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**Workshop Theatre in South Africa in the 1980s:
A Critical Examination with specific reference to
Power, Orality and the Carnavalesque**

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to critically examine the form of theatre practice which in South Africa has become known as workshop theatre focussing on the period of the 1980s. It examines the history of the form; the process by which it is made; and the kinds of plays it produces. The examination is centered around three philosophical concepts: discourse and power as understood within post-structuralist critical theory; orality and the oral tradition; and the carnivalesque as it is conceived of in the writing of Mikhail Bakhtin.

Chapter One is a general introduction to the dissertation. In Part I of the study, it is argued that workshop theatre forms part of a power struggle within the field of theatre practice in South Africa because it is essentially an oral form. Chapter Two describes the rise of authorship within the European theatre practice in the seventeenth century resulting in the marginalisation of the improvisatory 'carnival' tradition, and suggests that it was this literary tradition of theatre practice that was imported to South Africa as part of the British colonial project. Chapter Three examines the indigenous oral performance forms that pre-existed the arrival of the literary theatre in southern Africa with particular reference to the Nguni oral narrative. Similarities are indicated between these oral forms of performance and the carnivalesque forms of the European tradition. Chapter Four traces the gradual involvement of members of the non-hegemonic group in theatre practice in South Africa from a predominantly literary practice limited to a select few participants to oppositional practice involving larger numbers across a wide range of social contexts. It is argued that workshop theatre facilitated this movement because it is an essentially oral form and incorporates popular carnival elements first introduced in the theatre of Gibson Kente.

In Part II of the study it is argued that workshop theatre is itself a site of numerous power struggles. Chapter Five examines the workshop process with specific reference to the role of improvisation. It is argued that improvisation potentially frees the performer to participate in the meaning-making process but that the extent of this participation is limited by struggles for power within the workshop group. Chapter Six examines the product of the workshop. It is argued that there is a dominant form of workshop play produced in the 1980s and that this form displays many oral and carnivalesque elements. It is further argued that there are movements away from this dominant form towards more literary forms and styles as a result of changes in the make-up of the workshop group and its relationships of power.

In Chapter Seven the conclusion is drawn that workshop theatre reflects the current struggles within the South African social and political body, and that it continues to be a relevant form of theatre practice in South Africa because it diffuses strong centres of authorial power and presents possibilities for radical participatory democracy.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE DISSERTATION

ANC	African National Congress
AWOL	Absent without leave
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CWLP	Culture and Working Life Project
ELP	English Literacy Project
FOSATU	Federation of South African Trade Unions
JATCO	Junction Avenue Theatre Company
MAWU	Metal and Allied Workers Union
PAC	Pan African Congress
PET	People's Experimental Theatre
SACP	South African Communist Party

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In an article published in Yale Theatre in 1976, Robert Kavanagh, writing as Mshengu,¹ observed that despite having few outstanding playwrights:

South Africa...has many gifted corporate playwrights - a group of actors and a director who draw on combined memories and insights of the South African experience to improvise plays of shattering force, subtlety and eloquence.

(Kavanagh, 1976, p 44)

What he is describing is the form of theatre practice which, in South Africa, has become known as workshop theatre.

Workshop theatre can be defined as the creation of a new play through a group playmaking process as opposed to the writing of a new play by an individual playwright in isolation. It foregrounds collectivity and physical making as opposed to individuality and writing. Workshop theatre represents a major 'paradigm shift' in South African theatre practice in that it fundamentally alters the model used by theatre practitioners for the creation of performances (Hauptfleisch, 1988, p36).

Although the emergence of the form can be traced back to as early as 1957, and particularly to the period of the early 1970s, it was in the period post-1976 that workshop theatre became firmly established as part of theatre practice in South Africa. Workshop theatre has become particularly popular amongst those opposed to the system of Apartheid. In the 1980s a large number of new South African plays were created in workshop in a variety of contexts. Workshop theatre has been practiced in the professional theatre arena and at community level, in the Trade Union movement, and within the structures of oppositional political organisations. Workshop plays created during this period have been

enthusiastically received by audiences in South Africa despite often uncertain critical reception from commercial theatre reviewers. Many workshop plays have also travelled abroad to international theatre festivals where they have received much acclaim.

The notion of collective theatre making is not unique to South Africa. It is practiced by mainly politically motivated theatre practitioners in Europe, North America, Latin America, Asia and in other parts of Africa. In the third world context it often forms part of the practice of people's education and theatre-for-development as expounded by writers such as Paulo Freire (1972) and Augusto Boal (1979). As one commentator remarks with regard to the central and southern American context:

...in accordance to strong and renewed popular demands for democratization, new artistic tendencies have tended with varying degrees of success, to the collective creation of works conceived as the product of the material and cultural conditions of each society, not the exceptional fruit of an individual genius.

(Frischmann, 1982, p 112)

This applies equally to other parts of the world. In France, the collective Le Théâtre du Soleil, led by Ariane Mnouchkine is at the forefront of a number of groups (for example Théâtre de la Salamandre; Le Folidrome) engaged in collective playmaking, particularly in the period post-May 1968. Mnouchkine explained the group's decision to work collectively in an interview with Irving Wardle in 1972:

For us its better to work communally. A real collective work is based on the richest possibility for everybody to create....Since we started doing this work we have changed. I'm sure we haven't changed anything in the world, but we have changed something in

ourselves, and that is our main concern for the moment because it is our only power.

(Mnouchkine, 1972, p 137)

In England, most collective playmaking goes back to Joan Littlewood and her Theatre Workshop which grew out of early English political theatre groups like Unity Theatre. Today Mike Leigh creates plays for the theatre and for television together with groups of actors, and companies like Joint Stock, Hull Truck, Théâtre de Complicité and Shared Experience have created their own works collectively. In America, El Teatro Campesino and the San Francisco Mime Troupe are just two of the better known companies who create theatre by collaborative methods.

The present study is a critical examination of workshop theatre in South Africa in the period of the 1980s. It focuses on the form of workshop theatre and on the relationship of this form to theatre practice in South Africa in general. It does not examine the content of workshop plays in any detail. It is not what the plays say that is examined in this study but how they say it (style and shape of performance) and how they come by what they say (process of creative production). On one level the study examines the history of the form; the process by which workshop theatre is made; and the kinds of workshop plays that have been produced in workshop during the 1980s. On another level the study critically evaluates these aspects of workshop theatre with reference to the three interrelated concepts of power and discourse as understood within post-structuralist critical theory, orality and the oral tradition, and the carnivalesque.

Part I is concerned with the power struggle within theatre practice in South Africa between the dominant form of practice which is literary, and workshop theatre, an oppositional form as a result of its essential orality. Chapter Two

examines the rise of authorship in European theatre practice in the seventeenth century and the resulting marginalisation of the improvisatory 'carnival' tradition. Chapter Three examines the indigenous oral performance forms that pre-existed the arrival of the Western theatre in southern Africa with specific reference to Nguni storytelling forms. Similarities are indicated between these oral forms of performance and the marginalised carnivalesque forms of the Western theatre. Chapter Four examines the emergence of workshop theatre in South Africa as an oppositional practice in relation to the dominant literary tradition, the oral and carnivalesque performance traditions, and social and political developments in South Africa.

Part II deals with workshop theatre in South Africa as a site of a plurality of power struggles between various different interest groups analogous to power struggles operating in South African society as a whole. Chapter Five examines the process of making workshop plays focussing on improvisation as a physical and oral mode of composition, and how power struggles in the workshop group affect the creation of meaning. Chapter Six examines the form of workshop plays in South Africa in the 1980s and argues that there exists a dominant form, closely related to the Nguni oral tradition and the European carnivalesque, and that deviations from this dominant form towards a more literary form are a result of power struggles within the workshop group. Chapter Seven draws conclusions from Parts I and II.

I would now like to discuss the notions of power and discourse as they are to be understood in terms of the present study.

The notion of discourse first emerged within socio-linguistics to refer to 'a continuous stretch of language larger than a sentence' (Crystal, 1980, p114). Its meaning and application was extended in post-structuralist theory to refer to the

complex of signs and statements that organises social existence and social reproduction. Weeks (1988) defines discourse as:

...a linguistic unity or group of statements which constitutes and delimits a particular area of concern, governed by its own rules of formation and its own modes of distinguishing truth from reality.

(p 1)

From this perspective, therefore, a discourse determines what activities constitute a particular practice or area of concern, and how such activities are to be realised.

Now, discourses are implicated in relations of power in which individuals take up different subject positions. When an individual or a group cannot find a subject position for themselves within a particular discourse, they may be silenced, or they may attempt to contest or challenge the dominant discourse (Peirce, 1989, p405).

Theatre practice in South Africa and its authorising discourse are implicated in a network of power relations: in the rehearsal room, the performance space, the community and the society at large. This constitutes a vast plurality of power as Roland Barthes describes it in his inaugural lecture as Professor of Literary Semiology at the College de France:

...everywhere, on all sides, leaders, massive or minute organisations, pressure groups or oppression groups, everywhere authorized voices which authorize themselves to utter the discourse of all power: the discourse of arrogance. We discover then that power is present in the most delicate mechanisms of social exchange: not only in the State, in classes, in groups, but even in fashion, public opinion, entertainment, sports, news, family and private relations, and even in the liberating impulses which attempt to counteract it.

(Barthes, 1979, p 32)

Interestingly enough, it was Michel Foucault who presented the chair and its occupant to the Assembly of Professors of the College (Barthes, 1979, p32). In an

article published in Critical Inquiry, Foucault (1982) outlines what he terms the 'specific nature of power' (p788). For Foucault power is firstly a relationship between partners, individual or collective, and secondly the way in which certain actions modify others. Power exists only when it is put into action. What this means is that:

...something called Power, with or without a capital letter, which is assumed to exist universally in a concentrated or diffuse form, does not exist.

(Foucault, 1982, p 788)

He goes on to add that power is not simply an action that acts upon others directly or immediately but an action that acts on the actions of others which exist or will come into existence in the present or the future. Power is basically a question of government. This is a definition of government in the broad sense of the sixteenth century: the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed. To govern in this sense is to structure the possible field of actions of others.

For Foucault it is important to note that a degree of freedom is required within a power relationship:

Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free...individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse components, may be realized. Where the determining factors saturate the whole, there is no relationship of power; slavery is not a power relationship when man (sic) is in chains.... Consequently, there is no face-to-face confrontation of power and freedom, which are mutually exclusive, ...but a much more complicated interplay.

(Foucault, 1982, p 790)

Foucault describes the power relationship as an 'agonism', from the Greek word for combat, denoting a physical contest in which the opponents develop a strategy of reaction and of mutual taunting, as in a wrestling match (p790). It is a relationship of struggle in which neither party is rendered wholly impotent and in which both parties are engaged in a state of permanent provocation:

Every power relationship implies, at least in potentia, a strategy of struggle, in which the two forces are not super-imposed, do not lose their specific nature, or do not finally become confused. Each constitutes for the other a kind of permanent limit, a point of possible reversal. A relationship of confrontation reaches its term, its final moment (and the victory of one of the two adversaries) when stable mechanisms replace the free play of antagonistic reactions.

(Foucault, 1982, p 794)

What this means is that the more dynamic the agonistic relationship between opposing forces is, the less stable the mechanisms of power. Conversely, the more stable the structure of a power relationship between opposing forces becomes over time, the more powerful does one of the forces become. If this stable structure comes to be accepted by both forces over time, a relationship of domination sets in.

In the light of the above I would like to propose two things in the present study:

1. Workshop theatre is one element of a power relationship within the field of theatre practice in South Africa. This is a function of its essential orality.
2. Workshop theatre is a site of power struggle between a range of interest groups. This power struggle is often reflected in the meaning and form of what is produced in the workshop and analogous to power struggles operating in the society as a

whole.

I will deal with the first proposal in Part I of the study and with the second in Part II.

Before proceeding to the study itself, I would like to note a certain tension of which, as a practitioner involved in the making of workshop theatre, I am acutely aware. Workshop theatre is not a 'formed-whole' finished and fixed in time.² It is a contemporary formation in which theatre practitioners are still actively engaged and which continues to change and develop in relation to changing realities and as practitioners continue to explore new boundaries. Workshop theatre is most alive and exciting, most dangerous, when it is least defined, least institutionalised.

Writing a dissertation on workshop theatre in a University context runs the risk of submitting it to the power of the institution, of legitimating the practice by reducing it to a body of rules and assumptions which come to constitute the science of the process far removed from the real context in which the practice operates. In short it runs the risk of subjecting the practice to a discourse which delimits it. Of this we must remain aware as we proceed.

PART I

CHAPTER TWO

EUROPEAN THEATRE AND THE CARNIVALESQUE

Most surveys of the history of the Western Eurocentric tradition of theatre practice, as given in various drama courses at universities around South Africa, follow a path from ancient Greece, Rome, church morality plays of the middle-ages, to the Renaissance and then on through the Restoration period to Victorian melodrama, the naturalism of Strindberg, Ibsen and Chekhov and on to the modern theatre of Beckett, Brecht, Ionesco etc. Occasionally a performance form like the commedia dell'arte will be included alongside Renaissance literary theatre.

The theatre included in such surveys is:

- (i) a literary theatre comprising published plays written, in most cases, by a single individual;
- (ii) a theatre performed in formal, designated theatre spaces; and
- (iii) a theatre connected to the dominant power bloc in each period.¹

Such surveys selectively exclude the fact that preceding the literary theatre and existing alongside it in each period is a second tradition which for my purposes I will term the carnival tradition. In fact in Europe this tradition has only been afforded serious attention in the last fifty years and any degree of respectability in the less distant past (Lecoq, 1987, p31).

In contrast to the literary theatre the carnival tradition is:

- (i) a theatre that belonged to an oral tradition both in the sense that it was passed on from one person or group to another, and in the sense that performances were not based on a written text in the majority of cases;
- (ii) a theatre that used improvisation to a great degree;
- (iii) a theatre performed outside of designated theatre spaces; and
- (iv) a theatre of the popular classes in each period.²

It is my contention that the exclusion of the carnival tradition contributes towards a false teleology operating within theatre practice, an attempt at moulding historical detail to authorise and delimit contemporary practice.

I will look at the co-existence of these two traditions in relation to three historical periods: ancient Greece, the Middle-Ages and the Renaissance.

The literary theatre of ancient Greece, with the plays of great poets like Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes, performed as part of the organised drama festivals in front of massive audiences in the amphitheatres, was not introduced into a theatrical vacuum. Numerous performance forms which display the characteristics of the carnival tradition as described above existed long before the literary theatre became established. One of the most important of these forms was known as the Dorian mime and originated in the town of Megara. The Dorian mime was performed by companies of masked actors called the deikeliktai who performed farces on everyday subjects as well as burlesques of the

sacred events. According to Frost and Yarrow :

They were also known, most significantly, as autokabdaloj, which means 'buffoons' and 'improvisers'. Their performances probably included obscenities, acrobatics, juggling. At the heart of the performance lay both the burlesqueing - the relativising - of sacred myth, and the celebration of the human body.

(1990, p 6)

Hauser (1951) suggests that the origin of the Greek mime is almost prehistoric and is 'directly connected with the symbolic magical dances, vegetation rites, hunting magic, and the cult of the dead' (p86). According to Hauser the mime was the true 'people's theatre' of ancient times:

Here at last we have to do with an art which has been created not merely for the people but also in a sense by the people. Mimers may have been professional actors, but they remained popular and had nothing to do with the educated elite, at least until the mime came into fashion. They came from the people, shared their taste, and drew upon their common sense.

(1951, p 86)

It is not clear whether the improvised performance forms such as the mime died away completely as the literary forms became more and more established or as these carnival forms were appropriated into the formal drama festivals, or whether they continued to be practised as a separate stream of performance in a space independent of the 'official' theatre. What is clear is that at a certain juncture there occurred a major discontinuity in the field of performance in Greek society. The literary drama established itself in radical fashion over and above the older improvisatory performance forms.

Many reasons have been suggested for this. In the Poetics, Aristotle acknowledges the historical primacy of the improviser over the tragic poet but in

his view the movement from improvisation to poetry was a natural development from a low form of theatre to a higher form.³

For Hauser and for later critics like Augusto Boal (1979) and Derrick de Kerckhove (1987), there was nothing 'natural' about the way the literary theatre came to be the 'official' theatre of ancient Greece at the improvised theatre's expense. For Hauser, the literary theatre was designed to serve the interests of the ruling elite who 'governed in the name of the people, but in the spirit of nobility' (p83):

In its festival theatre the Polis possessed its most valuable instrument of propaganda and certainly would not think of letting a poet do what he liked with it. The tragedians are in fact state-bursars and state-purveyors - the state pays them for the plays that are performed, but naturally does not allow pieces to be performed that would run counter to its policy or the interests of the governing classes. The tragedies are frankly tendentious and do not pretend to be otherwise.

(1951, p 87)

For Boal the form of Greek tragedy was coercive in that it divided up the body of society separating the spectator from the action; the protagonist (aristocrat) from the chorus. The spectators are reduced to a passive role and through a process of empathy and catharsis all their aggressive tendencies are purged. The Aristotelian system for Boal was designed to:

...diminish, placate, satisfy, eliminate all that can break the balance - all, including the revolutionary transforming impetus...to bridle the individual, to adjust him (sic) to what pre-exists.

(1979, p 47)

Derrick de Kerckhove (1987) agrees that the literary theatre served a coercive function for the Greek state but he suggests that it was introduced to achieve a

specific objective. He argues that the Greek literary theatre was introduced into Greek society as a means of training the basically oral population in literary cognition at the time when the alphabet was first being introduced to Greek society. His basic argument is that writing removes speech from the body, reading returns it not to the body but to the mind. The theatre also returns speech to the mind but through the intermediary stage of the audience's sensory values to facilitate the ordering and interpretation of abstract meanings. Theatre was therefore devised as a 'half-way house' between the exclusively oral and the fully literate psychology (p11). De Kerckhove lists four major effects of the introduction of theatre to Greek society:

1. The theatre trained spectators to use their eyes for concentrated, aimed and sustained attention.
2. The theatrical process separated the spectators from the action.
3. The model of the objective, neutral, and containing space of the stage was integrated by the spectators as a technique of consciousness.
4. Causal relationships demonstrated in full regalia on the stage taught the spectators to organise information in causal relationships for their own purposes.

(1987, pp 11-12)

The literary theatre was, therefore, a means of facilitating the cognitive changes demanded by the introduction of literacy into Greek society, a process in itself not an 'innocent, value-free option' (p2).

As we leave the Greeks and begin to trace the development of Western theatre further, what becomes clear is that the two essentially different modes of performance continue to exist through different periods. In the Middle-Ages when the church was the dominant power bloc, the formal theatre form was the morality

or 'mystery' play. It was a literary form, practiced within the confines of the church and it served a coercive function for the church. Dario Fo (1988) tells us at the beginning of *MISTERO BUFFO* that a mystery means 'a play, a religious representation, a performance...a religious performance'. On the other hand various festivals or carnivals held during the year were the stages for the 'common' people to perform in spectacles whose basic aesthetic function was transformation. They aimed to turn the world and its rigid social structure upside down. Fo calls these the 'comic mysteries'. He describes them as 'a grotesque performance...invented by the people' (p1). These performances were certainly not literary. What was spoken was improvised. They were rituals of transgression and were deeply rooted in the human body.

THE CARNIVALESQUE

At this point I would like to expand on the theme of carnival by briefly exploring the notion of the carnivalesque as developed by Bakhtin (1968) in relation to the writing of Rabelais. The carnivalesque is both a description of a particular social practice: the carnival of the middle-ages, and a broader theory of otherness and transgression, embodying the potential for change, which transcends time and place. The carnival is the people's culture and it represents for Bakhtin the 'second life' of the people outside and opposed to the official culture. On the one hand the images and symbols of the official culture evoke stability and unchangeability as they reflect the existing hierarchy of society with its religious, political and moral values, norms and prohibitions. It is 'the triumph of a truth already established' (p9) predominant, eternal and indisputable. Its tone is serious, its forms finished, polished and complete. On the other hand, the carnival is based on laughter, a laughter that frees it from anything official. Its images are

of transformation, of change and renewal. It seeks to make all prevailing truth, all prevailing authority relative and multiple. The logic of carnival is of turning everything upside down and inside out. All that is high must be degraded and materialised. The tone of carnival is humorous, its forms ugly, hideous and incomplete, blurring at the edges, disintegrating or just coming into being.

Stallybrass and White (1986) summarise the elements of the carnivalesque according to Bakhtin as comprising:

1. Socially diverse speech types ('heteroglossia')

The carnival foregrounds common speech, speech of the streets, bawdy and billingsgate, oaths and curses, rough and incomplete speech.

The 'coarse' and familiar speech of the fair and the marketplace provided a complex vital repertoire of speech patterns excluded from official discourse which could be used for parody, subversive humour and inversion.

(Stallybrass & White, 1986, p 8)

2. Grotesque realism

Carnival uses the material body in grotesque forms to represent, subvert and parody aspects of the society and the world. This has social aspects, topographical aspects, cosmic and linguistic aspects.

Grotesque realism images the human body as multiple, bulging, over- or under-sized, protuberant and incomplete. The openings and orifices of the carnival body are emphasised, not its closure and finish. It is an image of impure corporeal bulk with its orifices (mouth, flared nostrils, anus) yawning wide and its lower regions (belly, legs, feet, buttocks and genitals) given priority over its upper regions (head spirit, reason).

(Stallybrass & White, 1986, p 9)

Grotesque realism has its own logic which can unsettle 'given' social positions and interrogate the rules of inclusion, exclusion and domination which structure the social body.

3. Collective practice

Carnival focuses not on the isolated individual but on the collective body. People do not watch carnival as much as participate in it. Performances which are part of the carnival are an active engagement between the performers and the seething masses of the carnival. As Bakhtin writes:

...carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators....
Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people.

(Bakhtin, 1968, p 7)

4. Space

Carnival occupies an extraterritorial space outside the control of accepted authority. Both in the practical sense of being outside of any official and controlling buildings and in the more abstract sense of being a popular space as opposed to a hegemonic space.

... in the open, extraterritorial space of the marketplace, 'outside' of the official local hierarchy and its languages and 'within' the popular festive body: it is the grotesque body at home with itself, evading the social constraints of the public building (the Church, the law-court) and the private house.

(Stallybrass & White, 1986, p 28)

5. Carnival as dialogical

Above all, for Bakhtin, the carnival is dialogical. This is not simply a dialogue as opposed to a monologue. It is a double-voiced play of open-ended possibilities. It is founded on ambivalence, ambiguity and polyvalent imagery; on the complex inter-play of opposites.

The discourse of carnival knows no neutral terms: caught up in ambivalent evaluations of praise and abuse, marked by shifting dualities of tone, it is always speech received back from the other to whom it was addressed in the first place. Discourse is thus released from univocal constraints into the comedy of change and collectivity, the subject caught up in a pleasurable play of shifting solidarity with others.

(Eagleton, 1981, pp 149-150)

The carnivalesque operates in a contestatory role against the dominant ideology which sets the terms of high and low, included and excluded. It is concerned with struggle, transformation, inversion, turning the world upside down. It denies the demand of the dominant that critique be made in the language of reason and seriousness preferring instead to attack in the language of grotesque laughter.

This does not mean to say that carnival is always revolutionary. On the contrary most manifestations of the carnivalesque are licensed, allowed to exist as a release valve for tension in the society. As such it actually operates to legitimate the pre-determined social norms and positions designated by those that dominate. But what is important to note is that the carnivalesque embodies the potential for revolution. For long periods 'the carnival may be a stable and cyclical ritual with no noticeable politically transformative effect' but when the conditions are right, when the political antagonism has reached a certain level in the society, the

carnival may act as both catalyst for and site of revolutionary change (Stallybrass & White, 1986, p14).⁴

What I am attempting to show is that the two traditions in each period are engaged in a relationship of power with each other. In the Greek period the literary theatre seems to gain the ascendancy, coupled as it is with the hegemonic group, and once this ascendant position has been achieved the power structure becomes quite stable although it is difficult to know with any certainty what happens to the carnival performance forms during this period. In the middle-ages this relationship continues with the literary theatre still holding the ascendant position and allowing the carnival tradition to exist in its own sphere. Within this sphere, the carnival tradition embodies the potential to raise the level of dynamism within the power relationship by linking real political antagonism with transgressive forms of representation. Despite this ever-present potential, and perhaps certain isolated cases of actual revolt, the power relationship remains reasonably stable throughout this period. It is the period of the Renaissance, particularly the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, in which a significant change occurs within the power relationship, one which I believe has had a significant effect on theatre practice in South Africa.

In the Renaissance period the formal, literary theatre was that performed for the monarch and the court. It derived directly from Aristotelian tragedy both on a formal level as a literary form, and in that it upheld the structure of society and the divine right of the King and the ruling class. On the other end of the spectrum the fair and the fairground replaced the carnival as the site of the carnivalesque tradition in the Renaissance period. It was both a setting for manifestations of the carnivalesque and in itself a carnival experience for the populace. The fair was on the one hand a site of commerce, a site of barter and trade, and as such it drew the

emergent bourgeois class as well as the popular mass. On the other hand the fair was a stage, an arena for performances of a variety of kinds. A description of the Kermis at The Hague in the seventeenth century by Schama (1979) gives a good feel for the variety of activities to be found at the fairground:

Soothsayers and clairvoyants would usurp the prophetic roles of the preacher; actors would, literally, make a mummery of historical heroes and contemporary pretensions, quacks and alchemists would take the place of the physicians, and pedlars and hawkers that of the guildsmen. Its stables were dwellings for those who had no fixed abode, no claims on 'Burgerschap' (residential citizenship): gypsies, transient musicians and tumblers; exotics of doubtful origin; freed slaves with hair-raising tales of Turkish barbarity; and the ultimate parody of the 'normal' - freaks midgets and giants.

(p 119)

The fair was also an 'outside' space; an extraterritorial popular space free of the usual authorities. It was a collective space, a site for intense community struggle and interaction. It was the crossroads of popular and bourgeois, the meeting point of peoples of differing nationalities, and of the professional performer with the bourgeois observer.

At the fairgrounds, troupes of performers were engaged in an informal theatre which spoke directly to the basically non-literate masses and which was again transformative in nature. One such style of improvised performance is often referred to as commedia dell'arte. According to Tony Mitchell (1984) Dario Fo distinguishes between the guillare which is the Italian equivalent of the French jongleur or the Spanish juglare who 'busked and performed to the peasants of Europe, frequently on the run from persecution by the authorities' (p11) and the commici dell'arte who are regarded by Fo as the professional court jesters officially recognised by the ruling classes. According to Frost and Yarrow, Meyerhold was greatly influenced by the similar tradition of the Russian

skomorokhi (Russian equivalent of the jongleur) and balaganschik (fairground-booth player) (1990, p19). In an article entitled 'The Fairground Booth' written in 1913, Meyerhold refers to the figure of the cabotin:

...a strolling player; the cabotin is a kinsman to the mime, the histrion, and the juggler; the cabotin keeps alive the tradition of the true art of acting.

(Meyerhold, 1913, p 122)

Such performance forms were essentially body based forms, with movement, mime and the transformation of the body into grotesque shapes being a major component. They were not written and an essential feature of these forms was improvisation.

Now between these two extremes lay the public theatres which arose particularly in the late sixteenth century. They were frequented by a cross section of the population and housed both carnival attractions abstracted from the fairground, such as bear-baiting, and performances of plays which were later to be performed for the monarch and the court.

There can be no arguing that plays of dramatists such as Shakespeare are firmly within the literary tradition. Yet in some ways they seem to straddle both traditions in that there exists some degree of incorporation of the carnivalesque into an overall literary setting which in itself serves some coercive function for the state. As Leonard Tennenhouse (1986) demonstrates it is the Petrarchan tradition of courtly writing that authorised the exclusory political body of the Elizabethan state. So while on the one hand Shakespeare's drama, couched to some degree in this tradition (which he does satirise to an extent particularly in the earlier plays), must be seen as 'a forum for staging symbolic shows of state power and as a vehicle for disseminating court ideology' (p39), on the other hand, his

representation of the social body encompasses a much broader social range than that which the writers of the courtly tradition were willing to countenance. And although this does make the political body seem more flexible and inclusive and less rigidly exclusive, it has its limitations in Shakespeare. As Tennenhouse puts it:

Rather than splitting the social world into the community of blood and that of the people, Shakespeare uses the comic stage to represent a more coherent and compatible social reality....[T]he power of inversion and the language of bawdy...assault the aristocratic constraints that make the welfare of the state one and the same as the welfare of the aristocratic community. Even so, Shakespeare stops short of blurring the distinctions between the two social bodies. They remain distinct and separate.

(Tennenhouse, 1986, p 43)

Examples of this limited use of the carnivalesque in Shakespeare's Elizabethan comedies are the romantic heroines who change sex, disguise themselves and use the language and behaviour of the lower classes in their pursuits, and characters such as Bottom in *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM* who is not merely a representative of the excluded classes but who transforms in true carnival fashion into an ass - an image of the grotesque body.

In the history plays Shakespeare makes similar use of the carnival figure as a representative of an alternative form of power. A character like Falstaff in the Henry plays represents according to Tennenhouse a source of power contrary to that power inhering in genealogy. But:

...the various confrontations between licit and illicit authority comprising the Henriad more firmly draw the distinction between aristocracy and populace even as they appear to overturn this primary categorical distinction.

(Tennenhouse, 1986, p 84)

In the character of Hal, the later Henry V, the energy of the populace ultimately authorises the state as the state appears to take on the vigour of the carnival.

Shakespeare does not become carnivalesque. His works remain firmly rooted in literariness. But by incorporating elements of the carnival tradition into his literary works he is in a sense reactivating the power relationship between the two and in his case the literary always comes out on top.

In the late sixteenth century a significant polemic aimed at the abolition of the public playhouses emerged. Michael Bristol (1985) discusses this polemic in some detail. He sees it as 'part of a larger program to restore the structure of authority by subjecting popular culture to vigilant surveillance and coercive restraint' (p117). He summaries the attack on playing by one such writer, Phillip Stubbs, in the Anatomie of Abuses (1583):

Mimicry, disguise and the dispersion of authority have become pervasive; discriminations of rank, of status and even of gender become unintelligible.... There is a 'lawful' form of ceremonial pageantry and theatrical display, which, like 'gorgeous attire', are permitted - in fact required - as signs of excellence and superiority. But plays and interludes become an abuse insofar as they are produced by the 'inferior sort' as the expression of their own knowledge of social and spiritual life.

(Bristol, 1985, p 115)

It is important to note that at the time of Stubbs' antitheatrical polemic, there was much theatrical activity but relatively little dramatic literature. The attacks were not aimed at texts but at players who were 'the immediate creators of their performances and interludes' (p117). In the late sixteenth century the majority of performances were still of the improvisatory type.

One of the interesting antitheatrical texts Kind-Hartes Dreame by Henrie Chettle (1592) depicts Tarlton, an exemplary improvisatory performer, returning

from the dead to admonish the players and denounce the 'unprofitable recreation of Stage playeing':

Fie uppon following plaies, the expence is wondrous; upon players speeches, their wordes are full of wyles upon their gestures, that are altogether wanton. Is it not lamentable that a man shoulde spend his two pence on them in an after-noone, heare covetiusnes amongst them daily quipt at, being one of the commonest occupations in the countrey; and in liuevly gesture see trecherie set out, with which every man now adaies useth to intrap his brother. Byr lady, this would be lookt into: if these be the fruites of playing, tis time the practisers were expelled.

(Bristol, 1985, pp 117-18)

Tarlton goes on to suggest that there is another more proper use of playing and that is to link playing with 'bookes'. This link to books is part of a second stream of thought which emerged in the late sixteenth century which replaced the idea of abolishing playing with the idea of legitimating it. Bristol describes this project as an attempt to 'reinvent the institution [theatre] so as to provide it with a well-defined and carefully limited social function' (1985, p117).

The work of Ben Jonson epitomises this project of legitimation and in the process the triumph of the literary over the carnivalesque in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although this is evident through Jonson's entire oeuvre it is nowhere better symbolised than in his play BARTHOLOMEW FAIR.

I do not intend to examine this play in great detail here. A brief glimpse will suffice to show the process of appropriation of the carnivalesque into the literary tradition and its results.

BARTHOLOMEW FAIR is a play about a fair and the fair was the Renaissance manifestation of the carnival. By writing about the fair, including it in his work, Jonson was not expressing an admiration for the popular and its forms. As Stallybrass and White (1986) show all his critical writing is resolutely directed

against the popular audience and the 'hacks' whom he saw as serving it. So what then was Jonson's intention?

Jonson described his writing as 'quick comedy refined', 'a legitimate poem' and 'one such as other plays should be'. He decried the 'license' of playwrights who debase 'stage poetry' and those plays in which 'the concupiscence of dances and of antics so reigneth'.⁵ As Stallybrass and White put it:

Again and again Jonson defines the true position of the playwright as that of the poet, and of the poet as that of the classical, isolated judge standing in opposition to the vulgar throng. In this of course he was not alone.

(1986, p 67)

What Jonson and his contemporaries set out to do and which to a great degree they achieved, was to establish the notion of 'authorship' in the theatre. By connecting playing with the authority of the written text, Tarlton's 'booke', Jonson could achieve the legitimation of the theatre that he sought. In Bristol's words he could:

...diminish the dispersed, anonymous authority of the 'players' in favour of a well-defined author function that allows for the ownership of texts and, just as important, for lines of accountability to de jure authority.

(1985, p 117)

Jonson published his collected works in 1616 where they appeared as literary texts divorced from their theatrical reality. As such they were also being freed from the 'contagion of the marketplace'. By removing his plays from the theatre, so to speak, they could become literature within a classical canon (Stallybrass & White, 1986, p76).

The play *BARTHOLOMEW FAIR* opens with 'The induction on the stage'. This short dramatic introduction to the play succinctly explains the process described above. It opens with the entrance of the stage-keeper whose job it is to clear the stage of apples thrown during the bear-baiting which shared the theatre with Jonson's play and preceded it in the programme. The stage-keeper addresses the groundlings and throws two accusations at Jonson: firstly that he is simply ignorant of the fair which he is proposing to write about, and secondly that he has failed in the very methods of his representation. This second accusation concerns the fact that 'in Master Tarlton's time' things were done better. 'Master Tarlton's time' is of course the time of the improvising clown, of the popular carnivalesque performance. Now the 'master poets', of which Jonson is one, stand at such a distance from the realities of the fair that their attempts at representing it must fail dismally.

Now in come the book-holder and the scrivener to rid the stage of its keeper. This moment is highly symbolic as Jonathan Haynes (1984) comments:

The opposition between the popular and coterie theatres is perfectly expressed in this moment: groundlings vs gentlemen; the stage-keeper with his memories of an improvisational theatre vs the Book-holder and Scrivener, men of the master-poet's written text.

(Haynes, 1984, p 659)

The book-holder and scrivener propose a contract with the audience for the coming performance:

1. The audience must stay in their places for the duration of the performance of the play.

2. The audience is free to judge the play according to their position in the theatre that is determined by the amount of money they have paid for their place.
3. The audience must judge what they see as individuals and not as a collective whole and once a decision has been made it must be stuck to even tomorrow.
4. The audience must not expect to see what has come before but what is currently being presented. They must not expect to see the fair as it was outside of the theatre but as it is presented inside the theatre by the playwright.

What Jonson is attempting here is to reshape the body of the audience from the collective and participatory grotesque body of the fair to the individuated, class-bound, distanced and judgmental body of the literary theatre. The play as it proceeds displays many aspects of the fairground activity not as they were, but as they are presented by the 'master-poet' as part of his art. Jonson will incorporate aspects of the fair but he will not let the fair incorporate him. He will set them up for the audience but not to revel in, merely to judge, to criticise.

The whole notion of authorship from this point on parallels the ideal of the individual in the new bourgeois culture - the individual as 'the proprietor of his own person and capacities, for which he owes nothing to society' (Fish, 1984, p26). The writer of plays embodied this ideal of individualism to the extent that he removed himself from the collective space of the marketplace and the carnival. The writer would now only approach that collective space as an 'aloof spectator' or view it simply as 'spectacle and freak' (Stallybrass & White, 1986, p77).

As the carnival was being appropriated by the literary theatre and changed in its own image, so too the fair itself was being broken down. The city was encroaching on the marketplace, the private shop was replacing the market stall,

the extraterritorial space of the fairground was falling more and more under centralised, official control. The fair and the marketplace were progressively attacked over a long period of time, legislated against, freed and bound again. For Robert Malcolmson (1973) the suppression of fairs was part of the hegemonic struggle waged by the state against 'traditional' popular recreation. What is interesting to note is that the middle of the nineteenth century was both a time when a great many fairs disappeared and a time when a great explosion of new fairs occurred, particularly in France.

So the Western Eurocentric tradition that forms one of the two major tributaries of our South African theatre practice was not the whole tradition as such. It was the literary part of the tradition which had incorporated its adversary, the carnival, and changed it in its own image, to suit its own purposes. The carnival had been made the property of the hegemonic group, contained within its mode of representation.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE ORAL PERFORMANCE TRADITION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

In his article on the shifting paradigm of South African theatre, Hauptfleisch (1988) refers to recent scholarship to the effect that the earliest settlement in South Africa seems to date to about 6000 BC (Tobias, 1986; Bredenkamp, 1986). These were the San, more commonly known as the Bushmen. They were joined by the Khoikhoi at about the time of Christ. The San had a tradition of ritual dance drama and mime, records of which are preserved in rock paintings.

Hauptfleisch continues:

Although a great deal of controversy still surrounds the dating of these events, it would seem that the first Iron Age, or crop-raising, settlements were established by the ancient Bantu-speaking peoples round about 300 AD (Maggs, in Cameron & Spies, 1986). These are the people who finally settled the whole of South Africa, and whose - long suppressed - culture has become the kingpin of the emerging paradigm.

(1988, p 37)

My discussion of the African performance tradition will focus on this 'long suppressed culture' with particular reference to the Nguni-speaking part of that culture.

Amongst the indigenous peoples of South Africa many performances forms existed with well developed dramatic elements. These included:

1. The oral narrative: the inganekwane (Zulu), the intsomi (Xhosa), the tsomo (Sotho), and the dinaane (Tswana);
2. The oral praise poetry: the isibongo (Nguni), and the diboko (Sotho); and,
3. A variety of song and dance forms.

Most recent writers agree that these forms exist (Dhlomo 1939a; Mutwa 1973; Kavanagh 1981; Larlham 1985; Sitas 1986; Coplan 1987). However, there is a difference of opinion as to their relationship to the concept of 'theatre' as it is understood in the West.

Larlham (1985) after mentioning all of the performance forms listed above, suggests that there are 'no dramatic performances of the kind associated with the Western theatrical tradition with fixed, formal, spoken dialogue between costumed actors who impersonate characters' (p61).

Sitas (1984) points out that the word ithyeta in both the Nguni and Sotho languages 'is not part of ukulima (culture in its pre-capitalist sense) it is rather part of okunjengokwabelungu (the light that 'shines' from the white man)' (p90).

Mutwa (1973) insists, on the other hand, that theatrical forms did exist in South Africa before the arrival of the European colonisers. These forms were known as tekantso in the Sotho tradition and umlinganiso in the Nguni tradition. For Mutwa the performance forms of the indigenous peoples of South Africa included a range:

...from simple but highly-skilled and highly organized
STORYTELLING by an expert storyteller, to actual ENACTMENT
of stories by trained players of both sexes, which was performed on
sacred occasions in times of peace. (His emphasis).

(1973, p 38)

In my opinion the distinction between the African oral performance tradition and the Western theatrical tradition is only apparent if, as I have tried to show in the previous chapter, one part of the Western tradition is separated off from or co-opted into the other, disempowering it in the process. The high literary theatrical

tradition and its mode of practice is clearly distinct from the African tradition, but as will become clear in the course of this chapter, the improvisatory carnival tradition of Western theatre is remarkably similar in many ways to the African oral performance tradition.

A number of recent articles have pointed to the influence of the African oral tradition on contemporary South African theatre (Fuchs 1987, Hauptfleisch 1988, Morris 1989, Fleishman 1990). The majority of these studies focus primarily on the storytelling forms of the tradition. My discussion here will continue to focus on the storytelling forms. There is no doubt, however, that the oral poetry and the dance forms have exerted an influence on the contemporary South African theatre too.

The basic feature of the African performance tradition is that it is an oral tradition and this feature will be central to my discussion. I will begin with a short discussion of orality and oral culture and then proceed to discuss the storytelling forms in some detail.

ORALITY

Much research has been conducted this century on the differences between oral cultures and literary cultures. Amongst the most significant have been the works of Millman Parry on the oral nature of homeric verse (1928), and Albert Lord on the oral poets of Yugoslavia (1960). Walter Ong in his book Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word (1982), provides a comprehensive overview of this field of research and emphasises the differences between oral ways of organising and representing experience and literary ways.

A primary oral culture is a culture whose members are not merely non-literate in the sense that they cannot read or write, it is a culture whose members do not

know of the existence of writing and by implication reading. The indigenous peoples of Southern Africa were essentially a primary oral culture. As Hauptfleisch has already noted above the Bantu-speaking peoples settled in the whole of South Africa from about 300 AD. The first European explorers touched on the tip of the African continent in the late fifteenth century, and the Dutch colonised the Cape in the seventeenth century. Writing was brought to Africa by these Europeans so it is clear that for at least twelve hundred years the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa probably did not know of the existence of writing. If one considers that the early European settlement was confined to what is today known as the Cape, then most of the indigenous people did not come into contact with European settlers until sometime in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. The Zulu people it seems first encountered whites only in 1824 (Larham, 1985, p 1).

It is exceptionally difficult for a person living in an advanced literary society such as our own to conceive of primary orality, and our biggest mistake is that we constantly view orality through our literary perceptions. Orality is then seen as a deficient form of literacy and hence the tendency to refer to oral people as 'illiterate'. It is therefore vitally important that oral forms of representation are viewed for what they are: extensions of the oral system of consciousness which differs in fundamental ways from literary consciousness.

The fundamental difference stems from the nature of sound itself:

All sensation takes place in time, but sound has a special relationship to time unlike that of the other fields that register in human existence. It is not simply perishable but essentially evanescent, and it is sensed as evanescent. Sound exists only when it is going out of existence.

(Ong, 1982, pp 31-2)

The essential evanescence of sound determines the ways in which oral people think, represent their thoughts to others, and importantly, the ways in which those thoughts are maintained for the future. These are essentially different from the literary world where thoughts can be written down to be 'looked up' at a later date.

Ong emphasises that in an oral culture 'thought is intertwined with memory systems' (p34). In order to retain complex thought and be able to recall it at some later time, thinking must be carried out in 'mnemonic patterns'. The expression of thoughts in an oral culture tends to be heavily rhythmic, to occur in balanced patterns, to be repetitious and to employ communal formulas. This mnemonic patterning serves some of the functions that writing serves for people in a literary culture. It also determines the kind of thinking that is possible. As Ong puts it: 'In an oral culture experience is intellectualized mnemonically' (p36).

Characteristics of the oral system of consciousness and cognition are summarised by Ong as 'the psychodynamics of orality' (pp 36-57). For Ong, elements of orally based thought and utterance are: additive in that they follow one another according to the convenience of the thinker/speaker at the moment of thought/utterance and not according to analytic, reasoned subordination; aggregative in that they tend to be clusters of integers rather than simple, individuated integers; redundant in that they tend to be highly repetitious; traditional and conservative in that they retain ways and means that have proved their efficiency over time; close to the human lifeworld in that they refer to human beings in relation to their actions rather than as abstracted from what they do in the course of their lives, and objects in terms of their uses as opposed to their abstract categorisations; highly combative; and empathetic and participatory.

Oral cognition determines a distinct system of oral artistic composition. A primary oral poet or storyteller does not prepare the content of his/her

performance prior to the performance. No system for the storage and retrieval of composed thoughts or ideas exists except the system of formulas or mnemonic patterns. Albert Lord concludes that the oral compositions of Yugoslavian singers are 'the remembrance of songs sung' (quoted in Peabody, 1975, p 216). Basically the same formulas and themes recur, but they are 'rhapsodized' differently by different singers. The term 'rhapsodize' has a direct connection to the concept of a 'text'. Today we conceive of a text as a literary construct. But as Ong shows, it is in fact more compatible etymologically with oral utterance. The word 'text' derives from a root meaning 'to weave' and in oral cultures utterance is often seen as a 'weaving or stitching together'. The word 'rhapsodize' derives from the Greek rhapsodein meaning literally 'to stitch songs together' (p13). So composition in oral terms is a stitching together of basic themes according to a formula. The themes and formulas belong in a clearly identifiable tradition. Individual creativity is thus the way different singers stitch the traditional formulas together in different ways.

In the final analysis, Ong's comprehensive study demonstrates convincingly that orality is a system of consciousness which differs significantly on a cognitive level from the dominant system of consciousness in our society which is literary. If orality determines a different cognition, it also determines a different aesthetics and this must be borne in mind in the following discussion of the intsomi and the inganekwane, the storytelling forms of the Xhosa and Zulu tradition respectively. These forms developed in a society which was primarily oral and which stayed essentially oral even after the literary culture was transplanted onto the African continent.

STORYTELLING FORMS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN NGUNI ORAL TRADITION

A number of recent studies have examined the storytelling forms of the Nguni-speaking peoples of South Africa in some detail. Influential studies of the Xhosa intsomi include those by Jordan (1973), Scheub (1970/5), and Gough (1986). Important studies of the Zulu inganekwane have been made by Oosthuizen (1977), Cope (1978) and Canonici (1986).

These studies can basically be divided into three general types which could be simply termed: morphological analysis, image analysis, and discourse analysis.

1. Morphological analysis:

The first type (Oosthuizen, Cope and Canonici) concentrates on the structure of the narrative. It is based on the morphological system of folktale analysis devised by Propp (1958) and developed by Dundes (1964). Briefly, the model is based on the observation that in traditional folktales 'the same "action" can be performed by different dramatis personae or characters, while still remaining basically the same action expressed in a determined position in the overall structure of the tale' (Canonici, 1986, p 62). Propp suggested that the actions of the stories should be studied in preference to the characters. He called these basic actions 'functions'.

An example from the Zulu tradition is given by Canonici. It is not important whether the trickster in a particular tale is uNogwaja, or uChakide, or uHlakanyana, or iMpisi, what is important is that these characters always perform the trick action, and that the trick action is always found in a specific relation to other specific actions like fraud, ploy, escape, irrespective of which character is the trickster in any particular story (1986, p62). The combination of functions creates

an 'episode' or 'sequence' which, when combined with other sequences, creates a 'narrative move'. In the analysis of tales, functions are named, for example LACK, or LACK-LIQUIDATED, or INTERDICTION etc. Sequences are designated as one function plus another function, for example LACK + LACK-LIQUIDATED or INTERDICTION + VIOLATION + CONSEQUENCE etc. The whole narrative might be framed by a 'frame formula' which is usually a function sequence itself and operates as theme for the performance as a whole.

Oosthuizen (1977) introduces the concept of the 'free function' which is a function not combined in a sequence but occurring at different places in the overall sequence of the tale. This free function serves the individual creativity of the performer because it need not occur in relation to other specific functions. It also aids the combination of sequences by acting as a transitional link in the narrative as a whole. Canonici (1986) emphasises that the sequences are not simply juxtaposed but are 'embedded' or interwoven into each other: 'sequences are embedded one into another, thus giving rise to an interesting multilayered narrative formation' (1986, p64).

As an illustration of the above I will quote a section of an example translated by Trevor Cope from UChakijana (Mbatha & Mdladla, 1936):

Once upon a time a woman went to cultivate the land. She hoed and hoed, and there came a bird which said, 'Tshwiyo! Tshwiyo! This is the earth of my sister, which is cultivated by lazy people and not by diligent people!' The little clods went mbe mbe (tight, tight), the little hoe-handle went phoqo phoqo (snap, snap). The clods returned to their places and the hoe-handle broke.

(Cope, 1978, p 186)

If we break down the episode according to the morphological system we find the functions: INTERDICTION (the land should be diligently cultivated),

VIOLATION (the land is cultivated by lazy people), and CONSEQUENCE (the clods close up and the hoe breaks). Combined in this specific order the functions form the traditional sequence INTERDICTION + VIOLATION + CONSEQUENCE which will be combined with other sequences by the performer to form the narrative.

Propp found a very specific number of functions in Russian folktales and that their combination always happened according to a rigid traditional structure. Cope (1978), applying Propp's method of analysis to the inganekwane, found that in the case of the Zulu tradition the number of functions is more flexible and that their combination is less rigidly determined, but that nonetheless, functions and function sequences are determined by a specific tradition. For Cope there is a balance of tradition and creativity in the inganekwane:

The tradition orders the sequence of functions at the episode level, but it is the storyteller who determines the combination of sequences at the narrative level, and this is where the art of composition mainly lies....The syntax of the Zulu folktale is the test of the creative imagination of the storyteller....[T]he art of the Zulu storyteller lies not in the choice of functions to combine into sequences (for both functions and sequences are determined by tradition), but in the choice of sequences to combine into a coherent and integrated narrative.

(1978, p 193)

2. Image analysis:

The second type of study revolves around the concepts of the 'core-cliche' and the 'core-image'. These concepts were developed by Scheub (1970/5) in relation to the Xhosa intsomi:

The basic element of the tradition and the centre of the intsomi (sic) itself is the core-cliche (a song, chant or saying) which, with a few related details, forms the remembered core-image, a distillate of the

full performance which is expanded and fleshed out during the actual process of externalization.¹

(Scheub, 1970, p 122)

The core-images are the 'stable elements' of the tradition. When the performer has selected a particular image from the tradition, she will expand on that image to create the episodes of her story. In more complex tales a number of 'expansible images' might be included, or one image might be expanded through its repetition in a number of different ways. The various images or repetitions of the original image are locked together by 'interlocking images' (1970, pp 139-40). Another technique of binding various images is the use of 'interlocking details' - 'clues and details planted in earlier images which are realized, echoed or developed in later images' (1970, p142).

The artist may choose to build on the essential image, adding other expansible images to her developing performance, integrating them fully into the basic intsomi with interlocking images and details so that the series of expansible images becomes a unified whole.

(Scheub, 1970, pp 134-5)

Scheub stresses that storytelling is a performance and that the study of the text alone is insufficient. Besides the spoken words, the intsomi includes other important 'artistic materials' such as 'body movement, gesture, vocal dramatics, song and over-all rhythmic framework' (1975, p45). Scheub has no doubt that the intsomi is not a 'form of short story, but a theatrical production with its own unique properties' (1975, p45).

The intsomi performance is an improvisation based around the stable elements of a tradition which the performer has been saturated in from childhood.

Scheub describes the process of the retrieval of the stable elements of the tradition in the course of the performance as:

...a complex process of cueing and scanning, whereby an artist dips into her rich repertory of intsomi images, and brings into performance appropriate images and image-segments which combine to create the finished work.

(1975, p 3)

In the process of 'cueing and scanning', the cue acts as a trigger which releases immediate information related to the specific performance. At the same time the cue sets in motion a scan which brings more long-term information into play. It is the scanning process which involves access to the tradition. The joint process of cue and scan gives depth and richness to the performance: the immediate and specific meshing with the general and sedimentary.

Scheub lists two 'material funds' from which the storyteller draws. The first he calls 'materials external to the performer' and includes the inherited tradition, the environment of the performer's community, and the audience. The second fund he calls 'materials personal to the performer, utilised in performance to give form to the inherited tradition, the milieu and in some respects, to the audience' (p45). Here he includes the poetic use of language, the performer's body and voice, and the performer's imagination. For Scheub the intsomi performer is both a 'medium externalizing the core-images of the past' and an 'artist imaginatively selecting, controlling and arranging' these images (1970, p122).

The characters in the intsomi represent, for Scheub, a range from the conventional and stylized to the more rounded. Some characters, like Sikhuluma and Sihamba-ngenyanga, are functional, in the Proppian sense, with the emphasis being on action and not on character in the images in which they traditionally

appear (1975, p55). Many of the fabulous characters like the iZim are conventional representations of certain concepts such as evil, while the human characters can be both allegorical and more psychologically rounded.

'Characterization is achieved primarily through gesture, vocal dramatics, and body movement; the verbal narrative only sketches in the characters as it concentrates on their actions' (1975, p54).

For Scheub, the entire intsomi is built around conflict and resolution. 'The completed narrative performance will always contain conflict and resolution, and these are created through the artful manipulation of traditional images' (1975, p83). Images of conflict constantly threaten to fragment the order and harmony of the community and resolutions must be found to counter them. Conflict and resolution are to be found in the relation of the performer and the audience:

The performer creates the community during her performance; she gives the community shape and form. She creates it and introduces the forces of fragmentation. This introduces an aesthetic tension into the developing intsomi image, much as the actual forces of change and disorder threaten to fragment the actual society.

(Scheub, 1975, p 87)

Conflict is also embodied in characters like the iZim, a cannibal who has lost his essential humanity through his depraved appetite, and who is described by Scheub as the 'fallen angel of the intsomi tradition' (1975, p77). Constantly threatening destruction and mayhem, the iZim must be simply escaped from, confronted and satisfied, or confronted and destroyed.

The conflict/resolution pattern is often a feature of the function sequences discussed in the first type of study (for example LACK + LACK-LIQUIDATED). Canonici (1986) describes the structure of the inganekwane as 'a movement from crisis to solution as well as the many balancing forces which are called into play in

order to re-establish the initially broken harmony and to achieve an ideal society' (p66). It is also reminiscent of the social 'rites of passage' from separation through transition to incorporation formulated by Van Gennep (1960) and developed by Turner (1981).²

3. Discourse analysis

The third type of study focuses on discourse analysis. An example of such a study is that of Gough (1986) on the Xhosa narrative. Gough distinguishes his type of study from the two previous approaches which he labels 'folklore studies':

Our approach is...not in terms of the Xhosa folktale as a folktale as such, but rather as a type of narrative, and beyond this, as a type of discourse. In this respect, our concern with folktales is both wider and narrower than folklore studies. It is wider in that it examines general linguistic and discourse properties of folktales over and above their 'traditional' and 'artistic' qualities, and it is narrower in the very fact that it ignores such definitive properties. The general domain in terms of which we undertake our examination is discourse analysis.

(1986, p 4)

The basic unit of the intsomi is termed a 'tale-chunk' in Gough's study, and is described as a 'coherent stretch of information in the narrators memory which may potentially occur individually, or in combination with other tale-chunks as the basis of a single intsomi' (p186). The tale-chunk is not a story memorized verbatim, it is simply the 'gist' of such a story or story segment. Once the tale-chunk has been recalled during the performance it is creatively expanded on and embellished by the performer.

For Gough, intsomi production is a form of discourse. All discourse involves both a speaker and a listener. It involves utterance on the part of the speaker directed towards the listener. In the first place 'discourse is a goal-directed

activity'. The speaker will therefore institute various plans or strategies in order to achieve the desired objective. Unlike other goal-directed activities, however, in discourse the speaker wants the listener to realise his goal. Fundamental to this type of study of the intsomi, therefore, is comprehension as well as production. In order to ensure comprehension the utterance must be governed by the principle of relevance:

Since the principle of relevance tells us that the hearer assumes that the speaker is trying to be relevant in his production of discourse, relevance must intrinsically operate as a pragmatic constraint over such production. From the speaker's perspective, the principle of relevance would read that he must try to be relevant and that he assumes that he is, in fact, trying to do so. Considerations of relevance, in this regard, form the controlling factor in the production of utterances.

(Gough, 1986, p 180)

The relevance of any utterance is determined by the context in which it is produced. If the context is not clear the listener will have difficulty comprehending the relevance of the utterance.

Basically then, according to this approach, intsomi as discourse involves the interplay between performer and audience. The performer produces the intsomi in order to achieve a goal: the audience's comprehension. Concepts like strategy and intention become important in the analysis of the performance. The intsomi is built up out of remembered tale-chunks which are selected in terms of their relevance to the intention of the performer as part of the overall strategy employed to achieve the desired goal for the particular performance:

Acting over the production of an intsomi as a goal directed activity, complex processes of reminding and the associated principle of

relevance explain a central property of the tradition...the notion of narrative creativity through personal improvisation.

(Gough, 1986, p 200)

The audience, in its turn, influences the production of the intsomi insofar as the performer will select the tale-chunks most relevant to the particular audience present at each specific performance (p194).

I would like to make two points concerning the three types of study of the Nguni oral narrative summarised above. Firstly, on the surface the studies display a movement from a more closed and definitive approach to a more open and variable one. They move from the foregrounding of systematic tradition to the foregrounding of improvisational creativity in pursuit of goals. Secondly, these three approaches to the study of Nguni oral narrative are by no means completely distinct categories, hermetically sealed off from each other. For example, Cope (1978), whose morphological analyses have been criticised for being too rigid, acknowledges Scheub's focus on performance elements and his contribution to our 'understanding of the balance between memorization and improvization, between what is inherited and what is created' (p199). He also utilises Scheub's concept of the image to reveal various stable images in the Zulu tradition. Scheub (1970/5) deals with the performer-audience relationship which is central to Gough's discourse analysis. He describes how the intsomi changes if the audience is made up of children, or of adults, or of a combination of both. The core-images remain the same, the 'structural keystones of the performance', but with children action is emphasised and with adults the emphasis is on detail, nuance and motivation. Where the audience is made up of a mixture of adults and children (which is usually the case), the performer will choose the direction she wishes to take. The audience is often quite fluid and if the performer chooses to emphasise simple

images and bold action it is likely that adults might tend to drift away from the performance before its completion. Conversely, if complex images and serious themes are chosen, the children, without being asked to leave, will lose interest and become 'bored because they are unable to follow the narrative and will leave of their own accord' (1970, p121). On the complex performer-audience relationship, Scheub comments:

...aesthetic tension exists not only within the plot's normal elements of conflict and resolution; it is also a problem in the potentially chaotic relationship between the artist and her audience.... The performer, during the production of the intsomi images, seeks to control the forces of the audience that are potentially destructive to her work of art, and to mould and channel them into useful aesthetic functions within the work.

(Scheub, 1975, p 87)

SUMMARY

From the above discussion a number of basic points can be noted:

1. The intsomi/inganekwane is not a simple story narrated through the spoken word. It is a performance which includes, enactment, characterisation through gesture and vocal dramatics, mime, dance and song.
2. It is a traditional form which is made up of 'stable elements' (images, functions, tale-chunks). These are passed on from generation to generation within a particular community.
3. A performance includes a balance of these traditional elements and individual creativity through personal improvisation.

4. A performance is not a verbatim memorisation of a prepared text but is created by the performer in the moment of performance by improvising around stable elements of the tradition.

5. Strict linear plot structuring is a product of writing, it requires analytic, reasoned thought prior to performance as to the structure of the whole.

Everything that is included in a literary narrative is subordinate to the whole. In contrast, whatever is included in the oral performance is included as a cluster of actions or an episode (usually traditional), and each episode is linked to the next episode at the convenience of the speaker during any one particular telling using transitional links and interlocking images and details. This might lead to the narrator setting off on a path which seems tangential to the thrust of the narrative and remaining on it for quite a distance before returning to the main path.

Sometimes seemingly small and inconsequential details receive a long and involved treatment while other episodes which seem to be more directly linked to the central thrust are treated summarily. There might be little logical connection between one episode and another, episodes might occur in different sequences at different tellings, new episodes might occur from one telling to another, and what is accepted as the same basic narrative might be treated in highly different ways by different narrators.

6. Performances seldom display a sense of completeness or closure. Most literary narratives convey a sense of closure partly as a result of a strict plot structure, but partly as a result of the influence of print whereby the finished work is reproduced in multiple, identical copies between containing covers. Each copy is a complete, separate, economic entity which can be privately owned. An oral performance can never be privately owned. It can never be repeated exactly. It always conveys a

sense of openness, incompleteness and the potential for continuation and change. For listeners who are used to linear climactic plot structuring, the rhythm of which signals the end, the oral narrative performance might seem to come to an abrupt, unexpected ending or it might seem to peter out at the end on a 'weak' note.

7. A range of different character types do occur ranging from highly stylised and functional to more psychologically balanced with the emphasis on the former. Different types of characters do appear in the same story.

8. Performances are goal-directed activities. The goals of the performers are usually social and aim to bind a community in the face of potential fragmentation and disorder. The performer's goal might be more personal, however, and aimed at a particular part of the community, for example women or children.³

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE ORAL NARRATIVE PERFORMANCE AND THE CARNIVALESQUE

In conclusion, the oral narrative performance forms of the indigenous peoples of South Africa display remarkable similarities with the carnival tradition of performance in Western theatrical practice described in the previous chapter. Both are built around stable traditional elements which are passed on from one generation of performers to another. In both there is an absence of a pre-determined, written text. Performance 'texts' are created through a process of improvisation around the stable elements of the tradition at the moment of performance. Both traditions include a number of performance forms in any one performance, with a strong emphasis on gesture, mime and overall rhythmic body movement. Performances of both traditions take place in non-designated performance spaces. In Chapter Two it was noted that one of the features of the

carnival tradition is the notion of the grotesque. Elements of the grotesque also feature in the Nguni oral tradition: many characters (for example the iZim) have distorted bodies; there are many instances of old, decrepit grandmothers who prey on children; there is an emphasis on ingestion and excretion, ambivalent images which are at once threatening and evil (negative) and generative (positive); there are elements of bawdiness (Scheub, 1970, p121); and there is a co-existence of animals, people and vegetation all interacting and communicating, an infringement of the stable order of the world in which these categories are clearly divided off from each other and placed within hierarchies of high and low. Finally, both the carnival tradition and the oral performance tradition have a popular orientation and are aimed at collective interaction and the enjoyment of corporate or communal solidarity over the specialised, individuated, critical appreciation of abstract literary or artistic values.

It must also be noted that there are many similarities between the oral performance forms of southern Africa and performance forms in other parts of Africa (see Graham-White 1976; Onuora Enekwe 1976; Povey 1976; Beik 1987; Spencer 1990).

As mentioned above it is only fairly recently that critical study has begun to take notice of the influence of these oral performance forms on contemporary South African theatre. This late awakening is not limited to theatre studies.

Kelwyn Sole (1985) comments:

In my opinion, the admiration activists feel for lower-class forms of culture is a relatively recent phenomenon. Consider the more oral, rurally-derived cultural forms used by the black migrant workforce at present one of the largest and most militant sections of the working class. As recently as the early 1970s, many activists dismissed these forms as mere 'folklore' and 'caricature'.

(p 48-9)

Elizabeth Gunner (1986) locates the reasons for this attitude in the relationship between orality, literacy and 'progress':

...the bearers and communicators of tales are often regarded (and may regard themselves) as those who have been left behind, who are not modern and learned in terms of book knowledge. Such a view may be held even more strongly if the storytellers, singers and poets are seen as part of the rural peasantry and are viewed as not having access to modern ways, modern technology and 'progress'.

(Gunner, 1986, p 32)

What is most important with respect to the present study is that these oral performance forms, along with the Western carnival tradition, were denied a place within the domain of theatre practice in South Africa until very recently. They were declared 'simple', 'naive', 'sub-theatrical' forms by those in authority who sought to limit the practice of theatre to their own tradition, thereby maintaining their hegemonistic control.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE EMERGENCE OF WORKSHOP THEATRE

In Chapter Two I discussed the process within European theatre practice by which the literary theatre came to predominate over the carnival tradition by submitting improvisational performance to the authority of the written text. In Chapter Three I examined various oral performance forms that pre-existed the arrival of the European theatre into the southern African context. I revealed similarities between these oral performance forms and the improvisatory carnivalesque forms of Europe. I ended Chapter three by noting that these oral performance forms had been denied a place within theatre practice in South Africa until very recently. I would like to begin chapter three by exploring in a little more detail the process by which the oral performance forms were marginalised.

THE MARGINALISATION OF THE ORAL PERFORMANCE FORMS

The European literary theatre was brought to South Africa, particularly by the British after 1795. On one level it was imported to entertain the colonial officials, the military and the settler communities. On another level, one more pertinent to the present study, its introduction formed part of the broad hegemonic objectives of the colonial project vis-a-vis the indigenous population. Theatre was introduced to the indigenous peoples by the missionaries in the early nineteenth century as part of a 'civilising' missionary education. Fundamental to this education was the introduction of literacy. This made it possible for black students to be introduced and exposed to certain carefully selected exemplary texts of the 'civilised' West. Amongst these were included a number of 'great' dramatic works. As Anne Fuchs

(1987) comments:

...it is not surprising that the first literary texts imported [to South Africa] should be the Bible, Bunyan and Shakespeare; the Bible as the foundation of the new faith, Bunyan typifying the Anglo-Saxon, Protestant branch of this faith, and Shakespeare, representing the cultural sum of the Christian, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, literary tradition.

(Fuchs, 1987, p 32)

The missionary education and the colonial discourse in general marginalised the traditional communities and their orally based cultures as part of a general process of sociopolitical centralisation or hegemony in which the institutions and culture of Europe asserted themselves as 'naturally' superior to those of Africa. Within the field of performance the discourse delimited and organised the range of possible activities that could exist as 'theatre'. It established hierarchies of high and low forms. The literary theatre, connected to the political and socio-economic power of the dominant group, was promoted by the discourse to a central role as the prestige form. It was presented as a self-sufficient and exclusive category and became the norm with which all theatre activity had to comply. On the other hand, the oral performance forms such as the intsomi, the inganekwane, the isibongo, and the various dance forms were considered by the discourse to be 'low' forms, relegated to a marginal folkloric role in the rural areas: 'simple', 'primitive' and 'quaint' elements of the culture of the local peoples. They were certainly not considered to be acceptable activities for the 'theatre'. In other words the literary theatre came to constitute the totality of theatre practice while the oral forms were separated off, excluded from theatre practice, and in the process degraded. In this way both the oral aesthetic and the oral mode of production were marginalised.

There was no room for any kind of dialogical interaction between the two types of performance. The oral performance forms were to be practiced by members of the non-hegemonic group in the rural areas within traditional communities as part of their 'folklore'. The literary theatre was to be performed in the cities by members of the hegemonic group for the enjoyment and edification of the colonial community as 'theatre'. Where members of the non-hegemonic group did engage with the literary theatre it was in the form of reading as part of a missionary education. And as Fuchs points out, 'the missionaries...appear to have discouraged for religious-moralistic reasons performance of drama' (1987, p 32). In this latter context, when oral performance threatened to assert itself, 'it was carefully channelled...into the writing and singing of Christian hymns' (p32). A clear case of Foucault's notion of government as discussed in the introduction to the present study - a structuring of the possible field of actions of a particular group of others.

Because the terms of literary theatre now saturated the whole of theatre practice there could be no power relationship in Foucault's terms - just the fact of domination. This static power system within theatre practice remained intact, cleanly splitting black from white, colonised from coloniser until the 1930s.

THE EMERGENCE OF WORKSHOP THEATRE

Against this background it is my intention to trace the emergence of workshop theatre within theatre practice in relation to more general attempts by the non-hegemonic group to gain access to, and establish a presence within, theatre practice in South Africa.

The process of urbanisation amongst the black communities as a result of industrialisation, brought black people in vast numbers to the cities as cheap labour from the late nineteenth century. The migrant labour system intended these people to be mere sojourners but they settled into city living with a determination to remain on a more permanent basis. They brought with them their cultural forms particularly songs and dances which often operated as a means of defence against the harsh conditions of their lives.¹ These cultural forms began to be shaped by their urban experiences. New syncretic forms began to emerge which combined elements of the traditional with urban influences particularly in the areas of music and dance.² Pressure was therefore slowly beginning to be exerted on the dominant forms of culture practiced by the minority. This pressure did not initially affect theatre practice substantially. Although in some cases short improvised sketches were performed by urban black communities as part of variety concerts, the theatre remained essentially a literary based activity in the cities produced for and by the hegemonic group, that is whites.

From the 1930's, however, white liberal 'culture brokers' began to organise theatre workshops and the first black musical shows. This formed part of a broad project on the part of the white liberal community described by Visser and Couzens (1985):

Through the Joint Councils (multiracial discussion groups started at the suggestion of the educationalist and reformer James Aggrey, who visited South Africa several times in the early twenties), the Institute of Race Relations (founded in 1929), the Bantu Men's Social Centre (begun in 1924), and the newspapers, white South African liberals encouraged the emergence of a particular kind of black elite with a complex, but nevertheless decodeable, ideology. A key codeword during the period was 'progressive'.... It meant a belief in Western style education, 'civilisation', moderation, anti-tribalism, and equality

for the 'best sections' of white and black society. And, it meant most of all a position of tutelage for black writers and politicians.

(pp x - xi)

As a result of this process a few select members of the non-hegemonic group began to participate in theatre activity. Although some degree of access to theatre practice for the non-hegemonic group was now being allowed, the dominating discourse limited the possible activities of these new participants to the tradition of Western literary theatre, with the emphasis on literary. Plays were to be written and written 'well'. Access to participation was restricted by the fact that theatre practice was controlled by writing, a 'specialized technique'³ requiring specific training, and not just a rudimentary, competent writing but a sophisticated, literary writing. Along with this emphasis on writing went the implicit belief that performance was subordinate to the authority of the written text. Furthermore, theatre activity was bound by the language of those in power, usually English. The involvement of the white liberal group demanded the use of its language. This placed a further restriction on participation. The discourse also demanded that the plays, if performed, should be performed in designated spaces (theatres) and that audiences should behave appropriately, that is in accordance with the recognised behaviour of theatre audiences in Western culture. They were to be separated from the action, silent, individuated and critical. All in all, theatre practice as Ben Jonson would have had it be in terms of his contract with the audience in 1616.

So the participation of members of the non-hegemonic group in theatre activity had to be appropriate to the norm of theatre practice at the time. The new black theatre practitioners, a few middle-class intellectuals, accepted the literary tradition, and as we shall see, they soon began to invert it to fit a local cultural

perspective, but only in terms of content. The hegemonic group had succeeded in legitimating itself by incorporating a select portion of the non-hegemonic into its fold while at the same time entrenching the form of theatre practice authorised by the dominant discourse.

The Bantu Dramatic Society was founded in 1933 by Herbert Dhlomo with its purpose to develop African dramatic art. It began by producing classics of the Western theatre and plays for Africans written by white writers in English. In 1935 the first play by a black person in English was published. The play by Dhlomo, entitled *THE GIRL WHO KILLED TO SAVE: NONQAUSE THE LIBERATOR* was typical of most black dramatic writing of the period up until the late 1950's. Coplan (1985) terms these plays 'literary dramas' (p203). Written by black intellectuals, they employ the language of literature not the language of real life. They are heavily worded plays but the words are trapped in a formal sterility which has little to do with the everyday words, the real-life words of the urban majority. The language of Dhlomo's plays has been described as 'subromantic diction' (Gerard, 1971), and as 'stilted, artificial, even pompous' (Visser & Couzens, 1985). Although many of these plays were performed they were really more suited to reading than to performance. As Visser and Couzens (1985) comment in relation to Dhlomo:

While Dhlomo is silent on the subject of the construction of his short stories, he seems to have had a clear generic design in mind for his plays. He wrote repeatedly that African playwrights should attempt to write 'literary drama' rather than 'acting plays', an assertion that, taken in the context in which it occurs, seems to place the emphasis on the magnitude and thematic seriousness of a play rather than on its effectiveness as a vehicle for the stage.

(p xiii)

The consumption of these plays was thus clearly limited to a literate, intellectual audience.

However, Dhlomo was conscious of the need to speak to a wider audience than a close circle of intellectuals, to be of service to his community. He also recognised the need to deal with contemporary issues. In an essay entitled 'Why study tribal dramatic forms?', Dhlomo states:

The African dramatist cannot delve into the past unless he has grasped the present. African art can grow and thrive not only by going back and excavating the archaic art forms, but by grappling with the present-day realities...art must deal with the things that are vital and near the African today.

(Dhlomo, 1939b)

Although he wrote plays like *THE PASS* and *THE WORKERS* which eloquently protested the racial injustices of his day, and although these later plays tend to overcome problems of linguistic style to some degree, his overriding literariness and his intellectual alienation from the masses of the people limited the success of his project. As Sitas (1989) points out in reference to Dhlomo's poetry, he was gifted enough to understand his own predicament. In his poem 'People's Poet's Prayer' he anguishes:

Ere my stars set,
Must ever I remain unheard,
Attempting
In vain to get
Through mighty grind of printed
word - a hearing?

(Visser & Couzens, 1985, p 365)

The point of my argument is here evocatively stated in the words 'mighty grind of printed/word'. The majority of South Africans were excluded from the world of

theatre production and its message by the dominance of literariness in the dramatic activity of this period.⁴

A play like *THE RHYTHM OF VIOLENCE* by Lewis Nkosi, written twenty years or more after Dhlomo and dealing with a major political issue: the use of violence as a tactic of struggle, displays the same alienating literariness as in:

Sarie: All night we seem to have done nothing but talk and talk, and yet, somehow, I seem to have discovered something important and vital. I can't explain it to you.

Tula: I know how you feel because this is exactly how I feel. It's like stumbling upon something precious, something you want to keep. I suppose the pain of discovery is the fear of losing.

Sarie: We can't be losers, because we care, and caring breeds regard; and now that I know something of your affection, even the political problem seems less heavy, less frightful.

Tula: I am frightened, though. Precisely because I care. There seems to be no way of preserving the important things when history grinds on its course, and yet one wants to preserve the things that one has affection for.

Sarie: There must be a way of redirecting history to avoid tragedy, provided there is enough love. I am a woman, so my optimism is boundless. I don't feel despondent. I used to, but now that I know there must be many people who feel like you on your side, I think I feel more strengthened.

The play is set within the intellectual class and remains restricted to this limited audience both in respect of its literariness and the attitudes it expresses.

As Ian Steadman (1985) observes:

Nkosi was too removed from the theatre to create, with actors, language rooted in the idiom of the proletariat.

(p 133)

In 1957, Athol Fugard arrived in Johannesburg and began to work with black intellectuals like Lewis Nkosi, Nat Nakasa, Corney Mabaso and Bloke Modisane. The play this group created was NO GOOD FRIDAY. Kavanagh (1985) comments that NO GOOD FRIDAY was:

...a collaboration between white and black intellectuals in a 'no-man's land' Nkosi called 'Bohemia'.

(p 61)

The interesting thing about this production was that Fugard wrote the play after watching the actors improvising scenes within specific skeletal structures he set up. This is interesting because it is the beginning of a collaborative creation process which would later become one of the distinguishing characteristics of workshop theatre. The final product however, is less interesting in that it is grossly over-written and exhibits similar literary qualities to the earlier plays. The play does reflect urban social concerns but avoids larger political and economic issues. NO GOOD FRIDAY was performed at the Brian Brooke Theatre in Johannesburg and although moderately successful there was by and large divorced from a mass township audience.

In 1959 Union Artists, a new group of white 'culture brokers' headed by Ian Bernhardt, produced KING KONG which introduced a new form of theatre which was to develop into a major popular form in the 1960s: the township musical. Gibson Kente developed the township musical to a point where it became synonymous with his name. Under Union Artists he produced MANANA, THE JAZZ PROPHET and SIKALO, and in 1967 he formed his own company and became the first independent black theatre producer based solely in the townships. Before the end of the decade he produced LIFA and ZWI and had succeeded in

creating the first mass black theatre audience. His plays in this period did little to raise political or class consciousness and were more concerned with entertainment ending with a broad moral based in African Christianity and an individual's personal morality. The language of the plays was the language of the streets, a mixture of English, Afrikaans, Tsotsitaal and various African languages. Kente also introduced the broad, physical acting style which was later to characterise many workshop theatre productions. The size of the performances and their vocal acrobatics can perhaps be attributed to the size of the halls in which the plays were produced and their bad acoustics. The plays were built around an episodic structure and included a combination of various performance forms in the context of one performance. Music was obviously very important to Kente's theatre, the black urban music styles of the 1960s.

It is interesting to note how much of what made Kente's plays popular with a mass audience falls under the rubric of the carnivalesque: the grotesque bodies in the acting style particularly when used to characterise villains; the colloquial speech patterns; the scatological obsessions of the plays; their popular themes; and their performance in township spaces (even though these can be said to have fallen under hegemonic control). Kente's theatre was, to use Bakhtin's terminology, theatre being 'carnivalized', its structures 'permeated with laughter, irony, humor, elements of self-parody, and finally - this is the most important thing - Carnival inserts into these structures an indeterminacy, a certain semantic open-endedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality' (Bakhtin, 1981, p7).

The popularity of this theatre readjusted the position of the non-hegemonic group within the power complex of theatre practice, from a position of virtual silence to a position of contestation. It threatened to activate a real power struggle

within theatre practice in South Africa. However, the fact remained that although a greater number of black people were now watching theatre, and a greater number were discussing it, only a small number were actually engaged in making it. Performers still fell under the control of a single authority, the director/writer/manager, who determined what they would say and do on the stage, how they would do it, where and for whom. The vision was still essentially authoritarian. The productions were large and the infrastructure required for their performance was immense and costly. Certain individuals such as Sam Mhangwane and Boykie Mohlamme produced plays similar in style to Kente's theatre but overall these plays did not act as a stimulus for a large growth of play production amongst different sectors of the society.

With the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in the 1970s, politics was reintroduced into the theatre. The BCM emphasised that political goals - the liberation of the black people - could be achieved through cultural expression. The BCM rejected Kente's type of theatre as can be seen from this indictment of a Sam Mhangwane play in the Mihloti Newsletter quoted in Kavanagh (1985):

...plays that tell you how unfaithful our women are...of our broken families, of how black people fight and murder each other, bewitch each other, pimp, mistrust, hate and despise each other.

(see Kavanagh, 1985, p 163)

In contrast the BCM believed that black playwrights:

...have a moral duty to create theatre that depicts the people's struggle in terms of black awareness and to instill in them a sense of pride...the playwrights have to be proud of their blackness first, then become playwrights.

(Vusi Khumalo in Kavanagh, 1985, p 171)

In 1973 People's Experimental Theatre (PET) produced SHANTI by Mthuli Shezi. The play is politically direct and unambiguous. It maintains that the solution to the problems of black South Africans lies in the armed struggle. It was written by an individual playwright. In terms of structure it has elements of the episodic structure of Kente's plays but its performance style, although quite large and active, often leaving the illusionary world of the play to speak directly to the audience, is more cautious and serious than the rumbustiousness of Kente's plays. The language of the play is all English. As Kavanagh puts it, 'the dialogue is meticulously English, self conscious, school i.e. written English at formal moments, relaxing only slightly at informal ones into a mild student slang' (1985, p193).

SHANTI was, according to Kavanagh, a success. It did not have many performances but was enthusiastically received and its impact was immense. It was still basically a literary theatre and although the BCM wrote about speaking to a mass black audience it never really succeeded in including that mass in its theatre work in the period before 1976. Some BC writers even suggested that plays should only be written by the skilled and the educated and that lack of knowledge of English, 'the Queen's language', was a disqualification for black playwrights (Vusi Khumalo, in Kavanagh, 1985, pp 192-3).

A feature of this period was the rise of a whole discourse of township/black theatre practice (theatre organisations, festivals, discussion groups, publication of newsletters and journals). This new discourse served to challenge the arrogant, self-confidence of the dominant discourse. One of the features of the new discourse introduced by BC theatre practitioners and commentators was an insistence on the need to root the new theatre practice in the African tradition. As

one commentator remarked:

I believe there is a consensus in Black Theatre circles to the effect that Black Theatre must, as a prerequisite, rid itself of servile imitation. It must aim at shrugging off values and models thrust upon its shoulders by foreign civilizations. It is a theatre with a new mind whose mechanism works at redirecting it to the rich treasury of Black civilization wherein lies the truth and the wisdom of Africa. It is the theatre of a people who seek to discover and re-establish their civilization. The theatre of pride in one's heritage, pride that brings about self-assertion and consciousness. It is in fact (pardon the overworked phrase) the theatre of Black Consciousness.

(Mango Tshabangu in Kavanagh, 1981, p xviii)

It is significant that it is also in this period that we begin to find the first ripples of response from within the dominant discourse towards the new theatre practice.

Workshop theatre, as a cogent form, first emerged alongside the BC theatre in the early 1970's, with the work of two groups. Firstly, Workshop '71, directed by Robert McLaren, which began as an Institute for Race Relations project to create dialogue between different racial groups and soon developed into a powerful independent theatre group with productions like CROSSROADS, UHLANGA and SURVIVAL.⁵ These productions were improvised collectively by the group over extended periods of time.

Secondly, The Serpent Players in the township of New Brighton, Port Elizabeth working together with Athol Fugard. Various improvisatory experiments were tried by the group including THE COAT, FRIDAY'S BREAD ON MONDAY and THE LAST BUS, before Fugard, John Kani and Winston Ntshona produced SIZWE BANSI IS DEAD and THE ISLAND.⁶

The work of these two groups drew on various elements of the theatre that had preceded it and managed to combine the formal aspects of Kente's popular carnivalesque theatre with its urban concerns and the political commitment of BC.

But what was fundamentally different about the work of these two groups was that they created their theatre through a collective creation process in which improvisation was central. By changing the mode of production from literary to oral these groups were fundamentally altering the relations of production and the forms of social organisation that predominated within the practice of theatre. In the dominant literary practice the performers were required to submit to the power of the author through the agency of the written text. In the workshop the performers were all potentially authors. Through the essentially oral process of improvisation the performers were empowered to participate collectively in the meaning-making process. Furthermore, both Workshop '71 and The Serpent Players were concerned with exploring new forms of presentation and new communicative languages in performance. Their work involved a constant challenging of the forms of the dominant practice and an attempt to break out of the stranglehold of naturalism. This experimentation with forms combined explorations of African oral performance styles and aesthetics with explorations of the ideas of European writers like Grotowski and Artaud.

It is important to note that the work of these groups did not simply attempt to replace a European aesthetic and mode of production with an African one. Both these groups, although predominantly black, included, significantly, a white 'culture broker' in a powerful central position. Much of the work consisted of a dialogical interaction between this white director and the essentially black group in which the assumptions of essentially white literary theatre were challenged by features of black performance. What emerged was a form in which cultural differences were constantly informing and challenging each other rather than one powerful culture predominating over all others. The extent to which individual members of the group were empowered to participate in this interaction was of

course subject to power relations operating within the workshop itself and this will be examined in more detail in Part II of the study.

It is significant to note that this challenging of the dominant literary practice through the experimentation with forms was not confined to the non-hegemonic sector only. Theatre practitioners from within the hegemonic sector were actively involved in similar experiments through the importation of Anglo-American avant garde theatre and theatre writing. Fugard was actively involved in these experiments within the hegemonic sector at about the same time as he was working with The Serpent Players. His production of ORESTES, also created through a collaborative creation process with Yvonne Bryceland, Wilson Dunster and Val Donald-Bell, stemmed from the same impulses to go beyond naturalism that prompted the explorations for SIZWE BANSI IS DEAD and THE ISLAND.

The emergence of workshop theatre was a significant development because it empowered the majority to potentially participate in theatre practice, not as spectators in passive agreement with a counter-hegemonic content produced by an elite minority within alternative versions of the literary theatre, but through collective self-activity in oppositional versions of theatre practice. This potential was to be significantly realised in the 1980s.

WORKSHOP THEATRE IN THE 1980s

Victor Turner (1980) suggests that 'there is an interdependent, perhaps dialectic, relationship between social dramas and genres of cultural performance in perhaps all societies' (p 153). The rise of workshop theatre is an example of such a relationship. As Steadman (1990) comments:

...the preponderance of plays made through "workshop" theatre can be seen as analogous to the emergence of progressive action based

on a mass-democratic movement in South African politics

(p 19).

In the period post-1976, in response to reform initiatives introduced by the state, new oppositional political formations began to emerge into the vacuum resulting from the decimation of the BCM through arrests, deaths, bannings and the mass exodus of members. It had become clear that the BCM had remained an organisation of the students and the youth, had never been able to develop roots in the working class, and could not muster all the social forces (black and white) necessary to come together to bring about change in South Africa. The new formations concentrated on grassroots political activities, local level issues, labour disputes and community action. They were aligned to the congress tradition of the 1960s, linked to the Freedom Charter and based on concepts of non-racialism and democracy. Central to these formations was the notion of collective praxis. They asserted the need for mass defiance and protest which traversed all sectors of the community and the population. They were popularised by the increase of the armed struggle in this period which caught the imagination of the people. They were also linked to the rising militancy and organisation of the working class:

From the small rural villages of the northern and eastern Transvaal, to the metropolitan agglomerations of the Witwatersrand, to the small towns and metropolises of the Cape, the communities, workplaces and schools have become the loci of black opposition and rebellion that has affected ever-widening layers of the black population. Workers through their trade unions, township residents in the civic associations, militant youths in the youth congresses and parents in the Parents Crisis Committees - all these constituencies have been organised and their efforts coalesced around a set of common demands frequently articulated by national organisations such as the United Democratic Front, National Education Crisis Committee and the major trade union federations.

(Swilling, 1988, p 11)

In all these organisations, people were demanding the right to speak, to be heard, to voice their particular concerns, demands and issues. They were tired of being spoken for, of being told what could or should be said, and how. One of the ways in which this multiplicity of voices could be heard was through the medium of culture. In searching for a cultural form that could contain this plurality with all its manifest contradictions and complexities, the people fell upon the theatre and particularly the workshop theatre form that had been established in the early 1970s. Workshop theatre was a form which existed outside of the 'official'. It was a form which offered opportunities for kinds of collective existence and action more in line with the ideologies and praxis of the new oppositional politics. Workshop theatre offered the potential for democracy; not through passive consensus, but through collective self-activity. It was also a form which exploded the restrictions of the dominant literary theatre because it was fundamentally oral in three senses:

1. It was not dependent on writing for its production. Workshop theatre could be made by anyone regardless of education, regardless of an ability to write well or to speak English well.
2. It had the potential to incorporate elements of the oral performance tradition; aesthetics, forms, modes of production.
3. It functioned as a form of oral history/memory. Workshop theatre documented contemporary events from non-hegemonic perspectives not so much as factual, chronological records of events, but as bundles of meaning, relationships and themes across the linear space of a particular time. Making workshop theatre was one way in which people from marginalised groups could express their sense of

themselves in history. It was a process by which they actively attempted to explore and come to terms with the realities of their lives and position in society.

It is of course true that workshop theatre as a document of history might not be fully reliable in point of fact but rather than being a weakness, this is a strength. Errors, inventions and myths, ways in which people try to come to terms with their world, lead them and us through and beyond facts to their meanings.

I am not saying that it was the conscious intention of all the people who first began to practice workshop theatre to develop a form which, because of its oral nature, would increase access to theatre practice to a wider range of social groups or serve any or all of the other functions mentioned above. What I am saying is that was the result. Particularly in the period from the beginning of the 1980's, workshop theatre mushroomed within a wide cross-section of social contexts: youth plays, community plays, worker plays, women's plays. In most of these contexts the performers had no previous theatre experience or training. On the other hand, companies of trained professional actors began workshopping plays at venues like the Market Theatre.

Even adherents to the BC ideology, in the period post-1976, people like Matsamela Manaka and Maisha Maponya, began to use workshop theatre techniques in their theatre. As Steadman (1985) comments:

...Manaka's plays are not based on any artistic models. They are workshopped by Manaka with a group of unemployed Sowetan youths.

(p 433)

and again:

Like Manaka, Maponya restructures his plays through the rehearsal process so that the script is really little more than 'the score' of a performance created in workshop.

(p 385)

Significantly, this was also the period in which the dominant discourse began to voice its most virulent attacks on the new form. Critical response to workshop theatre through the 1980s moved from outright dismissal, to enthusiastic and patronising engagement, to attack and finally to the prediction of its demise and ultimate doom.

CONCLUSION

The rise of workshop theatre initiated a new and heightened period of struggle in the ongoing power relationship within theatre practice. This was partly due to the increased agitation in the overall power struggle between hegemonic and non-hegemonic in the society in general. It was also due to the oral nature of workshop theatre along with its collective and participatory elements.

To borrow from the field of literacy and English second language teaching, workshop theatre operates as a 'project of possibility':

A project of possibility...constitutes an agenda well beyond conventional notions of equal opportunity. Equal opportunity is defined in reference to an individual's position within given state or market-regulated social forms. Within a given form it means equal access to comparable opportunities provided within that form.... A project of possibility on the other hand would require that we expand the range of both capacities and forms within our communities. The agenda is to create practices that encourage, make possible, and enable the realization of differentiated human capacities.

(Simon, 1987, p 374)

Workshop theatre is such a new form. In the movement from the literary dramas of the period 1930-1960, through the carnivalesque stage of the Kente plays and on to workshop theatre, participation in theatre practice, for the non-hegemonic group, has moved from being simply appropriate practice authorised by the dominant discourse, to a practice which is desirable to the aspirations of that group, in terms of content and form, and contrary to the dominant discourse.

On one level workshop theatre counters the dominant formal discourse by positing an alternative which dissolves the restricting elements of the dominant form, thereby making it more acceptable to a wider range of people. On another level, the process of workshop theatre dissolves the authoritarian structures and hierarchies implicit in the production of theatre in the dominant practice and empowers people who have been silenced to speak, to claim economically and culturally a status as full participating members of a community.

So with reference to my first proposal as stated in the Introduction, it is my contention that workshop theatre can be understood as one element in a power relationship within theatre practice in South Africa, a relationship which has grown increasingly antagonistic over the period of the 1980's. This forms part of the broader power struggle between hegemonic and non-hegemonic (the state and the masses) operating within the South African society during this period. The rise of workshop theatre constitutes a movement away from alternative performance to oppositional practice. By reintroducing the oral tradition and the carnivalesque into theatre practice, workshop theatre challenges the dominant mode of practice on a fundamental level, not in order to replace it as the dominant mode but in order to relativise its claim to truth and the absoluteness of its rule.

PART II

INTRODUCTION

In Part I of the present study I argued that workshop theatre operates as an oppositional form, challenging and relativising the absolute power of the dominant literary form of theatre practice in South Africa, by fundamentally altering the forms of social organisation and the relations of production inherent in the practice of theatre.

But while claiming that workshop theatre does alter forms of social organisation and relations of production, it is important to take into account the fact that workshop theatre is not divorced from social reality. The historically determined social material conditions existing in the South African social formation as a whole, with its hierarchies and power struggles, are reproduced within the workshop itself. It therefore cannot simply be stated that workshop theatre is democratic or empowering; this democracy or empowerment must be deconstructed to reveal the power relations operating within the practice.

It is with this in mind that I now come to my second proposal as stated in the Introduction to the study. Workshop theatre is itself a site of a plurality of power struggles between various interest groups which are often reflected in the meaning and form of what is produced in the workshop, and analogous to power struggles operating in the society as a whole.

In Chapter Five I will begin by examining the workshop itself in some detail, the process through which workshop theatre is made in terms of two fundamental elements: the group and the physical making process. I will then discuss the power relations involved in this process with specific reference to the creation of meaning. In Chapter Six I will begin by examining what has become known as the

workshop play, the product that emerges from the workshop. I will then examine how the power relations of the workshop are inscribed in the product specifically in relation to its form.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WORKSHOP PROCESS

THE GROUP

One of the two fundamental elements of the process of workshop theatre is the element of collectivity or the group nature of the process. Whereas in the case of a written play the process by which the primary text is produced is undertaken in most cases by a single individual in the solitary privacy of his/her study, the same process in a workshop always involves a group of people in some form of collective interaction.

At the outset it is important to emphasise that a workshop group is not a totally homogeneous entity. As one commentator remarks: 'participants...are often multi-positioned with differing class and group allegiances and affiliations' (Orkin, 1991, p16). Certainly, in some cases there is a greater degree of homogeneity amongst workshop participants than in other cases. There is a fundamental difference between the process and eventual product of a group which is entirely black, entirely female or entirely working-class for example, and a group which is either entirely white or male or middle-class, or in a group which combines elements of all these categories. There is no way, however, in which it can be argued that a group of disparate human beings, however much they seem to subscribe to a particular unifying group identity or world-view, can be considered to be as homogeneous as a single individual with a singular vision. If it is a singular vision that is being sought, I would suggest the workshop method can hardly be expected to be an appropriate method by which to achieve such a vision.

The body of the workshop group, particularly in a country like South Africa then, is never a simple unified and closed body. It is more clearly something akin to Bakhtin's carnival body: unfinished, orifices gaping wide, protuberant and bulging. A body in which a plurality of voices struggle to be heard. A body in which multiple contradictions are the rule rather than the exception. This makes the workshop at one and the same time a site of immensely fruitful creative interchange and exasperatingly debilitating confusions and arguments. Much of the little that has been written on or spoken about workshop theatre in my experience focuses on this inherent dichotomy.

A workshop group comes into being in a number of ways. Examples of such group formations are:

1. A group of people with a similar idea or vision either of the theatre and how it should be practiced, or of what is happening in the world around them, gravitate towards each other by a kind of directed osmosis to make a workshop production [for example Junction Avenue Theatre Company (JATCO) particularly the earlier productions; Workshop '71].
2. An individual who can command some degree of respect or authority decides to do a workshop production and assembles a group of participants around him/her. Here the participants will join the group for reasons like wanting to work with the particular individual concerned; being paid to work in the group; or, as in the case of university drama students for example, because it is demanded of them as part of their training course. [For example groups working with Barney Simon on a number of productions like **BLACK DOG** and **BORN IN THE RSA**; or working with Percy Mtwa and with Mbongeni Ngema on **BOPHA** and **ASINAMALI** respectively].

3. A particular group who have gravitated towards each other as the result of a certain common identity or common problem, wishing to make a workshop production concerning these commonalities but feeling themselves to be without essential skills, approach a person outside of the group who they recognise as having the required skills that they lack. In this example, the group might not lack the skills to create a workshop production but might need particular input from people who are not part of the group but important to an investigation of the group's concerns. [For example worker theatre groups working with facilitators like Ari Sitas and Astrid von Kotze; in the production of THINA BANTU the group of white drama students was expanded by the inclusion of three township community actors specifically employed for the production].

Once the group has been established a series of dynamics come into play which influence the way the group operates. The way the group has come together will influence these dynamics. A number of possible ways forward exist for the group:

1. The group can operate according to strict democratic procedures as a group. No leader is appointed or elected and no central controlling sub-group is formed. All decisions on how to proceed are taken by the group as a group either through a voting system or by a process of discussion and debate through which consensus is reached.
2. A leader is elected or appointed by the group. Obviously if the group came together around a particular individual or if the group drew in a particular individual in order to fulfill the leadership function, that individual will become the

leader. The leader might not be a single individual but could be a sub-group of workshop participants operating in a central leadership role.

3. A leader or controlling sub-group emerges from within the group without ever being expressly appointed or elected as leader. In this case the emergent leader or leadership group might never be acknowledged as such or acknowledge him/her/itself as leader.

The first example is probably only an ideal situation. Groups may argue that they operate in this fashion but it is not very likely that they in fact do. It is far more common for groups to operate either by appointing a leader or accepting as leader the individual around whom the group formed, or by some leader or controlling sub-group emerging through the process. What is important to emphasise is that a process of schism occurs within the group, usually quite early on in the process, between the group and certain powerful individuals or factions within the group. This is important because it forms the basis for an essential power relationship that operates through all workshop processes. I will return to a discussion of this power relationship later in this chapter.

THE PHYSICAL MAKING PROCESS

The second fundamental element of the workshop process is the element of physical making as opposed to writing. Any written script that exists of a performance created in workshop is the sum total of this physical making, usually produced after the total making is complete and then often for some reason other than as a guide to the actors. For example, many written texts of workshop plays that do exist were only compiled when it became necessary for the stage-manager

to have a prompt-copy or for the lighting and sound technicians to record their cues.

The physical making process in a workshop differs from situation to situation. Each group has its own way of making plays, but the process can basically be broken down into four strands:

1. Group work and learning to play
2. Observation
3. Presentation
4. Selection

These strands are not all included in the work process of every workshop group. Nor do they necessarily follow one after the other but are interwoven through the duration of the workshop. Any number of strands may co-exist during any one work session.

I would argue, however, that the major element of the playmaking process is improvisation. Although improvisation in its various forms is part of most of the strands listed above, it is central to the presentation strand. I will therefore discuss improvisation at some length under the presentation section. My discussion of the group work, observation and selection strands will be more brief.

1. Group work/Learning how to play

This type of work is usually found at the beginning of a workshop process but may be included at any stage of the process. Two broad categories of activities can be isolated. The first category of activities is aimed at developing the workshop

group as a group made up of disparate individuals. The second category of activities is aimed at developing the improvisation capacities of the participants - in other words teaching them how to play. The two categories of exercises are not, in reality, distinct. Aspects of group work emerge from exercises ostensibly designed to teach playing skills and vice versa.

(i) Group work

In my own workshop experience both as a participant and as a workshop leader it is extremely important that the group is not simply taken for granted as a cohesive body. All groups are made up of individuals and all individuals bring certain attitudes and inhibitions into the work situation. As Clive Barker (1977) comments:

There is often a tacit understanding built up in acting companies not to engage in certain areas of human interaction with other actors. We all have to work with people whom we do not personally, instinctively like, or about whom we feel strong emotions of one kind or another. The tacit understanding not to meet in certain areas turns into a passive tolerance, which carries over from the private relationship into the rehearsal situation.

(p 101)

Many workshop groups in South Africa include people from vastly different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. In addition people in South Africa have been taught to remain separated off from other people who belong to different cultural groups. This leads to a situation where intra-group inhibitions and prejudices are rampant even though on the surface, at least, most people who participate in workshop theatre in South Africa tend to project an attitude of openness and acceptance towards others from different cultural groups and an apparent willingness to explore different life experiences.

It is, therefore, important to tackle these inhibitions and barriers within the group on some level. Many group work exercises are aimed at breaking down such barriers within the group, as well as developing a sense of trust amongst the group members. Physical and vocal exercises aimed at extending the range of the individual participants might also be included.

Exercises or games aimed at breaking down barriers would begin at the level of the physical. Exercises would involve the release of energy through a high level of physical activity. Such activity could tend to be quite boisterous and even a little rough and would include a good deal of conscious or unconscious physical contact between group members. A playful competition element might be included. It is often the case, particularly where the workshop is dominated by black performers or where it is racially mixed, that traditional or gumboot dancing and singing forms an important element of this activity. The dancing and singing serves to bind the group and helps with physical warm-up and co-ordination; it also empowers the black performers particularly in relation to any white performers in the workshop.

Other work might include massage and shake-out exercises in which one person's body is worked by the rest of the group. This involves some degree of release of physical inhibitions on the part of the person whose body is being worked, particularly if the working group is taking good care. It also increases the level of intimacy amongst the group members and helps with group bonding. Massage is also a good warm-up and relaxation exercise for later work.

Contact games might develop from the physical to the non-physical. Participants might be asked, for example, to walk around the room choosing whom, amongst the other workshop participants, they wish to make contact with and whom they wish to avoid. Such an exercise reveals much about the individual participants and about their relationship to the rest of the group.

Clive Barker (1977) suggests that 'the use of another person, to whom one trusts the security of one's body, is an important part of the work of building a group' (p93). Trust exercises usually involve the participants doing something that they would not normally do because it involves putting their bodies at some kind of physical risk, and then trusting the remainder of the group to prevent anything adverse from happening to them. Most trust exercises that I have been involved with include either elements of falling and catching or of jumping and catching.

Many good examples of the games and exercises indicated above are to be found in Clive Barker's: Theatre Games (1977, pp 91-109).

(ii) Learning to play

The second general category of work in this first strand of the process involves an attempt to help the workshop participants to learn to play.

The basic transaction of any improvisation, in fact of any interaction between two people in life or two actors on a stage in a scripted play, involves a proposition followed by a response. If the response in turn becomes another proposition which itself, in turn, is responded to, setting off a string of continuous propositions and responses, the participants have begun to play. Two things are I believe fundamental to successful playing: the ability to say 'Yes', and the ability to react spontaneously.

Keith Johnstone (1981) comments that:

There are people who prefer to say 'Yes', and there are people who prefer to say 'No'. Those who say 'Yes' are rewarded by the adventures they have, and those who say 'No' are rewarded by the safety they attain. There are far more 'No' sayers around than 'Yes' sayers, but you can train one type to behave like the other.

(p 92)

He goes on to argue that any proposition that is made by one performer will be either accepted or blocked by other performers. 'Yes' sayers accept propositions that are made to them while 'No' sayers block such propositions. An acceptance allows the action to move forward. A block stops the action from developing or destroys the premise on which it was based. Some blocking can be so subtle that it is quite hard to perceive. Most people like to feel safe and comfortable and this leads to habitual blocking of propositions that might lead to experiences which are new and unknown. In this category, therefore, exercises must be developed which help the participants understand this essential transaction of proposition and response, and which make them aware of their blocking and accepting strategies.

The second factor that affects play is the participants' ability to react spontaneously, that is with the first thing that comes into mind. Johnstone (1981) argues, in relation to the English context, that the school system and our general upbringing tends to inhibit our ability to react spontaneously and therefore to play. As he describes his own experience:

At school any spontaneous act was likely to get me into trouble. I learned never to act on impulse, and that whatever came into my mind first should be rejected in favour of better ideas. I learned that my imagination wasn't 'good enough'. I learned that the first idea was unsatisfactory because it was (1) psychotic; (2) obscene; (3) unoriginal. The truth is that the best ideas are often psychotic, obscene and unoriginal.

(p 82)

It is my experience that this is also the case in the South African context. Both white Christian National Education and black Bantu Education refuse all spontaneous and creative thought in favour of the ideas of some higher authority: parents, teachers, the Government, God. It is therefore vitally important that

performers in workshops in South Africa develop capacities to respond spontaneously and to value their first impulses.

Spontaneity exercises must encourage the participants to value and express the first idea or impulse and then to follow it through as far as it will go - to play with it. Participants might for example be asked to give each other presents which they open and respond to. If this process of giving and receiving is repeated a number of times, and the process is speeded up, thereby bypassing the 'watcher at the gates of the mind',¹ the participants tend to become more and more spontaneous and the presents they receive and what is done with them become more interesting.

Further exercises on play and spontaneity can be found in Keith Johnstone's book: Impro (1981, pp 100-105).

In a discussion of the workshop process followed by JATCO in the making of TOOTH AND NAIL, Nicola Galombik and Carol Steinberg (1989) describe three different areas of work prior to improvisation: physical exercises, vocal exercises and games. Whereas the first two were essentially involved with extending the physical and vocal range of the workshop participants, the games section involved developing 'skills in role playing and improvisation, as well as experimentation with relationships of power and trust' (p3). They also mention that many of the scenes that were later developed for the play arose directly out of the games. This is a good indication of the way in which one strand of the workshop process interweaves with other strands. Exercises in group work or learning how to play do not simply have one aim or end, they inform the workshop at many levels throughout the process.

2. Observation

Observation is essentially a research phase. It involves on the one hand materials brought to the workshop from the life experience of the participating performers, and on the other hand, materials discovered by the performers during the observation phase of the particular workshop. In other words, long-term and short-term material. Observation could involve extensive reading and interviews as is the case with most JATCO plays such as MARABI and SOPHIATOWN. As Malcolm Purkey writes in the introduction to the published version of SOPHIATOWN:

...we were aware of our enormous responsibility to the people of Sophiatown - we had to strive to remain true to the spirit of the times. And so we started a series of interviews with representative figures from the period.

We were fortunate to witness, in a workshop, four hours of the most revelatory storytelling from Don Mattera, sometime Sophiatown gangster and poet....

Schoolteacher and Sophiatown property owner, Jane Dakile, told of the brutal destruction of her home.... Anthony Sampson and Nadine Gordimer, amongst others, shared their experiences of the intellectual life of Sophiatown....

One day we set off in four cars to Pretoria, to the film archives to study the films of the fifties, 'African Jim' and 'The Magic Garden'.

(Purkey, 1988, p xi)

In WATHINT'ABAFAZI, WATHINT'IMBOKOTHO² the three actors, Thobeka Maqutyana, Poppie Tsira and Nomvula Qosha, and the director, Phyllis Klotz, began by researching the role of women in the struggle for liberation in South Africa. This research included reading a thesis and various books on the subject as well as discussions from personal experience.

Observation could also involve actually observing people in the course of their everyday actions or the roles that they play in life. This is a technique favoured by

Barney Simon who speaks of creating 'theatre from the streets' (interview, 5/7/90). Here Simon is inspired by Bertolt Brecht and particularly from lines in a poem by Brecht entitled 'On Everyday Theatre':

You artists who perform plays
 In great houses under electric suns
 Before the hushed crowd, pay a visit some time
 To that theatre whose setting is the street.
 The everyday, thousandfold, fameless
 But vivid, earthy theatre fed by the daily
 human contact
 Which takes place in the street.
 Here the woman from next door imitates the
 landlord:
 Demonstrating his flood of talk she makes it
 clear
 How he tried to turn the conversation
 From the burst water pipe. In the parks at
 night
 Young fellows show giggling girls
 The way they resist, and in resisting
 Slyly flaunt their breasts. A drunk
 Gives us the preacher at his sermon, referring
 the poor
 To the rich pastures of paradise. How useful
 Such theatre is though, serious and funny
 And how dignified! They do not, like parrot
 or ape
 Imitate just for the sake of imitation,
 unconcerned
 What they imitate, just to show that they
 Can imitate; no, they
 Have a point to put across. You
 Great artists, masterly imitators, in this
 regard
 Do not fall short of them! Do not become too
 remote
 However much you perfect your art
 From that theatre of daily life
 Whose setting is the street.

(Bertolt Brecht Poems, p 176)

In WOZA ALBERT Mbongeni Ngema and Percy Mtwa spent many hours watching the residents of Johannesburg's streets and townships. These

observations formed the basis for many of the characters who are interviewed in the play about the arrival of Morena in South Africa. In *BORN IN THE RSA*, cast members were asked about people that interested them and were then sent out to find models on which to base their characters. Some were prompted in a specific direction by the director, Barney Simon, but most were given at least a chance to investigate their first choice. Neil McCarthy was interested in playing a character based on a mechanic who lived across the road from his home in Bez Valley, but Simon was interested in him portraying a campus spy. After some investigation McCarthy settled on the spy. He actually visited and applied for a job at the infamous John Voster Square police station where Thenjiwe a character in the play is later detained. Gcina Mhlophe wanted to portray a reborn Christian but after observing such a woman in a hostel in Alexandra for a few days she decided on another character based on a woman in the Detainees Parent's Support Committee (DPSC) whose child had been detained. Terry Norton had seen a television programme on call girls and went off to investigate an escort agency only to return with the conclusion that she wanted to play 'an ordinary South African'. Vanessa Cooke was introduced to a former detainee by the director and based her character to a large degree on this woman's experience.

Observation might be simply personal experience. Aubrey Radebe who plays the role of a policeman in *BOPHA* underwent training to become a policeman before resigning to become an actor. In *THE LONG MARCH*, the initial storytelling phase of the workshop, described by Astrid von Kotze (1988, p84) involved the performer/workers relating their personal experiences and stories of the strike. These experiences and stories form the basis for the later composition of scenes for the play.

The observation phase gives the performer access to what Michael Vaughan (1988) calls:

...the active culture of the wider society...the ways in which people in that wider society formulate their responses to, and interpretations of, the diversity of their experience.

(p 10)

It gives the performer access to the creativity of the people as 'makers of culture'. When performers go out to do observation they see stories happening around them, stories played out over time as drama with the streets as stage. Stories embodied in looks, gestures, moments. These are the stories that constitute the new tradition on which the new performance forms evolve.

3. Presentation

The third strand of the making process I have called presentation. Basically, in this strand of activity what has been observed is presented and creatively elaborated through play.

As I have already indicated earlier in this chapter the major feature of this strand is improvisation but presentation could take the form of discussion or demonstration. Whatever form it takes, it involves some degree of extemporary or improvised performance. Improvisation is the creative process by which segments are formed which will later make up the episodes of the play.

In Chapter Two I noted that central to the carnival tradition in Western theatre practice, and that which most distinguishes it from the literary theatre, is this process of improvisation. I also noted, in Chapter Three, that improvisation is a key element of African oral performance forms. However, in both the oral

tradition and the carnival tradition improvisation occurs in front of the audience. When the performers enter the playing space before the audience, they have at most a basic pre-determined structure within which to improvise. The remainder of their performance 'text' is created at the moment of performance. In contrast, in the presentation strand of the workshop, improvisation is part of a preparation for a performance which will take place at a later date. By the time an audience gets to view the finished product most, if not all, of the improvisational elements will apparently have been discarded in the performance itself.

This is only partly true. The presentation phase of a workshop is not dissimilar to a performance. In fact as Peter Brook points out in The Empty Space, the French word for performance is représentation (1972, p155). Something which has been presented before is re-presented. Both take place in front of an audience and therefore in both cases a community is created. In the first instance the community of the workshop participants: actors, directors, stage-managers, designers, lighting designers, and so on. In the second instance the community of those on- or backstage, and those who watch: the audience. It could be argued that in both cases the success of the process depends on the extent to which this sense of community bonding has been successful.

Improvisation is not an easy process to theorise. It is essentially active and rooted in the physical body. It struggles in the realm of the mind. In my opinion, the closest one gets to an understanding of the improvisation process is in the work of Jacques Lecoq, the French teacher of mime and movement theatre. Lecoq founded his Ecole Internationale de Mime et de Théâtre in 1956 in Paris. According to a brochure issued by the school the overall aim of Lecoq's teaching is

to:

... 'découvrir les règles du jeu théâtral par une pratique de l'improvisation tactile à tous les niveaux (du réalisme à l'abstraction)', which might be glossed as: to discover the essentials of play and interplay in theatrical performance by the practice of improvisation using the whole range of tactile possibility at all levels (from realism to symbolic condensation).

(Quoted in Frost & Yarrow, 1990, pp 62-3)

Lecoq has collaborated with a host of internationally famous theatre companies including the Théâtre Nationale Populaire, the Comédie Française, the Schiller Theater, the Piccolo Teatro (della Città) di Milano, and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Since 1969 he has been a professor at the University of Paris, directing a Laboratory devoted to the study of movement and dramatic architecture.

He has taught or worked with a vast array of innovative theatre practitioners like Giorgio Strehler, Dario Fo, Franca Rame, Michel Saint-Denis, Ariane Mnouchkine, Peter Brook and Stephen Berkoff. His ideas on improvisation are very close to those of Brook and Mnouchkine in particular, two of the foremost exponents of improvisation in the theatre today. Graduates of the Lecoq school have formed some of the most exciting theatre companies in Europe and America: Avner the Eccentric, Moving Picture Mime Show, Théâtre de Complicité, Mummenschanz and Footsbarn to name but a few. One of the fundamental aspects of the work of all these groups is the notion of collective creation through improvisation. Lecoq has also been responsible for researching and repopularising the old carnival forms. Along with people like Dario Fo he has studied forms like the commedia dell'arte and the buffoon and passed them on to his students as part of the fundamental tradition of theatre. Many of the companies emerging from

the Lecoq school mentioned above include many carnivalesque elements in their productions.

Lecoq does not write much about his work. Like most theatre practitioners he prefers to do or show rather than to talk about doing. He has performed his demonstration piece Tout Bouge ('Everything Moves') in many countries. What little he has written is in French and until recently very few translations of his writings existed. In 1987 he published his most comprehensive work to date Le Théâtre du Geste, a book which to my knowledge has not been translated into English.³ My understanding of Lecoq's work derives from informal discussions with South African actress Jennie Reznick who trained with Lecoq in Paris, from a recent book on improvisation entitled Improvisation in Drama by Anthony Frost and Ralph Yarrow, and from a personal visit to the Lecoq school in Paris at the end of 1989.

For Lecoq improvisation begins in a silence somewhat akin to the 'empty space' of Peter Brook. But it is not only a silence that exists outside of the performer, enveloping him/her, it is a silence inside of the performer too. The 'empty space' is at once within and without. For Mnouchkine this idea of the space inside is primary and the representation of the space outside is dependent on it. As she says: 'You believe the space is outside of you. This is wrong, it is in you. I can only take in space if I see you take it in.' (Féral, p86). Similarly, Brook often speaks of 'making the invisible visible' (Banu, 1987, pp 99-106; Cohen, 1991, p 152).

What must be emphasised here is that the notions of 'silence' for Lecoq and of 'emptiness' for Brook do not imply passivity. The silence is a point of unlimited possibility in which all creative directions remain open. For Lecoq it is important for the performer to achieve a state of disponibilité, a state of balance which is at

once open and energised, from which all paths remain open and in which the body is in a state of 'precise corporeal preparedness' (Frost & Yarrow p66).

Disponibilité is close to Johnstone's state of 'Yes' and to the Zen concept of the 'Beginners Mind':

Our 'original mind' includes everything within itself. It is always rich and sufficient within itself. You should not lose you self-sufficient state of mind. This does not mean a closed mind, but actually an empty mind and a ready mind. If your mind is empty, it is always ready for anything; it is open to everything. In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few.

(Suzuki, 1988, p 21)

The silence from which all improvisations begin can be a point of unlimited possibility, but it can also be a source of great fear with a potential to freeze the performer in inaction which will perpetuate the silence. The performer entering the silence balances precariously on the delicate edge between acting, thereby emerging out of the silence, and failing to act. As Frost and Yarrow comment:

If you let the silence go on...[it] becomes an introverted embarrassment crowded with self-accusations, justifications and excuses jostling each other into impotence and leaving you rooted to the spot. What...Lecoq emphasises is the need to act...immediately from the silence, from the unknowing. In doing that you acknowledge it and put your trust in it;...you validate the silence as a temporary collecting-point...which can be activated to produce the next sequence of moves.

(p 71)

What helps performers in the moment of indecision, between acting and failing to act, is the fact that they do not come into the silence unarmed. Performers enter the silence with various resources at their disposal. For Lecoq these resources are acquired through precise observation of the world and through the practical work done by the performer - through preparation and training.

Improvisation is 'the activation of these resources at appropriate moments so that they emerge in new sequences' (Frost & Yarrow, 1989, p71). These resources relate to Scheub's notion of 'material funds' in oral composition and to the observation work of the workshop process discussed above. The problem for most people according to Lecoq is that they are too socially conditioned to accurately observe the world around them. Achieving the state of disponibilité does not only help us to open up possibilities and energise us to act at the moment of improvisation and play, it also helps us to observe the world around us more precisely which enriches the possibilities for play:

In the beginning, it is necessary to demystify all that we know in order to put ourselves in a state of non-knowing, a state of openness and availability for the rediscovery of the elemental. For now, we no longer see what surrounds us.

(Lecoq, 1972, p 41)

Another factor which is important to note here, is that Lecoq emphasises that these resources are 'references recognised in the body'. The world around us moves ('tout bouge'). We observe the world: its rhythms, movements, realities, and we store these elements not in the mind but in the body. Improvisation is an essentially physical event. It is this fact that makes the text of a performance created in workshop fundamentally different from a performance based on a written text.

In order to understand this more clearly we must briefly look at Lecoq's idea of mime. For Lecoq, mime is not limited to gesture in silence. It includes all resources available to the performer including the spoken word which is, after all, a physical event. But what is important is that the gesture precedes the word. Lecoq distinguishes his notion of mime from what he terms pantomime or the

mime de forme epitomised by Marcel Marceau and inspired by Decroux. In this kind of mime the gesture imitates the word which pre-supposes that the word exists before the gesture. The gesture is denotative because it is reliant upon a pre-existent language. The gesture sign for 'wall' replaces the word 'wall'. Lecoq terms his mime the mime de fond, the fundamental or basic mime.

Anthropologically speaking, movement precedes language in the development of the human being. The goal of Lecoq's work is to re-discover the gesture before the words. 'To emulate the gestural expression prior to language' (Felner, 1985, p153). Not in order to replace words with gestures but to contribute with words to the communication process. For Lecoq mime is connotative in that it does not rely on any pre-existent definitional system like spoken language. It is a definitional system of its own which can inform language. Because mime is not limited by words it can exist alongside words.

For Lecoq, improvisation and mime are connected. From the silence the performer acts. What the performer does becomes a proposition. A proposal to advance, to play. In the moment of improvisation, the performer creates languages in which to articulate his/her proposition. For Lecoq improvisation is 'the physical articulation of mimetic possibility' (Frost & Yarrow, 1990, p65), that is the languages created during improvisation use a vast array of communicative possibilities: words, gestures, sounds, traditionally stable choreographed movements etc. There is no doubt that improvising performers will employ a wider spectrum of communicative languages than the writers of plays. The degree of training and experience that performers have in a particular style of performance will influence the languages that emerge when they improvise.

The actor for Lecoq is not an interpreter of a pre-existent text, but an 'author who needs to discover his own style' (Frost & Yarrow, 1990, p71). In an

improvisation it is the performers who create the text for the performance at the moment of performance. No outside authorial power dictates the way forward. The performers are free to choose which path to follow and in what style, in what language, in what voice they will act. As we have already seen some pre-existent text does inform the improvisation but it is not a text that fixes the action and determines in which direction it must proceed. It is a text which initiates a creative play of meanings. A Bakhtinian riot of generative dialogical possibility:

Improvisation doesn't work entirely without a pre-existent 'text', any more than language or creativity do: but what it does is to operate with the ever-present possibility of reorganisation - of shaking the kaleidoscope again - which can keep you on your toes, on the edge of your seat or on the limits of your mental and physical world. It turns text into texturing, into the art of weaving new patterns....

(Frost & Yarrow, 1990, p 169)

The language of the above is reminiscent of that used by Ong in his discussion of oral composition referred to earlier when discussing the African oral tradition. In the oral tradition individual creativity lies in the way a particular performer weaves together elements of the tradition embellishing them in the process with new details and forms.

In the presentation phase of the workshop the performers improvise in order to create text. These improvisations are usually based on themes suggested by the performers or the director as a result of things emerging from the observation strand of the process. What is important is that the text is created by the performer at the moment of performance. It can be argued that a similar process of 'cue and scan' as used by Scheub to describe intsomi composition, operates during these improvisations. The performers draw from similar material funds as those described by Scheub or from the resources described by Lecoq. The cueing

and scanning might not be into a memory-bank of traditional images gleaned from 'songs sung' or stories told, but into a memory-bank filled with contemporary images through the observation strand of the workshop process, or through watching other performances in other plays and films, or hearing songs or music, or reading books and seeing photographs or paintings and drawings. These images are often shared by a whole community of people who easily understand their origin and import. They may relate specifically to a particular period imbued with a particular collective structure of experience or feeling.⁴ Barney Simon refers to these images as emblems:

I use the word emblem. You know sometimes you are struck with a thing and it remains there pressed in your forehead.

(Interview, 5/7/90)

From the above discussion of improvisation two factors emerge which are, I believe, fundamental to the playmaking process of workshop theatre:

1. Improvisation is essentially a physical activity in which gesture exists before and alongside words. This is important in relation to what emerges through improvisation - the product of the workshop. In a workshop in which improvisation is used extensively during the presentation strand, the product will retain an essentially physical character. If writing is used in place of improvisation in this strand, the product will be less physical and more literary in character. This difference can be illustrated by looking at two plays in which monologues are predominant: *BORN IN THE RSA* workshopped by the cast and directed by Barney Simon, and *ASINAMALI* workshopped by the cast and directed by Mbongeni Ngema. In *ASINAMALI* improvisation was used extensively and the performance text of each monologue retains many of the physical gestures that

preceded the words. When the words are fixed and assigned to the page as a final playtext there is no indication of the gestural signs which surround and inform the words. I would suggest that this makes the monologues seem slight when they are read as opposed to experienced live in the theatre. In *BORN IN THE RSA*, on the other hand, there was no improvisation during the presentation strand. After extensive observation and discussion on character, monologues were written. The resultant performances tend to be less physical and what gesture exists is sub-textual rather than textual, created not at the moment of creation but during rehearsal of the written product. In the finished playtext of *BORN IN THE RSA* the monologues read well as literary works comparable to any written play.

2. Improvisation shifts the performers from being creative interpreters to being creative authors, potentially freeing them from a pre-existent text and the control of an external authorial voice. This creative authoring on the part of the performers is important because it empowers the performers in the workshop group both as individuals and in relation to the group leader or director. As individuals the performers are empowered in that they contribute, through improvisation, on a primary level both to what is said in the performance and to the style in which it is said. They not only speak for themselves but also with their own voices, their own style of action and communication. Their power as a group in relation to the director will be dealt with in more detail after I have dealt with the selection strand of the playmaking process.

One final element of the presentation strand of the workshop process that needs to be mentioned here is the recording of a particular improvisation. An imbongi composing and reciting a poem spontaneously, has no pre-conceived idea of the overall structure of the poem he/she is reciting. Nor will he/she be able to

repeat it exactly again. An imbongi's composition, like that of all oral poets, only 'exists at the moment it is going out of existence', at the moment of its performance (Ong, 1982, p32). Similarly, a performer in the commedia dell'arte, despite having a pre-determined structure for a particular performance, will not be able to re-create the same improvised scene verbatim. The main ideas might repeat themselves but the details will vary from performance to performance and good performers would not hesitate to follow new directions that open themselves up during a particular performance. Likewise, performers in the process of improvising a scene in a workshop situation are unlikely to have a rigid pre-conceived structure for their improvisation. Even when a structure has been imposed on an improvisation it is probable that neither the performers nor the director know with any certainty where the improvisation will lead to. The improvisation will certainly not be able to be repeated exactly a second time.

Some theatre groups in other countries improvise their performances in front of an audience. Peter Brook's performers did this in their tour through Africa out of which emerged the production CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS (Heilpern, 1977, p67). Keith Johnstone and Roddy Maude-Roxby's Theatre Machine also improvise their performances in front of an audience. There have been occasions in South Africa where worker plays have been improvised in front of an audience. Von Kotze (1988) describes an occasion in July 1986 when Mi Hlatshwayo, Alfred Qabula, and a MAWU organiser from Newcastle, Badumuti, improvised a play called YOU'RE A FAILURE MR MPIMPI at the MAWU congress after only rehearsing for about ten minutes (pp 73-4). However, workshop theatre in South Africa is usually fixed to a large extent before it is shown to an audience beyond the workshop community. Whereas it is true that performers in workshop theatre have more scope to change and develop their roles according to specific

circumstances such as changes in the political situation and in some cases the response of the audience and critics, a large degree of consistent repetition is required. John Kani's improvised monologue at the beginning of *SIZWE BANSI IS DEAD* is an exception to the general rule in South African workshop theatre. Today many performers playing the role of Styles fix the monologue before the performance and rehearse it to be repeated. This being the general state of affairs, it is essential that some form of recording of improvisations happens. This may take the form of extensive notes taken by the director or a scribe. This was the case in the production of *THINA BANTU* for example. Barney Simon tends to make recordings of improvisations on a tape recorder. The group then transcribes these recordings verbatim and Simon shapes the material into scenes. Sometimes individual group members with writing skills might be given the shaping task. Some groups may even use video recordings. This method is particularly useful in productions with a large physical or non-verbal component. Jazzart Dance Theatre often uses video to record free dance improvisation. Individual movements or movement sequences are then extracted and worked into the performance as part of more stable choreographic units. Some groups believe that constant repetition is the only way to retain what is created. What is forgotten is considered to have been unimportant. This is the philosophy of English director Mike Leigh. In my own production, *PERSONAL COLUMN* made in 1985, this method was used. The play was made up of a number of scenes involving pairs of performers. These pairs would improvise the same scene over and over in the workshop until it began to gel into some semblance of a finished product. The scenes were never written down so even when the play was subsequently performed, a scene might differ from performance to performance. This leads us to the final phase of the process - 'selection'.

4. Selection

Here the various segments created or composed in improvisations and recorded are selected or rejected. Those that are selected are stitched together to form the 'text' of the performances that will follow the workshop. By 'text' I am referring to all the elements that are to be included in the performances including words, gestures, movement, dance and song. As I have already indicated, a text in the form of a written script including words and some stage directions is not always produced in a workshop. Often the 'text' simply consists of an agreed schema or sequence of events. In cases where written scripts have been produced they either ignore the non-verbal elements that have been produced or they go to great lengths to incorporate these elements making the text quite technical and difficult to decipher.

Selection takes different forms in different groups. Basically there are two possible processes. In the first, the director, workshop leader, or a writer, produces a text after the presentation phase separate from the rest of the workshop group. This text may or may not be modified by the workshop group. In the production of SOPHIATOWN, a scripting process under the control of the director, Malcolm Purkey, happened after the improvisation stage was complete and in fact some of the actors were only brought in to play some of the parts that had been created, at a late stage in the process. In the second method, the individuals within the group produce segments of the text through improvisation as the workshop progresses. These segments are stitched together simultaneously with the process of composition and in a more collective and participatory way. In South Africa this second option seems to occur more frequently.

Two further points must be noted. Some amount of conventional rehearsal will always follow the selection phase in order to prepare for the public performances. If the text has been scripted separate from the workshop group quite a lot of rehearsal will need to take place, particularly if the actors were not central to the workshop improvisations and discussions. However, if the text is created in the workshop alongside the improvisations it is often surprising how little rehearsal is necessary before the text can be performed. In the workshop for THINA BANTU the final text was not decided on until very late in the process, about one week before opening night, and the performers were nervous that there would be no time for rehearsal. When the text was put together very little rehearsal proved necessary as much of the character work had already been dealt with in the workshops. The second point to be noted is that the selection of material to be included in the final text is not an easy or neutral process. It is a difficult struggle for meaning and ultimately for power within the workshop group. I will deal with this in more detail in the following section.

POWER RELATIONS IN THE WORKSHOP PROCESS: The struggle for meaning

If the performer is empowered to create meaning through improvisation in the earlier stages of the workshop, it is during the selection phase that the extent of this empowerment is tested. The workshop process is designed to produce a 'text' which will be performed to an audience outside of the workshop group. The text is intended to mean something; to communicate a meaning to the audience. In South Africa this text is usually fixed before the performances begin, and although there is often some leeway for change, the text basically 'anchors' the performance to a pre-determined meaning (Frost & Yarrow, 1990, p175).

In discussing language as discourse, Bakhtin argues that when we speak, we speak into an environment already saturated with alien words, other people's words. Amidst this throng of alien words, our words struggle to achieve their intention, their meaning. For Bakhtin it is 'the word breaking through to its own meaning and its own expression across an environment full of alien words and variously evaluating accents, harmonizing with some of the elements in this environment and striking a dissonance with others' (Bakhtin, 1981, p277). Bakhtin emphasises that these competing words are not socially equal. Some people's words are privileged and others face the risk of marginalisation. It is through a process of 'dialogic interaction' that the privileged words attempt to assert their authority and maintain their position of privilege and control, while the subordinated words attempt to avoid, negotiate or subvert that control (White, 1984, p125). All this occurs in a space which Bakhtin terms the 'logosphere': a space where meaning occurs as a dynamic and constant struggle between centrifugal forces that seek to keep things apart and in motion, and that increase difference, and centripetal forces that strive to make things cohere and to stay in their preordained places (Holquist, 1983, p309).

Thus it is with the meanings created by the performers through improvisation in the workshop. They too enter an environment saturated with other people's meanings and they too must struggle to be included in the ultimate meaning embodied in the 'text' that is to be performed to the audience. We have already noted how the workshop group is far from an homogeneous entity and how it tends to divide up into factions. These factions are not equally empowered. The meanings they create exist within a hierarchy which can either be accepted, which will lead to some factions being marginalised or silenced, or contested, in which

case subordinate meanings will struggle with privileged meanings to be heard and included.

Factors that affect the unequal distribution of the power to participate freely and equally in the workshop are:

1. Gender discrimination

Mostly this entails the marginalisation of the women's contribution. Women often have to struggle within groups dominated by powerful male figures to be allowed to speak, to be heard and taken seriously, and to influence the final meaning of the performance in a significant way. It is interesting to note that in most workshop plays men do predominate.

This has led to separatist women's plays such as *ULOVANE JIVE* created by Clare Stopford, Aletta Bezuidenhout, Nandi Nyembe, Nomhle Nkonyeni and Jacqui Singer, and *LAST TREK* created by Stopford and a group of nine women. These plays are made by women, about women and are often a direct reaction to the predominance of men in workshop groups, and in the production of theatre in general.

In racially and gender mixed groups such as *JATCO* and Barney Simon's groups in *BLACK DOG* and *BORN IN THE RSA*, men and women seem on the surface to be equally involved. In *BORN IN THE RSA*, out of a cast of seven, five were women, and powerful women such as Gcina Mhlophe, Vanessa Cooke, Fiona Ramsay, Terry Norton and Thoko Ntshinga. In *JATCO*, contributions by women such as Astrid von Kotze, Pippa Stein, Gladys Mothlale, Ruth Jacobson, and lately from Doreen Mazibuko, Megan Kruskal, Carol Steinberg and Nicola Galombik are arguably significant. However, it is my opinion, based on extensive interviews

with past and present members of the company, that the strong male figures such as Malcolm Purkey, Ari Sitas, William Kentridge and to a lesser extent Ramalao Makehene, Siphwe Khumalo and Arthur Molepo, usually occupy powerful positions within the group and within the discourse surrounding the company.⁵ Of all the JATCO productions to date only one has been directed by a woman: Von Kotze in the production of SECURITY.

It was a pattern in the workshop plays produced during the 1980s by predominantly black workshop groups, for men to dominate to the extent that women were not included at all and for the discourse of these plays to be overtly sexist and patriarchal. This could be ascribed to what Stallybrass and White (1986) refer to as 'displaced abjection': the process in which an oppressed social group turn their 'figurative and actual power' against an even more 'abject' or disadvantaged group (p53). This is clear in productions like WOZA ALBERT, ASINAMALI, BOPHA, and HAMBA DOMPAS. The production of WATHINT'ABAFAZI in 1987, which is similar in form to these other plays but has a cast of three women, seems to be a direct reaction to this exclusion.

Mbongeni Ngema comments on this fact:

When I was doing ASINAMALI later on in New York, someone asked me, 'Why don't you do plays about women?' I said to him, we as blacks have a problem, a traditional problem. First of all, theatre is looked upon in the townships as just a hobby. It's not work, something serious. Also our parents are much easier with boys, with men. A boy can go and say that he's going to look for work in Durban and they won't say anything but for a girl to be away from her mother - traditionally, this is not correct. A girl stays with the mother and at 6 o'clock, the woman must be back home. So it was very difficult to make a play like ASINAMALI with women because I couldn't just go and take girls away from their homes, go and live with them and rehearse a play. That is why women have been so laid back. Because there aren't many women who actually go out and do something in theatre because of how they grew up....

(Ngema, 1989, p 103-4)

In the community based plays there have been significant productions in which women have featured to the exclusion of men. The production of the play **IMFUDUSO** in 1978 by the women of Crossroads squatter camp is a good example. It arose spontaneously out of the frustrations of the wives of migrant workers who were struggling to remain in Cape Town close to their husbands while the authorities demanded that they should return to the Transkei. None of the participants had any previous theatre experience but they believed that the theatre was the best way of getting their message across. The play was performed in Crossroads as well as in other squatter camps in the Cape. It also had six performances at The Space Theatre and was performed at The Market Theatre in 1979. In the labour movement, despite a professed anti-sexism policy, men have tended to dominate all aspects of the unions. As COSATU has stated: 'The oppression of women is an immediate organizational issue for the democratic movement. Generally, the broad issues raised with the rise of the women's liberation movement internationally have not taken root amongst the rank and file of progressive organizations' (Malange, 1989, p77). This marginalisation of women effects cultural projects such as the production of workshop plays. There were no women participants in **ILANGA LIZOPHUMELA ABASEBENZI**, or in the **DUNLOP PLAY**, or the **LONG MARCH**. It is worth quoting Nise Malange of the Culture and Working Life Project (CWLP) at some length:

At the FOSATU Women's Congress in Johannesburg in 1983, four women shop stewards described their own lives as examples of the daily hardships they experienced as workers/worker leaders and as wives/mothers in the community. They gave accounts of their struggles in the home and how the decision to assume leadership roles clashed with the traditional patriarchal family.

After some debate a male shop steward responded with an enlightened appeal to his brothers. He asked them to work hand in

hand with women, both at the industrial site and at the home. 'Women are now doing a double job. We say we are an oppressed nation but women are more oppressed. They go to work and then start again at home. We should put aside the whiskey and make the fire if the wife is not yet home. And also carry the child. After all it's the man's child also.' His plea generated cheers from women and jeering from men. Since then not much progress has been made. Women still suffer the triple oppression at the workplace, in the organizations and in the domestic sphere. They still have to confront the bosses at work and men who play bosses in organizations and at home.

(1989, pp 77-8)

By the efforts of facilitators like Von Kotze, Nise Malange and Patti Henderson, women have begun to participate in cultural production to a greater extent. For example, women participated in the second Sarmcol workers play *BHAMBATHA'S CHILDREN*, and made the *CLOVER PLAY*, and the *KWA MASHU STREET CLEANERS PLAY*. As Malange (1989) observes, looking back over five years of cultural work in the union movement: 'The presence of women [in cultural work] has been sporadic rather than regular and strong. Few women have participated in the creative workshops and performances' (p77).

2. Language

The choice of the language used in improvisations and in the discussions that continue throughout the workshop as to direction and meaning, affect the status of participants. In most workshops in which there is a mix of black and white participants, English is used as a *lingua franca*. This promotes English speakers into predominant positions. As soon as non-English speaking people begin to express themselves in vernacular languages their power increases to a great degree. Workshop '71, which began as an Institute of Race Relations project to create dialogue between different racial groups and therefore included black and

white participants, worked with a basic rule that participants could speak in the language of their choice. This freed the non-English speaking participants to express themselves in more complex ways and therefore to participate more meaningfully in the workshop negotiations. Most black participants could at the very least understand most of what other participants said, even when they were speaking in a language which was not their mother-tongue: English or another African language. The result was that slowly over time most of the white members of the workshop, who could understand only English, began to drift away. Robert McLaren, the group's director, an English-speaker, could function within the group because he was able to speak Xhosa well and was functional in other African languages. It can be argued that the decision to allow free choice of language usage resulted in a major shift in power within the Workshop '71 group.

Improvising in a second language is extremely difficult. It forces performers to concentrate on language usage rather than on spontaneity and play. Performers are seldom totally present in the improvisation when they are conscious of language usage. The proficiency of language usage might also determine the status of the characters a particular performer chooses to play. This does not mean that black performers cannot or do not improvise in English. Mostly they do. The longer they do, and the more confidence they gain, the better they become, but this does not alter the fact that their initial attempts are difficult. This would apply equally to English-speakers improvising in Afrikaans for example.

From personal experience, it is quite clear to me that when improvisation is used as part of actor training, it renders few results when students are not improvising in their own languages. As soon as students are freed to improvise in their mother-tongues, new vistas open up and the student leaps forward. It is also often the case that black students who are used to working in a second-language,

find it difficult, initially, to make the jump into improvising in their own language, and that once this jump has been made, improvising, even in the second language, becomes more fruitful.

It is also worth noting that it is possible that doing improvisations in second languages results in more physical performances because the need for non-verbal communication devices is increased. It can be argued that as black performers tend to be the ones improvising in second languages it is not surprising that their performance styles tend to be more rooted in the body.

3. Life experience

The relationship between the subject matter of the workshop and the life experience of the participants often elevates certain members into more powerful positions. Many workshop plays created in the 1980s deal with the issue of apartheid and its ramifications. This often means that the views of black participants and their versions of events and visions for the future have been privileged in the workshop and that white participants, possibly as a result of guilt feelings, have often perceived their own views as inadequate and uninformed. An interesting example of this in the case of Workshop '71 is given by Stephen Sack, an early participant and founder member of JATCO:

Rob McLaren approached me and asked me if I wanted to join the workshop and I did.... [M]ost of the time one felt terribly inadequate about one's whiteness and about one's middle-class background. It really was extraordinary.... I remember on one occasion we had to sit and examine one another's feet. I remember I was sitting with a black woman whose name I don't remember, and we had to tell one another what we thought about one another's feet, and she was so insulting about my soft, lily-white bourgeois feet. She had these hard calloused feet. So at all levels I just always felt so self-conscious.

(Interview, 2/2/89)

This indicates the degree to which even enlightened white participants might feel inadequate in relation to the life experiences of black people under apartheid. It could be argued that as it is usual for the views and opinions of whites in South Africa to take precedence over the opinions of blacks, it is not a bad thing that for once the black version of events should take precedence. It must also be noted that many white theatre practitioners sought out black performers to participate in workshops precisely so that the resultant performances would be more 'authentic' and rooted in the lives of the oppressed in South Africa.

4. Theatre experience

The extent of a workshop participant's theatre exposure and experience often determines that individual's power status within the group. Most white workshop participants, particularly those involved in the so-called professional theatre sector, have had some theatre training, many have university degrees or diplomas, and most have worked quite considerably as actors or directors. On the other hand most black participants have never had formal training. What experience they do have comes from participating in other theatre groups and many black actors, particularly in the Transvaal, have worked with Gibson Kente at some time or another and learnt much of what they know from him. According to actor John Ledwaba, Kente was not the only black theatre director in the late 1970s who also trained his actors. Ledwaba comments:

I worked with Sam Mhangwane who used to run the People's Theatre Association, Maisha Maponya was also a member.... Yes, certain basics were learnt, but I found that Sam Mhangwane was more into getting the artist to read, to read about theatre. That's

when I read about Stanislavsky, about Jerzy Grotowski and people like that.

(Interview, 6/3/89)

Less experienced participants might be marginalised by the more experienced and even if they do speak, their choices might not be taken seriously. This obviously does not need to be on racial lines and even in productions where only blacks are involved, strong personalities with previous experience, like Mbongeni Ngema and Percy Mtwa, tend to dominate. In the production of BOPHA the play was originally billed as 'BOPHA by Percy Mtwa, performed by The Earth Players' and the writer's royalties all went to Mtwa. In the course of its run in South Africa and abroad, a bitter struggle developed between Mtwa and the cast over ownership of the 'text'. The cast insisted that they were equally involved in the production process. Today the play is billed as 'BOPHA by Percy Mtwa and The Earth Players' and royalties are shared by Mtwa and the cast. It is often argued that a play like ASINAMALI is not a workshop play at all but was produced entirely by Mbongeni Ngema. However, interviews with other group members reveal the existence of earlier versions of the text produced by members of the group other than Ngema, and of a long process of exercises and improvisations. It is clear that Mtwa and Ngema did play strong, perhaps even overriding, roles in these productions but the process of meaning-making did not merely involve a one-sided relationship; in both plays the casts were engaged in some dialogical interaction with the directors albeit from positions of relatively little power.

This problem is not confined to the professional theatre. When the cast of the worker play THE LONG MARCH returned from performing in England, some of the cast members were not happy about creating a new play with workers who had no previous theatre experience (Interview with Patti Henderson, 14/4/89).

5. Class differences

It is often the case in workshop groups in South Africa that participants are multi-positioned as regards class membership. This is particularly clear when one considers the position of middle-class, usually white, intellectuals like Ari Sitas and Astrid von Kotze in the production of worker plays. There has been much critical debate over this issue. To what extent the middle-class facilitators mediate the experiences of the working-class participants; and whether it is possible to refer to this work as working class culture at all. I do not wish to contribute more to that debate here. My concern is simply to indicate that differing class positions may be a factor that affects the distribution of power within the workshop group.

It is also important to note that black intellectuals have often themselves turned to workshop techniques precisely in order to represent working-class experiences which they felt unable to do from their class position. As Steadman writes with regard to Matsamela Manaka:

Manaka recognises that there are different needs and aspirations in different sectors of the black community. He recognises further, that his own position as an emerging intellectual, places him in an ambivalent position. To rectify this he has tried to create plays not as a writer but as a scribe of group creativity.

(1985, p 457)

6. The actor/activist split

Whether participants in a workshop see themselves as primarily actors creating theatre as a form of art, or as activists who are attempting to achieve political ends through cultural activity, is a factor that often contributes to conflict and power

struggle within the workshop group. This could also be characterised as a split between liberal values and more radical aspirations. In the workshop for the production of *THINA BANTU*, the participants were split between white university drama students who were training to become actors, and township performers who were brought in to augment the workshop group. This composite group was further divided into the actors and the activists. This division was not along racial lines. Some students adopted activist positions while at least one of the three township performers fell within the actor camp. The activists wanted the meaning of the performance to connect unambiguously with the principles and strategies of anti-apartheid political organisations. The actors wanted the meaning to be more universal and less directed towards any political ideology. This split caused much tension and struggle within the group.

A similar split is clearly dramatised in the JATCO production of *TOOTH AND NAIL*. In this production the tension in the workshop between those who were fundamentally preoccupied with 'the dilemmas about the freedom of the artist' (actors), and those who found these dilemmas to be 'abstracted and esoteric' (activists), is represented in the play by the figures of the photographer (Basil Jones) and Sifiso, the activist (Ramalao Makhene). The photographer struggles to reconcile the split between wanting to serve the struggle on the one hand and his own desire for freedom of expression on the other. He is often engaged in debate on this issue with the activist in the course of the play (Galombik & Steinberg, 1989, p9).

Doubtless there are numerous other factors that contribute to the power struggles within workshop groups in South Africa. The ones I have listed seem to be the most frequently occurring. What I have hoped to indicate is the diversity of factors and their often decisive influence on the meaning produced in the

workshop. It is clear that on the level of selection, the workshop is a negotiation, a site of struggle for meaning and ultimately for power between various factions who do not all compete on an equal footing. The struggle involves alignments between factions, confrontations, compromises and contradictions, many of which are reflected in the 'text' that is performed at the end of the workshop process.

In *THINA BANTU*, for example, the 'text' became an exploration of the violent psyches of four AWOL national servicemen who raped a black woman and burnt her in the boot of her boyfriend's car, and of the devastating affect of their actions on their families, particularly their wives and mothers, and on the families of the victim and her boyfriend. For certain elements of the activist faction within the workshop group this exploration did not align itself clearly enough with the people's struggle for liberation, and therefore as a compromise the 'text' ended with the group singing a song for Nelson Mandela pleading with him to 'show us the way to freedom'. This ending seemed to jar somewhat with the rest of the play, evoking much negative criticism, but this jarring contradiction was certainly a reflection of the conflict within the workshop group. Galombik and Steinberg (1989) describe a similar thing occurring in the *JATCO* production of *TOOTH AND NAIL*:

Another compromised element in the play, in our opinion, is the naive simplicity of the plays final message: 'heal with fire'. This was the result of an anticipated criticism from the democratic movement that the play should not simply depict the chaos and darkness of the times, but should also suggest a positive route forward.... [A] way forward was pasted onto the play in the form of a tokenary gesture. The simplistic expression of the aims of the armed struggle rang hollow given that many of the leftist concerns with organisation and structures were largely swamped by a general conglomeration of images and events which gave the play an anarchic rather than programmatic logic.

(1989, pp 8-9)

But there is another important factor in the struggle for meaning and power in the workshop besides the various competing factions, and that is the influence of the group leader (individual or collective) on the individuals who create meaning through improvisation and on the factions that fight to direct those meanings towards a particular end.

Earlier in this chapter we saw three possible ways in which the group leadership function might arise. Whichever way the leader is arrived at, he/she enters the struggle for power in the workshop on a strong footing either by virtue of artistic experience, political credibility, or simply by virtue of a charismatic and dynamic personality, or possibly by a combination of all of these.

The group leader can operate in two ways in relation to the group (individuals and factions):

1. The leader can operate as a facilitator helping individuals to find their own voices, both in terms of what they choose to say and how they choose to say it, and as a mediator between the struggling factions, attempting to reach consensus between them through negotiation as regards the meaning of what is produced.

Ideally, this would involve the leader not having an agenda of his/her own which would enter into the power struggle in the group.

2. The leader can be an arbitrator in the struggle for meaning. In this respect the leader would act as an adjudicator settling disputes between factions and ultimately having the final say as to what is to be included in the meaning of the 'text' that is to be performed at the end of the workshop.

This usually involves active participation on the part of the leader in the struggle for meaning and power in the workshop, bringing his/her own views and

visions into play, and because of the leader's status in the group these views and visions enjoy a certain pre-eminence.

It is of course clear that neither of these positions is wholly distinct. A leader who chooses facilitation probably arbitrates to some degree too and vice versa, and it is unlikely that a group leader will not have views and visions which significantly affect the final product. Most leaders fall somewhere between facilitation and arbitration, between freeing meaning and dominating meaning. What is significant is the dynamic relationship between the leader, the group, and the meaning of the finished product.

In THINA BANTU the director, Mavis Taylor, operated mainly as a facilitator allowing the workshop participants a voice to create segments of text and to discuss the direction of the production as a whole. She mediated between various factions, some more powerful than others, but she did not impose a personal vision on the piece in a decisive manner. This does not mean to say that she did not contribute views and visions of her own, but that these entered the melting-pot of the workshop along with all others. This role could have been influenced by the fact that she was operating both as a director and as a teacher, and that the students were not merely making a theatre piece but learning about making theatre in the process. Taylor's directorial role emerged strongly as the workshop drew to an end and the public performances beckoned.

The role of facilitators such as Sitas, Von Kotze and Henderson in worker plays seems to be similar. Their work involves creating structures in which the worker participants can create meaning in the workshop through their own traditional performance forms such as storytelling, oral poetry, traditional dance and song. The democratic process of these workshops is to a large extent determined by the collective practices and procedures operating in the labour

movement as a whole. The maintenance of these procedures is often more important to the participants than achieving the most coherent artistic product. The workshop process is also affected by the dialogical interactive behaviour modes of the essentially oral participants. It is also interesting to note that many of the participants in earlier worker plays have gone on to occupy powerful leadership positions within the unions and within cultural activity in the labour movement in general. These 'grassroots intellectuals' now often operate as facilitators in workshops for new worker plays (Sitas, 1990, p6). Because they hold powerful positions within the unions and union federations, the power of these new facilitators within the workshops is heightened. It must be noted that the potential exists within these workshops for meaning created by individual performers to be marginalised where it contradicts with or is critical of the policies and programmes of the organisation under whose auspices the workshop is run. I do not mean to say that this is always the case, or that it is even often the case, but it must be recognised that it could sometimes be the case.

In the professional arena a director like Barney Simon has operated in different ways in different workshop processes. In the workshop for *WOZA ALBERT*, the two actors, Ngema and Mtwana, brought work they had been doing on their own to the workshop and a style of acting they had learnt from Gibson Kente. Simon brought his mainstream theatre experience (as director of such productions as *THE SEAGULL*, *LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT*, and *MOTHER COURAGE*). He also brought extensive writing skills (he had been an advertising copywriter and a writer of short-stories, as well as the editor of the literary magazine *The Classic* before becoming a full-time theatre director). Workshopping was not new to Simon, he had been workshopping productions on and off since the mid-1970s. He traces his involvement with workshop theatre

back to health-education programmes he ran at mission hospitals in Zululand and the Transkei in the early 1970s.

I suppose the beginning of my workshop work was when I'd been with Dugmore Boetie at the mission hospital.⁶ I became aware of the problems of health-education and I became very interested in seeing what I could do with that using theatre. I began to have meetings with nurses.... I saw there was something I could help with, communication, finding a vocabulary for communication - what the nurses ultimately called education through respect - beginning with a sense of the needs of the people and the vocabulary of the people.... I worked with them [the nurses] on improvisation, on observation and improvisation. That was the beginning of this kind of work. And exercises, exercises that opened their eyes.... I sent them out into the streets, incognito, into villages where they weren't known, to bus-stations, shebeens, whatever. And they listened and they came back and reported and they began to create plays, and songs to traditional melodies, dealing with whatever problems they felt were central to their community. That was the beginning of it for me and very exciting.

(Interview, 5/7/90)

Simon sees 'a very clear and organic line through' from these health-education workshops to a production like *WOZA ALBERT*.⁷ In *WOZA ALBERT* he helped the actors develop their ideas by sending them out to the streets to observe people and to ask them how they would feel if Morena came to South Africa. He then got them to improvise around what they had observed. These improvisations formed the segments of the final text which Simon stitched together. I would argue that the power relations in this process were fairly evenly balanced and that it is very difficult to unravel the individual contributions in the final performance text.

Simon's next workshop production, *BLACK DOG, INJEMNYAMA*, was initially based on a text produced by Brendan Butler for the Amstel playwrighting competition dealing with paratroopers on the border. Simon asked the participants to improvise around this text and in one of the improvisations, actor

John Ledwaba told of his experiences during the 1976 uprisings in Soweto and of seeing one of the leaders of the uprisings, Injemnyama, swinging a chain around above his head. This image so caught Simon's imagination that he proceeded to centre the entire 'text' around this character and this image. The workshop process then moved away from improvisation to the writing of monologues by the individual characters.

In *BORN IN THE RSA*, the improvisation phase was done away with completely and after observation the writing of individual monologues began immediately. The movement from improvisation to writing in the workshops is significant. Not all workshop participants had developed writing skills. Some, like Neil McCarthy and Gcina Mhlophe, had previous writing experience and they had the power to produce their own monologues. Others felt inadequate as writers and with these, Simon got them to speak about experiences and observations and then wrote the monologues himself. Timmy Kwebulana's monologue was composed in this way. It was based on Kwebulana's personal experience but written by Simon, and Thoko Ntshinga's monologue was crafted by Simon around the monologue that had been written by Gcina Mhlophe for her character. Even with those participants who had written their own material, Simon's role was decisive. McCarthy describes Simon in the process as a kind of hands-on editor, extensively cutting and reworking what other people had written.⁸ Simon also pointed people in new directions by suggesting links between various monologues. The decision for the characters played by McCarthy and Terry Norton to be married was only made late in the process after a suggestion by Simon and influenced both individual monologues extensively. Simon also pulled various themes and images through all the monologues thereby crafting them into a whole in a very detailed

way. Simon's own image for himself in the process is as 'a hawk hovering overhead'.⁹

The point is that by gradually shifting the mode of composition in the workshop from improvisation to writing, Simon's personal power with regard to the meaning of the text increased as did the power of those participants whose writing skills were more developed.

In conclusion, the process of meaning-making in the workshop is not a neutral process in which equally empowered participants contribute. It is subject to a whole range of power struggles operating within the workshop. Some are struggles that transcend the specific workshop and reflect struggles for power within the society as a whole, others are specific to particular workshops and contexts.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PRODUCT OF THE WORKSHOP

The workshop is a struggle for meaning, but it is also a struggle for form. During the workshop, not only the content of the performance is determined but also its structure and style. As was noted in Chapter Five, improvisation potentially frees the performer not only to contribute to what is said in the performance but also to the way in which it is said.

Technically speaking there is no such a thing as a definitive workshop play. Each workshop, each different group of participants, has the potential to create a different kind of play. The structure and style of each play is determined by the make-up of each workshop group; by the traditions, conventions and experiences that are brought into the workshop by the different participants.

From an analysis of in excess of forty plays produced in workshop in South Africa during the 1980s (see Appendix A),¹ it would seem that in respect of form, workshop plays exist on a continuum between the oral performance tradition and the carnivalesque on the one extreme, and the Western literary dramatic tradition on the other. Furthermore, where on the continuum a particular play will be found is, it would seem, determined by the relative influence of these two poles in the workshop. The workshop is in this regard a site of struggle between two dominant influences on the participants in the workshop, neither influence is ever absolute and the relative power of either is never exactly equal in any workshop.

Most of the workshop plays included in the analysis reveal similarities of form and can be bunched together in a group close to the oral and carnivalesque end of the continuum. For purposes of clarity I will refer to this group as the dominant group and to their form as the dominant form of workshop plays in the period in

question. There are, however, deviations towards the literary dramatic end of the continuum as the make-up of the workshop group changes.

In this chapter:

1. I will examine the similarities of form amongst the dominant group of workshop plays with particular reference to the influence of the oral tradition and the carnivalesque. It must be emphasised that I do not mean to define what constitutes a workshop play but only to reveal tendencies and trends.
2. I will explore deviations from these tendencies as a result of the influence of the literary dramatic tradition in the workshop, and within the context of power relations in the workshop group in general.

THE DOMINANT FORM OF WORKSHOP PLAY IN THE 1980s: The influence of the oral tradition and the carnivalesque

In Chapter Three above, I indicated that a number of recent studies have pointed to the possible influence of the oral narrative tradition in particular on contemporary South African theatre (Fuchs 1987, Morris 1989, Fleishman 1990). Although Fuchs and Morris do not refer specifically to workshop theatre, most, if not all, of their examples come from plays created in workshop. Their observations are therefore pertinent to the present study. My own earlier article deals specifically with workshop theatre and is a development of Fuchs's study.

1. The narrator function

Workshop plays tend to involve the telling of stories. In most workshop plays, the performers enter the acting space not as characters but as narrators with a story or

stories to tell. There is therefore a clear distinction between narrative voice and narrative action in these plays. As Fuchs comments:

...the most convincing correlation between *intsomi* narration and the play of *WOZA ALBERT* is that just as in oral performance, the actor creators or performers of the play keep their own identity throughout, and never attempt to create that theatrical illusion of Western theatre whereby the actor is supposed to have disappeared behind the character he is playing.

(1987, p 36)

Often when such plays are published the performers' real names are used. This is the case in *WOZA ALBERT* where the two performers are referred to in the published text as Mbongeni and Percy. It is also the case in *ASINAMALI* where the published text lists the 'characters' as: Solomzi Bisholo, Thami Cele, Bongani Hlophe, Bheki Mqadi, and Bhoyi Ngema. This is not always the case though. The published text of *BOPHA* lists the 'characters' as: Njandini, Naledi and Zwelakhe, and the unpublished script of *WATHINT'ABAFAZI* refers to the characters: Mambhele, Mampompo and Sdudla. In both *BOPHA* and *WATHINT'ABAFAZI*, however, the performers do serve the narrator function as in the other plays.

2. A variety of performance forms

As in the *intsomi* or the *inganekwane*, the performers in workshop plays use direct narration as well as enactment, gesture, body movement, dance and song in order to tell their stories. In *WOZA ALBERT* there are a number of episodes in which the performers use direct narration: the old man's story of the death of Piet Retief at the hands of Dingane; and Mbongeni's foretelling of what will happen at Regina Mundi church when Morena arrives in Soweto. In *ASINAMALI* each performer

narrates a particular story as to how he arrived in prison. In scene two of BOPHA Naledi relates to the audience how he became a policeman against his will and how he was trained at Hammanskraal. There are other sequences, however, in which the performers enact their stories by taking on characters for the particular sequence. In scene two of WATHINT'ABAFAZI entitled 'Post Office' in the script, Mampompo begins by telling how she would go to the rural post office in the Transkei to collect money sent from her husband who was working in Cape Town. The direct narration breaks off and the performers all play the characters at the post office: Mampompo, the postmistress, an old lady. At the end of the episode the performers drop their characters and return to their narrator functions. In this way the performers may play a large number of different characters in the course of any one play.

The plays also include dance sequences and songs many of which have their origins in the oral tradition. The old man in WOZA ALBERT who recalls the killing of Piet Retief by Dingane sings a traditional song as he sits sewing a button onto his coat; and Zuluboy dances a traditional war dance brandishing his kierrie at the end of the 'Coronation Brick' scene. More often though, the dances and songs used in the plays are contemporary developments of the old forms. Dances like the toi-toi, said to be used to drill the soldiers of Umkhonto we Sizwe in the training camps, are included in almost all workshop plays of the period. Many of the freedom songs that have become part of the struggle for liberation are also featured in the plays. A clear example is the song sung by the women marching on the Union Buildings in 1956: 'Wena Strydom, wathint'abafazi, wayithint'imbokotho, uzakufa' (Hey Strydom! You strike the woman, you strike the rock. You will die) from which the play WATHINT'ABAFAZI is named. In the workshop plays the performers are no longer Zulu warriors going into battle

but they are militant comrades in the struggle for liberation and their dances and their songs reflect this struggle.

In the worker and community plays the songs are directly linked to the organisations out of which the plays emerge and to the particular struggle in which the group is involved. In *THE LONG MARCH*, produced by striking SARMCOL workers, songs and dances are related to the worker experience in general and to the strike in particular. Von Kotze (1988) attempts to piece together a 'text' for the play from interviews with participants and comments:

...different forms of worker oppression are shown through a series of gumboot dances. Songs make the message clear: "Our songs are 'Sophinda Siteleke' (We shall strike again), 'Abaleka Amabhunu' (racists run away) and we shout slogans, like I praise Barayi, the soldier, and Jobha calls J. Naidoo a soldier and praises the entire COSATU executive. After that we pack and run off."

(p 90)

After this sequence of dances and songs, the performers speak the poem 'It's a long long march to freedom' written by worker poet and COSATU cultural organiser Mi Hlatshwayo, and later they sing 'Hlanganan'abasebenzi' (workers unite).

In plays that do not emerge directly out of specific struggles or organisations, particularly those that are produced and performed within the domain of the professional theatre, the use of songs is more varied and less directly related to a particular organisation or issue. There is some overlap though: *ASINAMALI* ends with the song 'Kwaphel'izinsizwa, kwasal'amavaka ayobaleka/Elamanqamu, elamanqamu namuhlanje' (Gone are the brave men, only the cowards remain and they will run/but today is the day, the day of reckoning) which also features in *THE LONG MARCH*.

Urban forms like the gumboot dancing in EGOLI and THE LONG MARCH, and the soft-shoe routines in SOPHIATOWN are also featured, as are Christian hymns like 'Somlandela, somlandel'uJesu' (We will follow, we will follow Jesus) which is changed in WOZA ALBERT to 'Somlandela, somlandel'uMorena'.

3. Stable elements

It was noted in Chapter Three how in the oral narrative tradition, performances are built up around stable or remembered elements of the tradition. These stable elements have been referred to as 'function sequences', 'core-cliches', or 'tale-chunks'. The creativity of the performer lies in the developing of these stable elements through her improvisatory ability. One element is either combined with another or expanded by the building up of detail around the image. The studies mentioned above (Fuchs 1987, Morris 1989 and Fleishman 1990) are concerned to a large degree with trying to explore the extent to which much contemporary South African theatre is built up around such 'stable elements', and what the relationship might be between the stable elements of the new tradition and those of the old tradition.

Fuchs (1987) uses the morphological analysis of folktales as developed by Propp and Dundes to analyse the workshop play WOZA ALBERT. She then compares the results with similar work done by Cope and Canonici on the inganekwane in order to reveal the influence of the oral narrative tradition on the contemporary urban theatre.

Fuchs's analysis reveals the function sequence 'LACK + LACK LIQUIDATED' to be the primary function sequence of WOZA ALBERT. This same sequence is also the primary function sequence in the traditional oral tales:

The lack in the tale was that suffered by society as a whole, including performer and audience: lack of food, lack of water. In the WOZA ALBERT series of plays going back to SURVIVAL as a model, the lack expressed is also that which is foremost in African urban society today: the lack of freedom - a lack once again shared by actors and audience.

(Fuchs, 1987, p 37)

Her analysis also reveals the secondary function sequence in WOZA ALBERT to be 'HOPE + DISBELIEF' which Fuchs comments is perhaps 'an apt reflection on the state of African urban society today' (p37). She also comments that the 'INTERDICTION + VIOLATION + CONSEQUENCE' sequence, which is a secondary sequence in the traditional tales, is surprisingly absent 'most certainly because for interdiction/violation to exist there must be a consensus about values and norms' (p37).

In the final analysis Fuchs comments that in the process of workshopping their plays, the performers 'seem to be re-creating in a different way all the plays that have gone before, repeating again and again the same function formulas in different sequence combinations' (p38). She argues that this hardly ever seems to worry the black theatre audience but evokes a negative reaction amongst most white critics 'who complain bitterly that all black plays are alike and never say anything new' (p38).

Morris (1989) employs Scheub's terms: core-images and core-cliches, to

describe the new tradition in South African theatre:

It is exciting to conjecture that there are contemporary South African performers whose dramatic work is infused with new beliefs, new images, new core cliches, new chants and new songs. And because they use these aesthetic devices to mould a particular kind of dramatic meaning, they could be said to be following the old tradition.

(1989, p 97)

She suggests that the images are expanding to meet the demands of the urban experience and are rooted in the working lives of the people in the cities:

In EGOLI the workers empty dustbins, in WOZA ALBERT they load bricks, in WATHINT'ABAFAZI WATHINT'IMBOKOTHO they sell chickens; and when they are not working they are often looking for work or travelling in search of work'

(p97).

Examples she gives of the images around which contemporary plays are built are the dompas in SIZWE BANSI IS DEAD and the suggestion that Morena the Saviour is here in WOZA ALBERT. It could be argued that although the dompas is an important image in the play SIZWE BANSI IS DEAD, the initial image around which the play was developed and the image that gave rise to the dompas image, is the picture which Fugard had seen in a photographers window some time before. As Vandenbroucke (1986) describes it:

He [Fugard] recalled a portrait he had seen in an African photographer's window. 'It was a man sitting at a table with a vase of flowers, wearing a very special hat - a big hat - with a pipe in one hand and a cigarette in the other. It was a very celebratory image, affirmative, full of life - the sort of life that is still intact in New Brighton, despite what it has to cope with.'²

Fugard, Kani, and Ntshona improvised and engaged in a

Socratic dialogue about the possibilities behind that smile...[T]hey decided the man was happy because his passbook was in order.

(1986, p 158)

Strong core-images are evident in other workshop plays with which Fugard was involved. When Serpent Players member, Norman Ntshinga, was convicted of belonging to a banned organisation and sent to Robben Island, another prisoner gave Ntshinga's wife his coat and asked her to pass it on to his family with the message that they should use it in some way. This coat formed the core-image of the play THE COAT workshopped by Serpent Players.

The play ASINAMALI is built up around the slogan 'Asinamali - we have no money' which was coined by Msizi Dube an activist from Lamontville who was assassinated and to whom the play is dedicated. As Ngema comments:

Then Msizi was killed. I decided this play should not only be about poverty but it should also celebrate the spirit of Msizi Dube. Msizi's slogan to mobilise people was 'Asinamali!'. And so I featured his life in the play.

(Ngema, 1990, p 103)

In my article 'Workshop Theatre as Oppositional Form' (1990), I use both the morphological system and Scheub's images to examine the play WATHINT'ABAFAZI. I develop on Fuchs's study by suggesting that WOZA ALBERT, created in 1981, is only the beginning of workshop theatre in the 1980s, and that a similar analysis of plays at later stages of the period reveals interesting differences. My analysis reveals that LACK + LACK LIQUIDATED remains the primary function sequence, with the LACK function broadening from 'lack of freedom' to a whole range of other lacks, 'lack of employment', 'lack of security' etc. HOPE + DISBELIEF is a secondary function sequence throughout the

period as proposed by Fuchs, but the INTERDICTION + VIOLATION + CONSEQUENCE sequence is not merely absent, it mutates into a new sequence which becomes more and more significant, particularly after 1984.³ I call the new sequence: INFLICTION + DEFIANCE + CONSEQUENCE + ASSERTION.

The first function, INFLICTION, usually involves some form of State oppression. The second, DEFIANCE, is the response of the people. The third function, CONSEQUENCE, is some form of repression aimed at putting an end to the defiance, and the final function, ASSERTION, is a clear indication of the path ahead and the inevitability of the people's triumph. The point being made is that the functions and function sequences of the new tradition change in relation to changes in the society as a whole.

My analysis reveals that there are four broad narratives in the play WATHINT'ABAFAZI (See the schematic analysis in Appendix B):

Mampompo's story (Move 1) - the 'homeland' woman who journeys to the city to be with her husband and to earn money to support her children;

Mambhele's story (Move 2) - the struggle of a woman born in the city oppressed because she is black, oppressed because she is a woman, and exploited as a member of the working class;

Sdudla's story (Move 3) - the old woman who knows the tradition of women's resistance to Apartheid and whose belief in the ultimate victory of the majority helps her to survive;

The fourth narrative move is begun through the repetitions of the free function: PRESENT SITUATION which is returned to in episodes 5b, 7, and 11, and is then picked up on and rounded out at the end of the play. In this move the market

place is set up for the audience and the women's commercial problems are highlighted. The final confrontation with the police ends the move.

The narratives are discontinuous. Each narrative is in turn broken up into a number of episodes each of which contains a number of functions and function sequences. The episodes are not simply juxtaposed but are embedded or interwoven into one another. The process of combination is assisted by 'transitional links' and the 'free functions'. The whole is enclosed by a 'frame formula' which in this case is the primary function sequence LACK + LACK LIQUIDATED which opens in episode 1 and closes in episode 18.

I then introduce Scheub's concept of core-images with reference to the play. I suggest that the core-image of the play, around which it is structured, is embodied in the title: WATHINT'ABAFAZI WATHINT'IMBOKOTHO. On 9 August 1956, in response to the regime's attempts to force women to carry passes, 20 000 women filled the amphitheatre of the Union Buildings in Pretoria. They waited patiently while their leaders, Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Lily Diedericks, Rahima Moosa and Sophie Williams, delivered a petition containing over 100 000 signatures to the office of the Prime Minister, Strijdom. Outside, the gathered women sang a song that was to become the symbol of defiance of the women of South Africa against the system of apartheid:

Strydom, wathint'abafazi

Wathint'imbokotho

Uzakufa

Strydom, you have touched the women

You have struck a rock

You will die.

The play has three other images around which episodes are structured: (i) the helicopter as 'plague bird'; (ii) the chickens waiting to be slaughtered; and (iii) the juice of the oranges opening the people's eyes to what must be done.

In the first episode the first element of the frame formula - LACK (of security) - is introduced through the core-cliche of the 'plague bird':

Sdudla: In the dead of the night there comes a plague bird, hateful, ugly bird

Mampompo: Hateful bird

Mambhele: Ugly bird

Sdudla: That runs above the location, the whistle blows, the people fear. Mothers hush back their children, back to sleep, lock the doors they creep, for that bird takes away our innocent sons and daughters.

The second episode is the first instance of the free function: **PRESENT SITUATION** - The two other core-images: the chickens, and the oranges are introduced in this episode. The images are repeated at various points in the play and their import becomes more apparent as the play progresses.

When one looks at the schematic analysis of the play's four moves it becomes clear that the primary function sequence in the first three moves is still **LACK + LACK LIQUIDATED** with **HOPE + DISBELIEF** a prominent secondary sequence. When one examines the fourth move, however, what emerges is that these function sequences give way first to the **INFLICTION + DEFIANCE + CONSEQUENCE** function sequence and then to the full **INFLICTION + DEFIANCE + CONSEQUENCE + ASSERTION** function sequence.

I conclude that structurally, the play WATHINT'ABAFAZI displays strong similarities to oral storytelling forms, and the development of its function sequences through the four narrative moves of the play reflects the growing confidence and militancy of the people through the period of the 1980s, from a position of recognising the condition of their oppression to a clear assertion of what is to be done in order to emerge from this oppression, and this despite severe repression by the State. I end by commenting that this is even more clear in the non-professional plays where the final assertion is often directly linked into a political organisation with a clearly defined programme of action.

What these three studies show is that the workshop plays are built up around specific images/functions/tale-chunks whichever terminology one chooses. These relate to the traditional elements of the oral narratives but they expand in relation to new experiences that face the performers and their communities in the urban context.

4. Characters

The range of characters that the narrators assume in the various episodes of the workshop play are often similar to the characters in the oral narratives and the grotesque characters of the carnival.

The actions of the characters are more important than their interior psychological states. They are like masks that represent certain figures in the world. On the one end of the scale are the ordinary people, represented as hardworking and suffering but full of life: the coal vendors, the barber, Auntie Dudu, and the old man in WOZA ALBERT; Magogo in BOPHA; the travellers on the bus to Cape Town in WATHINT'ABAFAZI. These characters tend to be

more 'real' in presentation. On the other end of the scale are the villainous oppressors in various forms. These are presented as grotesque, bodies distorted, faces pulled into unnatural masks or covered with masks or false noses, voices harsh and grating: the Prime Minister in *WOZA ALBERT*; the Commissioner Stefanus de van Genoubi in *BOPHA*; Maggie Thatcher in the *LONG MARCH*; the lustful boer in *WATHINT'ABAFAZI* and many more. The names given to many of these characters are often indications of their qualities: the prison warders 'Makhandakhanda' [Many headed one] and 'Indod'emyama' [pitch black man] in *ASINAMALI*; and the police training instructor, 'Buffalo', in *BOPHA*. In the worker play *GALLOWS FOR MR SCARRIOT MPIMPI* the lead character, Scarriot Mpimpi, is an impimpi or traitor. In the same play the boss is called 'Mr Slaver'.

Morris (1989) suggests that the fantastical creatures like the *iZim* - 'evil's worst embodiment in the *intsomi*' - might today be represented by the figure of the white policeman who 'hounds his victims into the night', who beats on the door crying 'Maak Oop! Polisie!' in so many plays, or the 'plague bird' - helicopter - in *WATHINT'ABAFAZI* mentioned above 'roaming the locations like a bird of prey' (p97). These characters constantly threaten to fragment the community. She also suggests that:

The *Intsomi*'s lesser nasties like the river monster and baboons have been replaced by the characters like the exploitative boss (*THE LONG MARCH*), or the spy (*KWANELE*).

(1989, p98)

Perhaps there is even a third group of characters. Characters that are never seen but often invoked, the saviours, the martyrs, those that inspire the people, those that will lead them to a better world. They are also to some extent

fantastical characters but never presented in the grotesque fashion in which the villainous characters are presented. These are characters of great beauty like the helpful birds of the intsomi and their beauty cannot be shown so they remain unseen but not unfelt, not visible but present. These are indestructible characters that cannot be laid low by death, by prison, by atom bombs. Morena in WOZA ALBERT, the fallen heroes of the struggle in the same play resurrected in the final scene: Albert Luthuli, Lilian Ngoyi, Steve Biko, Robert Sobukwe, the many more dead heroes and imprisoned leaders invoked at the end of ASINAMALI and ALUTA CONTINUA.

5. Open-ended structure

As with most oral narrative the structure of many workshop plays tends to be quite divergent and open-ended. Often the play is made up of many strands which do not seem to tie together. This is often a function of the multiple voices struggling to be heard in the workshop but it is also consistent with oral aesthetics. The moment is what is important in the plays, the energy and vividness of an image or an action, or the feelings and recognition evoked by one particular story amongst many stories. These are often more important than one overall composite image derived from the amalgamation of many subordinate parts.

6. The use of the material body

In Chapter Two it was noted that one of the major elements of the the carnivalesque is the obsession with the material body. We have already noted above how many of the villainous characters in workshop plays are presented as grotesque figures with distorted and distended bodies and faces. We also noted

how dance forms an important part of workshop plays. But the emphasis on the material body in these plays goes much further than this. In Chapter Five we noted that improvisation is an essentially physical activity in which gesture exists before and alongside words as an independent sign system. In performance the workshop plays exhibit a similar physical quality with a pronounced gestural component which runs alongside and interweaves with the words of the 'text', at once informing and adding to their meaning. As Ngema comments with regard to ASINAMALI:

I wanted to develop a style of theatre that would communicate with anyone anywhere in the world, that would bridge the barriers of language and culture, something in which the body tells the story much more than the words.

(Ngema, 1990, p 103)

This physical performance style is also very much a product of orality which is deeply rooted in the body. As Ong (1982) comments:

The oral word...never exists in a simply verbal context, as a written word does. Spoken words are always modifications of a total, existential situation, which always engages the body. Bodily activity beyond mere vocalization is not adventitious or contrived in oral communication, but is natural and even inevitable. In oral verbalization, particularly public verbalization, absolute motionlessness is itself a powerful gesture.

(pp 67-68)

Peabody (1975) has observed that 'From all over the world and from all periods of time...traditional composition has been associated with hand activity' (p197). Scheub (1977) describes elaborate and stylised gestures which accompany intsomi composition as well as other bodily activities such as rocking backwards and forwards. This back and forth rocking motion is adopted by Jews as they

recite prayers from memory and has even been adopted by those who today read the prayers rather than recite them from memory.

In many workshop plays the performers are unclothed above the waist (EGOLI, WOZA ALBERT, BOPHA, HAMBABOMPAS). The body is clearly visible to the audience as it moves, rests and transforms itself. Because of the intense physical involvement of the performers they often sweat profusely and in venues where the audience is close, perspiration showers them.

The carnival body has its orifices open wide and is obsessed with the physical activities of the lower bodily stratum: fornication, defecation and urination. These obsessions are often present in workshop plays. Strip searches in prison occur in WOZA ALBERT and ASINAMALI where the body's orifices are opened to examination. A cigarette is found hidden inside a prisoner's mouth. In the 'Bra Tony' story in ASINAMALI money is stolen from its hiding place in a woman's vagina. In BOPHA, the instructor tells Naledi that he's 'got his brains emnqundu [in his ass]'.

Sexual images abound. In WATHINT'ABAFASI Mampompo jokes about having 'smarties' with her husband in a crowded hostel room. In the same play a farmer tries to rape Sdudla who is working for him on his farm. In ASINAMALI Thami tells, in his story as to how he landed up in prison, of his sexual relationship with Mrs Van Niekerk his boss's wife and how Mr Van Niekerk had caught them having intercourse in the pig sty as the pigs all ran free. In WOZA ALBERT, Zuluboy in the Coronation brickyard is obsessed with having sex with Angelina a woman who passes on the other side of the fence. Along with the verbal descriptions there is much explicit lewd gesture and body movement in all of these scenes.

In BOPHA there are examples of urination and defecation. The character Mapantsula gives an explicit description of how he was arrested while defecating in a whites only toilet and dragged out naked for all to see. The character Darktail is arrested for urinating in the streets. Bobbejaan in WOZA ALBERT is always running out to the toilet, and Zuluboy urinates against the wall at the Albert Street pass office. In THE LONG MARCH buckets of 'shit' are emptied over the barricades erected by the residents of Mpopphomeni township in anticipation of a 'visit' from the police.

7. Heteroglot language usage

The language of the workshop plays is the language of the townships and the streets. It is a mixture of English, Afrikaans, various African languages, Tsotsitaal and slang. No one language is allowed to remain intact. Each language is confronted, interrogated and invaded by other languages. It is an excellent example of Bakhtin's 'heteroglossia'. In a single speech by Bheki in ASINAMALI for example, he uses Zulu, Sotho, English, Afrikaans, and colloquial slang in ten lines of text, often combining more than one language in a single sentence:

Bheki: He! He! Hayi! Wemadoda you know this world is very funny, ingathi abantu bayahlanya. Strue's God! If it's not the police outside it's the police inside: 'Why do you have a cigarette?' If it's not that it's the police outside again. Ha re bône mare re kगतetse kelona! 'Jou pass jong!' If it's not that it's the school fees for the children. 'Baba, ngicela imali ye school fees futhi ne ncwadi zam ayikaviwe futhi neyicathulo zami azinawo upholishi.'

The translation of one language into another, and the transformation that meaning undergoes in the process is often featured in plays. There is a three way translation, English, Afrikaans, Zulu, in the court scene in ASINAMALI. In

TOOTH AND NAIL the character of the translator follows the activist Sifiso around translating his Tswana words into English, and in the scene in which Sifiso tries to recruit the opera-singing Angelo into the struggle, he speaks to Angelo in Tswana in order to escape the ears of the madam, Madelaine. Angelo deliberately mistranslates Sifiso's words to Madelaine which makes for an extremely funny scene if one can understand Tswana!

The language of the plays is often bawdy and curses and terms of abuse abound. In the 'coal vendor' scene in WOZA ALBERT the one vendor calls back to the interviewer: 'Inkanda leyo kwedini iyashisa he?' [Your prick is hot, boy - heh?]. In ASINAMALI as the prisoners are being fingerprinted the warder calls Bheki 'masende kati' [the cat's balls]. In BOPHA the policeman, Piet, explodes at the intellectual, Styles: 'Jou moer man!!!...Die swart engelsman die bliksem!'. Bawdy comments and curses are more apparent in performance and are often edited out when the play is published. The language used by the characters in the production of a play like ASINAMLI is very different from the language of the published playtext.

8. Laughter

Despite the fact that they deal with the often painful, harsh and difficult lives and experiences of the majority of South Africans, workshop plays are filled with laughter. It is a laughter that challenges everything preordained, everything serious and absolute. A strong satirical vein flows through many of the plays. Power structures are estranged through parody and all that is taken for granted is turned upside down and inside out. The use of the clown noses in WOZA ALBERT is indicative of the humourous style of these plays. It is a humour meant

not to distantiate harsh reality but 'as a means of obtaining pleasure in spite of the distressing affects that interfere with it; it acts as a substitute for the generation of these affects, it puts itself in their place' (Eagleton, 1981, p156).

In almost all of the plays authority figures such as policemen, soldiers, bosses and politicians are satirised and parodied. They become grotesque clowns struggling in vain to maintain an order which is constantly being threatened, challenged and finally overturned. Much of the laughter of these plays originates from the mocking of these figures but it also stems from the degree to which the 'natural' order is transgressed. An example from *THE LONG MARCH* is described by Von Kotze (1988) in her construction of the 'text':

The youth is building a road block in anticipation of another 'visit' [from the police]. For the first time the 'bucket system' serves the community - as all the 'shit' from the buckets is emptied over the barricades. The youths wait for the action. Two policemen arrive. In the attempt to remove the barriers they fight with each other: "This is the kaffirs' shit so you better clear it," says the white policeman to the black one. The black cop refuses. He gets pushed - and retaliates by rolling his superior in the mud.

(p 92)

Here the laughter is not only evoked by the comic presentation of the policemen and by the white policeman's degradation as he rolls in the 'shit', but also by the reversal of the 'natural' order in which white triumphs over black. One fundamental transgression, repeated over and over again in workshop plays, which elicits much laughter from audiences is the transgression of the 'normal' boss-worker relationship. This is clearly evident in worker plays where the relationship is fundamental to the lives of the worker-participants. But it is not restricted to the trade union arena. In the 'Coronation Brickyard' scene in *WOZA ALBERT* the workers, Zuluboy and Bobbejaan, struggle with their employer Baas Kom. The

scene is one long battle for status and supremacy in which the grotesque Baas Kom fights to maintain his privileged position of authority and control. The harder he is forced to struggle the more grotesque he becomes, spluttering, exasperated, body contorting and distorting in the face of an inconceivable challenge to his absolute right to rule. On the other hand as he becomes more confident, more sure of his right to challenge, Zuluboy transgresses more and more the 'natural' order of things until he finally utters the unthinkable challenge to his 'master': 'Aay suka!!!' [Fuck off!] and, kierre held aloft, faces the multitudes of advancing police assured of his ability to withstand any attack. Even this encounter with the police involves a transgression of the 'natural' order. In the next scene, the commander of the task force sent to quell the uprising in the brickyard, head heavily bandaged, reports to his commanding officer that the police squad of thirty men was overpowered by 'one mad Zulu' with a knobkierre. All thirty policemen are in hospital and the 'mad Zulu' got away. Faced with this unbelievable overturning of the absolute and 'natural' power of the police, the commanding officer can only turn to God and exclaim: 'Wat gaan aan?!' [What is going on?].

In ASINAMALI, Thami tells how he came to work for a farmer called Van Niekerk, looking after his pigs. How Mrs Van Niekerk made sexual advances towards him. How, when Van Niekerk was away at the border, they had sexual intercourse together, and how they were caught having intercourse in the pigsty by a returning Van Niekerk. The story induces laughter from the other prisoners and from the audience because it involves a number of upturnings and transgressions. The sexual act takes place not in a bed under a roof but in the open in the mud of a pigsty surrounded by escaping pigs. For a black man to have sexual relations with a white woman is considered a transgression in itself in South Africa but when that woman is also the wife of the black man's boss, it is a double transgression. In

fact, one of the exclamations of the other prisoners while listening to Thami's story is: 'Bongane! - Ube wubasi' [So you were a boss now]. The transgression reorders the relationship so that the worker is elevated to the status of a boss.

The laughter of the plays relativises the order of society, invoking the possibility that other orders could exist, that boundaries and taboos can be transgressed, and that no truth, no rule is absolute. But carnival laughter in the workshop plays is not only about tearing things down, breaking up meaning into multiple possibility. It is also about a sense of togetherness, of community bonding in the face of common adversity. As Eagleton (1981) puts it:

The laughter of carnival is both plebeian derision and plebeian solidarity, an empty semiotic flow which in decomposing significance nonetheless courses with the impulse of comradeship.

(p 146)

The audience laughter binds them together as a community, empowering them to withstand the apparently monolithic forces ranged against them. In this respect the workshop play is closely related to the performance of the traditional oral narrative. As we saw in Chapter Three the performer of an intsomi or inganekwane creates a community when she begins to tell her story to a particular group of people and she must struggle to keep that community together, to prevent them fragmenting, breaking up and drifting away. At the same time she introduces images of fragmentation into her performance, images that mirror the 'forces of change and disorder which threaten to fragment the actual society' (Scheub, 1975, p87). These images represent a crisis that must be resolved and this process of crisis and resolution, of potential fragmentation and ultimate community bonding is a central feature of the intsomi tradition and of the new tradition being forged in workshop plays in the 1980s.

At this point it might be fruitful to discuss the audience for workshop plays.

As Njabula Ndebele (1986) comments in respect of writing:

...once we begin to see an artistic convention emerging, once we see a body of writing exhibiting similar characteristics, we must attempt to identify its origins, its methods of operation, and its effective audience.

(p 148)

Ndebele distinguishes between two audiences for black writing in South Africa. On the one hand there is the objective audience, that audience which is objectively likely to read the particular work. Given South Africa's peculiar conditions with regard to language, literacy levels and publishing patterns this audience is usually white, English-speaking and liberal. This audience is not necessarily the most competent audience for the particular works. Although in many cases the content of the works is aimed at appealing to the conscience of the white reader: 'If the oppressor sees himself as evil, he will be revolted by his negative image, and will try and change' (p148), the form of the works is usually contrary to all the aesthetic standards that this white reader has been schooled in:

...that audience, schooled under a Eurocentric literary tradition, was in turn, schooled to reject this literary tradition 'meant' for them. They rejected both the methods of representation as well as the content. Where they yielded to accept the validity of the content, they emphasized the crudeness of method.

(Ndebele, 1986, pp 148-9)

On the other hand there is the effective audience. This audience might not be the one for whom the work was objectively 'meant', but it is the one for whom it would be the most effective. Ndebele insists that if a mass black audience could

read these literary works, they would derive great 'delight' from both the content and the aesthetic:

...the more the brutality of the system is dramatized, the better; the more exploitation is revealed and starkly dramatized, the better. The more the hypocrisy of liberals is revealed, the better. Anyone, whose sensibility has not been fashioned by such conditions will find such spectacular dramatization somewhat jarring. In the same way that Western dancers of the waltz found African dancing 'primitive', the aesthetics of reading this literature, for the Black reader, is the aesthetics of recognition, understanding, historical documentation, and indictment.... For the white audience, on the other hand, what has been called 'protest literature' can, to borrow from Brecht, be considered a spectacular 'alienation effect'; a literature that refuses to be enjoyed precisely because it challenges 'conventional' methods of literary representation, and that it painfully shows up the ogre to himself.

(Ndebele, 1986, p 149)

Much of this applies to the audience of the workshop play. The effective audience is the mass black township audience. This audience is not restricted from enjoying the performance by an inability to read, as they often are in the case of black writing. Since Kente this audience has to a large extent been watching theatre and there need be no conjecture as to what its response to the work might be. This audience understands the vast array of languages used in the performance. It has no problems with the 'crudeness of method', it understands the conventions, it accepts the form. The body of the audience is a carnival body. It is never passive, individuated, silent. It is actively engaged in the performance; it confronts the performance as much as the performance confronts it. The audience talks amongst itself, it talks back to the performers, and often it is quite fluid, refusing to remain confined in a seat, shifting around, walking in and out in the middle of the performance, rising to join in song and dance. Above all it is a laughing body, responding to all that is recognisable and understandable, from the

grotesque parody of villainous oppressors to the spectacular dramatisation and narration of oppression, defiance and vicious repression, with various degrees of laughter and derision and being bound in the process as a community.

On the other hand, the objective audience for these workshop plays is often the white liberal audience at venues like the Market Theatre or abroad. This audience is challenged by both the content and the form. It feels attacked, interrogated, judged, guilty. Where it accepts the content, it struggles with the form, with the aesthetic conventions. It sees only the 'crude' and the 'incomplete' and judged by its own imperialistic Eurocentric standards, the 'inferior', the 'simplistic', and the 'primitive' which it rejects outright or patronises. The body of the audience is individuated, passive, and silent. It is broken up into multiple, critical units which remain silently seated in their own spaces for the duration of the performance, hidden in the darkness of the theatre. It is a serious audience that reacts with shock and disgust, seldom with laughter to the spectacle before it.

This leads us on to the politics of theatre spaces in South Africa. There are no designated theatre spaces in the townships. Theatrical activity happens in community halls, classrooms, churches and even garages. There is no raked seating, minimal if any lighting equipment, and most venues have poor acoustics. Many workshop plays are designed to be performed in such spaces. They have no scenery or set as such, perhaps a few boxes, a clothing rail, at most a simple table and chair. They are adaptable to any 'empty space'. The black theatre audience is most comfortable in these township spaces and the plays can be said to work more effectively in these spaces.

However, in the 1980s more and more plays were performed out of the townships at town venues such as the Market Theatre. There are a number of

possible reasons for this tendency:

- (i) the difficulty of securing township venues, controlled by administration boards, for plays with anti-government themes;
- (ii) the general state of attrition existing in the townships throughout the period making theatre going difficult if not impossible;
- (iii) the desire amongst many township theatre practitioners for exposure to and recognition from more 'sophisticated' audiences and critics;
- (iv) the desire amongst these practitioners to make use of the technical facilities offered by venues like the Market Theatre; and,
- (v) the possibility of overseas engagements stemming from successful seasons in town theatres.

The performance of workshop plays at the Market Theatre in particular has lead to much debate and criticism. As Kavanagh (1987) comments:

The weakness of the Market Theatre and other similar cultural organisations is that they tend to function to siphon the creativity and talent of the masses out of the community into products which, brilliant as they may be, even at times quite hard-hitting in their political content and presentation, are then marketed for the consumption of petit-bourgeois audiences in South Africa and various Western countries... [T]he real audience for some of these plays, the most politically effective performance, is an audience not to be found at the Market Theatre.

(p 16)

This type of argument led certain workshop theatre practitioners, particularly from JATCO, to assert the 'imperative to situate the physical spaces of cultural production amongst South Africa's workers' (Sitas, 1986, p89). This lead to plays

like SECURITY (performed for striking Fattis and Monis workers) and DIKHITSHENENG (performed for maids on their afternoon off), and then to the worker plays performed by workers in union offices and township spaces (ILANGA LIZOPHUMELA ABASEBENZI, THE DUNLOP PLAY, THE LONG MARCH etc). Most of the workshop plays performed at the Market Theatre are also performed in the townships but not with the frequency with which they are performed in town venues, or for the number of performances that are done in town.

It is important to note that the audience at the Market Theatre is seldom exclusively black or white, objective or effective. It is usually a combination of the two. Most workshop plays like WOZA ALBERT, ASINAMALI, BOPHA or WATHINT'ABAFAZI, draw a large black audience to the theatre wherever they are performed. This audience mixes with the white audience in any one performance and the result is a tension between the two bodies. White audience members find the black audiences difficult because they are noisy, participatory, seemingly rude to the performers at times, and because they laugh at moments which seem tragic. On the other hand the black audience members find the white theatre goes too serious and too formal. The argument that those black people who do go to the town theatres tend to be middle-class and upwardly mobile, the only ones who can afford the transport and the ticket prices, is often true but it must be noted that through block-booking discounts and through bussing schemes, often financed by foreign governments, a large number of township residents are brought to the theatre. These include school children, community groups and even workers from mines and factories as far afield as Carletonville. It is clear that this is not as satisfactory as a performance in the township itself but it is also not simply a failure to perform to an effective audience.

POWER RELATIONS IN THE WORKSHOP: The struggle for form

The dominant group of workshop plays, those which exhibit the characteristics summarised above, includes most, if not all, worker and community plays but also many plays produced in the professional context. Whatever the context of their production, these plays emerged from workshops entirely made up of black participants or in which black participants were in the majority. This meant in the first place a greater oral influence in the workshop and in the second place the influence of the carnivalesque style which first emerged in Kente's plays.

It is clear that in urban South Africa in the 1980s one cannot speak of primary orality in the sense that it was described by Ong (1982).⁴ In South Africa there are many people who cannot read or write (the English Literacy Project [ELP] estimates that there are about nine million people in South Africa who are not literate)⁵ but very few who do not know of the existence of writing. As Portelli (1991) comments: 'Orality and writing, for many centuries now, have not existed separately: if many written sources are based on orality, modern orality is itself saturated with writing' (p52). What exists today in South Africa is a continuum between primary orality on the one end and high literacy on the other. Most people fit somewhere between the two. Most black people tend to cluster towards the oral end while most white people tend towards the literary end (ELP estimates that 47 per cent of black adults in South Africa over the age of twenty cannot read and write in their mother tongue as opposed to 2 per cent of white adults).⁶ Most black workshop participants do have literacy skills but I would argue they have high oral residues and this influences their contribution to the workshop and particularly the form of what is created.

There are of course tensions within and amongst black participants themselves. In the worker context for example, there are higher levels of oral residue. The Sarmcol worker's second play, *BAMBATHA'S CHILDREN*, consists of a complex interweaving of oral narratives, poetry, song and dance which traces the history of the community of Mphopomeni township and their struggles against dispossession and exploitation. On one level the play is a complex oral history; on another level it is an oral spectacle. The language of the play is almost entirely Zulu and the performance is strongly rooted in the oral culture of the Zulu people. Its oral performance style and its sprawling, open-ended structure sets the play very close to the oral end of the continuum of workshop plays produced in the 1980s. In fact in my opinion, the one element that jars in the overall structure of the play is the attempt to make the whole cohere more completely through the repetitive image of the cattle. This it seems is a device which was suggested by one of the facilitators and never fully accepted or understood by the participants themselves (interview with Patti Henderson, 14/4/89).

Other black participants, particularly those who tend towards the professional theatre, have high levels of literacy and their work reflects this (Manaka, Maponya, Mhlophe, Mda). For most of these theatre practitioners, however, there is some tension between oral influences and literary influences. Black writing is often infused with oral aesthetics.

The influence of European theorists like Brecht and Grotowski on black theatre practitioners is a matter for debate. Many of the ideas proposed by these theorists bear remarkable similarity to oral performance forms. Some black theatre practitioners involved in workshops acknowledge some influence from these theories, but it is contentious whether this influence is primary or simply confirmatory of what already appeals to these practitioners' oral sensibilities and

aesthetic conventions. As Fuchs (1987) comments with regard to the Brechtian influence on contemporary black theatre:

...it seems unlikely to be more than a fortuitous agreement with Brecht's methods: the latter could certainly not have been a revelation for performers steeped in their own oral performance traditions.

(p 36).

But the struggle for form between the oral and the literary influences emerges most strongly when the workshop group becomes racially mixed. Most white workshop participants come from a tradition in which the literary theatre is dominant. There are of course white workshop participants who are influenced by oral performance forms and particularly by the carnival tradition but for them it is a conscious decision to deviate from the dominant literary tradition, unlike the black participants for whom the oral tradition is the dominant tradition and for whom its use is largely unconscious. What becomes clear is that as the literary influence increases its power in the workshop the form of what is created deviates from the norm of the dominant group of workshop plays discussed above, and shifts along the continuum away from the oral/carnavalesque pole towards the literary dramatic pole. In this regard I will examine two variations from the dominant mode of workshop play in the period of the 1980s.

BARNEY SIMON'S MONOLOGUE PLAYS (BLACK DOG, BORN IN THE RSA)

In the period in question, besides WOZA ALBERT, Simon created two plays in workshop: BLACK DOG - INJEMNYAMA, and BORN IN THE RSA. The workshop groups for both these plays were made up of actors with previous

training and theatre experience who were asked to join the group by Simon, or who requested to work with Simon. The groups were mixed in respect of gender and race. In Chapter Five I discussed the power relations in the workshops for these two plays and noted Simon's powerful central role. Here I will examine the form of these plays and how this form differs from the form of the dominant group of workshop plays of the period.

Both plays are made up of a series of monologues. Simon has always been attracted to the monologue, an attraction which he ascribes to 'a fascination with the aria, of somebody standing on a stage and singing their guts out about something that matters passionately to them' (Interview, 5/7/90). He also feels that it has always been the easiest way in which to work. During the 1970s he created a number of plays based around monologues: *MISS SOUTH AFRICA SIX*, *JO'BURG SIS*, *MEN DON'T CRY*, and *PEOPLE*.

The monologues run parallel to each other and are interlocked by linking sequences and images in much the same way as the linking details operate within the *intsomi*: 'It's almost to me like a tapestry, and each monologue becomes like a vertical thread that hangs down at different lengths and levels' (Interview, 5/7/90). The interlocking sequences which link the monologues might include song, dance and minimal enactment in which some character shifting occurs. In this sense the plays are similar to a play like *ASINAMALI* but there are a number of significant differences.

1. The narrator function

The monologues are stories which are told directly to the audience but the performers speak as characters not as themselves. There is to some extent a

narrative which is developed through the monologues, a story which is pieced together from various perspectives but the major narrative action of the plays is the interior psychological development of the characters through the events they narrate. In this sense the narrative voice becomes subsumed in character which embodies the narrative action unlike in the dominant form where there is a clear distinction between narrative voice and narrative action. Some of the monologues (Injemnyama in *BLACK DOG*) narrate external events more consistently and more directly while others tend to be more concerned with internal, private thoughts and reflections (Rita in *BLACK DOG*). Most, however, tend to combine elements of both shifting from storytelling to personal reflection with a great degree of fluidity. It can be noted however, that the monologues spoken by black characters tend to include more of the direct narration of events and those of the white characters more of the interior psychological rumination.

2. Characters

The change in the narrator function means that characters are substantially different in these plays from the characters in the dominant group of plays. They tend to be more 'real', more psychologically rounded, with the emphasis on their interiority not their external actions. The characters of these plays represent a broad social range from the hostel-dwelling migrant Gwababa in *BLACK DOG* to the sophisticated civil rights lawyer Mia Steinman in *BORN IN THE RSA* with many gradations in between. Despite this broad social range the type of character remains essentially consistent unlike in the dominant group of plays where different types of characters coexist in any one play. Even the linking characters

(policemen, a nightwatchman and prison warders) who only appear briefly are presented in an essentially naturalistic style.

3. Core-images or emblems

Many of the monologues are built up from images or as Simon refers to them 'emblems' which are part of the so-called new tradition. In this respect their concerns are similar to the concerns of the dominant group of plays but emanate from and affect the characters on a much more individual and personal level rather than on a group level. When asked whether he felt there were particular collective emblems for particular periods of time, Simon replied:

Emblems for particular people at particular times. I must always start with the person.

(Interview, 5/7/90).

Whereas the dominant form of workshop play foregrounds the collective 'people', the monologue plays foreground the individual 'person'.

4. A more serious tone

The tone of these monologue plays is more serious than the tone of the plays in the dominant group. There is very little if any parody or grotesque imagery. Most of the characters are involved in some kind of struggle. Some struggle against vicious repression (Thenjiwe and Susan in *BORN IN THE RSA*). Some struggle with themselves about their part in the repression (Glen in *BORN IN THE RSA*, Raymond in *BLACK DOG*). Some struggle with themselves seemingly oblivious of the repression (Rita in *BLACK DOG*, Nicky in *BORN IN THE RSA*). Some

struggle to help those struggling against the repression (Mia in *BORN IN THE RSA*). Finally some just struggle to lead normal lives despite the repression (Zach and Sindiswa in *BORN IN THE RSA*, Gwababa in *BLACK DOG*). All the struggles are grave and serious affairs. There is an enormous amount of anger felt or expressed. There is none of the raucous communal laughter of the dominant group of plays. The audience tends to remain passive and silent. They empathise with the characters in the Aristotelian sense described by Boal, delegating the power of action to the character while feeling as if they themselves are experiencing what is actually happening to the character. As Simon comments:

To me the most important thing is to move people in an audience empathetically. That means not only to receive the information but also to understand what is happening to human beings in those circumstances. I mean for me that's the perfect political theatre.

(Interview, 5/7/90)

5. Structure

The monologues tend to have a very crafted literary feel. They tend to be extremely detailed with images recurring from one monologue to another. In *BLACK DOG* the helicopters flying overhead are witnessed by a number of the characters and commented on in their monologues. This serves to link the quite disparate experiences of the characters. In such ways the whole is skillfully threaded and stitched together and the presence of a controlling, editing hand is clearly evident. There is a greater sense of unity and uniformity between the individual monologues and in the play as a whole than there is in the plays of the dominant group. Overall the monologue plays demonstrate a greater sense of

closure. They appear more finished, polished and complete with regard to their structure.

6. The dominance of words

The plays are less physical than plays from the dominant group. They are dominated by words. The performers remain essentially passive throughout the performance speaking directly to the audience. Any movement or physical gesture that does occur has been found by the performer during rehearsal as a means of informing the words that pre-exist in the written text. They were not found at the moment of composition as part of the primary textual material. In this sense gesture remains subordinate to the words of the monologues in these plays. There is a strong sense of the head dominating over the body. There are choreographed dance sequences in the plays but these serve secondary linking functions.

7. Language usage

Language usage is almost monolithically English. There is very little intervention from other languages. When other languages are used they tend to be easily contained within the English hegemony. There is very little sense that the English is under any sort of threat in the plays. The characters are all extremely articulate. They seldom if ever struggle to express themselves. The language is finished and complete and seldom breaks down into inarticulate fragments as often occurs in plays of the dominant group.

In conclusion the monologue plays *BLACK DOG* and *BORN IN THE RSA*, while exhibiting certain features of the dominant form of workshop play in the

period, deviate away from this form towards a more literary form in significant respects. I argue that this shift in form is a result of the make-up of the workshop groups and the power relations operating within the groups. These workshops involved a potentially dialogical interaction between strong literary theatre influences and some essentially oral influences. However, it is my contention that the presence of a powerful leader figure in Barney Simon, favouring literary aesthetics and operating in a strong centralised authorial position, tended to restrict the dialogical potential of the workshop resulting in an essentially monological product.

THE WELL-MADE WORKSHOP PLAY

There are some workshop plays which can be placed very close to the literary dramatic end of the continuum. These plays exhibit many of the formal characteristics of the literary drama. A play like **THIS IS FOR KEEPS** workshopped by Janice Honeyman, Vanessa Cooke and Danny Keogh is indistinguishable in its final form from any well-made written play. Unities of time, place and action are strictly maintained. The play has a strictly linear climactic plot structure. The narrative voice is completely subsumed in the narrative action. This is an extreme example but serves to illustrate the fact that a workshop can potentially give rise to any form of product. It is also clear that the workshop group was homogeneous in almost every respect: racially, culturally and with respect to class. The performance traditions and cultural influences of all the participants were uniformly Western and literary.

A more interesting case for the present study is the case of **SOPHIATOWN** by **JATCO**. The workshop group for this production was more heterogeneous. Since

the production of RANLORDS AND ROTGUT in 1978, JATCO had been a racially mixed company so the potential existed for some kind of struggle between literary and oral influences. However, it is my contention that the real struggle for form in JATCO workshops over the years has not so much been one between oral and literary influences, although this struggle has existed and continues to exist to some degree. It is rather a struggle between the literary aesthetic and a conscious attempt to introduce the carnivalesque into that aesthetic.

In its earlier days JATCO consciously set out to produce work that was close to the carnival tradition. Malcolm Purkey, around whom the company had formed, was influenced by Jerome Savary's La Grand Magique Cirque with its irreverent acting style and shocking ambivalent images as well as a Japanese company called the Red Buddha Theatre. He commented in an interview in 1981:

I think quite early on we started formulating, quite self-consciously, a theatre that was anti-narrative, anti-psychological, anti-character.

(Purkey, 1981, p 4)

It seems to have been a feature of the company in its early days that positions of authority were continually being contested both in relation to organisation and aesthetics. The form of early plays like FANTASTICAL HISTORY OF A USELESS MAN and RANLORDS AND ROTGUT is characterised by a clashing of styles reflective of the struggles within the group over questions of form. When Purkey travelled overseas to study, the company drifted into plays like SECURITY and DIKHITSHENENG under the influence of Ari Sitas and Astrid von Kotze. As I noted above, these plays were designed to be performed outside of formal designated theatre spaces for worker audiences. The style of these plays seems to have been influenced by street theatre which Sitas and Von Kotze

witnessed in South America. The plays display strong carnivalesque elements. In both plays the physical body undergoes transformations. In *SECURITY* an unemployed man, struggling to find a job, is hired as a watchdog. For much of the play he must transform his body into that of a dog. In *DIKHITSHENENG* when a domestic servant is refused leave to attend a funeral, her boyfriend swops places with her and acts as a maid. By the time of *SOPHIATOWN*, however, many of the original members had left the company including Sitas and Von Kotze. In their case they had left specifically to pursue cultural work within the labour movement which tended to be more oral and carnivalesque in form. Malcolm Purkey on the other hand remained and occupied a strong central position in the group as director. By the time of *SOPHIATOWN* he seemed to have moved quite far from his earlier carnivalesque influences. In Chapter Five I described how Purkey wrote the final text of *SOPHIATOWN* in isolation from the group after the presentation phase of the workshop was complete. In talking about *SOPHIATOWN*, Purkey reveals a strong sense of ownership both of the process of the workshop and of the final product (interview, 17/4/89). What seems clear is that as a result of certain powerful individuals leaving the company, Purkey held almost uncontested power in the workshop, a fact reflected in the form of the final product.

I will now go on to examine the form of *SOPHIATOWN* in a little more detail.

1. The narrator function

For most of the play the narrative voice is subsumed in the narrative action and the audience is asked to suspend disbelief. At the beginning and at the end of the play, however, there is direct narration in which the narrative voice emerges

distinct from the action. Jakes opens the play with an expository narration setting up the context of the play, and the whole cast collectively narrates the removal from and destruction of Sophiatown at the end of the play.

2. Characters

The characters remain consistent throughout. They are presented as quite rounded and at first glance appear to be similar to the type of characters in the monologue plays. In fact they are societal types representing aspects of the Sophiatown sub-culture: Jakes the intellectual, Mingus the gangster, Fahfee the activist, Lulu representative of the youth, Mamariti the shebeen queen but also the holder of a freehold right, Princess a 'good time girl', and Ruth representative of the few white liberals who made forays into the Sophiatown scene particularly on a cultural level. Each displays a particular social style of the period, and in this respect they come across as less individuated and more group conscious than the characters in the monologue plays. Their individuality is a kind of historical or period individuality rather than a personal individuality.

3. Structure

The play has a linear chronological plot structure climaxing with the removal of the community from Sophiatown. The unities of place (Mamariti's freehold Sophiatown house), action and time are observed in the play but there are moments when the action is interrupted by song and dance routines which tend to serve a Brechtian style alienation function. These interruptions are very clearly separate from the main body of the play. It has a literary quality about it and the

presence of a controlling hand entrusted with the ultimate selection and shaping is clearly evident.

4. Language usage

There is some mixing of languages in the play. English is again primary but Tsotsitaal appears to be present to a relatively substantial degree. But as Yvonne Banning points out with regard to the language in the play:

The English of the play provides the central linguistic (and cultural) framework for the action, into which Tsotsitaal is inserted and assimilated precisely through the blurring and blending of margins that tsotsitaal characteristically exhibits. If alternative or oppositional stances are articulated in the play, they are articulated in English. There is no linguistic alternative or opposition to English. The site of the action, the expression of opposition and conflicts all lie within the territory of English.

(Banning, 1989, p 100)

In the final analysis, SOPHIATOWN exhibits an overriding sense of unity and closure. Few of the features of the dominant form of workshop play for the period are included. Where these do occur they are clearly separate and distinguished from the main body of the play where the form is essentially literary. There is very little dialogical interaction and 'blending and blurring of margins' between the literary influences and any oral or carnivalesque influences that might potentially have existed in the workshop. The dominance of the literary in the workshop saturates the whole. The literary incorporates versions of the oral and carnivalesque, on its own terms, for its own purposes. However, it refuses to engage in any real power struggle in which these forms might incorporate it. The power at the centre of the workshop seems absolute.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

In Part I of the study I argued that workshop theatre is an oppositional form engaged in an ongoing power struggle with the dominant form of theatre practice in South Africa.

In Chapter Two I examined the process in European theatre practice by which the improvisatory carnival tradition was marginalised by the literary tradition. I argued that this was achieved through the rise of authorship in the European theatre during the seventeenth century which paralleled the rise in prominence of the individual in the emergent bourgeois culture.

In Chapter Three I examined the Nguni oral narrative as an example of a performance form which pre-existed the arrival of the literary theatre in South Africa. I also indicated the similarity of such oral performance forms to the European carnival tradition.

Chapter Four began by describing how the literary theatre of Europe, exported to South Africa as part of British imperialistic objectives, marginalised the existing oral performance forms. In the process it became enshrined as the dominant and correct way of practising theatre in effect denying access to the practice to the majority of people. I then went on to trace the emergence of workshop theatre within South African theatre practice against the background of more general attempts by members of the non-hegemonic group to gain access to theatre practice. I showed how in the 1930s a small number of educated, middle-class members of the non-hegemonic group began to be allowed to participate in theatre practice as part of a legitimisation exercise on the part of the white, English-speaking, liberal community. I argued that this limited participation had to be

appropriate to the norm of theatre practice at the time which fell squarely within the literary tradition and required an ability to write good literary drama. It also demanded a certain mode of reception on the part of audiences. This limited the participation of a broad range of members of the non-hegemonic group either in the watching or in the making of theatre. It was only with the introduction of a substantial carnivalesque mode of performance in the theatre of Gibson Kente in the late 1960s that a mass non-hegemonic theatre audience arose. I argued that Kente's theatre managed to draw a new audience to the theatre but that it did not promote a vast increase in participation in the making of theatre. It was the rise of workshop theatre techniques in the early 1970s that initiated an upsurge in participation in theatre practice across a wide range of social contexts. This I argued was a result of workshop theatre's essentially oral nature both in the sense that it did not require skill in the technology of writing and in the sense that it accessed the oral traditional forms on an aesthetic level, linking them with a carnivalesque mode of performance, and a focus on contemporary, popular issues. In this way workshop theatre engaged in a power relationship with the dominant form not in order to replace it as the dominant form but in order to relativise its exclusive claims to truth and superiority.

In Part II of the study I examined various power relationships within the practice of workshop theatre itself.

In Chapter Five I examined the process of making workshop plays and focussed on improvisation as a physical and oral mode of composition. I argued that the physical nature of improvisation determines a physical performance style in the product that emerges from the workshop, a style that is essentially different from the style of performance in written plays. I further argued that improvisation transforms the performer from creative interpreter to creative author empowered,

in potentia, to participate in the making of meaning and form in the workshop; that is empowered to contribute both to what is said in a performance and how it is said: to the content and to the form. I then went on to examine the power relations in the workshop between various factions, and between the leader and the group, in respect of the meaning of what is produced. I argued that the extent of the empowerment of the performers is determined by their position within these power relations.

In Chapter Six I examined the form of workshop plays in South Africa produced in the 1980s and argued that a dominant form, closely related to the Nguni oral tradition and to the European tradition of the carnivalesque, emerged during the period of the 1980s. Deviations from this dominant form towards more literary forms and conventions were, I argued, determined to a large extent by the make-up of the workshop group. I suggested that as the workshop group becomes more heterogeneous so a power struggle in respect of the form of what is produced in the workshop is activated.

A FUTURE FOR WORKSHOP THEATRE?

Towards the end of the 1980s a number of questions began to be raised with regard to workshop theatre's continued relevance. Many mainstream theatre critics, writing in the commercial press, continue to hold the view that workshop theatre is made by those who are not talented enough to write their own plays. One of the instigators of workshop theatre in South Africa, Athol Fugard, declared as part of the publicity for his new play *MY CHILDREN, MY AFRICA*, apropos

workshopping:

Democracy doesn't work in art. There are too many contributing voices which talk at the same time. Art needs despots, tyrants, monsters. Great art has a heart of mystery...which you can never get in workshop theatre.

(Fugard, 1989)

What is being argued according to this view is that workshop theatre cannot be 'great art' because it attempts to accommodate too many conflicting voices and visions, resulting in incomplete, changeable, often contradictory and compromised products. In other words, workshop theatre equals 'bad' art, an inferior form which has had its day and must now make way gracefully for more noble forms.

To this argument can be added the one that has emerged in the wake of the speech by President F.W. De Klerk on 2 February 1990. With the release of some political prisoners, the unbanning of organisations such as the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan African Congress (PAC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), and the possibility of a negotiated constitution for all South Africans, it is no longer necessary for theatre people to make 'protest theatre'. As workshop theatre is essentially 'protest theatre', it is argued, it must give way to forms which are less confrontational, more inward looking.

It is my opinion that these arguments must be responded to by those theatre practitioners who continue to believe in the value and continued relevance of workshop theatre, not as a substitute for all other kinds of theatre but as one of a number of possible kinds of theatre.

The first attempt to respond to these anti-workshop arguments in any coherent sense was undertaken by two members of JATCO. In their paper on 'the making of TOOTH AND NAIL' Galombik and Steinberg (1989), partly in response to

Fugard and other critics of workshop theatre, set about assessing the value of the workshop process. They conclude that:

[T]he workshop method is indeed a very valuable and appropriate one in our context....The incorporation of voices that have historically been denied expression is significant on a political level as well as enriching on a dramatic level....However the full realisation of the educational aspect of the workshop process as well as the production of dramatically and politically powerful theatre is...contingent on abandoning a sentimental notion of democracy within the workshop group.

(pp 21-2)

What is meant by a 'sentimental notion of democracy' is explained earlier. The authors argue that while the accommodation of multiple voices is valuable it is 'crucial to avoid a confusion of voices at the expense of a clear and penetrating vision' (p19). This 'confusion' occurs in a democratic method of theatre production where 'democracy is understood as giving equal weight to everyone's vision and voice' (p19). What is needed, they argue, is:

...a workshop leader with a powerful and confident vision of a play, a vision which is then challenged, renewed and enriched by the absorption of other voices. In a nutshell, what is needed is a centralised democracy rather than consensus politics, and this should be established from the outset.

(1989, p 19)

To my mind this is a partial but inadequate response. I have argued in the present study that the workshop process as a site of struggle for both meaning and form does lead to products which in some circles might seem confused and compromised. However, strong centralised control only produces more coherent products in line with dominant aesthetics and forms, products that are part of Bakhtin's 'official' culture 'the triumph of a truth already established' (Bakhtin

1968, p9). Demanding strong centralised control in the workshop runs the risk of replacing the 'despotic' author of literary drama with the 'despotic' authorial leader of the workshop group. The argument for control and coherence is based on a false binary opposition at the core of Western metaphysical philosophy, the opposition of authority and anarchy. 'Anarchy as the only other to a firm, masterful and authoritative tightening of the ranks' (Ryan, 1982, p215). If you don't want anarchy, the argument goes, then you must accept authority. Yet, as Ryan argues, 'authority and anarchy are only two points in a plural field which includes many alternate positions that do not reduce to one side or the other of the metaphysical binary opposition' (p216). What must be guarded against is the constant attempt to reduce plural differences to such binaries which also serve as normative hierarchies of good and bad and become the ideological basis for rationalising a particular practice like workshop theatre.

I have argued that workshop theatre arose precisely at a time when oppositional politics in South Africa was moving from centralised to consensus politics. It arose in response to demands within oppositional political circles for more grassroots, local level, popular participation in politics and struggle. The so-called 'confusion of voices' (Galombik & Steinberg, 1989, p19) is democracy at work. It is the process by which those who have been silenced begin to speak for themselves. It is not surprising, considering the degree of silencing and division which has characterised the South African context in the past, that it is often discordant, contradictory and confrontational. This is only a weakness if there is an attempt to predetermine and control the meaning of what is to be produced in the workshop; to reduce the competing voices, all 'talk[ing] at the same time' (Fugard, 1989) to a unitary, coherent, singular voice. That is what makes it 'crucial to avoid the confusion of voices' (Galombik & Steinberg, 1989, p19).

The strength of workshop theatre lies precisely in its ability to make it possible for people to actively engage in creative authoring rather than remaining adherents to centralised authorial control. In my view, centralised control is not neutral, it is disciplinary. It denies activity and participation to people in the name of coherence and unity. Its hidden agenda is control: control of what is said, how it is said, and for what purpose it is said. This applies as much to the State and the dominant culture and its forms as it does to the oppositional political parties such as the ANC, the PAC, and the SACP and the so-called alternative or people's culture and its forms.

At a time like the present when power blocs are engaged in active struggle to determine the shape of the future in South Africa, workshop theatre remains relevant. Indeed, I would argue that it has a heightened relevance. South Africa does not need strong centres of authorial power, it has suffered long enough under such a system. What is needed is 'a new form of organization, founded not on guidance, leadership, a knowing elite, and an abstract set of concepts, but instead on participation, self activity, a diffusion of the leadership function, differences and radical participatory democracy (Ryan, 1982, p203). Workshop theatre is a model for such a 'form of organization'.

To those who demand an end to 'protest theatre' in the light of possible changes in the political arena, I would say, if there is to be a revolution in South Africa it is not nearing its end but only attempting its beginning. Struggle remains an elemental part of the South African social drama and as such it will continue to be reflected in its cultural forms for some time to come. Yes, the content of workshop theatre may change, this is inevitable, but to discard the form along with a change in content seems to me to be throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Workshop theatre remains a powerful forum for participatory democracy and the

expression of difference, a corrective to all forms of absolutism whether in the theatre or in politics. To paraphrase Graham Pechey (1987), it is not that workshop theatre is a bearer of a particular political content that is important but that it is a means of imagining the truth that no rule is absolute:

Its only politics is the insistence on the necessity of politics, of dialogical struggle, of power as struggle.

(Pechey, 1987, p 66)

APPENDIX A

The following is a list of workshop plays analysed in preparation for the present study. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list of plays created in workshop. With very few exceptions I have seen the plays performed either live or on video, and sometimes on a number of different occasions in very different venues. I have, however found it impossible to document the dates of the performances witnessed. My analysis has been based on the performances of the plays that I have seen supported by the analysis of published or unpublished texts where these have been available (see bibliography).

Andrew Buckland and Casts

Ugly Noonoo
Thing

Athol Fugard and Casts

Sizwe Bansi is Dead
The Island
Statements after an Arrest Under the Immorality Act
The Coat
Friday's Bread on Monday
The Last Bus
Orestes

Barney Simon and Casts

Woza Albert
Born in the RSA
Black Dog
People
Cincinnati
Score Me The Ages
Starbrights

Cape Flats Players

Senzenina
Aluta Continua

Clare Stopford and Casts

Ulovane Jive
The Last Trek

Janice Honeyman and Cast

This Is For Keeps

Jennie Reznek and Roz Monat

Cheap Flights

Junction Avenue Theatre Company

Fantastical History of a Useless Man

Randlords and Rotgut

Marabi

Security

Dikhitsheneng

Ilanga Lizophumela Abasebenzi

Sophiatown

Tooth and Nail

Mamu Players

Township Boy

Mavis Taylor and Cast

Thina Bantu

Mbongeni Ngema and Committed Artists

Asinamali

Percy Mtwa and The Earth Plays

Bopha

The Woman of Crossroads

Imfuduso

Vusizwe Players

Wathint'Abafazi, Wathint'Imbokotho

Warren Nebe and the Nyanga Theatre Group

Kwanele

Worker Plays From Natal

The Dunlop Play
The Long March
Bambatha's Children
The Clover Play
The Kwa-Mashu Streetcleaners Play
Gallows for Mr Scarriot Impimpi
You're a Failure Mr Impimpi
Qonda

Workshop '71

Uhlanga
Crossroads
Survival

APPENDIX B
Schematic analysis of WATHINT'ABAFAZI, WATHINT'IMBOKOTHO

Ep.No.	Move	Function	Description
1	Free Function:	Lack (Frame Formula) Core cliché (1)	The 'plague-bird'
2	Free Function:	Present situation Core cliché (2) Core cliché (3)	The market place The chickens The oranges
3,4,5a	Move 1:	{Lack {Lack liquidated {Hope { {Disbelief	No money, no husband Decision to go to city Dreams of what money will buy for the children Husband in hospital - TB
5b	Free Function:	Present situation Defiance (Move 3)	The market place Sdudla's refusal to take pass
6	Move 2:	{Lack (of security) { {Lack Liquidated {Hope {Disbelief {Hope {Disbelief {Hope {Disbelief	Working women leaving children alone at home Belief in Jesus protecting children Finds job as domestic Fired for coming late Finds job as cleaner Work conditions impossible Finds job in laundry Has miscarriage

Ep.No.	Move	Function	Description
7	Free Function:	Present Situation Core-cliche 1 Core-cliche 2	The market place The plague bird The chickens
8	Move 1:	{Hope {Disbelief	Finds job on farm Sexual harrasment by farmer
	Transitional Link : Song	Defiance	
9	Move 3:	{Lack {Lack Liquidated {Hope (Core image) {Disbelief	Lack of women's rights Women's participation in struggle March to Pretoria 1955 Arrest and death of husband and exile of sons
10	Move 1:	{Lack (of men) {Lack Liquidated {Hope { {Disbelief	Women alone in 'homelands' Women come to cities Of being together with their husbands Not allowed to live with husbands in hostels
11	Free Function:	Present Situation	Anxiety over smoke seen in the distance

Ep.No.	Move	Function	Description
12,13	Move 2:	{Hope {Disbelief	Money earned from selling Husband drinks money away at shebeen
		{Hope {Disbelief	Once husband had a job Accident - loses job with no compensation
		{Lack (of job) {Lack Liquidated	Husband unemployed By drinking
	Transitional Link:	Infliction Core-cliche 1	Plague bird
14	Move 4:	{Lack (of security) {Lack Liquidated	As a result of infliction Can only be eradicated by political action
		{Hope {Disbelief	Dreams of episode 4 The reality of nothing
	Transitional Link song	Defiance	Women won't be destroyed
15,16	Move 4:	Consequence	Arrival of Casspirs
		{Interdiction {Violation { {Consequence	Children respect elders Brutality of police erodes respect Children become killers
		Infliction	Restrictions on funeral

Ep.No.	Move	Function	Description
	Transitional Link Toi-Toi	Defiance	
17	Move 4:	Consequence Assertion	Clash with police; one child killed No response to peaceful pleas; now we will take our freedom
18	Free Function: (Frame Formula)	Lack Liquidated	Listing of prisons to be liberated

NOTES

Chapter One: Introduction

1. Robert Kavanagh often writes under the name Mshengu. I will refer to him as Kavanagh in this study in relation to all his writings. As a theatre director he uses the name Robert McLaren and I will refer to him as such in this study in relation to his theatre work.

2. Williams (1977) p 128

Chapter Two: European Theatre and the Carnavalesque

1. I do not mean to imply by this that University drama departments are wholly responsible for this selective adoption of European theatre practice into the South African context. It is clear that many of the early theatre practitioners were not from University backgrounds. I am merely attempting to illustrate the false teleology being practised and these surveys provide a convenient illustration.

2. By popular classes I am referring to the complex of producing classes, unified by virtue of their exclusion from the privileges of birth and wealth. These classes occupy subordinate positions in the relations of power within the society but nevertheless exert constant pressure on the ruling elites.

3. Aristotle, Poetics, Chapter IV, 48b 25-34. For detailed commentary in this regard see Else (1967) p 139.

4. See Le Roy Ladurie (1979) for an example of an annual carnival becoming a 'people's uprising'. This incident formed the subject matter for the workshop production CARNIVAL OF THE BEAR, offered as the practical component of the MA degree towards which the current study is aimed.

5. See Jonson's preface to Volpone (1607) and his preface to The Alchemist (1612).

Chapter Three: The Oral Performance Forms of Southern Africa

1. Scheub uses the spelling ntsomi throughout his works. When referring directly to him I will use this spelling but in all other cases I will use the Xhosa spelling intsomi.

2. For a brief discussion of Van Gennep's 'rites of passage' theory and Turner's development of it, see Bristol (1985) pp 29-30, 35, 38-40.

3. In this regard, the case of Ngoni women's pounding-songs from Malawi is interesting. Mvula (1991) describes these songs as a form of 'dispute management' (p34). He asserts that in the area of the performance of pounding-songs, women are the de facto authority and use the songs as a forum or platform in which to express their status and power within the society particularly when some social dispute occurs.

Chapter Four: The Emergence of Workshop Theatre

1. For a discussion of cultural forms as mechanisms of defence or 'defensive combinations' in the lives of urbanised black workers, see Sitas (1983) pp 18-56.

2. The terminology is Coplan's. He defines 'syncretism' as: 'The blending of resources from different cultures in order to produce qualitatively new forms in adaption to changing conditions' (1985, p 270).

3. Raymond Williams refers to writing as a 'specialised technique' (1981, p 93). Walter Ong refers to writing as a 'technology' (1982, pp 81-3).

4. Of course legal and economic factors have contributed to the exclusion of large sections of the population from theatre practice in South Africa. However, black people were never specifically banned from making or watching theatre by statute. Up until 1965 mixed casts and audiences were legal though unusual. It was only in February 1965 that the Group Areas Act was changed to expressly prohibit mixed audiences and mixed casts in public theatres.

5. For more information on Workshop '71 see: Kavanagh (1976) pp 38-48; (1981) pp ix-xxxi; 1985 pp 54-7, 213-5.

6. For more information on Fugard and The Serpent Players see: Vandenbroucke (1986) pp 130-203.

Chapter Five: The Workshop Process

1. The phrase is Schiller's, quoted in Johnstone (1981) p 79.
2. To be referred to as WATHINT'ABAFAZI in the remainder of the present study.
3. Lecoq, J. 1987 Le Theatre du Geste, Bordas, Paris.
4. Raymond Williams discusses the concept of a 'structure of feeling' in some detail: (1977) pp 128-35.
5. For a list of interviews conducted with members of JATCO by the writer see the bibliography.
6. When the writer Dugmore Boetie was dying of cancer, he asked Simon to take him back to Zululand in order that he might spend his last days in his birthplace.
7. Interview, 5/7/90.
8. Personal communication, July 1991.
9. Interview, 5/7/90.

Chapter Six: The Product of the Workshop

1. My analysis of plays is based on my own observation of workshop plays since the early 1980's, video material of productions, published playtexts (where these exist), and unpublished playtexts made available to me by workshop groups.
2. Quoted from a BBC 2nd House television programme entitled 'The Life and Works of Athol Fugard', first broadcast 20 November 1974 (Tristram Powell, Producer).
3. The UDF was formed in 1983 and troops were first deployed in the townships in November 1984 after the uprisings in the Vaal in September of that year. According to the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa,

in the period post 1984 over 5,000 people were killed, over 40,000 people were detained without trial - 12,000 of them children - and 31 anti-apartheid organisations were silenced (Fact Paper no. 17, London, 1990).

4. Chapter Three above, p 30.

5. These figures are taken from an unpublished paper entitled 'Language Policy and Literacy in a Post Apartheid South Africa: Some thoughts, some comments, some questions', workshopped by members of ELP, USWE (Use, Speak and Write English) and Learn and Teach for the ANC Language policy conference, February 1990, p 3 (writer D. Norton). The same figures are quoted in the 'Draft Press Release for Press Launch of International Literacy Year', 1990, issued by National Literacy Co-operation, p 2.

6. Norton (1990) p 4.

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