon, staunchly represents the interests of the law. In Sophocles' narrative, Creon is thwarted of any kind of victory, because despite Creon having a change of heart, Antigone commits suicide. Teiresias castigates Creon:

> You buried one who should have remained alive on the earth. You put in a tomb a living being, while you kept unburied a corpse which belongs to the gods below. You should not have done this, and your violation has also polluted the gods above. Now you can never escape the avenging furies of hell, and they have set an ambush for you.[56]

Winston, through his prison performance of *Antigone*, has learned to adapt in order to endure the psychological burden of the state's oppression, and to accept his personal relationship to the collective 'struggle' movement.[57] The injunction imposed on Antigone means not being allowed to bury her brother; Antigone is imprisoned because she contradicts the King's authority. Before Creon can pardon her following sentencing, having had a change of heart, Antigone commits suicide.

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[56] Sophocles., *Antigone: Full Text and Introduction*, trans. by Marianne McDonald., (Nick Hern Books: Kindle Edition), Kindle Locations 715-717.

[57] These burdens cause Winston to have an existential crisis, with the play-within-a-play acting as a denouement. The performativity of the character's conflict is, perhaps, what has allowed *The Island* to survive beyond the 'protest theatre' movement (as with *Sizwe Bansi*), forming a part of the postcolonial South African 'canon'.

In contrast, in improvised dialogue that Africanizes Antigone, Winston accepts his (potentially life-long) incarceration, his sealing, on Robben Island. Winston chooses to accept the scant agency found in being a political prisoner, representing an alternative to the unjust state.[58] Winston accepts the absurd theatricality of his imprisonment. The situation of the South African prisoners may be analogous to Sophocles' protagonist, but John and Winston are defined by apartheid rather than their royal bloodlines. The status of being a lifelong prisoner is akin to being a ghost. Faced with the absurdity of their never-ending experience of labour the incarcerated John and Winston struggle with the isolation imposed by their exiling to 'the island'. Their exile on the site of Robben Island is akin to their burial, cast away from those who mourn their absence.

1.3 Burial: claiming and hiding the dead

> 'They throw in Drummer Hodge, to rest
>
> Uncoffined— just as found:
>
> His landmark is a kopje-crest
>
> That breaks the veldt around;
>
> And foreign constellations west

[58] Arena, BBC., (1994), *Voices from the Island* (2018) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b0074rmv/arena-voices-from-the-island> [accessed 1 November 2018]. The struggle, effectively, continued within the prison. As Nelson Mandela said, 'There was a raging debate right from the beginning. Some said, 'Let's treat these people as human beings. It has happened on odd occasions that people who've been prisoners are released and they've become heads of governments. And they're very important people. Let us prepare for that day. Let's give them newspapers, let us allow them radios.' But there were others who said, 'look, we must not take that risk. What we must do is to get these people to understand that opposing white supremacy is a disaster for them.' Our treatment was intended to make them never again to resist the white supremacy.' (57:22-58:13).

Each night above his mound.'

Thomas Hardy, Drummer Hodge (1899)[59]

In 1899, at the beginning of the Anglo-Boer War, Thomas Hardy wrote 'Drummer Hodge', a poem that has come to define his late period. The poem's sentiment, about the death of youth and the cosmic nature of life and death, was opposed to the aggressively jingoistic mood that had captured the British public and literary establishment in reaction to the South African conflict.[60] The imagined burial of a British soldier in the South African *veld* sparks the poem's critique of rhetorical aggression. Known only as Drummer Hodge, the poem conveys a pastoral voice who is ultimately defined by his final resting place. The image of Hodge is 'claimed' by the Karoo environment. Around the burial of Hodge tensions around nationalism, jingoism and war congregate and dissipate, with the poem written as a part of a critique of the militaristic school of thought in late Victorian Britain. The possessiveness of claiming, or being claimed, reinforces the empathic roots of the politics of burial.

A century later, fuelled by the existential contradictions of the post-apartheid, the problem posed by burial and interment is a key theme that connects *The Abbess* to *The Train Driver*. As typical for Fugard, these plays bring the characters' private subjective struggles into the heterotopic space of the theatre. Indeed, Foucault's notion of heterotopia is an important concept, because it encompasses and connects discussions of the stage and the graveyards that are reified on it through

[59] Boehmer, Elleke., (ed.) *Empire Writing: An Anthology of Colonial Literature 1870-1918*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) Kindle Edition, p. 282 – stanza I.
[60] See Boehmer, for further examples.

scenographic craft.[61] Reflecting the historical contrast of these plays' cemeteries, Rupertsberg abbey is a monastic sanctuary and place of power, filled with a chorus of angelic voices, while the Port Elizabeth graveyard is menaced by stray dogs and thugs.[62] As such, there is an unsettling difference between the faith and struggle invested by the Abbess's religious community in a disputed body buried in the graveyard, and the sole, fatefully, traumatically related mourner of Roelf attempting to find 'Red Doek'.

Two unknown buried figures provide the locus for the plot of both plays. In *The Abbess*, the noble buried by Hildegard and her followers provokes the 'episode' which gives the play its subtitle.[63] Named in the play as Albrecht, the deceased figure shares the profile of an historically unnamed noble whose death and burial caused a crisis in the final months of Hildegard of Bingen's life. This crisis threatened the spiritual life and reputation of the Benedictine community that Hildegard had founded at Rupertsberg, to be independent from the monastic community of Disibodenberg where she had joined as a child.[64] In comparison, Fugard originally intended *The Train Driver* to be about Pumla Lolwana.[65] However, he was unsettled

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[61] Foucault, Michel., 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias', trans. by Jay Miskowiec, *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité*, (October 1984 [1967]). Indeed, cemeteries, as well as colonies and prisons, are a key illustrative example for Foucault in his foundational essay.

[62] Fugard's representation of Hildegard's abbey may be drawn from monastic history, but it speaks to the links between the spiritual history of the past and the politics of the present; *The Train Driver*'s graveyard exemplifies the political darkness that shrouds South African culture and politics.

[63] Full title: *The Abbess: Based on an episode in the Life of Hildegard of Bingen.*

[64] Indeed, depending on the veracity of Guibert of Gembloux's sole account, Hildegard was, alongside Jutta von Spanheim, sealed in an enclosed space within their monastery, in a ceremony that resembled a funeral. This account of an 'anchorage' finds its way into Fugard's *The Abbess.*

[65] Eric Ntabazalila,, *'Jobless mother sought release on railtrack'*(2000,) <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/jobless-mother-sought-release-on-railtrack-56340> [accessed 1 November 2018]. Fugard clearly did not have access to all news sources on the subject of Lolwana's death. In the Independent Online network (a publishing chain in South Africa) there was an interview with Lolwana's family, her name having been Anglicised slightly differently to the *Mail&Guardian*'s reportage. Important details in Ntabazaila's coverage include details of her being a widow, and the fact that Lolwana's family saw the events on the train tracks, and that she would therefore be 'claimed' at the mortuary. In contrast, the tension in *The Train Driver* arises from the fact that 'Red Doek' goes unclaimed, and therefore ends up in the pauper's burial ground at the

by the phenomenological questions that her suicidal actions posed, and thus found writing a coherent drama difficult.[66] Fugard shifted the perspective to the white train driver, whose trauma and counselling form the majority of the original newspaper article, shedding light on the 'guilt' felt by the train drivers, despite their lack of agency in the deaths of people on the railway lines.

The background of *The Train Driver*, and the identity of the buried is less simple than has been usually treated. The unknown mother is more a representation of Pumla Lolwana, rather than a direct recreation of her. Firstly, *The Train Driver* is set in Port Elizabeth, not Cape Town; and secondly, small details such as the number of her children are changed. Furthermore, the play is about the perspective of the traumatised driver, not the dead woman and her children. Red Doek/Lolwana's presence in the play is spectral: she is both there and not there, a dead, buried and returning presence.[67]

Focusing on the present problem of squatter camps on the edge of urban areas, *The Train Driver* moves the focus back to the familiar territory of joblessness and destitution shown by *Sizwe Bansi is Dead.*[68] But the burial of Red Doek at Simon Hanabe's 'squatter' camp's graveyard comes with a unique status. She is

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squatter camp. Here is a precis of this in-depth story:
'God will find the way.' These were the last words Phumla Lolwana said to her sister-in-law, Nontobeko Ndilinga, before she took her three children to the railway line between Philippi and Nyanga near Cape Town, pulled them together, turned her back to an oncoming train to be run down and killed last Friday. She and her children, Lindani, 2, who was semi-paralysed, Andile, 3, and Sisanda, 4, died when a Khayelitsha-bound train hit them. Lolwana was driven to suicide by financial problems, unemployment, lack of family support and 'because she was tired of surviving on other people's mercy'. […] [Lolwana's niece] Senzi described the horrific moment when Lolwana reached the point of no return: 'When we arrived at the railway line, she told us that she wanted to rest. 'We told her we would wait on the other side. 'She pulled Andile who was with us back to her. Andile screamed as the train was approaching but she pulled her children closer. 'She turned her back to the oncoming train and looked down. We ran and were screaming.'

[66] Fugard, 'Pages from a Notebook', (2000); Fugard (et al.), *Athol Fugard: 'The Playwriting Process'*, (2008).

[67] Derrida, (2006).

[68] See section 1.2 above.

buried among the unknowns, in an unmarked grave; Red Doek is (officially) nameless, and yet is also (in a sense) known and named by the train driver Roelf, who feels responsible for her death, yet is no murderer. Roelf unintentionally confronts, through the desperate search for her grave, many fundamental questions about the nature of post-apartheid society. Roelf's wife tells him to stop dwelling on his trauma, insensitively telling him to leave home and search for her. His wife's conservative, casual racism prevents her from empathising with Roelf's anxieties about Red Doek's death, because she sees the woman as having sealed her own fate. Roelf's twin sense of responsibility and powerlessness limits his options, and yet also provides a roadmap for dealing with his trauma. Roelf cannot be comforted by taking on the role of the well-wisher at her grave. The driver 'knew' her, solely in her deadly meeting with his train. Roelf finds her impossible to confront because he cannot find her exact resting spot; instead he must contend with her ghost, and the memory of her on the tracks. Roelf learns to deal with his grief, beginning with being angry at Red Doek, and finally choosing to claim her, possessively taking on the political responsibility this trauma has thrust on him. Hardy's Drummer Hodge is marked by 'a kopje crest', Red Doek's (and everyone else's) by undifferentiated junk found by Simon. Roelf struggles with what is expected of him as a superstitious, Christian believer in a seemingly godless space.

The Abbess also revolves around the status and identifiability of a grave and its occupant. The play opens with The Abbess and Guibert, a monk serving as the Abbess's secretary and confessor, rushing to conceal Albrecht's resting place. The regional superiors in Mainz believe that Albrecht was excommunicated at the time of his death, yet the Abbess and Guibert know that he had been redeemed, with the

burial being properly consecrated by the man's priest. Initially forthright about the method of hiding the grave, she must contemplate what she is doing:

> THE ABBESS. Quick! Get some of those dead leaves and scatter them over the grave. Any fool could see there is a body buried here.No ... no wait.
>
> *(She goes down on her knees and starts to smooth away the mound with her crozier.)* [69]
>
> GUIBERT. (On to his knees beside her; trying to get her back onto her feet.) No Mother! Get Up! Mother please !
>
> THE ABBESS. (Pushing him away.) No! Leave me alone!
>
> …
>
> THE ABBESS. Leave them alone Guibert. Let them sing. I'll be silencing them soon enough. Now just do as I say and get those dead leaves and scatter them over the grave.
>
> *(Guibert does as she says.)*
>
> That's right. Spread them all over.
>
> […]
>
> GUIBERT. No one would ever know that someone is buried there.[70]

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[69] Hildegard of Bingen., *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, Volume 1, trans. by Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). 'Letter 23: Hildegard to the prelates at Mainz', (fn. 1, p. 80): 'The 'protocol' of her canonization reports that she made the sign of the cross over the grave with her *baculus*, causing the tomb to vanish without a trace'.
[70] *The Abbess*, p. 341.

The Abbess's defiance of the worldly Church's authority in order to follow scripture, and the arguments that this conflict presented, have directly informed Hildegard of Bingen's canonisation. By 'causing the tomb to vanish', Hildegard demonstrated her saintly power to channel the will of God.[71] The body in the churchyard is, therefore, doubly buried – unable to be found – in a way that echoes the muddled burial of Red Doek in *The Train Driver*. The reasoning for their hurrying asks questions of The Abbess and Guibert's state of mind. Are they guilty about the ramifications of this monastic insurrection? Is it to simply cover and conceal the deed, so that the disinterment order is thwarted? In Scene One, The Abbess and her closest remaining companion are engaged in 'a very serious act of disobedience', a direct challenge to the authority of the prelates of Mainz.[72]

For the remainder of the plot of *The Abbess*, everything hinges on her question to Guibert about the ethics of resistance: 'You have no doubts about the rightness of what we are doing?'[73] Questions of faith, human conduct and the relationship between redemption and condemnation are immediately confronted by the material consequences laid down by the church hierarchy. Guibert delivers an interdict which strictly commands the Benedictine community to 'not be allowed to celebrate the Mass', but perhaps most painfully, ''you and your Sisters may also not sing the Divine Office, but only whisper it behind closed doors.''[74] Hildegard finds the order to 'disinter the body […] and cast it out beyond the wall of your convent' a potential source of sin, and therefore the root of a potential calamity brought by God that she is avoiding. The opposition between being allowed to 'sing the Divine Office'

[71] See fn. 69.
[72] Line spoken by The Abbess, p. 342.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid., p. 344.

and being forced to 'whisper' it stems from the theological idea that the monastic practice of performing heavenly music can create a connection with God, in which Hildegard of Bingen was interested when writing her music. The Church does not ban the Nuns from speaking to God but its punishment entails reducing their performance to the lowest audible levels, and spoken in privacy 'behind closed doors' rather than as a collective. By doing so their community's spiritual authority is repressed. The effective silencing of the abbey creates a morbid atmosphere, lacking the life brought by their spiritual singing. The stillness of the abbey stirs anxieties in Hildegard, who sees the ramifications of her burial of Albrecht inflicted on her living sisters.

The divine ramifications of this censorship of singing, because of the disobeying of Mainz's authority, forms the crux of Hildegard's arguments against the interdict, both historically and in the play. While Guibert reads to her, Hildegard halts the letter, and turns to repeat the glorious chants of the Choir of Nuns, who are reciting one of her own pieces. The prospect of this collective praise for God being silenced leads to a deep dialogue with Guibert about the history of her music. Such is the role of the religious experience in her life that she credits the inspiration for her musical composition as being her unique connection to God: 'One day in the Living Light I saw a heavenly choir', she recalls, re-experiencing the apparition.[75] It was an image which urged her to write a 'hymn' so that her own 'daughters' could imitate the singing 'brides of Christ' that were in her vision 'in their humble way'.[76] Earthly music cannot match the beauty of heaven, as experienced through her 'Living Light', but it can act as a connection between the isolated faithful and God.

[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

The Abbess recalls the moment when she was sealed away, 'entombed' like a burial, in the 'anchorage' of Jutta von Spanheim as a ten year-old 'child'.[77] An anchorage was a place where monks and nuns could work alone, in an isolated space within a monastic community, on their faith. The only connection to the community outside the anchorage was the music of the 'monks chanting the Holy Office'.[78] The Abbess's music is not just the focus of the Prelates's punishment, it is at the heart of her theological experience. It provided the basis for her to become a leader, teaching newcomers 'how to sing the psalms and songs I had by then been inspired to write.'[79] It is not surprising then that the interdict blocking their singing of the Divine Office inspired Hildegard to formulate powerful arguments about the divine nature of performativity. Hildegard reflects on the centrality of music within all of the Bible, not just her own life, tracing the history of music back to Genesis and the singing of Adam with the angelic host.[80]

Such historical arguments by Hildegard resonate with Fugard's own insistence on the importance of performance within theatre's form. Since the 1960s, an important part of Fugard's artistic practice has been the keeping of notebooks, a selection of which were edited by Mary Benson in 1983.[81] In an entry from July 1968, Fugard meditated on his purposes as a writer of theatre. Embedded at that time in the literature of symbolist and existential aesthetics, integral to the avant-garde European scene, Fugard outlined the inappropriateness of privileging the written over the performed in discussing the form:

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[77] Ibid. p. 375.
[78] Ibid., p. 345.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Hildegard of Bingen., (1994), 'Letter 23: Hildegard to the prelates at Mainz', pp. 76-80.
[81] Fugard, Athol., *Notebooks 1960/1977*, ed. by Mary Benson (London: Faber and Faber, 1983).

> One of the reasons, I suppose, why I write for the stage - beyond, or before, all the spoken words, there is the possibility of this code - the Carnal Reality of the actor in space and time. Only a fraction of my truth is in the words.[82]

In Fugard's discourse the 'Carnal Reality' of performance is a deep source of 'truth', where meaning could be abstracted and comprehended. This is in line with symbolist-inspired theatre, which abstracted 'literary' or 'realistic' representations beyond spoken or written language; authors like Jerzy Grotowski, Albert Camus and Samuel Beckett all belonged to this school of thought, and influenced Fugard's own approach. With these contexts in mind, Fugard's re-articulation of Hildegard's emphatic defence of performance, dramatised as monologue rather than as an epistle, articulates a medieval form of Fugard's central concern with the 'code' of 'the Carnal Reality of the' performer 'in space and time'.

The same divine inspiration that made the music possible also inspired Hildegard, as in the play, to defy the order to disinter the buried man and instead argue the case. Fugard's Abbess and the historical Hildegard are skilled, passionate speakers who are able to negotiate convincingly (if not always successfully). Hildegard's argument hinges on the sin and injustice of silencing her community's collaborative worship as a form of disempowerment. As a prophetess channelling God, Hildegard warned the Prelates that:

> those who, without just cause, impose silence on a church and prohibit the singing of God's praises and those who have unjustly despoiled God of His

[82] Ibid.: p. 171.

> honor and glory will lose their place among the chorus of angels, unless they have amended their lives through true penitence and humble restitution.[83]

(Thus the aural importance of *singing* versus merely whispering).

Fugard's script synthesises this letter and its arguments, to form a basis for the Abbess's conflict with the spectres of her dead former companions, the confessor Volmar and the nun Richardis von Stade. The Choir of Nuns, a presence within the play's scenography, is silenced by the interdict. When she speaks to her nuns about the struggle ahead she frames the crisis as being about the conflict between earthly and heavenly authority: 'The wrath of God or the wrath of men? I cannot face the anger of my Creator […] But do not despair my daughters. We are not defeated. Right is on our side.'[84] The Abbess's sense of right and wrong, and her reliance on the 'Living Light' to guide her,[85] coalesces around the burial, with an internal conflict about faith and despair embodied in a struggle with the personas of the deceased monk Volmar and the departed nun Richardis.[86] The individualisation of burial within the urban cemetery, a modern phenomenon, obscures the sense of *The Abbess*'s dead body as representing a struggle within the power structures of the eleventh-twelfth century Church.[87]

Hildegard of Bingen's proto-feminist politics of community, when relocated to the South African context are profoundly democratic. To Hildegard the supreme political authority was God and the Pope, with any orders that contravened the word

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[83] Hildegard of Bingen, (1993), p. 79.
[84] *The Abbess*, p. 350.
[85] Ibid.
[86] See section below, 'Despair and Haunting in *The Abbess*'.
[87] In Our Time, *Hildegard of Bingen* (2014) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b047c312> [accessed 1 November 2018].

and teachings of the Bible in even the most technical of ways presenting a challenge to the work of the Church on Earth.

The graveyard of the nameless, for Roelf, is 'a bloody disgrace to humanity!', questioning Simon's 'respect for the dead'.[88] The squatter's graveyard lacks the comforting ambience of a lush, well-kept cemetery. Continually plundered by thieves and stray dogs, this heterotopia is as fragile as the squatter camp it serves. Roelf asks Simon: 'do you believe in ghosts?' Simon, in response, remarks that, 'I hear them. At night. When the dogs are digging I hear them. […] It is like the wind, Roefie. It is very sad.'[89] In a state of restlessness, Simon's communing with the dead is not one of silent respect, as Roelf prefers, but of singing in his native language, 'like my mother sing to me when I was a little boy and she carry me on her back.'[90] Roelf's attitude to the dead is challenged by Simon's unsentimental purpose for decorating the graves with junk. The keeper places objects solely to remind him not to dig in the same place again.

What is perhaps most surprising about Athol Fugard's representation of burial and the graveyard from a political perspective is the conclusion drawn by the characters of *The Train Driver*. Fugard has for a long time presented his plays as a project to witness the marginalised and destitute of South Africa. Victims of apartheid have, in *The Train Driver*, been replaced by those who have been failed by the post-apartheid system. Unlike Robert Zwelinzima, Buntu or Sizwe Bansi, they can have no names and still live and die as South Africans. This provokes a question: is post-apartheid South Africa, in the year 2010, a cemetery? Can committed individuals like Roelf Visagie intervene and learn how to live despite the

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[88] Fugard, *The Train Driver*, (2010), p. 26.
[89] Ibid., p. 32.
[90] Ibid.

threat of criminal violence? Initially Roelf tells his new acquaintance Simon that he is only at the graveyard to 'curse' the woman whose suicide has shattered his life. But as Miki Flockemann argues, 'we find ourselves living in a [post-apartheid] society in which apparently irreconcilable conflicts are constantly being dramatised'.[91] With *The Train Driver*'s conclusion, there is a paradoxical sense of reconcilability and irreconcilability at play. Roelf's 'claiming' of Red Doek in *The Train Driver* is a more possessive model of experiencing post-apartheid South Africa than that suggested by witnessing; on a differential level, Roelf's 'claiming' of Red Doek is grounded in a possessive responsibility. Protest theatre like *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* had an educational aspect, in that it made theatre audiences witness situations that were actively hidden by apartheid's policies and the state. The barriers around witnessing the oppression of communities like the squatter camps is not imposed by the government as the apartheid system was, suggesting a different kind of individual responsibility and 'claiming' being possible. The transient presence of the spectre enables the communing with the dead, whether buried in marked or unmarked graves.

During the apartheid era, there was a sense of contribution given by breaking down cultural barriers set-up in the name of racial separation.[92] The idea that witnessing could extend a hand to the marginalised, whether they were black, coloured or white, empowered the utilisation of avant-garde ideas such as Grotowski's focus on the actor, and Brecht's alienated notion of social structure. As Zach, in Fugard's first 'hit' *The Blood Knot*, says, his fear and marginalisation is 'all

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[91] Flockemann, Miki., 'The aesthetics of transformation: Reading strategies for South African theatre entering the new millennium', *South African Theatre Journal*, 15.1, (2001), 25-39 (p. 28).
[92] Hutchison, Yvette. *South African performance and archives of memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

because I'm black!'[93] In the figure of Roelf Visagie, the white culture and perspective is no longer a looming threat; Roelf, through the experience of trauma, feels as dismayed and alienated as those who are traditionally seen as oppressed, like the gravedigger Simon Hanabe. Roelf is a witness, traumatised by his experience as one. So he must move beyond his memories, to accept the trauma, to *claim* Red Doek. This hauntology allows Roelf to begin to make sense of his own responsibility, and how the scenes of destitution that he has been exposed to fits into the country's political imaginary.

The seeds of this solution lie in the newspaper article about the suicide that Roelf carries with him: ''By Monday night nobody had claimed the bodies from the Mount Road mortuary. In the meantime the train driver is receiving counselling.' There you have it.'[94] Trying to rationalise the impossible, Roelf surmises that had he gone to the mortuary and claimed the body then Red Doek may never have been buried in the desolation of Simon's graveyard. Roelf reads the politics of the Bible as a reason for connecting across the heterogeneous lines of crushing inequality, that 'We was all made in His image… you… me…Simon…every human being…made in His image.'[95] While Roelf can turn his faith to recover a sense of human connection, he cannot reconcile the idea of being unable to find the resting place of Red Doek and speak his feelings over the mother and children's grave. It is the stoic grave keeper Simon, not the emotional Roelf, who finds the spiritually- and politically-satisfying solution to the problem. If Simon and Roelf cannot find Red Doek's grave, then the next body to be buried can symbolise her. Roelf can claim

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[93] Fugard, Athol., *The Blood Knot* (new version), in Fugard, Athol., ed. by Dennis Walder, *Port Elizabeth Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 94.
[94] Fugard, *The Train Driver*, (2010), p. 20.
[95] Ibid. p. 40.

her by labouring over the grave of an unknown other. They are not even sure if the body is that of a woman; that the characters can just 'say it is a woman' is enough to enable Roelf to claim her and solve his dilemma.[96] The haunted Roelf digs while Simon sleeps.

The play ends with Simon's epilogue, the gravedigger fired by his 'boss' Mr Mdoda and his shovel taken away. While digging the symbolic grave of Red Doek, the feared urban thugs, the *amagintsa*, murder Roelf with the shovel, putting him in the grave that he had been digging. *The Train Driver* ends and begins with a burial, and the figure of Simon bearing witness, claiming the responsibility in his heart for the death of Roelf, even if he must deny knowing the dead white man for his own safety.

1.4 The 'New' South African Hauntology of *The Train Driver*

The post-apartheid democracy has not dispelled the spectres of apartheid. As Fugard reflects: 'the New South Africa - tragically - needs the vigilance of writers *every bit* as much as the Old did.'[97] The question of how to deal with the spectre of apartheid has continued to fester. The experience of guilt, from the standpoint of those not necessarily covered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, greatly informs *The Train Driver*. Roelf's crisis is described by the reviewer Brent Meersman as: 'the dilemma of white guilt […] that we are responsible for the destruction we

[96] Ibid. p. 44.
[97] Fugard, Athol., *Athol Fugard: 'Defining Moments'* (2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iflUJVUWvY8&feature=youtu.be&t=3873> [accessed 1 November 2018].

cause but over which we have no control.'[98] Roelf, as the driver of a train hurtling, unstoppably, toward people that he could do nothing about killing, feels a parallel form of responsibility and guilt. The traumatised Roelf is as conflicted about his self-identity as Sizwe or Winston are in the workshop plays. However, Roelf struggles with the spectre of the oppressed other – if he was able to move on from his experiences he would return to his old comfortable life. Sizwe has to deal with the dilemma of stealing another's identity in order to live a life outside of inescapable poverty and unemployment in urban South Africa. Roelf cannot accept that, as part of his own job within the industrial economy of Port Elizabeth, he is expected to 'move on' so decisively from this traumatic experience. Red Doek's spectre creates an ethical injunction for him to find out why she was on the tracks, where she lived and has been buried. As such, he feels haunted by the moment that he, continually, returns to:

> ROELF. Home? Don't you understand anything. I've crashed! I was on the rails, I was going forward, everything up to schedule… until it all crashed. Thanks to that woman with the red doek I don't know if I've got a home anymore. I don't know if I've got a family anymore, or a job or… ja… a life. You said it: this is the place for the ones without names… and I think I'm one of them now. Roelf Visagie? Who the hell is he? You got your spade so dig another grave, man.[99]

[98] McDonald, Marianne., (2012), p. 266, quote of *Mail & Guardian* (Western Cape, April 9, 2010).
[99] Fugard, *The Train Driver*, (2010), p. 14.

The metaphor of Roelf having 'crashed', having come off 'the rails' illustrates his inability to divorce his intense sense of responsibility from his available actions. 'Roelf Visagie' is effaced, his sense of being wiped out, the inexorable train embodying his lack of power. Despite the platitudinous advice of both his wife and therapist, Roelf perceives a different reality, where he is no longer 'Roelf Visagie'. Roelf explains his feeling of namelessness by comparing himself to those in the unmarked graves, identifying himself as one to be buried. The haunting compels Roelf to learn about a part of his home city where he never goes. Red Doek, and the moment in which he came in contact, is a *revenant*, a spectre that returns and blurring the boundaries between being named and being nameless. The established critical model of reading Fugard's work as promoting the 'witnessing' of oppression feels oddly limited compared to the hauntology of *The Train Driver*, because the play's portrayal of spectrality proceeds out of the original *witnessing* of death and hopelessness. Roelf's alienation is so acute that he is now, emotionally, nameless and placeless, a kind of wandering ghost who feels as much at home in the squatter camp as the destitute. Unable to return to work or stay at home, Roelf has resolved to find the grave of the woman and her children on the outskirts of the metropolis, to act out his despair in an empty exercise of anger in a bizarre attempt at therapy:

> ROELF. I'll do it [curse at her grave] so that her ghost will hear me. I'll tell her how she has fucked up my life… the selfish black bitch… that I am sitting here with my arse in the dirt because thanks to her I am losing everything… my home, my family, my job… my bloody mind! […] Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Help me![100]

[100] Ibid. p. 13.

Roelf's ugly language betrays his sense of fragility and estrangement from the ordinary logic which is supposed to ground him. The staccato-like syntax, with the repetition of 'my', 'her' and 'she' reflects his panicked, disoriented perspective following Red Doek and her children's death on the tracks. The haunting of 'Red Doek' has taken over his existence, so that he feels as anonymous and ghostly as those buried in the graveyard. Roelf must learn from the grave keeper Simon the ability to break through and comprehend the hauntology of life in the squatter camp, to be able to lay to rest the ghosts of the nameless like the gravedigger can. The driver's initial disgust at the state of the graveyard, and of the people in the squatter camps, is directed into his 'claiming' of the buried body of Red Doek through his burial of the *simulacrum* body, which he must tell himself is that of the woman and children his train murdered.

Initially sceptical, Roelf must adopt Simon's superstition in being able to hear the ghosts, but is repulsed by the place. The arrival of Red Doek at the squatter's graveyard is 'still not the end…Because the big happy ending is that Nobody Wants Her! … Except the dogs.'[101] At night Roelf leaves Simon's shack to speak with Red Doek's ghost, choosing to 'imagine Simon is right, and that your ghost comes out of the grave at night'.[102] He contrasts his Christian faith in heaven with the 'feeling about your world' he has gained from, briefly, seeing the life she will have lived while searching for her in the squatter camp. Roelf desperately holds on to the memory of the woman on the tracks (he always focuses on the mother), because 'it feels like I am losing you, and if that happens, if I can't remember even your face anymore,

[101] Ibid. p. 35.
[102] Ibid. p. 38.

then I really will go mad like they all say I am.'[103] The haunting has compelled Roelf to learn the truth and see a world still separate from his own experience, despite the absence of legal apartheid: 'We always think we know – like Lorraine, my wife – she thinks she knows everything about you people… and I did as well … but the truth is we don't.'[104] Roelf realizes that the crucial difference between the named and the nameless is the ability to hope: 'that tomorrow is going to be better than today, which is terrible. […] I don't know what it is like to live without hope, to give up', and he realizes, 'you did, didn't you? That is why you did what you did'.[105] Roelf is able to learn this lesson because of Red Doek's spectrality; she teaches a lesson that strikes at the centre of what he believes to be true as a (relatively affluent) white South African. For Roelf, drawing on his daily experience of the railways, the graveyard is the 'End of the fucking line.'[106] The teachings of the Christian church, so key to the integrity of apartheid, become the sole comfort for Roelf, a kind of humanism tempered by the knowledge of the grinding separation between the political 'world[s]' of the nameless and the privileged: 'We was all made in His image… you … me … Simon … every human being.'[107] As a terminus, the graveyard is more like hell than heaven; Roelf's brief friendship with Simon complicates his first impression. Roelf concludes in his séance with Red Doek that:

> ROELF. […] Now you are lying in the place for the ones without names because nobody wanted you. Well that is not the way it is anymore,

[103] Ibid. p. 39.
[104] Ibid., p. 39.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid., p. 14.
[107] Ibid. p. 40.

> because now I hold up my hand and say: 'I Claim Her!' Me… Roelf Visagie.. the driver of the train that killed her…wants her to be his.[108]

Roelf's name regains meaning once again because, through it, he can take on the ghost of Red Doek, so as to absorb the lessons that her world has given him. The theme of names, so prominent in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, returns in a more collectivized form in *The Train Driver*. Not only are there the nameless in the graves, but the two characters Simon and Roelf both have vexed relations with their own names. But just as Roelf feels estranged from his name, the 'old man' employed as the camp's gravedigger has a similarly problematic relationship to his own name.[109] 'Simon is my whiteman's name', he tells Roelf, an identity that represents his sense of estrangement from his childhood, when he was named Andile, sharing the name of one of Pumla Lolwana's children; from Simon/Andile's nostalgia, Roelf surmises this was 'when you were happy'.[110] A character of few words in contrast to Roelf, Simon's description of his childhood is epitomized by the poignant image of his two dogs iWandle and Indudumo, whose care and companionship contrast with the grave-digging and the gangs of stray dogs that terrorise Simon's existence as an old man. Red Doek challenges the (neo)liberal order that was supposed to integrate together the shattered apartheid social order, represented here by the white Roelf/Roefie and the black Simon/Andile, mediated by the spectre of the woman who haunts the train-tracks and the graveyard.

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[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid., 25.
[110] Ibid., 29.

1.5 Despair & haunting in *The Abbess*

The confrontation over the burial of the excommunicated noble represented the greatest threat to Hildegard of Bingen's reputation within her lifetime. Hildegard lived in a time of immense socio-political change within Christian Europe. Her visions, if not for the belief of her male superiors, could very well have been labelled as a form of heresy. The balance of power between the Holy Roman Emperor and the Papacy was of utmost importance, with Hildegard taking the side of the Pope in defending the Roman Church leadership's authority.[111]

The interdict placed on The Abbess's convent is a sentence that silences its community's spiritual communication with God, through the singing of the Divine Office. The Abbess is aware of how she ought to approach her 'superiors' in Mainz, presenting her case in a way designed to draw both sympathy and respect. Unable to convince them, she successfully circumvents their ruling by appealing to the authority of the Church's upper-echelons. Before she is triumphant, however, she must confront the spectres of two of her closest advisors, now deceased and judgmental: her former confessor Volmar, now replaced by Guibert, and the prodigal nun Richardis von Stade, who had died after leaving to set up her own convent.

The Abbess is confronted, at first, by the intervening voice of Volmar, whose didactic lessons disrupt the flow of events surrounding the interdict. The Abbess regards him as a memory; and yet, his challenges become more unsettling, as the interdict exposes the disjunctiveness of the silent convent, robbed of its performative connection to God by the force of Church law. Should she rebel by instructing her

[111] In Our Time, (2014).

'daughters', the 'Brides of Christ', to lift their voices from a whisper, against the order of the Prelates? The Abbess believes that banning such singing is an affront to God, and a sin; yet, her respect of the Church hierarchy means that to disobey the Prelates would *also* be a sin. The contradictory mathematics of this does not add-up; and thus, the Abbess is seemingly presented with a 'zero-sum game'. The Prelates' interdict both reasserts their authority over the Abbess, and confronts the kind of patronage that the (concealed) burial of Albrecht represents.[112]

The Abbess is aware, because of her advanced age, of her precarious health. The future of her convent is at stake, and so too is the recognition of her spiritual connection to God. And it is at this point, following all of her efforts at Mainz, that the ghosts of Richardis and Volmar challenge her faith. The Abbess, unlike Roelf Visagie, sees these as phantoms, resolving that these ghosts are Devils requiring her personal exorcism.[113]

Volmar's ghost undermines The Abbess's confidence, declaring her feeling of despair to be a kind of sin. Volmar challenges Hildegard because of his ghost's insight into her inner feelings. Hildegard was known to protest by claiming her life was in mortal danger when her power and connection to God was threatened:

> VOLMAR. […] You lay down on your bed and as far as we could see you departed this life – stopped breathing and lay there stiff as that staff

[112] The patronage of the wealthy was incredibly important to the longevity of such communities; it is a fact that the monastic class was drawn mostly from the political and social elite, with Hildegard and Richardis being no exception.
[113] Davis, (2005). For the distinction between Abraham and Torok cf. Derrida. Essentially, phantoms are tricksters who obscure the truth, while spectres have a positive, if challenging, role.

> you've got in your hand. We were all terrified - the poor Abbott most of all when I told him your last words to me: 'Goodbye Volmar! I can't carry on.'
> ... but of course you did when the Abbot changed his mind and let you and your sisters leave. And then another very convincing cry of defeat was when your beautiful sister Richardis left you and wouldn't return in spite of all your entreaties. We had to get through a few very dark days then as well. [114]

The Abbess is accused of cynically manipulating those around her. This latest private 'cry of defeat' is surveyed by the ghosts' gaze. Richardis's spectre laughs at the pain that The Abbess expressed in her melodramatic letters. Richardis's phantom urges The Abbess to openly rebel and carry on, reflecting The Abbess's perception of her leaving the convent to set up a new institution.

> RICHARDIS. […] Because you know yourself that that is who they are ... those pious men in Mainz who have interdicted you. They have abandoned the path of the Ancient Fathers and now serve the Lord of Darkness. Who else would silence a church that wanted to raised its voice and sing its praises to God the Father? Defy them! Prove yourself the Warrior of the Lord you have always claimed to be. [115]

Richardis's revolutionary tone challenges The Abbess's faith in her interpretation of her voice from God, her 'Living Light', to challenge the Prelates but labour under the silencing of the interdict. The spectre appeals to a potentially vainglorious perception

[114] Fugard, *The Abbess*, (2006), p. 360.
[115] Ibid., p. 369.

of her career, casting her as 'the Warrior of the Lord'. Volmar and Richardis's temptations and admonishments manifest secret psychological motivations; initially overjoyed at their return to her life, she concludes that they are manifestations of the Devil. She 'slays' them with the very same object that, at the beginning of the play, concealed the grave of Albrecht. The intervention of these spirits comes at a time when, because of nearing death, the Abbess is cognizant of the future and her legacy. The slaying of these ghosts precedes the final victory, the lifting of the interdict. In her final address to the audience and her daughters, The Abbess humbly looks to the future, openly recognising the ever-present role of her past suffering. Despite her suspicions of these spectres, they portend a possible present, or future, where her appeals to the Archbishop for intervention may not be enough. The Abbess's visions, as a self-summoned form of spectrality, revolve around the future status of the convent, and of her own soul (as represented by the twisted souls, memories, spectres of Richardis and Volmar). Because of the discourse that guides The Abbess's life, she is unable to see these ghosts as more than a temptation. She turns away from 'despair', but affirms the lifelong feeling that her 'heart […] is and always will be that of the eight-year-old little girl entombed with Christ on Mount Disibodenberg.'[116] Despite her internal exorcism succeeding, she remains haunted because she sees her soul as that of an 'entombed' *buried* little girl residing in the mortal body of an old woman.

The etymology of the word 'despair' is from the Latin '*desperare*', roughly meaning 'down from hope'[117]. The antonym of despair, hope, is precisely what Roelf and The Abbess wish for, in their own ways. As Roelf says in *The Train Driver*,

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[116] Ibid., p. 375.
[117] *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3 edn (WordWeb Software, 2010).

finally, completely empathetic with the other that he once wished to 'swear' at, recognising his lack of experience: 'I don't know what it is like to live without hope, to give up'. [118] In his autobiographical lecture 'Defining Moments', Fugard communicated the sentiment that the dawn of the 'new South Africa' was unique within his life, as the 'defining moment that wasn't'.[119] A true democracy, remains, 'to come'.[120] It is a fair summary that, at the close of his lecture, Fugard expresses a sense of despair about the direction that South Africa has taken, particularly in relation to foreign policy and HIV/AIDS. Whether Fugard chose it or not, the *American Theatre*'s excerpts from his notebook are titled the 'Appointment with Despair', the 'publicity paratext' summing up the intertextual links between *The Abbess* and *The Train Driver*.[121]

It is the word 'despair' that enrages the ghosts of Volmar and Richardis within The Abbess's visions. The word is used nine times in the play, each at key moments. It is first used by The Abbess in Scene Two, who is explaining the ramifications of the interdict to her Choir of Nuns:

> THE ABBESS. [The Prelates] have again commanded us to remove his body from our cemetery and this time they have added the warning that if we fail to do so, we will be placed under interdict. In terror and despair I looked to my inner guide, the Living Light, and I saw that if we did as they ordered, dug up the body where we had laid it to rest with our prayers, we would be violating the Holy

[118] Fugard, *The Train Driver*, (2010), p. 39.
[119] Fugard, 'Defining Moments', (2014).
[120] Wortham, Simon Morgan., *The Derrida Dictionary*, (London: Continuum, 2010), pp. 34-5.
[121] Fugard, 'Appointment with Despair' (November 2012); Pavis, Patrice., *Analyzing Performance: Theatre, Dance, and Film*, trans. by David Williams (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), p. 42. For a definition of the 'publicity paratext'.

> Sacraments and that would bring down on us a danger more destructive than anything the hand of mortal man could do. God's wrath would descend from heaven and envelop us like the blackest of thunderstorms.[122]

The Abbess, struck by 'terror and despair', is motivated to seek counsel with her 'inner guide, the Living Light' of God. The imagery of her vision intuits her logic surrounding the conflict between 'God's wrath' and 'man's wrath'. The inferno caused by these two clashing forces would be devastating, creating a path from the silencing of their musical performance to a bleak response from God, one which would shut out the sun with 'the blackest of thunderstorms'. The thunderstorm symbolises the conflict that her devout monastic life is supposed to prevent, by dedicating herself and her community to God. The Abbess invokes the word 'despair' a second time, at the end of this speech:

> THE ABBESS. …But do not despair my daughters. We are not defeated. Right is on our side. Our Lord and Protector will lead us back into battle and we will win.[123]

God, for The Abbess, is the one that prevents 'despair', because his will is *justice*: 'Right is on our side.' From this situation, however, arises the spectral dispute over 'despair'. Jacques Derrida's spectrality, of course, was motivated by the relation to the other, but also fundamentally to a pursuit of *justice*. While the ghost of King Hamlet motivates revenge, the ancient form of *retributive* justice, Derrida searches for a new response to such questions, a hauntological justice that explains the place

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[122] Fugard, *The Abbess*, (2006), p. 350.
[123] Ibid.

of Marx within revolutionary history.[124]

The silencing by the interdict takes away what made the convent exceptional, the performative power of which having created a holy atmosphere, an existential 'source of light itself'. The effect of this struggle on the community is summed up by Brother Guibert: 'It has become dark in here now mother and ... dare I say it? ... filled with despair.'[125] The Abbess, on edge, admonishes Guibert for using the word *despair*, because she has already been visited by the ghost of Volmar.

In life Hildegard was well known for her struggles against opponents within the Church. The Abbess's anxiety that she is, now, defeated, is taken by Volmar as another case of her paranoia. The word, when pushed, that she uses to describe her feeling, to the ghost, is our key word:

> THE ABBESS. There is nothing absurd about my *despair*, Volmar.
>
> VOLMAR. *(Changing his manner and speaking suddenly with quiet but urgent concern.)* Oh dear – I thought we were talking about defeat. It's now 'Despair' is it? No, no! Don't say that. With all the great love and respect I have for you I hope that I have just heard the first careless word from your mouth. Yes! I pray to God that your cry of *despair is* a total absurdity and that your soul will wake up and know it is that! [126]

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[124] See Derrida's political deconstructions of concepts such as forgiveness, the animal and the death penalty.
[125] Fugard, *The Abbess* (2012), p. 364.
[126] Ibid. p. 361, my emphasis.

The spectral 'absurdity' of this irrational scene resonates with the final search for meaning in *The Train Driver* between Red Doek and Roelf. Volmar, in his second appearance in the play, is engaged in a spooky dialogue within The Abbess's psyche, summoned for guidance beyond the grave. In his first apparition, Volmar uncannily prophesied a kind of apocalypse, because of the conflict about the burial, marking The Abbess's responsibility for the community's victimhood: 'And you won't be the only victim. Your entire community will go down with you.'[127] The paradox that traps The Abbess is that the situation may be perilous but it is a sin to feel 'despair' because, by doing so, she implicitly rejects the salvation granted by God. Volmar and Richardis, together, represent the potential paths that she may take as a political leader: to defy the Church, or to defy God. Both forces stand in judgment of The Abbess, and the spooks challenge what the interdict means for her work with God:

> VOLMAR. […]No matter how great your suffering, how great the wrong or injustice done to you, *despair* will always be the doorway to darkness – and you of all people know why - because it means that you are denying the goodness, the mercy and the faith- keeping of Almighty God.[128]
>
> ;
>
> RICHARDIS. […] There is not much time left to you on this earth, Holy Mother. Do you want to die in silence? When your day of reckoning comes stand there before your maker with a gag in your mouth? How will you answer him then? In whispers? Your life's work is in danger of being cancelled out?

[127] Ibid. p. 348.
[128] Ibid. p. 361, my emphasis.

> Act now before it is too late. Let the Convent rise triumphant from the ashes of your *despair*. [129]

Volmar's ghost proposes that The Abbess, in order to return the community to the proper worship of God, exhume Albrecht and cast out his remains. Richardis sees the bending to the will of the interdict as an affront to the community's relationship with God, the ghost singing in defiance much to The Abbess's dismay and panic, despite the nun being an apparition only she can communicate with. While Volmar has a paternalistic role, the possessiveness of The Abbess's relationship with Richardis's ghostly memory leads her to lose her composure. In their differing ways, however, the spectres argue that God's authority is supreme; as a lifelong member of the Church, The Abbess sees the earthly institution of Catholicism and the heavenly role of God as being inherently linked. The Prelates, she rationalises, simply do not understand the ramifications of their interdict. These ghosts place contrary demands on The Abbess, representing her psychological conflict: to bend her principles so that her community, ultimately, benefits, or to resist so that the nuns can resume their service of God forthwith. Despair is 'the doorway to darkness'; an anchor that hearkens to the ultimate Christian future of the 'day of reckoning'. The despair created by silence, in turn, threatens to destroy her 'life's work', seven decades of devotion to God. What remains, and will remain, after The Abbess's death is the music, sang by the Brides of Christ. The chanting performs the delicate, hauntological, balance of mourning its author, drawing on the teachings of the past, and celebrating the future.

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[129] Ibid. p. 369, my emphasis

Conclusion

The postcolonial ghosts of apartheid are not leaving. And yet, it is in the (post)structure of spectrality that they offer a potential path into the future; Derrida's ghosts are the community of the dead, but also those yet to live, the latter demanding a transformation of the globalised world to a new kind of political community, that of the *alter*-global: 'For Derrida, the ghost's secret is not a puzzle to be solved; it is the structural openness or address directed towards the living by the voices of the past or the not yet formulated possibilities of the future.'[130] Frederic Jameson argues that, within postmodern societies, 'spectrality is [...] the form of the most radical politicisation and that, far from being locked into the repetitions of neurosis and obsession, it is energetically future-oriented and active.'[131] And as Frederic Jameson argues, 'The future is also spectral […] it is not at one with a present (itself 'out of joint'), it has the distance from our own plenitude of the dead and of ghosts, its blurred lineaments also swim dimly into view and announce or foretell themselves.'[132] Roelf and The Abbess are haunted by their past, but also by the prospect of what future they can see. The Abbess sees the end of her life, her community giving the comfort to her feelings of despair. Their music provides the heavenly, communal mise èn scene that brings meaning to her self-image as the lonely girl that was trapped in the anchorage with Jutta von Spanheim. The future that The Abbess dreams of is the fulfilment of her visions and the religious experience her community's choral practice affirms. Roelf takes up his shovel, ready to 'claim' the ghost that haunts him, with a hope that his life will once again have

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[130] Davis, (2005), pp. 378-9.
[131] Jameson, Frederic., 'Marx's Purloined Letter' in *Ghostly Demarcations*, ed. by Michael Sprinker, *Ghostly Demarcations*, (London: Verso, 2008) p. 59.
[132] Ibid. p. 60.

meaning and make sense. His experience is, of course, only shared with Simon, Roelf's death filling another tragic grave. Through the hauntology and storytelling of *The Train Driver*, however, Fugard can claim the story of Pumla Lolwana and the anonymous driver. If post-apartheid South Africa is a graveyard, then it is important to find and claim the stories of those who lie in it.

Sizwe Bansi had to contend with living as another man's ghost; The Abbess, with the ghosts of her own past, including her past self; Roelf Visagie learns how small and privileged he is by trying to find the ghost of Red Doek. The close readings in this chapter continually emphasise the role that burial and ghosts play in communicating the contradictory nature of postcolonial South Africa. Within these texts' staging of haunting and burial is the potential to simultaneously deal with the past, as a means of escaping the despair of the present. Burial and ghosts are a key theme within this period of Fugard's work, but so too is the role of generational passing and inheritance. Art stands, within this milieu, as a tool for breaking through. Roelf Visagie is helped by the power of dialogue, even if it leads to his death. The Abbess's music stands for the historical contribution of a strange, if familiar, voice, the revolutionary power of whom anticipated the missionary forces, that led, through settler colonialism, to the Christian institutions which are so intertwined with South African society. The endless openness to the other demanded by Jacques Derrida's spectrality bears a striking resemblance to many of Fugard's life-long projects, a career almost as long as The Abbess's. The ghostly tension between despair and hope is a dialectic at the heart of these post-apartheid texts.

Chapter Two: Power and Transformation in the South African Recycling of European classics

'…there is no objective Hamlet' – Jerzy Grotowski[1]

A significant tradition within South African political theatre is the appropriation of European texts. The idea that performance is counter-discursive is a foundational principle within postcolonial theatre's theory.[2] However, the dominant role of English literature in settler colonialism was to elevate white culture as being superior;[3] the idea that so much of European art is uniquely placed to tell 'universal' truths is a product of this hegemonic discourse. The canon is part of a philosophical 'mythology which asserts the presence of the tap root', a '*myth* of power' that works by excluding the other.[4] The idea that an elevated European canon has solely been a tool of white domination, however, does not tell the whole story. Numerous post-apartheid plays have continued the trend from the apartheid-era[5] of subverting elitism through counter-discursive processes.[6] This chapter focuses on *Molora*, by Yaël Farber, and *MacBeki*, by Pieter-Dirk Uys, plays that deftly recycle texts drawn from the

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[1] Grotowski, Jerzy., and Peter Brook, *Towards a Poor Theatre* (London: Metheun, 1975 [1968]), p. 57

[2] Gilbert, Helen., and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, practice, politics* (London: Routledge, 1996).

[3] Gilbert and Tompkins argue that: ''English Literature'', as a body of texts and a cultural ideology, 'occupied a privileged position in the colonial classroom…to 'civilise' native students by inculcating in them British tastes and values, regardless of the exigencies of the local context.', p. 15

[4] Ashcroft, Bill., *Post-Colonial Transformation* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 51., original italics.

[5] See Chapter One's analysis of *Antigone* within *The Island*.

[6] Heywood, Christopher., *A History of South African Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 79. Until the 1950s and 1960s, repertory theatre in South Africa was more-or-less the sum total of the English theatre tradition. Groups like the Serpent Players, led by Athol Fugard, demonstrated that 'classic' texts could be used to discuss the specificities and politics of the here-and-now.

Eurocentric canon to construct critical narratives of New South African politics.[7] These texts open up avenues of discussion regarding the theatricality of South Africa's post-apartheid politics, and the role that such political theatre has played in representing events. These critical, creative texts, playing with formal conventions of genre and story, turn the narratives of Aeschylus and Shakespeare into South African stories. This chapter will explore how Farber and Uys use 'classic' texts to critique the state and suggest new ways of thinking about subjectivity and politics. Uys's and Farber's changes to their source material provide a focal point for reading the plays' post-apartheid politics. The push for transformation has been a consistent impulse within South African politics, taking on divergent meanings in the contexts in which it has been applied.[8] The formal processes of theatre itself, politicised within the post-apartheid concept, speak to the transformative potential of deconstructing the canon.[9]

In Chapter One I focused on the singular career of Athol Fugard in the post-millennial period, and the ways in which spectrality and burial can be used to conceptualise post-apartheid politics. By doing so I was able to consider and recover

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[7] Farber, Yaël., *Molora*, (London: Oberon, 2008); Uys, Pieter-Dirk., *MacBeki: a farce to be reckoned with*, (Darling: Peninsula, 2009).

[8] Reddy, Thiven., 'Transformation', in *New South African Keywords*, ed. by Nick Shepherd and Steven Robins, (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2008): '[Transformation] arguably occupies centre-stage of the contemporary political terrain and, as to be expected, is the locus of intense contestation.', p. 209.

[9] Barthes, Roland., 'From Work to Text', in *Image Music Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath, (London: Fontana, 1977), p. 157. The survival of a physical text may be important, but the *process* of performing that text is all-important to its survival as a theatrical text. Roland Barthes ruminated on the intellectual difference between the ideas of work and text. Barthes defines the distinction as being that of static *versus* dynamic: 'the work can be held in the hand…*the Text is experienced only in an activity of production*.' The questioning of the author figure is an important part of this conceptual move 'from work to text', because as Barthes argues: 'The work is caught up in a process of filiation…a *conformity* of the work to the author…[who is] the reputed…father and the owner of his work.' ' This idea of 'filiation' is also bound up in the idea of fidelity, when an adapted or appropriated text must define itself against the original. The 'original' text becomes a kind of 'filiation' in itself, and the hypotext's author is its father. In contradiction, 'the Text…reads without the inscription of the Father'. Herein lies the value of judging postcolonial and South African texts as transformational, moving differentially away from the 'inscription' of imperial control. (original emphasis)

themes that criss-cross texts which have divergent settings. Throughout this thesis I argue that the definition of political theatre in contemporary South Africa is broadening in terms of subject matter and style. This chapter assesses the theme of South African deconstructions of canonical texts, as a means of exploring the theatricality of post-apartheid politics. Each play has its specific features but the intertextual links within the democratic post-apartheid theatre provide both context and the means to interpret the plays' significance on a social, political and aesthetic level.

Molora and *MacBeki* take contrasting routes through the political landscape of post-apartheid South Africa. *Molora*'s representation of truth and reconciliation and *MacBeki*'s satirisation of the political elite are as real as they are unreal. Both plays present uncanny South Africa-*s*, recognisable and yet transformed, reorganised through the logic of their central dramatic inspirations. Farber's and Uys's appropriations recode canonical texts, rewriting situations from recent South African history, creating a peculiar, uncanny process of enactment and re-enactment that speaks to the haunted nature of post-apartheid creativity.

The prevalence in contemporary culture of using a pre-existing story for a new purpose has led to the growth in theories and studies of adaptation. This creative process is certainly not unique to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, or media such as film and television. As Linda Hutcheon argues, 'every age can justify its claim to be the age of adaptation'.[10] Throughout history the most revered and canonical of artists have engaged in adaptation: 'After all, most of

[10] Hutcheon, Linda., *From Page to Stage to Screen: The Age of Adaptation* (2003) <http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca/essays/hutcheon_page_stage.pdf> [accessed 1 November 2018], p. 39.

Shakespeare's plays were adapted from other literary or historical works, but that doesn't seem to have damaged the Bard's reputation.'[11] Indeed, the process of adaptation was a way of opening up such sources to 'a largely illiterate audience', transmogrifying sources to commercial and political success, imbuing such theatre with a place in the political imaginary.[12] In the present, the cultural cachet surrounding a text like *Macbeth*, which Pieter-Dirk Uys adapts into his satire *MacBeki*, is buttressed because of its place on school curricula, augmenting the undoubted prestige given to Shakespeare in colonial culture. Classical works such as *The Oresteia*, the basis for Yaël Farber's *Molora*, have been preserved over time through repertory theatre and scholarship. J.M. Coetzee's conclusion to the central question of his lecture 'What is a Classic?' is that classics are those texts and works which have *survived* through the devotion of performers and enthusiasts keeping, for example, the music of Beethoven a living practice.[13] The classics are not a body of texts that will always be essential, but they are those that have survived the passage of time.

Adaptation is typically treated as existing along a spectrum, from works that closely replicate an original text to those which radically alter their source; and for these latter, the term 'appropriation' is often used.[14] Such adaptations have qualities which are not sufficiently explained by the mechanical definition of adaptation, as

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[11] Ibid.
[12] Dollimore, Jonathan., and Alan Sinfield, *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, 2nd edn. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994). See for further theories along these lines.
[13] Coetzee, J.M., 'What is a Classic?' in Coetzee, *Stranger Shores: essays 1986-1999*, (London: Vintage, 2002).
[14] Ibid.; Desmet, Chrysty., and Sujata Iyengar, 'Adaptation, appropriation, or what you will', *Shakespeare*, 11.1, (2015), 10-19. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17450918.2015.1012550> [accessed 1 November 2018]: 'the difference between adaptation and appropriation, from a theoretical and historical perspective, proves to be a difference in degree rather than kind'.

the 'transfer [of] a story from one medium or one genre to another'.[15] According to these established terms, the plays analysed in this study are more towards the appropriation side of the spectrum; however, as recycled texts they both have complicated and productive relationships with their source material. Given the implications of recycling and intertextuality, there is a thread running through here regarding the very nature of creativity itself, calling into question the singular model of 'originality' that can dismissively view adaptation as unimaginative, rather than a lively theatrical and political process.[16]

All of these terms are part of an evolving lexicon for scrutinizing intertextuality.[17] Theatre as a form, because of its linked textual and performative nature, is ever-adapting, fluctuating, responding and resisting. Two critical concepts are key to this chapter's reading of *MacBeki* and *Molora*'s relationships to intertextuality and power[18] – Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome,[19] and Marvin Carlson's theory of theatre's (ghostly) recycling.[20]

The rhizome is a term borrowed from botany, a subterranean plant structure which does not grow into a vertical stem or trunk. It is a poststructural metaphor

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[15] Hutcheon, Linda., 'On the Art of Adaptation', *Daedalus*, 133.2, (Spring, 2004), 108-111 (p. 108).

[16] Said, Edward W., *The World, the text, and the critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), p.138. Said, for example, argues that we should begin by foregrounding 'the shift from ['original'] inscription to parallel script' in which 'originality… now becomes a sort of faculty for combinatorial play.'

[17] Sanders, 2006, p. 1; Studies of adaptation and appropriation are, at their heart, 'an exploration of intertextuality'

[18] These meanings are sometimes contradictory and confusing; such as the idea present in both *MacBeki* and *Molora* that well-meaning, revolutionary agents can make interventions that are counter-revolutionary, creating a cynical mood akin to Sartre's 'bad faith'. Indeed, because these characters are recycled, the nature or power of transformation is thrown into question. Appropriation theorist Julie Sanders describes 'the ability of [poststructural textual] theories to destabilize the authority of the original text', a reading strategy that 'enable[s] multiple and sometimes conflicting production of meaning' (p. 3).

[19] Deleuze, Gilles., and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

[20] Carlson, Marvin., *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

explaining power as lateral and complex, shifting and changing. There is no identifiable hierarchy, beginning or end, of a rhizome and a key example that Deleuze and Guattari gave for the rhizomic is literature. Canons and literatures were typically presented as united structures, mirroring the supposed cohesiveness of Anglo-European governance.[21] The canon is a hierarchy imposed on the rhizomic network of literature. Within postcolonial theory, Bill Ashcroft argues that, '[t]he rhizome metaphor provides a complicated and less easily representable model of colonial relations than 'centre and margin' but it does accommodate the various subject positions an individual may occupy within colonial discourse'.[22] Although 'structures of power characterize *themselves* in terms of unities, hierarchies, binaries and centres', these metaphors do not accurately describe the way that power and the state operate.[23] The rhizome models literature as an ever-shifting 'assemblage' shaped by power and politics, multiplicitous and transformative.[24] Another concept which emphasises the importance of resistant, heterogeneous networks is the political theorist Paul Gilroy's concept of *The Black Atlantic*, a historical model for the 'rhizomorphic, fractal structure of the transcultural'.[25] The literature and theatre that emerges out of this nexus shows the provisional forms of a syncretic, hybrid culture, with Farber's *Molora* and Uys's *MacBeki* being exemplars of the different forms these can take. Gilroy analyses the productive transnational relationships of postcolonial contexts, as a counter to the ossification of nationalism:

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[21] Gilbert, Helen., and Joanne Tompkins, (1996).
[22] Ashcroft, Bill., *Post-colonial Transformation* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 51.
[23] Ashcroft, Bill., Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 2nd edn (Abingdon, Oxon.: Routledge, 2007), p. 191; Krueger, Anton., *Experiments in Freedom: Explorations of Identity in New South African Drama* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 37-46.
[24] Deleuze and Guattari, p. 6.
[25] Gilroy, Paul., *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, (London: Verso, 1993), p. 4.

'Regardless of their affiliation...groups have fallen back on the idea of cultural nationalism, on the overintegrated conceptions of culture which present immutable, ethnic differences as an absolute break in the histories and experiences of 'black' and 'white' people.'[26] In contrast, Gilroy proposes the counter-tradition of the differential: 'Against this choice stands another, more difficult option: the theorisation of creolisation, méttisage, mestizaje, and hybridity.'[27] Theorising this linkage in theatre, and especially the hybrid combinations of plays like *MacBeki* and *Molora* is part of this theoretical process; indeed, according to the logic of the rhizome, all texts are hybrid combinations of some kind. Transnational networks like the Black Atlantic are their own, distinct networks of intertextual relations.

Central to this chapter's reading strategy is Marvin Carlson's theory of theatre as a form defined by 'recycling': 'The theatre's reuse of already familiar narrative material is a phenomenon seemingly as old as the theatre itself'.[28] Carlson focuses on the role of 'ghosting', the semiotic and phenomenological process whereby an audience member connects the spectacle of the performance to their wider cultural understanding. Crucially, Carlson reads the history of theatre as one defined by recycling, as postmodern theatre is a style that self-consciously toys with the 'constructedness' of the form, to play with the historical descent of the ideas, motifs and elements that are re-formed into a new text: 'such a recognition of constructedness is actively pursued by the engaged theatre descended from Brecht, which has found recycling a useful tool in its project of disrupting the dreamworld of naturalism, and by the playful postmodern theatre, taking joy in the artifice of art.'[29]

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[26] Ibid., p. 2.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Carlson, (2001), p. 44.
[29] Ibid., p. 172.

From the standpoint of creators and spectators, therefore, there is a shared, 'provocative relationship between the theatre, haunting, memory, and ghosts.'[30] The challenging nature of *Molora* and *MacBeki* as provocative texts rests on their subject matter, but also with their multiplicitous, shape-shifting relationship with the re-enactment of South African contexts, memories and ghosts, and the transformation of canonical textual artefacts.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that 'A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*.'[31] So if literature is a rhizome, it is always a place of contestation, an intermediary point between the dominant and the resistant; the idea that Europe is 'a single civilization', with 'an originary classic' in the form of Virgil's *Aeneid*[32] is itself a myth that does not explain the rhizomic nature of European geography or history. The canon can be read in South Africa as both an instrument of hegemony, and an object of constant deconstruction. As the prominent postcolonial theorist Bill Ashcroft argues: 'This is why a binary model of resistance [and control] can contend with no more than the myth of power, the myth of the tap root of cultural identity and the 'trunk' of cultural control.'[33] The texts by Uys and Farber go beyond this myth, designed as conscious assemblages of 'classic' stories and South African specificities. These texts push the postcolonial tradition of the counter-discursive, towards using these stories to think about power and transformation. As the Adaptation Studies scholar Julie Sanders argues, 'the inherent intertextuality of literature encourages the ongoing, evolving production of meaning, and an ever-expanding network of textual

[30] Ibid., p. xi.
[31] Deleuze and Guattari, (1987), p. 25.
[32] Coetzee, (2002), p. 1.
[33] Bill Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Transformation*, (London: Routledge 2001), p. 53.

relations.'[34]

In post-apartheid South Africa, the canon has been a consistent source of appropriation and recycling. Practitioners have reworked canonical frames of reference, the texts and situations of Eurocentric canonical texts, to create politically vital 'original' South African plays.[35] Through the vicissitudes of time, Coetzee concludes, tentatively, that 'we arrive at a certain paradox. The classic defines itself by surviving. Therefore the interrogation of the classic, no matter how hostile, is part of the history of the classic'.[36] Farber and Uys's appropriations are, by the definition of Coetzee, 'part of the history of the classic', because they are 'interrogation[s]' of the original stories.

2.1 Pieter-Dirk Uys: recycling, satire and fear

The Afrikaner-Jewish political satirist Pieter-Dirk Uys came to national prominence in the 1970s and 1980s, first as part of the dissident club theatre, The Space, in Cape Town and later on The Market Theatre stage in Johannesburg. Through a varied cast of characters – most prominently the 'most famous white woman in South Africa' Evita Bezuidenhout – Uys mocked and exposed the powerful as charlatans.[37] Uys was both a performer and writer, becoming the face of his own

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[34] Sanders, Julie., *Adaptation and Appropriation*, (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 3.
[35] In the sense of 'combinatorial play', see Edward Said (1983), quoted in f.n. 16.
[36] Coetzee, (2002), p. 19.
[37] Uys's performance style meant that he would frequently impersonate powerful politicians, exploiting his Afrikaner heritage to provide a critique of apartheid's nationalist governing forces from within the postcolonial Dutch community; Uys, Pieter-Dirk., *Evita's Free Speech* (2015-), <https://www.youtube.com/user/EvitaSePerron> [accessed 1 November 2018].
Evita is an avuncular character, an Afrikaner traditionalist and nationalist, played by Pieter-Dirk Uys as a foil for critiquing his own culture, and the tone of National Party politicians. Depicted as an ambassador to a fictional black homeland, Evita's political 'career' is laced with irony and sarcasm,

personal brand of political comedy. His relationship to the establishment was as contradictory and rhizomic as the satirical theatre for which he has become a national celebrity in the arts. He was prominent enough that government ministers would attend performances at the Market Theatre, when he was an adult. But this was an association with the powerful that started in his childhood. As a choir boy, he writes in his 2005 autobiography, 'I used to sing in my father's choir in the Dutch Reformed Church in Rondebosch. Prime Minister Verwoerd and his wife Betsie would sit in the pews and listen intently. They were fans. I have letters to prove it'.[38] Family connections linked him to the National Party's uppermost echelon, his father being a first cousin of Prime Minister D.F. Malan, a key architect of apartheid. As a dissident theatre-maker, Uys was a constant thorn in the side of the government's censor board, using the farcically pompous dogma of Afrikanerdom to undermine itself.[39] Through his playful satire, bawdy and serious, the outlawing of political opposition was confronted by the materiality and politics of theatrical practice.

As a BA student at the University of Cape Town (UCT), Uys transitioned towards studying drama, initially gaining a foothold through stage management at the department's Little Theatre, the venue that, with UCT students as the cast, premiered *MacBeki* in February 2009. It was the scene at the Little Theatre that

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all delivered in a friendly, yet straight-faced persona. She has become one of the most popular characters within Uys's repertoire, 'joining' the ANC during the democratisation process. Uys has been producing regular videos in-character as Evita, commenting on topical news stories as part of the *Evita's Free Speech* series on YouTube since October 2015, available at:

[38] Uys, Pieter-Dirk., *Between the Devil and the Deep: A Memoir of Acting and Reacting*, (Cape Town: Random House Struik, 2005). Kindle Edition, Kindle Locations 403-416.

[39][Quoting Brian Astbury's out-of-print text about the history of The Space Theatre] 'We revived [*Selle ou Storie*] later that year, when it began its battle with the censors. The first skirmish was the most reasonable, a No-Children-under-18 restriction, only when it moved away from The Space. Later the script was banned when the production reached the more uptight north, though you could see the production. Still, later, this too was banned. It became some ridiculous farce from which, with his usual quick sense of humour, Pieter made much capital.' Ibid., (Kindle Locations 662-665).

allowed the young Uys to reconcile his nationalist background with the alternative scene that he was part of day-to-day:

> My life was going one way and my soul the other. Theatre reflected truth and exposed the inhumanity of man towards men. But outside the theatre, the inhumanity of my so-called Christian society overpowered everything. Theatre was giving me a standard for life and proving that my own life was found wanting.[40]

Uys's language, describing the push and pull that he felt, is rhizomic. His sense of identity and his personal history arose out of racism; yet, he saw the culture's structural, moral bankruptcy. The competing self-images of his divine soul, as defined by the Calvinist Dutch Reformed Church, and his performative life in theatre could not be reconciled.[41] An honest, open commentator, Uys has continued his sense of responsibility into the post-apartheid scene. The Porter, a self-reflexive character representing Uys, appears in the post-apartheid play *MacBeki* as an out-of-work comedian.[42] His trademark comedy feels strangely at home within a nightmarish vision of post-apartheid South Africa's ruling party, but reduced to the meagre role of government/royal court fool. Built on the ephemeral culture of the

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[40] Ibid. Locations 403-416

[41] 'How can I – and so many of us – brought up in a racist society, strengthened by racist education and, in my case, a racist Dutch Reformed Church that preached and taught the superiority of a white skin and a Eurocentric heritage, pretend not to be in complete understanding of the strength of prejudice? And so, like an alcoholic who doesn't drink any more, I have to start my day admitting: Yes, I am one. I am a racist, therefore I will not be a racist. And it is a full-time job to fight the ease of prejudice and the casualness of inflicting pain through careless words.' Ibid. (Kindle Locations 1011-1015)

[42] Uys (2009), p. v. Uys remarks in his playwright's note that *MacBeki*'s opening production, in early 2009, was the first time that he was solely a writer of a theatre work, not directing or acting in the play. The student cast from UCT followed in Uys's own footsteps, a conscious decision by Uys himself to contact his *alma mater*.

time, such as newspaper storms around political scandals charting the rise and fall of reputations, *MacBeki* is an uncanny combination of Shakespeare's tragic plot and a twisted cast drawn from the ANC's highest echelons. The play's comedic re-enactment of the ANC's politics through the 2000s interweaves the traditionally contrasting modes of tragedy and farce. *MacBeki*'s rhizomorphic assemblage of satire and political re-enactment casts as intense a gaze on the ruling elite as his apartheid-era work.

When the now-legendary Space Theatre was first gaining its reputation after opening in 1972, it was the group's version of Shakespeare's *Othello* that first caught the ire of censors.[43] In The Space's opening year, *Othello – Slegs Blankes* (*Othello – Whites Only*) took apartheid's racial ideology to heart.[44] As Uys writes, there was: 'Not enough cage-rattling to attract official attention, until *Othello – Slegs Blankes* caused an uproar. In those days, a black Othello would not be allowed to appear on stage with a white Desdemona. So in this version the Moor didn't show up. And that was the play! Othello for Whites Only!'[45] Shakespeare was venerated as a cornerstone of Eurocentric culture, by an intellectual culture that had deemphasized the politicized elements of plays like *Othello*. *Othello Slegs Blankes* took the logic of Eurocentric, organic nationalist politics to a logical conclusion.

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[43] The venue opened with the production of Fugard's workshop play *Statements After an Arrest Under the Immorality Act*, a provocative play that set the stall for plays that would confront the state's racial laws.

[44] ESAT, *Othello* (2018), <http://esat.sun.ac.za/index.php?title=Othello> [accessed 1 November 2018]. Written and directed by Donald Howarth, *Othello – Slegs Blankes* was a production that showed how The Space as a collective of dissident performers could actively undermine the racialized culture of white superiority. The play is unpublished, typical of the less well known examples of anti-apartheid theatre. Shakespeare's *Othello* has a long history within South African theatre; it was not until 1986, 14 years after Howarth's play, that the first black Othello appeared on the South African stage, in Janet Suzman's production starring John Kani. Unlike Howarth's work, Suzman's production was filmed for BBC and has subsequently been released on DVD.

[45] Uys, (2005), (Kindle Locations 469-477).

Uys's first 'successful' play was *Selle ou Storie*, which toured the country in 1974 with Uys as writer-director, battling with censors along the way.[46] Strangely, the scrutiny of the state did not always comprehend the political sophistication of the theatre that it was attempting to police.[47] Apartheid-era South Africa was a democracy deliberately designed to be for the 'few', a contradiction in terms that only made sense because of racial ideology. The way in which racism was *unconsciously* shaped into discourse within the white community is recalled by Uys, taking his own childhood as the basis for social commentary:

> Racism. There was no explanation for that word when I was a child, growing up with white supremacy the segregated oxygen of life. South Africa was a democracy for white people only. 'How many people live in South Africa?' the nine-year-old boy would ask. 'Four million people live in South Africa, Pieter,' his uncle would reply. 'But what about the other millions?' 'We're talking about people, Pieter.'[48]

Just as *MacBeki* theatricalized and Shakespeareanized the ANC's leading cast, Uys also mocked the National Party through the lens of comedic recycling during apartheid. One of his favourite satirical subjects, the then-foreign minister 'Pik'

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[46] Uys (2005), (Kindle Locations 5559-5580). Uys's first play was *Faces on the Wall,* produced in his time at film school in London in 1969. It was later performed at The Space (1973) and The Market (1980). Uys was writer-director of all three productions.

[47] Ibid., (Kindle Locations 660-670): 'Following *Selle ou Storie:* Ironically, my next play, *God's Forgotten*, was never deemed offensive or obscene, nor subversive in any way. It was, in fact, the most dangerous of my new plays, focusing on Afrikaner politics and the future of the Boer dream. '*God's Forgotten* is probably Pieter's bleakest, strongest play to date,' writes Brian [Astbury]**.** 'A vision of South Africa after an unsuccessful revolution – totally cut off from the world – its prophecies started to come true with discomforting regularity.

[48] Ibid., (Kindle Locations 970-978).

Botha, was transformed into Prince Hamlet in the 1982 satirical revue *Adapt or Dye*.[49] The existential fear of the Prince was reworked via the apartheid government's politics of fear, surrounding the war in Namibia. The existential playfulness of Shakespeare's character is stripped of its vulnerability by Pik's Hamlet.

Figure 2.1. Uys, Pieter-Dirk., 'Adapt or Dye, 'ADAPT OR DYE at the Market Theatre 1982' [screen capture]', (2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-qb3bZf5uM> [accessed 1 November 2018]. 51:30-56:15.

Pik's Hamlet adopts stereotypically Shakespearean speech, interweaving familiar lines with seamless, contemporary political references. He dismissively names political enemies, acknowledging their existence, yet trivialising them as he makes himself the centre of all political attention. There is a touch of insecurity to Uys's performance, an acknowledgment of the ridiculousness of Pik Botha's high cultural elevation as Hamlet. Mentioning ANC politicians was a dangerous act for a theatre-maker, and yet, Pik/Hamlet is able to unite an existential angst with the (ironic) disgust directed at the opposition: 'Namibia! United Nations! […] Pah! Mandela!

[49] Uys, Pieter-Dirk., *Adapt or Dye*, 'ADAPT OR DYE at the Market Theatre 1982', (2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-qb3bZf5uM> [accessed 1 November 2018]. 51:30-56:15.

Buthulezi! Tutu! *Tutu?!* O-oh that this too, too solid flesh would melt!' Pik/Hamlet's ambiguity, particularly in the possible rendering of the line as 'too, too' and/or 'Tutu', intertwines the act of impersonation with meta-theatrically Shakespearean wordplay. This performance, in many ways, anticipates the text of *MacBeki* two and a half decades later.

Most of all, in his reading of a newspaper, Pik/Hamlet also prefigures the role of the three newspaper reporters in *MacBeki*, as the Witches. The dismissive tone used as he names his political opponents betrays his obsessiveness with the mass media's portrayal of his government and their enemies. Similarly, MacBeki is swayed by the rumours spread by the three journalists. MacBeki, a fan of the Bard, sees these characters as akin to Shakespeare's witches. They do not claim to be mystics, yet MacBeki places faith in their knowledge, because those rumours confirm MacBeki's own conspiratorial and paranoid mindset. Further, Pik's cloaked costume, wig and false pencil moustache create a sense of absurdity, an uncanny doubling of a character as both a highly familiar politician (Pik) and a canonical character (the Prince). This skit within 1982's *Adapt or Dye*, in hindsight, provides many templates for the interplay of the tragic and farcical in *MacBeki*, produced twenty-seven years later. The untouchable position of the ruling parties of the apartheid and post-apartheid eras provided the cultural context for the conflict between the activity of Uys's satire and the theatricality of state power. Crucially, in Uys's hands the creative process of recycling becomes a means of satirizing the powerful, undermining their hegemonic legitimacy in the eyes of the satire's audience.

Watching the once-cutting edge satire of *Adapt or Dye* has now become a historical exercise for South Africans to look back in hindsight at a highly volatile

period. The revue was re-broadcast on television during the 1990s; in an introductory monologue, Uys urges his audience to 'look back, not in anger but with humour. After all, we're still here. So as long as we can laugh at our past fears, those future fears will hopefully never become fearful again.' [50] A major subject of Pieter-Dirk Uys's satire and theatre is 'fear' – a theme that has continually appeared in the language of Uys's autobiography, and now of *Adapt or Dye*'s recording. Uys's political satire has, in a fashion that has evolved alongside the contexts of the apartheid and the post-apartheid, been an attempt to square the experience of fear by audiences and the politicians that have benefited from its effect:

> But laughing at fear can make that fear less fearful. Never less lethal. It can still kill and destroy, but at least one is more in charge of it and not its victim. Racism needs to be outed with brutal humour and then hung there from the tallest lamppost for all to see. Only then can we realise how flimsy and pathetic it is. And how destructive it was when it was kept secretly in the dark, usually by politicians who knew how to use it to their own advantage. [51]

The social construction of race, typified in the twentieth century by the Afrikaner Nationalist fear of the other, rhizomically spread throughout South African culture and politics, leaving nothing unconnected. The alternative paths that run alongside

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[50] Ibid., It is difficult to find an exact date, but Uys says in his monologue that the period of 1980-1982, the politics of which formed the subject of *Adapt or Dye*'s sketches was 'over ten years ago'. The entire revue was an exercise in contradicting apartheid and conservative culture generally. It was, for example, 'Written, Directed and Produced in Both Official Languages and Sexes by Pieter-Dirk Uys's (1:39). This made a mockery of the meaning of the state's 'official languages' that did not acknowledge the speech patterns of the majority of the population, and the general subversiveness attached to Uys's (then-iconic) drag performance as the fictional National Party figure Evita Bezuidenhout.

[51] Uys, (2005), Kindle Locations 1015-1023.

these, of hybridity, transforms these histories into a space of reworking. The re-enactments of *Molora* and *MacBeki* plug into these pathways as texts, rerouting and resituating established, recognisable situations, characters and fears. For Uys this rerouting has always been for comedy; a macabre humour with the central awareness of the deadliness of the joke's subject (a key example of such deathly humour in *MacBeki* is the barely spoken about denial of AIDS; the hollowing out of the ANC leadership's authority as a result of denialism).

Like Athol Fugard, Pieter-Dirk Uys initially saw the end of apartheid as a kind of retirement. In his obituary of Nelson Mandela, Uys wrote that, 'On 27 April 1994 I celebrated the fact that I had lost my job… [but that] job was easy as I had an entire National Party government writing me all my material.'[52] Fast-forward to the mid-to-late 2000s, and Uys was once again a prominent critic of South Africa's government. As the new establishment, the ANC had become akin to a ruling dynasty. President Thabo Mbeki, along with the health minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang had taken the official position that HIV and AIDS were not medically related[53]. This led to a long impasse, where the government did not provision life-extending Anti-Retroviral (ARV) treatment. HIV/AIDS has affected South Africa so greatly in the post-apartheid period that prominent scholars like Nicoli Nattrass have argued that: 'AIDS is different because it is a public health crisis, which not only has deep social roots, but challenges the very notion of what it means to be a society.'[54] Because of the national debates surrounding the importance of transformation post-apartheid, and

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[52] Uys, Pieter-Dirk., 'Nelson Mandela made me lose my job', (2013) <http://www.thesouthafrican.com/nelson-mandela-made-me-lose-me-my-job-pieter-dirk-uys/> [accessed 7 June 2015].

[53] NB: The contextual role of Mbeki's 'denialism' is immensely important; see Chapter 3 for further analysis as to how this 'denial' operates on the level of an individual character, and the representation of HIV/AIDS sickness and treatment.

[54] Nattrass, Nicoli., *The Moral Economy of AIDS in South Africa*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 189.

the widespread politicisation that the resistance to apartheid produced, South Africans are highly familiar with arguing about 'what it means to be a society'. As part of an excoriating letter to Mbeki, delivered via the South African media, Uys controversially accused the Mbeki administration of 'genocide' via the denial of HIV/AIDS. Uys responded to his critics by arguing that: 'The national comprehensive strategy is starting to look like a systematic, planned extermination of an entire group of South Africans: those who are poor! The new apartheid has already established itself. Black and white South Africans with money will live. Those without money will have no access to medicines. They will die.'[55] Uys, through his theatre, educational work and journalism, has cut to the heart of this debate. His work in HIV/AIDS has tended to take an educational approach, performing at schools to demystify the subject, and encourage the use of preventive contraception by both men and women.[56] Uys's educational performances centre on tackling fear through the encouragement of care and self-awareness.

While the HIV/AIDS crisis is a presence within *MacBeki*, the politicians are much more concerned by their personal greed and ambition. The denialism of the connections between HIV and AIDS means that the issue is marginalised within *MacBeki*, a subtle process that calls attention to the way in which the Mbeki government disengaged from solving the health crisis. Familiar tropes from the time appear, such as the ridiculous, yet official, policy that a traditional African diet could cure the disease. HIV/AIDS is therefore both present and non-present within *MacBeki*, represented as a mysterious force sweeping the country that the King and

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[55] Uys, Pieter-Dirk., 'Time to Go, Mr President!' (2003) <http://pdu.co.za/articles%20by%202003-1.html> [accessed: 19 November 2016].

[56] 'Darling! The Pieter-Dirk Uys Story', dir. by Julian Shaw (Umbrella Productions, 2007). I.e. condoms and femidoms, the latter of which is the subject of a significant part of Shaw's documentary (2007), emphasising that, in the context of a patriarchal society, young women need to be made to realise they have the power to control their own health.

Queen deliberately do not acknowledge. It is not until the conference at the climax of the play, when the remaining members of the party leadership, represented by a Winnie Mandela figure, decide that the policy must change so that the state recognizes that HIV leads to AIDS (that 'A' results in 'B'), opening the way for Anti-Retroviral treatment. MacBeki is still present, but now he is the one who is ignored:

> WINNIE. And then most urgently, it must be official: A leads to B. (*Applause from all.*) And it results in C. We will no longer cure with beetroots.
>
> MACBEKI. How could I have said those things. I don't know anyone who is suffering from A or B. Or anyone who has died of C!
>
> WINNIE. No one needs to die of C. There are medications. There might not be one single cure, but there is Care![57]

The formula of 'A to B to C' was initially defined in an exchange between Lady Manta and MacBeki.[58] Manta, as the health minister, leads MacBeki astray while buttressing her own, personal grip on power, in a scene that mirrors Lady Macbeth's infamous emasculation of her husband:

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[57] Uys, *MacBeki*, p. 85.

[58] The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator, *ABC Guidance #1 For United States Government In-Country Staff and Implementing Partners: Applying the ABC Approach To Preventing Sexually-Transmitted HIV Infections Within The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief* (2006) <https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pcaab411.pdf> [accessed 1 November 2018]. Nb.: The motif of 'ABC' is a reference to the controversial USAID policy programme of 'Abstinence, Be faithful, correct and consistent Condom use', a strategy pushed by various American administrations that was popularised, particularly, in Uganda within Africa.

LADY M. Have we ever tasted autumn yet? Did I not say be humble and helpful in the shadows of power and so learn all there is to use against those ahead of you? And you did. And today they fear you more than the plague? Did I not say the contentious A does not lead to the destructive B?

MACBEKI. But hundreds of our people are dying of something.

LADY M. And see how easily thousands can be removed without a finger to point at us, because it is all natural and incurable. My good Lord, do not underestimate my magic potions. Who needs poor or sick, lame or lazy? Yes, the contentious A leads to the destructive B, which then adds up to deadly C. C stands for the corpses which will become rich earth to give bloom to the new world. Our new world. Besides, whatever evil that happens to the kingdom, we can blame the servants for.[59]

The 'C' of HIV stands for corpses, as opposed to caring, because the conspiracy is a means of killing the poorest in society, who are no longer needed in a political world ruled by vested elites like Manta and MacBeki, career politicians who have come of age politically in a country where political struggle is no longer deemed necessary. By talking about 'ABC' instead of 'HIV', there is a sense that AIDS is an elephant in the room, a context deeply understood by its audience that are confronted by the dispassionate lack of care in politicians' egotistical plotting. The crucial differences in the play's definitions of 'C' – as corpses or as care – critiques

[59] Uys, *MacBeki*, p. 17.

the ANC's necropolitical approach to HIV/AIDS in the Mbeki era. The government's authority means that the disease can shift from a deathly policy, which eradicates the poor, working class, to one that responds using the more expected strategies of a government to a pandemic.

2.2 'To be or not to be porter to this lot'

MacBeki is a text predicated on self-conscious recycling and spectating. The two principle characters of *Macbeth* are the titular Lord and his wife Lady Macbeth; here, these roles are seized by MacBeki and Lady Manta.[60] The tragic flaw of both Shakespeare and Uys's characters is in the selfish pursuit of power. Senior ANC figures like Cyril Ramaphosa and Nelson Mandela had, in the 1990s, credited the movement as a whole with success, stressing the danger and inaccuracy of 'personalising' the achievements of the struggle in an individualist narrative.[61] The fantasy of an individual seizing power in *Macbeth* is transformed by Uys's satire, becoming a play about the dramatic failure of social justice in the post-apartheid project.

The character of MacBeki, as a reworking of Macbeth, is flanked throughout by a new character, expanded from Shakespeare's play, the Porter. Shakespeare's Porter is a comedic interloper marking the murder of Duncan and the rise of King

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[60] I.e. President Thabo Mbeki and health minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang).

[61] Uys, Pieter-Dirk., 'Evita Bezuidenhout interviews Cyril Ramaphosa – 1994' (2014), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FcrYlrLs6w [Accessed 1 November 2018]; Uys, Pieter-Dirk., Evita Bezuidenhout interviews President Nelson Mandela 17 November 1994', (2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tjUhwYr48vE> [Accessed 1 November 2018], 'Well I don't think it is fair to personalise the achievements that we have made during 1994. Those achievements would not have been possible without the sacrifices that were made by a *long* line of freedom fighters who never gave up, and who came out into the streets and demonstrated. Who were shot at and killed by the racist apartheid police […] it is the results of their sacrifices that is responsible for 1994. But also *all* sectors of South Africa have contributed'.

Macbeth, a drunk doorman who hears the eerie knocking, responding for his own amusement as if he is the gatekeeper of hell. The Porter has a controversial, complex place within Shakespeare's editorial history. In some editions of *Macbeth,* the scenes with the Porter were edited out, because they were considered false additions to the play's script, implying that the Porter's comedic role within the tragic *Macbeth* was not 'worthy' of Shakespeare.[62] Within the history of *Macbeth* the Porter has had a shifting status of presence and absence in the text, a kind of importance that has followed into Uys's recycling of the character.[63] In *MacBeki* the Porter is a crucial figure, tying together the play and providing a constant stream of commentary and assistance to the political farce. This Porter is a simulacrum of Pieter-Dirk Uys, a down-on-his-luck comedian who finds himself questioning, in Shakespearean lexicon evocative of Pik's Hamlet: 'To be or not to be Porter to this lot.'[64] The role of Uys as the Porter in the play is a commentary on the potentially disempowered role for comedians and satirists in a humourless political system. The Porter represents what practitioners like Uys could be reduced to. Alone, the paranoid Manta, on learning that the Porter is a comedian by trade, remarks that 'House-clowns are the last thing we need. Because they sit at the foot of the throne, they see the small cracks of corruption appear first.' [65] The conspiratorial, self-

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[62] Harcourt, John B., 'I Pray You, Remember the Porter', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 12.4, (1961), 393-402; Foucault, Michel., 'What is an Author?', in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch, trans. by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, (London: W.W. Norton, 2001), p. 1622-1636 for the 'author function' theory.

[63] To recapitulate the arguments regarding the Porter's textual history within Shakespeare is beyond the scope of this study; however, as indicated here, it ties rather nicely with Pieter-Dirk Uys's *MacBeki*'s treatment of the character, justifying a separate analysis. The anecdotal and historical importance of the Porter is, however, noteworthy and gives a sense of context to Uys's appropriation. Indeed, as opposed to the traditional debates surrounding the Porter's introduction of comedy to a tragedy, *MacBeki* is a comedy through-and-through (albeit with a politically tragic subject matter).

[64] Uys, *MacBeki*, p. 23.

[65] Ibid., p. 39. Dialogue by Lady M.

consciously corrupt nature of 'MacBekivellian' politics is thrown open by humour, threatening to reveal the cronyist nature of the (supposedly) rational, enlightened liberal nationalist politics of MacBeki's government.

While Mbeki's ANC did not openly censor satirists, when the issue of AIDS and the President was publicly debated by Uys, he was belittled in a 2003 *ad hominem* press release by one of Mbeki's political allies, Essop Pahad, attempting to defang Uys as an irrelevance from the apartheid past.[66] This symbolised the growing distance between the leadership and Uys, whose reputation as the leading satirist of his generation in South Africa was exploited by Pahad. What Pahad's discourse does not acknowledge, however, are the myriad postcolonial implications of the post-apartheid context, especially the Mbeki-era HIV/AIDS crisis, as complicating factors to narratives of democratisation.

As a satirist, Uys has made a career of transforming such public characters into caricatures, extracting the grotesque from public images. His father became a member of the country's Censor Board during apartheid, an experience that led to the repairing of a torn relationship:

> Thanks to my Pa getting onto the censor board as a censor, I started laughing too. He couldn't believe what arseholes they were. He invited me for lunch. We started reconciling. He said: Don't be scared of these people. Make fun of them. The weapon had been found. Humour is the ultimate sword of

[66] Cowell, Alan., 'Satirist of apartheid finds new target', *The New York Times,* 23 October 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/23/theater/satirist-of-apartheid-finds-new-target.html> [accessed 1 October 2016]: 'Mr. Mbeki's office responded dismissively. "House clowns in any democracy have some mainly amusement value," Essop Pahad, a government minister, wrote in a response to Mr. Uys's letter. "Uys's satire did have a useful influence on enlightenment in the days when there was a total absence of democracy in South Africa, and his lampooning had something to do with helping to change attitudes away from apartheid and repression."'

revenge.[67]

The Porter's power lies in the humour that he generates, observing the powerful first-hand. The politics may unfold without his gaze, but the flamboyant theatricality that the character brings makes a farce out of the political drama for the benefit of the audience. This irony is immensely productive, feeding off a political situation that, in the last throes of the Mbeki government, changed day-to-day. There is a contradiction, or paradox, operating here, that plays with the comparison of the real South Africa and Uys's satirical South Africa. Rather than being outright illegal, the critiques of figures like Uys in the real South Africa were, of course, cutting, but they had a diminished role compared to those enjoyed during the time when the strategy of using 'culture as a weapon' was key to the anti-apartheid movement's strategy. The Porter's diminished sense of worth as a contributor to the public life of South Africa echoes the form's crisis of confidence in itself regarding following the transition to post-apartheid. The sense that theatre had a key role in transforming society has been hampered by the nostalgia for a time when simply creating anti-racial art was a radical activity.[68] While there are fascinating dialectical parallels between Pieter-Dirk Uys's apartheid-era and post-apartheid era work, *Adapt or Dye* compared with *MacBeki*, the New South African arts scene has been defined by the underfunding of the arts rather than censorship.[69]

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[67] Uys, (2005), Kindle Locations 1645-1648.

[68] van Graan, Mike., 'From Protest Theatre to the Theatre of Conformity?', *South African Theatre Journal,* 20.1, (2006), 276-288.

[69] The biggest sea change being the growing importance of arts festivals. See Chapter Four of this thesis.

The Porter's personal experience of a post-apartheid transformation is one of deterioration, forced to chase meaningless arts awards and the most menial of roles, that of the seemingly-unimportant Porter. His brand of comedy is impossible in the litigious land of MacBeki, a censorious threat that goes a step beyond the Mbeki administration's public distaste for the humour of Uys.[70] Lady Manta and the Porter have an exchange where he tells her, point blank, that he used to be a famous comedian. She soon defangs him:

> PORTER. I used to tell jokes about politicians.
>
> LADY M. Well, my dear, you won't get away with that here. We'll just employ the best lawyer in the land and sue you for 5 million a cartoon.
>
> PORTER. Is there no freedom of speech in our kingdom, my Lady?
>
> LADY M. There is a lot of freedom, darling, but as far as speech is concerned, terms and conditions apply. [71]

Macbeth is 'a play about deterioration'[72]; in its own way, so is *MacBeki*. In the hands of the humourless MacBeki and Manta, the country becomes a decaying land where nothing makes sense, and the government does not know, or care about, what is happening. No-one is murdered; all of MacBeki's schemes result in his rivals abandoning the ship of state to do something else. King Maduba becomes a worldwide celebrity, his only worry being the constant irritation of being around Celine Dion; Lord Ramabanquo is the figurehead for the Black Economic

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[70] See fn. 66.
[71] *MacBeki*, pp. 38-39.
[72] Ingham, Rosemary., *From Page to Stage: how theatre designers make connections between scripts and images*, (Portsmouth, NH.: Heinemann, 1998), p. 163. Quotation of Kurt Daw, director, in conversation.

Empowerment (BEE) policy, his political ambitions captured by the temptation of three businessmen, not murderers. As the paratextual description of the play reads, 'Unlike Shakespeare, Pieter-Dirk Uys does not spill blood in his play. He spills the beans. He challenges political correctness and sycophantic denialism. He makes us laugh at the transparency of the ruling elite who lie to protect themselves at all costs and so dig an ever-deeper trench in which they inevitably will fall.'[73] The politicians in this media-obsessed country dig their own graves. But because of the way in which the ruling party provides a platform of collective leadership, no individual mistake is truly punished. Every scandal becomes a show for the next set of leaders to differentiate themselves from their party colleagues. In *MacBeki,* the populist Lord MacZum is able to sweep into power, carrying a machine gun like a revolutionary, and yet never once using it to take power. The politics of this ruling elite are pure theatre. The broken Lord MacBeki, ready to share the heroic fate of his Elizabethan dramatic precursor, is ultimately shuffled off: 'In my play no one dies; they go back into the collective leadership.'[74] Meanwhile, the policies that determine the fate of the country at large are decided at the drop of a hat.

There is a motif within versions of *Macbeth* in the twentieth century that undermines the traditional focus of the end of the play, wherein the 'good king' Malcolm is crowned and order is immediately, miraculously restored. In Roman Polanski's 1971 film, scripted by Polanski and the critic/writer Kenneth Tynan, Prince Donalbain encounters the witches at the end of the play, hinting that the mystics will once again trigger a violent revolution within the state.[75] In the absurdist

[73] Uys, *MacBeki*, p. x.
[74] Ibid., p. vi
[75] 'The Tragedy of Macbeth', dir. by Roman Polanski (Colombia Pictures, 1971).

playwright Eugène Ionesco's *Macbett*, premiered in 1972, the heir to the dead-Macbett's throne promises to be a greater monster than the usurper.[76] Continuing this tradition within recycled *Macbeth*s, Lord MacZum, a facsimile of Jacob Zuma, promises to replace MacBeki as leader. A grotesque character who promises to lead the people, yet also claims that showers protect him from venereal disease, his rallying cries promise a new phase of farce-meets-tragic politics. Shakespeare's Malcolm, as the reconciliatory ruler led by the divine right of kings, was written to resemble King James I of England; what these more recent interpretations of the succession have shown is a greater distrust of ruling classes, who are clearly motivated solely by the desire for power, rather than because they seem particularly well-suited to rule. In the South African context, the infamy of Zuma, even before he was President, anticipated that the post-apartheid malaise that deepened during the Mbeki era would continue and mutate. *MacBeki*, as a satire of the 2000s, demonstrates the mood associated with that decade compared to the mid to late 1990s. An AIDS denying President was being succeeded by one who was both accused of rape, and publicly stated that taking a post-coital shower would prevent infection. The ANC's collective leadership system, in the world of *MacBeki*, precludes the succession of a truly good leader led by virtue, because every one of the ANC is as corruptible as each other. Even the old King, modelled on Mandela, is powerless to deliver more than platitudes, dominated by the materialism of celebrity culture.

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[76] Ionesco, Eugène., *Exit the King, The Killer and Macbett: Three plays by Eugène Ionesco*, trans. by Charles Marowitz and Donald Watson, (New York: Grove Press, 1985).

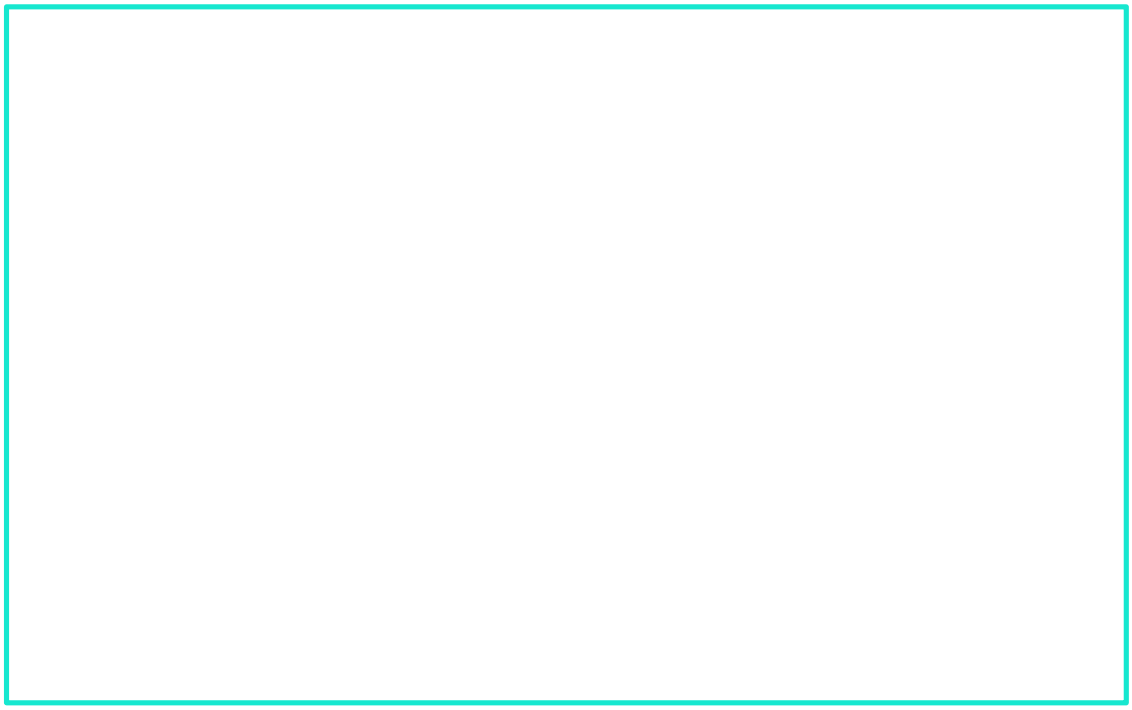

Figure 2.2 Bishop, Leigh., 'MacBeki [production photograph]', (2008) <https://www.leighbishop.co.za/theatre> [accessed 1 November 2018].

The Porter is, paradoxically, the most important character within the satire and the least important. He speaks directly to the audience, inviting them to the show, insinuating himself within many servile niches of political life. He represents those standing outside the ruling class, employed to follow their charades in person, and constrained from creating routines that tell of what he sees. A deliberately marginalised fool, the Porter's presence is not necessary for the farce to unfold. The irony of MacBeki is that comedy is kept at bay by the litigious state, yet this litigiousness is an aspect of a generally farcical form of statecraft. While the other characters are dressed in costumes highly-reminiscent of their real-life counterparts, the Porter is fully immersed in the Shakespearean pastiche. The clown makeup emphasises his whiteness, a figure unable to benefit from the BEE feast.[77] The

[77] Ibid., p. 47. 'Ramab.: I curse you for diverting my passion to serve my land. I am now a Fat Cat! MacBeki, I see you'.

Porter explains this directly to the audience, partly recycling Shakespeare's dialogue:

> PORTER. I pray you, remember the Porter. When nominations are announced for theatre awards throughout the land, remember me. An example of the surfeit of transformation in theatre. Not only do I have so little to say, but I have to bring my own costume and food. I studied Shakespeare and know the style […] Were I a politician, I would be within wearing the latest BBBEEE-bling. Woe oh woe, I am of the lighter ethnic hue. There is no part available for me, other than that of Porter.

The South Africa of *MacBeki* is an absurdist kingdom, where political revolution means nothing, and yet hundreds of thousands die of a 'mysterious' virus. There can be a 'surfeit of transformation in theatre', where awards can proliferate and old artists are forgotten. The Porter's phrase ironises the populist fear that whites have been excluded because of black empowerment (like the 'BBBEEE-bling'), critiquing the post-apartheid transformation's focus on creating a neoliberal black middle class, rather than solving issues for the poor. The debacle around HIV/AIDS was what soured the relationship between Pieter-Dirk Uys and the ANC; when they came to power, prominent figures, including the President and (future President) Cyril Ramaphosa had appeared in Uys's *Funigalore* television series of interviews featuring the larger-than-life character Evita Bezuidenhout.[78] The changing cast of the political leadership, in real life as in *MacBeki*, changed the focuses for Uys's

[78] Uys, Pieter-Dirk., 'Evita Bezuidenhout interviews Cyril Ramaphosa – 1994', (2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FcrYlrLs6w> [Accessed 1 November 2018].

satire. In many ways it was well-trodden ground, the same sense of humourless absurdity mocked by revues like *Adapt or Dye* in the 1980s. MacBeki is a pathetic revolutionary because he has no moral centre or project other than his own importance. His political ally, Lady Manta, is a bizarre alcoholic who masterminds the removal of King Maduba. She dies of liver failure, a result of alcohol abuse, so readily available because of her wealth and importance. Uys's satire is fuelled by the real minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang being a ripe subject for satire. The devout Manto, for example, believed that AIDS 'could also be a God-given opportunity for moral and spiritual growth, a time to review our assumptions about sin and morality'.[79] Uys's Lady Manta has no such religious conservative statements to make; instead, she sees AIDS as an opportunity to form a class that will, because of the manipulation of the populace, always keep her and MacBeki in power:

> LADY M. And let them stay exactly where they are. Still in their shacks and slums. The moment you rouse them from their poverty-induced slumber, they will rise and demand a place at your table. Poverty is shocking, but so is the birth of a child. Lots of pain, screams and blood. But then the ultimate reward.[80]

As timely as *MacBeki* was – as a 'writing back' to the dominance of a corrupt political system – there is a sense within this text of the continual entertainment value of South African politics.[81] There is a constant sense of mocking and disturbance,

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[79] Foster, Douglas., *After Mandela: The Struggle for Freedom in Post-Apartheid South Africa,* (London: W.W. Norton, 2012), p. 203.
[80] Uys, *MacBeki*, p. 40.
[81] Uys, (2005). Of course this was true in the 1980s: 'During the two-year tour of Adapt or Dye through most provinces and cities of the land, with countless return seasons to the Baxter and the Market, the show

that such humour is deeply necessary to any real sense of democracy. Like *Adapt or Dye* before it, *MacBeki* mocks a ruling elite through the mockery of imitation, of the stringing together of a disparate, wide-ranging series of political machinations into a sketch-like series of scenes. Uys said of *Adapt or Dye*, that '[the] fact that it was entertainment seeped with blood and lies just made it real and truly South African.'[82] The Shakespearean text recycled within *MacBeki* provides the all-too-familiar plot for a truly South African type of satirical entertainment, blending together metatheatrical knowingness, the serious critique of contemporary politicians, and intrusive moments of nonsense that typify Pieter-Dirk Uys's ever-evolving, enduring style. *MacBeki* is recycling spun out as political comedy.[83]

2.3 Transformation, Forgiveness and the politics of the Family in *Molora*

Yael Farber's *Molora* provides a rather different kind of recycling to Pieter-Dirk Uys's comedy. The two plays' status as appropriations makes them ripe for comparison. Further, in their divergent styles, Uys and Farber re-tell and commemorate important political events through the prism of Shakespeare and Aeschylus. They are not straightforward localisations of old plays with South African characters; and neither

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changed constantly as the politics changed. New characters were added and less successful ones given the boot. It was not usual to be serious in shows like this. When I introduced a few sketches which, although encased in wry humour, dealt with the deaths of young soldiers in the Border War and the inhuman treatment of blacks by so-called Christian whites, there was a general sense of discomfort.' Kindle Locations 1955-1959.

[82] Ibid., Kindle Locations 2154-2157.

[83] Carlson, (2001), 'the extremely varied comedic tradition in drama has developed its own strategies of recycling and has often assumed a pre-knowledge of material as important to reception as that expected by conventional tragedy', pp. 35-36.

are these plays able to connect with post-apartheid politics through virtue of their timeliness, such as the tour of *Titus Andronicus* chronicled by Anthony Sher and Gregory Doran.[84] The overall tonal differences between *MacBeki* and *Molora*, the former as comedy and the latter as a recounting of a tragic past, are key to explaining how both plays theatrically present post-apartheid politics, through their use of genre and form.

The plot of *Molora* is told through a hearing of a truth commission, an adversarial meeting between victim and perpetrator. The plot, as a blend of testimony and re-enactment, creates a perpetual search for the meaning of pain of the 'ash'[85] from the fires of a traumatic past. *Molora* draws its characters from the first two parts of Aeschylus's *Oresteia* trilogy, the protagonists being the three living members of the House of Atreus (doomed within Greek mythology). Farber's play draws a comparison between the internecine racial conflict that could be released within post-apartheid South Africa and the utterly destructive conflict of the Atreides. *Molora* is a play dominated by themes like grief and revenge, yet the hearing, and the community of spectators and chorus that witness it are crucial to the disarming of the Atreus's conflict. Farber's family are not doomed by the Gods, but they are on the knife-edge of murdering one another. This section of the chapter argues how a dramatisation of the TRC integrates the destruction and crises of a family with the struggle for psychological truthfulness and spiritual reconciliation. Farber's *Molora* is an overt engagement with the TRC. *Molora* collages and appropriates text from The Bible, and by the Greek tragedians Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, and the

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[84] Sher, Anthony., and Gregory Doran, *Woza Shakespeare!: Titus Andronicus in South Africa*, (London: Metheun, 1997).
[85] The title of *Molora* comes from a Sesotho word for 'ash'.

early modern English theatre of Shakespeare. These are joined by oral traditions and ancestral memorialisations drawn from Xhosa culture.

In *Molora* there is a localised version of the ancient Greek chorus, originally drawn from the Ngqoko Cultural Group from Transkei, whose haunting, split tone singing was a key part of the play's syncretism.[86] The sound design 'has all the spare savagery of Greek tragedy', 'characterised by [the] ritual' singing of the Cultural Group.[87] The chorus plays both the TRC's audience and the adoptive community that takes in the young Orestes, who is sent away by his sister Elektra to escape potential murder by their mother. Klytemnestra had her lover kill the king Agamemnon (father of Elektra and Orestes) for his attempt to appease the gods through ritually sacrificing another of their children. While Elektra is left to the devices of Klytemnestra, who tortures and subjugates her daughter, while fearing the return of her son as the embodiment of her late husband, Orestes is raised within rural Xhosa society. It is this community that present the alternative ideology to Orestes' and Elektra's sworn path of violent revenge. These lessons do not immediately bear fruit; after returning home Orestes is shown to have killed his step-father, an act of extreme violence that appals the chorus into intervening later. When the pair finally find themselves in a position to take revenge on their mother, the Chorus prevents them.[88] The central conceit of the play's truth commission hearing is that it provides a kind of transitional justice that is a worthy democratic alternative

[86] The IsiXhosa speech of the Group, and of the characters Elektra and Orestes, is glossed in the playscript through translation. In the performance, a Translator intervenes at certain moments to translate the non-Anglophone speech.
[87] Gardner, Lyn., 'Molora: The Pit, London', *The Guardian,* 14 April 2008, < https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2008/apr/14/theatre> [accessed 7 June 2015].
[88] It is noteworthy that one of the lasting impressions that Aeschylus left on ancient Greek theatre was the idea that the Chorus can be an active participant as much as a commentatory force within the play. Farber's play takes this conceit to a new level by conflating the intervention of the chorus with the anti-apartheid movement.

to revenge. In contrast, in Aeschylus's text the transitional justice is only offered by the new Olympian gods led by Apollo. Rather than about a community beginning to heal its members, the Greek trial is about confirming which divine rulers, the Olympians or the Furies, can judge right and wrong. The new gods use the trial of Orestes to break the power of the vengeful Furies, who represent the old order of the gods.[89] The trial of Orestes is, implicitly, the beginning of a new hegemony within the Greek pantheon, as male power is inherently prioritised over female.[90] As Komar argues, the story of the *Oresteia* is a founding moment for patriarchy, embodied in Apollo and Orestes: 'the classical versions of the Klytemnestra story […] spotlight the fact that a critical founding moment for Western culture hinges on the subjugation of women'.[91] The rebellious Queen is killed, her ghost denied justice, and Elektra is married off, 'thus reversing Klytemnestra's own career.'[92]

By contrast, there is a sense of irresolution to *Molora*, because a truth commission cannot fix the past that it exposes and re-enacts. Because of the transitional nature of the justice in *Molora*'s truth commission, Elektra, Orestes and Klytemnestra are left to an undecided fate, democratically judged by their community. There is no divine judgment to decide the fate of these characters, or to ultimately prescribe right from wrong. The family's amnesty hearing is all-encompassing, reflecting the country's palimpsestuous histories of violence and trauma.

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[89] In so doing Aeschylus was drawing a comparison between the mythology of the House of Atreus and their salvation through the rule of law and the establishment of Athenian democracy following the victory over Persia.
[90] Apollo adjudges the right of revenge over Agamemnon's death to be above the revenge that Klytemnestra's ghost wishes, because the man is the one who 'mounts' in coitus, establishing the patriarchal dominance of men over women, like a rider over a horse.
[91] Komar, Kathleen L., *Reclaiming Klytemnestra: Revenge or Reconciliation?*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), p. 49.
[92] Ibid.

In order to understand the performative basis of *Molora*'s representation of transitional justice it is important to provide some context. South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission began during December 1995, with its Report being presented to President Mandela in October 1998. The TRC was very different in its tone and ideology to prior examples of 'transitional justice', like the Nuremberg Trials after the Second World War. Chaired by the ANC acolyte and national icon Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the TRC's achievements have been widely debated by scholars and citizens alike. Despite misgivings over the TRC's achievements, especially its resultant (lack of) prosecutions and reparations, the programme played an important role in the transition, by reconnecting the New South Africa with the deeds of both the apartheid state and its opponents. Like the Nuremberg Trials, the TRC played the part of (re)-shaping the public's mass memory of the past. Confronting the violence, its victims and perpetrators were invited to submit their stories to the Commission. Some of those stories were broadcast through forms of mass communication: television and radio. The TRC was a cornerstone of the transition to the post-apartheid; it was a temporary institution created because of political negotiations to address the problem that 'neither side could impose victor's justice because neither side won the decisive victory which would have enabled it to do so.'[93] As a highly spiritual method of applying transitional justice, the TRC did not share the punishing mind-set of the post-Second World War trials, with amnesties being the centre rather than execution hearing. Because of the political complexity of the transition from apartheid, 'the Nuremberg option was rejected by

[93] Tutu, Desmond., *No Future Without Forgiveness: A Personal Overview of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, (London: Rider, 1999), p. 25.

those who were negotiating the delicate process of transition to democracy', Tutu writes.[94] Instead, the TRC was a radical exploration of forgiveness, which inspired the French philosopher Jacques Derrida in his own thinking about forgiveness.[95] As Loren Kruger writes:

> Even if the TRC's final report could not produce a universally sanctioned truth or full consensus about the legitimacy or illegitimacy of acts of violence committed by the apartheid state or its opponents, which might have led to collective reconciliation, the hearings compelled those who paid attention to reevaluate their place in the country after apartheid.[96]

Scholars and participants have bound up the Commission's legacy with debates about transition and progress. Philosophically, there is a debate about whether the TRC had a *telos*, or whether truth, reconciliation, healing and reconstruction are a process without a definitive end. Archbishop Tutu, and others who shaped the Commission, designed the programme intending the linking of experiences of truth and reconciliation to be the necessary process for achieving a new kind of justice and community. This path was both for the individuals involved in giving testimony and in applying for amnesty, and those experiencing the Commission through the

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[94] Ibid.

[95] Derrida, Jacques., preface by Simon Kritchley and Richard Kearney, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, ed. by Bernd Magnus and Stephen Cullenberg, trans. by Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 30. See Chapter Three of this thesis for more analysis of forgiveness in South African drama. A precis of Derrida's conclusion is that forgiveness can only truly *be* forgiveness, if the act that is forgiven is so heinous that it is worthy of it, a key example for Derrida being the very 'crimes against humanity' that the TRC deliberated. Yaël Farber's *Molora* explores this idea through the prism of the house of Atreus story: an infinite cycle of familial revenge is broken, with pain and anguish, by the idea of forgiveness.

[96] Kruger, Loren., 'On the Tragedy of the Commoner: Elektra, Orestes and Others in South Africa', *Comparative Drama*, 46.3, (2012), 355-377 (p. 356).

media. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was presented as necessary for any alternative vision of politics in the New South Africa, connecting the past to the present (old to New South Africa), and therefore to the future. This philosophy is encapsulated in the title of Tutu's book about the TRC, *No Future Without Forgiveness*. The TRC was one of the principle public means for striving for a 'future' South Africa, an instrument of transformation that touched the metaphysical experience of South Africans more than their economic reality.

Drama and other forms of theatre work have been created that confront these complex legacies, ideas, stories and events. Re-enacting an uncanny TRC meeting in *Molora* creates a recycled, syncretic text that blurs the lines between the 'new' South Africa and the 'ancient' Greek text.[97] In 2010, the theatre scholar Catherine M. Cole published a monograph about the TRC and its performance of transitional justice, an important study in the historiography of the Commission.[98] Cole theorised the TRC as a powerful performance in itself. Farber's play ought to be understood in a greater context, as part of '[t]he repertoire of the TRC [that] can also be seen in the artistic sphere with films and plays… that engage with the legacy of the truth commission via the realm of the aesthetic.'[99] This 'legacy', Cole argues, is not as straightforward as establishment figures like Archbishop Tutu promote. Two such controversies were the TRC's process for amnesty, and the South African state's slow moves to bring cases to court: 'the policy [of prosecution], when carefully scrutinized, actually appeared to offer back-door amnesty for apartheid-era

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[97] Ibid.: 'The scenes that follow alternate between those that grant both characters a measure of the audience's pity and terror and those that mimic scenes of torture from the TRC record, which place the white protagonist firmly in the perpetrator's box and so foreclose pity, wonder, and also catharsis', p. 368. The temporal structure of *Molora* is, by design, constantly shifting.
[98] Cole, Catherine M., *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission: Stages of Transition*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), p. 134.
[99] Ibid., p. 134

offenders.'[100] With this ambivalence in mind, it is important to frame that the acts of

Figure 2.3 SABC, 'Hawa Timol's testimony on Ahmed Timol at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) [screen capture]', (2012) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cI9qBaHkZSo> [accessed 1 November 2018].

forgiveness and reconciliation occurred within a whirlwind of philosophical debate. Arguably, both the 'truth' and 'reconciliation' have proven more difficult to achieve than the TRC could reasonably deliver. What it did deliver – and what is seen in representations like *Molora* – was an organ for the voicing of the oppressed, however brief. The idea of theatre as a place of witnessing is an old one in South African theatre, coming from Fugard and his related artists, something which the state was able to capture in this transition: 'the TRC gave *voice* to the formerly disenfranchised.' [101] The gleaning of any agency from the ambiguity and contradictions of the post-apartheid cloud is, I would argue, a worthwhile exercise, such are the titanic socio-economic problems that the new South Africa has faced. *Molora's* dialogue with the past offers some brief moments of optimism.

[100] Ibid., p. 127
[101] Ibid., p. 138, original emphasis.

The staging of the TRC was made so familiar because of the Commission's dissemination through media like television. As we can see from the statement of a victim Hana Tiwol in Figure 2.4, taken from SABC's coverage, the audience looks as she gives her testimony to the Commission's panel led by Desmond Tutu. Tutu and others have been candid in describing the draining, but necessary, nature of these meetings: while theatre-makers like Fugard made plays that 'gave voice to the voiceless' during apartheid, the TRC saw citizens confront other citizens. The tears and bodily responses of those taking the harrowing journey of 'truth and reconciliation' were broadcast: the TRC hearings were about personal tragedy told on a national scale.

Figure 2.4 SABC, 'Hawa Timol's testimony on Ahmed Timol at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) [screen capture]', (2012) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cI9qBaHkZSo> [accessed 1 November 2018].

We see Timol using her handkerchief to wipe away tears and clean her nose, while her family member puts his arm around her, as the room – and the mass media audience– listen. It is these kinds of personal responses to mass political injustice that have driven much of South African theatre since the 1980s. Because of their

being broadcast, such images, both of perpetrators and of victims, have permeated South African culture in the post-apartheid period. Hawa Timol's testimony was about her family, and so too is *Molora*.

The transition in the early 1990s was from a segregated to non-segregated society; through the work of artists like Farber, Bret Bailey and William Kentridge, syncretic theatre has become an important genre in South African theatre. The syncretic theatre challenges the segregation of different theatrical traditions, epitomizing Edward Said's notion of 'the conception of originality' as 'a sort of faculty for combinatorial play'.[102] *Molora* contrasts classical Greek notions of revenge with the ideology which motivated the TRC. *Molora* transforms the legendary context of the Oresteia, coming after the Siege of Troy in legend, and the defeat of the Persians by the Greeks in war, into the transitional context of post-apartheid South Africa. The influence of the Chorus, who take on the active role of Aeschylus's chorus while drawing on traditional Xhosa ideals, is such that Orestes is convinced that there can be an alternative, which eventually means seeking forgiveness at the commission that provides the setting of the play.

The South African version of the mythic House of Atreus would suggest a continuation of the 'adherence of the State to family', the mirroring of familial and political relationships. The Atreus family's state of transition and crisis represents the complexities facing the South African state. The rhizomatic idea of text as process troubles the power structures of filiation that run through the idea of a 'work'[103]; the breaking down of filiation, in its various forms, represents the fragmenting of certainties during the post-apartheid period. In *The Politics of*

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[102] Said, 'On Originality', in *The World, the text, and the critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983) p. 138.
[103] See Barthes, (1977).

Friendship, Jacques Derrida argues that the family is the basis for Western politics and political thinking: 'The concept of politics rarely announces itself without some sort of adherence of the State to family, without what we will call a *schematic* of filiation: stock, genus or species, sex…blood, birth, nature, nation'.[104] When applied in the apartheid context, of the 'separate development' of nations, this relationship between family and nation also implicates ideas of race. The TRC was, in this interpretation, an important part of the state resolving itself, to try and find a new order, a new 'filiation'. The irrevocability of the changes to the Atreides, through death and the confession of family members' true feelings, resonates with the scale of the changes in the post-apartheid period. The past cannot be returned to, either by the family or South Africa. That there is frustration in this process, that it is imperfect, is a reflection of the processual (rather than teleological) nature of healing, truth and reconciliation. The breaking of the curse of the House of Atreus hints at the possibility for transformation.

By returning to the TRC, even 10 years after the publishing of its report, *Molora* affirms the ghostly legacy of the commission, contradicting an easy narrative of denial, wherein the TRC is not something to be left in the past. The TRC is an example of the spectral, a revenant that is continuously returned to and learnt from, an event that haunts South Africa's political imagination. It is something to be continually recycled and played with as a cornerstone of the post-apartheid milieu, replete with imagery and iconic moments. The commission is a vehicle that allows the play to criss-cross time periods: some scenes are re-enactments for the benefit

[104] Derrida, Jacques., *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. by George Collins, (London: Verso, 1997), p. viii.

of the commission's audience, others retellings of events in the past that give the backstory of why the family is at the commission in the first place.

2.4 The Atreus Family

Molora's representation of these characters is part of a long, rhizomatic tradition within theatre writing; Aeschylus, in his *Oresteia* plays, recycled the myth of the house of Atreus as a theatrical statement about the stability and legitimacy of Athenian democracy. The final part of the *Oresteia* trilogy, *The Eumenides*, is the trial of the hero Orestes for the murder of his mother Klytemnestra by the Furies. In *Molora*, with the murder of Klytemnestra thwarted, and a very different form of justice taking place to that of the Greek gods', Farber's play and its TRC-esque hearing fulfils the role of *The Eumenides* in closing the cycle of revenge. *The Eumenides* is about a paradoxical trial, because Orestes' revenge, for the killing of his father, was exactly what the Furies wanted. Orestes is forced to confront his mother's ghost, and have his family drama form a key part in the transition from the old order and justice of the primordial gods to the new, Apollonian justice of the Olympians.

In the mid-twentieth century, influential sociologists and psychologists like Talcott Parsons and R.D. Laing argued that family life, and the way that families are structured, are historically contingent; Laing went further by arguing that family life can be a psychological straitjacket, which creates the role of figures like the naughty child, the overbearing parent, or the schizophrenic[105]. In this school of thought, family structures reflect the material conditions of society. R.D. Laing's controversial

[105] Laing, R.D., *The Politics of Experience and The Bird of Paradise* (London: Penguin, 1967) pp. 84-107.

ideas and radical techniques are important for foregrounding the importance of talking, of lifting the veil on potentially traumatising relationships; there is, I argue, a relationship between this radical psychotherapy and the agency that theatre can have in a period of profound transition. Laing's focus on talking in groups, telling each other how we feel and exposing the unspoken power relationships that run within families, bears similarities to the process of Truth and Reconciliation. In *Molora*, the 'hearing' convened is for just that purpose. But rather being a Laingian anti-psychiatry session, the venue is the TRC. The Atreus family, with black and white members, symbolise the core of South African society's struggles around apartheid. Other marginalised identities, such as the coloured community, do not literally fit into this picture, although the metaphorical nature of the Atreus's hybridity to the colonial history of South Africa is conditioned by a contradictory, reflexive representation of postcolonial forms of victimhood and trauma. The interplay of each of the characters forms a complex, palimpsestuous story, that the community of *Molora*'s hearing opens itself up to.

Klytemnestra

Much attention has been paid to the representation of the queen Klytemnestra within theatre, particularly in feminist theatres of the late twentieth century. Komar's *Reclaiming Klytemnestra*, for example, maps this rhizomic tradition: 'we acknowledge a more complicated figure who cannot be forced into a simple mould or easily condemned. Matriarch and murderer, Klytemnestra rocks the cradle, wields the axe, and reflects on the meaning of both.'[106] These feminist representations are

[106] Komar, (2003), p. 188.

'Productively disturbing', using the character as a prism for studying and redefining the status of motherhood, care and womanhood: 'She helps us to re-examine the very concept of gender and the female.'[107] Many contemporary Klytemnestras refuse the moral judgment that she is neither caring towards her children, nor penitent for her crimes. In *Molora* she is caught between the ancient codes of revenge that she follows to kill her husband and subjugate her children, and the ethical implications of her daughter Elektra's traumatic life. Farber's Klytemnestra as performed by Dorothy Ann Gould is defined by her whiteness, and navigates the complex moral and historical pathways within the post-apartheid milieu. She is a figure of moral rebellion and problematic ethics, in particular because of the history of abuse evident in the behaviour of her daughter Elektra. And yet she is also a victim of oppression and violence, a point of great contention with Elektra, who disregards her mother's history as irrelevant and a betrayal of the patriarch Agamemnon.

The commission itself provides the opportunity and means for airing this conflict, making it the central focus for much of the play. The name of Aeschylus's trilogy is an indication of the centrality of Orestes to a series of plays about a family struggling over two generations with the burden of revenge. However, directly opposed to *The Oresteia*, it is Elektra that is given the most agency in *Molora*, while Orestes is largely side-lined. Klytemnestra's actions are tied to the 'curse' of violence within her life, yet she is also the instigator of the ethical debate that leads to Orestes renouncing his vengeance. Klytemnestra's fear of Orestes, as re-embodying the slain Agamemnon, motivates her actions. The titular 'ash' of *Molora* represents Elektra's grief for her father, and the trauma caused by a life of

[107] Ibid.

subjugation and trauma. The fake ashes of Orestes are the locus for Elektra's grief for her beloved family members, and the nation the ashes represent; for Klytemnestra they provide temporary relief from the nightmarish fear of her estranged son. Klytemnestra's testimony forms a coherent narrative of a life defined by violence: first involving her husband, and later her children. Her daughter does not see such a history as a valid explanation of the past, and finds the injustice her mother feels to be incompatible with the past violence that she received and witnessed. Both Elektra and Klytemnestra struggle with the past in a way that Orestes appears not to. Orestes was spared the violence that his sister faced, instead spending his life training for the day when he would return home and enact Umkhonto we Sizwe-esque revolutionary violence. It is Elektra, not Orestes, who is tortured for her connection to her brother, distinguishing Orestes as a performer of violence, rather than a victim. Both Klytemnestra and Orestes, through their shared experiences of taking revenge, are aware of the psychic effect of violence on its perpetrator. Elektra, unable to take the vengeance she craves, does not share this connection, which provides the starting basis for the commission hearing depicted in *Molora*.

Klytemnestra, as the victim of male violence herself, becomes an instrument of it, an endlessly problematic means for her to gain power and authority within her family. Elektra and Klytemnestra are both examples, in their own ways, of double colonialism, the phenomenon that implicates gender as a level of marginalisation that works in conjunction with colonial subjugation. In Scene 7, 'Grave', mother and daughter, in a scene during the past, eviscerate one another as they argue. Elektra, by turns, is sensitive and cruel: 'I want only to know you. Who you were before the

hurting… who we could have been.'[108] She sees her mother's marriage to Ayesthus as a sign of their distancing, considering herself and Orestes exiles: 'you cast us out', she argues, while her mother 'honor[s] [Ayesthus's] line'.[109] Elektra's verbal assault ends with her judgment that, 'You are nothing but that man's Bitch.'[110] The speech that follows is the clearest recitation of Klytemnestra's own victimhood: 'Let me tell you about this Bitch – and how she met the man you call father.'[111] The mother and daughter cannot reconcile because they have fundamentally incompatible viewpoints about Agamemnon –whom Elektra honours as 'father', and Klytemnestra remembers as her murderous second husband:

> KLYTEMNESTRA. […] There are things you do not know about me child: A history that was written long before you were born. […] I was not always Klytemnestra who carried this curse. Before your father – I was married to a man I loved – with a child – my first born. The power in that bond you will never know.[112]

She is conscious of her 'curse', a rationality that carries into the imagery of her nightmares, which are grounded in fear rather than superstition. While Agamemnon represents an ancient history and bloodline in the eyes of Elektra, he was the murderer of several of Klytemnestra's children, a traumatic experience that creates an endless pain of punishment and guilt: 'Hurt her child – and the wound is hers… Cuts her where she cannot heal'; 'It is an old and terrible world, and I feel its pain.'[113]

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[108] *Molora*, p. 40
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid., p. 41
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.

Klytemnestra is a character that has had a complicated relationship with concepts of womanhood and motherhood. As both a victim and perpetrator, Klytemnestra also experiences a level of trauma and violence that places her status as a 'villain' into doubt. As above, it is these kinds of contradictions that the TRC was designed to be able to navigate; as opposed to the TRC's emphasis on a singular, national 'truth', however, *Molora* has a sense of irresolution that permeates its depiction of the past and present. The punishment that Elektra feels Klytemnestra should face must be reconciled within the context of a feeling of endless 'pain', having taken place in the 'old and terrible world' of the past, something which Klytemnestra's children cannot truly understand. Klytemnestra must reconcile the fate of being a mother, a victim, and an oppressor.

Elektra

> KLYTEMNESTRA. We all have choice. And I made mine.
> I took what was owed me:
> Breath for breath, and life for life.
> And so would say your dead sister, if she could speak.'
> ELEKTRA. Ngamthetho wuphi? [BY WHAT LAW?]
> KLYTEMNESTRA. By the justice of a mother.[114]

Elektra's faith is in her brother and father as the rightful representatives of her 'house', a word used in the play that doubles for their family but also a culture and history attached to it. In contrast, Klytemnestra sees herself as an individual

[114] Ibid., p. 37

exercising rights as ancient as the Atreus family: the 'justice of a mother' to avenge her dead daughter by killing Agamemnon. Elektra and Klytemnestra are both obsessed by the ideas and consequences of the 'eye for an eye' ideology. Klytemnestra views it as a 'choice', if the correct one, while Elektra believes in strict laws, all of which vindicate her father's actions in 'war', one of which meant sacrificing a daughter to ensure peace.

In *Molora*, the concept of the dead's remains, of what happens to who survives and what survives of a person, is key to the plot. This is the 'curse' of the House of Atreus. In scene two, 'Murder', Klytemnestra (re)-performs the killing of Agamemnon, a murder she shared with her husband Ayesthus. This act leads to a cycle of revenge, hatred and murder. In the familiar scenographic environment of a TRC hearing, with its microphones, tables and chairs, the act is played out, reconstructed in scenographic, material terms, with the watching Elektra, playing her seven-year old self. '[MAMA…WHERE ARE YOU GOING?]', she pleads.[115] Her mother swings an axe at a table, which represents Agamemnon: '*With this blow, she has struck her husband – Agamemnon – dead. She squats on the table and, scooping from an enamel bowel, covers her expressionless face, arms and hands in blood*…'[116] The body of Elektra's father is shown in a plastic sheet, played by the performer of Orestes. As the body disappears into the grave, dragged by Klytemnestra, Elektra desperately tries to pull the body free, but is unable to. From this point on, Elektra is represented as being unable to let go of the past, the grief becoming a lifelong pursuit. Agamemnon's grave is where Elektra mourns, and

[115] Translated in *Molora*, 'Mama…uyaphi'. p. 26.
[116] Ibid., p. 26.

where she is eventually re-united with her brother, whom she sent away the night of their father's killing.

In scene ten, 'Ash', Orestes returns home under the guise of a stranger. He brings with him his own 'ashes'. Klytemnestra uses this as her declaration of victory over the forces that would conspire to kill her, and the ending of history that it represents: 'Now I know – the stock of our ancient masters is perished, root and branch. And the ancient bloodline is blotted out.'[117] She goes further, believing that ''Now at last my children are silenced…/and peace is mine!'[118] Because of her lifelong devotion to her father's memory and Orestes' return, Elektra is naturally devastated by the idea that her brother is dead. The fact that it is a lie, and that the brother and sister are reunited at their father's grave, turns the plot towards its denouement. Klytemnestra tells the 'stranger' that 'She is in love with misery.'[119] In the following scene, 'Found', Elektra lies on Agamemnon's grave:

> ELEKTRA. [PAPA, ORESTES HAS LEFT US!]
>
> [...]
>
> [WITH THESE ASHES I CRY FOR MY NATION.]…[120]
>
> [...]
>
> Our future is now ash.[121]

The necropolitics of Elektra's planned revenge bound Orestes to the authority of

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[117] Ibid., p. 49.
[118] Ibid., p. 50.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid., p. 51
[121] Ibid., p. 52

their father, an ancient, national power that would justify the destruction of her mother's new 'house'. She wishes to die, losing the will to rebel. The ashes of the future, and the grave of her father, mean that her life means nothing. She grieves, nihilistically, to her ancestor's ghost: 'Take me as nothing, into your nothingness, that I may live with you'.[122] Elektra, hiding from the approaching Orestes, hears her brother's vow, realising the truth. Orestes swears to the patriarchal ancestors that he will take revenge, a misstep that threatens to destroy the family as a whole.

> ELEKTRA. Father that begot us… / Among the dead the savage jaws of fire cannot destroy the spirit.[123]
>
> ;
>
> ELEKTRA. […] [LET JUSTICE REVEAL THE TRUTH.]
>
> CHORUS. […] [LET IT BE SO!]
>
> ORESTES. Father, make me the master of your house.[124]

The siblings are united in a joint purpose, which they believe to be filled with meaning. The climax of the play, and the argument that it makes for the Truth and Reconciliation process, is in reconciling the idea that the ashes of dead ancestors are to be the basis for a way of life profoundly opposed to the kind of nihilism that the traumatised Elektra and the misguided Orestes represent. The chorus, agreeing that 'justice reveal the truth', represent a very different, transitional, healing kind of justice to the retributive justice Elektra and Orestes initially crave.

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[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid., p. 55
[124] Ibid., p. 58

Orestes

> ORESTES. Send me not dishonoured from the land,/ but grant that I take back what is mine,/ and restore my house![125]

> ORESTES. Father, make me the master of your house.[126]

Orestes is absent for much of *Molora*; yet he is a presence within the hopes and nightmares of Elektra and Klytemnestra, respectively.[127] His masculinity is anchored in the honour of his father's memory. Growing up within a nurturing community of rural women, Orestes still feels dispossessed by the status of his family. He wishes, above all, to 'restore my house', the re-establishing of a dreamlike, nostalgic pre-colonial state. Orestes' 'Initiation', in scene nine[128], is crucial to understanding the character's (mis)reading of his role as a man in the achievement of change and transformation. He, the chorus and Elektra are united in wanting 'JUSTICE [to] REVEAL THE TRUTH'[129] Orestes and Elektra's definition of what justice means is challenged by the alternative community of the chorus, who channel similar ideas to Desmond Tutu's popularisation of 'Ubuntu'. Crucially, it is not Orestes who speaks the words of the initiation, but his adoptive mother, who speaks '*the traditional*

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[125] Ibid., p. 53
[126] Ibid., p. 58
[127] He appears as the corpse of Agamemnon, but does not appear in the script until scene 9, 'Initiation', pp. 45-47.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid. p. 58; see above, in section regarding Elektra.

WORDS OF WISDOM'.[130] The initiation tells Orestes to return home and 'take care of your sister'; to 'take care of your family'.[131] He is urged to 'raise a family and build your house', to 'take your inheritance and your rightful position.' [132] The transformation from boy into man means that he is, now, the head of his family and accompanied by the ancestors: 'your ancestors want you to return to your father's house and take your position there', 'the ancestors go with you.'[133] Elektra and Klytemnestra localise the classical Greek 'spirit of revenge', who speak after Orestes finishes the ritual and begins his trip home.[134] None of the words of wisdom, however, directly refer to such a revenge; it is Orestes who infers that duty. Orestes is urged to, instead, begin anew, but with the ever-present knowledge of the past, the ancestors and the taking care of his family. Orestes' misreading means that he, on returning home, immediately begins his plot to kill Ayesthus, and later to kill his mother. The ashes that Orestes carries with him threaten to symbolise the future that he can carry with him, as the bringer of a different kind of justice to his family's obsessive cycle of blame. Orestes' initiation implies that he should make his life's work about (re)building a community, to begin his 'house' and 'raise a family'. The patriarchal ideology represented by Agamemnon is to be shifted and rearticulated, reconnected to long-marginalised communities and traditions of peace as represented by the Chorus, so as to serve the present.

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[130] Stage direction, p. 45; The amaXhosa initation rite, 'ulwaluko', is somewhat controversial in modern South Africa, particularly in relation to issues surrounding male genital mutilation, and the deaths of some boys during the ritual. These controversies are beyond the scope of this chapter's research. The focus, here, is the import of the initiation's text as part of a South Africanized recycling of *The Oresteia*.

[131] *Molora*, p. 45; n.b.: the quotes in fn. 117, 121 are, in the playscript, rendered in square brackets and capitalised. For style purposes these are presented in lower case here.

[132] Ibid., p. 46.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Ibid., Dialogue by Elektra, p. 46

Aeschylus's Elektra is, despite her dominant role within the play's plot, subordinated to her exiled brother, psychologically dependent on his return. Farber's Elektra is empowered by Orestes' return, but she and her mother are the centre of the play;[135] Orestes' 'only' violence in *Molora* is, after all, the killing of his step-father. When it comes to avenging himself on his mother, he has a change of heart. Elektra cannot abide *not* taking revenge; she must be dragged away, screaming, murderous, by her newly enlightened brother. And so, the stage is re-set at the end of *Molora* for the beginning, explaining the need that the hearing plays as a space of infinite re-enactment, a multiplicity of perspectives able to exist in light of the non-violent revolution led by the Chorus, who in turn convince Orestes. The syncretic society represented by the hearings of *Molora* is incompatible with the ancient patriarchy of Agamemnon, or the colonial violence of Klytemnestra.

[135] Kruger (2012): 'The confrontation between Klytemnestra and Elektra alters the TRC scenario by heightening the dramatic conflict between protagonist and antagonist. At the same time, it challenges the dominance of male agents in the TRC by depicting women as violent agents as well as suffering victims. In contrast to Aeschylus's *Libation Bearers* and Sophocles' *Elektra*, where Orestes takes the stage before his sister, Elektra spars with Klytemnestra for eight scenes in *Molora* before Orestes appears', p. 366.

2.5 Wet bag method: State and personal violence in past and present

Figure 2.5 Gallo Images/Oryx Media Archive, 'Jeffrey Benzien, A Former Security Police Detective, Demonstrates The 'Wet Bag' Torture Technique To The Truth And Reconciliation Commission In Cape Town In 1997. (1997), <https://mg.co.za/article/2014-04-24-murder-of-anc-guerrilla-haunts-his-sisters-27-years-after-he-was-killed> [accessed 1 October 2018] ; Farber, Yaël., Klytemnestra (Dorothy Ann Gould) Wet Bags Elektra (Jabulile Tshabalala) < http://www.yfarber.com/molora/> [accessed 1 October 2018].

In the centre of *Molora* is a recreation of one of the TRC's most controversial images.[136] As part of his amnesty hearing, in 1997, Jeffrey Benzien (a former detective in the state's Special Branch) was asked to demonstrate the so-called 'wet bag' torture method, one of the key techniques used to interrogate prisoners during apartheid, by one of its victims. These two images show the close similarity, the

[136] The significance of the image cannot be overstated. Kruger describes the way that *Molora*'s scene draws on this infamous reception: 'As South Africans know, the wet bag was not only a method of torture whereby the perpetrator threatened to suffocate the victim by pulling tight a wet bag over the latter's head, but also the most notorious representation of that torture on national television.' p. 369.

deliberately uncanny staging by Farber as writer/director of Benzien's technique, with the 'audience' of the Chorus on the right, and the onlookers at the TRC on the left. This iconic image, through recycling and recreations like *Molora,* has taken on its own life. For his amnesty application, Benzien was justifying and explaining his role, employed by the state, in suppressing 'terrorist' operations within South Africa by the liberation movement's fighters. Klytemnestra and Elektra re-enactment is framed as an interrogation about Orestes' whereabouts.

Scene eight of the play, 'Wet Bag Method', combines the different time-periods of the play into a single scene. The scene performs this balance through imitating how the TRC was a public confessional about the recovery of the 'ashes' of the past. Benzien and Klytemnestra's re-enactments are remarkable for how they act out moments from the past that would have been deliberately covered up, if it was not for the play's truth commission.[137]

Elektra's stage-directed '*testimony'* channels this specific moment in the TRC's 'repertoire', so that it is interwoven with the re-performance of the past, tying together the surrounding scenes that are taking place in the past with the hearing set in the present.[138] The present, public hearing contrasts with the past, private moments between the family members. Elektra speaks to the audience via the microphone, while her mother takes her place centre stage. Klytemnestra carries the chair '*upside down, above her head. The effect is of an animal with horns, under threat*'.[139] Immediately the scene assumes the binary power structure of victim and '*perpetrator*', with Elektra submitting to the torture of the bestial Klytemnestra.

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[137] To reference the title and the centrality of ashes (of Orestes) and burial (of Agamemnon) to the play.
[138] *Molora* p. 43; 'repertoire' is used throughout Cole, (2010).
[139] Ibid.

The distance between the events of 'Wet Bag Method' and the prior scene is addressed by Elektra's testimony: 'Years passed between us. But I was not permitted to sit at the table. […] No-one ever talks about the night you spilled my father's blood. It is as though the past never happened. But a daughter remembers.'[140] Elektra is, even in the present, obsessed with the conflict within her family. The anger still rages, despite the fact that her presence – with Klytemnestra – at the fictional truth commission hearing is an admittance of (at least for the moment) how violence cannot be the answer to past oppression. Elektra, throughout, reaffirms her connection to her father over her mother. 'A daughter remembers' her father's murder, and following the torture, she curses Klytemnestra: 'One day you will face your God. And ask forgiveness for the things you did in those years.'[141] Elektra, having re-experienced the torture, is unforgiving, setting herself apart from her mother's 'God', who as an ultimate moral authority is the only credible source for her mother's forgiveness. The singular judgment of 'your God' contrasts with the collective commission, which is the judgment of a 'community that provides a context to this event'.[142] Klytemnestra justifies her extreme actions because of the 'fear in those years' of 'The inevitable vengeance [Orestes] would one day bring. For those we harm as children – Grow up to be men.'[143] Jeffrey Benzien's torture was in the name of preventing uMkhonto we Sizwe operatives from returning to the areas that the government had reserved for whites; the personal connection of Klytemnestra to the vengeance of Orestes personalises this parallel fear of an individual rather than a political group of paramilitary fighters. Klytemnestra's fear of

[140] Ibid., p. 43.
[141] Ibid., p. 44.
[142] See 'Mise-en-Scene' of *Molora*, p. 19.
[143] Ibid., p. 45.

the vengeful, exiled other is contrasted with Elektra's constant anxiety about her prisoner-like status. However, a key difference with the Benzien hearing is that demonstration was for the benefit of Tony Yengeni, who had suffered the method and wanted to see what it looked like; in *Molora*, the 'Wet Bag Method' recreation is a way of exposing Klytemnestra's record of torture, and is not for Elektra's 'benefit'. The scene takes place in an interesting moment within the play's structure. 'Wet Bag Method' follows scene seven, 'Grave', where Klytemnestra and Elektra turn against each other, setting out their competing versions of the past in an extended argument that demonstrates how raw past traumas are to both characters. Both women have been wronged, facing the violence of others. It is the role of Klytemnestra's *personal* use of extreme violence, in 'Wet Bag Method', that shows the powerlessness of Elektra's past protests and the precariousness of her resistance. Indeed, the fearful waiting for the avenger Orestes traps both women in a cycle of destructive behaviour, problematizing the role that struggle fighters played in relation to those at home. This pivotal scene is followed by another: Orestes' 'Initiation', a coming-of-age ritual that, in the moment of its enactment announces his intentions to use violence against his mother and husband; in light of the end of the play, the initiation becomes a platform for Orestes' healing. How Elektra can recover from the memories of the 'Wet Bag Method' is less certain, although the commission is a ground zero for the Atreus family.

The act violently escalates their conflict, South Africanizing an ancient, mythical family conflict, that has been rewritten and recycled in countless versions, over thousands of years. Elektra submits completely to the power of Klytemnestra, as the latter '*takes a plastic bag from her pocket, places it over Elektra's head, and*

pulls it tightly. Elektra begins to suffocate.'[144] As the stage direction makes clear, it '*should be a direct visual reference to the 'Wet Bag Method''*, enshrining the need to imitate the framing and positioning of Benzien's torture technique. The physicality of this image is used to unsettle and disturb. The re-enacted performance of Benzien's technique is specified by Farber's precise stage directions to be carried out '*for longer than the audience would be comfortable with*', creating an uncanny memorial to the brutality inherent to the apartheid state.[145] How to frame such violence must reflect it as both everyday and extraordinary – because apartheid ruthlessly controlled the exposure of different citizens to privilege or deprivation. The idea of a situation as being 'extreme' implies an apex, and yet apartheid was *also* a status quo, a social structure that existed for decades.

With these issues in mind, the amnesty hearings had a great deal of existential and historical weight attached to them in making sense of this past. *Molora*'s mirroring of Jeffrey Benzien's paradigmatic amnesty hearing simultaneously reminds audiences of the apartheid state's extreme violence, and of the TRC's role in judging such acts, as a way of exploring how such a past can lead to the future. Cole sums up this issue: 'the past in South Africa still requires 'dealing' in the present continuous tense. As [Pieter-Dirk Uys] Evita Bezuidenhout […] has said of South Africa […], 'The future is certain; it is the past that is unpredictable.' The past refuses to conform to grand narratives and explanatory frames.'[146] The TRC had to combine the often-incompatible legal process of prosecuting and the historiographic recording of history: there are plenty of leaders, such as President

[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid., p. 44.
[146] Cole, 2010, p. 121.

P.W. Botha, who escaped the Commission's purview and yet are worthy of intense historical scrutiny[147]. As the *New York Times* summed up, Benzien was intriguing, precisely, because he was the opposite of royalty: 'Mr. Benzien's story has gripped the country partly because of photographs of him demonstrating his technique during hearings, and partly because until he testified he was a nobody.'[148] He, suddenly, had an audience. Benzien was granted amnesty, because the TRC was designed to tie the individual actions of the agents of apartheid to the overall political structure; it was the judgment of the TRC that Benzien acted within a culture that legitimised torture, painting it as a necessary tactic to fight 'terrorism'. Benzien's application encompassed a series of crimes, including the death of Ashley Kriel, which he believed was an accident involving a struggle over a gun rather than a deliberate shooting. The 'wet bag method' was designed to extract information from paramilitary operatives, guided by the silent authorisation of Benzien's superiors within the police service[149] It was a form of force that was understood by the state organ administering it, yet passively denied by the state as a whole:

> Benzien said that it was not official policy to torture political detainees and that there were no written instructions in police manuals on how to question detainees. Nevertheless, police used all forms of duress to obtain

[147] Ibid., pp. 122-123.
[148] Daley, Suzanne., 'Apartheid Torturer Testifies, As Evil Shows Its Banal Face', *The New York Times*, 9 November 1997, <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/11/09/world/apartheid-torturer-testifies-as-evil-shows-its-banal-face.html> [accessed 1 October 2016].
[149] Truth and Reconciliation Commission., *TRC Final Report: Volume 6, Section 5, Chapter 2, Subsection 4*, p. 620, <http://sabctrc.saha.org.za/reportpage.php?id=12942&t=Benzien&tab=report> [accessed 1 November 2018]. 'Although aware of the opprobrium being directed at them for this practice, the state continued to do nothing to end it. The state also did nothing about the violators or the agency that harboured them, the Security Branch. No mechanisms were put in place to monitor whether torture was still happening, nor to prevent it from happening.'

> confessions and information of political activities of suspected terrorists. The so called 'wet bag' method was common knowledge to members of the anti-terrorist unit and he would be surprised if Lieutenant Liebenberg and his seniors did not know about it. [150]

The testimony of Benzien, bringing such a conspiracy to light, was crucial to his award of amnesty. The hearings were also an opportunity for victims to see the truth of their experiences from a third-person perspective. Because of the nature of the torture, those wearing the bag could never be aware of what, exactly, had happened to them. Thus, on the insistence of Tony Yengeni, he re-enacted his torture technique on a willing volunteer. What was previously a secret act, understood only by those involved in its application, became a public image, a performance that proved the violence meted out by one of apartheid's key repressive apparatuses. Representations and re-presentations of the Commission such as *Molora* play a crucial role in creating fresh images that reference iconic moments like Benzien's hearings. Both in the TRC and in *Molora*, this re-enactment becomes theatre because of that audience: 'scenography happens with audiences as witnesses.'[151]

These recognisable, recycled narratives make these provocative images a part of the commission's legacy, a continual political pursuit of truth and reconciliation (and, thus, these images are used to echo the TRC's message, rather than as inappropriate references to histories of trauma). As Jacques Ranciere argues,

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[150] Truth and Reconciliation Commission., *Amnesty Decisions: Jeffrey Theodore Benzien,* <http://sabctrc.saha.org.za/hearing.php?id=58788&t=Benzien&tab=hearings> [accessed 1 November 2018].

[151] McKinney, Joslin., and Philip Butterworth, *The Cambridge Introduction to Scenography*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 7.

> There is no straightforward road from the fact of looking at a spectacle to the fact of understanding the state of the world; no direct road from intellectual awareness to political action. What occurs instead is a shift from a given sensible world to another sensible world that defines different capacities and incapacities, different forms of tolerance and intolerance.[152]

A 'post-Benzien', post-TRC South Africa is a new, postcolonial 'sensible world' in which the past is not buried but, to use a metaphor, is a pile of ashes that ties the pain of past and present. The materiality of this re-enactment is, indeed, crucial. By taking on the staging conventions familiar from the TRC, *Molora*'s scenography bridges the Athenian story with the present and recent-past of South Africa. Dorothy Ann Gould's performance of the wet bag method is, of course, uncanny, but it is also quite different in tone and situation to Benzien's. We understand that her torturing is done as a mother, seeking information about her son. Unsettlingly, she is the kind of figure who could have appeared at the TRC as a victim, in different circumstances. Klytemnestra's attire at the hearings is not the three-piece suit and tie of a white ex-police officer. Klytemnestra's private relationship with Elektra becomes a public image, as understood through the prism of the audience. And it is in this process of exposure, recycling, and re-enactment that the transformative politics of *Molora*'s commission rests. It is politics as filtered through theatrical recycling.

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[152] Ranciere, Jacques., *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. by Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2011), p. 75.

2.6 From Rivonia to the TRC

Molora's representation of the TRC through the retelling of the Atreus family's tragic story exemplifies the theatricality of post-apartheid politics. The TRC itself certainly had a theatricality, as argued by Cole.[153] The concept of the oppressed confronting their oppressors in front of an audience, or South Africans providing raw testimony about their actions (whether as victims or perpetrators) echoes the apartheid political theatre tradition, for instance Athol Fugard's workshop plays analysed in Chapter One. Post-apartheid milestones like the TRC and the 1995 Rugby World Cup turned South African life into collective experiences akin to theatrical events, with performers and audiences brought together in ways that would have been impossible under the segregation of apartheid. *Molora*'s stylistic blending of raw emotional address and re-enacted violence are necessary for the commission's justice to have its empathic power.

The iconic theatricality of the TRC's transformative process has lent itself, again and again, to plays like *Molora*. Farber's dramatic recycling was arguably produced after this 'genre' on the post-apartheid stage was no longer in vogue. It is also not the only play by Farber to use the process of recycling to explore South African politics, beginning with the 2002 play *Sezar*, based on Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Since *Molora* there have been plays based on Strindberg (*Mies Julie*, 2012) and Hindu texts (*Ram: The Abduction of Sita into Darkness,* 2011), followed by a production of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (at The Old Vic Theatre, 2014) directed by Farber. *Molora* was an international hit that played to audiences in South Africa, the

[153] Cole, (2010).

United Kingdom and the United States. The play's production – in proximity, yet with a few years' distance – reconnected ideas of grief, pain and revenge with the healing process the Commission was supposed to inaugurate. As Aktina Stathaki writes in their PhD thesis on the topic of adaptation, '*Molora* is an allegorical representation of the 'ubuntu theology''.[154] The Ubuntu ideology is, as argued throughout *Molora*'s retelling and re-enactment of the planned revenge of Elektra and Orestes, incompatible with the desire for revenge. Revenge is a political ideal that has become more and more attractive, as the order of the 1990s' liberal nationalism has been eroded by government corruption (*MacBeki*, above) and militancy (the 'Rhodes Must Fall' campaign, the impulses of Orestes and Elektra). The solution in Aeschylus's play is that the patriarchy of Apollo overturns the ancient Furies' cyclical demand for revenge, putting to rest Klytemnestra's ghost's demands and vindicating Orestes' killing of his mother in Agamemnon's name.[155]

No such solution makes sense within the post-apartheid context as envisioned by the transitional justice of the TRC and *Molora*. In reality the TRC had to, alongside its more general ameliorative work on the national psyche, play a role in the central compromise of the post-apartheid transition. The TRC was a legislated part of the negotiated revolution from the apartheid to the post-apartheid. Thus, key political figures from the highest echelons of the apartheid regime, like ex-President P.W. Botha, would not have to appear. The TRC was a clear alternative to Nuremberg-style trials, but also to the Rivonia trials that imprisoned Nelson Mandela

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[154] Stahaki, Aktina., *Adaptation and Performance of Greek Drama in Post-Apartheid Drama* (unpublished PhD thesis: University of Toronto, 2009), p. 130.
[155] As Stathaki summarises, 'for an Athenian audience, contrary to the later Judeo-Christian ethos by which revenge was socially destructive, revenge was culturally justifiable', p. 134

and other ANC leaders. The result was, as Loren Kruger writes, a state of 'settlement if not reconciliation'.[156] The ambition of the TRC to channel 'terms like *versoening* (reconciliation in Afrikaans) and *uxololweno* (Xhosa for both reconciliation and forgiveness), to communal reconciliation rather than the mere resolution of conflict', the historiographic and judicial process 'settled with deliberations that reached consensus… without necessarily reconciling the subjective views of participants.'[157] Perhaps no government-instigated inquiry, even one as broad ranging as the TRC, could have satisfied everybody. There are varying opinions about the TRC, which could appear to be mutually exclusive. High profile amnesty cases meant that the TRC did focus a great deal of attention on war crimes. Fears were centred on the idea that the complicity of the white elite as a community, the majority of whom did not work within violent organisations like the state police, was largely off the table. Lyn Graybill, in a monograph on the TRC, writes about such individuals: '[the] issue of bystanders is especially important when one considers how little white South Africans have felt responsible for the apartheid system. Just weeks before the [TRC]… began…a poll…indicated that 44 percent of white respondents did not feel apartheid was unjust.'[158] Others questioned whether the amnesty system could cope with the task that it was given, that of verifying the 'truth' of what contributors to the commission were saying. Suspicions were heightened around individuals who would, in a Nuremberg style trial, have been charged with charges like war crimes. 'One criticism of the TRC was that, by focusing on gross human rights violations, most whites could merrily go on their way

[156] Kruger, (2012), p. 365.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Graybill, Lyn. S., *Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Miracle or Model?* (Boulder, CO.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), p. 113.

secure in the knowledge that they never did anything like that… This denial was made easier by the public portrayal of perpetrators'[159]. Further, the commission 'ignored the massive denial of human rights experienced by millions of people – the violence of identity-pass laws, Group Areas, and forced removals'[160]. Because the TRC did not canvas these everyday, socioeconomic injustices, vital components of the materiality of the 'truth' of apartheid were missed. Understood within these important contexts, theatre like *Molora*, and the texts that were produced during the commission's operation, had its own contribution to make. This was so significant that theatre as healing and reconciliation became a veritable genre in and of itself in South Africa. As Graybill acknowledges, the TRC ought to have been revolutionary in scope: 'Perhaps the TRC's most important goal – and at the same time its most difficult goal – was to implicate society at large.'[161] In *Molora* the TRC process is a means of exploring such historical and political contradictions. The actual gains of the Commission were not strictly reconciliatory, but about achieving, as above, a 'settlement if not reconciliation'.[162] The twisting temporal structure of the play, the dramaturgical interweaving of re-enactment and storytelling, leaves some unresolvable questions. Regarding Elektra, for example: how much faith does she really place in the hearing? It, after all, represents the exact opposite of the violent revenge that she strived for.

The scenes at the climax of the play provide the crux of the play's argument regarding settlement, reconciliation and revenge, drawing on the teleological Atreus curse and what its illegitimacy means allegorically. The close of scene 17, 'Truth',

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[159] Ibid., p. 115.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Kruger, (2012), p. 365.

quintessentially represents this debate:

ELEKTRA. This night's end is already written.

Our destiny must be played out!

KLYTEMNESTRA. Nothing…nothing is written.

Do not choose to be me. The hounds

that avenge all murder will forever hunt you down.'

ELEKTRA. This is the son of Agamemnon.

His hour is come at last.

ORESTES**.** (*In rage and pain*)

YOU HAVE MADE ME WHAT I AM!!

KLYTEMNESTRA**.** (*Lowering her head, ready for the blow from the axe.*)

Then strike my child – and be done.[163]

Orestes is given the opportunity, means and motivation; and yet, because of his upbringing away from his family, he is able to see the wrong in executing Klytemnestra. It would be a crime. The eye-for-eye ideology is broken in this moment, although Elektra cannot see why. From the 'truth' of scene 17, to the 'Shift' of scene 18, Orestes realises the agency that has been handed to him through the

[163] Farber, *Molora*, pp. 74-75

seizure of power. A monopoly of force is one of the basic definitions of a state, and so Orestes transforms, like the struggle movement, from being a revolutionary to a ruler.

ORESTES. NeZinyana ziyayazi lo nto…

[EVEN THE ANCESTORS KNOW THIS…]

Throwing down the axe.

I cannot shed more blood.

ELEKTRA. But the Furies demand it. They cry out for more.[164]

ORESTES. (*Grabbing her.*) There is still time, Sister. Walk away.

Rewrite this ancient end.

ELEKTRA. (*Wrenching herself loose.*)

Don't ask me to forget my hatred! There can be no forgiveness![165]

ORESTES. WHAT IS IT YOU WANT?

ELEKTRA. (*She screams from her soul.*)

VENEGANCE!

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth!

ORESTES. That was the curse of our Mother's House.

I have been there tonight and it's empty.

It's a circle with no end.[166]

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[164] Ibid., p. 75.
[165] Ibid., pp. 75-76.
[166] Ibid. p. 76.

Elektra makes one final attempt to kill Klytemnestra with the axe, but is stopped by the women of the chorus, '*mov[ing] swiftly as one.*'[167] The new South Africa, as envisioned by *Molora*, is one where the community is not a passive chorus, but an active part of justice. The 'Epilogue' by Klytemnestra, spoken at the testimony table, recognises the responsibility of older generations: 'We are still only here by grace alone.'[168] Rather than this being the 'grace' of a God, as in the Athenian *Oresteia*, it is the even-handedness of a community that recognises that it wants to overcome its pain. Rather than divided, separated by hierarchy, as the 'mother's' or 'father's house',[169] the new South Africa is one: 'this house rises up'.[170]

Farber's text depends on breaking the cycle of vengeance, of realising its contingency. Ato Quayson has argued that: 'Hope lies in an awareness of the temporary nature of the statement of absolute victimhood. That is not to say that South Africans should denigrate what people suffered in the past, but that there should be very rigorous questioning about what the memory of that suffering is doing in the present. What are its uses and abuses?'[171] This is a good description of *Molora* as a performance in the context of 2008. The blending of performance practices signals a bringing together and blurring of cultural boundaries.

Molora does pose a serious political question, however, about the resonance of the TRC: what is the memory of suffering doing in the present? *Molora* is a play that debuted a decade after the TRC ended, and yet it has had international success, and has connected the dilemmas of the South African transition back to

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[167] Ibid. p. 77.
[168] Ibid., p. 79.
[169] Ibid., n.b.: 'Mother's house' on p. 76, 'Father's house' elsewhere in play.
[170] Ibid., p. 79
[171] Quayson, Ato., 'The enchantment of a false freedom', *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 7.3, (2005), p. 337.

the present, and to other contexts. In a present and future haunted by the past, Farber pulls at the question of how to react to the 'ash'. The present – as represented in *MacBeki* and *Molora* – fits so perfectly with the recycling of past stories and histories, because neither denies the influence of the past.

The persistence of the pain of the apartheid-era, and its continued representation in plays like *Molora*, however, speaks to the continual, spectral return of the past as a *revenant*. The operation of power and the goals of transformation are inexorably tied to the curse-like grip of the past, warned against by the theatrical justice of the truth commission. The absurdity of the present, where everything seems to change, yet nothing does, provides the comedy of *MacBeki*. These infinite, interrelated, contrasting responses are evidence of the interrelatedness of contexts, memories, trauma and fear in post-apartheid South African culture.

Chapter Three. The post-apartheid politics of friendship: Spagnoletti's *London Road* and postcolonial democracy

3.1 The contradictions of democracy

This chapter explores the representation of friendship in Nicholas Spagnoletti's award-winning 2010 play *London Road* and foregrounds connections between that play and contemporary debates about South African democracy.[172] Jacques Derrida's theory of the 'politics of friendship' provides a focal point for my analysis of Spagnoletti's dramatisation of xenophobia, hospitality, care and health.[173] Two women, marginalised for reasons specific to their identities and status, grow to know one another, creating a relationship that defies normative conventions of family and South African-ness. I will explore how the play encodes in performance concepts and ideas that are inherent to the relationship between friendship and democracy in the theory of deconstruction. In this chapter I will analyse a video sourced from Spagnoletti,[174] and the playscript published by Cape Town's Junkets in 2010.[175] Set

[172] Spagnoletti, Nicholas., *London Road* (Mowbray, Cape Town: Junkets, 2010). *London Road* found great success on the fringe festival circuit, first in Grahamstown at the National Arts Festival, being the highest grossing Fringe play in 2011. See Skinner, Christine., 'Festival Hit *London Road* returns for another year'. <http://www.artlink.co.za/news_article.htm?contentID=30246> [accessed 10 October 2016]. The play also saw international success at the Edinburgh Festival where Robyn Scott won Best Actress at The Stage Awards. See Merrifield, Nicola., 'Our Edinburgh Award winners revealed,' *The Stage*, <https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/2013/theatre-ad-infinitum-wins-second-stage-award/> [accessed 10 October 2016].

[173] Derrida, Jacques., *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. by George Collins, (London: Verso, 1997); Derrida, Jacques., and Geoffrey Bennington, *Politics and Friendship: A Discussion with Jacques Derrida* (1997) <http://www.livingphilosophy.org/Derrida-politics-friendship.htm> [accessed 1 September 2016].

[174] 'London Road', dir. by Lara Bye (Author's own collection, 4 May 2010 at The Fugard Theatre, Cape Town).

[175] *London Road* was written and refined over a four-year period, after its debut in a writing competition for the Performing Arts Network of South Africa's Festival of Contemporary Theatre Readings in 2006. This led to successful runs at the Kalk Bay Theatre, whose in-house

in the affluent, cosmopolitan Cape Town suburb of Sea Point, the play's action takes place in the two characters' flats in the Beach View tower block, and on their local seaside promenade.

While *London Road* is a play focused on the personal relationships between its characters, its context is important. In the two decades since the end of apartheid, South Africa has transitioned from being heralded as a 'miracle' of democratisation via the Afrikaners surrendering power,[176] to a case study of how the 'postcolonial remains'.[177] The 'End of Apartheid and the Birth of the New South Africa'[178] was achieved through the famous 1994 general election, a moment when the Republic's voting franchise was no longer based on racial essentialism. But according to the constitution of the Afrikaner's 'rogue' state,[179] the Republic had always, nominally, been a democracy. As Jacques Derrida wrote in 1985, South Africa was a caricature of democracy, 'a regime whose formal structures are those of a Western democracy,

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professional company produced the play, and the Fugard Theatre in Cape Town (a performance of which is the source of the recording analysed).

[176] Waldmeir, Patti. *Anatomy of a Miracle: The End of Apartheid and the Birth of the New South Africa*, (London: Viking, 1997), p. xii.
[177]Young, Robert J.C., 'Postcolonial Remains', *New Literary History*, 43.1, (2012), 19-42, (p. 19).

[178] See Waldmeir, (1997) subtitle.

[179] Derrida, Jacques., 'The Last of the Rogue States: The 'Democracy to Come,' Opening in Two Turns', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 103.2/3, (2004), 323-341. A rogue state with its crucial strategic relevance during the Cold War on the one hand and its status as an anti-humanitarian pariah on the other. Derrida analyses the transition from a state being considered legal and moral within the international community to being a 'rogue', a concept which Derrida argued reveals deep-seated assumptions about states and the ways that geopolitics is based on a possible hypocrisy, given the United States' own 'rogue' behaviour. Derrida, Jacques., 'Racism's Last Word', trans. by Peggy Kamuf, *Critical Inquiry*, 12, (Autumn 1985), 290-299 (See for the application of deconstruction to the apartheid state). N.b. There are tensions here about the meaning of the word 'Afrikaner' and its relationship to state power, as it stands for Afrikaner organic nationalism. South Africa, arguably, provided Derrida's favourite contemporary political subject for some time. Even his *Specters of Marx*, as established in Chapter One Fn. 33, was dedicated to the South African Communist leader, Chris Hani.

in the British style, with "universal suffrage"'.[180] The exclusion of 72% of black South Africans was achieved through democratic mechanisms.[181] Democracy in South Africa, therefore, has – from the founding of the Republic in 1961 at least – been contradictory, an *aporia*. The 1990s were dominated by the liberal nationalist project of the 'Rainbow Nation', an attempt to respect all ethnicities and national groups within a unitary imaginary of healing and reconstruction. The xenophobic '*Amakwerekwere*' riots in the 2000s, for instance, ruptured this carefully plotted narrative. South African theatre has responded to the post-apartheid political milieu in sophisticated and diverse ways, as I have argued in Chapters One and Two of this thesis, reflecting the evolution of political theatre in response to post-apartheid politics.

The contradictions inherent in South Africa's political life have not disappeared post-1994. The drawing up of the country's Constitution ensured that its citizens' human rights would be protected by inclusionary guarantees, a deliberate counterpoint to the exclusionary essentialism of apartheid. Derrida's reading of democracy is important to understanding the post-apartheid, because democracy, in theory, rests on a central (possibly utopian) *aporia*: the *demos* governs, or ought to govern, as a paradoxically heterogeneous singularity.[182] Derrida posits the idea of the 'democracy to come', central to which is a politics of friendship, as opposed to the dominant Western parliamentary form of statehood.

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[180] Ibid., p. 384.

[181] Ibid.: '*(except for the 72 percent of blacks 'foreign' to the republic and citizens of 'Bantustans' that are being pushed 'democratically' into the trap of formal independence)*'.

[182] Glendinning, Simon., *Derrida: A Very Short Introduction,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 90.

Derrida's argument is that canonical Western politics has mapped itself onto patriarchal concepts of family: what he refers to as a 'schematic of filiation'.[183] In this model, liberalism and democracy are particularly tied to the family because friendship and fraternity are linked together in this '*androcentric* configuration of politics', where the 'republican motto almost always associates fraternity with equality and freedom' and 'democracy […] is rarely determined in the absence of confraternity or brotherhood'.[184] By contrast, Derrida argued that friendship can become the basis for the forming of relationships beyond the hitherto exclusionary ideals of nationhood, race and species. The friendship in *London Road* between Stella and Rosa contradicts the entire '*androcentric'* history or 'canon of friendship'. Between two women, of 'opposing' ethnicities and nationalities, it is formed through none of these phallogocentric, traditional forms of '*schematic …* filiation' that constitute political power structures as recognized by the Western – and therefore colonial – canon.

London Road opens with its two characters bursting onto the stage, investigating Stella's burgled home in the Beach View tower block. Stella is a young black woman from Lagos in Nigeria, and operates a small narcotics operation out of her squalid flat, contending with the uneasy status of being an irregular economic migrant in a time of popular xenophobia, working within the city's drug trade.[185] Her estranged husband, Abi, who passed on HIV to Stella after an illicit affair with a co-worker, has returned to Nigeria. Written and set before the South African government approved the public funding of Antiretroviral (ARV) drugs in 2010, the

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[183] Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, p. viii.

[184] Ibid.

[185] The International Organization for Migration., *Key Migration Terms* (2018) <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms> [accessed 26 January 2018]. For the usage of 'irregular', United Nations's terminology.

play shows how Stella must fund her own HIV treatment and her sky-high rent by carrying on her 'import/export' business, servicing her bourgeois clients. The looting of Stella's drug stash presses her into debt with the boss of the criminal operation.

In contrast, Rosa is an elderly white South African Jewish widow, who owns a flat in Beach View. Her family have emigrated to Israel and Australia, leaving her alone. Having benefitted from the area's gentrification, Rosa lives a comfortable life, spending her time people-watching (being a 'peeping tom') and being politically active at a local union's office. Prior to Scene One, Rosa had gone to the (former) storage room to find the source of a problem in the plumbing; seeing Stella's predicament, Rosa immediately offers her help, both in reporting the burglary to the police and in politically targeting Stella's landlord, the unseen Barlowe, for charging unreasonably high rent on such sub-standard accommodation. While Stella emphatically refuses, out of a sense of caution and a belief that her business is her own to deal with, she does take up Rosa's offer of a bed for the night, and enjoys the widow's hospitality.

The staging of relationships between privileged whites and oppressed non-whites is a dominant theme in contemporary political drama.[186] However, the characters of *London Road* are atypical in that they are both South Africans and non-South Africans. The director Lara Bye touched on the effect of this unusual juxtaposition: 'I think it's a nice fact that it's a Nigerian lady. Somehow makes [the play] not your typical South African, black, white, we find reconciliation and

[186] During apartheid 'mixed' race casts were, depending on the laws at the time, illegal or taboo. Alternative, political theatre-makers frequently explored this motif in the 1990s and 2000s, developing into a sub-genre that linked with the Truth and Reconciliation commission. See Ch. 2 on Yael Farber's play *Molora* for a contemporary example of this theme.

healing'.[187] Sea Point is a diverse, if recently gentrified, part of Cape Town and *London Road* reflects this with its characters. The representation of internal migration has been a long-standing theme within South African theatre, reflecting the moving of workforces across the country in heavy industries like mining; it is striking therefore that Stella, as an economic migrant from outside South Africa, is an atypical dramatic subject. She is a migrant who experiences the globalisation of South Africa, as a postcolonial, neoliberal economy. The immediate evidence is that Stella's life in South Africa is enabled by the global narcotics trade. When she and her husband moved to Johannesburg, he struggled to find work, until he joined the 'delinquent' drug trade.[188] Now working alone, her middle-class customers' wealth reflects South Africa's dominant economic status on the continent, providing a market for her so-called 'Import Export' business.[189] Stella's life in prosperous Sea Point is in stark contrast to the Hillbrow area in Johannesburg, where she lived when she first moved to South Africa.[190] Importantly, Sea Point is known for housing significant Nigerian and Jewish communities. Both Spagnoletti and the actor who played Rosa have lived in Sea Point, and their local knowledge of the multicultural, diasporic urban scene permeates the play. [191]

Stella and Rosa become close friends in *London Road* through a number of meetings and events. Both overcome their initial qualms about one another to build an important, mutually beneficial relationship based on care and compassion,

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[187] Spagnoletti, Nicholas., 'The play London Road', (2010) <https://youtu.be/-X9LPv2YWxc?t=163> [accessed: 26 January 2018]. This recording was filmed during the play's première run at the Kalk Bay Theatre in March 2010.

[188] Spagnoletti, *London Road*, p.39.
[189] Ibid., p. 30.
[190] Ibid., p. 29.
[191] Ibid., p. 17; CueTube., 'Finding Humanity on London Road', (2011) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFsyLSOXrsA> [accessed 26/1/18]. Rosa was played by Robyn Scott.

sustained by their similarities and differences. At the end of the play, Rosa's age-related illnesses bring her to her death bed; Stella, encouraged and supported by Rosa, is becoming 'legit'. As a friend, Stella has a caring role that contradicts the dominant, exclusionary discourses of blood-related family and xenophobic patriotism, as presented in the play's representation of South African society.

London Road's critique of neoliberal capitalism in South Africa is exemplified by Rosa's phone call to the landlord Barlowe. Rosa calls Barlowe at the beginning of her personal mission to deal with the problems plaguing her friend Stella. In Scene Eight, '*Schmuck* Barlowe', we hear the telephone conversation from Rosa's perspective while she is alone:

> ROSA. I live in Beach View – in London Road? You know the block, do you? I should hope so since you own a flat there. How is it, then, that you are collecting a rent of R5000 for that shoebox, and from an illegal immigrant? Oh. You know full well that she is illegal.[192]

Barlowe is someone who does not care about Stella's administrative status as a migrant, only of the exorbitant profit he can extort from her. Stella's rent 'should be able' to pay for a much higher standard of accommodation than her flat, in the former superintendent's basement, but her irregular ('illegal') status means that she must deal with the illegitimate Barlowe.[193] The landlord must now face his social responsibilities, as well as the practicalities of the permanently leaking pipe and the door hanging off its hinges from the burglary, because of Rosa's political pressure:

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[192] *London Road*, p. 49.
[193] Ibid., p. 26.

> ROSA. Listen to me, Barlowe, and listen close. I'm a well-connected
> woman in political circles, and I can make you the most
> infamous slumlord since El Rio! […] If these problems are not
> fixed and if you try to threaten her in any way, I'm going to have
> cause to make you a public enemy. I've done it before – YES –
> correct – El Rio – that was me […] I'm glad you understand.[194]

The problems that Stella faces can, realistically, only be solved through Rosa's tactics. Rosa's communist politics means that she views Barlowe's behaviour as the scandal, not Stella's business or her lack of a visa.[195] While Rosa clearly has a background in such campaigns, for instance her shaming of the 'slumlord…El Rio', her friendship with Stella motivates her to personally intervene. Scene Eight, therefore, is a window into Rosa's personal determination to help her friend. For Rosa, friendship has become a positive reason to, once more, engage in local political struggle. Rather than the apartheid system, Rosa's opponent is a landlord who represents the illicit, exploitative form of neoliberal capitalism that the gentrification of Sea Point has enabled(?).[196]

The politics of a friendship are important, but so too is the meaning that such relationships can bring to life. This is key to Scene Four, in which Stella and Rosa meet on the promenade. In Scenes One to Three, the characters discuss their

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[194] Ibid., p. 49.
[195] Rosa and her husband were members of the Communist Party of South Africa, Ibid., p. 27.
[196] For further discussion of Sea Point, see section 3.4 below.

problems with their families and their lives in different parts of South Africa, the kinds of topics that may appear in the initial stages of becoming acquainted. Rosa asks:

> ROSA. Do you have any friends?
>
> STELLA. No. Not really. What about you?
>
> ROSA. Oh, I've had fantastic friends in my life. But they're all dead now. Or *mashuga.*[197]

Rosa is without friends – but still preserves the memory of them. Rosa's philosophy is that 'Love makes energy. Love and friendship. Living without love isn't much of a life'.[198] It is Rosa who first decides to show her vulnerability to her new friend, telling the story of her embarrassment that she had absent-mindedly placed a tin of Nestlé Milo in her handbag at the supermarket. Stella, crucially, does not judge Rosa, and listens to her explanation, unlike her acquaintance, who gossiped about the incident to Rosa's family. When Stella 'puts her arm gently around Rosa', she stops isolating herself, and begins to love and be open to others again, after the adulterous betrayal of her husband.

The scene is set, therefore, for these characters' friendship to countervail the post-apartheid context; but it also serves as a response and resistance to classical Greek definitions of friendship. As established in Chapter One of this thesis, from the late 1980s and into the 1990s, Jacques Derrida's philosophy took 'an ethical

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[197] Ibid., p. 35.; *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3 edn (WordWeb Software, 2010). 'Meshugga' (משגע) is a Yiddish term informally used to mean 'crazy'.
[198] Spagnoletti, *London Road*, p. 34.

and political turn'.[199] This saw Derrida becoming more explicit about his politics.[200] Derrida traced, in his deconstructive reading of democracy, the paradoxically marginal yet central conception of friendship within European political philosophy.[201] In his reading of the Western philosophical canon, Derrida 'discover[ed] that friendship plays an organising role in the definition of justice, of democracy'.[202] Derrida found that the theorising of friendship (and its incorporation into classical conceptions of democracy) from Aristotle onward was based on the patriarchal, familial relationships of fraternity, of brotherhood between the men of a city: 'even the idea of democracy, the way it was defined in the beginning, had to agree with the presuppositions of this concept, with the privilege granted to man, to brotherhood.'[203] Stella and Rosa's friendship is a feminized, hybridized alternative to such patriarchal views. Derrida's deconstructive reading showed that within European politics there is a set of underlying essentialist assumptions, pinned together by notions of male friendship; however, it was in the possibilities presented by a new kind of friendship, outside of the philosophical canon, that Derrida found the source of a new kind of democratic politics. Rather than based on homogenisation, the differential nature of the friendship between Stella and Rosa deconstructs the ideals that have, hitherto, tied friendship to hierarchies founded on

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[199] Glendinning, (2011), p. 78.

[200] Glendinning writes, 'the movement from 'early' to 'later' Derrida is best regarded merely as *a shift of emphasis* from a focus on traditionally marginalized predicates to a focus on rather more traditionally central ones' (Ibid., p. 80, original emphasis).

[201] Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship* (1997).

[202] Derrida and Bennington, (1997).

[203] Ibid.

marginalising figures like Rosa and Stella.

Rosa and Stella's friendship is representative of the new possibilities in post-apartheid South Africa. The gentrification of Cape Town, the significant amount of 'rest of Africa' migration to South Africa, and their familial circumstances provide the scaffolding for these possibilities. As Lara Bye says, 'they are essentially two women alone in the world, which I think a lot of people can relate to.'[204] It is this loneliness that creates the possibility of them meeting and becoming friends. South Africa's constitution, and its anti-racial politics, was supposed to encourage openness and healing. Their friendship is enabled by post-apartheid attitudes, even as their relationship exposes the boundaries running through modern South African society. How their friendship can be replicated on a wider, social level is complicated by the internecine conflicts surrounding their core differences. In reality, xenophobia is pervasive, as shown by the pogroms (largely) in Johannesburg and Durban on the one hand, and the negative representation of migrants in media and film.[205] Worryingly, this situation has been spurred by the efforts of the post-apartheid state to create a sense of collective unity, the collective platform of 'rainbow' nationalism having mutated into a society troubled by foreign 'others'.[206] That both a positive and negative association surrounding their friendship can be argued is reflective of the ambivalence surrounding particular forms of difference in contemporary South Africa, for instance, migrant status. How widespread xenophobia is when compared

[204] Spagnoletti, 'The play London Road', (2010).

[205] See references below in the 'Xenophobia and Hospitality' section. Footnotes 77-79.

[206] Krueger, Anton., 'The implacable grandeur of the stranger: ruminations on fear and familiarity in *Die Vreemdeling*', *South African Theatre Journal*, 26.3, (2012): 'Since the democratic reforms of 1994, the new South African government has insistently attempted to cultivate a sense of patriotism, and to develop pride in a newly formed national identity. However, this investment in a cohesive national body has all too often been premised on the exclusion of the foreigner.' (p. 2).

to the post-apartheid openness that Rosa represents is unclear in the play. The conflicts within their social circle, however, can be viewed as a microcosmic example of the uneven spread of internationalist ideals. In the same moment that xenophobia challenges the core ideals of the post-apartheid project, such as the Rainbow Nation, their countervailing friendship presents a potential alternative that preserves the positive aspects of the 'Rainbow' while adapting to the realities of South African communities like Sea Point.

Despite all that Stella does for Rosa by caring for her, in lieu of Rosa's family, Rosa admits that her émigré daughter Rachel was fearful when she learned Stella is Nigerian:

> ROSA. So I tell Rachel, turns out that old Sango's developed a bit of a crush on old Stella! I said to Rachel, I can't believe it - someone who until recently was going on about how all the foreigners should be deported or put in jail - now falling head over heels in love with you, a Nigerian.
>
> Rachel freaked out, you didn't mention she was a Nigerian! She was furious. I said I'm sure I mentioned that you were a Nigerian. But I was lying. I knew I hadn't mentioned that. Not to Rachel.[207]

Rachel's discomfort about Stella is entirely based on the new knowledge that she is Nigerian. Similarly, Sango, who works at the local union office, has had to reconcile his romantic feelings for Stella with his views of foreigners as being

[207] Spagnoletti, *London Road*, p. 63.

'*Amakwerekwere*', reflecting the moral panic that blames foreigners for the country's ills. Sango and Rachel's xenophobia thus implies that Stella represents the 'other' that threatens the South African nation. By contrast, Rosa is not afraid of the possibility of Stella residing in South Africa, and is not obsessed with defining Stella by her 'foreign' status. It is worth noting that, by the end of the play, Rosa and Stella's friendship allows them to speak honestly with one another about the subject of xenophobia, secure in the knowledge that neither woman sees each other through the discursive lens of *Amakwerekwere*. The politics of their friendship operates as a countervailing force to the widespread demonisation of foreigners, which thrived during the play's development. [208] As Owen Sichone discusses, xenophobia in South Africa 'exploded' into the form of 'sinister "mass action" against foreigners ['*Amakwerekwere*'] in violent forms of political mobilisation […] in May 2008'.[209] The context of the 2008 uprisings, however, is that 'tensions and actual violence against foreigners had in fact been simmering for more than fifteen years'.[210] The political elite may have negotiated to end apartheid in the early 1990s, but 'populist justice' had been used to deal with 'the "enemies of the people"' in the final years of the apartheid regime. [211] Victims including officials working within the segregated system, militants who had defected, and folk enemies like 'witches'.[212] Sichone proposes that xenophobia emerged from the fact that constitutional reform, ideological transition, political compromise and populist violence had all overlapped, and it was under those conditions 'that xenophobia became manifest in South

[208] For further discussion, see section 3.2 Xenophobia and Hospitality, below.
[209] Sichone, Owen., 'Xenophobia', p. 255 in *New South African Keywords*, ed. by Nick Shepherd and Steven Robins, (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2008).
[210] Ibid., p. 256
[211] Ibid., p. 257
[212] Ibid.

Africa.'[213] Stella's resistance to being a scapegoat echoes that of the anti-apartheid resistance, in which Rosa played an 'active' part.[214] The extent of xenophobic ideas is underlined by the attitudes of Sango and Rachel, as well as a taxi driver who hurls abuse at Stella.

Furthermore, Stella's new found stability at the end of the play means that she has been able to access the legal advice required to fight her status as an irregular migrant:[215] 'I've spent so much time and money with this bloody [immigration lawyer]. It's expensive being legal – no wonder nobody bothers', she says.[216] While Stella is grateful for the opportunity to formalize her status within the country, her sarcastic attitude underlines the feeling that the difference being made is purely administrative, with its own processes of exploitation and expense. On a personal level, Stella's relationship with Rosa has made the difference.

In the same scene, Rosa expresses the desire to leave her flat to Stella in her will because, 'My children… they've got nothing to do with this country anymore – where's the sense in it?'[217] Within *London Road* is a contradiction: the breakdown of their families creates the conditions for their camaraderie. As Derrida's deconstruction showed, friendship is at the heart of all political relationships – so it follows that Stella and Rosa's 'love and friendship' is also a political relationship.[218] The stake that Rosa's children have in South Africa, compared to Stella's, is irrational and unjust: as Rosa argues, 'where's the sense in it?' The family's claim

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[213] Ibid.
[214] Spagnoletti, *London Road*, p. 27
[215] Ibid., p. 27.

[216] Spagnoletti, *London Road*, p. 61
[217] ibid., p. 60.

[218] Ibid., p. 34, Rosa's phrase.

competes with Stella's real plight. Rosa's reasons that the materiality of the situation is more important than her children's sentimentality, because her family is more remote than the shared community of Sea Point and Stella's friendship. Stella's residency is a more plausible reason for her to inherit than the connection that Rosa's children have to South Africa as their birthplace. The implication is that in a globalised world possession, need and everyday life should replace the system of familial property inheritance that would leave Rosa's flat to her children, who are independent and abroad in Australia and Israel. A South African politics of friendship which is no longer tied to family provides the conceptual framework for redistributing Rosa's wealth to fulfil her wishes as opposed to her duty to her children. Nevertheless, the possibility that her children will contest the will clouds the future possibilities of their friendship continuing to assist Stella after Rosa dies.

Rosa's bond with her daughter Rachel is racked with anxieties because it is one that is defined by geographical and emotional distance. Stella's comment about the expensiveness of 'being legal' critiques the inadequacy of nation-states in being reconciled with such a globalised world, where individuals and groups move across borders as part of the flow of capital or in refugee streams.[219] The friendship formed in *London Road* is one that forms connections that rigid laws and conservative attitudes cannot encompass. And yet, the paradox is that because of this friendship, Stella is in the process of being 'legitimised', and Rosa is given a focus in a time of her life when she is left alone by her family, marginalised because of her age. Ironically, this unconventional form of friendship, which actively works against the conventional bonds of family and social-group affiliation, serves to create a more

[219] *London Road*, p. 61.

socially stable and happy way of life for those who participate in it.

The political theatre scene's existential search for a purpose in the 1990s, as argued in Chapters One and Two, led to practitioners and theorists actively questioning the purpose and objectives of art in the 'New' South Africa. In 1996 Malcolm Purkey asked three questions that are relevant to the kind of post-apartheid theatre that *London Road* represents, with its focus on subjectivities, relationships and individuality: 'Can we move from a 'protest' to a 'post-protest' literature? Can our literature and theatre become *pro*active rather than *re*active?' And further: 'How do we prepare to make a theatre that contributes to a post-apartheid society?'[220] Democracy is – as Derrida argues – a state which is proactive, formed by the construction of a community and the mutual diversity of all. Indeed, in the twenty-first century as much as in the twentieth, there are many issues to be proactive *and* reactive about. *London Road* is a text that incorporates ideas and relationships which speak to these complex critical subjects; it is a play that encourages critical thinking about xenophobia and hospitality, democracy and equality, the experience (and politics) of friendship, and the relationship between compassion, care and health**.** Derrida's conception of democracy is not a traditional political programme with parliamentary grievances and policies. Instead Derrida's democracy is defined by the desire to deconstruct and build equal relations:

> [I]f we dissociate democracy from the name of a regime we can then give this name 'democracy' to any kind of experience in which there is equality, justice,

[220] Purkey, Malcolm., '*Tooth and Nail*: Rethinking Form for the South African Theatre', in *Theatre and Change in South Africa*, ed. by Geoffrey V. Davis and Anne Fuchs (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 1996), p. 156, original emphasis.

> equity, respect for the singularity of the Other at work, so to speak - then it's democracy here and now.[221]

London Road's politics of friendship exemplifies a fresh form of democratic practice because it is the means of achieving change and dignity: it is 'democracy here and now'. Rosa and Stella's friendship draws strength and force from their mutual respect for each other, their acquaintance and, later, close bond is an alternative to the separation and loneliness the characters are trapped by at the beginning of the play. *London Road*'s scenes are by turns spontaneous, humorous, poignant, revealing or illustrative of their everyday lives. It is in these moments, where their friendship forms, that the 'experience' of 'equality, justice, equity, respect' for one another is constructed. Their friendship becomes the means for seeing their lives in a new light. The productiveness of their friendship in solving or approaching personal problems enacts real change in their lives. As Derrida argues, democracy does not have to be attached to a 'regime' to be an identifiable means of associating with one another, and the informal nature of friendship is the alternative needed to circumvent family or nationhood.

The politics of friendship in *London Road* shares the paradoxical, aporetic logic of the Rainbow Nation, of the differential and the singular brought together; but through the Nigerian character of Stella, the tacit connection of that Rainbow to South African soil is gone, an imaginary community replaced by a relationship between two individual subjects. As such the anti-essentialist politics of the women's friendship in *London Road* is a staged example of the nurturing, everyday

[221] Derrida and Bennington (1997).

relationships required to build a community in light of the globalised, neoliberal problems that South Africa faces in the here-and-now, in conscious contrast to its essentialist history.

Friendship is significant in the politicisation of deconstruction because, unlike ideas of family or nation, it is a relationship that can be constructed around both differences and similarities. Stella and Rosa's friendship, for instance, deliberately contrasts with the formal obligations of family or nationhood. Rosa and Stella completely differ from each other, in ways such as ethnicity and nationality, but their bond is based on their need for each other in times of ill health and hardship. Indeed, friendships can work despite seemingly intractable differences. The genesis of Derrida's theorisation of friendship can be found in his meditation on his intellectual differences with Louis Althusser, a colleague whom he admired but greatly differed with. Derrida's 1989 interview with Michael Sprinker, titled 'Politics and Friendship', was closely followed by his eulogy at Althusser's funeral in 1990.[222] These texts are important in reconsidering the famously uneasy relationship between the two philosophers. During Derrida's eulogy for Althusser, he makes their friendship explicit: 'I have no difficulty speaking (as I must here) about the things that tended to separate him and me, even to oppose us… *because they never chipped away at a friendship that was the dearer to me on account of those differences*'.[223] To understand these differences, we must go back to the roots of both deconstruction and Althusserianism within the French academy. In the 1960s, Derrida and Althusser clashed over their opposing readings of Marx. The guiding concept for

[222] Both published in Kaplan, E. Ann., and Michael Sprinker (eds.), *The Althusserian Legacy* (London: Verso, 1993).

[223] 'Text Read at Louis Althusser's Funeral', in Kaplan and Sprinker, p. 243, my emphasis.

Althusserianism was a 'return to Marx' via the *re-reading* of the Marxist corpus; during Derrida's 'political turn' in the 1980s and 1990s, the guiding political force was a return to the theory of democracy.[224] In *The Politics of Friendship*, Derrida argued that there is 'no deconstruction without democracy, no democracy without deconstruction.[225] Unlike the totalist Marxism of the Althusserians, which presents definitive readings of societies to create a 'scientific' model for identifying the potential for revolution, Derrida's deconstructive reading of democracy – taking place over so many texts – does not reach hard conclusions. According to Derrida, 'Democracy is the only system, the only constitutional paradigm, in which, in principle, one has or assumes for oneself the right to criticize everything publicly, including the idea of democracy, its concept, its history, and its name.'[226] The impulse for South African theatre to be '*pro*active' or *'re*active'[227] to contribute to the political life of the country and build a post-apartheid stage ought to be read as an extension of the logic of democracy; in the case of *London Road*, this auto-immune response is targeted at the present link between race and class, to the social problems that have arisen from postcolonial inequality.

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[224] Althusserian readings of Marx – emerging out of intellectual discussions within the *Parti communiste français* – contrasted with Derrida's development of post-Marxist deconstruction in the 1960s and 1970s as outside of a traditional political party.

[225] Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, p. 105.

[226] Derrida, 'The Last of the Rogue States: The 'Democracy to Come'', (2004), p. 332.

[227] Purkey, '*Tooth and Nail*', (1996), p. 156.

3.2 Xenophobia and Hospitality

London Road, with its representation of subjectivity, is an interrogation of what being a South African really means, or can mean. Even if Stella became a legal citizen of South Africa, in a xenophobic context she may still be subjected to oppression, marked forever as 'non'-South African. Derrida's argument in *The Politics of Friendship*, about the link between patriarchal politics and discourses like the nation, has a particular relevance when linked to South Africa's popular xenophobia. The differential *and* singular politics of Derrida's 'democracy to come' offers a necessary refinement of the ANC's Rainbow Nationalism, editing out the reactionary affinity of the Rainbow to blood or soil. South Africa and its democracy (past and present) is a hybridised product of settler colonialism, imperialism and postcolonialism. Theatre critic Anton Krueger, choosing not to use the appellation of 'ethnic', suggests that: 'perhaps South Africa is a nation of 'others', a nation of many nationalities.'[228] Krueger references *London Road* as one of five significant examples of refugees on the post-apartheid stage, arguing that this group constitutes a significant trend, the politics of South African drama intercutting with widespread anxieties about these marginalised others.[229] South Africa, as a product of modern history, and therefore of nationalism, must be understood through the lens of this contradiction, of the

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[228] Krueger, Anton., 'Performing transformations of identity: 'Ethnic' nationalisms and syncretic theatre in post-apartheid South Africa', *English Academy Review: Southern African Journal of English Studies*, 24.1, (2007), 51-60 (p. 53)

[229] See Krueger, (2013): 'Societies prefer their refugees to remain invisible, which is perhaps why we love putting them on stage. A cluster of recent productions have had to do with the fear of strangers and there are now enough plays about xenophobia for this to be recognised as the emergence of a new theme in recent South African theatre.' p. 3; Krueger's other examples are Acty Tang's *amaQueerKwere* (2005), Magnet Theatre's *Every Day, Every Year, I am Walking* (2006), Jonathan Nkala's *The Crossing* (2009) and Helen Iskander's *Planet B* (2011). Krueger summarises *London Road* as being 'about a migrant's compassion for a stranger.' (Ibid.).

'nation of 'others'', where alterity and difference is a condition of nationality. In this context, the democratisation of the country, especially in the sense that Derrida promotes, of a singularity aware of its differential nature, becomes a way of translating this hybridity into the country's laws and policies. With the prominent arrival of refugees, and of political migrants, in the post-apartheid period, a re-evaluation of what that 'nation of many nationalities' should include is necessary; and indeed, *London Road* is evidence of a nascent impulse towards openness and a willingness to think beyond the country's 'indigenous' or 'European' communities.

Xenophobic violence swept South Africa in 2008; pogroms against Zimbabwean refugees, in particular, shattered the government's liberal narrative of a society that was gradually healing with time. This was the cultural milieu that *London Road* was written and staged in. As Owen Sichone argues, since the end of the insurrections against apartheid in the early 1990s, 'tensions and actual violence against foreigners had in fact been simmering for more than fifteen years.'[230] Neill Blomkamp's Academy Award-nominated sci-fi film *District 9*'s representation of Nigerians[231] was an important example of divisive representations of migrants, part of a wider context, the township imagery and violence now exported to Hollywood and rendered in the speculative form of sci-fi.[232] Far from an isolated phenomenon on the ground, Sichone found that '[t]he media have also provided other fears, linking foreign Africans in particular to organised crime, drugs,

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[230] Sichone, 'Xenophobia', (2008), p. 256.

[231] 'District 9', dir. by Neill Blomkamp (Sony Pictures Releasing, 2009). The sci-fi film provoked international outrage, with the Nigerian government banning *District 9*'s distribution.

[232] Graham, Lucy Valerie., 'Amakwerekwere and Other Aliens: *District 9* and Hospitality', in Moses, et al., '*District 9*: A Roundtable', *Safundi*, 11.1-2, (2010), 155-175 (p. 162). Graham argues in her analysis of *District 9* and Hospitality, that 'although the film critiques xenophobia, it ultimately also perpetuates it'.

diseases, guns and child abuse. It is thus now difficult to dissociate Nigerians from drug syndicates[…]'.[233]

While Stella's drug operation is, largely, used to provoke laughter in *London Road*, the stereotype remains, of an illegal migrant Nigerian, working in her countrymen's typecast underground trade. Indeed, while Rosa is a politically conscious South African, she still holds prejudices against those involved in selling narcotics: in Scene Two, Rosa bemoans the 'gangsters and drugdealers' who made her life in the Hillbrow suburb of Johannesburg untenable: the very same suburb that Stella lived in when she first came to South Africa.[234] Rosa, however, personifies the impulse to give hospitality to the foreigner, rather than to fear, or to impose limits on the newcomer.[235] She emphatically argues in the first line of Scene Two:

> ROSA. No. I couldn't live with myself thinking of you down in that flat. What if those thugs came back? […] No. You're much safer here. I'm so glad I wore you down. […]

Rosa provides both hospitality and refuge. Hospitality is key to understanding the entrance of an individual into a 'foreign' space, and Rosa's offer of a safe place to sleep is an example of what Derrida describes as the radical, 'unconditional law of

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[233] Ibid., p. 257.

[234] *London Road*, p. 29.

[235] Critchley, Simon., and Richard Kearney, 'Preface', in Derrida, Jacques., *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, (London: Routledge, 2001). [Derrida] locates a double or contradictory imperative within the concept of cosmopolitanism: on the one hand, there is an unconditional hospitality which should offer the right of refuge to all immigrants and newcomers. But on the other hand, hospitality has to be conditional: there has to be some limitation on rights of residence.' p. x.

hospitality […] a law without imperative, without order and duty.'[236] Rosa is driven by her protective – at first glance, prying, intruding – attitude towards Stella. So surprised is she by the material difference in their lives, despite them living in the same building, that she unconditionally opens her home to her vulnerable new friend.

Rosa's hospitality is the antithesis of the popular xenophobia documented in South Africa at that time. 'Foreigners in South Africa are typically accused of committing crimes; bringing disease (particularly HIV/Aids), 'stealing' employment and swamping social services.'[237] Stella sells illegal drugs and is a sufferer of HIV/AIDS. Rosa encourages her to 'go legit' and become a non-irregular migrant.[238] However, according to the logic of xenophobia, even as a 'legal' migrant Stella could be castigated as taking 'South African jobs'. As Steenkamp writes further, '[xenophobia] relies heavily on the circulation of myths and stereotypes about foreigners.'[239] *London Road*, rather than reinforcing, critically plays on such stereotypes, demonstrating their socially determined nature. Stella is, quite clearly, an unwilling drug-dealer, was infected with HIV because of her adulterous husband, and is a vulnerable individual in need of state (or, a friend's) protection. *London Road* exemplifies Derrida's concept of the democracy to come, which is particularly

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[236] Derrida, Jacques., and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000) p. 83.

[237] Steenkamp, Christina., 'Xenophobia in South Africa: What Does it Say about Trust?', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, 98.403, (2009), 439-447 (pp. 439-440).

[238] *London Road*, p. 62; The International Organization for Migration, *Key Migration Terms* (2018) <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms> [accessed 26 January 2018].

[239] Ibid., p. 439.

important given the failure of post-apartheid ideology that the xenophobic riots represented.

Stella and Rosa's friendship undermines the idea that community should be based on nationality. However, both Stella and Rosa are proud of their identities, and how they define them. Because of their experience of friendship, these identities allow them to connect rather than to fear each other in their everyday life.[240] Stella overcomes daily challenges to remain in Cape Town. Similarly, Rosa struggles with her loneliness, and is continually anxious about her family, and in particular her estranged daughter Rachel. As she bemoans at the end of the play, 'Children, they can be so stupid. They think you're going to go on for ever.'[241] Family relationships are still important to Stella and Rosa, but in their everyday life, they must live without them: Rosa makes this clear when she argues, 'You've been there when my real family hasn't.'[242] Rosa, clearly, sees her friendship with Stella as a kind of family – because she is 'there', even though her 'real family' isn't. As lifelong as family ties can be, in a globalised society where aged parents and adult offspring can be separated by oceans and continents, friendship has an adaptive openness that filial relationships do not. As Rosa says, her friendship with Stella has 'been there', while her 'real family hasn't', juxtaposing the familial and the friendly, speaking to the uncomfortable realities of an ageing global society.

It is Rosa's initial prying that brings her into contact with Stella. While Rosa sees the cramped and ransacked flat as both a crime scene and a reason to take social action, Stella is intent on keeping herself to herself. Each iterative scene in

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[240] I.e. As a xenophobic South African would, or a fearful irregular migrant could.

[241] Spagnoletti, *London Road*, p. 63.

[242] Ibid., p. 61.

London Road communicates more about the characters' situation; the director Lara Bye reflects that, 'Both of these characters initially are not particularly likeable. The old lady is extremely bossy, poking her nose; the Nigerian lady is extremely defensive.'[243] The actors' exploration was key to creating the characters as we relate to them in the stage production. As Bye writes, they 'intensively researched their characters and brought many idiomatic expressions and speech patterns to the script', with Makhutshi and Scott drawing on their knowledge of the idiolects of local 'grannies' and Nigerians. Scott reflects in an interview that Rosa is 'a pretty lonely lady, but she's a very feisty lady', that 'the reason she is a busybody is because she is so lonely'.[244] Nevertheless, Rosa takes action on behalf of the defensive Stella, for instance, when she calls the landlord Barlowe, as analysed above. While Rosa does her best to steer away thugs that come to threaten Stella in Scene Seven, they catch up with her prior to the final scene, Twelve. Stella still tells Rosa that this is 'not your business'[245], but unlike at the beginning of the play, Stella is being protective of Rosa. Both characters share similarities, one of them being stubbornness; the key change for Stella and Rosa by the end of *London Road* is that they both have someone who cares for them, that they can depend on. Lara Bye reflects that the play:

> says a lot, particularly in terms of immigrants, and old people who get abandoned and forgotten and left to their own devices. I think certainly for

[243] Spagnoletti, 'The play London Road', (2011).

[244] CueTube., (2011).

[245] Spagnoletti, *London Road*, p. 60.

> both of them it's like being injected with oxygen when you have been deprived. Having somebody who actually cares about you and is there for you.[246]

By comparing loneliness to asphyxiation, Bye draws attention to the ways that friendship, love and hospitality are important ways of feeling alive, rather than suffocated or overwhelmed by the pressures of everyday life. The insecurity that the robbery brings, and Rosa's unconditional offer of hospitality, compels Stella not to be alone: Rosa speculates at the end of Scene One, 'What if they come back?'[247]

Since the end of apartheid, as the largest economy on the continent, South Africa has been a port in a storm for those affected by conflicts ranging from Zimbabwe to the Second Congo War. As a (relatively) stable democracy the country has been a natural destination for those seeking refuge from conflicts occurring in Middle and Southern Africa. However, South Africa has struggled to address the structural problems inherited from the apartheid era, making the influx of refugees a compounding factor that has exacerbated and called attention to the post-apartheid's state's lack of resilience and uneven development. Apartheid itself was defined by the ripping apart and reconfiguration of urban and rural regions, a macroeconomic process within South Africa itself that has not, as yet, been fully addressed.

Post-apartheid international refugee streams and moral panics surrounding Nigerians have combined to create uncomfortable stereotypes that recall the language of apartheid-era racism, instead expressed through the language of

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[246] Spagnoletti, 'The play London Road', (2011).
[247] Spagnoletti, *London Road,* p. 28.

xenophobia. The South African government's fulfilment of international obligations have been contested by domestic discontent. In 2009, South Africa received 'more than 220,000 claims' by refugees, 'almost one quarter of applications globally', making it 'the world's largest recipient of individual applications', many of whom applied from countries like the Congo and Zimbabwe.[248] Popular fears about racism against whites through affirmative action policies; the issue of land ownership remaining, overwhelmingly, in the hands of whites; and the creation of a black middle class at the expense of the majority's prosperity, have combined with the media's portrayal of Nigerians to fuel popular xenophobia. The minority of Nigerians working in the drug trade do not compare to the majority of law-abiding Nigerians in South Africa.[249] Indeed, this victimisation, as a vicious circle, explains the reticence of Stella to connect with others on a meaningful level, or to proudly affirm that she is Nigerian when she is subject to xenophobic hate-speech. Such is the nature of organic nationalism that whether a migrant was 'economic' or 'political' seemingly did not matter to those who incited hatred and violence. The latter-day racists targeting non-South Africans, demonised as '*Amakwerekwere*', are themselves affected by this structural inequality: 'In an internally divided and highly unequal society like South Africa, it is very difficult to create a sense of belonging that cuts

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[248] UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency., '2009 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons', (2010) <http://www.unhcr.org/4c11f0be9.html> [accessed: 10 October 2016], p. 2.

[249] The African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS), 'Nigerians in South Africa: Facts and Figures', (2012) <http://www.migration.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Nigerians-in-South-Africa-Facts-and-Figures.-Issue-Brief-8a.pdf> [accessed: 27 January 2018]. The ACMS surmise that: 'Since the end of apartheid, the South African media have portrayed Nigerians as criminals and threats to South Africans' physical and economic security, relying mostly on state sources over any other source of direct information. However, there is no quantitative evidence of above average involvement of Nigerians in criminal activities. Indeed, over the past twenty years, neither quantitative statistics from police and correctional services nor qualitative research among the police justifies claims that Nigerians are over-represented in criminal activities.', p. 5.

across the old apartheid-era fences and divides.'[250] The providing of 'a sense of belonging' is what hospitality initially brings. The establishment of that, through Stella's path to legal citizenship, is the *traditional,* legal-political result of the women's friendship. Their differential, hybrid friendship does not efface their difference, but plays on it, depends on it. It is a friendship that does not depend on the homogenising structures of fraternity, family or citizenship as does the 'traditional', 'canonical' friendship that Derrida uncovered in his reading of friendship throughout the history of philosophy.

London Road is exceptional among modern South African plays in that its characters' healing is not a result of overcoming the trauma of apartheid. The healing effects of Rosa's friendliness are underscored in Scene Ten, when Stella describes her experience of popular xenophobia. On the walk home from her first antiretroviral treatment for HIV/AIDS a taxi driver shouts at her: ''You must go back to Congo!''.[251] She angrily replies, 'I'm not from Congo'. Firstly, there is the declarative function of saying where she is (not) from. The emphasis on the personal pronoun, the 'I', in the face of a homogenising stereotype is a performative speech act that affirms her presence as a singular person. Her statement, that she is not from the Congo, is more than simply declarative. Stella's stigmatisation, the same day of her first ARV treatment for her HIV, underscores the risks and bravery of her resistance. To the xenophobic driver her origin does not really matter. Stella's reply resists his othering of her as a 'foreigner'. Stella is, however, a paradoxical figure because she both symbolises the placeless, the foreign and the stereotypical and

[250] Sichone, (2008), p. 257.

[251] Spagnoletti, *London Road*, p. 56; Stella admits her secret diagnosis because Rosa peeks in her medicine cabinet.

functions as an individual that denies the integrity of these concepts. Through her friendship with Rosa for example, Stella demonstrates the differential relations that are possible when divisions are troubled. Finally, Stella's declaration counters the taxi-driver's imperative that she must 'go'. Stella's choice of words is important: rather than a positive statement that she is Nigerian, she says she is 'not from Congo'. While she confronts the taxi driver directly, she is essentially shouting that she is not a refugee. Rather than affirming that she is Nigerian, Stella is forced to defend herself through negation. Stella is forced to engage with the driver on his terms. This brief, recalled encounter on the street directly contrasts with Rosa and Stella's friendship that forms on stage. Stella's perception of her life in Cape Town is shifted by the friendliness that Rosa shows to her. No longer is a negative conflict like that with the driver, or members of the criminal gang, her predominant form of association. The scene suggests that the impact of Congolese refugee streams into South Africa has created a profound tension among South Africans, with issues of asylum and hospitality becoming intermingled with the constant tensions surrounding post-apartheid statehood. The accusation that Stella might be from the Congo – that she is a refugee, a political migrant, not an economic migrant – underlines the sensitivity of these categorisations, and the discourse that is used to discuss and differentiate the foreigner as 'other'. In *London Road* friendship is the countervailing force against the exclusionary politics of xenophobia, a form of affiliation that replaces nationality.

Figure 3.1 Bye., Lara (dir.), 'London Road [screen capture from Scene Ten]', (2010) Author's own collection.

Shaken up by this experience, when she gets closer to home, she remembers that:

> STELLA. I came walking down London Road. Standing here outside in the street was this old white woman waiting at the gate, hands gripping a little shopping bag, so tightly, as if someone might come snatch it at any minute. She greeted me as I walked past. I did not know it then but that was actually the first time I saw you, Rosa.[252]

Stella perfectly describes the feelings of insecurity that the vulnerable like Rosa anticipate on a day-to-day basis in contemporary South Africa, the feeling that a traumatic experience could happen at any time. That these experiences have, invariably, been blamed on non-South Africans in folk and media narratives is key

[252] Ibid., p. 56.

to understanding the 'xenophobic' paranoia that came to the surface at the time *London Road* was being written and conceived. As Sichone argues:

> The new South Africa is a good candidate for a society in a condition of anomie, given its state of permanent negotiation over basic values and norms, and we should therefore not be surprised to find unusual levels of moral confusion among the citizenry.[253]

The word 'anomie', according to the *OED*, comes from the French and Greek for 'lawless'. The state's laws, with its new Constitution, should be clearer than ever. But the challenges of disassembling of state apartheid has created social upheaval as well as transformation. The perception of lawlessness has, as Sichone argues, has created deep confusion within the post-apartheid polity, as reflected in the citizenry. Rosa's own status as a subaltern – as a woman, as a Jew, as a widow bereft of family – are parallels to Stella's own subalternity. Rosa, too, experienced this sense of 'anomie' in Hillbrow, and initially in Sea Point as well. Rosa is in no position to be warned away from the 'Other'-ed Stella by a prejudiced friend or a family member, and thus she offers her hospitality.

Conceptual debates within postcolonial theory regarding hybridity and differential models of culture further open up the discussion of contradictions in this chapter. For democracy, hybridity, and the politics of friendship – emerging as they do from poststructural readings – are all characterised by the idea that a singularity, such as a culture, or a friendship, should be understood as being determined by

[253] Sichone, (2008), p. 257.

difference and heterogeneity. In 1988, Homi Bhabha argued that cultural difference, as opposed to cultural *diversity*, 'undermines our sense of the homogenizing effects of cultural symbols and icons, by questioning our sense of the authority of cultural synthesis in general.'[254] Both Bhabha and Derrida, writing during the same period of intense global political change nearing and during the end of the Cold War, came to a similar conclusion, by philosophising through contradiction and outside of the impulse to homogenise. *London Road*, with its politics of friendship, is a text that does not shy away from the foundational hybridity of contemporary South African society or history. For both Bhabha and Derrida the appeals to fraternity, to geographical origin in justifying power, are pernicious because, as Bhabha argues:

> It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity.[255]

London Road, because of its portrayal of a friendship that breaks down social stereotypes, definitively operates outside of the traditional boundaries of family and nationhood. The women's friendship is very much defined by this 'absence of confraternity'. Both Stella and Rosa have been estranged from their families: their lives take place in this 'absence'. Stella forgives her husband Abi for giving her HIV, but she will not be with him; Rosa meanwhile, behind her stubborn exterior, yearns

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[254] Bhabha, Homi K., [1988] 'Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences', in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London, Routledge: 1995), p. 208.

[255] Ibid.

to mend her relationship with her daughter Rachel (while not knowing exactly how). While they have had a difficult relationship ever since Rachel's childhood, the mother and daughter are at their closest for many years at the end of the play, because they are beginning to be honest. There is irony in that the friendship of Stella and Rosa both takes place, in part, because of the estrangement between mother and daughter. The care given between these two women, also, 'lets off' Rachel from the immediate responsibility that Stella assumes.

The women's openness towards one another's difference is a basis for reading their friendship as being a model of ethics. According to Derrida's idea of ethical 'horizons', the 'radical otherness of the other' is full of potential, for it 'makes possible any *attempt*' to pursue 'purely ethical behaviour (total openness to the other)'.[256] The metaphor of the horizon, as Jonathan Roffe explains, is 'doubly important', because 'a horizon is that towards which we move but will never reach', and 'a structure that we can describe […] as *transcendental*, that is, a condition for the possibility of something'.[257] Like democracy, ethical behaviour is an ideal to strive for rather than a teleological destination. It is the permanence of the horizon which encourages Rosa and Stella to look beyond their current status or short-term gain, and see how they can be enriched. To apply the metaphor to *London Road*, for Rachel and Rosa, it seems, a perfect relationship between these two head-strong individuals is a 'horizon' in itself, something that can be reached for, but something that always creates a sense of distance between them. The distance, however, is about them remaining open, not closed like the nationalistic and xenophobic politics which their friendship countervails. Their friendship is not based

[256] Roffe, Jonathan., 'Ethics', in *Understanding Derrida*, ed. by Jack Reynolds and Jonathan Roffe (London, Continuum: 2004), pp. 42-43.
[257] Ibid.

on family or nation, but on their living in Sea Point together and being able to relate. Their friendship is by design impermanent, unlike the discourse of the eternal nation. One of the ethical messages of *London Road* is that it is important to recognise the mortality of interpersonal connections. As Rosa laments in the play's final speech, 'Children, they can be so stupid. They think you're going to go on for ever. They think you're always just going to be old. They don't believe you when you say goodbye.'[258] This estrangement is something that can only be solved when both of them are still alive, when there is still 'the possibility of something' to bring about an open, ethical relationship[259]. The honesty developing between them is the beginning of this openness, of course, but Rosa's assessment of her children being 'so stupid' regarding her mortality tempers hopes of a miraculous transformation.

Their estrangement resonates with Derrida's idea of a democracy that presents an alternative to a politics of origin. By deconstructing traditional concepts, people can 'think and live a politics, a friendship, a justice which *begin* by breaking with their naturalness or their homogeneity, with their alleged place of origin'.[260] By proceeding from the deconstruction of 'genealogical' politics, the democracy to come can emphasise difference and heterogeneity. The abandonment of nationalistic and patriarchal concepts defining politics, as Derrida argues, creates space for a new 'justice', a new sense of right and belonging outside of 'homogeneity'. In *London Road*, Stella's estrangement from her husband, and Rosa's alienation from her daughter, creates the opportunity for the hybridity of their friendship to present a form of association, counter to their loneliness, isolation and oppression. Both characters must struggle, in one way or another, with the perils of

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[258] Spagnoletti, *London Road*, p. 63.
[259] Roffe, (2004), p. 43.
[260] Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, p. 105.

globalisation: Rosa's children are gone, and Stella is marked as a foreigner. The politics of friendship in *London Road*, therefore, is one that is connected intimately with migration and globalisation, the forming of new ties and the pain of old bonds. The acts of hospitality in *London Road* give Rosa the opportunity to empathise; meeting in a homely space, rather than in the street. After all, there is a great difference between the meeting of Rosa and Stella, and the yelling of the xenophobic taxi driver in the street. The characters' homes, as locations in the staging, begin as distinct. Rosa's house represents security and permanence, while the improvised accommodation of Stella mirrors her own precariousness.

Both characters struggle with another of Derrida's subjects: forgiveness. Rosa feels responsible for her 'fighting' with Rachel, having apologised on the telephone for 'this war between us', which came out of a lifetime of arguing, culminating in Rosa not approving of her daughter's choice of husband[261]. As part of the final dialogue in the play Rosa tells Stella her daughter's reaction: 'I don't know if I got through to her. She said she appreciated what I said. She said but it's difficult, Ma. Ma! She hasn't called me 'Ma' in years. That was something.'[262] Rosa craves the feeling of being valued by her daughter as her mother, even though she finds her daughter difficult to get along with. The path from the breakdown of old ties to new possibilities, which Derrida suggests is needed for a democracy to come, is not easy. Rosa and Stella's friendship is emblematic of the new bonds that can be possible, but it emerges out of the painful breakdown of both their families. Rachel cannot quite forgive her mother, because it is the nature of forgiveness that it is, for Derrida, an act that can only be granted when it is impossible. Rosa and Rachel's

[261] *London Road*, p. 63.

[262] Ibid.

estrangement has deep roots. From the snapshot that *London Road* shows us the characters need to reconcile rather than forgive. Their conflict comes from the clash of their personalities, a difference of opinion, rather than a great wrong. Stella's friendship provides the model alternative for Rosa, a relationship built on respect, honesty and trust. By turns, Rosa finds the healing power of Rachel calling her 'Ma', acknowledging their familial ties, as cathartic. Indeed, what we see of Rosa and Rachel's relationship is told from Rosa's perspective. The migration of Rachel and her husband pushes them away from both Rosa and South Africa itself. The impact of the play's central friendship is in underlining the possibility of new relationships flourishing in the abandonment of old bonds; but crucially the women's friendship does not stand in the way of the reconstruction of Rosa's relationship with her family. The mother and daughter's reconciliation, and her friendship with Stella, provides the possible basis for Rosa living a much more bearable life in post-apartheid Cape Town.

3.3 Stella: living with HIV

The failure of Nelson Mandela's 1990s administration to address the HIV/AIDS crisis mutated, under Thabo Mbeki, into the damaging strategy of 'denialism' by the post-apartheid state. [263] The consequences of AIDS policy and the shape and

[263] These intertwining national and international contexts led to the crisis in South Africa today: a signification proportion of South Africa's population are estimated to have HIV and are in need of AIDS treatment, with daily death tolls from the epidemic running from three to four figure numbers. Mbeki's government was complicit, critics argued, because of its policy on AIDS, as demonstrated by the effectiveness of ARV treatment in countries like Brazil, India and Thailand in lowering death rates. Nattrass, Nicoli., *The Moral Economy of AIDS in South Africa*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Gevisser, Mark., *A Legacy of Liberation* (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 276-297; Gumede, William Mervin., *Thabo Mbeki: The Battle for the Heart and Soul of the ANC*, 2nd edn (London: Zed Books, 2007), pp. 187-215.

demographics of HIV in South Africa has done much to underline apartheid-era inequality, exacerbated by the health economics of South Africa's largely private and exorbitantly expensive healthcare system. This issue raises critical questions about governmental provision and the role of the state in managing macro- and micro- contexts. Nattrass poses this question: 'Do we make the necessary sacrifices to treat everyone, or do we create a situation in which limited resources require the application of triage and rationing?'[264] The Mbeki and Mandela administrations' reasoning for the delays in treatment are, for Nattrass, a smokescreen: 'the government's rhetoric of expertise was deflecting attention away from the implicit social choices that were being made on behalf of society'.[265] Nattrass argues that society should democratically deliberate over what to do, rather than being reliant on (possibly corrupt) technocrats. The HIV epidemic therefore poses serious questions about what kind of society and system of government South Africa wants or needs. This is, for Nattrass, the defining feature that makes the epidemic so distinctive and important. She concludes her monograph by arguing that: 'Serious social reflection and debate will not only help raise the consciousness of citizens about AIDS (thereby contributing to prevention), but will help shape a genuine social response to this challenge.'[266] The representation of Stella in *London Road* implicates the important contexts of transnational migration, patriarchal oppression and xenophobia, but also the social dynamics brought about by the South African HIV/AIDS crisis.

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[264] Ibid., p. 179.

[265] Ibid., pp. 188-189.

[266] Ibid., p. 189.

The AIDS crisis began, of course, at the tail-end of apartheid in the 1980s. Susan Sontag was keen to expose the metaphors that are used to describe and respond to diseases, most of which are hangovers from pre-modern medical history, before the existence of bacteria, viruses and microbes was understood.[267] Sontag, writing in the same decade as when the HIV virus was identified and the AIDS crisis as we know it today began, argues (like critics such as Adam Sitze[268]) that it is a symptom of our globalised world: 'AIDS is one of the dystopian harbingers of the global village, that future which is already here and always before us, which no one knows how to refuse'.[269] Sontag analyses how AIDS has become a vehicle for metaphors and meanings that obscure the purely medical basis of the disease. Instead, Sontag sees the metaphors attached to AIDS as being about catastrophe, apocalypse and nightmare visions of the future, AIDS being 'such a perfect repository for people's most general fears about the future'. While Mbeki's 'denialism' is more commonly criticised, Sitze's broader arguments about the nature of 'denial' conceptualises how powerful neoliberal corporations and governments perform their own kind of 'denialism'. It is a denialism that, because of its structural link to poverty and uneven power relations has the same DNA (the 'double helix')

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[267] Sontag, Susan., *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors*, (London: Penguin, 1991), Kindle Edition, p. 95.

[268] Sitze, Adam., 'Denialism', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 103.4, (2004), pp. 769-811 (p.777). Sitze's essay takes a radical interpretation of these different arguments, homing in on the calculations behind the expensiveness of ARV therapy, which are used to conclude that the poor and unemployed do not contribute enough to the global (and arguably national) economy to justify the outlay on life-extending drugs. Sitze, 'More than the market's failure to ensure the poor access to ARVs, denialism writ large describes a condition defined by the immanence of HIV/AIDS and capital. In the general economy we are charting, the replication of deregulated capital and the unblocked replication of the virus are so tightly linked that, in effect, they constitute a single double helix […] Given the structural similarity between these two circuits, ought we consider the relation between them a mere matter of homology?'

[269] Ibid., p. 180.

as Mbeki's. As Sitze argues further: 'Because global capital[270] would not suffer the expenditure necessary to halt the replication of the virus, the replication of the virus could not be halted. People with HIV/AIDS would just have to suffer'[271]. The condemnation and placing of blame solely on the (embattled and misguided) South African leadership was, for Sitze, a strategy that distracted from the fact Western corporations are morally and economically culpable.[272] Deborah Posel argues that 'it is impossible to make sense of the substance and intensity of the AIDS controversy in South Africa without situating it in the symbolic politics of South Africa's transition from apartheid, and the unsettling entanglement of new life and new death within it.'[273]

London Road's representation of Stella, therefore, is one that humanizes such fears, recontextualising such moral panics within the life of an individual. Able to afford ARV treatment because of her work on the black market, Stella is able to cross the boundaries erected by the state's denialist healthcare policy. In his introduction to his 'trilogy' of playlets, *Iago's Last Dance*, the political playwright Mike van Graan sets out the challenges of theatre in intervening in such a context: 'No one play or trilogy can explore the full gamut of human and social experiences

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[270] The delayed rollout of ARV treatment led to the formation of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), which pursued wholesale provision of ARV treatment through the incitement of international media and political pressure and civil disobedience campaigns. The Mbeki camp's supporters argued that ARVs were promoted by Big Pharma and were too expensive, with their more extreme positions being that the drugs were (despite reliable statistics to the contrary) more deadly than living with HIV/AIDS.

[271] Sitze, (2004), p. 781.

[272] Ibid., p. 781. '[T]he scornful critique of the Mbeki administration in northern mass media derives from a condensation and displacement of denialism writ large onto Mbeki's figure. Readers of *Time* and *Newsweek* can sleep well at night knowing that irrational African leaders (and not the multinationals whose advertisements cram those same magazine's pages) are responsible for withholding HIV/AIDS treatments from the poor.'

[273] Posel, Deborah., 'AIDS', in *New South African Keywords*, ed. by Nick Shepherd and Steven Robins, (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2008), p. 23.

impacted on by HIV/Aids.'[274] In terms of satire, Uys argues that, 'Apartheid was not funny, Aids is not funny - but hypocrisy and denial and pompousness and arrogance can be made funny. Not because it's a ha-ha joke but because you see the obscene and the absurd aspect'.[275] The representation of Stella's living with HIV/AIDS in *London Road* is not played as a reflection of political obscenity, because the virus, and how she got it, is a secret that she only feels comfortable telling Rosa after everything they have been through together. When they return to Stella's home for a party, the conversation is not about the threat of the outside world, but about issues that communicate how close these characters have become. As Stella says, rather than a violent intruder, Rosa has the distinction of being 'My first invited guest'.[276] Because Rosa is at her flat, she notices the HIV medication in the medicine cabinet (unable to resist her nosy nature). *London Road* is a product of the HIV/AIDS crisis's peak in the 2000s, when the government actively blocked ARV treatment.[277] By launching its first tour in 2010, the play was on the cusp of the dramatic change in healthcare policy in tackling the disease. Within the play,

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[274] van Graan, Mike., *Iago's Last Dance* (Mowbray: Junkets, 2010/2009), p. 15. For example, in 'Heartbreak Medea', within *Iago's Last Dance*, the attitudes of the characters of Jason and Lulama are very different. When hearing of her HIV+ test, Jason asks a technical, medical question: 'What's your CD4 count?' Lulama responds by spitting in his face (42). Lulama assumes Jason and Karabo are the source of her infection by the HI virus ('Of course you gave it to me', 38), despite this being a medical impossibility (both being HIV negative). Lulama's attitudes to the virus and AIDS are, like the Ancient Greek character on which she is based, incongruous with the scientific consensus on the disease's transmission. This scenario is a direct contrast to the way that Rosa and Stella discuss the virus in *London Road*, of course. Van Graan's plays are more 'overtly' political, each playlet in *Iago's Last Dance* focusing on how South Africans relate to one another, compared to the Nigerian/South African relationship in *London Road*.

[275] Fleming, Lucy., (2009) 'Laughing all the way to the polls?', <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7999701.stm> [accessed 7 June 2015].

[276] Spagnoletti, *London Road*, p. 52. Scene Ten: 'Stella's Dinner'.

[277] The play was first written for a competition, winning a writing award in the 2006/7 NLDTF/PANSA Festival of Contemporary Theatre Readings in Cape Town, directed by Lara Bye. The play was subsequently developed, under Bye's direction, with varying casts until the 2010 production that forms the basis of this chapter, and the Junkets published script.

however, the characters dwell on the betrayal by Abi rather than the system helmed by Mbeki.[278] Stella's drug operation is the subject of humour, an activity to be laughed about, especially who her (often wealthy, middle class) clients are.[279] The ludicrousness of Stella's ability to afford such essential treatment because of her 'business' has within it, however, an implicit critique of the way that poverty and an absent state coupled together to create a pandemic that symbolizes the injustices and mismanagement of the post-apartheid era.

These characters' marginalisation speaks to the multiplicity of forces impinging on individual freedoms within contemporary South African society. Just as Rosa is isolated because of her age, Stella's marriage has been compromised by the symbolism of her HIV. The infection represents her husband's infidelity, of course, but it also encapsulates her life in South Africa, away from her (now nostalgically remembered) former life in Lagos. Stella's marriage to Abi is an excellent example of a paradox running through the play: the appreciation of loving and familial relationships as coming into focus when these bonds have been shaken or destroyed. In Scene Five, when the two women are having tea together, Stella speaks at length about how they met, and how they lived when they first came to Johannesburg. Keeping her cards close to her chest about her (and her husband's) work in the drug trade, she remembers:

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[278] The exchange on page 54, in Scene Ten of Twelve, is the sole connection of Stella's condition to the South African domestic crisis. Stella, however, is painted as one of the lucky ones, who did not fall for 'that nonsense about the beetroot and garlic and vitamin C'. Stella wittily replies that she is using ARVs: 'I'm relying on vitamin 'A', vitamin 'R' and vitamin 'V'.' Rosa does relate this to the political context: 'See – Thabo Mbeki was wrong. He should be tried in the Hague for what he did that man.' Stella agrees. The emphasis in the conversation is on Stella's personal experience of the virus; the Mbeki government's mishandling is treated as plainly obvious, a false debate.

[279] They joke that perhaps Stella could deliver saffron instead, '(*Imitating herself*) 'I'm coming! I'm coming with the saffron now!'. p. 52.

> STELLA. Before Abi and I came here, that was the happiest time. When we were planning our journey. We didn't even have anything. We were poor. Or so we thought.[280]

The dream of moving created more happiness than the reality of life in the South African city. Stella and Abi only found security when the latter began working in the underground drug trade out of the need for work, highlighting the unforeseen contexts that made their life in Lagos not as 'poor' than they 'thought'.[281] Working in the narcotics trade has trapped Stella, until she begins to build her relationship with Rosa, which allows her to reconnect with the feelings of happiness she felt while living with Abi in Lagos. The play's friendship has an ameliorative effect, helping to create a meaningful, happy life in South Africa for Stella. Further, Stella is able to find closure and independence from Abi's poor choices, firstly because of her ARV treatment for HIV, and later because of Rosa's help with her immigration status.

Regarding Stella's relationship with her husband, she is open about how much she loves, or loved, Abi. Nevertheless, she sent him away, back to Nigeria, after she discovered he had transmitted HIV to her. Derrida's argument about forgiveness, to reiterate, is that it is only possible to 'truly' forgive something which is unforgiveable. That to forgive something which is less than that is not especially worthy of a powerful act like forgiveness: 'there is the unforgiveable. Is this not, in truth, the only thing to forgive? The only thing that *calls* for forgiveness?'.[282] As Stella

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[280] *London Road*, p. 39.

[281] Ibid.

[282] Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (2001), p. 32.

reflects, when Rosa finally gets her to admit that she has HIV/AIDS, 'I was very angry for a long time. But I have forgiven him. I know he didn't intend for all of this. But I will never go back to him.'[283] What Abi did was 'unforgiveable', in that it was something that would end the possibility of them being together; but Stella still forgives him, a dramatic example of Derrida's reading of forgiveness that 'there is only forgiveness, if there is any, where there is the unforgiveable […] forgiveness must announce itself as impossibility itself'.[284] When forgiveness has been represented in post-apartheid theatre, for instance in Athol Fugard's *Playland* (1992), the person seeking forgiveness has archetypally been a white South African character.[285] Those seeking forgiveness, in such plays, are asking because of unforgivable acts in the apartheid era. The representation of forgiveness in *London Road* is a significant development because his behaviour is not related to apartheid, but can be contextualised by the political conditions of post-apartheid South Africa. Further, Abi is (presumably) a black Nigerian whose unforgiveable acts happened in South Africa. Abi's forgiveness is politicised because of its stemming, firstly, from the HIV/AIDS health crisis, and secondly, because of the links between inequality and the globalised criminal enterprise that Abi and Stella earn their living in. *London Road* shows that postcolonial situations involving issues of health, family and work create the conditions for individuals like Abi not to 'intend for all this'. Abi and Stella's victimhood and potential reconciliation cannot be related to or understood via traditional mechanisms like the TRC. Desperation induces behavior which provoke

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[283] Spagnoletti, *London Road*, p. 55.

[284] Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (2001), pp. 32-33.

[285] Fugard, Athol., 'Playland', in *Plays One*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), pp. 239-299. Fugard's play was an early example of this genre, written and performed in the transitional period of the early 1990s, before the culmination of the process in 1994.

forgiveness, because the acts that are to be forgiven are so heinous. Derrida, in his theory of forgiveness, used the TRC as a key example. Stella's solution to the problem is remarkably similar to Desmond Tutu's, which as Derrida describes, 'oscillate[d] between a non-penal and non-reparative logic of "forgiveness" (he calls it "restorative") and a judicial logic of amnesty.'[286]

An important parallel between Stella and Rosa is that they are both sick. Rosa has had a fall in Scene Six, and is gripped by an unspecified illness at the conclusion of the play, the implication being that she is dying. The characters must contend with their conditions, but also with the social effects that they bring. Stella's HIV/AIDS must be understood within the greater contexts of the government's refusal to recognise the disease and finally roll out effective ARV treatment until 2010, the year of *London Road*'s first staging. The government stance on the Virus, and activist groups' campaigns to change it[287], speak directly to the connections between democracy, care and health in the New South Africa; Pieter-Dirk Uys frequently calls apartheid the 'first', and HIV the 'second virus'.[288] HIV/AIDS is important to understanding 'South Africa's transition from apartheid, and the unsettling entanglement of new life and new death within it.'[289] Understanding the impact of AIDS on the body politic, and therefore on the political imaginary, is a key part of the post-apartheid and the disparities of wealth that characterise the country.

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[286] Ibid. p. 43.

[287] Posel, 'AIDS' (2008), pp. 13-23. The direct action of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) provided a model for an active, self-organising citizenship which is free to criticise the state and act in its stead; in the face of President Mbeki and Health Minister Manto's public denial of AIDS's link to HIV, the TAC provided its own quasi-governmental response to the problem by sourcing cheap ARVs from outside the country, and brought the attention of the world's media to place political pressure on the government.

[288] Uys, Pieter-Dirk., 'Time to Go, Mr President!' (2003) <http://pdu.co.za/articles%20by%202003-1.html> [accessed: 19 November 2016].

[289] Ibid., p. 23.

Prior to government treatment, the wealthier an individual, the better their chance of survival; it is in this context that Rosa's care for Stella, expressed by her desire to leave her legacy to her friend and not her family, ought to be understood.

3.4 ''Sea Point, Sea Point' the man was screaming.'[290]

Figure 3.2. Spagnoletti, Nicholas., 'Part of London Road's marketing campaign for the [2010 National Arts] Festival are these London Road 'roadsigns' on display at various street corners and venues.' (2010), 'Ovation Award at Fest', <http://londonroad.co.za/ovation-award-at-fest/> [accessed 7 June 2015].

Spagnoletti introduces the published edition of his play: '*London Road* is the product of eight or nine happy years living in Sea Point.'[291] It is a play that interweaves indelibly local motifs with ideas that speak to nationwide contexts. The connection between the macro- and micropolitics of South Africa is performed by *London*

[290] Shouted by a taxi-driver, see speech by Stella, pp. 55-56.

[291] Spagnoletti, *London Road*, p. 17, author's introduction.

Road's critical commentary and representation of a neighbourhood. Sea Point is emblematic of familiar processes of gentrification, the hybridity brought by a multicultural society. Place is important to the subject of the play, and of course its title. *London Road* is about Stella and Rosa, but it is also about London Road, with its residences and businesses. As part of its very successful appearance at the 2010 National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, the play's marketing took the creative form of street signs placed around the Eastern Cape city (such tactics are typical of the NAF's fringe scene[292]). By taking on the form of street signs, the promotion relies on its audience understanding the ironic disjuncture between the London Road signs and the real name of those streets. The multiplicity of them, as seen in the collage (Figure 2, above), also undermines the usual role of such signs. Like the text itself, these signs play with the boundaries between the representation of an urban milieu, and the location of such performances within city spaces.

Sea Point, as a cosmopolitan area, is contrasted with the Hillbrow area of Johannesburg by both Stella and Rosa, who are both former residents of Hillbrow. The quality of life is summed up by Stella who says: 'At least I'm in Sea Point […] Man – it was good to get out of there.'[293] Rosa, a long-term resident of Hillbrow, understands Stella's relief. In an exchange that resonates with the above discussion of roads and signs, the two focus on the street where Stella lived, which was nearby to Rosa's home:

STELLA. Soper Road.

[292] See Chapter 4 of this thesis.

[293] Spagnoletti, *London Road*, p. 29.

> ROSA. Soper Road? Soper Road. Wowee hey. We were just near there. Terrible what happened to Hillbrow hey. Was a different place when we were there. Ruined. Ruined by gangsters and drugdealers. Bloody skollies. Shooh. Soper Road. So - Nigeria hey. Lagos? Is that where you're from?[294]

Neither Stella or Rosa are life-long residents of Sea Point, having arrived there after moving long distances (internally migrating within South Africa, and across the continent). As much as they recognise the impermanence and fragility of such safety, both are beneficiaries of Sea Point's affluence and hybridity. Naturally, Rosa and Stella begin to get to know each other by talking about where they have lived, and yet the aim of the conversation is to establish how both came to this cosmopolitan area. Cosmopolitanism, like forgiveness, friendship and hospitality, was a key area of analysis for Jacques Derrida in the 1990s as part of his political turn.[295] The key model for the cosmopolitan was the city, which in turn speaks to how *London Road* is a highly 'Capetonian' play, in the same way that Fugard's plays so often reflect the culture of either the Eastern Cape Karoo or the metropole of Port Elizabeth. With apartheid over, and the contradictions of the post-apartheid society emerging, Sea Point in *London Road*, with its multiculturalism and popular promenade, is a potential symbol of refuge. The representation of place is so detailed in *London Road*, however, that such an overwhelmingly positive picture, ignoring hegemonic contexts of xenophobia and gentrification, risks being a

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[294] Ibid.

[295] See 'On Cosmopolitanism' in Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London: Routledge, 2001).

caricature. Nevertheless, for Stella, the street of London Road is a home (albeit with a slumlord's rents), and the place where she returned after her troubling first visit to the HIV clinic. This moment does the double-work (as when quoted above) of illustrating the vulnerability of Stella to xenophobic treatment, and here, of connecting this vulnerable state to the coming together of these two characters:

> STELLA. I came walking down London Road. Standing here outside in the street was this old white woman waiting at the gate, hands gripping a little shopping bag, so tightly, as if someone might come snatch it any minute. She greeted me as I walked past. I did not know it then but that was actually the first time I saw you, Rosa.[296]

What we have believed is the women's first meeting, at the beginning of the play, is in retrospect their second. The image that Stella paints of Rosa is of a woman afraid of crime, yet still, somehow, wanting to reach out and greet a fellow resident. Rosa's attitude in this recollection captures the contradiction of friendliness and urban dangers that is such a strong motif throughout *London Road*.

While Rosa is well known in her community, Stella is a foreigner, subsisting because of the drug habits of the capital's middle-class. The characters both live, in different ways, on the margin, as subaltern subjects on the edge of the political imaginary adrift from the family structures which undermine Westernised political systems. Following Rosa's practical logic, in wishing to leave her flat to someone who needs it, living in South Africa is enough to have a stake in South African

[296] Spagnoletti, *London Road*, p. 56.

society, *more* of a stake even than an ex-patriate like the unseen Rachel Kaplowitz. A common, overriding theme in political or alternative South African theatre has been the exploration of the South African condition; *London Road* makes the argument, via its representation of Sea Point and two of its inhabitants, that South Africans ought to think beyond the boundaries of family and history in an age of economic globalisation and global migration. This was a key rationale behind the choice of characters and setting, as Spagnoletti reflects, 'I decided to use these two Sea Point stereotypes as the starting point […] but to disrupt the clichés, to surprise the audience with the true humanity of the characters'.[297] Sea Point has its local stereotypes, but *London Road* demonstrates that each person, whatever their identity, can have a compelling dramatic story.[298] Such theatre performs a role in confronting reductive, contemporary forms of social apartheid. In forming the stage persona for Rosa, Robyn Scott remembers that: 'I walked along the Sea Point promenade for a month with a dictaphone and a camera, and I stopped little old Jewish ladies… I would sit for hours on the bench, just chatting about their lives'.[299] Just like its Promenade, which draws together residents and tourists from all over the city, perhaps the thing that defines Sea Point is that it is diverse – that, as the resident Darrel Bristow-Bovey blogs, 'It has people and stories and life, and gratifyingly few Capetonians. It is the Joburg of Cape Town.'[300] So Sea Point is

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[297] Ibid., p. 17.

[298] In the tradition led by Athol Fugard and others, this latter idea has been highly influential in shaping modern South African theatre.

[299] CueTube., 'Finding Humanity on London Road', (2011) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFsyLSOXrsA> [accessed 26/1/18].

[300] Bristow-Bovey, Darrel., 'In Praise of Sea Point', (2013) <http://www.randomreads.co.za/blogs/in-praise-of-sea-point/151> [accessed 10 October 2016].

emblematic of Cape Town's history, and yet its hybridity counters the popular Capetonian identity. Sea Point has a 'character' identified by residents like Bristow-Bovey, Scott and Spagnoletti.

Reading *London Road* in this context exposes how prevalent these ideas are within South African conceptions of democracy. In practice the African National Congress' communitarian model of democracy has been largely stripped down, deliberately pared down by negotiators and international forces such as the International Monetary Fund.[301] The Freedom Charter, the manifesto that formed the basis of the anti-apartheid movement's vision for a new South Africa, was emphatic that: 'THERE SHALL BE PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP!'[302] Given the rise of xenophobia, the continued distrust among many demographic groups, and the disquiet about controversial programmes like Black Economic Empowerment, the actual experience of this peace and friendship within the post-apartheid's democratic culture is questionable.

What made the anti-apartheid theatre so vital was that it provided a working prototype of a post-apartheid cultural sphere, where radical diversity and independence were more important than conservative conformity and discipline. In contrast, the post-apartheid theatre could be viewed as uniquely constructive in its own way. Plays like *London Road* innately explore fresh territory, parts of the country that have been side-lined by the familiar, perhaps canonical, post-apartheid theatrical settings of the Karoo farm, or the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

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[301] Klein, Naomi., *The Shock Doctrine* (New York: Metropolitan, 2008).
[302] African National Congress., *The Freedom Charter* (1955), <https://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/anc/1955/freedom-charter.htm,> [accessed 1 August 2016].

hall. In a promotional video for the production of his later play *Special Thanks to Guests from Afar*, Spagnoletti remarks that he chose the location of that play (Germany) to directly contradict the common, quasi-mythical, rural setting of so many South African plays:

> [Why this story?] […] a few years ago I was watching yet another South African play that was set on that same particular piece of the Karoo, with that same windmill, and I thought - Fuck! *Please* can we have a South African play that's […] set anywhere except this particular place because we're really sick of it now.[303]

London Road is not set in a township or other familiar urban location from the milieu of South African theatre, and yet it is a playfully realist representative of the social, political and everyday life of a (un-represented, culturally marginal) part of Cape Town. Both *London Road* and *Special Thanks to Guests from Afar* explore the different meanings and forms of friendship (the neighbour-turned-friend on the one hand and the long-distance friendship on the other). The relationships in Spagnoletti's plays, formed on the margins of power, are categorically alternative examples to the patriarchal ideal of friendship at the centre.

[303] Spagnoletti, Nicholas., and Greg Karvellas, 'Special Thanks to Guests From Afar Promo', (2013) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZ6jhRlZVD8> [accessed 1 September 2016]: 1.56-2.18.

Figure 3.3. Bye., Lara (Dir.), ‘London Road [Screen capture from Scene Two]’, (2010) Author’s Own Collection.

The minimal set design is a template, manipulated by the performers to provide the settings for 'the events that might need to occur in order for these two to form a friendship.'[304] The domestic spaces of Stella and Rosa’s flats in Beach View transform into the Sea Point promenade, by moving the chairs in front of the table to form a bench. Rather than sitting across a table (fig. 4), the characters are next to one another, clearly together in public (fig. 5). While producing the play in Cape Town, Scott and Makhutshi were put in their makeup and costumes from the show, and went to the Sea Point promenade.

[304] Spagnoletti, *London Road*, p. 17.

Figure 3.4 Responsible Tourism Cape Town, 'Sea Point Promenade' (N.D.), <http://ctuat.co.za/listing/sea-point/> [accessed 1 October 2018].

The local government's website describes the Sea Point Promenade as 'one of the City of Cape Town's most inclusive and scenic walkways and recreational spaces'.[305] The discourse of tourism and urban development, in *London Road*, is given some substance: because it is the friendship that forms between the characters that is 'inclusive', as much as the space that they inhabit. In *The Guardian*'s guide to Cape Town, the Promenade is described as 'where people from all over the city can get some sense of common ground.'[306] The sense of 'common ground' between Stella and Rosa was frequently discussed in promotional material surrounding the play's production. The literal translation of this into promotional images shot on the Sea Point promenade, with the actors in costume and character, is an acknowledgement of the importance of space and place to *London Road*. Sea Point has, in recent years, been transformed by gentrification, with the wealthy

[305] Responsible Tourism Cape Town, 'Sea Point Promenade' (n.d.), <http://ctuat.co.za/listing/sea-point/> [accessed 1 October 2018].

[306] Brodie, Nechama., and Shaun Swingler, 'The alternative city guide to Cape Town', *The Guardian*, 18 February 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2016/feb/18/alternative-city-guide-to-cape-town-south-africa> [accessed 1 October 2016].

moving into its high-rises (which make Sea Point architecturally distinctive compared to other suburbs of Cape Town's waterfront). As a counterpoint to this exclusivity, Brett Petzer describes The Promenade, on the urban democratic organisation Future Cape Town's website, as 'perhaps Cape Town's greatest public space, [that] is heavily visited by poor and working-class families'[307].

Figure 3.5 'Afternoon on the Promenade [Photograph. Robyn Scott and Ntombi Makhutshi visit the Sea Point promenade performing as Rosa and Stella]'. <http://londonroad.co.za/promenade/> [accessed 1 October 2018].

The scenes of the play are, to recall the director Laura Bye's 'note' in the playscript, a 'series of vignettes' depicting how these individuals may meet and form a friendship. The sets in the play are these meeting places: their two residences, and then their public meeting on the promenade, for their encounters in Sea Point. Sitting together in public is itself a performative affirmation of their friendship, highly significant given the xenophobic social context that haunts the play and its

[307] Petzer, Brett., 'Sea Point: can the reallest Atlantic suburb hold its own against gentrification?', (2014) <http://futurecapetown.com/2014/02/sea-point-can-the-reallest-atlantic-suburb-hold-its-own-against-gentrification/#.V_3n9pMrKi5> [accessed 1 October 2016].

production. The table, and their sitting at it, provides the play's final image and gesture (see below). The set establishes domestic and public spaces. As Derrida wrote of the denial of feminine friendships (and masculine-feminine friendships): 'The tension [in friendship] is here on the inside of the political itself. It is at work in all the discourses that reserve politics and public space to man, domestic and private space to woman.' [308] These characters' personal and domestic lives are, however, political, relating to their nationality, ethnicity and legality as citizens or foreigners (Stella's illegal status being an important context). The friends, necessarily, trouble these barriers within the new South African political unconscious.

The contradictions of post-apartheid South Africa's class politics are exemplified by Sea Point, the setting of *London Road*. Because of gentrification, Sea Point is home to both Cape Town's middle class and the migrant, the dispossessed, and destitute, sometimes even in the same building. This is precisely the subject of Rosa's soliloquy in the penultimate scene of *London Road.* The tongue-in-cheek naming of the scene in the playscript, 'Urban Rejuvenation', hints at the illusory and discursive nature of neoliberal development.[309] The arrival of money into Sea Point, and therefore the supposed start of its 'rejuvenation', contrasts with urban areas like Hillbrow, in Johannesburg, which have not had the benefit of the urban elite's capital. The idea of gentrification as a kind of 'rejuvenation', the making of an area feel young again, is a sign of the obsession of postmodern economy with the surface of things. The value of community is replaced

[308] Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, p. 281.
[309] As above re: Stella and her move to Johannesburg from a convivial family home in Lagos, it is not the presence of wealth, as *London Road* exemplifies, that brings happiness, but relationships based on care and empathy.

by the value of money and finance. In the time that Rosa has lived in Sea Point, it has transitioned from being increasingly run-down and undesirable to an address that you can be proud of. Rosa recounts the process of community decline, and the 'salvation' of middle class money by relating the changing tensions within her family about living in Sea Point:

> ROSA. And then the kids. Mom, maybe you better think of moving out of that block, moving to the Southern Suburbs perhaps, what about Rondebosch. Or Claremont. Monique's mother has moved into a lovely Deco block where she can walk to Cavendish. It's not safe in Sea Point anymore, mom. It's not safe.
>
> Now they couldn't be more pleased. Oh the property prices have gone through the roof. Oh there's that fancy new hotel just across the road. So upmarket. There's nothing wrong with London Road they say now. 'They've' cleaned it up.
>
> A lick of paint. Some new windows. A bit of glitz. Everything looks better and suddenly nobody has a worry in the world. From an irredeemable hell to the front page of the Property Magazine.[310]

The circuitousness of this process, with middle-class anxieties centred so centrally on the surface, 'a bit of glitz', the stability and safety that such money and maintenance signifies, is, for the resident Rosa, 'madness'.[311] Rosa's cynicism is able to pinpoint the connection between her children's approval or disapproval, and

[310] Spagnoletti, *London Road*, p. 57.
[311] Ibid.

the 'property prices' that they will, of course, expect to benefit from. As a play shaped by several Capetonians and Sea Point residents, *London Road* is consciously built on this kind of local history, with such minutiae forming an important part of the play's political message.

Rosa gives an account of her anxieties shortly after she moved to Sea Point from Hillbrow, that she thought 'things started deteriorating [on London Road], the fear crept in, soon, I thought, I'm going to be just about the only whitie left, let alone the only Jew.'[312] The sense of neighbourliness and homeliness that are key to the experience of civil society were disappearing with the changing of Sea Point: 'All the things that make your little neighbourhood feel like home start closing down' she says, in the present tense. A newcomer to the area herself, Rosa clearly transferred her perceptions of Hillbrow to Sea Point. Rosa's whiteness made her exceptional, her Jewishness entangled with her skin colour; during apartheid, a white area would, in all likelihood, be affluent, and a place of work for non-white domestic labourers. The arrival of non-whites as residents is immediately associated by Rosa with spikes in crime, an atmosphere of danger where she is vulnerable and isolated. And yet, this precariousness also created room for an upswing in property prices created.[313] Rosa describes in detail how Sea Point transitioned from being undesirable to gentrified, with the arrival of capital and wealth, of the post-apartheid's ultra-rich. The presence of a wealthy class is enough to turn Sea Point into a fashionable, desirable community, or at least to have the *appearance* of being so. It is this notion of 'appearance' that is key. As Rosa philosophises about the glamour:

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[312] Ibid.

[313] To compare, an area like Brixton in London – once known for its crime rate – is now considered a desirable area to live in.

> ROSA. It's not real. The real London Road is somewhere in between. Yes, that renovated flat with original parquet floors is on the market for a million and a half. But just downstairs a Congolese family are living with a Pep Stores blanket blocking out the light…[314]

The wider social lens that Rosa employs (recognising that the affluent and poor, perhaps paradoxically, co-exist in the same geographical space of the Cape Town area of Sea Point) is an exposure of the contradictions that run through the post-apartheid city. The market is such that a high rise building like Beach View can simultaneously be home to a retiree like Rosa, the affluent middle class, or Congolese refugees. In the face of this complexity, xenophobic thinking attempts to efface and wipe out what is constructed as other and foreign. Indeed, by taking a building in her own neighbourhood as a kind of model for South Africa's stratified society, Rosa is able to speak to the economic base on which the democratic and political superstructure is supported. That base, crucially, is shown to be broken and unequal.

The psychic damage of the apartheid era, with its discourse of racial segregation, did not disappear with the general election, the constitution's radical reform, or indeed the TRC. Rather the old issues of race and class have taken new form in gentrification, and the promotion of a wealthy middle class at the expense of the dispossessed. However, Rosa does find some optimism in her monologue's portrait of Sea Point. The hopeful example in her list is the 'Two people [who] are

[314] Spagnoletti, *London Road*, p. 58.

loving every moment together.'[315] Rosa and Stella are two such people, and their friendship is as much a part of the urban experience as the outrageous glamour of the richest and the struggle of the poorest. The idea that '[t]he real London Road is somewhere in between' follows the poststructural logic of Derrida and Bhabha: that the contradictions of post-apartheid society appear when pulled apart by *reading*, such as my reading of the relationship between Rosa and Stella. I posit that recognising such friendships' significance is essential to the critical engagement with post-apartheid stratification in *London Road*. It is such inter-personal connections that provide meaningful examples of 'urban rejuvenation' *contra* to gentrification and (re)segregation.

The key is that friendship offers an alternative to the family as a form of social unity. The 'stranger', Stella, becomes a quasi-, deconstructed family member, who is able to gain legal citizenship, safety and protection via the hospitality and generosity of Rosa. This distinction is important: Stella does not gain her safety or agency from the state, but from and through the friendship with Rosa. To sum up, the widowed Rosa's wealthy, highly educated children have emigrated to Australia and Israel with their own families, leaving her to live alone in the multicultural area of Sea Point in neoliberal Cape Town. This domestic situation, one that depends on hospitality and not the familial, develops due to the absence of traditional family life because of death and emigration. We recall that Stella's husband, too, has left South Africa to return to Nigeria. This leaves her as a foreigner, alone in South Africa, forced to 'run' her husband's illegal drug enterprise. These facts are central to the characters' economic grounding.

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[315] Ibid.

In this section property and setting have been key to understanding the representation of the social inequalities within suburbs like Sea Point, and of postcolonial metropolises like Cape Town. It is assumed that after one's death, Rosa's property is to inherited by the family; but as the bedridden Rosa argues in Scene Twelve, her family have no need for her home, but Stella does. Rosa is unable to convince Stella that she should inherit her Beach View flat, the latter fearing legal action and misunderstanding from Rosa's children. But Rosa is able, finally, to give Stella the money she needs to escape her debt to her superiors within her drug operation, the debt created by the burglary at the beginning of the play. The passing on of liquid capital in cash does not have the same social significance as an abode. Stella persuasively argues that this non-familial inheritance would be perceived as an injustice, the disinheritance of Rachel and Leon, rather than the fulfilling of Stella's needs: 'You must leave it to them. That is the proper way.'[316] A politics of friendship undermines this idea of the 'proper way', because a key part of friendship is what is left behind by the death of one's friend. It is no coincidence that Althusser's death inspired Derrida to eulogise about their friendship.[317] In a reversal of these philosophers' post-mortem memorialisations, however, it is the sick Rosa who reflects:

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[316] Ibid., p. 60.

[317] Derrida, Jacques., 'Text Read at Louis Althusser's Funeral' (pp. 241-245); 'Politics and Friendship' (pp. 183-232), both in Kaplan, E. Ann., and Michael Sprinker, *The Althusserian Legacy* (London: Verso, 1993). Also see Blanchot, Maurice., *Friendship*, trans. by Elizabeth Rottenberg, (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 289-292. About Georges Bataille.

> ROSA. To the untrained eye I look like a dying woman in a bed but actually I'm an intrepid hero… *because you are my friend and friends help each other*. I don't want you to get hurt anymore. Is it enough?[318]

'[B]ecause you are my friend and friends help each other': this is an unconditional affirmation of their friendship, their relationship. It is an attitude that reflects the hospitality, and the gift, inherent in their friendship from the beginning of *London Road*. But more than just friendship (or, rather, through contradicting philosophical concepts of friendship that tie such relationships to family, masculinity or race) Rosa shows *solidarity* with Stella throughout the play. Because unlike her family, Stella is experiencing the post-apartheid, by living in South Africa:

> ROSA. My mind's made up. No one else needs [the flat]…they've got nothing to do with this country anymore[319]

This proposed transfer of wealth across the boundaries of race, class, family, is a powerful statement of the politics of Stella and Rosa's friendship. Stella refuses this gift, leaving the ownership and usage of Rosa's flat an open question at the ending of the play. Whatever the case, Rosa is able to free Stella from her debt to the drug trade, that Stella was shackled by at the beginning of the text.

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[318] Spagnoletti, *London Road*, pp. 60-1, my emphasis.

[319] Ibid.

Conclusion

Figure 3.6 Scheiner, Adam., '*London Road* Produciton photograph', (2010). <http://londonroad.co.za/production-pics-by-aaron-scheiner/> [Accessed 1 November 2018].

London Road is a text that intersects with a number of macro- and micro- contexts. Sociopolitical transformation, irregular migrancy, underground urban markets like the drug trade, gentrification, an ageing society, the HIV/AIDS crisis, are all issues of major importance within South African democracy. Yet *London Road* communicates these contexts and ideas through the depiction of a friendship between two women. As has been established throughout this chapter, friendship is a highly politicised and charged relationship; in Spagnoletti's play, it is the means for these characters to connect, to share their unique, subjective experiences with the objective situations listed above.

The play saw great success in its touring, both nationally and internationally. There are warm, physical moments in *London Road*, as shown in the production photo above, that encapsulate Rosa and Stella's friendship in a way that goes beyond the ties of legality or property. The story and characters of *London Road* are so involving, because they are caught up in so many post-apartheid specificities. The 'energy' of the bonds needed for 'Love and friendship' is what charges and interconnects Rosa, Stella, London Road and the politics of friendship within post-apartheid democracy.[320]

[320] Spagnoletti, *London Road*, p. 34. Rosa: 'Love makes energy. Love and friendship. Living without love isn't much of a life'.

Chapter Four: 'This Big Audition': The National Arts Festival in Grahamstown

'Even the audiences that come see you in the big cities, have heard about you because of festivals.'

- Jaques De Silva, theatre practitioner. Interview at National Arts Festival (2015).[1]

Arts festivals like the National Arts Festival (NAF) in Grahamstown are heavily promoted by the nation's press and media, and success on the festival circuit opens the door for practitioners to cross the threshold of the audition and be considered 'mainstream'. This chapter is based on the experience of my fieldwork at the 2015 National Arts Festival in Grahamstown. Ethnographic notes of twenty-five shows and performance analysis notes taken in the field document my personal experience. Semi-structured interviews with a focus group of four theatre practitioners from the Kalk Bay Theatre Collective, who had a season of plays at the Glennie Hall venue in 2015, inform the theorisation of the Festival through ethnography. These interviewees include the director Jenine Collocott, and actors Barileng Malebye, Jaques De Silva and Mlindeli Zondi.[2] In this chapter I consider the ethnographic insights formed from attending the festival, my

[1] See Appendix 1 as reference for ethnographic interviews. National Arts Festival 2015 abbreviated to NAF2015. Grahamstown, or the Grahamstown Festival, is a common vernacular name.
[2] N.B.: Collocott was the director of *The Snow Goose* (analysed below), *The Old Man and the Sea,* and *Making Mandela*, all for the KB Theatre Collective.

conceptual and performance analysis of *The Snow Goose*, and analyse the festival as an institution in the post-apartheid arts industry.

Writing about my fieldwork at the NAF is problematic because, of all the chapters in this thesis, it is where 'the unavoidable yet symbiotic relationship between theatre practice […] and theatre criticism and theory' is emphasised the most.[3] The balancing between discussing life experience, formulating theory and the impact of context has presented a number of challenges. The starting point of the research is almost entirely based on attending performances, a scholarly practice that has had much written about it, but still is in the process of defining itself as an activity.[4] Reconciling these performance analyses with the wider context is another challenge. Further, unlike the analysis in Chapter Three above, my account of *The Snow Goose* cannot fall back on the evidence of a published script or a video recording. Performance analysis is a process that considers ephemeral events in order *to create* scholarly evidence which is, on the surface, a more ambivalent process than historiography (for example), which proceeds from primary evidence to secondary critique:

> Whether we are dealing with a production that has actually been witnessed by the person describing it or a reconstruction of a past performance, in reality we can only ever hope to restore some of its main principles and not the authentic event. Once these primary principles are established, *the*

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[3] Neethling, Miemie., and Temple Hauptfleisch, 'Homegrown theory for a new theatre', *South African Theatre Journal*, 15.1, (2001), 5-6 (p. 5)

[4] See Pavis, Patrice., *Analyzing Performance; Theater, Dance, and Film*, trans. by David Williams (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003), for a monograph containing numerous insights and methods that will advance the analysis of theatre, dance and film performances. Rather than as a potentially programmatic method, I see performance analysis as a toolbox as a toolbox that takes advantage of the available insights and evidence, on a text to text basis.

> *performance text becomes an object of knowledge, a theoretical object substituted for the empirical object the performance itself once was.*[5]

The Snow Goose is a play that has made multiple appearances at the NAF and has had several successful tours of the country; sources in the form of reviews and production photographs are readily available, and a minimal entry in the *ESAT* wiki provides slender details.[6] But the play's unpublished status, apart from being adapted from Paul Gallico's 1941 novella, means that my own particular spectatorial experience forms the basis for my consideration of the play within contemporary post-apartheid political theatre.[7] The reiteration of the play's performance below, therefore, 'becomes an object of knowledge', which in turn facilitates the theorisation of the 'performance text'. The performance analysis is both a record of my impressions and an interpretation, created out of the ephemeral performance event.

In terms of the Festival experience as a whole, Pavis's argument that performance analysis 'can only ever hope to restore [a performance text's] main principles' reflects my experience. Temple Hauptfleisch, when discussing the impact of South African festivals on perceptions of the theatre industry, argues that: 'festivals are not only where the work is, it is where the artistic output of the actor, director, choreographer, etc. is *eventified*.'[8] When viewing a performance

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[5] Pavis, *Analyzing Performance*, (2003) p. 11, my emphasis

[6] ESAT, 'The Snow Goose', <http://esat.sun.ac.za/index.php/The_Snow_Goose> [accessed 1 October 2018].

[7] Gallico, Paul., *The Snow Goose and The Small Miracle*, (London: Penguin, 1967) Kindle Edition, which has, in itself, a detailed history of being adapted, in forms ranging from a progressive rock concept album by the band Camel in 1975, to a film and radio plays

[8] Hauptfleisch, Temple., 'The eventification of Afrikaans culture—some thoughts on the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK)', *South African Theatre Journal*, 15.1, (2001), 169-177 (p. 170).

at a festival it is unlike the attendance at a venue in a city or town. For a time, all the 'artistic output' is framed by the overarching festival experience: a play is eventified, festivalised.[9] The festival as a whole becomes a linked experience which creates a shared, extended period of spectatorship. As Hauptfleisch argues, a festival as an overarching '*Cultural Event*, framed and made meaningful by the presence of an audience and reviewers […] become a means of retaining the event in the cultural memory of the particular society.'[10] Conversations between spectators and the consumption and dissemination of reviews create an overarching atmosphere which processes the individual performances into an event of 'cultural memory' and importance.

The NAF is a 'multidisciplinary festival of festivals', where theatre takes a place alongside mainstays like jazz, dance and discussion panels.[11] In the post-apartheid years, the festivalisation of the theatre industry has lent these festivals ideological, commercial and institutional importance, representing wider changes in society. The NAF has been imitated by a series of increasingly diverse arts festivals around South Africa, forming an integral part of the country's theatre industry in the process.

The Festival's decades-long survival and annual scheduling has almost guaranteed the attendance of spectators, the involvement of public and private commercial interests, and journalistic and scholarly attention, giving a much-

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[9] Hauptfleisch, Temple., et al. (eds.), *Festivalising!: Theatrical events, politics and culture*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007). Festivalisation is a key concept developed by the South African scholar Temple Hauptfleisch, et al., at the IFTR/FIRT's Theatrical Event working group, which this edited collection represents.
[10] Hauptfleisch, (2001), p.170, original emphasis.
[11] Krueger, Anton., Revolutionary Trends at the National Arts Festival 2017 (an overview), *South African Theatre Journal,* (2018) p. 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10137548.2017.1407025> (no volume or issue)

needed sense of structure to the precarious arts industry. The perception of the Festival as a problematic gateway (as befitting its name as the *National* Arts Festival), an audition or auditorium, where artists and practitioners can begin to build careers in the contemporary theatre scene is key to this Chapter. Such is the dominance of festivals that they are key to perceptions and evaluations of where theatre is going in South Africa, and what themes are prominent enough to form informal, intertheatrical idioms like the appropriation of the classic in Chapter Two of this thesis. The Bulgarian critic Kalina Stefanova observed from her own time in South Africa that, 'no matter how many shows I had seen in Cape Town, everybody was pointing out that I wouldn't be able to say I knew South African theatre until I had "witnessed" the Grahamstown festival.'[12] This sense of not being able to 'know' South African theatre, unless one has attended the Festival, is evidence of Hauptfleisch's view that festivals, spearheaded by the NAF, have led to the 'eventification' and 'festivalisation' of South African theatre culture.[13] Moreover, there is a concomitant demand put on the theatre's spectators and practitioners to make the journey to Eastern Cape in order to 'know' or be 'known' within the post-apartheid milieu.

I argue that in its current state, the NAF's dyadic structure, with its centrally funded 'Main' and its independently funded 'Fringe', is both an institutional and hierarchical division that raises critical questions about the effect of arts funding in South African theatre. It is not that the Main Programme has non-political theatre, and the Fringe is radical. Pieter-Dirk Uys, the country's foremost writer of

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[12] Stefanova, Kalina., 'Falling in love with South African theatre (a true story)', *South African Theatre Journal*, 14.1, (2000), 185-198, (p. 191).

[13] See Hauptfleisch, (2001) and Hauptfleisch in *Festivalising!* (2007) respectively.

satirical theatre, shared the cover of the NAF2015 programme with the comedian Conrad Koch. [14]

The minority of Fringe productions which make money are a reflection of the importance of prior reputation and record. Even if money is a barrier, however, artists continue to view the NAF as a starting point to more extended periods of work: 'as this is the only national platform on which they can present, test and market their – particularly theatre – work'.[15] Since NAF2015 there has been a key change in regard to the presence of theatre critics at the Festival. *Cue* magazine, a project produced by Rhodes University's School of Journalism and Media Studies, was the most prominent and readily available resource of critical opinion. The breadth of the magazine presented its problems, in that the small amount of space would necessitate slender reviews that gave scant detail.[16] The daily print edition was sold in the streets for the small price of 5 Rand, and the magazine was easy to find in cafes and restaurants after being left behind by other festinos. As of the 2017 Festival, *Cue* no longer operates a print edition, because 'Standard Bank withdrew funding'.[17] Van Graan lists the closure of *Cue*'s print edition as one of the key

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[14] Each year the Grahamstown Festival has a 'Featured Artist', who defines the sponsored 'Main' programme's promotion, performing alongside international talent and those who won Ovation Awards the previous year. In 2015 this 'Artist' was the genre of satire, embodied by the veteran Pieter-Dirk Uys and the ventriloquist Conrad Koch.

[15] van Graan, Mike., (2017a) 'National Arts Festival 2017: A Reflection', <https://mikevangraan.wordpress.com/2017/07/24/national-arts-festival-2017-a-reflection/> [accessed 1 October 2018]

[16] Kalk Bay Theatre., (2015), 'Facebook post', <https://www.facebook.com/KalkBayTheatre/photos/a.217851471600396/962713753780827/?type=3&theater> [accessed 30 July 2015]. In a Facebook post by the KB Theatre Productions page on 6 July 2015, for example, said that 'Cue does not rock – inaccurate facts, shoddy investigation, overlooking plays and people – and generally shoddy. It's a pity it has so much influence. We challenge Cue to send a proper reviewer to […] [for example,] The Vaslav 50 words is a description of the set and says nothing of the piece'.

[17] Krueger, (2018), p. 1

> signs appearing to signal that it is a Festival in decline. The Main Programme – at least as regards theatre – was relatively shallow, comprising mainly pre-existing productions. For the first time as far as I can remember, there was no Cue, no daily Festival newspaper with reviews, news and pictorial impressions of the Festival.[18]

The NAF has faced crises before, such as when Standard Bank withdrew from being the Festival's main sponsor in the 1990s.[19] With the reduction in *Cue*'s coverage, however, evidence seems to be building that the current organisation of the Festival is in need of change. Alongside the Festival's formal programme, *Cue* was the most available resource for finding shows that interested me, in a highly competitive and packed market where word of mouth is spread thin. The Fringe is a particular victim, because the Main's smaller output concentrates attention and leads to better ticket sales.[20] Compiling his ideas on the topic, beginning in 2014, van Graan has proposed reforms to the Festival that would restrict the size of the Fringe, arguing that the current system is unsustainable and counter-productive for artists and spectators.[21] For good or bad, increased curation would move the NAF away from its 'free market' openness, which gives the Festival its ability to reflect the ruthlessness of the 'real world', a key reason why the Festival is a good learning experience.[22] However, bringing in restrictions on the number of productions would bring the NAF into line with other arts

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[18] van Graan (2017a).
[19] See f.n. 36.
[20] van Graan, Mike., (2017b) 'Towards a More Impactful National Arts Festival', https://mikevangraan.wordpress.com/2017/07/24/towards-a-more-impactful-national-arts-festival/ [accessed 1 October 2018]. Van Graan sees this as an issue of '"market attention"', where the Main is kept afloat by reputation, and the Fringe's success stories tend to come from 'theatre-makers with a "quality" brand'.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.

festivals in South Africa that follow the same format, and suggests real world viability.[23] Whether the structure of Main and Fringe is fit for purpose is, therefore, coming under increasing attention. The structure was inherited from the apartheid-era Festival, where the Fringe became a key place for protest theatre to come and go, making an impact before authorities could stop them.[24] Given the influence of the Festival on careers, spectators and producers the health of the NAF poses challenges to the whole industry, whichever way the organisation evolves.

The institutional importance of festivals is relatively new. Under the apartheid system, dedicated, regional performing arts boards had varying degrees of autonomy in funding artists. They were replaced by the National Arts Council following the government 'White Paper on Arts and Culture' in 1996, consolidating theatre funding with the other arts; the effect was to dismantle the existing public funding system for theatre and, in-turn, increase the importance of arts festivals, of which the NAF is chief.[25] The Grahamstown Festival has been traced as 'the grandparent of modern South African festivals', heading a circuit filled with other prominent events like the primarily Afrikaans-language *Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees* (KKNK).[26] As a departure from the heyday of urban theatres as the centres of the industry, like The Market in Johannesburg or The

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[23] Ibid.
[24] Grundy, Kenneth W., 'The Politics of South Africa's National Arts Festival: Small engagements in the bigger campaign', *African Affairs*, 93, (1994), 387-409.
[25] Blumberg, Marcia., and Dennis Walder, 'Introduction' in *South African Theatre As/And Intervention*, ed. by Marcia Blumberg and Dennis Walder, (Amsterdam: Brill, 1999), p. 8.
[26] Hauptfleisch, Temple., 'In Search of the Rainbow: The Little Karoo National Arts Festival and the search for cultural identity in South Africa', in Temple Hauptfleisch, et al. (eds.) *Festivalising!* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), p. 83; Trans.: The Little Karoo National Arts Festival; Temple Hauptfleisch, op. cit., p. 79; Since the year 2000, thirty-three essays have been published about the various South African festivals within *South African Theatre Journal* (*SATJ*), with a fairly even split between scholarship on the Grahamstown Festival and the KKNK, which are the main objects of study.

Baxter in Cape Town, festivals represent an institutional change that has affected both spectators and practitioners alike. The post-apartheid state has given the arts a low priority, which has lent a greater institutional and professional significance to festivals; the surviving venues of the protest era, and venues endowed by the well-resourced producers are less open *limen* than the festivals. As De Silva alludes to above, the dedicated few who patronise urban theatre venues are swayed by the festival network. According to the director Jenine Collocott, the days when plays were often commissioned are over. Arts funding is an informal system of patronage and fame, resulting in Fringe performers having to consider giving discounted or free performances, working at a discount, effectively, in exchange for positive word-of-mouth or a nod from a magazine or newspaper like Rhodes University's *Cue*. The festival circuit connects with urban theatres, such as The Baxter, The Market or The Civic, because it is in many cases where professional careers are born and texts first exposed to affluent, enthusiastic spectators. In post-apartheid South Africa, according to Hauptfleisch, 'the festivals are where plays, performances and other arts events are effectively launched and displayed for the public today… This process – if successful – may give the performance (theatrical event) or exhibition a life after the festival, by its association'. [27] The Festival has cultural power through concentrating word of mouth and critical attention. Success on the Fringe, whether through an Ovation Award or the negotiation of a run at another theatre, can lead to the peculiar transformation of a play from being 'fringe' to becoming

[27] Hauptfleisch, in *Festivalising!*, (2007), p. 82.

mainstream.[28] Student-practitioners, too, cut their teeth at Grahamstown: every one of those interviewed from the KB collective had done so.

The National Arts Festival began as a Shakespeare festival in 1974, evolving into an all-encompassing celebration of the contribution of English language and literature to South African culture, its location in Grahamstown stemming from the Eastern Cape's early role in the expansion of European power.[29] Today Grahamstown is a more commercialised, international and pluralist affair,[30] yet its companions on the festival circuit remain focused on a particular principle or language.[31] Localities are also the focus for festivals, such as the Cape Town Fringe, or the Hilton Arts Festival which draws attention to the KwaZulu-Natal region. Form-specific events have begun to emerge, such as the So Solo Festival at Wits University, made up of one-person performances. These

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[28] This is explored further below in ''It's like this big audition' – The Festival as limen'.

[29] There are affiliations between the 1820 Setters Foundation and the Shakespeare Society of Southern Africa, tied to Rhodes University via figures like Professor Guy Butler. The festival's most prominent stage is named after Professor Butler. Grahamstown is marketed by the local tourist board as being part of the 'Frontier Country', or Settler Country. The region's history as the contact zone between Europeans and the Xhosa people is openly acknowledged and traded on, and can be seen throughout the city of Grahamstown. Colonial buildings and landmarks are prominent throughout, curios like the country's oldest Post Box, and the colonial Fort Selwyn, which neighbours the central complex of the Festival – the 1820 Monument – atop the aptly named Gunfire Hill. The Monument comprises offices, venues, restaurants, performance spaces, ticket offices, as well as a more conventional monument to the 1820 settlers.

[30] Marx, Peter W., in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance,* ed. by Dennis Kennedy, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 455. 'The effects of festivals on the theatrical landscape are twofold. Firstly, they favour the emergence of 'global players', famous directors, actors, and international troupes that concentrate mainly on these events...; second, they give small companies and excluded ethnicities the opportunity of self-representation.' (2003: 455) The Main very much follows the logic of the former, with Irish comedian Dylan Moran performing at the 2015 Festival, whose international profile is justified in the 2015 Programme by his award in 1996 of the Edinburgh festival's Comedy Award, a.k.a. the Perrier; the Fringe is where the opportunity for the 'excluded' to have their voices heard by spectators. This, in turn, can lead to the entering of the marginalized into 'mainstream' spaces.

[31] Key to the definition of a festival is its finite length of time, and the sense of it cohering around a particular concept: in this case the concept is of a multi-disciplinary event, featuring Jazz, Dance, Film, Theatre, lectures, etc., largely based around English-language work; the practical result of this is that audiences can, effectively, 'get their fill' of contemporary culture within the space of eleven days, returning to their own localities, and not necessarily carrying that support to local venues.

events' relationships to one another have occurred in the wider context of the post-apartheid period, one famously defined in the 1990s, now fraught in the context of grinding inequality, by Desmond Tutu's idea of the 'Rainbow', a spiritual and ethnic metaphor for 'expressing the idea of unity within diversity' (although, in a sense, there is now a 'Rainbow' of festivals in the country).[32] The Grahamstown Festival's cultural hegemony and longevity has led to an expansion of the event beyond its specifically Anglophone cultural purview.[33] The project of social and political transition extended to the arts, because:

> After 1994, with the country facing an enormous task of reconstruction, reconciliation and self-realization, the arts (in the very broadest sense) have once more been invoked for a new 'cultural struggle', one in which not only the theatrical event, but the theatrical system as a whole is becoming increasingly important as a means of understanding and re-interpreting the past, coming to grips with the present and shaping the future, and thus in shifting perceptions across a wide spectrum and the many chasms that divide people and communities. And in this respect, the festival culture is of particular interest.[34]

Hauptfleisch argues that the pageantry of festival culture ought to be read as part of the overall restructuring of the theatrical system of patronage that had defined the apartheid period. The democratisation of the arts has entailed the desire to

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[32] Hauptfleisch (2007), in *Festivalising!*, p. 79.
[33] Ibid., p. 83. '[T]he *1820 Settlers' Foundation's* original aim, [was] namely to celebrate, (re)establish, empower and maintain the cultural heritage of English-speaking South Africans in the face of the triple threat of *Americanisation*, *Afrikanerisation* and *Africanisation*.'
[34] Ibid.

transform the 'system as a whole', going further than the founding of individual dissident theatres during apartheid, like The Market in Johannesburg. Festival culture 'is of particular interest', as Hauptfleisch writes, because it involves the proliferation of venues and the spread of artists throughout the country, both in regionally marketed festivals and 'national' hubs like Grahamstown. In the transition, the financial resources that were given to the anti-apartheid movement's use of 'culture as a weapon', and the state-sponsored performing arts organisations that the radical theatre had worked in opposition to, evaporated; against this background, there has been 'the rise of a predominantly freelance theatre industry' which dominates today.[35] The festival system suits this freelance industry, where financially viable, because they can provide a platform for further publicity, and therefore further work on tour (nationally or internationally).[36]

The healthiness of the NAF, as discussed, is in a state of constant debate, especially because of its perceived role as a manifestation of the 'state' of South African theatre. The promotional material of the NAF, inevitably, emphasises the Festival's cultural and commercial vitality. On the other hand, prominent critics like the journalist and playwright Mike van Graan have called into question the honesty of claims regarding the economic versus non-economic benefits of Grahamstown.

The Fringe's theatre programme encompasses those plays that have not won the funding of the 'main' programme, meaning that avant-garde and more conventional, independently funded productions co-exist side by side. 'Fringe'

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[35] Ibid., p. 80-1.
[36] See De Silva, Appendix 1, p. 317.

theatre was, originally, short-hand for theatre which survived outside of the commercialized practices of established venues. The blend of amateur, professional and commercialised theatre follows the pattern of the Edinburgh Fringe, the model for contemporary fringe festivals. Edinburgh originally began as an oppositional programme to locations like London's West End, but has since become a source of future 'mainstream' talent. In this context, fringe can mean theatre that is considered obscure and also something with potential, an audition where artists look to find the security of subsistence provided by wealthy or established institutions. Baz Kershaw captures these contradictions:

> [Fringe theatre] has tended to carry an implicit negative charge, as fringes are fripperies, though many theatre critics and historians also acknowledge that the fringe creatively feeds the mainstream… [in Britain] What had started out as a movement of resistance had become mainly a conduit for filtering the best talent into the most privileged parts of theatre as a cultural industry.[37]

The reality at the NAF, however, is that the Fringe mainly showcases the country's successful, 'freelance' theatre companies, with non-commercial forms taking up little of the conversation.[38] Successful artists, as Kershaw outlines, are captured by the market, with the Fringe becoming 'a conduit' which feeds established companies. Whether theatre-makers are from well-established

[37] Kershaw, Baz., in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance,* ed. by Dennis Kennedy, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) pp. 485-6
[38] Krueger, (2018).

companies like the Market Theatre Laboratory, Artscape, or are individual artists, the NAF requires productions to pay administration fees, venue hire and a percentage of ticket sales.[39] This central control, however, does not translate into transparency, and there is evidence that Fringe makers are beginning to doubt how audience numbers are calculated.[40] If the Fringe theatre cannot continue then the majority of the Festival's theatre programme will disappear.

In this context I argue that the 'free market' of the Festival has created a competitive environment focused around survival and marketability, with high risks and rewards. While the promotion of the NAF markets the event as a coming together of diverse voices, the reality of budgets, a biting economy and the taste of audiences add up to a distinct lack of freedom. In this context, the NAF's 'free' market appears to be an ideal as much as material fact. The contradiction which seems most unsustainable and incompatible with the event being a 'free' market is that the Fringe, on its own, would be a competitive festival (of around 250 shows in 2018[41]). However, as van Graan argues, there is the competition of the patronized Main programme to consider as well, for artists struggling to make ends meet.[42]

The Snow Goose, an established play which had appeared at the Festival in multiple years, is a good example of the kind of theatre which has succeeded

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[39] van Graan, Mike., (2018) 'Reflection on the 2018 National Arts Festival', <https://mikevangraan.wordpress.com/2018/08/13/reflection-on-the-2018-national-arts-festival/> [accessed 1 October 2018].
[40] Ibid; also see Kalk Bay Theatre., (2015b), 'Facebook post' <https://www.facebook.com/KalkBayTheatre/posts/966899336695602?__tn__=-R>. [accessed 30 July 2015]. Facebook post on 15 July 2015: 'The Festival says that more tickets were sold this year than last and I am sure that is right but why did it feel like there were fewer people than last year? Or is that a wrong impression? So fewer people seeing more shows or at least buying more tickets and this may just be a disturbing trend.'
[41] Van Graan, (2018).
[42] Ibid.

and survived. The audiences at every KB Theatre Collective play I went to were (numerically) good and, from my own point of view, their marketing together was particularly efficient and effective (see Figure 4.1).[43]

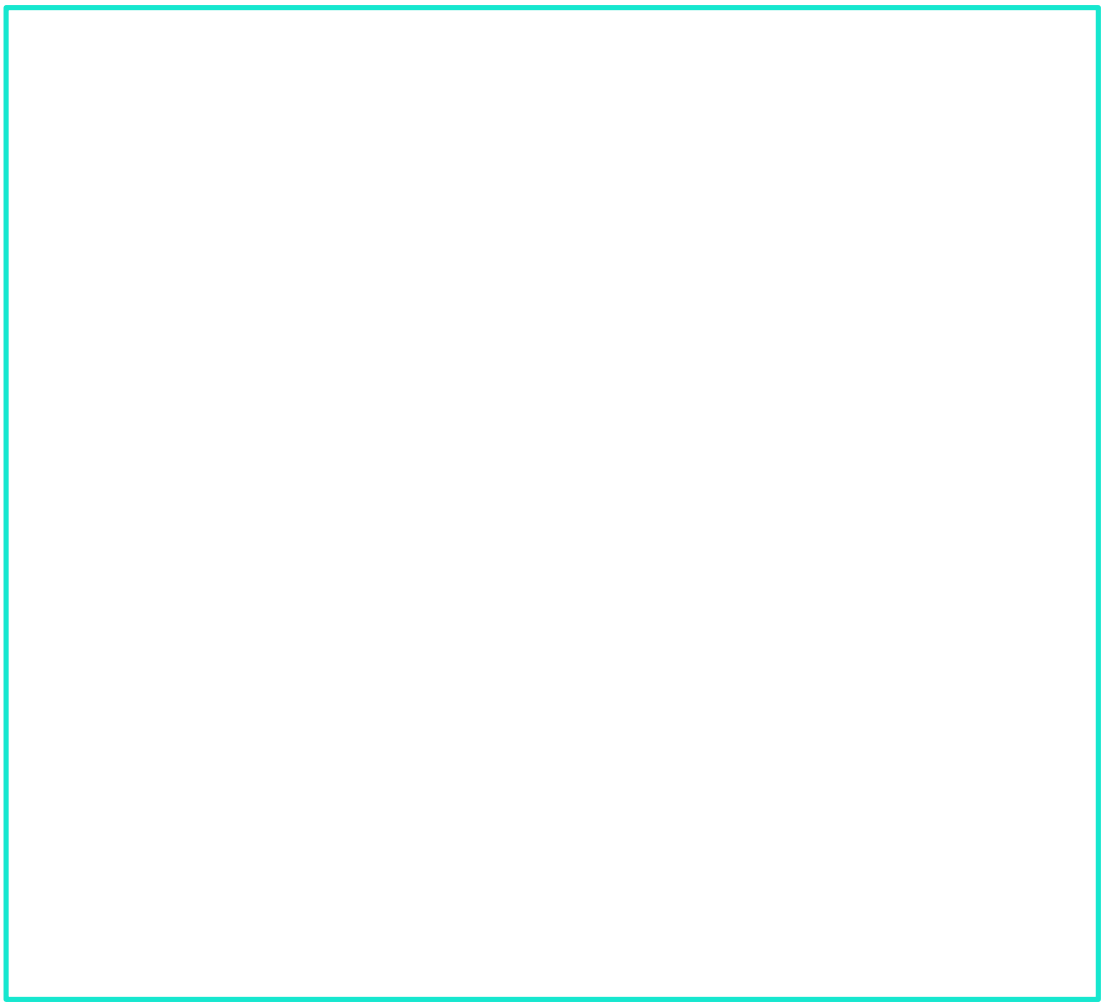

Figure 4.1, KB Theatre @ Glennie Hall leaflet. Author's own collection.

These debates about the NAF as an entity tie into discussion of the Festival as an experience, because the Festival's organisation is so important to the production and staging of the shows themselves. The importance of the NAF, as representative of current South African theatre, has only increased during the post-apartheid years. For comparison, Peter Larlham argued in 1993, 'In many

[43] While this is based on my personal observation as a spectator, it is striking how varied audience sizes and venues can be on the Fringe. This only serves to highlight the precariousness of the Fringe as a source of income or career advancement. Overall 'Main' productions have an advantage in venue, promotion and therefore perceived 'quality'.

respects the annual National Arts Festival is a microcosm of the South African political and social arena.'[44] As of NAF2015 it had become the centre-point of the country's theatre calendar.

From the point of view of the spectator, the NAF's 'free market' encourages the sense that one's own experience is unique. The range of shows is enormous, theatre being one choice of entertainment. Anton Krueger sums up the effect: 'Everybody's festival is different. Each individual charts their own course in navigating this vast, unwieldy, multidisciplinary festival of festivals that happens every year in the Eastern Cape'.[45] The multiplicity of shows means that spectators can connect their individual itineraries together to map 'intertheatrical' trends, themes and developments.[46] From my experience in Grahamstown, there are fringe events that are almost indistinguishable from their main counterparts in terms of their 'quality', the undeniable difference being the style of venues (the Main are performed in purpose-built venues, the Fringe on temporary stages with

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[44] Larlham, Peter., 'It Was The Best Of Times, It Was The Worst Of Times: Reflections On The National Arts Festival In Grahamstown, July 1–11, 1993', *South African Theatre Journal*, 7.2, (1993), 85-100 (p. 85).

[45] Krueger (2018), p. 1

[46] Flockemann, Miki., Jerome Cornelius and Jolyn Phillips, 'Grahamstown 2012: theatres of belonging, longing and counting the bullets', *South African Theatre Journal*, 26.2, (2012) 218-226.Is an example of the regular reportage on the festival within the *SATJ*: One of the pleasures and challenges of attending the annual National Arts Festivals held in Grahamstown is attempting to track aesthetic and conceptual trends which become evident when one is exposed to an intense concentration of works over a short period of time. The fact that the three of us occasionally had divergent reactions to the same works is indicative of the range of perspectives (some perhaps jaded, some fresh) that are common amongst festival-goers. (p. 218); Bratton, Jacky., *New Readings in Theatre History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 37-8. Bratton's concept (from Victorian theatre) of intertheatricality was an important one, that explains the connective force of the textual world of the festival, 'Intertheatricality', developed by analysis of nineteenth century playbills, can be deployed in two forms here: firstly, the necessary condition of being a festival-goer is that one has to pick and choose, is invited to attend many different works, and secondly because the Festival's programme is so key to organizing one's time as a festival-goer. This can be taken as a contemporary version of Bratton's Victorian promotional material.

uncomfortable seating). My key example for a Fringe play that competed with the Main programme's polish, on stage, was *The Snow Goose*.

In terms of theatre-makers, success at the National Arts Festival is a (problematic) liminal process required for supplying city theatres with fresh practitioners.[47] The NAF serves as an enormous advertisement for the institutions that fund and make it possible, with a range of public and private stakeholders, not just the theatre-makers on stages.[48] The Eastern Cape's government, media such as the television network M-Net, and Standard Bank, which used to lend the event its name before it controversially scaled back its role in the late '90s, are at the forefront.[49] These organisations are advertised in the Festival's extensive promotional literature. A sense of credit for the Festival is established within its programme, with opening remarks from figures such as Standard Bank's Chief Executives and members of the Eastern Cape's government, in addition to the Festival's committee.[50] Unlike the anti-capitalist theatre of the apartheid period, there is a partnership between capitalist

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[47] There is a kind of survivorship bias, where those who have endured the difficult process are confirmed as being 'talent', and worthy of a career; such is the nature of an increasingly professionalised theatre and its market-dictated approach.

[48] National Arts Festival., (2018) 'FAQ: 'Who Funds the Festival'', <https://www.nationalartsfestival.co.za/about/faqs/> [accessed 1 October 2018].: These can be found emblazoned on paratextual materials such as the enormous Programme, and the website for the festival. Indeed, as of the 2018 Festival, the website reads in its FAQ Section, 'Our sponsors do. Less than 10% of our income comes from ticket sales (because, on the Fringe, most ticket sales revenue goes to the artists). The rest we have to raise from corporate sponsors and public entities such as the government, National Lotteries and so on. So if you see a sponsor's branding anywhere during the Festival, make a note of who they are and *please* do your best to support them, both during the Festival and throughout the year. They put a lot of their resources into the National Arts Festival and we keep telling them how amazing our audiences are… prove us right!'

[49] Neethling, Miemie., 'To fund or not to fund?: Standard Bank National Arts Festival Grahamstown, 30 June–9 July 2000', *South African Theatre Journal*, 14.1, (2000), 202-217. Indeed the end of this sponsorship deal put the whole event in jeopardy, with speculation rife at the time of what the long-term impact of the Bank's un-sponsoring would have on the Festival, and by extension, on the industry as a whole.

[50] National Arts Festival., *National Arts Festival Programme: 2-12 July 2015 Grahamstown*, (2015), Author's own collection.

sponsorship and local government funding. Of greatest interest is the short endorsement by Standard Bank's Sim Tshabalala and Ben Kruger. Amid its praise for the Festival's contribution to culture, the Bank presents itself (as the main corporate sponsor) as being indispensable to the work of the local government: 'Standard Bank places great value in being in a position, created by the Festival, to support and stimulate the economy of the greater Grahamstown area and of the Eastern Cape Province.'[51] However, this is merely a reflection of the contradictions of post-apartheid South Africa's neoliberal economy. As quoted in Footnote 35, the Festival itself encourages festival-goers to 'do your best to support [sponsors], both during the Festival and throughout the year'. Given that a number of the sponsors are corporate, and that approximately 90% of the Festival's income is raised from sponsors generally, the event serves as an enormous advertisement for those organisations (public and private) which can afford to patronize the arts, wherever the capital is sourced.

Following in the footsteps of the anti-apartheid tradition, a major part of the Festival's programme is staged to critique social, political and economic injustice (including some of its Main offering, especially its featured genre, satire, represented by Pieter-Dirk Uys and Chester Missing). Decades after their first staging, texts from the anti-apartheid era, like *Born in the RSA, The Island* and *Woza Albert!* are performed as repertory pieces documenting past struggles; but they are also the reminder of another time, when theatre had a more 'united' function as a cultural weapon against the state.[52]

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[51] Ibid., p. 5.
[52] See the Conclusions chapter of this thesis with regards to future avenues of research.

The title of this chapter, 'This Big Audition', comes from a focus group interview I conducted with the KB Theatre Collective (four participants). The writer/performer Jaques De Silva describes how the festival was an opportunity for him as a young actor with little or no financial resources: in other words, the fringe (and the Festival which it takes place in) has been like an 'audition' for him to impress, to try and enter mainstream, 'bigger spaces':

> This is a conversation me and Jenine have also had before, is the idea that, for me, a lot of my shows wouldn't get into bigger spaces if they hadn't been seen here [in Grahamstown]. So spaces like the Market Theatre, spaces like The State, or The Civic, or the Baxter, they're all here scouting for work. So for me my first play that I brought myself in 2010 is an opportunity, it's a chance for anybody, it's a lottery now, better than that, it's like this big audition. Everybody's here, we're all on equal footing – kind of! – [laughs] and if I can somehow go to the Long Table[53] and convince someone from the Brighton Festival to come see my play, I could tour! There's an opportunity for my work, which we're mostly making without any money. The full mask work we did, *Butcher Brothers*, the three of us when we started making it were just three buddies working in a friend's, like, in his living room. Eating oats because we had nothing else. And eventually it was seen and it was taken to a theatre that had lots of runs and success, so festivals are great as a platform, as a way in. For young actors, for young theatre-makers, young storytellers, I think.[54]

[53] A pop-up bar/restaurant popular with participants.
[54] De Silva, Appendix 1, p. 317.

De Silva is describing his attempts to use this 'conduit', the 'chance', market-based institution as a 'big audition', aware of the process as being an uneven but still relatively open playing field. Grahamstown, as an industry threshold, 'a way in', lends a sense of importance by association. When De Silva describes the festival as 'this big audition', he captures how the Festival is a space to search for supporters, as well as a marketplace. The word 'audition' comes from the Latin to 'hear'; the Festival is an opportunity and an auditorium (the 'place to hear').[55] By interpreting the Festival as a 'big audition', the whole of the Fringe is turned into an opportunity to enter this 'place to hear', to be represented and be a voice that can reach through the confines of the marketplace. An audition, like an interview, is an attempt to enter a group; but the Fringe is judged by both the spectatorial public and privileged figures like the media, producers and talent scouts.

De Silva's experience also underlines how under-resourced Fringe theatre is, as a space where 'we're mostly making without any money.' Creative and critical success can, optimistically, be counterpoints to practitioners' lack of remuneration. I argue above that the NAF's 'free market' is not so 'free'; De Silva's perspective fits into this picture. When discussing the organisational and institutional elements of the Festival it is possible to underplay the very real experience of Fringe theatre-makers, who contribute the majority of the NAF's theatre shows. As De Silva remarks, 'the three of us when we started making [*Butcher Brothers*] were just three buddies working in a friend's, like, in his living room. Eating oats because we had nothing else.' As things currently stand, for

[55] *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3 edn (WordWeb Software, 2010).

students and artists looking to enter the industry's touring circuit, hardship is a necessary price. Being 'young storytellers' in post-apartheid South Africa is a precarious business; the Festival certainly helped De Silva and the other interviewees when entering their careers, providing a basis to build for future success, even at future Festivals in Grahamstown.

The press surrounding the Festival shapes and sets the conditions for the reception of new work; a good review can have a great influence on a festino trying to navigate the vast output of work on offer. Collocott observes that the festival format, in and of itself, is the reason why spectators may give 'arty' work a chance, perhaps because a great show is as easy to see as a bad one, whether experimental, independent or repertory:

> they're critical, these festivals [...] Because when I tell people, the moment I say I'm using shadow, and mask they think it's fringe, and it is fringe I suppose. But because of the response that happens and the reviews, […] in a festival environment people go 'what is this actually?' So suddenly this work that would really not be in a mainstream theatre is taken into [consideration]… you get to build yourself a bit of an audience and a reputation [….] I don't know how else would you do it. How else?[56]

The tension resides here in this question of the, 'How else?' There is a tension within the idea of 'fringe' theatre between avant-garde, unsettling work, and that which is not popular or prestigious enough to be considered 'mainstream'. These

[56] Collocott, Appendix 1, p. 318.

political aesthetic entanglements are exemplified, in the institutional case of Grahamstown, in the choice of whether or not to be funded by the Festival's Main programme. The Main and Fringe is a symbiotic, if financially unequal relationship, because the status of both decides the health of the NAF. De Silva's idea of the 'big audition' can be read as expressing the professional desire to be recognised and appear in big venues, to be a 'star'. But is it simply the means to this end? In practice, experimental and 'accessible' work included, the Fringe is so broad that to regard it as coherently about pointing towards a particular end is not true to life. The Fringe is more akin to a loose coalition than a series of different companies trying to chase a shared dream. Furthermore, being on the Main does not guarantee quality; the heavily promoted debut of Pieter-Dirk Uys's play *African Times* had audience members leave during the interval and not return. Alternatively, cheap tickets, the widespread proliferation of leaflets and posters, and the daily promotion by *Cue* magazine mean that many productions do succeed, despite their self-funded status. The meaning of 'success' is, of course, subjective, although certain mechanisms such as the Ovation Awards for fringe productions lead to an association of success with the achievement of acclaim. What separates figures like Pieter-Dirk Uys, whose performances as Evita Bezuidenhout and Bambi Kellerman in *A Part Hate, A Part Love* and *Never Too Naked*, from the 'fringe' theatre of James Cairns in *El Blanco: Tales of the Mariachi*; or the productions of past and modern classics like *Hamlet* and *Have You Seen Zandile?*; is the institutional structure of the National Arts Festival itself. The kind of theatre does not matter, but the 'brand' does.[57]

[57] van Graan, Mike., (2017b).

Grahamstown, therefore, encompasses a wide spectrum of styles and intentions. As Jaques de Silva believes, 'Everybody's here': representatives of the old school, agitational form of South African theatre; those who focus on storytelling as an activity unto itself, like the KB Theatre Collective; novice figures like students and young performers; and experimental artists who perform less easily definable work.[58] The bustle of festival audiences can translate to a career outside of the 'eleven days of amazing' for those can succeed in the ruthless theatre economy.[59]

4.1 *The Snow Goose* and contemporary theatre

I will give context of how *The Snow Goose* fits into South African contemporary theatre, before discussing the play's scenography. The adaptation of Gallico's *The Snow Goose* was workshopped by Collocott (as director and designer), Taryn Bennett and James Cairns (the sole performers).[60] South African political theatre has had a strong tradition of workshop, or actor-centric, theatre-making.[61] Small teams of practitioners thrived in the anti-apartheid theatre, because scant resources and mobile, intimate dramas could be adapted to play in non-traditional theatre venues, with actors often playing multiple parts. The material constraints of productions guided the minimalist style of 'protest' theatre. *The Snow Goose* continues these traditions, both in terms of its minimal, adaptable stage design,

[58] Just who cannot be 'here' is, of course, impossible to know, as is the exclusive nature of cultural capital; such access issues are obscured by the sheer breadth and scale of the festival to the independent festival-goer.
[59] 'Eleven days of amazing' was the NAF2015 advertising slogan.
[60] Gallico, Paul., (1967).
[61] For a case in point see *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972) in Chapter One of this thesis.

and the two-hander cast. Costume changes and masks were used by Bennett and Cairns to set apart their main and supporting characters.

The Snow Goose's aesthetic focus lies in its storytelling, reworked with significant elements of comedy when compared to Gallico's pathos-filled novella. Storytelling may not be an immediately eye-catching motivation, like radical protest theatre was, but the members of the KB Theatre Collective were unanimous on the centrality of it to their creative practice, and their careers as artists. Recalling the stress of making a version of *Hamlet*, Collocott 'thought: "why do I do this?" Because I really care about telling the story'.[62] Barileng Malebye reflected that South African theatre has developed so that story, rather than protest, is core, an evolution which took place within her own career:

> BM: And now it's about writing your own stories and telling stories in your *own way*. So, you don't need to stick to a specific sort of presentation or genre to say that you are bringing a production or you are staging a show, and if it's not that, it's 'not theatre', you know what I'm saying? So now it's about writing our own stories, it's about re-telling stories that have happened before and making them relevant to today.[63]

The Snow Goose exemplifies what Malebye is describing, because its blend of mask work, puppetry, physical acting and comedy are styles that repeat through much of Collocott's theatre-making, from the clown play *A Day in the Desert* to *The Snow*

[62] See Appendix 1., p. 306.
[63] Ibid.

Goose. An aesthetic freedom has been encouraged by the shift from making polemical plays to focusing on storytelling.

The impact of the politically conscious theatre of the past, however, and the politicisation of South African theatre-makers generally, is that storytelling is pursued with the awareness of the potential political resonances that may transpire. Yvette Hutchison, reviewing Dennis Walder's collection of Athol Fugard's introspective dramas, *Interior Plays*, explains the way that storytelling and politics interact in South African dramatic discourse: '"Telling the story" of an individual is one of the most subjective, least socio-politically contextualised acts, which simultaneously resonates within and echoes the broader political time and space.'[64] In the case of *The Snow Goose*, the depiction of Philip Rhayader's 'ostracisation' echoed the xenophobic *Amakwerekwere* riots in Johannesburg and Durban.[65] The play being an adaptation of Gallico's novel did not preclude the fictional story of Philip resonating with the *Amakwerekwere* riots.[66] In the anti-apartheid theatre the political intent of theatre-makers was central to the entire creative process, in voicing the plight of the oppressed, calling attention to unjust laws, retelling a fragment of the apartheid experience. The post-apartheid theatre's focus on storytelling creates room for a multiplicity of styles and sources. Further, rather than such storytelling being apolitical or lacking in impetus, plays like *The Snow Goose* are key examples of how the craft of theatre can be political, through resonance and the role of presentist political backdrops. *The Snow Goose*'s adaptation is not entangled with insurrection, like Fugard, Kani and Ntshona's *The Island*'s play-within-a-play

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[64] Hutchinson, Yvette., (2000) '*Township Plays* by Athol Fugard, *Port Elizabeth Plays* by Athol Fugard, *Interior Plays* by Athol Fugard', *South African Theatre Journal*, 14, 225-229, p. 228.
[65] Collocott, Appendix 1, p. 314.
[66] For further discussion of this context, see Chapter Three of this thesis.

transformation of *Antigone* is.[67] There is room, in the post-apartheid Festival, for repertory versions of plays like Fugard's *The Island*, self-referential political theatre like Mike van Graan's *Return of the Ancestors*, and storytelling-focused plays like *The Snow Goose* (all of which were performed at NAF2015).[68] Each example epitomizes the diversity of contemporary South African theatre, and all are political in their own way. A post-apartheid play's politics can manifest from the narrative's resemblance of recent events, the resonance of characters' experiences, or the thematic connection to contemporary issues, the conceptual analysis of which is undertaken below.[69]

4.2 *The Snow Goose* in performance

Because performance analysis is based on an individual's point of view of an ephemeral event, analysing live performance is not without its controversy as a methodology. Pavis explains that, despite the proliferation of writing about performance, 'both a minefield of contradictory theories and […] a fallow field that has yet to develop a satisfactory method of universal application.'[70] It is a field that is still being defined and worked out, its working evidence being negotiated on a case by case basis. Limiting performance analysis to those productions that have a published text would silence and exclude a great deal of theatre. As such the performance analysis here is based on my ethnographic notes from attending the Festival. Where appropriate and possible, secondary images are included that fit with the performance analysed in order to give evidence of the design and aesthetic

[67] Fugard, Athol., *Township Plays*, ed. by Dennis Walder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[68] National Arts Festival, (2015).
[69] Section 4.3 to 4.4.
[70] Pavis, (2003), p. 1.

of the play. My notes were based around recording my reactions and thoughts about design choices, as well as key moments in the play, not unlike a review. Without my presence, or my notes, this work could not be possible; this thesis, therefore, goes beyond published texts here. To study an ephemeral event requires such consideration. Following this analysis there is a further theorisation, with this experience being the primary source.

At the beginning of the play, the young adult Frith Cartwright addresses the audience directly, telling of her interest in the hunchback Philip Rhayader, and the cruel gossip surrounding him. Frith lives in a rural community on the south-eastern coast of England in the late 1930s, with farmers, sailors, publicans, postal workers and army officers as fixtures of local life. Philip and Frith become friends when the latter saves a snow goose who has been shot out of the sky by two hunters, one of whom is Frith's father. Philip is a conservationist and artist living alone in a lighthouse in the local marshes, not far from where the bird was shot. He educates Frith about how to take care of the bird, naming her 'the Princess'. They discuss the bird's mysterious arrival, with Philip speculating that she must have been blown off course while migrating from Canada. Frith likes Philip because he is unlike anyone she has met, his sympathetic attitude towards the Princess matches her own, and his knowledge allays her fears that her father has slain the beautiful bird with his gun. The bond between the young woman, the lonely artist and the adrift migratory bird enriches each, changing their lives. The Princess returns to health; Frith has a friend outside of her parochial community; Philip paints portraits of the Princess and Frith, and finds great value in their connection.

As the calendar advances, the Second World War approaches. The culmination of the play surrounds the events of Operation Dynamo at Dunkirk. Philip has already been rejected by the military, but he takes his boat, followed by the Princess, in answer to the call for aid. Philip is able to save many soldiers, despite his disability and his small vessel. Philip is not satisfied with saving one set of soldiers and returns again and again to Dunkirk's beaches. Meanwhile, Frith waits at the dock for his return, but she is told by an army officer who witnessed Philip's bravery, and the mysterious presence of the Princess in the sky, that he died at sea. Frith finally realises the power of their friendship as she looks out to sea.

In this performance analysis, I will outline three key areas of the play's staging: the set design, the significance of masks, and the role of puppetry.

The Snow Goose's unscripted beginnings meant that the play began by exploring '*the space* doing character work, doing stuff so that we can find what the style is, as the group.'[71] The result was a production where the actors were constantly moving and changing the set design, moving packing crates, a table and props, changing their masks and taking on the posture and physical gestures which conveyed that particular character's personality. How the actors communicate through their physicality and the images they create through inhabiting the space is at the centre of Collocott's scenographic practice, explained in her blog post from July 2015: 'I work in a way that the theatrical space comes first. Meaning the

[71] Collocott, Appendix 1. Transcribed emphasis., p. 312.

creation of the imagined world through how we invoke an image in them mind of the audience is paramount.'[72] Further, Collocott said in our interview that,

> some people don't go [into your play's 'dream' world], but for the people who do go with you, do they teleport, do they 'go' into your world? And I think that is true for the plays that I am doing, when you watch *The Snow Goose*, you are in that time and place…[73]

The crafting of stage space in *The Snow Goose* is, therefore, a result of the writing process which shaped the play's production. The intention is to create a temporary dream world via the play's scenographic elements, with surreal masks, (shadow) puppets, and the minimal set cohering to create a contextual 'time and place', in which these elements are consistent, believable vehicles for the storytelling experience.

The play's set design consisted of permanent elements, rearranged between scenes to distinguish between locations. A round, raised platform created a focal point to organise the table, packing crates and props in their particular configurations. Particularly distinct elements of the set were the sail, used in the transformation of the items to create Philip's boat. The use of a handheld shadow puppet prop to silhouette the Snow Goose within the space created a sense of flight and scale beyond the dark space which usually surrounded the set.

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[72] Collocott, Jenine., (2015) 'Manifesto', <http://jeene-in-the-wings.blogspot.co.uk/2015/07/manifesto.html> [accessed 1 October 2018].

[73] Collocott, Appendix 1., p. 307.

The most anchored location was Philip's lighthouse home, pictured below (Figure 4.2). Props such as a tea pot and cups appeared out of the crates, and a table provides a focal point. Philip's environmentalist artwork created a sense of connection beyond the minimal elements on show, because Philip's location in the marshes is one reason why he is treated as such a (literal) outsider. Philip's artwork appeared in the depiction of the marshes, representing the birds, providing a backdrop to the antics of the hunters Mister Cartwright and Frank (see Figure 4.5). Philip's artwork appearing in his home and the marshes creates an association and connection between the 'wild' ecosystem of the marsh and Philip, whose pacifist stance on animals is a counterpoint to Cartwright and Frank's hunting.

The play's denouement shifts between Philip's boat and the docks (latter, Figure 4.3). The same elements that made Philip's 'home', along with a large, white, triangular sail create his vessel. Frith and Philip had previously gone sailing together, but in these scenes they are entirely separated (see Figure 4.4). The improvisation of the set helped add to the sense of danger and fragility to his personal mission. Philip's home is a place of refuge and care for the three main characters, and in the final scenes, transformed into the boat, transforms into the place where those relationships are torn apart by the war. Almost all of the set design is crafted out of wood, which creates a grounded, non-industrial aesthetic, reflecting Philip's own sage-like connection to the environment.

Figure 4.2. Bischoff, Dani., ‘Dance some more [Photograph. Taryn Bennett as Frith (left) and James Cairns as Philip Rhayader (right) at Philip’s home].’ (2013) <http://jeene-in-the-wings.blogspot.co.uk/2013/08/the-snow-goose.html> [accessed 1 October 2018.]

Figure 4.3. Bischoff, Dani., ‘James Cairns as the General and Taryn Bennett as Frith [Photograph. At the docks].’ (2013) <http://jeene-in-the-wings.blogspot.co.uk/2013/08/the-snow-goose.html> [accessed 1 October 2018]

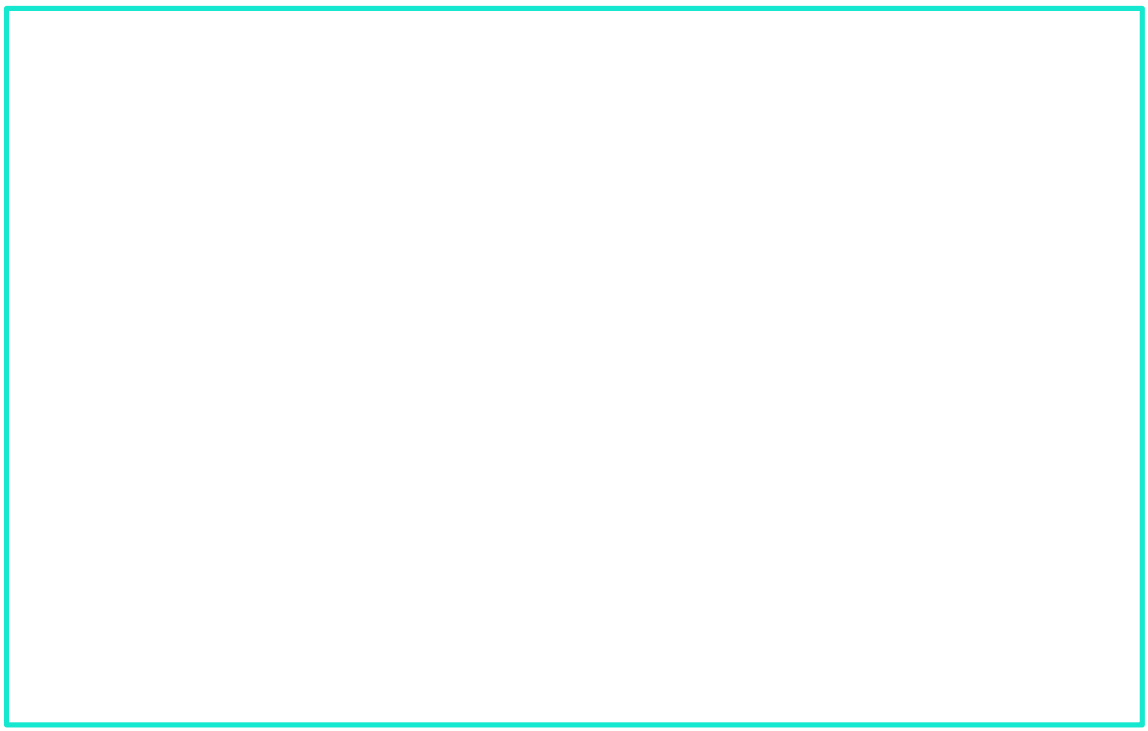

Figure 4.4. Kuhn., Philip., 'Taryn and James on a boat in The Snow Goose', (2015) <http://jeene-in-the-wings.blogspot.com/2015/07/manifesto.html> [accessed 1 October 2018].

At the docks, Frith stands on the wooden platform, the crates and table in a state of disarray. Standing towards the back of the stage space, Cairns' army officer also looks out to sea, but maintains his distance. While Frith is, practically, willing herself to emotionally connect with the spirit of her friend Philip, to have her hope reach across the sea, the officer stands stoically with his hands in his enormous trench coat. The officer and Frith do not share the central space, like the friends did in Rhayader's home, emphasizing the isolation she feels after losing her closest friend. Frith's building realisation of the significance of their relationship, especially to her coming-of-age over the years, was communicated by Bennett through her quiet mood of hope and mourning. Bennett's Frith was a vivacious character, frequently dancing and moving her arms in an exaggerated way that emphasises her youth

and lack of inhibitions (see Figure 4.2 and trailer by Collocott[74]). Frith contrasted with the withdrawn Philip, who moved much more slowly and deliberately around the tight stage space. In these subtle ways of exploring the space created for the play, the actors implicitly communicated their characters' mood and outlook on life.

Mask is a core part of Collocott's scenography, having crafted them as part of the design process. All the masks in the play are 'half' masks, not covering the mouths of the performers. Their grotesque features exaggerate the upper and side parts of the characters' faces, particularly the eyes and nose, but also the cheekbones. The costume changes between the characters changed the layers on top of their basic outfits. Frith and Philip wore blazers and cardigans (figure 4.2), while the supporting characters wore large coats and hats (see 4.3 and 4.5).

Figure 4.5. Kuhn, Philip., 'James and Taryn as Frank and Mr Cartwright in The Snow Goose...now when we warm up their state is so present we could make

[74] Collocott, Jenine., (2015) 'The Snow Goose Trailer', <https://vimeo.com/146745737> [accessed: 1 October 2018].

entirely new shows with these characters. [Photograph]' (2015) < http://jeene-in-the-wings.blogspot.com/2015/07/manifesto.html> [accessed 1 October 2018].

As weird as the masks in *The Snow Goose* are, they are an indispensable way of distinguishing characters, and the sense of a time and community being represented is created by the variety of them. Variations in characters' accents was particularly key, as a further way of setting them apart. Mister Cartwright, Frith's father, for example, spoke in a slow, booming voice which underlined his inflexibility and conservatism when lecturing Frith or joking with the larger-than-life Frank (see figure 4.5 as an ample illustration).

Figure 4.6: Raubach, Bazil., 'Figure 4.5. Kuhn, Philip., 'Taryn Bennet as Frith and James Cairns as Rhayader [Photograph]' < http://jeene-in-the-wings.blogspot.com/2013/08/the-snow-goose.html> [accessed 1 October 2018].

The absence and subtle differences between masks are important to the main characters in *The Snow Goose*. Bennett's performance as Frith, for example, was the only substantial character without a mask, allowing the actor to use facial

expressions to convey joy, anger and sadness.[75] Frith is a free spirit, still enjoying the freedoms of childhood, but beginning to form more mature relationships. Being able to see this range of emotions, so that the actor did not have to 'play' through the mask, allowed Bennett to embody Frith's young adulthood.[76]

Philip's mask has a stoic, lonely expression that fits the character's isolated situation and livelihood (see Figure 4.6). Being able to see Cairns' eyes and mouth is crucial, however, in contrasting Philip's mask with the more grotesque designs in the play. Collocott's masks play with the proportions of the human face to create different effects, as discussed above with regards to Mister Cartwright and Frank, and the same is true of Philip. His mask fits onto Cairns' face, making the character appear less bizarre or outlandish. While the supporting characters have fixed, white, glaring eyes, Philip's are sunken within the mask. The mask facilitates Cairns' representation of Philip's fragility, vulnerability and individuality.

The othering, alienating effect of masked and puppet representation is key to *The Snow Goose*'s on-stage design language. Even though the masks and puppets are constructed, alienating elements, they are used in *The Snow Goose* to create the collective context of social realism. Because of these elements *The Snow Goose* is strangely poised between 'arty' and 'mainstream'. The relationship between masks and puppetry is a close one:

> Like puppeteers, masked players lose their own personality to assume the physical attributes of the character of their mask […] The connection

[75] There are interstitial scenes that convey the year, which feature 'talking head' figures who do not wear masks, such as Cairns' radio newsreader.
[76] Collocott, Appendix 1, p. 315.

> with both puppets and ventriloquism is evident: the alienation and otherness intrinsic to many kinds of masks […] evoke fear or at least apprehension[77]

As in Penny Francis's quotation above, spectators tend to be apprehensive about masks, so this delicate balance in *The Snow Goose* is why it has played with success to independent venues away from the National Arts Festival over the last few years.

Figure 4.7: Collocott, Jenine., 'The Snow Goose Trailer [screen capture]' (c.2015), <https://vimeo.com/146745737> [accessed: 1 October 2018]. (0:34) - Frith tenderly carries the injured Snow Goose to Philip, wrapped in her cardigan.

The Snow Goose is represented both as a prop-like puppet (termed a 'proppet'), designed by Alida van Deventer, and as well as a live-acted shadow puppet (see

[77] Francis, Penny., *Puppetry: A reader in theatre practice* (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 35.

Figures 4.7).[78] The Princess appears in *The Snow Goose* in three different ways: as van Deventer's proppet, as a shadow puppet, and in Philip's art. The representation of the goose is fluid, transgressing barriers between the real and the artificial. The closest that the Princess comes to being depicted as 'real' is via the mechanistic proppet, designed to be used by the actors, without any specialised performers required. The bird is played so as to be on the liminal edge of being real. The integrated use of shadow and puppet and mask work shows the central importance of design to the play as a text, further, as a workshop play. The representation of the Goose in Philip's art in other scenes forms part of the backdrop on the marshes breaks down the barriers between naturalist representation and performance (Figure 4.5). The ambivalence of the real and the grotesque is furthered by the use of mask-work, allowing Philip to be distinguished by more than his voice; less elaborately, Cairns signified Philip's disability by being slightly hunched, and by clutching his left lapel with his hand, indicating that he only has the use of one arm. The cast's masks and costume changes are as equally 'artificial' as the Snow Goose, suggesting an equality rather than a hierarchical difference between human and animal representation on stage. While the plot of the play is arguably about Philip and Frith, it is the Snow Goose that brings them together, becoming a character and subject on stage in her own right, with her own history and will in the story.

Just as Philip defies the expectations placed on his 'other' Body, the Snow Goose defies death by recovering from the bullets that are designed to transform

[78] This technically makes the cast of *The Snow Goose* a three-hander; however, throughout this analysis I have termed the play a two-hander, because the role of the shadow puppeteer is not made clear until the performers' ovation. Collocott and I discussed the effect of this, and the directorial choice of choosing a live performer over a projection (which is, in some ways, simpler).

it from wild bird to food on the supper table. The friendship between Frith, the Snow Goose and Philip calls into question the integrity of concepts like species, and of the central hierarchy between human (animals) and (non-human) animals. There is no sense of exhibitionism to the representation of the Snow Goose in Collocott's production.[79] As a crafted object, located on stage, the Snow Goose is firmly within the human gaze; as a simulacrum, the Goose is a paradoxically human and non-human presence on stage, a puppet and a character with life.[80]

4.3 The politics of inter-species friendship in *The Snow Goose*

The play's socio-political concerns regarding the treatment of outsiders, migrants, women and animals are interconnected via the play's central characters. In this conceptual analysis I will tie together the wider meaning of the representation of animals, humans and inter-species care which were depicted on stage by Cairns and Bennett.

Animals present a particular challenge to practitioners; as Alan Read speculated, 'Animals imply a provocative and welcome subtraction of sophistication, ethically enhancing and intellectually problematizing any context within which human animals performing might be reconsidered.'[81] *The Snow Goose*, through its abstraction of the animal on stage through puppetry and

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[79] Orozco, Lourdes., *Theatre & Animals*, (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). For numerous examples of animals as performing figures.
[80] Taylor, Jane., (ed.), *Handspring Puppet Company,* (Parkwood: David Krut Publishing, 2009). This reminds of the aesthetic debates surrounding Puppetry, of which the South African Handspring Puppet Company, Jane Taylor and William Kentridge are so closely associated within contemporary theatre.
[81] Read, Alan., 'Editorial: On Animals', *Performance Research*, 5.2, (2000), iii-iv., (p. iii).

imagery, is an example of storytelling and zooësis (the aesthetic representation and manifestation of non-human animals).[82] Indeed, while the character of the Snow Goose represents migrants and strangers (in the wake of post-apartheid xenophobia), she also stands as a character in and of itself, a double role, a conceptual aspect of Animal Studies as a reading strategy.[83] The animal-human relationships in *The Snow Goose* countervail the characters' marginalisation and subalternity. I argue that the titular Snow Goose, Frith (as a young woman) and Philip (as a disabled artist and conservationist) are subaltern, too. *The Snow Goose* explores the friendship that forms between these figures, the politics of which is analogous to that of Nicholas Spagnoletti's *London Road* in Chapter Three. These friendships are an example of what Read regards as theatre-representations that operate 'beyond the human.'[84] Fundamentally, there is the sense that all of the above groups are 'Others', and are excluded from access to power. The interconnection between some of these groups is not new, and is foundational to the twentieth-twenty-first century animal rights movement. Peter Singer argues in the first chapter of *Animal Liberation* that: 'The idea of 'The Rights of Animals' actually was once used to parody the case for women's rights.'[85] The radical 'feminist recognition of interrelated oppressions' has led to sophisticated debates within feminism about the nature of human animal and

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[82] Chaudhuri, Una., and Shonni Enelow, 'Animalizing Performance, Becoming-Theatre: Inside Zooësis with The Animal Project at NYU', *Theatre Topics*, 16.1, (2006), 1-17; Chaudhuri, Una., '(De)Facing the Animals: Zooëisis and Performance', *TDR: The Drama Review*, 51.1, (2007), 8-20.
[83] Chaudhuri, Una., (2013) 'Bug Bytes: Insects, Information, and Interspecies Theatricality', *Theatre Journal*, 65, 321-334:
'Whatever animals may 'stand for' in works of art, literature, and film—and in the art of a self-obsessed species like ours, they will inevitably stand for myriad human concerns—the animal studies framework insists that they *also* be read as standing for, and signifying about, *themselves.* Seen thus, the animal figure in art becomes a productive site for the ecological revisionism called for by the accelerating crises of climate change.' (p. 321).
[84] Ibid.
[85] Singer, Peter., *Animal Liberation* (London: Pimlico, 1975), p. 1.

non-human animal relations.[86] My analysis draws on these debates, by applying the feminist ethic of care to *The Snow Goose*, drawing from Donovan and Adams's edited volume on animal-human care and feminism.

Secondly, the equation of women and animals within the logic of patriarchy is analogous to the oppression of 'non-white' human beings. Singer's analysis is founded, further, on the notion that 'the tyranny of human over nonhuman animals… has caused and today is still causing an amount of pain and suffering that can only be compared with that which resulted from the centuries of tyranny by white humans over black humans.'[87] The relationship between concepts of race and species within colonial science is an important, silenced aspect of postcolonial history; in South Africa, it was part of the philosophical underpinnings of the apartheid system. Indeed, the head of the final British-controlled colonial government from 1939 to 1948, Field Marshal J.C. Smuts, published a key text applying Social Darwinist theories to colonial Southern Africa, arguing that it was the white race's evolutionary role to rule.[88]

These contexts are important in situating the representation of animals; what is important about *The Snow Goose* are the characters' subjectivities, offering democratic and caring alternatives to the patriarchal domination of women, outsiders, and non-human animals.[89] The representation of the Snow Goose, as a migratory animal, and its care by the characters Frith and Philip, can be interpreted as a nascent, critical argument against the xenophobic politics that

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[86] Donovan, Josephine., and Carol Adams (eds.), *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics*, (New York: Colombia University Press, 2007), p. 11.
[87] Singer, (1975), p. vii.
[88] Smuts, J.C., *Holism and Evolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1926).
[89] 'London Road', dir. by Lara Bye (Author's own collection, 4 May 2010 at The Fugard Theatre, Cape Town), was also a product of KB Theatre.

has troubled post-apartheid South Africa. The characters' ability to speak and interact across and through socially constructed barriers such as species and gender countervails the continuing power of inequality. The most recognizable ecological crisis in South Africa in recent years has been the destruction of rhino populations for their horns. *The Snow Goose*'s representation of the animal as a viable perspective on stage, worthy of being nurtured and listened to, recalls the work done by Nicholas Ellenbogen's Theatre for Africa company, in particular the 1988 physical theatre play *Horn of Sorrow*.[90] *Horn of Sorrow* shifted attentions away from insensitive discourses such as 'poaching' and towards the critique of the markets which provide hunters with a disproportionate price and income (what is the difference between hunting and poaching, the play posed). Further, within South Africa, the alternative form of employment to the dispossessed rural population was the white-owned mines: 'We need cash to replace what has been taken away from us'.[91] The human cost of poverty and need is displaced, in *The Snow Goose* and *Horn of Sorrow*, onto the lives of animals, who become a part of the human economy in the process.

The politicisation of plays like *The Snow Goose*, which are based more around the principle of storytelling rather than a protest movement, is an effect of the post-apartheid context itself. As in Paul Gallico's novella, the Snow Goose's return over a number of winters, and its accompanying of Philip to the beaches of Dunkirk, means that the bird is more than a metaphor for marginality; she is marginal and other, with her mystery coming from the unusual migration of the bird to Europe. In the text this is explained by a storm blowing the bird off course,

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[90] Graver, David., (ed.), *Drama for a New South Africa: Seven Plays*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 79-91.
[91] Ibid. p. 89.

but its continual return forms the basis of a peculiar bond between the three outsiders of Frith, Philip and the Snow Goose that contradicts the parochial culture of the play's setting.

Perhaps this seeking of social relevance does not feel forced because such questions are integral to the stage presence of animals (artificial or live). The collision of Animal and Performance Studies means that we can read, 'The presence of the animal in performance [as] produc[ing] a necessary engagement with ethics'; further, the animal 'exposes theatre's negotiations with political, social and economic questions'.[92] *The Snow Goose*'s storytelling may not be 'directly' addressing South African issues, like a topical performance would; but as Orozco argues, the representation of animals leads to profound social and political questions.

Philip is marked as being different both by his disabled body, as a hunchback, and by his occupation as an artist and conservationist. The locals pronounce his Welsh surname Rhayader as 'Rodger', which widens his cultural difference to those who gossip about him. Philip does not fulfil the parochial expectations of the patriarchal economy, not working in a traditional working class role, and his bodily difference excludes him from fulfilling the strict expectations of masculine identity. This becomes clear later in the play, when he tries to enlist for the British Expeditionary Force and is turned away by the incredulous army officers; this anxiety is subtly communicated by Philip's feeling of alienation when discussing a community dance with Frith, who hopes to be swept off her feet by a local boy. Philip lives in a lighthouse in the marshes.

[92] Orozco, (2013), p. 3.

Frith is proscribed from going to the marshes by her father. In rebellion, Frith retrieves the Snow Goose that was shot by Mister Cartwright and Frank (whose activity seemingly represents a 'proper' job, unlike Philip's). The migratory bird is marked as different by its distinctive colour, and also by its origin from Canada, giving a further status of difference to the non-human bird as an 'outsider' to the area's ecosystem. Philip, as a conservationist, is able to understand and read into the bird's migration story, which enchants the curious Frith.

There are obstacles and prejudices surrounding their friendship from the beginning. When her father discovers that she visits Philip, he assumes that there must be a sexual relationship between the two: that a friendship between these two individuals is impossible. Frith and Philip's friendship is marked by their differing status in the community.[93] As in Chapter Three, Jacques Derrida's philosophy of the politics of friendship facilitates a reading of this friendship, between these 'unlikely' subjects, as one that defies dictatorial ideas of how people ought to relate to one another. Derrida connects the differential nature of deconstructed friendships to his idea of the democracy 'to come'; Philip and Frith's friendship as being potentially radical and instructive in the context of South Africa's own 'democracy to come'.

Philip's status as an outsider is clear in the confines of the story, yet Frith's status as a girl or young adult woman also places her in a liminal position within the phallogocentric structures of power. While she is nominally able to rebel, her

[93] As outlined in Chapter Three, the discourse of friendship within Western societies has, hitherto, been exclusive and patriarchal, and confined to Friendship's equation with brotherhood between citizens. To contrast, Rosa and Stella's friendship in *London Road* is marked as 'unlikely' by their different ethnicities and ages.

father Mister Cartwright has ultimate authority over her. Feminist theories of the animal-human emphasise the importance of age to human-animal relations; as they become adults, children are conditioned by speciesist discourse to ignore animals' suffering as incomprehensible, and fundamentally different, to human experiences of suffering.[94] Unlike the other members of the fictional community of Chelmsbury, Frith is able to see Philip as exceptional because of his talent and kindness, rather than because of his disabled body. On the brink of becoming an adult in the eyes of her community, Frith's emotional perspective on the Snow Goose's well-being allows her to connect with the animal as well as with Philip.

Because Frith interrupts the hunters by rescuing the injured Snow Goose, the importance of 'care' becomes central to the play through the bird's healing. Philip is also cared for, connecting him to a community that continually rejects him. Through their shared concern for the Princess, Philip and Frith can become friends. Although it is platonic, their friendship is associated with Frith's maturation into an adult, as indicated by her father's assumption of a sexual relationship. Frith's openness to someone marked by their alterity differentiates her from the rest of the community. Their relationship is told through a series of vignettes set over many years. Philip also takes interest in Frith's well-being, offering his perspective on her open desire to court and have relationships with the local boys. Frith, meanwhile, takes interest in Philip's art: in particular his portrait of the Snow Goose. The relationship between the humans and the Snow Goose can be read as an example of the feminist ethic of care, but so too can that between Frith and Philip. Mister Cartwright's censuring of his daughter is an example of the patriarchally utilitarian, exclusive and rule-driven discourse that

[94] See Donovan and Adams, (eds.), (2007).

precludes the importance of such care. The openness and sensitivity of care, as a structure for relationships between beings and subjects is, by its nature, circumstantial and individual. The hermeneutic, arguably post-structural, model of the radical feminist ethic of care gains rigour from sensitivity: 'our complex relationships with nonhuman animals seem better accounted for by the ethic of care's contextual approach focusing on the particulars of given situations.'[95] There is a sense that to Frith especially, and potentially Philip too, that the beauty of the Snow Goose ('the Princess') allows it to ease into a situation of care in Philip's home. The characters are immediately struck by her beauty, and she later becomes a subject of Philip's art. The Princess's status as a 'wild' animal provides further context for her relationship to human care, the bird having been shot at in a hunt, rather than coming from a farm.[96] However, as Clement argues, the ethic of care is based on 'contextual' need, being extended where needed. Frith is a character who in one conversation affirming her love for the Princess, and in another her social preoccupations. The caring, emotive relationship between Philip and Frith contrasts her relationships with local boys, which are punctuated by anger and competition. The temptation with the utilitarian viewpoint is to exempt certain kinds of relationships from the influence of emotion, which is regarded as wayward and distracting, as it does not conform to the rigours of reason.

In *The Snow Goose*, none of the relationships or characters are able to escape the inevitable influence of emotions; even the prescriptive Mister

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[95] Clement, Grace., 'The Ethic of Care and the Problem of Wild Animals', in *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics*, ed. by Josephine Donovan and Carol Adams., (New York: Colombia University Press, 2007). (pp. 302-303).
[96] Ibid.

Cartwright, who is a widower, has a humorously passionate encounter with the local post office mistress. Frith, meanwhile, is passionate about dancing and does not hesitate to bop in front of, or with, Philip (see Fig. 4.2). While Philip feels alienated and apart from the social world that Frith lives in, with her young adult relationships and her interest in romance, he does not begrudge them or view them nihilistically. Instead, his reservations are empathetically based on how her feelings may be hurt by the emotional immaturity of those who look to court her. Similarly, Frith takes an interest in Philip's artistic activity, a truth that is much more compelling about him than as a source of gossip, as an outsider.

Frith, Philip and the Snow Goose all transgress normative values in ways that converge so as to complement one another. Unlike the Snow Goose, however, who is able to survive gunshots and defy the barrier between life and death, Philip disappears beneath the waves. Philip's efforts at Dunkirk allow him to defy the masculine conventions that would exclude him from those allowed to fight and be valorised as heroes. Dunkirk was an important milestone in British propaganda, and a turning point in the war effort. Without the play's story as a context, Philip's contribution to Operation Dynamo would be subsumed by Churchillian discourse. The pacifistic Philip participates out of a feeling of care and responsibility, rather than having a violent role in the 'fight'. Frith discovers her friend's fate from a solemn army general, who recounts his bravery. It is only in death that Philip is recognised by those who exclude, ignore and marginalise him, although they do not understand him like his true friends do.

The Snow Goose herself transgresses parochial ideologies of organic nationalism and belonging by being a migratory 'other', as well as an 'other' species. Set on the brink of the greatest conflict in human history, between most

of the nation-states of the world, the Snow Goose defies national boundaries and calls into question the cultural construction of human geography as a migratory animal. By being 'blown off course', the Snow Goose calls attention to the chaos and change in ecosystems, and the ever-present role of humans in potentially shaping the destinies of wild animals. The hunters' and farmers' relationship to animals is radically different to that of Frith and Philip, which leads to profound ethical differences between these perspectives. Theorist Carol J. Adams emphasises how 'firsthand […] relationships can catalyse one into refusing to view animals instrumentally'.[97] Such emotive, anecdotal evidence does not fit with the imperialist, rationalistic culture that early conservationists operated. Indeed, because of his difference, Philip is excluded from power within Adams' theory of the 'sex-species system', just as Frith is.[98] He is clearly not 'autonomous', being marked as an outsider, despite having relationships with Frith and a passing association with members of the community, such as the post office proprietor (shown as he frequently orders supplies for his wildlife paintings). Philip lacks the agency to join local wartime civilian associations such as the home guard, who use his bodily differences as a way of excluding him from contributing.

Frith rescues the Snow Goose from her father, who intended to place it on their dinner table. It is particularly pertinent, then, that the relationship between diet and the binary conceptualisation of humans and animals are so intertwined. Rather than knowing the Snow Goose as anonymous meat, Frith and Philip know the bird as an individual, not a resource. The poverty of the Cartwrights'

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[97] Adams, Carol J., 'Caring About Suffering', in *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics*, ed. by Josephine Donovan and Carol Adams, (New York: Colombia University Press, 2007)., p. 199.
[98] Ibid.

community, however, heightens the role of the hunting of wild animals to these characters, brought into focus by the Snow Goose's survival. 'Of course,' Adams argues, 'the cultural construction of animals is such that this is precisely what we are usually denied: knowledge of the individual animal being consumed for supper, knowledge of the individual animal being worn. Often, animals are never even seen as possessing individual identities.'[99] These arguments are familiar today because of the contemporary vegetarian, conservation and animal liberation movements; in the period when the play is set, however, such ideas were less prevalent, and the institutions that advocate such ideas did not exist or were in their infancy. Frith's rescuing is akin to modern tactics such as direct action. Animal protection societies began to form in the 1800s in Britain, and Philip – although he does not claim to be part of such a society – represents this underground politics, with his first intention being to care for the wounded bird, rather than a grim alternative.

Frith and Philip's caring role for the injured Goose both countervails the anthropocentric setting and reinforces it: they are in a position to care because of the power afforded to them by human domination over other animals on Earth. The Christian ideology of man's dominion over animals as resources is, here, both being called into question, and re-constructed to justify care and conservation. The attitude of Frith and Philip is opposed to the hunters' perspective, which emerges from Adam's God-given dominance in Genesis.[100]

The Snow Goose's wildness, as opposed to a domestic farm animal or a companion pet, is also important within feminist theories of human-animal care.

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[99] Ibid., p. 211.
[100] Derrida, Jacques., *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. x.

Philip urges Frith to accept the Princess as a wild animal, who happens to need human attention and help. By being a 'wild' animal, the bird is supposed to operate outside of human domestic control, a status which also allows it to be the subject of hunting. Wild animals do provide a problem for feminist care. As outlined by Clement, 'the distinction between domestic and wild animals raises an important problem for it: while the ethic of care seems to fit our interactions with domestic animals well, it is at best unclear how it might guide our interactions with wild animals.'[101] The dilemma flows from how humans should act in relation to the 'biotic community' of animals that they may not necessarily feel an everyday connection to, begging the question, how interventionist should humans be? In contrast, the relationship between a farmer and (for instance) their cattle is straightforward and economic, governed by the cultural status of cows in Western societies, and because the cattle is the legal property of the farmer. The ideas about care and responsibility in *The Snow Goose*, however, are very much about the individuality and subjectivity of humans and animals. Even though she is supposedly a wild animal, the Princess finds a home at Philip's lighthouse, returning over the years after following its instincts to fly with the other birds.[102] The hunters and other members of the community are not demonised, but are part of the story nonetheless. The inter-species friendship and care between Frith, Philip and the Snow Goose calls into question the treatment of subjectivities, such as that of a young girl, of an outsider, of a bird, as being

[101] Clement, p. 302.
[102] 'The Snow Goose', dir. by Patrick Garland (BBC Television, 1971). This is vividly captured in the version of the story starring Jenny Agutter and Richard Harris, for which Agutter was awarded an Emmy Award. In Garland's version Frith is an orphan who works with local sailors, and has a much more distant, if no less powerful, relationship to Philip Rhayader than in the South African play.

dominated by patriarchal, hegemonic discourses like the speciesist 'ethic of justice'. Rather than eliding these differences, the relationships in the play are caring and nurturing, based on the differential.[103] While *The Snow Goose*'s political-aesthetic is that of friendly storytelling, there is a democratic value in telling the stories of (animal or human) outsiders, migrants or oppressed. *The Snow Goose* transgresses the barriers between gender, the healthy and the disabled, the dominant and the marginal, and the animal and human. Rather than seeing such hybrid connections as something to be denied, the play's politics of friendship represents a series of marginal figures.

4.4 Conclusion: 'Another Phase' of South African theatre, and the Fringe

Since 1994 theatre in South Africa has become increasingly professionalised, driven by the opportunities that the growing festival circuit has afforded. It is difficult to exaggerate how competitive the festivalised experience is in Grahamstown, because at any time of day there are events vying for one's time. South African drama, as a postcolonial theatre, has developed so that the experimental and avant-garde are often associated with politicised texts. South African theatre travelled well during the protest era, because in the work of practitioners like Athol Fugard there was a synthesis between aesthetic quality and the passion for political change. Staging the everyday was an extraordinary act in a society defined by segregation and censorship. The abiding problem in

[103] The connection between theories of Species and Race is important within colonial histories, including that of South Africa. See Smuts, *Holism and Evolution* as a primary source example.

the post-apartheid period is that sufficient political change, which the alternative theatre establishment pushed for, has not occurred, that the postcolonial 'remains'.[104] The question is whether South African theatre has, in recent years, begun to find new answers to stubborn socio-economic issues. Whether inherited structures like the NAF, with its organisational issues and market-based logic, are appropriate to the task of nurturing the country's arts industry is open to debate. Such is the hybridity of the Grahamstown festival that consciously political plays can occupy the same venues, audiences and times of day as plays that are designed to be weird and extraordinary, or less 'obviously' political plays like *The Snow Goose*.

The theory of Festivalisation is about taking the festival event itself seriously as a kind of performance. Conceptualised as being 'meta'-, 'poly-systemic' events, festivals are events that are socially determined, reflective of their time and space.[105] Theatre is not just textual in the sense of words on a page, it is institutional and public.

But what of the role of the festival-goer, or spectator? Jacques Rancière's concept of the 'emancipated spectator' unpicks the hierarchies that are endemic in theories of spectatorship; rather, spectatorship is the ordinary condition of the citizen, and it is an experience that is compatible with self-awareness and radical emancipation.[106] This postmodern theory is in contrast to the modernist position that spectatorship can become a passive activity that needs to be assaulted by

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[104] Young, Robert J.C., 'Postcolonial Remains', *New Literary History*, 43.1, (2012), 19-42.
[105] Hauptfleisch, Temple., 'The Cultural Bazaar: Thoughts on festival culture after a visit to the 2003 Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK) in Oudtshoorn', *South African Theatre Journal*, 17.1, (2003) 258-275 (p. 275). Hauptfleisch postulates that festivals are 'poly-systemic', compared to the monolithic idea of the festival.
[106] Ranciere, Jacques., *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. by Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2011).

the ritual of Artaud or the Brechtian alienation. The result of this turn in terms of how we view genre, is that theatre and culture that is not explicitly political does not have to be a pandering or mollifying force, ideologically functioning within Adorno and Horkheimer's theory of the *Kulturindustrie*. Mass experience, at least in the form of the festival, is a valuable opportunity to citizens to band together, to view their culture and ideology played out on the stage in an intense period of performative and spectatorial activity. A critique of the commercialisation of theatre within neoliberalised, consumer societies, suggests that a modern festival spectator's outlook on what the festival is about is deeply affected by the economic context. Perhaps South Africa is saved from this quandary by being a unique case: many spectators remember apartheid and the counter-colonial struggle, and those who are 'born free' live in a society frustrated by continued inequality. These discursive trends shape the responses of the Grahamstown spectators; these individual perspectives are uneven and unpredictable - as Rancière's theory of the emancipated spectator explains - but the politicised character of South African life is such that texts like *The Snow Goose* may provide unconventional routes into discussing contemporary issues. Collocott, the director of *The Snow Goose*, recalls how the play's original run in the late 2000s was affected by its context:

> *Snow Goose* came out at a time when xenophobia was happening in Johannesburg […] So it was interesting, there were [these] themes, and when we got reviews…they were sort of reviewing the ostracisation of the hunchback to what was happening in South Africa, so everything is

> related to a political backdrop, it's not possible for it not to be, if the themes are connecting.[107]

Given the popularity of political theatre in South Africa's recent past, and the politicised nature of South African spectators, contemporary theatre need not be straightforwardly 'political' in its outlook in order to have political resonances. This is the crucial aspect of what, in the words of Jaques De Silva, and in the opinion of the other members of the KB Theatre collective, makes the shift to 'another phase' in South African theatre, away from the protest era, so sophisticated. At the tail end of the 1990s, Loren Kruger identified the milieu as being a 'post-anti-apartheid' drama; is the contemporary South African scene now post-apartheid in a way that goes beyond ideas of transition?[108] What is clear is that, as diverse as the milieu is, the variety of what constitutes legitimate, meaningful theatre is opening up the South African stage to neglected subjectivities. Staged representations of figures like the disabled Philip Rhayader, or the migratory Snow Goose, speak to contemporary issues of the political representation of marginalised individuals.

The current status of political theatre in South Africa is problematic, with figures like Mike van Graan seeing it as a living tradition with more to say; meanwhile its critics, like Zakes Mda, argue that the culture as a weapon tradition is a distraction from the new purposes and modes of theatre on the post-apartheid

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[107] Collocott, Appendix 1, p. 314-5.
[108] Kruger, Loren. *The drama of South Africa: Plays, pageants and publics since 1910* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 200.

stage.[109] But the legacy of figures like Fugard is such that theatre still has an 'aura' in South Africa, a social and political significance which transcends the commercial or state-funded reality. It is no wonder, then, that contemporary theatre strives to use the authentic history of radical theatre to give it meaning in a time of financial and cultural marginalisation. The Grahamstown festival stands as a shop window for local cultural production. The performance analysis of *The Snow Goose* above addressed it as a play that is not expressly political, but one that nevertheless embodies philosophical and social debates about xenophobia, difference and the relationship between different species.

> For me, I feel like in general that South African theatre has moved…to another phase. […] We were doing the very confrontational [work], [the] on the nose, 'this is what we are speaking about, we are upset about this, and this, and that'. And as a country, as theatre-makers, I feel like we are now looking for stories, we are now… looking for more poetry in the work, we don't want to just say 'Racism is bad, let's not do that anymore.' But we want to show someone's lived experience.[110]

The process of reading, gaining insights, from texts like *The Snow Goose* is an evolution from the plays of the anti-apartheid era that have endured today, and continue to be performed at the Grahamstown festival: plays like *The Island*, *Woza Albert!* and *Have You Seen Zandile*? A fear articulated in the 1990s was

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[109] See van Graan, Mike., 'From Protest Theatre to the Theatre of Conformity?', *South African Theatre Journal,* 20.1, (2006), 276-288; Mda, Zakes., 'Politics and the Theatre: Current Trends in South Africa', in *Theatre and Change in South Africa*, ed. by Geoffrey V. Davis and Anne Fuchs, (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 1996), pp. 193-218.
[110] De Silva, Appendix 1., p. 313.

that the focus on healing and reconciliation could lead to a kind of mass amnesia about the actual roots of the post-apartheid period; in this view, bystanders and perpetrators were not subjected to justice but were given a pardon by the culture of reconciliation. As compelling a concept as this is, there is no sign that this amnesia has affected theatre-makers themselves. Apartheid is the backdrop here, because South Africans:

> can't escape that apartheid happened, and so everything that we watch as South Africans is within that [backdrop]. So even watching *The Old Man and the Sea*, or *Snow Goose*, we're still South Africans, and we still have that experience.[111]

The prospect of commercialisation, the desire for popularity, the presence of international artists like the stand-up comedian Dylan Moran, can be worrying if these parts of the National Arts Festival threaten what makes South African theatre sophisticated and distinct. Presently, the era of struggle has created an all-important level of self-awareness. 'Popular' work on the Fringe like that of the KB Theatre Collective may not be part of a theatre of 'struggle' or the avant-garde. But the political ideas of giving voice, the teasing out of human (and non-human) relationships, and the exploration of personhood and subjectivities that can be mapped within these texts, are a testament to the vitality of the practice of theatre-making as telling stories.

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[111] De Silva, Appendix 1., p. 314.

The South African fringe, therefore, encompasses a wide spectrum of work. As Jaques De Silva argues, 'Everybody's here': representatives of the old school, agitational form of South African theatre; those who focus on storytelling as an activity unto itself, like the KB Theatre Collective; novice figures like students and young performers; and experimental artists who perform less easily definable work. The bustle of festival audiences can translate to a career outside of the 'eleven days of amazing' for those who wish it, or are lucky enough to see success. And luck can be read as a socio-economic context, a deterministic situation that challenges liberal democracy.[112]

[112] Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1971).

Conclusions

In my introduction to this thesis, I identify theatre-making as having a peculiar historical role in the resistance to apartheid and post-apartheid injustice. Prior to 1994, apartheid was at the centre of resistance theatre. Now, political theatre has shifted in the 'new' South Africa to mirror the decentralisation of oppression and inequality. Through this thesis, it is argued that South Africa's politicised culture is reflected in the conceptualisation of plays which, on face value, are apolitical. Even plays like *The Train Driver* and *Molora* (from Chapters One and Two), which follow in the tradition of hybrid and syncretic political theatre, address their political concerns on an individual level, rather than targeting specific legislation and an identifiable system of state oppression. Characters strive, in these plays, to come to terms with the realities of politics in their everyday experience. The society or situation depicted can be buried or historical (*The Abbess*), traumatic and haunted (*The Train Driver*), a dark satirisation of the post-apartheid ruling class (*MacBeki*), or pertaining to the possibility of transitional justice (*Molora*). Countervailing friendships play a role in depicting relationships which ameliorate or resist forms of silencing and marginalisation, between outsiders who have been marginalised (in South Africa, *London Road*; in the historical setting of *The Snow Goose*). The specificities of each play speaks to a contradiction within post-apartheid politics and culture. The satirisation of the Mbeki Presidency in *MacBeki*, for example, calls into question the motivations of those overseeing transformation and governance. The characters pursue power in a farcical political centre while citizens are dying on the margins because of the 'King's'

cowardly denial of their disease. As the play ends, the healthiness of the nation promises to improve, now that the denial has ended, but the same cast of characters remain in power. How democracy can function justly when elected leaders can make such judgments, retold through the lens of satire, is an example of the ambivalence felt within contemporary South African political theatre with regards to power and agency. Ending apartheid and holding democratic elections does not heal the traumas of the past (*Molora*), hold a corrupt government to account (*MacBeki*), guarantee the end of victimisation (*London Road* and *The Snow Goose*), or prevent inequality from deepening (*The Train Driver*). *The Abbess*, meanwhile, depicts the dilemma of whether resistance continues to be a legitimate response to the silencing of those in power.

Democracy is a strong theme throughout this thesis, as a postcolonial alternative to the politics of marginalisation or violence. Jacques Derrida's idea of the 'democracy to come', which continually returned throughout his later works on philosophy and politics, explains why democracy and transformation is something to strive for continually. Indeed, Derrida has provided a through line in this thesis in a fashion that was not, originally, planned. When the research began, the critical perspective was more Althusserian than Derridean. But as the patterns of deconstruction began to emerge in my readings, and as my definition of political theatre broadened in response to the theatrical practices that I researched in South Africa, I found my own method's politics broadening too. A key example of how my readings reflexively explored the implications of the structures I identified is that of friendship in *London Road*, where my research necessitated investigating the assumptions and tensions constructing a familiar concept, as applied to post-apartheid politics.

Overall, the appreciation of the complexity of contemporary South African theatre practice is key in a reflective sense; because as Fortier argues, 'Theory can be applied to theatre, but in the other direction, theatre speaks back to theory. This is especially so in theatre pieces that themselves enact or induce complex thinking.'[1] The reflexiveness of South African theatre, and the complex ways in which contexts provide explanation or points of resonance, speaks to Fortier's idea of a theatre that 'enact[s] […] complex thinking'.

Apartheid was a readily identifiable political structure, but, in the post-apartheid period, it is no longer possible to identify one ideologically coherent system. The 1996 South African constitution was written to create the basis of a democracy based on fairness and equality, but time and again the nature of the post-apartheid synthesis is put into question. This is the mood so prevalent in the 2000s, a state that has been described as the 'second-interregnum', perhaps in anticipation (or hope) of a wider revolution to come.[2] Through each chapter, I conclude how each text sheds light on a facet of the post-apartheid milieu. In Chapter Four my fieldwork, integrating ethnographic interviews with my own interpretive performance and scenographic analysis, was my own complex contextualisation of the National Arts Festival as a post-apartheid institution. The conceptualisation of each reading shifts with the changing contexts framing the plays' politics, which explains the appropriateness of Derrida's deconstructive methodology within my thesis. As I quote in my Introduction, Derrida argues that 'each text calls for, so to speak, another 'eye.''[3] My thesis speaks to debates within

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[1] Fortier, Mark., *Theory/Theatre: An Introduction*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 6.
[2] Blumberg, Marcia., 'Reconciling Acts', in *SA Lit: Beyond 2000*, ed. by Michael Chapman and Margaret Lenta (Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011), p. 139.
[3] Derrida, Jacques., *Points...: Interviews, 1974 - 1994*, ed. by Elisabeth Weber, trans. by Peggy Kamuf et al. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995)., p. 216.

South African theatre studies about the different forms, genres and types of theatre and performance that have emerged since 1994. Critics like Hutchison and Kruger have broadened their political analysis to explore how public events like Nelson Mandela's inauguration, or the 2010 FIFA World Cup, abound with implications about performativity, the construction of memory, and the enactment of social change. As scholars have sought to widen the scope beyond that suggested by the former analysis of protest theatre, I have concluded that the definition of political theatre should be transformed and deconstructed accordingly. The performativity of culture justifies the importance of framing theatre as a material practice which reflects and resonates with social, cultural and political specificities. The proliferation of arts festivals, for example, is evidence of the coalescing of enthusiasm for performance from both spectators and artists in the new South Africa.

The nostalgic reaffirming of the importance of past theatre is something to be reflected on. During the early 1990s, there was a sense felt by sceptics that the theatre had entered a period of crisis and transition.[4] The prominent political playwright Mike van Graan argued in 2006 that the preponderance of nostalgic theatrical revivals of plays written during the anti-apartheid period signalled a generation of practitioners who feel shackled by the past. Without apartheid to fight against, practitioners 'no longer knew what to make theatre about.'[5] As Loren Kruger

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[4] Purkey, Malcolm., '*Tooth and Nail*: Rethinking Form for the South African Theatre', in *Theatre and Change in South Africa*, ed. by Geoffrey V. Davis and Anne Fuchs (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 1996). See Purkey's discourse as an example: 'Can we move from a 'protest' to a 'post-protest' literature? Can our literature and theatre become *pro*active rather than *re*active?';
'How do we prepare to make a theatre that contributes to a post-apartheid society?';
'the way forward for the South African theatre lies with a theatre which remains issue-driven, but understands that the empty words of an anti-apartheid theatre no longer have resonance and power for audiences who have been exposed to this forty-year history, and are deeply immersed in the complex issues of transformation which the current political situation has thrust onto the agenda. [….] We are now faced with the complex task of what we want to fight for.' (p. 161).

[5] van Graan, Mike., 'From Protest Theatre to the Theatre of Conformity?', *South African Theatre Journal,* 20.1, (2006), p. 276.

argues, 'the past offers neither the definitive explanation for the present nor a refuge from it.'[6] While apartheid's legacy is important the historical exploration of the roots of the present cannot, in itself, provide insights into how that experience translates today. The post-apartheid South African theatrical milieu has developed a sense of its limits and abilities within the new constitution, not as a movement engaged against state opposition and censorship. My analysis of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island*, from Chapter One, for example, is situated in terms of the theoretical reading of spectrality and burial in two relatively understudied Fugard texts. The workshop plays could be critiqued as exemplifying the nostalgia for the anti-apartheid theatre. The implications of nostalgia for a form of theatre which has, at turns, been declared dead or newly relevant in might be either revived or more fully realized through the presentist readings that I offer in this thesis. Looking at the ways in which the wider canon of anti-apartheid theatre is conceptualised, performed and received in contemporary South Africa today comprise examples of material for further research.

At the outset of this project, there was an ambition to explore under-researched or underrepresented theatre. As it stands, approximately half of the thesis fulfils this ambition (although a figure like Farber is a question mark, when compared to figures like Uys and Fugard's celebrity). On reflection, analysing conventional texts and authors from new critical perspectives has its advantages, and there are pathways forward in this research to reconceptualise a wider range of 'canonical' voices. In any case, picking a direction either way would have produced a markedly different project, and I argue that there is a strength in

[6] Kruger, Loren. *The drama of South Africa: Plays, pageants and publics since 1910* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 195.

looking at both established and fresh theatrical makers. It is also true that the more recent careers of artists like Fugard and Uys attracts less attention than the plays that made them famous. Research considering a figure like Fugard, exploring the implications of nostalgia or celebrity within post-apartheid South African theatre, could consider how the selectiveness of restagings have shaped the contemporary scene. Further, more specific work on the level of genre and form in relation to authors like Uys, such as research into the role of humour and satire, could reconceptualise texts beyond the retelling of the biographies of artists.

There have been challenges to the analysis of plays in this thesis. In particular, the challenging of the hegemony of the authorial-text as the most authoritative object within theatre studies, as opposed to the focus on the collaborative practices that co-produce theatrical events. Having an awareness of these issues, and how they can, instead, represent the value of critical work is an important conclusion, and pointer to future work. The ethnography in Chapter Four, for example, provides the basis for critical work and discussion otherwise left to journalists; a play being published, especially by an international press, has a role in selecting what theatre 'travels' outside the boundaries of South Africa. Success at a festival, over several years, as with *The Snow Goose*, is no guarantor. There is further work and research to be done with regards to the institutional role of publishing in South African theatre. The publishing house Junkets, from Cape Town, which published *London Road* is one example of a possible subject for such research.

The reportage and perspectives represented by the ethnography and interviews in Chapter Four has implications with regard to the representation of

voices through scholarship. Interviews, up to now, have tended to focus on industry heavyweights, reinforcing the power and authority of those established perspectives. Analysing the scenography of South African plays, for example, as a means of exploring the collaborative, multivalent nature of theatre writing could be served by interviewing designers and scenographers. Further, interviewing well-established artists necessarily does not include the perspectives of those earlier in their careers. The use of internet-based technology, for example, could be used to widen participation in order to gain access to a broader base of contributors. Recording such perspectives in the moment can, also, be a historical exercise in the creation of further source material about contemporary theatre.

To conclude, the 2000s has seen the fragmenting and complication of the theatre scene on a conceptual and institutional level. Festivals now have the eminence previously bestowed on the destination theatres founded in the past, with examples such as the National Arts Festival and KKNK becoming as vital to the state of the industry as the Market and Baxter Theatres were to the anti-apartheid era. As my thesis demonstrates, there has been a crucial diversification of what constitutes political representation. Theatre-makers have been actively departing from the stereotypical backdrops replete within late-twentieth century South African drama; instead, these post-millennial plays have represented those marginalised voices, stories and contexts which perhaps did not fit into the polemical theatre of the past.[7] Kruger observed that the apartheid-era's 'testimonial theatre can be said to constitute a *virtual public sphere*, a site and a mode of counter-publicity where

[7] As Blumberg, (2011), argues, 'Marginalised voices form a vital part of the post-TRC theatrical fare', p. 140.

South Africa could be depicted as it could have been and might yet be, as well as where actual conditions might be critically represented […] at times when direct action was dangerous and impossible.'[8] The post-apartheid theatre's construction of a 'virtual public sphere' is demonstrated through the discursive transformation of politics discussed via the plays in this thesis, reaffirming the theatre as a site for the exploration of difference, conflict, resistance, power and relationships.

[8] Kruger (1999), p. 13.

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Appendix 1: Interview with KB Theatre Collective members

Edited transcript of interview with cast/crew of *Making Mandela* – 6/7/2015, Glennie Hall venue at the 2015 National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, Eastern Cape. Interview was pre-arranged with Jenine Collocott.

RC (researcher)

JC (Jenine Collocott, director, designer, co-writer)

MZ (Mlindeli Zondi, plays Mandela and Mandela's Father)

BM (Barileng Malebye, plays Mandela's Mother, Mathona, Paul and others)

JDS (Jaques de Silva, plays Thambo, Justice, and others, and Broeder [the monologuing representative of Afrikaner Nationalism])

[What was the first production you were in, and what was your role?]

RC:… yeah? So what made you do [*Weekend Special*]?

JC: I did it for my fourth year when I was studying, I was studying film actually, but it was there was a theatre there. And the biggest reason is that I am interested in telling stories *primarily*, so whether I was acting or writing or directing or whatever it is, and the point is that I was at film school, but you can make a play, you can't make a movie, so you can get together with your friends and make a play, and we just did that. We rehearsed in the parking lots of places and they felt sorry for us, and they let us go inside of like rec. centres – that's completely true! – and then we performed

it at schools, and eventually we brought it to the Grahamstown Festival, and that was my first play: *Weekend Special*.

…

RC: Would you say that's [a] typical…sort of entrance into theatre in this country?

JC: I don't know… yeah, I think a lot of people make their own work in order to break in. Because you actually can, you know, you can afford it…I think that's the, I say that, but it's very expensive, but you can get together with your friends and make a story, and…just make theatre. I would hesitate to say that is how everybody does it…

BM: It was in university… I was at Tshwane University of Technology, and that was the first time I was actually given lines, and got to be directed.

RC: So you were an actor?

BM: I was yeah, and that was the first time that I actually came to Grahamstown with that production. But a long time ago, still in grade school, I started, there's this foundation called the [Mawana?] Foundation, and I used to go there for extra-[curricular] activities… it was a way of trying to keep children busy, I was going there in grade one and grade two and doing drama…or performing arts…but my first actual piece was in University in my first year, and got to bring it to Grahamstown.

JDS: I was doing amateur drama musicals at high school. I suppose the first professional production I did was while I was at university here at Rhodes… and it was a dance piece with Acty Tang called *amaQueerKwere*… that was a piece of art [about] foreigners finding their place within the society and the space… [it was] a devised work… I was an actor/dancer.

RC: Would you say there is a difference between an actor and a dancer?

JDS: At Rhodes University, no. It's a different type of dance here, here we're telling stories, we're not making pretty pictures… which I have a pet hate against… [There's] a lot more modern stuff now where I feel like there's really beautiful stories, lovely poetry coming from dance. But yes that's what we trained to do here, at this University I think, more.

…

MZ: As a professional it was *Milk and Honey* by James Ngcobo, it was the time I was studying at The [Market Theatre] Lab, that was like my first professional production. Otherwise I did other things in high school, I wrote my own show…then I auditioned the monologues [from] it to… university, and that's how I got accepted, using my own monologues.

RC: … You're all sort of saying similar things about stories, and what I think is interesting about each of these plays that you directed here Jenine, where you've all starred in or been in various ways, is that they're not necessarily 'just' political plays, they are [literary and biographical] stories…. Would you say then that telling stories is your primary motivator?

JC: It really is. When I worked that out… well yes, telling stories is the most important thing. So much so that I don't actually *care* what my role is in it. Just for example, 2 years ago I had a clown show called *A Day in the Desert*, which I started with a German friend of mine. And I studied in Italy briefly, and she came out to Johannesburg… and I'm the only person who can be in it, because it's a clown show, so it's very specific to us, and then I did a little thing with Jaques, we did a *commedia dell'arte* thing on *Hamlet*, and there were too many people, and I just played Ophelia… and then I thought: 'why do I do this?' Because I really care about telling the story. So sort of writing and directing, acting… I would *never* call myself an actor, but I will do it, to further the cause, [laughs] to take the story forward. So really, ja, so I suppose when you look at it, it's all different, there's no, I don't think I have a pattern in the kind of story…

RC: Would you say you're motivated by telling stories, more than some kind of politics, or would you say that does motivate you as well?

MZ: Well I think the foundation for most people who are in the arts, or who are performers, who are writers, is telling stories! It's just taking, getting a message

across… that is what *I believe* as well, and obviously with different types of work maybe we get commissioned to do *whatever*, but there is a story: there is a beginning, middle and end, there's *a point* that you want to get across. And that is the basic, that is the foundation. Then your love for maybe… *projecting* your feelings about a specific topic, you are having a say putting your word out there, whatever it is that you want to say. But it actually is telling your story, and putting your point across.

JC: I was going to say, is that what is for me, specifically, is that it is taking the audience, allowing the audience to *dream*. And that was the thing about *Frankenstein*, that was the first play that did that to me; and the second one was a play called *Baobabs Don't Grow Here*, where I *forgot time*. Where time did no longer matter, and for me that's the most important thing, when you watch these actors on stage, are they 'on the stage' in Glennie Hall [the venue at NAF], with the Kalk Bay Collective, or, are we in Kunu, are we in the place that we are trying to, am I sitting on the scaffold, or do I forget that I am sitting on the scaffold? And for me that is, I think, what I really try to do. And of course, you know whatever, some people don't go, but for the people who do go with you, do they teleport, do they 'go' into your world? And I think that is true for the plays that I am doing, when you watch *The Snow Goose*, you are in that time and place…

RC: South-East England…

JC: You're there, you're really there. So it's about the space, transforming the space. Theatre happens in the mind of the audience, and can you manipulate them into

that space… can you bring them in? Which is why I don't make, I don't think I make very 'intellectual' work.

…

RC: what would you say is your motivation? [JDS]

JDS: Definitely story, also relationships! Relationships are so exciting for me, seeing two bodies, like, discover each other, and discover the space. And whether it is even just one [character], what is that performer's, that character's relationship with the space, relationship with the audience... That for me is theatre, ok cool, what is the relationship here? How do we uncover that?

RC: Would you say that's true for you too? [MZ]

MZ: I would like to say yes, too. My motivation is that when you put a production there it must have some kind of familiarity to people. The person, the vulnerability of the character goes out there, and someone can really relate to that. Goes like, 'this guy reminds me of my Uncle, or my Aunt'... even if they have never been in that place, they can understand exactly where you're coming from. And for me I think if the audience can go out with that, it's something else, you know.

RC: I would say that's relevant for *Making Mandela*, because that's what the play was about wasn't it, it was making Mandela as, you know, not as some superhuman, but –

JC: - just a normal guy! Just a kid! [laughs]

RC: Yeah, although I must admit when…you first hear the word 'Madiba' on stage, there's something about that you know!

JC: Of course!

RC: It's not just hearing 'Joe Bloggs'

[laughter]

JC: The play works because that little boy became Nelson Mandela! [laughs]

[What attracted you all to work on the productions that you're putting on here at the National Arts Festival?]

JC: … These were his two childhood loves [*The Snow Goose*, *The Old Man and the Sea*] that he wanted to turn into plays, and then gave me and therefore the team complete creative freedom… it was completely new to him [on opening performance]… *Making Mandela*… it was 2009 and I got funding from the National Arts Council. And it started with the puppeteer lady Alida van Deventer saying she wanted to make a puppet show about the history of South Africa. I thought that's a very broad subject, so I went home to my husband [Nick Warren] and [told him]… and he went 'wow that's a really broad subject, why don't you just do Nelson

Mandela?' And then [Alida] didn't want to do it anymore. But then somehow, something had started in me, I was like 'ok that could be interesting'. And it was a long time ago, before all the Mandela plays, it was 2009… and then when I started researching it I was only interested in the childhood. It happened organically, and then I had to resubmit to the NAC… and they were fine with it.

…

BM: [on *The Old Man and the Sea*] …Jenine asked me to join the team as a shadow puppeteer. And this is my first time actually doing that, so I had to learn on the job, yeah, of course I've seen shadow theatre, but it's *very* different from [laughs] this, it's literally, I don't know, it's two worlds, but it's the same thing...

RC: I found it interesting that you came out at the end [of *The Old Man*, for ovations], for the second ovation, because I was watching it and I was thinking 'is this shadow or is it film?'

BM: Oh, No…

RC: I actually love the fact that you were there, participating in it. That was a lovely touch actually because you could have filmed the work that you do.

JC: But somehow *it would be less*!

RC: It would be less!

JC: Why is that, it's just true?!

RC: I'd like to re-watch it and *know* that someone was there.

JC: My husband, Nick, who did the adaptation, always says 'why don't you film it, make your life so much easier', and I said 'it'd be *so much less*.' (laughs) It would be so much less! Shadow theatre must be *that*!

BM: Shadow theatre.

RC: And there is shadow theatre in *The Snow Goose* as well isn't there

JC: A little bit, evoking images, not necessarily… not the same level.

RC: …The thing is if you gave me a script of your play [*The Old Man*], you wouldn't be able to capture that shadow puppet part would you? But it's *so integral* to the experience.

…

RC: So what motivated you to be in *Making Mandela?* [JDS]

JDS: The opportunity to work with Jenine. We had played before… so any time, any play. She could have called the show *The Old Boot* and I'd have been in it

[laughter]

RC: So the opportunity to work with Jenine…what is it about working with Jenine that's so great?

JDS: … I'm not going to look at you [Jenine] when I say it [laughter]… she makes you a better actor, you're a better performer for having worked with her. Your understanding of your own craft and the space is multiplied and *increased*. Like we start with training, building a vocabulary, building the basics, and then she *nitpicks*, she digs, and she *finds* a performance out of you. Which is magnificent… It's a joy.

MZ: …I was taught by Jenine… [was cast and had to go through training] Which is something I found is so different from her, she doesn't just… throw you into some play, out there, you know, she gives you a bit of training, which is different from other directors, who just give you a script… It was the first time for me to play mask, and it was an opportunity to really grab hold of, so that's what made me keep going, and keep growing…

…

JC: What I try to do with everyone… it's also for them but it's also for me… is that I try to rehearse in two parts. And the first part is, sometimes we have a script sometimes we don't, like *Snow Goose* we didn't have a script, with these guys we did, *Old Man* we did, we're all just *in the space* doing character work, doing stuff so that we can find what the style is, as the group. I don't come with a preconceived… I know some things, like I'm going to use mask, whatever, and then we spend two weeks just picking a scene from anywhere in the play to see what… so then you

bring it down, and that can be quite difficult for some actors… it's interesting because at the same time there is a sense of lack of safety, because it demands that the actors bring themselves, and at the same time it's safety because you *can't get it wrong*. You actually can't, because we're just finding stuff, you can't fail… but at the same time *you have to bring the best of you*, and that can be scary and very exciting. I can see that, and at some point I have to say to the actors, just *trust me*, it's going to be ok, like, you know [laughs] some people just do it automatically but some people are a little bit more like 'what?'…

['ANOTHER PHASE']

JDS: For me, I feel like in general that South African theatre has moved…to another phase. Like we were doing the very confrontational, on the nose, 'this is what we are speaking about, we are upset about this, and this, and that'. And as a country, as theatre-makers, I feel like we are now looking for stories, we are now… looking for more poetry in the work, we don't want to just say 'Racism is bad, let's not do that anymore.' But we want to show someone's lived experience.

JC: Not necessarily lecturing, *ja*. And that for me was amazing because *Snow Goose* has just had a run in a mainstream theatre in Johannesburg, and for a mainstream theatre to take something that is a masked show is *very out there*… mainstream theatres really take mainstream [plays]; really I think *Snow Goose* is pretty mainstream, but by virtue of the fact it uses masks [that] makes it arty. And it did really, really well, and I think that speaks to what Jaques is talking about, that

people came, of course it's a classic so that too was very helpful, but then when they come they just watch a story and they are transported…. We are having a call-back, we're going there in December…because we did really well. And it was exciting, it's just storytelling, it's not…lecturing.

BM: It's not lecturing, it's not protest theatre…

[MZ leaves]

BM: Of course [it's moved to a different phase], I would [say so], because what I know, or what I came into was a phase of protest theatre. And, you know, '*apartheid this! Apartheid that!*', you know. And now it's about writing your own stories and telling stories in your *own way*. So, you don't need to stick to a specific sort of presentation or genre to say that you are bringing a production or you are staging a show, and if it's not that, it's 'not theatre', you know what I'm saying? So now it's about writing our own stories, it's about re-telling stories that have happened before and making them relevant to today.

JDS: But still you can't escape that *apartheid* happened, and so everything that we watch as South Africans is within that [backdrop]. So even watching *The Old Man and the Sea*, or *Snow Goose*, we're still South Africans, and we still have that experience. We don't need…sorry, I'm pointing at my nose.

JC: What was very interesting is *Snow Goose* came out at a time when xenophobia was happening in Johannesburg […] So it was interesting, there were themes, and when we got reviews…they were sort of reviewing the ostracisation of the

hunchback to what was happening in South Africa, so *everything* is related to a political backdrop, it's not possible for it not to be, if the themes are connecting.

[Apartheid now is more of a backdrop, not *the* subject?]

JC: For South Africans I think so, whether that's true for international [audiences], for the shows that still travel are probably still shows that deal with it more. But as South Africans I feel that we…*I feel*, and this is really my opinion, that we are wanting to move beyond it. Which is what I thought we were going to be struggling against with *Making Mandela*, 'oh for god's sake another play about…' and then it's not that, it's a play about a young boy, *of course* it's not *any boy*, and *of course* he's born into the system, which we know, but you don't have to be *told* that all the time. So when people realise that the play is a little bit un-politicised, hopefully they can enjoy it.

[BM leaves]

JC: Good masks do that [they are multi-layered]… [In theory,] they say, 'Does the mask *play*?', and that means, can a mask have many, many emotions? Because it's a fixed thing, and then you can make a mask that doesn't play, and then you can make a mask that plays. And if a mask doesn't play it has one emotion all the time, and a mask that plays can be disturbed, happy, sad, intrigued, angry, it can be all sorts of things. And yet *we know* that it's fixed. So it's very exciting for the audience to be able to see all of that emotion, because part of them *knows*, like puppetry, that the thing is not alive. So therefore the whole body and the voice, everything, brings

what is fixed [to life]… and so then the audience can *project*. That's what I think happens in mask… Full mask is just harder, harder for the actor, harder for the director, harder for the storyteller, it just takes *another level* of physicality.... Of course being able to have the voice is helpful, in terms of making differences, and finding the physicality, to have the voice is an added tool, a full mask you take away the voice, you've got to fill it with the…

JDS: …with the half mask, it's all poetry…

[Talking about the scene featuring the removal of the masks in *Making Mandela*]

JC: …How were we going to make the father die, that's where it came from. And then I had this idea, maybe he could take off the mask in front of the audience! And then we just tried it, and then it seemed to work! So it was an experiment…it's in the timing… [the image of the mask] coming off and then being 'buried', it suddenly becomes a puppet in a way. So because we'd done that, we needed this scene for *Making Mandela* to bring in all these influences that at that critical point, that turning point of his life… this journey that he's just been on, but it's completely with his culture, so it's very complex, so we really needed to bring out that complexity. I originally made the trees so that the masks would always be on stage and then they'd take them on and off the trees, and that didn't work, so we didn't do it, and then suddenly, it came late in the process…

JDS [Broeder]: …he was fun to discover, fun *to be*… [something Jenine noted was] No-one wants to watch your judgment of this character, then they can't project as

their own self, you just need to… breathe life as honestly as you can, and then let the audience interpret or read what is there.

JC: …what I'm saying is that all people at some point are also people. And that is important, I think, if you are an artist.

JDS: ...This is a conversation me and Jenine have also had before, is the idea that, for me, a lot of my shows wouldn't get into bigger spaces if they hadn't been seen here [in Grahamstown]. So spaces like the Market Theatre, spaces like the State, or the Civic, or the Baxter, they're all here scouting for work. So for me my first play that I brought myself in 2010 is an opportunity, it's a chance for anybody, it's a lottery now, *better than that*, it's like this big audition. Everybody's here, we're all on equal footing – kind of! – [laughs] and if I can somehow go to the Long Table [pop-up bar/restaurant] and convince someone from the Brighton Festival to come see my play, I could tour! There's an opportunity for my work, which we're mostly making without any money. The full mask work we did, *Butcher Brothers*, the three of us when we started making it were just three buddies working in a friend's, like, in his living room. Eating oats because we had nothing else. And eventually it was seen and it was taken to a theatre that had lots of runs and success, so festivals are *great* as a platform, as a way in. For young actors, for young theatre-makers, young storytellers, I think.

JC: … I think they're critical, these festivals, even though they can be traumatic at times, it's hard, as you can imagine, but it is totally critical. Because when I tell people, the moment I say I'm using shadow, and mask they think it's fringe, and it is fringe I suppose. But because of the response that happens and the reviews, because of the mainstream element ends up happening, in a festival environment people go 'what is this actually?' So suddenly this work that would *really* not be in a mainstream theatre is taken into… you get to build yourself a bit of an audience and a reputation, whatever, I don't know how else would you do it. How else?

JDS: Even the audiences that come see you in the big cities, have heard about you because of festivals!

JC: It's not disconnected, it's totally connected. And also festivals give you a deadline!... Very few theatres are commissioning work [now], so doing something for a festival gives you a deadline. Which is really important…

Appendix 2: Confirmation of Ethical Approval

Keele University

RESEARCH AND ENTERPRISE SERVICES

22nd May 2014

Robert Croton
30 Partridge Drive
Uttoxeter
ST14 8TY

Dear Robert,

Re: Post-apartheid contradictions: strategies in theatre and culture

Thank you for submitting your revised application for review. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved by the Ethics Review Panel. The following documents have been reviewed and approved by the panel as follows:

Document	Version	Date
Summary of Proposal	2	01/05/14
Letter of Invitation	2	01/05/14
Information Sheets	2	01/05/14
Consent Form	2	01/05/14
Consent Form for the use of quotes	2	01/05/14
Interview Questions/Topic Guide	2	01/05/14

If the fieldwork goes beyond the date stated in your application, you must notify the Ethical Review Panel via the ERP administrator at uso.erps@keele.ac.uk stating ERP2 in the subject line of the e-mail. If there are any other amendments to your study you must submit an 'application to amend study' form to the ERP administrator stating ERP2 in the subject line of the e-mail. This form is available via http://www.keele.ac.uk/researchsupport/researchethics/

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me via the ERP administrator on uso.erps@keele.ac.uk stating ERP2 in the subject line of the e-mail.

Yours sincerely

Dr Bernadette Bartlam
Chair – Ethical Review Panel

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