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“Thoughts That Think in Straight Lines Cannot See Round Corners...” :

Transgressing the Realist Narrative Form

by

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RVNSAM001

A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award

of the degree of

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Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Abstract.

The present study is a theoretical explication of the production *Trauma Centre* written and staged by the author in December 2001. This production set out to critique traditional ways of thinking, writing and perceiving reality in Zimbabwe. These 'traditional ways' manifest themselves as nineteenth century British realism, nationalist realism and socialist realism, which are denounced, in Marechera's apt phrase, as 'thoughts that think in straight lines...'. These creative methods were inculcated into the Zimbabwean psyche through the dual processes of persuasion and coercion, in order to serve political and cultural goals of the political dispensations which promoted them. The argument is advanced that all of these forms of realism have a specific and privileged way of depicting reality which they exclusively promote. They all disqualify alternative versions and on that basis they are despotic. The production of *Trauma Centre* attempts to circumvent the stated problem by discarding the rationality, linearity, and monoculturalism of the realist text.

In chapter one, the argument against realism is presented and explored and a theoretical proposal outlined. Chapter two explores Dambudzo Marechera's theory of discontinuity and fragmentation as well as Wole Soyinka's version of theatre of the absurd as performance historical context for the present study. Chapter three examines the creative method applied in writing and directing Trauma Centre. This creative method is largely influenced by the chaotic political events in Zimbabwe dating back as far as the seventies. An attempt is made to explicate the representation of the architecture of chaos, absurdity and bondage in the text and performance.

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Samuel Ravengai

Cape Town 2001

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Exploding the Narrow Realist Frame.

An attempt is made in this chapter to outline the literary context in which my project occurs, which is basically the consequence of the importation of nineteenth century British realism, and later nationalist and socialist realism, on the Zimbabwean artistic psyche. I advance the argument that all of these forms of realism have specific and privileged ways of depicting reality which they exclusively promote. All these forms of realism disqualify alternative versions and on that basis are despotic. It is this authoritarianism which this project sets out to challenge (exploding the narrow frame).

The quotation 'thoughts that think in straight lines cannot see round corners...', which appears in the title of this explication, was written by a Zimbabwean novelist, Dambudzo Marechera¹, as a response to instruments of control which the British settlers, in what was then Rhodesia, used to restructure the literary imagination of Africans. Relying on the various branches of the superstructure, which among other things included missionaries and the education system, a prescribed way of thinking and depicting reality in fiction was encouraged and accentuated. Drew Shaw quotes Veit-Wild explaining the degree of British influence on African writing:

The Literature Bureau (in the then Rhodesia) organised writers' workshops to teach writing skills. Here [...] European mentors instructed aspiring African writers in the art of writing a novel, a short story or poetry following conventional British models of writing from 19th century Europe. (Veit-Wild & Chennells 1999:9)

Although the evidence available here points to skills about writing a novel, a short story or poetry, some of those skills can also be applied to writing for the theatre. In fact, there is overwhelming evidence of plays which were written under the auspices of the Literature Bureau: Chakaipa's *Ndakambokuyambira* (1968), Mugabe's *Rugare Tange Nhamo* (1972), Mashiri's *Ushe Ndohwangu* (1978), Tsodzo's *Babamunini Francis* (1977) and so on. The Literature Bureau laid out the path (realism) which writers had to follow as Veit-Wild puts it:

Its role and influence were ambiguous: It helped to develop reading habits and writing skills but at the same time obstructed the emergence of uninhibited and authentic literary expression... (1993: 23)

In what I will term British realism, reality has to be depicted in a particular way dictated by particular rules. Some of these rules include:

- 1 Adherence to the neo-classical unities of time and place: one unified and consistent setting and a coherent and linear progression of a limited time span. There is also a strong link between fictional time and dramatic space to the extent that if either of the two is changed, it affects the other. Thus the change of time or place always marks the beginning of a new scene or act.

- 2 A structure which follows a linear pattern where events unfold following the cause-to-effect principle. Castagno calls this structure a 'tracking' system which he describes as a 'plot-oriented approach structured toward intensification, with complications building to a climax' (2001:13). This structure is attributable to Aristotle's model of the 'well-made-play' which Brockett summarises as:
 - Clear exposition of situation and characters; careful preparation for future events, unexpected but logical reversals; continuous and mounting suspense; an obligatory scene; a logical and believable resolution. (1964:333)
- 3 A closed ending. Here the playwright offers a solution to the issues s/he has raised in the main body of the play. There is no room for alternative meanings except the one offered at the end by the playwright.
- 4 The play must end in such a way that all disturbing passions are cathartically purged from the hearts of the audience, which enables them to leave the theatre with a peace of mind.
- 5 The realist play should also fit a defined genre category like tragedy, comedy or farce. The playwright must follow the demands of a chosen genre to the end.
- 6 Characters remain consistent. They don't change into other characters, although they are allowed psychological development.
- 7 A mimetic relationship with the world. By this I mean a faithful replication of features of the external world. The play is 'placed in a context so as to convince the observer of its reality, or at least its connection to a recognisable and identifiable object, action or emotion' (Aronson 2000:10).

It is this methodical, logical, linear and chronological way of writing and thinking which the colonial education system and missionaries promoted in schools and through organisations like the Literature Bureau.

1.2 Shifting the Realist Paradigm: Nationalist and Socialist Realism.

The first literary reaction to British realism in Zimbabwe was, what I will call, nationalist realism. This was influenced by the rise of African nationalism and by negritudism².

The first Shona novel, by Solomon Mutswairo, *Feso* (1957), extolled the virtues of legendary Zimbabwean heroes. Militant nationalists soon found it to be a potent cultural weapon and 'recited poems and paragraphs from the book at public gatherings' (Veit-Wild 1993:139). As could be expected, it was quickly banned. Wilson Katiyo's *A Son of the Soil* (1976) is another example. It exposes racial segregation and the hooliganism of the Rhodesian police. Katiyo's protagonist,

Alexio, is the epitome of black resistance. Generally, in nationalist realism, writers rejected negative black images perpetuated by white writers. Nationalist writers also sought to replace stereotypes and inaccuracies with a body of Zimbabwean generated histories and artefacts, as well as reasserting what they called African values, images and perspectives. Mutswairo's historical novel *Mapondera: Soldier of Zimbabwe* (1977), bears testimony to the above. In the novel, Mutswairo corrects past historical inaccuracies and even becomes an idealist by giving Mapondera unrealistic superhuman qualities. In nationalist realism the centre³ of cultural authority was no longer London. The writers responded to British cultural authoritarianism by asserting the authority of an alternative centre – Harare. While this must be recognised as a healthy endeavour to parry incessant harassment by London, nationalist realism was simply a reversal of the British way of seeing reality. It remained rooted in realist aesthetics imposed by the colonial project. It created a new monster that wore the same realist face as the nineteenth century British writers. Chris Jenks, in his discussion of the notion of inversion, asks a very interesting analogical question: 'does the structure of oppression change if the roles of slave and master are reversed?' to which Heidegger offers an equally interesting answer: 'as a mere counter movement it necessarily remains...' (1995:73). According to this argument, the notion of writing back at the British, using the same realist structure, merely perpetuates the same despotism, which now flows in a different direction. In addition:

African nationalism responded to colonialism within the terms of the colonial argument by asserting the value of homogeneity in order to create a united front of opposition to colonialism. (Veit-Wild & Chennells 1999:24)

But the whole notion of homogeneity, often preached by nationalists and the negritude movement, is equally an illusion. Africa is not a simple reified continent, nor a single socio-cultural continuum. There is no way one can ignore or 'submerge the ethnic heterogeneity of the continent and put forward a set of beliefs, customs, taboos and practices as typically and uniformly African' (Amuta 1989: 38). Thus Amuta comes to the conclusion that '[...] the entire concept of an African worldview – undifferentiated in time and space – is a mythical and illusionary concept' (40).

Negritudism was never a tangible movement in Zimbabwe, as its ideas were quickly repulsed by the 1950 Subversive Activities Act⁴, which allowed the 'prohibition of the printing, publication, importation or dissemination of books, magazines, periodicals or newspapers' (Veit-Wild 1993:71). However, some of its ideas found way into Zimbabwean writing on the eve of independence. Geoffrey Ndhlala's *Jikinya* (1979) romanticised the Zimbabwean past in the fashion of negritude writers. Nationalist realism can, however, claim many esteemed writers like Stanlake Samkange, Chenjerai Hove, Lawrence Vambe, Wilson Katiyo and so on. In fact the black

intelligentsia which had been groomed in the nineteenth century British realism became its watchdogs and ardent supporters. Taylor and Winqvist (2001) summarise Lyotard as arguing that traditional narratives possess a narrative pragmatics of transmission. They go on to add that the position of sender and addressee can be occupied by the same person at different times. Realism, functioned in this way in Zimbabwe. Once Zimbabwean writers became addressees of realism, through the efforts of the Literature Bureau, they were placed in a position where they themselves would perpetuate the same creative method to the next generation. In Taylor and Winqvist's words, they were '[...] placed in a circuit that required that (they) in turn become ... the sender(s) as teachers or public figure(s)' (2001:165). Any writer or director who deviated from realism was condemned. Drew Shaw quotes Mzamane criticising Marechera for his anti-realist writing 'his literary analogies owe very little to the African tradition, and rob his work of a Zimbabwean authenticity (Veit-Wild & Chennells 1999:7). Zimunya throws another bombshell at Marechera: 'the eclectic babble does not, as a rule, enrich one's own culture, and certainly chokes the artist himself' (ibid:7).

In post-independence Zimbabwe, another form of realism – socialist realism⁵ emerged as the pre-eminent form. The country chose to follow a socialist path and its literary production complimented this ideological choice. Theatre was not regarded seriously 'unless it was politically correct and socially relevant' (Veit-Wild & Chennells 1999:13). Veit-Wild and Chennells quote established figures like Prof. Ngara and Fay Chung as saying in their book, *Socialism, Education and Development* (1985):

Writers cannot play a truly positive and constructive role in building socialism in Zimbabwe unless they take it upon themselves to be informed about the forms and functions of literature in a socialist society. (Veit-Wild & Chennells 1999:14)

The result was a repertory of plays which conformed to this socialist realist style: Mujajati's *The Wretched Ones* (1989), McLaren's *Katsha-a* (unpublished) and so on.

This creative method creates a simple linear structure to rehearse its narratives. Like other forms of realism, it demands a faithful reproduction of reality, but that reality is not a depiction of the actual world, but of life in its revolutionary development. In Fischer's words socialist realism:

Sees in the working class the determining...force necessary for the defeat of capitalism, for the growth of a classless society and the unlimited development of material and spiritual forces of production to liberate the human personality. (1963:111-112)

In socialist realism, nothing happens outside the realm of the working class. Since workers have to be seen as products of an oppressive history, history must always feature prominently in the subject matter of the play. It is an artistic chronicling of the struggles of the workers following the cause-to-effect principle. The play always ends prophetically with the victory of the workers – a bright future!

Socialist realism ... anticipates the future. Not only what has preceded a particular historical moment, but also what will succeed it, is woven into its fabric... the prophetic component has gained new force and dignity in socialist art. (ibid:112).

Has man reached a point of perfection to warrant him paradise at the end of the narrative? These prophetic happy endings only create an illusion of happiness which humanity does not possess at the moment. The narratives in this style are continuous and linear. The structure resembles any other realist text, but is itself not the subject of analysis.

1.3 Realism: A Moribund Aesthetic.

Given the foregoing facts, it is quite evident that British realism, nationalist realism and socialist realism all attribute to the historical and the contemporary Zimbabwean society, a unity, coherence and order which it never had and does not currently possess. Reality is not neat and continuous. It has silences, lapses, noise, cracks, interruptions and seams, which realism seems to discard or pass over in favour of continuity and coherence. In my opinion, such continuity and coherence are an illusion because events in actual life do not follow that clean linear path as is elegantly explained by Marechera:

History is not a well-ordered path leading from cause to effect;...it is rather a psychological condition in which our senses are constantly bombarded by unresolved or provisional images. (cited in Veit-Wild & Chennells 1999:6)

To try and force reality into a continuous narrative without lapses and seams is to fail to portray reality as it manifests itself daily. Laurice Taitz commenting on the discontinuity of reality says:

[...] historical events outstrip attempts to produce a seamless narrative of them. Events can(not) be contained in writing, which is the founding presupposition of all writing, since there are omissions, traces of violence, and silences that serve to interrupt the attempt at imposing continuity through narrative containment. (Veit-Wild & Chennells 1999:28-29)

In essence, the very demands of British realism, nationalist realism and socialist realism are dictatorial.

Furthermore, all forms of realism carry the same Aristotelian model of structure. This structure is deified to the extent that it is not itself the subject of analysis. It is there to be obeyed. This linear structure, intrinsic to all forms of realism, was created to curtail dissent. The structure soothes the audience by effectively siphoning off ill-feeling. It must be remembered that this was the original intention of the well-made-play structure when it was sculpted by Aristotle. Aristotle created this structure when he argued against the banishment of art by Plato. In what is now called the 'Platonic dilemma', Plato argued that 'if true reality consists of ideas of things of which individual objects are but reflections or imitations, then, anyone who imitates these objects is imitating an imitation, and so producing something which is further removed from ultimate reality (Daiches

1981:20). Reacting to this charge, Aristotle modelled a dramatic structure based on the very best of his contemporaries. He fixed an 'infallible' structure through which reality had to be seen and experienced. With this literary weapon in his hands, he concluded as outlined by Daiches:

Far from nourishing the passions...it (theatre) gives them (audience) harmless or even useful purgation, by exciting pity and fear in us, tragedy enables us to leave the theatre in calm mind – all passion spent. ...A tragedy not only communicates its own insight...and provides the satisfaction to be got from structural unity, but it also provides a safe outlet for disturbing passions which it effectively siphons off. (1981:39)

It is clear Aristotle was claiming some kind of therapeutic value for tragedy. Although not all tragedies are realistic⁶, it is the Aristotelian structure which concerns me here; the selfsame structure which was adopted by the realist movement. Such a structure tends to create the same cathartic effect, even in anti-apartheid realist plays like Athol Fugard's *No Good Friday*. The play ends with Willie having resigned from pursuing his goals in life 'I am sick of my whole life. Everything! Every single thing that I have done or believed in looks stupid' (Fugard 1993:29). No one in the audience would like to meet Willie's fate. They would rather avoid the risk. A play that is blatantly anti-apartheid has an ending, which seems inimical to its intentions. The roots of the problem are traceable to the structure of the play.

A further weakness of British, nationalist and socialist realism is that the events and characters are not larger than life. They resemble life itself. On the basis of this iconicity, no other meanings are generated by the sign vehicles except that which they signify. This portrayal of reality tends to diminish our awareness of reality because it confirms things as we know them. The imagined is discarded in favour of the actual. Observation is so hyper-valued to the extent of making imagination redundant, and in the words of Howard Barker, this turns actors into 'low-grade journalists' (2000:2). Barker laments that 'we are writing theatre for television viewers. Nothing is meditated. Nothing is metaphor' and he correctly notes that this theatre is dead and its corpse 'blocks our way to the one dramatic form which can and must distinguish theatre from its voracious offspring, television drama.' (ibid.2)

I find British realism, nationalist realism and socialist realism all inadequate as they permit only one way of seeing reality. It is my contention that events and incidents simply happen without obeying man-made systems of logic and sequence. On account of their promotion of a single way of perceiving reality, never allowing any alternative versions, I find these forms of realism artistically despotic. It is in this context that I challenge the privileged status of British realism, nationalist realism and socialist realism in Zimbabwe. It was also in this context that Marechera, my mentor,

charged at the devotees of realism with 'thoughts that think in straight lines cannot see round corners...'. In his novel, *The Black Insider*, he is even more explicit:

[...] man defines man, man defines violence. And is himself defined by his own definitions. The authority to which realism lays claim derives not from the real but from the realist's definition of real...[t]o write as though only one kind of reality subsists in the world is to act a mentally retarded mime for a mentally retarded audience. (Marechera 1990:67-68)

1.4 Fracturing and Disordering Narratives: A Theoretical Proposal.

My aim in this project is to find a more appropriate theatrical means of depicting the reality of post-colonial Zimbabwe and to find a way of making the audience engage in a more critical manner with the content of my play. As I have argued, the realist paradigm is not sufficient to depict the reality of the current situation, because of its insistence on linearity, nor does it stimulate the audience to engage critically with my work because of its cathartic effect. However, a text drawing from the lessons of the absurdist movement which emphasises discontinuity and fragmentation and which is able to foster active engagement from the audience, would, in my opinion, be a more appropriate vehicle for depicting the current situation.

In the pursuance of these goals, I make the following proposals:

- To create what Barthes describes as a 'writerly' (scriptible) text (Selden 1985:76). By the term 'writerly' or 'scriptible', Barthes means a type of text which turns the audience into producers of meaning(s) rather than being passive recipients of signs. The 'scriptible' text does not guarantee one meaning and reality as the realist text does.
- To create a syncretic⁷ or hybrid text. The syncretic text utilises two or more performance traditions in a creative recombination of their elements, to create a unique new form, which is not quite European and not quite African. Hauptfleisch (1997) uses the term 'hybrid' for the same concept, while a number of theoreticians in anthropology, fine arts and ethnography have noticed a similar trend in their domains and operate with a synonymous term 'creolisation'. In the wake of the nineteenth and twentieth century British writers' tendency to homogenise, by excluding 'other' cultures and advancing the notion of 'purity' - whether it be racial or stylistic - post-colonial playwrights and directors have to create forms in art that reflect the process of mingling, which is so much part of the post-colonial condition. Balme gives evidence of such British chauvinism:

In this worldview, which encapsulates the essence of colonialism, in both its paternalistic and aggressive, exploitative manifestations, any suggestion of mingling and interchange was synonymous with dilution, deracination and breakdown. (1999:9)

Any literary production in British colonies had to respect the idea of 'purity'. Post-colonial playwrights and directors are now faced by yet another problem: the ego of nationalist realists,

who advance the same notion of purity, but from an African perspective. The intention in this project is not to create an alternative centre, but only to allow neither pole: British realism nor nationalist realism to become the centre and guarantor of presence and 'purity'

- To create a post-structural play. This post-structural text operates beyond the limits of structure. My theoretical presupposition is that this is a better way of depicting reality as reality is not forced into a man-made structure. Reality, here, is simply given free space to manifest itself as it would in daily life – fragmented, non-linear, illogical and unresolved. If the narrative is fragmented, it means that the story 'discontinues'. To create this discontinuity, the narrative is filled with fissures, cracks and seams. These mark spots at which violence and disintegration have left their scars.

Chapter 2: Performance Historical Context.

2.1 Soyinka's Touch of The Absurd.

In my writing and direction of *Trauma Centre*, I have been influenced by other pioneers of syncretic and absurd theatre such as Wole Soyinka. Not all of Soyinka's plays conform to the absurdist category. I will therefore restrict my investigation to three of his plays, which have elements of the absurd: *The Road*, *Madmen and Specialists*, and *The Swamp Dwellers*. These plays demonstrate features of absurd characters as defined by Harrop, who singles out pain, decay and age as physiological features inherent to them. He gives examples of absurd characters with such qualities from texts written by other pioneers of absurd theatre: 'Didi's bladder, Gogo's feet' in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and 'Clove's inability to sit, the age of the couple in *The Chairs*' by Ionesco (1982:202). Wole Soyinka makes use of a similar physiological deformity, which in his characterisation manifests as old age, ailments or wounds. In *The Road*, Murano who is supposed to tutor the professor is blind. In *Madmen and Specialists*, Blind Man is the protagonist and in *The Swamp Dwellers*, a visually impaired beggar from the north is employed as a metaphor for wisdom. Soyinka also makes use of morbid images. His characters in *Madmen and Specialists* stink, and the whole play is littered with blood sucking and carnivorous creatures like rats, dogs, fleas and bugs. In defining the absurd, Harrop says:

[it] means out of touch with reason and propriety. What man seeks is some measure of happiness in a reasonable and predictable world. What he seems to get is unhappiness in a chaotic and unpredictable one. Devoid of purpose, cut off from religious, metaphysical, and spiritual roots, betrayed by reason, man is lost-all his actions become useless, senseless, absurd. (1982: 189)

The Professor in Soyinka's *The Road* bears testimony to the claim of the above quotation. He is eternally seeking the meaning of life. For the 'mad' Professor, life revolves around the Word, which

is knowledge. The Word is perennially elusive and in his search for it, his actions become useless. This is the essence of the absurd.

Another aspect of absurd theatre which influences my work, is that events seem to happen outside of time. The Professor reads time from a clock, which no longer works. He doesn't know what time it is. This notion of time is carried further in *The Swamp Dwellers*. Asked by Makuri how long he has been on the road, the blind begger answers: 'I have lost all count of time. To me, one day is just like another [...] ever since my sight became useless' (Soyinka 1964:90).

The European absurd theatre hinges, to a very large extent, on the concept of the death of God.

Nietzsche baldly stated that God was dead, and, with all due acknowledgement to believers, functionally we live today in a world without a godhead. But if not divinely guided at least we had reason (Harrop 1982:187)

This idea of the death of God gave rise to atheistic existentialism. Beckett is, arguably, the most successful artist of the atheistic existentialist philosophy. Since God is dead, Beckett proclaims doom to mankind: 'They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then its night once more' (1955:89). From the way they are delineated in the text, Didi and Gogo have no direction. The text is silent about the source of their suffering. We are not told about their background or their future. They are mysterious and Beckett wants them to suffer to the end of time. There is a point of divergence in this kind of existentialism and my own philosophy, which recognises the continued presence of God – theistic existentialism. Although I am at a loss to know Soyinka's religious inclination, his depiction of absurd characters sets a good precedent for my work. The underlying principle in Soyinka's work is that '...man has brought doom upon himself; he can save himself by denouncing evil...' (Durosimi & Palmer 1984:16). The starting point is not God's death; it is the iniquity of man. Thus I reveal the background of my characters, which is that they fought in a war which returns to haunt them. Their suffering is entirely their own fault and it is that iniquity which has brought bondage to their lives.

2.2 Dambudzo Marechera's Notion of Discontinuity and Fragmentation.

The artist who has had the most profound influence on my work is Dambudzo Marechera. He was the first Zimbabwean writer to shake off the shackles of realism. He penned his first anti-realist novella *House of Hunger* in 1977 after his expulsion from Oxford. Other anti-realist works *The Black Insider* (1978), and *Black Sunlight* (1980) published posthumously, were to follow. In his novel *The Black Insider*, Dambudzo Marechera singles out 'reason' and 'logic' as weapons used by

missionaries and teachers to restructure the artistic imagination of black people. In the statement from which the title of this explication is taken, Marechera writes:

Thoughts that think in straight lines cannot see round corners; the missionaries and teachers saw to that. We (black people) were taught to want to go where a straight lines goes and to look back over the shoulder to where the straight lines come from. Logic is an attitude. It freezes us forever in the icy tumult of all the cursed attitudes they stuffed into us. [Marechera 1990:37 (words in brackets are mine)]

The Aristotelian structure, which was adopted by the realists, depends upon a clear cause-to-effect principle and the logical progression of complications. It is a structure, which moves forward in time. It does not escape Marechera's scathing attack:

Straight forward things leave no room for imagination; they allow no other perspectives. The tyranny of straight forward things is more oppressive and more degrading than such idle monstrosities as life and death, apartheid and beer drinking, a stamp album and Jew-baiting. (ibid:49)

Marechera ended up on the streets of Harare, neglected by a society that was allowed to know only one truth. Veit-Wild throws some light on the influence of Marechera's writing on the generation that was to follow:

Yet among the younger, post-nationalist generation in Zimbabwe, Marechera became a cult figure and literary role model. He liberated their minds from outdated, boring, one dimensional ways of thinking and writing. (Veit-Wild & Chennells 1999:98)

My explorations are greatly influenced by Marechera as summarised below. Firstly, Marechera was not constrained by syntactic rules and narrative structures. In the words of the South African dub poet, Lesego Rampolokeng, 'Dambudzo was trying to fight rules set by old men. He was the most free spirit on this continent. The liberation we really need is from anything that oppresses the imagination.' (quoted in Veit-Wild & Chennells 1999:99)

This found place in my writing of *Trauma Centre*. My interest in fragmentation begins with dumping any form of regimentation. I discarded the traditional structural units of acts, scenes and episodes. My refusal to create categories such as these extends also to my plotless style. There isn't a clear narrative with a beginning, a middle and an end. In the words of Zeppelin 'there is No story' (Ravengai 2001:9).

Secondly, Marechera's use of space also influenced the way I set my disjointed narrative. The events in his novella take place in a house which he calls 'House of Hunger,' which is not only a 'symbol for physical starvation and hardship in township life, but a metaphor for the overall spiritual deprivation of Marechera's generation' (Veit-Wild & Chennells 1999:259). *Trauma Centre* is, likewise, a metaphorical setting, which represents the physical and psychological condition of the contemporary Zimbabwean society. The space in Marechera's anti-realist novels is also transformable. Spatiality relocates from the outer physical world to the inner psychic space. The same is true in *Trauma Centre*. When Zeppelin stands on the bed fantasising about sex, the sperm,

in the race to fertilise the egg fights other rival sperms. The external space relocates to an internal one which is microscopic – the urethra. There is a dialectic relationship between the outer space – the Trauma ward, and the deeper inner space, which is created in the minds of the audience. The same transformation happens when Giteh goes through the process of hypnosis. The space becomes her mind, which is peopled by the figures present at the meeting, who play characters that she recollects from her previous experience.

Thirdly, in Marechera's work, the boundaries of time shift constantly. When Marechera's characters are in dreamland, they live in a different time zone from those characters who live in the story's earthly time. I have borrowed these techniques from Marechera. When Reito's madness strikes, time moves backwards to the period of the liberation war. When his madness recedes, time comes back to the present. Furthermore, in Marechera's work, there is an inter-penetration of dream and reality. The dream and spiritual realms interact with human society. I exploit the same device in *Trauma Centre*. Reito talks to spirits, which the audience cannot see. Zeppelin used to have those problems too, after he had killed a white woman. Thus in *Trauma Centre* the spirit world interacts with the world of the living.

Last, but not least, Marechera leaves fissures, cracks and gaps in his work. There is clear evidence of seams where time moves backwards and forwards or where the subject matter instantly changes. In the same manner, violence leaves behind scars, wounds, dismembered bodies and fractured bones. The fissures and cracks in the text are used as elaborate metaphorical statements of the violence of colonialism and also of nationalism under the guise of bringing 'normalcy' and 'order' to a post-colonial society. This flies in the face of realism, which tries to create a seamless narrative.

All the above techniques interrupt the flow of the story bringing about discontinuity. The different parts of the texts are not well knit. They appear as fragments of a whole. This process of discontinuity and fragmentation is closer to the ways in which actual events are experienced.

Chapter 3: Creative Methodology.

In pursuit of my creative goals, I wrote and directed the play *Trauma Centre*. My first proposal was that this play should be a 'scriptible' text. The term 'scriptible' or 'writerly' is used by Roland Barthes to describe a type of text which turns the audience into producers of meanings, which he contrasts with a realist text 'lisible' or 'readerly', which he says offers a restricted meaning to be passively consumed by the audience. Before I explain how these gaps facilitate the audience's critical

engagement with my work, let me outline how I created them. I used 'back channels' in which, a section of dialogue is cut somewhere along the course of writing or saying it. The dialogue is picked up later in the play, and this creates a gap which serves artistic purposes. One example is when Zeppelin sits on a cube and begins to tell Reito about how the soldiers attacked his mother. His story is interrupted after two lines by his falling from the cube. Reito rushes to help him and a fight ensues which is followed by a short dialogue. Then Zeppelin picks up the story again.

Other gaps are created through the employment of 'snapshots'. Snapshots only capture certain moments and leave the rest of the material out of the vision of the audience. Take for instance, the moments of Reito's 'madness'. The first snapshot happens when he is in the middle of a conversation with Zeppelin. He finds himself swearing at the effectiveness of the guerrilla intelligence system. The madness recedes and that dialogue is interrupted by a two page chunk of text. The second snapshot describes how he survived a guerrilla attack. It is, immediately, followed by another snapshot where he is interrogating a prisoner of war. This quick succession of snapshots leaves cracks and gaps for the audience to fill. To use the same metaphor of the camera, the viewer is always prevented from achieving a complete logical decoding of the situation pictured. The camera angle is too tight, and the most crucial information the audience needs to complete the picture is outside the field of vision they have been given access to.

I also interrupt continuity by means of what Castagno calls 'split or bifurcated characters' (Castagno 2001:11). These characters are capable of changing into other characters as opposed to realist characters who remain consistent. Reito is one character when he is normal and another when his illness strikes. He also transforms into a soldier during the war beat and then into an ape and later towards the end of the play, into a judge. Zeppelin transforms into a soldier, into a lion and into an attorney towards the end of the play. Themba changes into a sperm, into a rocket and into a bullet. Sonja transforms into the minister of information during the war beat. Giteh remains consistent throughout but the same effect is achieved with her undertaker costume, which is not the uniform of a nurse. This absence of stable identity is viewed by David Kuhns as:

Expressing the true complexity of human consciousness when it is not rationalised in traditional bourgeois moral discourse. [It is a] type of performance suited to presenting human experience not as a naturalistic synthesis but rather as something like a palimpsestic text, wherein life's contradictions continually inscribe and reinscribe themselves, without resolution, upon one another. (Kuhns 1994:52)

While discontinuity and fragmentation indicate the disorder of the world of the play, they also provoke the audience's interface and engagement with the work. The audience, through these missing connections between the text's disparate layers, is invited to fill in the gaps. The audience is sucked into the events and is provoked to 'produce' meanings from the fragments provided in the

text. The fact that something is concealed in the gaps motivates the audience to actively engage with the play and each audience member generates his/her own meaning depending on the audience member's cultural competence. Counsell and Wolf call this state of not having all components intact, 'virtuality' (2001:180). It is this state of 'virtuality' which gives a play what they call 'its dynamism' (ibid:180). It ignites the viewer's interpretative engagement with the work.

Commenting on the use of gaps, Counsell and Wolf say:

The gaps function as a kind of pivot on which the whole text-reader relationship revolves. Hence the structured blanks of the text stimulate the process of ideation to be performed by the reader on terms set by the text. (2001:182)

The 'scriptible' playtext was also created through what Castagno calls 'character clash' (2001). This entails the juxtaposition of characters from opposing worldviews, historical eras and languages. In the case of *Trauma Centre*, four world views clash against each other. Zeppelin sees reality through the spectacles of a black 'liberator'. Reito sees reality from a Rhodesian white man's perspective. Giteh and Sonja perceive reality from the broader Western vantage point, while Themba is the epitome of a post-colonial mentality. This state of affairs creates a dialogic play with many opposing or contesting voices as opposed to the realist monologic play which 'telegraphs' its message to the audience in a controlled and coherently defined way. Castagno quotes Culler (1997) as saying this about dialogism:

The play is 'fundamentally polyphonic or dialogic' rather than monologic (single voiced). The essence of the play is its staging of different voices or discourses and, thus, of the clash of social perspectives and points of view ... [2001:9]

As the audience is taken through this multiplicity of perspectives, none of which exalts itself as the ultimate truth, they are motivated to think for themselves and chart their own course through the material. Goodman and de Gay, talking about post-linear performance, say that 'it can be hard work for the audience. Effort is required to dispel confusion and understand what is going on' and the work can also bring discomfort as a 'result of being presented with a dystopian picture of a particular slice of our social and political life' (2000:260).

I also created a 'scriptible' text through the engagement of non-iconic images. The relationship between the image and what it signifies is arbitrary and unmotivated. Take for instance the military boots on the cube. They do not stand for military boots. They have larger meanings, which are governed by the audience's cultural and personal experiences. Meaning in a 'scriptible' text does not exist; it must be produced. Since human beings that make up the audience come from diverse cultural environments, the same image can have different cultural signification. Thus Counsell and Wolf point out that members of the audience must be 'culturally competent' and must 'possess particular social knowledges' as well as be active to apply the required 'interpretative

strategies' (2001:177). In Western societies, for example, boots have a funereal significance. They make a statement that the sick person is about to depart. 'The shoes at the bedside show that that person is no longer well enough to walk: they are a sign of death' (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1994:877). In Christian societies, which most Southern African societies claim to be, boots are symbols of the right of ownership. They have the same significance in Jewish communities. To leave one's shoe or sandal on a piece of land is to take possession of it. In order to transfer ownership rights '[...] a man plucked off his shoe (sandal), and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel' (Ruth 4:7, cited in Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1994:887). Depending on the cultural background of a member of the audience, all these different kinds of meanings might be mobilised. *Trauma Centre's* images operate at this level. The parallelogram door mobilises a lot of meanings because of the various associations attached to it in different societies. Doors in many religious societies are, in a symbolic sense, a passage from the secular profanities to the realm of the sacred. Doors have a peculiar dynamic quality 'for they not only indicate a threshold but invite us to cross it. It is an invitation to a voyage into the beyond' (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1994:422). In Christian societies the door has eschatological connotations or even suggests redemption and opens the way to revelation. 'I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved' (John 10:9, cited in Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1994:423). The other examples are: the falling pillar with a myriad of meanings and the characters who are themselves metaphorical statements. All of these are non-iconic images and therefore divorced from simple attachments to everyday meaning(s). I stood the signifiers on their heads to make them difficult and to provoke the audience into thinking about possible meanings, as Aronson explains:

Normal systems of communication - their recognition and interpretation of signs - are thwarted or disrupted; signs become divorced from their culturally accepted signification... Framing devices become vague or unfamiliar [...] As a result, the emphasis shifts from understanding the signs per se to the process of decoding signs. (2000:8)

The images have many layers around themselves and can therefore not be reduced to a single meaning without compromising their richness. Selden quotes Barthes describing the many meanings of a scriptible text:

This ideal text is a galaxy of signifiers; it has no beginning,...we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilises extend as far as the eye can reach. (Selden 1985:77)

Upon leaving the theatre, the audience has not fully digested the material. They go home with their minds full of questions. In a way, the playtext continues to be written by the audience in their minds long after the show.

With regards to my second proposal, I endeavoured to create a syncretic and/or hybrid text through the use of multivocality and the grafting and blending of disparate genres and performative traditions. This text is a reflection of my identity as a person who has a hybrid consciousness. This hybridity is a result of my association with a variety of cultures in a cosmopolitan city. Balme gives an interesting account of how syncretism happens in a cosmopolitan centre like Harare: 'here disparate ethnicities and cultures have been drawn together and have produced new "creolised" cultural forms' (1999:10). He quotes James Clifford as saying on the same subject:

With expanded communication and cultural influence, people interpret others, and themselves, in a bewildering diversity of idioms - a global condition of what Mikhail Bakhtin called 'heteroglossia'. (ibid. 10)

Contrary to the philosophy of monoculturalism upheld by the British realists and the reactionary nationalists, syncretism recognises the multiplicity of influences, which have shaped my life. It eats up the ego and biases of both nationalism and British realism. In the words of Bryden and Tiffin 'it takes us from the monocentric into the polyphonic, from the dominance of a single culture into convergent cultures, from pure ancestry into hybridisation' (cited in Murray, 1996g:4).

Trauma Centre tried to achieve this by mixing the properties of various disparate styles to synthesise a unique theatrical mode. I engaged, for example, multivocal characters which are described by Castagno as 'primarily constructed from language and written to speak with unlimited linguistic potential and range, from street slang to high-toned discourse, and across languages, dialects, and speech genres...' (2001:17).

Whereas in a realist text, the playwright strives to manufacture character-specific language, in *Trauma Centre*, a variety of language strategies is experimented with. Reito, for example, shifts from his rustic and sometimes grammatically inaccurate military English to standard Rhodesian English when he is in a stable condition. His English is full of foreignisms like 'houts', 'kaya', 'gooks', 'houtie-slayer' and so on. He also uses Rhodesian slang like 'floppies', 'zap', 'mushi', 'terrs', 'commie', 'Afs' and so on. At formal gatherings, like the meeting with Giteh, his English shifts to the standard formal code. When he is in the company of Zeppelin, his language deteriorates to the level of absurdism. (I deal with absurd language in more detail under the language section below). Zeppelin's language is equally inconsistent. It fluctuates between metalanguage (gibberish and/or noise) and highly academic complex structures. At the beginning of the play, he chants an incantation. In the company of Reito, his language also descends to absurdism. Zeppelin also speaks in a hybrid language (Chilapalapa), which is a bastardised version of Nguni, English and Shona languages. When he is cornered and irritated, his emotions help him to build complex

linguistic structures as in the case of his monologue delivered to Giteh and Sonja: 'The doctor is angered by the boots I am putting on, over which passion and impulse lead his policy and override what reason and basic morality would reject' (Ravengai 2001:29). He is also proficient in Shona and can sing well in that language. He is multi-lingual.

To add on to that, the syncretic text was created by grafting together disparate sources. This was done by selecting strips of dialogue from their original sources and using them for my own artistic purposes. The charged monologue which Zeppelin delivers to Giteh and Sonja is part of Robert Mugabe's speech to the 44th ordinary session of ZANU PF Central Committee in 2000. Part of Giteh's lines during the meeting was deconstructed from Tony Blair's speech to the delegates at the G7 Summit in Cologne amid violent demonstrations by anti-globalisation protesters. Some of the lines delivered by Reito during his moments of madness were taken from Julie Frederickse's interviews with ex-Rhodesian soldiers after the war. It is precisely because of this textual quality of being polyvocal that the notion of a single point of view 'telegraphed' to the audience is resisted. The realist privileged authorial voice is dismantled in favour of multivocality.

Moreover, the syncretic text was created through the blending of literary genres. Whereas a realist text has to fit a given academic category such as comedy, tragedy, farce, satire and so on, a hybrid text like *Trauma Centre* blends two or more genres into one. *Trauma Centre* has qualities of a tragedy in so far as the characters suffer pain throughout the play. There are also elements of comedy as their suffering is caused by their own folly. Elements of comedy and tragedy are intermeshed together to create what can be loosely termed a tragicomedy.

Indigenous Shona performance traditions were also included in this theatrical text. Cultural texts like songs, which have their own methods of production and can exist on their own, were incorporated into the theatrical text. The spirit realm, which *Trauma Centre* explores is Shona and more generally African. One of the patients, Reito, has regular encounters with spirits of people he brutalised during the war. In his mind he can see them and talk to them. At one moment he talks to the spirit of a prisoner of war he killed. He asks him questions and threatens him with torture if he continues to keep quiet. Zeppelin also tells us that when he fell sick after killing a white woman, he saw 'this white woman fighting to suck (his) blood like a vampire [Ravengai 2001:28 (emphasis added)]. The spirit realm is also explored during the war scene. Both Zeppelin and Reito are possessed by animals. This spirit realm is a reality in Shona and African cosmography. This cosmography allows the inter-penetration of the human society and its spirit world. Chinweizu et al throws some light on the universe of the African work of art:

[it] is broad enough to include encounters of humans and spirits, transformations of humans into animals and vegetables, and of inorganic matter into organic matter, and vice versa [...] It is a vast almost limitless universe, and African novelists therefore need make no special effort to "make believable" to eurocentric readers accounts involving spirit realms which are a legitimate part of their African view of the universe [...] Spiritland, like dreamland, tends to be surreal. Terrestrial conventions of space and time do not apply there, hence, a tree, for instance, could hold with its trunk a palace or even a vast city. (Chinweizu et al 1983:23-24)

The transformations of Zeppelin and Reito into animals, and of Themba into inorganic matter were motivated by this African cosmography. However, the play was written and directed in English, which is a European language. This is a clear conjunction of aesthetic and cultural codes from different worldviews without a slavish adherence to just one.

I now come to explain my last proposal in which I seek to create a post-structural text. Other theoreticians have called such a text a 'post-linear text' (Goodman & de Gay 2000). Let me dispel confusion that may be caused by use of these terms. There may be greater tendency to think in geometrical terms leading to the equating of post-structuralism or post-linearity to absence of structure. There is indeed some degree of linear narrative in post-linear performance (although there are constant shifts in time and space), but the difference between post-linear performance and traditional linear narratives is that 'like a flood, post-linear performance ignores the boundaries of the river of theatrical convention and engulfs the many positions of the viewers, the actors, the critics.' (Goodman & de Gay 2000:259). Again, in traditional linear narratives, the structure is there before the play is written. The story has to respect the demands of structure. In a post-linear text, there is no structure to guide the playwright. It is the story that takes the structure where it wants it to go. Thus in *Trauma Centre*, the structure is malleable. The events captured in the play hammer it into something that has an apparent lack of identifiable form. Fragments of the story do not move forward. The buried narrative ends where it began. Although one or two discoveries are made – for example that Reito and Zeppelin fought each other during the war - tending to catapult the story forward, their circumstances do not change. In the language of physics, the overall displacement is zero. Displacement, is loosely equivalent to distance that an object moves. In order to calculate 'work done', the distance moved by the object is multiplied by the force applied to move that object. If an object moves in a circle and comes back to its initial position, it has moved a distance of zero. To apply this theory to the production of *Trauma Centre*; the play begins with a 'point of attack' and from that moment the three patients begin their main task of waiting for Dr Bretton. There is lots of kicking, violent fisticuffs and shouting which only manage to produce more heat than substance. This corresponds to the force applied to move the action forward. However, that force only manages to displace the play back to its initial position. Nothing has changed. The doctor hasn't come. The nurses still promise the imminent coming of the doctor. The diseases are striking like never before.

The overall work done in the play is zero. To put it crudely, nothing has happened in the play, in terms of dramatic action. The audience has been held at ransom for the entire seventy-five minutes.

3.1 The Architecture of Chaos, Absurdity and Bondage.

This anti-realist style of writing and directing that I seek is no mere whim; it is a direct result of my personal experiences in childhood and adulthood. My life has been punctuated by the chaos and carnage of war, the absurdity of life and the bondage of the post-colonial state to global forces. I have consciously chosen a creative method that, I believe, will carry the weight, meaning and intensity of emotion of such traumatic experiences. In this chapter, I explore the architecture of such chaos, absurdity and bondage, in the text and in the directing process. I have to admit here that my theoretical explication presents logic and coherence in the play's progression, which the play itself does not possess.

The real crux of the matter in trying to explicate and analyse a performance, and the process which led to the performance, lies in creating categories. However, recent criticism has tended to be unsatisfied with categories because this conventional method tends to 'turn process into structure' (cited in Rohmer 1999:18). But the process of analysis itself involves breaking down the complex phenomenon into smaller units in order for it to be comprehended. Rohmer is of the same stance '[...] the real process of analysis is based on the process of breaking down the object into segments and re-arrange and present them with the purpose to make underlying structures transparent for the recipient' [(sic)1999:18]. Rohmer quotes Fischer who shares the same opinion: 'segmentation of the theatrical text is a fundamental operation in analysis' (ibid:18). Hauptfleisch also finds it difficult to analyse without some measure of breaking down the text '[...] I cannot do without the basic process – nor, I believe, can the opponents of positivism and classification. In their very efforts to confront, to deny the validity of such procedures, they usually employ some kind of classification themselves' (1997: 5). However, I contend that a performance is an 'on-going dynamic,' which in the process of analysis needs the 'dynamic linking of pieces...' [Regula, B Quresh 1987:71 (cited in Rohmer 1999:18)]. In the process of explicating and analysing the performance and the process, I will create categories which should not be considered to be static, but dynamically linked to other performance elements.

The title of the play, *Trauma Centre* is both the setting and a metaphor of chaos, absurdity and bondage. A hospital as a setting immediately strikes one with associations of disease - psychotic and physical trauma. Let me dwell a little more on disease as metaphor. This metaphor is

used frequently in African writing. Charles Mungoshi uses it in *Waiting For the Rain* (1981) so does Marechera in *House of Hunger*. In fact the old man who plays a major part in the novella is 'mad'. The same metaphor of 'madness' is used by Soyinka in *The Road* and *Madmen and Specialists*. Chenjerai Hove in his novel *Bones* (1988) uses disease as metaphor for the threat posed by white settlers to the fecundity of the land: 'disease has eaten into the world of your soil. Disease has eaten into the wills of your ancestors [...] Disease has sucked the juice of your land...' (Murray 1995e: 12). In all the above examples, disease is anti-social; it brings rot, decadence and death to society. 'Madness' in *Trauma Centre* is used as a metaphor for disorder, violence and death. Its most spectacular revelation is in Reito. Once it strikes, it reveals to the audience a trail of casualties; victims being beaten by 'a belt of the baton', half drowned and electrocuted forcing them to reveal information. 'Madness' also reveals itself in Zeppelin. According to Themba, all ex-combatants have gone 'mad': '[...] they (the people) never thought you will all go mad' [Ravengai 2001:35 (emphasis added)]. Madness is personified as an image of violence and death. 'He (Madness) is running all over the country [...] Madness began to attack her (the woman) with logs on her buttocks' [ibid:34 (emphasis added)]. Zeppelin, in whom those brutal traits are embedded, begins to defend 'Madness' and its activities: 'We are trying to protect that freedom. When you are on the verge of losing it, you fight again to get it back' (35). This is an interesting contradiction in the society of the play. While some people see 'madness' as a disease, which needs to be cured, others like Zeppelin glorify it, and use it as a weapon to crush dissent.

In addition to this focus on disease or madness as metaphor, Trauma Centre hospital houses victims of trauma. In the words of Bradley et al:

Trauma indicates a caesura, necessitates a pause - it arises from a moment of rupture, of radical disjunction... it offends our belief in the link between the empirical knowledge and control, our aspiration to order, our assumptions of the logical, intelligible connection between cause and effect. Trauma fractures the fragile webs that provide the framework for our interface with social, political, cultural and emotional realms in which we function. (Bradley et al 2001:6)

The above quotation accurately describes the condition of both Zeppelin and Reito in *Trauma Centre*. The word 'trauma' originates from Greek, meaning physical damage or wound, and this partly describes Zeppelin, who 'earned' some bullets and shrapnel in his pelvis during the war of independence. 'More frequently, however, it (trauma) is used to denote a psychological state resulting from a particular event...' (ibid:6) and this applies to Reito who is haunted by the shocking memories of his brutal methods of interrogating victims during the same war. How does the text represent such chaos, absurdity and bondage? Since trauma 'offends our aspirations to order, our assumptions of the logical, intelligible connection between cause and effect', the victims of trauma,

Reito and Zeppelin, speak and act in a manner which does not respect logic or reason. When Reito gets a sudden shock, he does not respect the topic under discussion. He jumps to interrogating his victims and describes his battles with guerrillas. Time shifts from the present back to the past. When this shock recedes and Reito comes back to his quasi-normal condition, conversation continues with Zeppelin, but half the time they speak past each other. Communication between them ceases. I will explain this in greater detail in the language section below. These cracks and fissures in their speech mark spots where violence has occurred.

The text also delineates absurdity and bondage. The absurdity of this situation lies in the fact that the three patients are waiting for a doctor. We don't know for how long these patients have been waiting for they have lost track of time. The time is the 'same as yesterday' and it is 'a continuous movement towards tomorrow' (Ravengai 2001: 8). The waiting continues every minute of their stay, but with no prospect of the doctor coming to their ward. There is a lot of chaotic fighting between the patients, but none of these activities changes their situation. This condition is absurd. On another level, this condition of absurdity is hinged to the idea of bondage. The hospital has, in a way, become an institutionalised point of control of the patients. The two nurses, Sonja and Giteh, dangle Dr Bretton above the patients' heads. They are assured that he will come to treat them immediately. However, a set of conditions have to be met. Patients must settle their medical bills; they are not allowed to receive food from their families; they have to be well behaved (even if their mental condition does not permit) and so on. In return the doctor will advance them a loan to service their debt. This institution has double standards in its function as it purports to offer the patients a panacea for their ill-health, while at the same time accentuating the inculcation of an ethos of subjugation and its attendant loss of self-affirmation. Thus the young patient, Themba, complains that Dr Bretton 'wants to limit our power to determine our own destiny' (Ravengai 2001:20).

The text being multi-vocal, there are quite a number of meanings that can be produced from this theatrical metaphor. Firstly, the story can be understood for what it is, that is literally. Secondly, in the historical Zimbabwean context, the metaphor may represent the relationship that exists between the state (patients) and global lending institutions like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the European Union (the two nurses). Thirdly, in the ahistorical sense, the patients may represent some form of suffering and bondage that can be decoded through the spectator's personal associations with the image. Each member of the audience has personal associations with the metaphor and by the end of the show, the audience has written many stories out of the given fragments.

I will now proceed to look at the ways in which the performers and I tried to represent chaos, absurdity and bondage in the construction of the *mise-en-scene*.

3.2 Building the Absurd Character.

Although Stanislavski was not in any way an absurd director, his reflections on character building helped our process. He quotes Tortsov as saying:

Most frequently, especially among talented actors, the physical materialisation of a character to be created emerges of its own accord once the right inner values have been established. (1949:5)

The backgrounds of the two central performers motivated, to a large extent, 'the right inner values' which lead to 'the physical materialisation of the characters'. The performer who played Reito, Milton Schorr, is the son of a father who fought in the Rhodesian army, repulsing guerrilla incursions from Mozambique and Zambia. He fought for Ian Smith until the very last minute in 1980 when he fled to South Africa. Milton brought books and pictures of the war into the process, which in my entire life of growing up in Zimbabwe I had never seen. This added a new dimension to my understanding of that complex conflict. Milton made character proposals that were partly based on the experiences of his father. Once the right values were within reach, it was not difficult to find the character's physical qualities, his inclined torso and the absurd mask of suffering on his face. Thando Mthi, the performer who played Zeppelin, derived his character proposals from his involvement in the South African political struggle. At the age of sixteen, *Umkhonto weSizwe* cadres with whom he attended school, began to confide in him and finally convinced him to run errands for them. From bases set up in Chris Hani Squatter Camp, Thando Mthi and others launched clandestine attacks on police. He exchanged fire with his enemies while on errands for the Self Defence Units. In his life of political activism, he was arrested three times. His choices for Zeppelin, the ex-combatant, were extrapolated from his experiences during this period.

In the process of character building, we also wanted to delineate absurdity through the performers' bodies. Absurd characters have to be deformed, aged, deranged or invalid. Milton was acting the mentally deranged patient, Reito. I assigned him the task of watching psychiatric tramps who roam the backyards of Rondebosch and Mowbray shopping centres. His problem was finding a way to shift from a lower level of madness to a higher level and vice-versa. The play being syncretic, the concept of possession immediately came to my mind. Externally, a possessed person contorts and convulses. The spirit has a noticeable physical impact on the body. By suggesting to Milton that he explore possession as a means to attaining higher levels of 'madness', we were able to achieve our goals of absurd physicality and action.

As absurd characters are sufferers, that suffering tends to leave a permanent mask on their faces. In as much as we relied on the text for recurrent details of making this mask, the proposals were very stereotypical. Then an idea came while I was having lunch with Gahlia Phillips. She told me that she was Jewish and we began to talk about what I knew about her history. She told me how her parents' relatives and friends became victims of Hitler's policy of anti-semitism. The fruits of this discussion were books, which I collected from the library, which had bowel-moving pictures of people with barely enough skin to cover their bodies. We used these pictures to initiate proposals for masks as demanded by each performer's given circumstances. These choices for facial masks were supported by costume choices appropriate to the style and intentions of the play. To quote Stanislavski's recollection of Tortsov's reflections on the external characterisation:

Without an external form, neither your inner characterisation nor the spirit of your image will reach the public. The external characterisation explains and illustrates and thereby conveys to your spectators the inner pattern of your part. (1949:5)

Bearing in mind the chaos and absurdity we wanted to convey to the audience, we clothed Reito in oversized pants. This gave him the repetitive and absurd business of having to keep them in position. We also clothed Sister Giteh in an undertaker's suit. The suit she wore was not analogous to the duties she was performing as a nurse thereby setting up a sense of illogicality and irrationality in her appearance. There is a gap between the signifier and the signified. In other words, the signifier floats away from what it signifies, inviting the audience to think about possible meanings, rather than fixing the meaning for them.

3.3 Set.

The set for *Trauma Centre* had to be commensurate with our intentions of representing chaos, absurdity and bondage. Chaos was represented here through discarding the mimetic set. In other words, the set wasn't a one-to-one representation of actual life, but an expressionistic space, which reflected the thematic preoccupations of the piece. A net, in the background, might have struck the audience as a snare, reminiscent of the ever-present spider spinning a web in Soyinka's *The Road*. Painted in black, on the floor of the set, was a map of Zimbabwe, but without any geographical details that would allow easy access to the material. Within the boundaries of that map, a non-decorative, decaying white colour was used to establish the fact that whoever is within that space is crumbling. Centre stage right, there was a parallelogram standing like a door and down stage right there was a pillar frozen in the process of falling. Within the defined space, there were two beds and a white cube with a pair of black military boots on it. All the objects put together did not paint a

picture of any realistic locale. What I was trying to achieve here was to show reality not as a solid and unified truth, but as a collection of signifiers, which generate meaning at will. I was trying to undermine the authoritarianism of realism, which insists on one meaning. The other quality of the set was its (and here I rely on the Prague structuralists's terms) mobility, dynamism, or transformability which means 'the sign-vehicle may be semantically versatile' (Elam 1980:12). In our case, the physical space changed to an inner psychic one during fantasy and dreamlike moments. During Giteh's hypnotic state, the space became a battle-field, a forest with animals fighting and foraging, a television studio with the minister of information giving a stern warning to the 'terrorists'. Kuhns quotes Van den Berg as saying:

The presentation of dramatic space as a sequence of continually transforming images, or tableaux, amounts, then, to dramatising a temporal process of perception. This resembles the reading of a modern abstract painting, as the eye moves over the canvas continually refocusing on different elements in the non-representational abstract design. The spatial subject of the painting, in effect, is the temporal process of reading it. [...] all states of mind are in fact places. [Kuhns 1997:97]

Another way in which the set helped to create a sense of chaos and absurdity was through the blurring of the distinction between the audience and actors by taking the audience out of the auditorium and placing them right on the stage. The grey colour, which we used to paint the floor, faded into the area where the audience was sitting to create the impression that they were part of a single room - the trauma ward. The stage was open to the audience, but ironically, the patients did not recognise their presence. Themba, diffusing fears of Reito and Zeppelin, peeps into the audience and assures them 'there is not a soul watching' (Ravengai 2001:12). The same assurance is given to Reito by Zeppelin. Zeppelin looks left and right and advances to the audience with a penetrating look. Convinced of the absence of people, he reassures Reito: 'Not a soul' (ibid:25). Creating this sense of interconnectedness but without real connection goes to the heart of what I was aiming to achieve with this project.

3.4 Movement.

I also wanted to portray chaos, absurdity and bondage through movement. The structure of *Trauma Centre* is loosely circular. In other words, the ending is the beginning or the beginning is the end. There is no positive displacement. Nothing leads anywhere, no matter what business is executed, or what energy is exerted to carry out such business. However, even if the business that does exist does not change the character's situation, the performer still does not resign in respectful silence. S/he continues to experiment with new actions and more often than not, repeats the same old actions, which never change the character's circumstances. This is absurd; an open insult to reason

and logic. While I was choreographing movements on stage with the performers, my major preoccupation was to delineate this irrationality and absurdity through human bodies moving in space. I explained this to the performers, so that they could make proposals, which were not incongruent to the main thrust of the play. The to-and-fro movements across the lateral plane were proposed and consolidated. The absurdity of this movement pattern is that, a burst of purposeful energy is spent over a certain distance, only to use the same energy to come back to where the movement originated from thereby cancelling the 'work done'. Just to pick up one example from among many, Reito moves on the lateral plane from centre stage to the stage right door. He looks for signs of Dr Bretton and quickly moves to the other exit on the stage left side to do the same activity. Finding no one, he comes back to where he originated from with a burst of energy, as if he had seen Dr Bretton with: 'What did he say?' (Ravengai 2001:22).

I also focussed on circular movements. Our set was rectangular in shape, although we tilted it for theatrical reasons. Most of the movements generated by the performers were circular - around the perimeter of the set or around the two beds. The circular movement, just like the to-and-fro movement, comes back to where it began and cancels the 'work done'. Themba runs away from Reito around the perimeter of the ward; Sonja advances on Zeppelin who backs off around the perimeter of the ward; Themba and Zeppelin sing while marching around the bed; and several other violent bouts of fisticuffs between Zeppelin and Reito are executed around the perimeter of the ward. Commenting on the performance demands of absurd theatre, Harrop concurs:

The circular and repetitive patterns are invested with an urgency as if they might achieve something, but always end where they began. ...he (the performer) performs the absurdly repetitive rituals of movement with a heightened energy that further underlines their futility. Equally when the movement ends nowhere and stops, the stillness reinforces the vast emptiness of time and space surrounding the characters. [1982:200 (words in brackets are mine)]

Not only did I rely on movement to convey this sense of absurdity, but also on silence and stasis. After these futile movements, the performers always ended with a long silence or stillness. We always occupied this silence with the dominant emotion, boredom, which always motivated the sufferer to urge his partner to break the silence and stasis with the words 'say something'. The other device we used to occupy this silence was the execution of trivial stage business. Reito usually returned to look at the bikini or to fluff up his pillow, or to pull up his pants. Occasionally, he scratched his arms and genitals. Zeppelin either struggled with the pain of his boots or he returned to fix the screw of one of his crutches. In another incident, Reito wakes up to discover that he and Zeppelin have new hats. In a humorous piece of stage business, they pass the two hats back and forth, from the hand to the head and vice – versa for five times, in a repetitive way reminiscent of

Didi and Gogo in Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*. All these rituals do not help in any way to change the characters' circumstances. They were just a way of filling time and silence.

3.5 Language.

Language, which is the supreme rational structure and is supposed to be equipped with enormous ability to express knowledge, has been rendered impotent in the world of *Trauma Centre*. The use of language in *Trauma Centre* is an attempt to depict a world that has been affected by violence and bondage. The features of such language include, among other things, psychic automatism, stichomythia, staccato sentences, streams of consciousness and obscenities. Psychic automatism is a surrealist technique in which words are committed to the page as they occur to the writer without any attempt to process them in a reasonable manner. The opening incantation is the result of this technique. During the rehearsal process, Thando Mthi produced his own sounds, which he linked to the sound of an AK-47 assault rifle, and mixed them with my gibberish. This dislocation of language from its function of rational communication allows 'metaphysics...to be imprinted in the mind through the skin' (Innes 1993:60). It is not the idea communicated by language, which gets into the mind, but it is the emotion produced by the impulses arising from the chanting of the incantation. In the absurd world of the play, which overvalues rationality, language has 'become a complex of cerebralized structures, which impede communication and give only limited control over the empirical world' (Fowler 1973:62). This lack of communication is portrayed through stichomythia. In such a speech event characters follow their train of thought. What seems to be a conversation between two people is an idea sparked by one character, which is followed through by both of them, until it is exhausted or one of them decides to keep quiet. Since there is only one idea expressed throughout the beat, the conversation becomes a parallelism - two lines which mean the same thing and which may be attributed to one character only. Here is an example:

Reito:	She is too strict.
Zeppelin:	She is too strict.
Reito:	She speaks for him
Zeppelin:	She has become him. (Ravengai 2001:22)

Here language has lost its motive force and hence its dramatic force. Since this force has been lost, characters suddenly fall into silence only to find themselves too human to keep quiet. Thus they labour with long farewells and abrupt exchanges of verbal trivialities just to keep up the pretence of being alive. This 'reinforces the sense of aimless continuity: the situation seems to be part of eternity, to have been going on forever without changing' (Harrop 1982:195).

Short staccato sentences are also indicators of violence. As I have argued above, language is the first victim of trauma. It is either used sparingly or the victim loses it completely becoming speechless. Both Reito and Zeppelin are victims of trauma and their language displays a simplicity and brevity of sentence structure.

Reito: And we?
Zeppelin: Say that again.
Reito: And we?
Zeppelin: Meaning what?
Reito: I asked and we?
Zeppelin: Then if it doesn't work we are allowed to keep quiet.
Reito: Come on think. Be patient. (Ravengai 2001:24)

What is striking about this extract is the spareness of the statements. They hint at issues without being explicit. This lack of specificity appears profound as statements seem to generate multiple meanings, but without defining anyone of them. The sentences are open to any interpretation the audience may wish. What the sentences seem to suggest is not exclusive.

The world of the play has also created deranged minds. These minds are no longer bound by norms and taboos of their society. That is why Reito and Zeppelin are at liberty to act in non-conformist ways by using obscene, foul and degenerate language. The sanctity of religious names is not respected as they are used as swear words. The name of the Lord is used in vain. They swear throughout the play. In the society of the play, it is taboo to talk about sex. Discussing it with a lover can even bring embarrassment. Acting it out with a pillow and glorifying it while standing on a bed is way out of the bounds of the acceptable. Chennells' comments on Marechera's non-conformity apply equally well to my non-conformist use of language:

Society fears any act of non-conformity and what it finds fearful it will listen to: the fearful is 'the only manner which society cannot fail to understand'. If the artist appears to be violent in his non-conformity, it is because only society's fear will allow it to register the presence of non-conformity. (Veit-Wild & Chennells 1999:47)

I also relied on stream of consciousness to depict an absurd and chaotic world. Reito's longest monologue (32) is an example. Reito's thoughts and feelings are expressed in the haphazard order in which they pass through his mind. Intellectual rules of paragraph unity, coherence and structure are not observed. Thought patterns are captured raw and put on the page before they are processed by the rational side of the mind. Reito imagines and recollects what happened while he was sleeping in the operating theatre. He imagines a gun and the various possibilities that could happen with it. The thoughts are not just internal; the feelings and emotions, which they generate, are exteriorised. When it occurs to him that one of the possibilities of gunfire could be his own

death, he bursts out crying until there is no more thought left in his mind. This 'disorderly' portrayal of thought patterns challenges the realist structure, which thrives on the rational and the ordered presentation of ideas and thoughts as if such a presentation is the only reality.

I have argued that violence affects language to the point of speechlessness. However, when the state of speechlessness reaches a saturation point, victims of trauma burst into a range of noises. For lack of a better term, I will use the German expressionist term *Schrei*⁸ to describe these noises which I used in *Trauma Centre*. When Zeppelin concludes the description of how he killed a white woman, Reito bursts into a *Schrei*. Zeppelin promptly picks up the noise and for nearly thirty seconds, the theatre is jammed with a complex orchestration of noises. Reito does the same at the end of the play when the patients are told that the doctor will not make it to the ward.

3.6 The Ending of the Beginning.

In my desire to depict chaos, absurdity and bondage, I opened the ending to the performers. There was indeed some degree of chaos and absurdity in the initial textual proposal. The doctor hadn't come. The circumstances of the three patients hadn't changed. However, the problem was that there wasn't something theatrical that would concretely link the beginning to the ending without creating the impression that there had been some progression forward.

We choreographed the pandemonium at the end by having Zeppelin run to the falling pillar, a position he was in at the beginning of the play. I made Themba run straight into the net so that he would become entangled in it, to make a spectacular statement about the bondage of the young generation by the faults and failures of the old. Precisely because nothing has happened, Reito had to look as sick as he was at the beginning. We achieved this by motivating a *Schrei* and having him move menacingly towards Sonja. Then Eve Szapira suggested that Giteh repeat her diagnostic lines again. I re-wrote parts of the script to accommodate these proposals. The play ends without the order of a realist plot. We captured the random occurrence of events without being governed by the dictates of a linear progressive structure. In the words of Marechera '...life is not a plot, you know' (1980:84). The ending was just like the beginning. There was no definitive closure which is the hallmark of the realist play. There was no attempt at reinstating order by purging the emotions, which had been stirred up, as would be the case in a realist play. Belsey illuminates our understanding:

The movement of classic realist narrative towards closure ensures the reinstatement of order, sometimes of a new order, sometimes the old restored, but always intelligible because it's familiar. (1980:75)

The proposal of new order, in my view, brings happiness to the audience. The problems, which the realist play has grappled with, have been solved for the audience right under their noses. This is illusionistic and deceptive. I agree with Yuri Bondarev when he says:

I am against sunny radiance at the end of books or films, and against Christmas-tree-like decorations in art, for I see in such tender and uncertain emotion the desire to reassure man and place a sweet rosy crown of self-satisfaction on his head ... Serious books and serious films should disturb the consciousness and keep telling man that he has not yet reached perfection and thus, by denying the bad in him, affirm the pure and compel him to think of the essence of man's destiny. (quoted in Marx & Engels vol.3 1969:19)

The disruptive ending of *Trauma Centre* is therefore antithetical to the realist's desire for a unified narrative with a definitive closure. This closure is a means of icing the play and giving substance to the world that the realist playwright wants to represent. It is a ritual, which signals to the audience that the play is over, and urges them to accept the story unquestioningly. Drew Shaw's comment on the disruptive ending of a novel may also apply to a play:

Conversely, in the absence of closure, questions remain unanswered and the reader (spectator) is not presented with any absolute or authoritative 'truth' and is sometimes actually invited to doubt the validity of what he or she is presented with ... It subverts the notion of one universal and rational 'truth' and it suggests...that the truth is not objective and singular, but subjective, relative, and multiple. [Veit-Wild & Chennells 1999:11 (words in brackets are mine)]

Trauma Centre ends disruptively rather than conclusively. The violence or possibility of violence is underlined at the end by Reito 'schreing' menacingly at Sonja, with Sonja ready to strike with her sedative injection. Zeppelin crashes violently against the pillar and struggles to support it. These happenings are not to be considered at their face value. They are 'galaxies of signifiers' to be decoded by the audience. In the words of Peter Brook:

A play must leave you in a more receptive mood than you were before. It isn't there to "move" people. That's a ghastly idea. You cry, you have a bath of sentiment. You come out saying you've had a lovely time. I prefer the notion of disturbance, which leaves you in a greater state of disturbance. (Jones 1986:208)

4.0 Conclusion.

This study was motivated by my sense of dissatisfaction with the traditional ways in which the realities of post-colonial Zimbabwe have been depicted in the theatre. The traditional ways have been manifested at various times as British realism, nationalist realism and socialist realism, all of which require a structured, linear and one dimensional way of depicting and viewing reality. In other words, they think in straight lines. Precisely because these forms of realism do not accommodate alternative versions of perceiving reality, they are authoritarian and therefore obsolete. They impose and express a literary imperative which is self-referential and self-defining.

The major part of the study consists of the writing and production of the play *Trauma Centre*. *Trauma Centre* is an attempt to deviate from thinking, writing and perceiving reality in

straight lines. It outlines techniques of discontinuity, fragmentation and multivocality and enables the audience to 'see (reality) round corners'. These techniques go beyond the narrow frame of the realist paradigm. To this end, I set out to achieve three fundamental goals: the creation of a 'scriptible' playtext; the production of a syncretic or hybrid text and/or performance; and the scripting of a post-structural or post-linear playtext. These three objectives were achieved with relative degrees of success. After each show I threw away my hat as director and mingled with audience members, listening and contributing to the debates about my play. There was a myriad of interpretations of the characters and other metaphors involved. Out of a jungle of signifiers that had sprouted in the performance space, the audience had created many stories and significations.

Most theatre practitioners who try to create a syncretic performance fall into the danger of using indigenous cultural texts for their exotic surface appeal. In my creative recombination of these indigenous and European cultural texts, their functional significance was retained. The only problem I encountered was the use of possession. Here I had to rely on psychoanalytic techniques in the absence of rituals that would have invoked possession.

The playtext and the performance were indeed post-linear. It is my submission, however, that research has not yet provided performers with new analytical skills to interpret post-linear playtexts. We found ourselves applying traditional interpretative strategies and terms to a play that did not use traditional techniques in its creation. Castagno predicts this problem when he writes: 'because the old terms do not quite fit, we assume something is wrong with the play. Thus in play development or rehearsal there is dilution of the new into old familiar bottles' (2001.53). During rehearsals, one of the performers complained to me 'I can't find my through line'. The play is of course static and she was not supposed to have a journey at all. In the production of the play *Trauma Centre*, terms like subtext, arch of action, obstacle, conflict and so on are obsolete. It is an interesting subject for another study.

4.1 Endnotes

¹ Although Marechera wrote and performed his own poetry and sketches in Harare's *First Street* and *The Book Café*, now dubbed 'the cultural oasis of Harare', he is largely regarded as a novelist and his observations on novel writing apply equally well to theatre.

² A term that was coined by the Caribbean writer Aime Cesaire, but which came to be mostly closely associated with Leopold Senghor of Senegal. In the work which falls under this category, the black protest writer dwells on his past, partly because of an attempt to escape contempt due to the long history which has demeaned his person and belittled his culture (see Ngara 1990:22-23).

³ Centre is used here to mean the coloniser's language and/or worldview when paired with that of the colonised (margin). Traditional post-colonial thought shows us that there are two traditional centres: Britain and France. The margins consists of their colonies with the Americas and Australia considered to a lesser extent (see Taylor & Winquist 2001).

⁴ National Archives of Zimbabwe, file S/483/2/17.

⁵ It was Maxim Gorky who coined the term socialist realism. It was officially adopted as a creative method in the former USSR after the First Soviet Writers Congress on the subject in 1934. Its pre-eminent subject is the working people carrying out a revolution and fighting to build a new order (see Zis, A 1977).

⁶ Realism as a literary movement began around 1850, although most of its elements may be found before the 19th century. The realist well-made-play was perfected by Eugene Scribe 1791-1861 (see Brockett 1964:333).

⁷ Syncretism is used not in the sense of its pejorative intellectual history as in the case during the 17th century where it invariably implied a state of decadence and reflected the inability of certain religions to exist. Nor is it used as theatrical exoticism, which involves the use of indigenous cultural texts for their surface appeal. It is used here to imply a type of theatre which utilises the performance forms of both European and indigenous cultures in a creative recombination of their respective elements, without slavish adherence to one tradition or the other (see Balme 1999:2ff).

⁸ In the German expressionist theatre, the *Schrei* was used as an expression of the horror of war. The term has a narrow semantic range, which includes cry, shout, yell, howl, wail, scream, shriek. In their theatre, it was used at the end of a speech or monologue which talked about something terrible (see Kuhns 1997:94).

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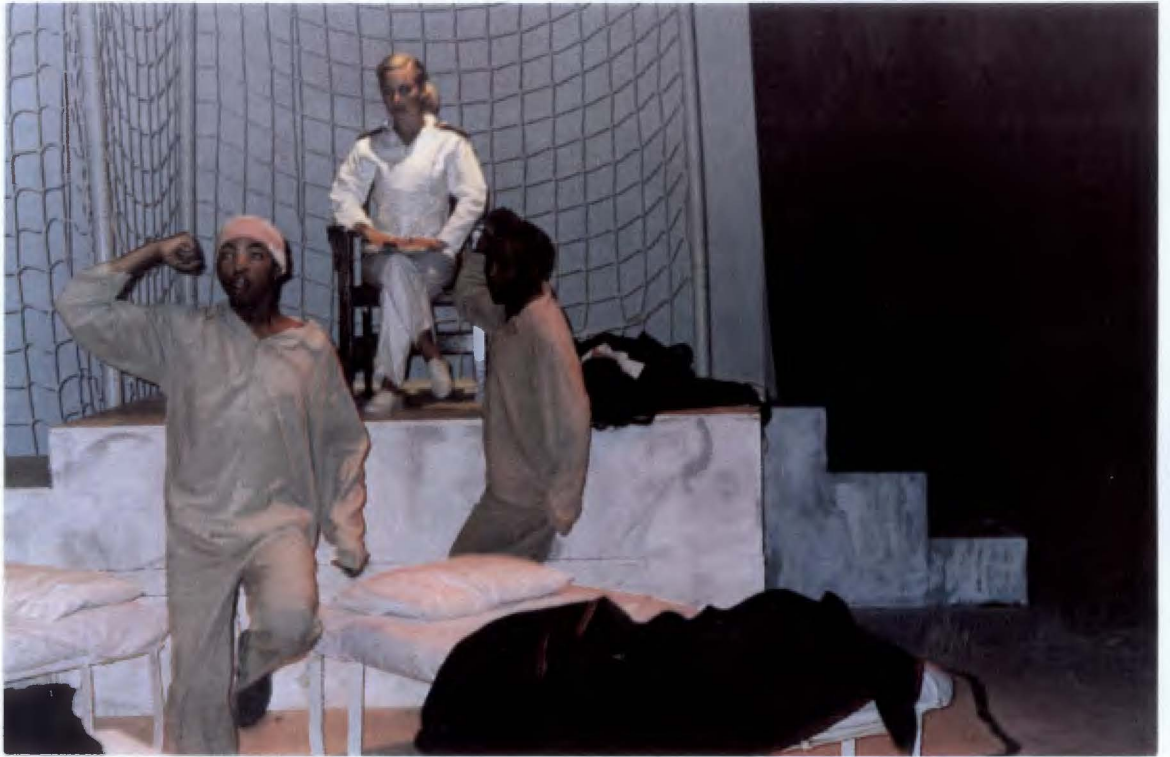












Trauma Centre

A New Tragicomedy

by

Samuel Ravengai

[RVNSAM001]

University of Cape Town.

Trauma Centre
A new play
by
Samuel Ravengai

Dramatis personae

- Zeppelin** : A patient at Trauma Centre. He is an ex-combatant of the 1970s war of liberation. He is now in his late forties.
- Reito** : Another patient at Trauma Centre. Coincidentally, he served in the Rhodesian army of the UDI period. He is in his late fifties.
- Giteh** : A Nursing-Sister at Trauma Centre. She is in her early forties.
- Themba** : Another patient at Trauma Centre. He is in his early twenties and may belong to a generation of the 'born frees'.
- Sonja** : A middle-aged woman who works as a medical orderly at Trauma Centre.

Trauma Centre premiered at the University of Cape Town's Little Theatre from the 4th to the 8th of December 2001 with the following cast:

- Thando Mthi : Zeppelin
- Milton Schorr : Reito
- Eve Szapira : Giteh
- Andile Nebulane : Themba
- Gahlia Phillips : Sonja

The period is somewhere between 2000 and 2002. The action takes place in a portion of a hospital ward. The country is Zimbabwe. Down stage centre is a small cube with a pair of military boots on it. On either side of the stage is a hospital bed complete with maroon blankets and white sheets. Upstage right, on a raised platform, is a great armchair. Another rostra which is half the height of the one where the great armchair is resting sprawls around the upper and lower right perimeter of the rectangular set. On each outer angle of the rostra is a white PVC pillar which supports a white net which follows the perimeter of the rostra. Down stage right is a white pillar which is frozen in the falling position. Centre stage right is a parallelogram feature which stands like a door. On both ends of the L-shaped rostra are steps and these points act as entrances and exits. Drawn on the surface of the set is a big map of Zimbabwe in black and the area within the boundary is painted in decaying white. The rest of the surface area is painted in grey which fades into the fringes and the audience. The sum total of all the objects on stage does not paint a picture of any realistic locale.

It is evening. In another bed is a patient who has just died without the knowledge of any hospital authorities. A faint special light is hitting on a pair of black military shoes resting on a white cube. Upon fading of house lights, Reito comes in and sits on a wheel chair which is upstage right with his back to the audience. Giteh comes in and sits on the great arm chair with her back to the audience and Themba sits down on the floor between Giteh's legs in like manner. Zeppelin enters and stands down stage centre facing the falling pillar. Sonja remains offstage.

ZEPPELIN

A stiff man who walks on crutches on account of bullets and shrapnel which lie buried in his hips. He earned this during the war of liberation. Ever since de-mobilisation he has never sought medical help and only does so when he is threatened with death. Because of some terrible things, which happened while he was a guerrilla, he suffers from psychosomatic disorders characterised by moderate loss of memory. Despite this neurotic disease, he remembers extremely painful and traumatic events. He has rather developed for his comfort, a defensive psychological state of irritability, which he uses to evade questions which require him to rely on his memory. He can be described as a stick of dynamite with a detonator ready to be ignited. In short he is an extremely emotionally dependent person. He has a general phobia of collective discussion unless he initiates the dialogue. He is married and has children.

When the lights fall on him, he breaks into an incantation in the form of a meta-language and advances in warrior fashion towards the pillar in the falling position.

Makeke aora-a-a makeke aora-a he-e-e
Gaga gagiga gagagagaga gaga gagiga
He-e he-e he-e makeke aora-a-a-a-a
Makeke-e aora-a-a-a
Gaga gagiga gagagagaga gaga gagiga
He-e he-e he-e makeke aora-a-a-a-a
He-e kundaravavo ravasika randavavuya-a
Makeke aora-a-a-a

[Or any other hypothetical language that can produce the same effect]

Lights illuminate the falling pillar. Then he moves to give support to the falling pillar, tries with all his mighty to lift it up but collapses. He gets another surge of energy and tries again but fails. He tries several times until he gives up and falls on the ground with:

Can't do anything about it. [Silence]

The siren of an ambulance breaks the silence. Simultaneously red flashing lights fall on the set.

SONJA

[Rushing into the ward]

How many are you in the ward?

Hey! What's your name?

ZEPPELIN

Sorry. [moving from the falling pillar to sit on his bed]

SONJA

Never mind. *[waking up to the other patient in another bed]*

Hey Sir Douglas open your eyes. *[feels his pulse, raises his hand and let it go]*. Can you hear me sir?

[Coldly, on realising Sir Douglas is dead]. Oh shame you have kicked the bucket Sir Douglas. Oh poor Douglas, twenty years, twenty years as a rheumatic patient and you decide to give up today.

ZEPPELIN

Oh did he? Ho ho ho! *[standing up peering at the corpse with utter disbelief]*

SONJA

Shut up! Is this your first time to see a corpse?

Oh Sir Douglas let's get you out of here. This is the end of an era. *[as she drags the corpse out of the ward with Zeppelin utterly shocked with Sonja's insensitivity. Zeppelin moves to the late Sir Douglas's bed and feels the sheets by his hands and then sniffs them. The siren grows in intensity followed by flashing lights. Then Reito begins to blabber and gibber. Sonja comes back quickly to push the wheel chair on which the blabbering Reito is sitting. Zeppelin rushes to his bed and buries himself in his blankets. As soon as the wheel chair reaches the edge of rostra, Reito jumps off and climbs on his bed still talking about his enemies who want to attack him.]*

REITO

Because of his activities as a soldier in the Rhodesian army, he now has pernicious insomnia, accompanied by anxiety. His insomnia gives him nocturnal uproars, which also come when he gives traumatic accounts of his life. He has a wholesale aggressivity, which is nearly always present, especially if his illness strikes. When his illness recedes, this state of aggression and excitement disappears and has a greater tendency to seek solitude. During conversations he escapes into hallucinatory attitudes. Sometimes his gaze is fixed for sometime on a point anywhere on the stage, while his face is lit up giving the impression that he is watching an event on that spot. He is putting on oversized hospital trousers, which constantly threaten to fall with him equal to the task of getting it back into position. He continues with his blabbering which on reconstruction comes to something like this:

They have all got to be killed. Give me my FN.

I want to zap him. I want to slit their throats... all of them.

Every gook wants to kill me. I will fight...defend myself.

They are Afs all over. They look innocent, but they are all fucking houts and gooks.

GITEH

Giteh is in complete undertaker attire. She turns her head slightly and censures Reito in a Martian accent. At the same time, Sonja fires an immobilising injection into Reito's buttocks and there is a momentary freeze.

Quiet! Shut up.

REITO

[With a slurring voice]. God is with me... I will kill you as soon as you look at me.

Woman, children, dogs, donkeys... I will fire at any moving object.

GITEH

[stands up and talks to Sonja] We are putting the whole service permanently on alert...

REITO

You tell me to stop shedding blood. I will stop when there no more blood to shed. Then I will be able to sleep in peace.

GITEH

Listen to what he is saying. ...on account of his declared intentions. Get the files. Be still you.

REITO

[losing both voice and consciousness] I 'm gonna get them.

Yah, steady now... they are running....beautiful, Jesus Christ, those fucking bombs are beautiful...

GITEH

[Sonja returns quickly with the files]

We have dealt with this kind of homicidal impulsion before.

These patients can be dangerous.

SONJA

Many times sister. *[Handing over the files]*

GITEH

These are psychosomatic disorders [*as she now writes in the file articulating syllables with exaggerated stress*].

Psychosis of the depersonalisation type.

Symptoms of paroxysmal tachycardias. Doctor to confirm.

[*To Sonja who doesn't understand these medical terms*]

Accusatory delirium eh?

SONJA

Well he is quiet sick sister.

GITEH

[*Still talking aloud as she writes*]. Patient referred to doctor Bretton.

[*looking at Reito*]. That's better. [*As she walks out*].

Remember his homicidal impulses. You are on alert. [*she walks down the podium*]. Tell the rest of the service about this. I am going to see the doctor. [*as an after thought*] Don't say you were not told. [*moves centre stage left beside Zeppelin's bed*]. And Sir Douglas' body?

SONJA

Oh. To the laboratory for a post mortem. [*walks to the cube to clear the shoes and clean up*].

GITEH

[*moves further down and stands adjacent to Sonja on the other side of Zeppelin's bed*] And his shoes...what are you up to?

SONJA

[*startled*] I am putting them in his suit-case for his family.

GITEH

No they are there to stay.

SONJA

I beg your pardon.

GITEH

[*walks along the down stage lateral plain*] He was a historic personality. [*moving back on the same plain*] He represented civilisation and was the last white man to fight for it. We will make this a memorial room. That pair of boots will be preserved as a reminder of his last living place.

SONJA

But sister, this is a public ward. Other patients might not be comfortable with that kind of recognition. He never wanted this hospital to accommodate patients of different hues.

GITEH

[*moving back to the great arm chair along vertical central area*] During those ugly days. It's over now. All our yesterdays are torch bearing fools. They light our way to our destinies. [*stops on the lower rostra and looks at Sonja*] Oh God, nobody cares about the old anymore.

SONJA

[*subdued*] Your will shall be done.

GITEH

His will too. [*as she walks out*]

SONJA

Yes sister. [*to Zeppelin with authority*]. Hey don't you pretend to be asleep.

Weren't you jumping around like a kid? [*silence*]. Yes talk to me [*forgets Zeppelin's name and rushes to the file hung on his bed*]...Zzzz...Zeppelin.

ZEPPELIN

[*jumps up on his buttocks and sits up straight*] Mame?

SONJA

[*flicks her fingers close to Zeppelin's eyes*] Did you hear what sister Giteh said.

ZEPPELIN

Sister Giteh?

SONJA

Yes. A few minutes ago.

ZEPPELIN

A few minutes ago?

SONJA

Yes.

ZEPPELIN

What did she say?

SONJA

Am I wasting my time here. Okay ...stay alert. *[speaks to Zeppelin as if he doesn't understand English]*

Your friend there is dangerous. He is insane and wants to kill everybody.

If ever he decides to do that... well you stay together...you could be the first victim.

Doctor Bretton is coming to operate on your hip.

ZEPPELIN

I am glad.

SONJA

We all are. *[now writing stuff in her files. She moves to Reito's bed]* Since your friend is a threat to the welfare...

ZEPPELIN

Threat.

SONJA

Yes ...to the other patients. Sister Giteh will recommend his immediate diagnosis...

ZEPPELIN

Not before me.

SONJA

It's not for you to make decisions for the hospital. ...so that he is operated as soon as possible...

ZEPPELIN

So we will all pretend to be like him so that...

SONJA

Not everyone here is a fool alright!

This is to arrest his aggression before he causes problems for us here.

ZEPPELIN

[stands up] ...so that she can recommend us to the doctor. *[moves towards Reito and charges at him]*

But he can't do any thing to me. I will give him the most terrible blow.

SONJA

You are not at your best every time everyday. *[Walking out]*

We are getting the theatre ready for you.

[Stopping to score a few points]

Don't touch unauthorised things here.

That box is a sanctuary... very sacred.

ZEPPELIN

Sacred?

SONJA

I have no time for this. Dr Bretton will be on you soon.

You will throw away those crutches soon *[walks out pushing the wheel chair offstage]*

THEMBA

[Shows his head from behind the great arm chair. He has heard everything that has just taken place. He slowly walks in first trying to win Zeppelin and Reito's attention. Failing to get it he laughs. He is of obscure qualities. He is given to little talking and answering in monosyllables. He loves poking his head into the privacy of other people, eavesdropping and loving all the fun.

He laughs mimicking Zeppelin and Reito.

Ha haha haha.

He-e makeke aora he-e-e makeke aora-a-a.

[Laughter]

[impersonating Sonja] You have kicked the bucket Sir Douglas. Sir Douglas can you hear me? What rubbish!

Damn it all man. I wish these people could have a heart.

[Laughter]

[impersonating Reito] He-e give me my FN. I want to what what what.

He-e I will fucking kill you.

Do you think I will be shaving your beard while you savage me?

Try it. *[impersonating Giteh]* He-e we are putting the whole service on alert. On account of what?

Rubbish! *[laughter]*

Try it and see fire *[as he imitates a boxer punching the air and moving round the stage as if it were a boxing ring].*

I will butcher you. Just try it. I will give you the treatment of your whole life.

[Reito wakes up and charges at Themba. He kicks Themba on the shins and Themba falls down screaming. Reito ignores him and is immediately struck by the strangeness of the new place he finds himself in]

REITO

Shut up you rascal!

Where am I ? *[no answer]*

Where am I? *[silence]*

Where am I?

ZEPPELIN

Go to sleep man!

REITO

Who are you?

ZEPPELIN

Who are you?

REITO

Who are you?

ZEPPELIN

Who are you? *[silence. Themba crawls his way out of the ward]*

REITO

Who are you?

ZEPPELIN

I throw it back at you.

REITO

[To himself while moving around] You will never get answers here.

ZEPPELIN

Never.

REITO

Not even once?

ZEPPELIN

That's right.

REITO

That's okay.

ZEPPELIN

That's fine. *[Zeppelin gets back into his blankets]*

REITO

That's mushi. *[silence]* Nothing to be done. *[He walks around looking for clues of Zeppelin's name. He notices a pillar in the falling position and screams as he rushes to support it. He tries to raise it up several times but without success. His last attempt is interrupted by Zeppelin's raucous laughter].*

ZEPPELIN

[laughing] Don't worry it won't fall.

REITO

It won't fall?

ZEPPELIN

It won't fall.

REITO

What do you mean it won't fall?

ZEPPELIN

I was once worried like you are.

REITO

Well you need to get more worried. *[moving menacingly towards Zeppelin]*

This is quite threatening.

ZEPPELIN

[stands up and climbs on his bed ready to parry Reito's attack] I am not threatening you.

REITO

[retreating and forced to sit on his bed] We will lose our lives here.

ZEPPELIN

Yes people lose their lives here.

REITO

Where are we?

ZEPPELIN

Look around. Where did you think you were going?

REITO

Stop all this bullshitting. I don't know how I came here. *[silence]*

ZEPPELIN

[Examines his crutches, unscrews one of them, looks into the screw hole and replaces the screw. He walks downstage right and looks at distant off and comes back to sit on his bed. Reito moves closer to the cube with black military boots on it. At the point contact with boots Zeppelin points his crutch at Reito as if he were handling a gun.]

He-e-ey! I am resuming the struggle.

REITO

[gives up and examines his new environment up the lower rostra]. This is difficult algebra. It needs to be worked out.

ZEPPELIN

I hate algebra. One always gets an answer even if it's wrong.

REITO

But it still gives you an answer after all the working.

ZEPPELIN

What's boring is somebody wields that answer in an answer book.

REITO

But they keep it locked up so you keep on working.

ZEPPELIN

That makes time move... you won't notice it.

REITO

[moves down the lower rostra towards Zeppelin]. Do you know what time it is?

ZEPPELIN

[dismissive] Time, the same as yesterday.

REITO

[moving round the bed to touch Zeppelin's left hand] I mean what does it read on the instrument.

ZEPPELIN

[irritated and pointing his crutch at Reito] Time is a continuous movement towards tomorrow

REITO

Time is money, if you lose it, you lose value.

ZEPPELIN

Time does not owe you a cent.

REITO

But we can define it.

ZEPPELIN

We can only live it and accept it.

REITO

[moving back to sit on the edge of his bed]. We can harness it to give our lives structure and meaning.

ZEPPELIN

We give ourselves hope through false expectations of tomorrow.

REITO

It is concrete. You can see it and correct on the instrument.

ZEPPELIN

It is a flow and it cannot be grasped. *[Reito resigns and sits on the edge of bed giving his back to Zeppelin]*

[silence]

REITO

If you wouldn't mind, what is your name?

ZEPPELIN

That's very rude *[turns away to seek solitude].*

REITO

[Walks towards Zeppelin] So what's your story?

ZEPPELIN

[He notices that Reito has very bad breath and turns the other way]

There is NO story.

REITO

[moves upstage left still looking for clues of his new place] This is endless boredom.

ZEPPELIN

It's boring.

REITO

It's the worst place to be.

ZEPPELIN

It's hell.

REITO

What place is this?

ZEPPELIN

It's where people come to die.

REITO

Come to die? Are we dead?

ZEPPELIN

Who knows? Life doesn't cease with one's death. It goes on.

You never know what stage of life you are in.

REITO

Where is that boy? Do you think he might know?

ZEPPELIN

He will probably run away if he sees you.

REITO

[moving back to his bed] Jesus wept!

ZEPPELIN

The shortest verse in the bible.

REITO

Excuse me.

ZEPPELIN

[following Reito to his bed to preach to him] You see Jesus loved him.

REITO

Priests say he loves all of us. But oops we wouldn't be here if he did.

ZEPPELIN

But when he said that he was travailing.

REITO

[looking for something under the bed] What did he do?

ZEPPELIN

You just said it.

REITO

What?

ZEPPELIN

That Jesus wept.

REITO

Jesus wept!

ZEPPELIN

He was deeply moved in spirit.

He cried out for him to get out of the tomb.

REITO

Who?

ZEPPELIN

Emn emn... what was his name? You see he was...but he was in the tomb for four days and four nights.

REITO

Well keep him to yourself.

ZEPPELIN

Fine don't talk to me. That's why things go wrong here. *[goes back to sit on the edge of his bed quite disappointed]*

[silence]

REITO

Notices a file hanging on Zeppelin's bed. He moves towards him. When he notices Reito's intentions, he grabs it, defends himself by pointing his crutch at Reito and makes a run. Reito feels sorry for Zeppelin who is limping terribly and stops giving him a chase.

Why do you harm yourself like that?

ZEPPELIN

[from centre stage left] What are you talking about?

REITO

Your crutches... I stopped out of compassion.

ZEPPELIN

Oh you mean these. I love them like that.

REITO

But it's the wrong way.

ZEPPELIN

This is the right way for me.

REITO

[climbs the high rostra and picks a spot in the direction of the audience. Green cyclorama lights illuminate the background as he hallucinates]

They tell me to stop the blood shed.

The best way of doing that is to make sure there remains no blood to be shed.

ZEPPELIN

Do you need help?

REITO

[he climbs on the great arm chair] Amazingly so. Oh shit ...that mujibha system. It's those houts...those houts, they know exactly what is going on, exactly where the army is going and why... a very very good intelligence with those mujibhas.

ZEPPELIN

Are you a puruveya?

REITO

[green cyclorama lights fade off] Did I do something out of the ordinary?

ZEPPELIN

I believe you are right. *[moving back to his bed]*

REITO

I am right?

ZEPPELIN

Absolutely

[silence]

REITO

What happened when I came in here?

ZEPPELIN

I don't remember.

REITO

Why walk on them like that?

ZEPPELIN

What?

REITO

Your crutches.

ZEPPELIN

[Very enthusiastic about his belief. He acts out the bulldozer and the driver while sitting on the edge of his bed]

I am in love with bulldozers...massive and rolling.

I am the driver, tiny like an ant and manoeuvring the big wheels below.

It used to hurt at first, but every first trial hurts...ask the young girls.

But eventually you are master of the bulldozer. You are in control.

REITO

But the pain.

ZEPPELIN

It makes you stronger...it hardens you.

REITO

Why not just forget about that fucking bulldozer thing.

ZEPPELIN

If you forget it you are in trouble. You are face to face with reality.

You can't face shit unless it's your own. You shy away from it.

REITO

[moves towards Zeppelin]. Face it and scoop it in the cesspool.

ZEPPELIN

If you have the hands to do that.

REITO

Don't you?

ZEPPELIN

There are tied to a tall tree you can't reach out to. So instead of shit you create flowers, lemon cream biscuits. That's my idea of a bulldozer.

REITO

It doesn't make sense to me.

ZEPPELIN

You will soon find out. *[As he moves to his bed to collect a bikini from under his pillow. Themba peeps into the privacy of Reito and Zeppelin].*

You can't live with the fact that your wife is not allowed here.

I mean you are considered too sick to fuck.

REITO

Who considers people too sick?

ZEPPELIN

You will find out. So you can't just sleep there and dream you will get better again.

REITO

Who told you?

ZEPPELIN

It's easy to notice. So you create a fuck...creating things in your mind.

The first thing is a symbol *[displaying the bikini and Reito snatches it and gives it a closer examination].* Then you are on.

Here you have the liberty to choose the most beautiful chick.

Not these bad ones you see everyday.

The most beautiful. You see, this is the most complicated of all computers *[head. He moves back to his bed and climbs right on top].* It's capable of creating wonders.

REITO

Why would you do that?

ZEPPELIN

Take notes. Grab a pillow if you like, caress, kiss...take out your man.

See you have created a fuck. You dig, dig deeper.

Allow yourself to hear that beauty queen panting. I like panters.

Screamers are too noisy for me.

Feel her oscillate, gyrate and panting into your ears.

Hear her call your name...what's your name?

Oh that's rude. Just keep on screwing.

Then you feel like you want to grab things...it's the time.

It's orgasm...you have hit the G-spot. The first jet comes... *[throughout this fantasy, Reito gets an erection and gyrates the way Zeppelin does]*

THEMBA

[Comes in and acts the movement of the head sperm. The space becomes the sperm duct and the urethra].

Come on guys...I will hit first.

I will snatch the ovule...make a babies!

[Talking to the other rivals]. You can't beat me in this race.

I will get the ovule first.

Watch me, I am coming I am comingI am coming.

Exit...woo too much light over there. *[Feels the blow of cold air and talks to the other contenders]*

Hold on guys... there is nothing.

Hold on guys I am not lying... stop this stampede.

Stop maiming me...stop it guys you are hurting me.

[Now aggressive] Go back can't you hear me?

[He drops down and adopts a posture to protect himself from the weight of the other falling sperms. He speaks in pain and with a slurring voice]

I told you guys. We have got a few seconds to survive. *[Silence]*

We can't go back. That life is past. *[He kicks and dies. Shortly he gets up and impersonates the movement of the stench of sperms as it diffuses into the air to the accompaniment of sound at three different frequency levels. He then bursts out laughing]*

That's what you do here guys.

ZEPPELIN

[To Reito] That is my idea of bulldozer. I am the driver and am in control *[miming driving and the sound of the bulldozer]*

See, you forget about the horrors of this world. God is the sole spectator.

REITO

If you think you are performing for him, I an't.

THEMBA

[he looks through the door and moves up the rostra to look through the other exit and comes back.] There is not a soul watching. That's why I am here.

REITO

[Walks towards Themba]

Who normally watches this place?

THEMBA

[retreating to centre stage right]. The hospital authorities.

REITO

[follows Themba and continues to centre left] This is a hospital. Why didn't you tell me?

ZEPPELIN

Don't you see the logic?

REITO

Now that I know...so what have you lost?

ZEPPELIN

Don't you see the logic?

THEMBA

There is no logic. *[now sitting on the edge of Reito's bed]*

ZEPPELIN

He will kick you again. *[Themba stands up ready to run away]*

REITO

There is no logic.

ZEPPELIN

To keep on talking. To pass time.

REITO

Well, time doesn't stop.

ZEPPELIN

You see, you can't waste it but you can occupy yourself so you don't notice time is moving.

THEMBA

It makes sense.

REITO

It's logical.

ZEPPELIN

So time can pass without noticing.

REITO

So you don't keep on thinking about your illness. *[green cyclorama lights illuminate the set]*

THEMBA

So life can go on.

ZEPPELIN

That's it my boy!

REITO

[Looks at a spot and sees things. Laughter. He climbs on Zeppelin's bed]

In fact it was so good that I almost saw my ass as a result.

We are on patrol and we pick up an old guy and make him tell us where the gooks are.

This old Af tells us where they are and says they are just a few.

So we amble down and run into 40 of them. *[jumps off the bed and lands on centre stage]*

40 fucking gooks. They shot the shit out of us.

So I fall down and tune my hootie-slayer on sing and zap one of them.

I ran the shit out of myself. *[runs and climbs on the lower rostra on upstage right]* That old Af...

ZEPPELIN

[having a caucus] He mustn't say that.

THEMBA

But he is ill...all of us are.

ZEPPELIN

It's not the first time.

THEMBA

May be he wants to pass time.

ZEPPELIN

He can't pass it like that.

REITO

[climbing on the high rostra and then the arm chair.] If you have a bit of consideration for me speak out.

Don't force me to spend hours tearing information word by word out of you.

To all the questions you answer 'I don't know'. Where do you live?

'I don't know'. Then you scream. *[He laughs].*

So you have to go through it. I know how you will shout and plead.

If I give you two blows and a belt of the baton behind your ear you have a certain way of speaking, of shouting.

Then the hanging, the bath and electricity.

[to Zeppelin] You see I am not interested in killing him. What I want is information.

ZEPPELIN

Let's stop it. Somebody will get hurt.

REITO

[jumping off the podium]. You don't stop when you are dealing with tough ones like this.

ZEPPELIN

[crossing the stage on the lateral plain to his bed]. He is a Rhodie. That's what he did.

REITO

[charging towards Themba]. Sooner or later I will manage it. *[to Zeppelin].* Mind you, we'd like to avoid it, but they don't make things easy for us.

All I want is information.

THEMBA

So what do we do now?

REITO

We are not interested in killing them.

ZEPPELIN

Let's call the nurses.

THEMBA

They are preparing the theatre.

REITO

Now I hear their voices, their screams even when I sleep. Do-o-o-o-cter

...I am fed up... cure me-e-e-e.

SONJA

[now complete in theatre gear, white gloves and a green head cover].

Peace, peace!

He is at it again. *[notices Themba].* What do you want here Themba?

ZEPPELIN

Your name is Themba?

SONJA

Go to your place. Patients must sleep. That's how you recover. *[Zeppelin buries himself in his blankets]*

ZEPPELIN

Bye Themba

SONJA

[to Zeppelin] Go to sleep you. *[and moves to Reito's bed to cover him with a blanket].*

Dr Bretton has been to Latin ward. He is now in the Eastern wing.

You will be going to the theatre today depending on what Sister Giteh will recommend.

You should also be thinking about settling your hospital bills.

ZEPPELIN

[sits up on his bed] Sometimes they could have been avoided. I have been here holding to all the promises of a doctor who never pitches. And meanwhile the bill is growing.

SONJA

The doctor knows exactly when your problem needs attention.

ZEPPELIN

[now on his knees about to get up] I didn't fight for this type of service. No wonder why the boys are saying enough is enough.

SONJA

So what does 'enough is enough' bring you? Lawlessness, food shortages, dry fuel pumps...empty pharmacies...

ZEPPELIN

[now up on his feet on the bed] It's doctor Bretton.

SONJA

That's all you can say. Sit!

ZEPPELIN

[sitting down]. Before he came pharmacies were full.

SONJA

Everything has gone wrong because of the doctor.

You can't look at your boys and see what has gone terribly wrong.

Enough! You are only a patient here.

ZEPPELIN

[covers himself with his blanket]. With full rights.

SONJA

[circling Zeppelin's bed] The conflict has long ended Zeppelin.

It's no point adding salt to injury. But I think it's important to try and see both sides of the story.

And there are two sides, the good guys and the bad guys...

But who is to say who is who? You can't.

You believed in a cause; they believed in a cause.

Who was right who was wrong? Difficult to say... *[crossing to upstage right]*

ZEPPELIN

[uncovers his head]. They were wrong...racism, segregation, colonialism...

SONJA

[turning to Zeppelin] So was communism. The Reds taking over Africa and then the whole world. *[walks around Reito's bed]*

Whew! Poor Reito. A lot of stuff went up in smoke in this country.

A helluva lot. Salisbury ...my goodness Harare was surrounded by a little cloud of black smoke from army camps, government offices, police stations... *[she cleans the shoes with a piece of cloth with exaggerated reverence]*

You have never seen so much paper... all being carted off to the incinerators and shredders.

Burning the past. Records of interrogations, army set ups...anything that had to do with the conflict was destroyed.

ZEPPELIN

Can I have those shoes when I go back home?

SONJA

[Looks and ignores him]. I think no one wanted to be checked up.

They knew the new administration would be coming to take over from grassroots. No one wanted to be held responsible for anything. It was....

REITO

[who appears to have been listening]

But twenty-two years, twenty-two years, twenty-two years the past returns to plague us.

SONJA

The present as well Reito.

ZEPPELIN

Is that your name?*[stands on his feet on his bed]* Ye-e-e-e-e. You are too fond to know other people's names

REITO

[jumps off the bed and snatches Zeppelin's file. He reads loudly while Zeppelin is in hot pursuit around the perimeter of the set]

Zeppelin Made...

SONJA

Stop it Reito.

REITO

Bullet in pelvis girdle. Three shrapnel stuck in the flesh. Moderate loss of memory.

ZEPPELIN

[Snatching away the file after a stampede]

You have wronged me. You are not a doctor.

REITO

Calm down Zed. We can't fight over...

ZEPPELIN

It's mine. It's confidential. *[charging]* I will forget you Ray.

SONJA

[crosses centre stage and stands between Reito and Zeppelin] Peace. Peace.

ZEPPELIN

You can't do that to me. *[missing Reito with his crutch]* I would kill you under different circumstances.

SONJA

Just listen to me for minute!

[silence]

REITO

Ye-e-e-e ye-e-e-e-e. I know your name.

SONJA

Poor creatures. I am watching you. *[Shaking her head and walking out of the ward]*

ZEPPELIN

That makes a mad man celebrate. *[showing Reito the middle f*** finger]*

REITO

And a cripple angry. *[silence. He then moves towards Zeppelin to give him a handshake. Zeppelin does not respond.]* Come on let's be friends. Don't be angry with me. *[Walking away to look at distant off and coming back].* I agree I was wrong. *[as he walks back and stretching his hand for a shake]*

ZEPPELIN

[accepting the handshake]. That was stupid of us.

REITO

I will never do it again. Come on shake hands.

ZEPPELIN

[keeping safe distance from the bad smell]

No need to do it again... it will not be interesting.

REITO

Why?

ZEPPELIN

Because we know each other now.

REITO

[sitting on the edge of Zeppelin's bed] That was real stupid...to know each other.

ZEPPELIN

We have nothing to ask each other.

REITO

We have nothing to pass time.

[silence]

ZEPPELIN

So what do we do?

REITO

Let's wait.

ZEPPELIN

Precisely what we are doing. That won't change our situation.

REITO

[standing up from Zeppelin's bed and moving towards the right exit with Zeppelin in hot pursuit] We better go away.

ZEPPELIN

We are waiting for him.

REITO

Who?

ZEPPELIN

Doctor Bretton. He is coming to treat us.

REITO

[spreading his pillow] We are sick.

ZEPPELIN

We are pathetic.

REITO

We are patients

ZEPPELIN

We are stupid.

[Silence]

REITO

Come on say something.

ZEPPELIN

So what do you do for a living? Do you own a factory?

REITO

Factory?...No.

ZEPPELIN

You guys own everything. Our men and women on the ground are making sure this is corrected.

REITO

You only bring famine to the people.

ZEPPELIN

[going up the high podium] Is that your camp? You can't swim against the current.

REITO

Wherever it has happened, it has brought trouble.

ZEPPELIN

Where do you belong?

REITO

I am a farmer.

ZEPPELIN

[sarcastic laughter] Do you still want your farm?

REITO

I own it. I own it to the total exclusion of anybody else.

ZEPPELIN

You haven't seen anything. You better listen and listen carefully.

REITO

You mean you can help.

ZEPPELIN

I am in charge. If you withdraw your case from the courts, you tone down your language against our men and women on the ground.

Then we can be friends.

We can fight together the inefficiency of this hospital. *[opening his hands for a hug and Reito moves up the high podium to hug him].* Together we will bring him to the ward.

REITO

We will give it a trial.

[Silence]

Say something.

ZEPPELIN

[descending from the high podium] Let's forget ourselves again.

REITO

[also descending] We can't I am afraid.

ZEPPELIN

I might with time.

REITO

There would be no need.

ZEPPELIN

Because?

REITO

He would have come and we will be home.

ZEPPELIN

[seeing Themba walking into their compartment with some bottles of beer]

Is it possible?

THEMBA

[Handing the beers to Reito and Zeppelin] Why? I am well connected.

REITO

[moves lower stage right and opens his bottle on the edge of the rostra] This could turn to be the most exciting place.

ZEPPELIN

Where did you get the stuff?

THEMBA

Connections.... Well it's a long story.

ZEPPELIN

This is just the right thing... just to be oblivious...have fun.

THEMBA

[sitting down on the lower step of the right rostra] This time they ran away, with ostriches in hot pursuit.

REITO

Who?

THEMBA

The war veterans.

ZEPPELIN

Then I would hang myself on that pillar. They trained in China, Russia and Eastern Europe. They are the best trained people around.

REITO

These terrorists...

ZEPPELIN

Freedom fighters!

REITO

Terrorist.

ZEPPELIN

Freedom fighters.

REITO

Terrorist.

THEMBA

[stands up] These ancient people... you spend all your time talking about the past.

You have no time for today's challenges. Right now, where is the doctor?

ZEPPELIN

He is coming.

REITO

He will bring us good health.

ZEPPELIN

He will redeem us.

REITO

He will give us life.

ZEPPELIN

Maybe death.

REITO

I refuse that curse.

ZEPPELIN

I guess Douglas refused but he died.

THEMBA

Is Douglas dead? I thought he was discharged.

ZEPPELIN

[standing up to demonstrate back pedalling lower stage left] His corpse was discharged and dragged like...some piece of rug.

Right here, with me imagining it could be me tomorrow.

REITO

If a person is dead he has lost his rights.

We dragged floppies... dead commies behind the pumas. Pulled them to the kayas for other houts to see.

THEMBA

And you want the doctor to treat you for that? Go and appease their spirits.

REITO

I don't believe in that.

ZEPPELIN

You take death like a sport.

REITO

Once you are dead you have no rights.

ZEPPELIN

[moving across the stage to climb the high rostra where he sits on the great arm chair] You don't lose your rights. That's why we give our last respects to our loved ones. Right ...a judge sits in his big chair, bangs his desk and utters a death sentence to a convict.

'I interpret the law not as I wish, but as I see it. I find you guilty of murder with intent to kill and I sentence you to death. You will be hanged by the noose until you die'.

On the evening of the hanging, the judge enjoys a cup of coffee behind a fire that is burning the convict's legs and hands. Hmm... you can use them as firewood... Has he lost his rights?

[Zeppelin notices Giteh coming into the ward]

Oh my God!

[Themba and Reito turn to look at Giteh and quickly rush to hide their beers under the bed]

GITEH

As you were. *[all the patients freeze. Themba tries to escape]* Don't move a foot... *[moves down along the rostra until she reaches the lower end; picks up a beer bottle and smells it]*

You are joking. Okay I think I should speak now. And Themba what do you want here?

THEMBA

Sister I was just...

GITEH

Zip your mouth. Patients must recuperate in bed. Meeting now. *[moving back to the high podium through the same path]*

Sonja! Sonja! Bring pencils and paper. *[Sonja comes in rushing].*

This is what is happening here. See for yourself.

Notes everybody lest you forget. Sit sit! *[They all sit with Giteh on the great arm chair, Sonja just below Giteh on the floor of the high podium, Themba and Zeppelin on the same bed and Reito on his own. Themba arranges the beds in horse shoe formation, opening towards the audience. Out of shame they cannot face Giteh and therefore sit facing the audience].*

This is a hospital... not some township shebeen. I want every fool to understand that. Repeat, this is not a bar!

REITO

It won't ...

GITEH

Just keep quiet. You can't consume alcohol in a ward.

Meanwhile what is our job? You want to make things difficult here.

Who do you think you are?

We want to make things better for you here.

ZEPPELIN

Better...

GITEH

God forbid. Yes and what do you do in return? You say thank you with this.
There is to be no consumption of...take notes! Write!
...no consumption of alcohol.

You are living here on the generosity of the hospital.

All of you have not paid a single cent to the hospital.

That cent you are supposed to pay will pay an extra doctor.

How do you expect things to be better when you don't do your part?

We want to make Trauma Centre the best hospital in the region.

Take notes...come on...write!

If you have genuine financial problems, Dr Bretton will use his discretion to advance a loan to you.

REITO

We would real appreciate that sister...what...

GITEH

Just take notes and hold on to your questions.

ZEPPELIN

What are the terms of...

GITEH

Hold on, I will give you time to ask. But anywhere, the terms are that the loan is solely for settling your hospital arrears.

The hospital charges interest on loans advanced to patients.

THEMBA

Who is aiding who?

GITEH

Gatecrasher. 'Who is aiding who'. A beggar is not a chooser.

We are simply running the hospital on business lines. If a patient does not agree with the terms, then they will have to look for their own sources of money.

ZEPPELIN

Where is he? He is foreign and doesn't have our interest at heart.

Why does...

GITEH

Look Zeppelin. Paranoia. You and those who share your opinion have created a culture based on the belief that the rest of the world is evil. You see Dr.Bretton in that light and do you want the world to see you like that too?

THEMBA

But don't we have doctors in this country?...I mean they would care better...

GITEH

Themba, no one can do this job. Let those services which our own doctors cannot efficiently do be carried out by those who can do it better.

That is the only way we can ensure quality and highest standards. Now I will give you the chance to ask questions..Eh..eh eh...wait a minute.

We have a full-fledged dining hall here complete with balanced diet.

Your families are not allowed to bring you anything including alcohol.

ZEPPELIN

What kind of...

GITEH

Wait a minute! Now, this is very crucial. In preparation for your operations, which will take place just very soon, you must weed your fields. Understand?

Shave all your hair...all your hair...all...pubic...all of it. Questions.

ALL

Sister Giteh....

What about the issue of....

My children are all going to...

GITEH

One fool at a time!

ZEPPELIN

Sister I am sending eight children to school...

GITEH

Breeding like a rat eh?

ZEPPELIN

I respect you sister. *[pause]* Much of the money I make goes to pay their school fees. I ask the doctor to consider me in his use of discretion.

GITEH

Get your priorities right. You are spending too much money on education.

What do you want here? To be treated...get treated. Priorities...eh.

Next question.

REITO

I own a farm. Honde Valley is notorious for marauding baboons.

I am buying guns...planes for spraying pesticides. We have an alliance with other regional farmers to defend our produce. Where is my pride if I renege?

GITEH

You are spending too much on defence.

Why should baboons bother you? Where in the world have you heard baboons causing a famine? Planes and their spare parts...aren't those imported? Wasting foreign currency.

THEMBA

I move that Dr Bretton is the source of our problems.

Since he promised to come, he has never set foot in this ward.

How many people have died in this ward?

GITEH

The doctor/patient ratio is not favourable...you put every blame of your problems on Dr Bretton. All of you are here on account of some silly political mistake you made... bullets and shrapnel...post-war mental disorders...fracture in the skull. For all that, the problem is Dr Bretton.

THEMBA

[almost standing up] I didn't go out to get trouble. Madness came right on my doorsteps and I wanted to teach him a lesson.

ZEPPELIN

But the war was to redress imbalances...to make things better.

GITEH

Are they any better now?

ZEPPELIN

[losing patience] It's the opposition. They are supported by some lurking shadows to broaden the scope of sanctions against us. The people don't have land.

GITEH

[climbing the arm chair] You have become too predictable. You seem to have the doctor and the opposition as ready scapegoats for your own problems.

You only have to lie once to be called a liar and to tell the truth all the time to wipe out the stigma.

ZEPPELIN

I am not lying. The people don't have land.

REITO

Sure they don't, but there is a better way of giving it to them.

THEMBA

[standing up] That won't help our situation here at Trauma Centre.

We plead with the doctor to cancel all our debts. We are merely poor patients.

He wants to limit our power to determine our own destiny.

GITEH

He can only help to a certain degree. Patients must pull themselves up by their own boot strings. Your health is your own responsibility.

ZEPPELIN

[both Reito and Zeppelin stand] So why are we here?

GITEH

You are growing too big for your socks. A word of warning before I go.

That pair of boots is not just an ordinary pair. It is loaded with historical meaning. It's a monument.

THEMBA

What history?

GITEH

Don't you know Sir Douglas passed away here?

REITO

[sitting down] His Excellency?

ZEPPELIN

Sir Douglas?

SONJA

Yes. Who do you think you were staying with Zeppelin?

ZEPPELIN

When I was fighting his policies, he was younger. How did you expect me to make anything out of those white papery folds on his face?

GITEH

Since this is a shrine, it must be honoured with good behaviour, sobriety. That pair of boots has been preserved as a reminder of his last living place. It must never be tempered with.

ZEPPELIN

So they don't deserve to be here. *[jumping off the bed to get the boots]*

GITEH

Sit down!

REITO

[Also stands to protest and they wrestle while they take the following lines] You can't take them Zed. It's our history.

ZEPPELIN

Bad history...

REITO

But our history...history doesn't rot.

SONJA

Now you guys are going too far. Sit!

GITEH

[Screaming] Injection Sonja...fire injection! *[Sound of a rewind sound. She goes through various convulsions and soon stabilises with her body sprawled on the floor in a hypnotic state. The space becomes her mind where she sees visions of the past enacted by figures present in the ward. Sonja plays the role of information minister. She walks in slow motion and sits behind the desk that Giteh has just vacated. At the same time Zeppelin and Themba become guerrillas. They march around singing:*

	<i>Shona</i>	<i>English translation</i>
solo:	kana urimuvengi	if you are a foe
	<u>kana urimuvengi</u>	<u>if you are a foe</u>
solo:	enda nekokouko	move over that side
	<u>usauya nepano</u>	<u>don't come past this place</u>
solo:	ukauya nepano	if you come past this place
	<u>ukauya nepano</u>	<u>if you come past this place</u>
solo:	tinokuponda isu	we will savage you
	<u>ukasiya zvenyika</u>	<u>and you will depart from this world</u>

SONJA

[In a peremptory voice sitting on the great arm chair]

You are far from home.

You have been sent by your leaders to fight against us.

These men refuse to come themselves because they know our strength and don't want to die.

They have sent you to die for them.

You will be shot if you don't obey the orders...and you may never be seen again.

Then how will your spirits be appeased?

Reito and Zeppelin lie on their bellies on either side of the box.

Each of them is wielding a crutch, which now is being used as a gun. Themba is spectating from upstage.

ZEPPELIN

I want to put them on.

REITO

Never. Not in my life time. Not in a thousand years.

ZEPPELIN

They are made out of the skin of my stolen cattle.

REITO

They are sacred.

ZEPPELIN

You skuz'apo, you puruveya...

As he throws a hand grenade. Themba crouches on imaginary starting blocks and remains on the on-your-marks position. He rockets like an athlete in slow motion towards Reito in sound and movement. He lands on Reito's side sending him flying into the air. Sound of a rocket explosion. Reito wipes his face and fires back at Zeppelin. Themba becomes a bullet and flies towards Zeppelin missing him and ricocheting into no man's land. Sound of machine gun fire. The effects of this battle are carefully reflected in Sonja's body as she twitches, exclaims, screams... There is more sound of machine gun fire.

At every attempt to draw blood from the opponent each of the two ceases to be human and transforms into a beast; Reito transforms into an ape and Zeppelin transforms into a lion. When the two beasts charge at each other, Themba cheers them and they grow more aggressive. Themba finally chases away the most aggressive beast and the beast in question somersaults and transforms back into a human being with 'voesak! voesak!'. At the second 'voesak' a Fast Forward sound is played. Zeppelin puts on the military boots while Reito stands in disbelief. Giteh wakes up from her hypnosis.

GITEH

The meeting is over. To your beds everybody.

REITO

But he has got the boots. *[following Giteh]* Sonja he has got...

SONJA

[Collecting the empty bottles of beer] Shut up! No more playing with hospital authorities again.

[silence]

REITO

[kneeling on his bed and gazing attentively at the boots] She is too strict.

ZEPPELIN

She is too strict.

REITO

She speaks for him.

ZEPPELIN

She has become him.

REITO

Both of them.

ZEPPELIN

Who?

REITO

Giteh and Sonja.

ZEPPELIN

They are good for nothing.

REITO

They are full of shit.

[Silence]

ZEPPELIN

Examines his crutch and also his new possession, the boots.

Say something Reito.

REITO

Ssssssh! [he tiptoes along the lateral plain and looks for clues of Dr Bretton through the door. He moves along the rostra, up the high podium and looks at distance off. He moves back to where the movement originated from]

REITO

Well.

ZEPPELIN

Well what?

REITO

What did he say?

ZEPPELIN

Who?

REITO

Dr Bretton.

ZEPPELIN

Jesus! I didn't see him.

REITO

I mean when you first came here.

ZEPPELIN

Let's not talk about the past. What do we do now?

REITO

Didn't he say something?

ZEPPELIN

I don't know?

[silence]

REITO

Maybe he is consulting his surgery books.

ZEPPELIN

Maybe he is thinking over it.

REITO

In the comfort of his home.

ZEPPELIN

While we suffer here.

REITO

And he doesn't give a damn about it.

ZEPPELIN

That is normal to him.

REITO

Is it not?

ZEPPELIN

I would think it is.

REITO

I am persuaded to think so too.

[silence]

ZEPPELIN

We can't just keep quiet Reito.

[silence]

REITO

Can I see one of your boots *[kneeling down on the floor to remove the boot with Zeppelin quickly repulsing the move].*

ZEPPELIN

[retreating to a safe distance and turns the heat on Reito] Stop teasing.

REITO

[running across the stage and climbs the high podium. He falls on the first step and Zeppelin who is giving him a chase begins to kick Reito who cries as climbs the rostra on his back.]

Come on give me those boots

ZEPPELIN

[rests his right foot on Reito's chest]. I am giving you my last warning. You will never see your farm again. Close your eyes and see that happening to you. Either begging on the streets or cueing at the airport.

REITO

I didn't break any of your rules.

ZEPPELIN

I am going to forget you now. Stop this bullshitting! *[Zeppelin presses harder his right boot on Reito's chest who is lying helplessly on his back. Silence.]*

REITO

Sometimes Zed I...I...I think...

[silence]

ZEPPELIN

[removing his boot from Reito]. Go on. Talk please.

REITO

Well...a-ah *[stops to think].* Wouldn't it be a good idea to just go away?

ZEPPELIN

But we are waiting for the doctor.

REITO

[waking up and disembarking from the high podium determined to go away]. But suppose I go like I am going to do...

ZEPPELIN

[descending via the steps to pursue Reito]. But the doctor, Reito...he is coming.

REITO

If he doesn't?

ZEPPELIN

Patience pays in the end.

REITO

But it's not paying anything now.

ZEPPELIN

Not at all.

REITO

Nothing.

ZEPPELIN

Empty set.

REITO

[now standing down stage right ready to go out]. Vacuum.

ZEPPELIN

Zero.

[silence]

REITO

And we?

ZEPPELIN

[now standing about a metre behind Reito]. Say that again.

REITO

And we?

ZEPPELIN

[getting impatient]. Meaning what?

REITO

I asked and we?

ZEPPELIN

[moving back to sit on the head of his bed]. Then if it doesn't work, we are allowed to keep quiet.

REITO

[in hot pursuit]. Come on think. Be patient.

ZEPPELIN

Not all thinking is reasoning *[pause]*. You are not patient.

REITO

But all reasoning is thinking. That is what I am saying.

ZEPPELIN

[shifting positions around his bed to avoid Reito]. It's vague.

REITO

Come on! Shall we endure all this? Let's go away.

ZEPPELIN

[pause. He sits on the cube]. Well I will wait a little bit

REITO

And endure all this?

ZEPPELIN

No my idea of a bulldozer and a fuck will win the day.

REITO

[walking to his bed to collect his book]. I am going.

ZEPPELIN

Go well. If they don't give you trouble, I will follow suit.

REITO

I will remember you for a long time. *[Reito walks towards the lower stage right exit]*

ZEPPELIN

[Moves as if to escort Reito and stops]. I will be back to square one.

REITO

I beg your pardon.

ZEPPELIN

I will be together with silence.

REITO

Speech is shallow. *[Reito turns opens his arms to Zeppelin for a hug. Zeppelin being now weary is unable to climb the rostra. Reito stretches his arm to help Zeppelin up. The force being a little too much carries both of them straight into the pillar. They rise up quickly to give support to the pillar. Assured that it is not going to fall they relax].*

ZEPPELIN

That was close.

REITO

[Moving to shake hands with Zeppelin]

Good bye.

ZEPPELIN

Good bye.

REITO

God bless you. *[He doesn't move]*

ZEPPELIN

God bless you too.

[silence]

REITO

Thank you for everything. *[He doesn't move]*

ZEPPELIN

It's my pleasure.

REITO

Farewell.

ZEPPELIN

Farewell. *[Moves back to his bed but stops to watch Reito]*

REITO

[Moves to the end of the stage and gazes at distance off. He moves to the other side of the stage and does the same thing]

Do you think somebody is watching?

ZEPPELIN

[with a burst of energy Zeppelin does the same movement and looks into the audience]. Not a soul.

REITO

Tell them I was exercising if they catch me.

ZEPPELIN

Show no nerves.

REITO

[Moves as if determined to go]

What do you think they would say?

ZEPPELIN

[Looks at the audience threateningly]

Who?

REITO

Dr Bretton.

ZEPPELIN

Who is they?

REITO

Giteh and Sonja.

ZEPPELIN

All hospital authorities.

REITO

[Moving almost out] Good bye.

ZEPPELIN

Good bye; take a risk.

REITO

I am.

ZEPPELIN

The greatest risk is a risk not taken.

REITO

[turns back and paces to and fro undecidedly].

I am beginning to come round to that idea.*[pause]*

[back at the head of bed where he returns his small book and fluffs his pillow]. I am resuming the struggle.

ZEPPELIN

Go back to the bush.

REITO

What?

ZEPPELIN

Be a menace to the people again.

REITO

No. Zeppelin... I am beginning...*[long hesitation]* to fall in love with this place.

I can't leave you alone. *[Moves to hug him and Zeppelin moves towards Reito to welcome him back. Half way through the movement, he decides to the contrary and ducks the hug. He moves past Reito and comes to sit on the cube].*

ZEPPELIN

We must learn from past mistakes.

REITO

Real I can't leave this place. It means so much to me.

ZEPPELIN

It's ridiculous.

REITO

It's naïve.

ZEPPELIN

It's weird.

REITO

It's unbelievable.

ZEPPELIN

It's stupid.

REITO

It's idiocy.

ZEPPELIN

It's base.

[silence]

REITO

What?

ZEPPELIN

Is your bag is empty?

REITO

Why?

ZEPPELIN

You stopped.

REITO

You stopped last.

ZEPPELIN

But we take turns.

REITO

I said it in silence.

ZEPPELIN

That is what we don't want here. We think too much in silence.

REITO

That will make us think about Dr Bretton.

ZEPPELIN

Don't think like that.

REITO

[sitting on the far end of his bed]. You are right Zed.

[silence]

ZEPPELIN

[stands and moves towards Reito]. I thought you would learn from my experience.

REITO

I have no clue.

ZEPPELIN

[By now Zeppelin is terribly limping from the pain of tight fitting military boots]

You see, when I got your disease, I went for cleansing.

REITO

[standing up]. For heaven' sake, why don't you leave those shoes alone?

ZEPPELIN

[face to face with Reito]. Who do you think you are here? I don't want your suggestions.

REITO

But it's hurting you.

ZEPPELIN

[charging aggressively at Reito]. Do you now feel with my feelings?

REITO

[sitting down on the edge of his bed]. Well I am sorry.

ZEPPELIN

[Moves and sits on the cube where the boots once rested].

My mother is winnowing on a low-lying dwala. Seven puruveyas bump into us 'Hupiro gandanga wena mufazi?' *[He tries to take off one of the boots but fails. He tries once again and applies so much force that his hand slips and carries his whole body with it leaving him sprawled on the ground with a loud scream. Reito goes to his aid and by the time he grabs the boot to pull it out of the foot, Zeppelin has decided to wake up. His whole boot hits Reito on the chest leaving him on lying the ground with a cry too. He wakes up and dusts himself and by now Zeppelin is determined to keep putting on the boots.]*

REITO

You will be alright without them.

ZEPPELIN

[wakes up and back pedals to his bed]. The language of a detractor.

REITO

Surely if they make you sick, give them to somebody else.

ZEPPELIN

The nurses are telling you that eh? I refuse to be an agent of somebody.

REITO

You will walk to your death with them.

ZEPPELIN

They will never go back to a racist.

REITO

[spreading his bed]. Try give them to one of your own.

ZEPPELIN

They are all puppets.

REITO

But your health is at stake. I would choose life.

ZEPPELIN

Life? They didn't choose to give life to my mother. 'You cook for terrorists' as the butt of an FN rifle struck her skull. *[acts this out with his crutch and his bed as his mother]*. Then it was a bayonet which ruptured one of her eyes. I ran the shit out of myself with bullets singing an adage in my ears. *[crouching lower and lower and moving downstage left]*

REITO

Stop it Zed.

ZEPPELIN

That scares you. So what did you want me to do? I went straight to Rhonda mine right at night with other mujibhas-that was before I became a freedom fighter.

REITO

Why are you telling me all this?

ZEPPELIN

So you know how I got cleansed. You need it too. So we went straight to Makanika's house – well that's what we called him.

REITO

Must have been a mechanic.

ZEPPELIN

He was...but he wasn't there. Only his wife was at home. We decided to wait for her husband.

REITO

What were you up to? Were you allowed into a white man's house?

ZEPPELIN

I didn't give a shit about that. I wondered why we didn't kill her; then all of a sudden she noticed I was gazing at her. *[looking at Zeppelin's pillow as if it is the white woman]*

REITO

You wanted to seduce somebody's wife?

ZEPPELIN

There was no time for that. *[He moves to the head of Reito's bed, grabs the pillow and kneels down as if he is the woman].* She flung herself upon me screaming 'please don't kill me... I have got children'. I was possessed by twenty years of prejudice and in the flick of an eye she was all covered in blood.

REITO

Brutish!

ZEPPELIN

I had killed her with my knife. *[now stands between the two beds, referring to Reito's bed as the white woman and his bed as his mother].* When I looked at that white woman dying, blood oozing out of her, I thought of my mother. For the first time I saw that they were also human.

REITO

That should have stopped you.

ZEPPELIN

It came too late. Then I started screaming at night, vomiting after every meal. Sometimes I would see this woman fighting to suck my blood like a vampire.

But what about my mother's blood?

REITO

[Now restless, he begins to see visions in space obviously invoked by this description. He screams. Following Zeppelin around the perimeter of the ward. Zeppelin tries hard to quieten him, but fails. He then creates a melody impromptly by adding other sounds. This he does to forget the noise and create the illusion that he is enjoying it.

Meanwhile Reito grows more aggressive as he gibbers and mumbles words]

GITEH

Giteh and Sonja move in as quickly as possible. They are both very cautious. Giteh whispers a few words to Sonja and Sonja moves forward and fires an injection into Reito's buttocks. He falls down and there is a momentary freeze for everybody.

[leaning on the great arm chair on the high podium]. And Zeppelin have you joined Reito in this illness?

ZEPPELIN

I couldn't stand it.

GITEH

The boots. You should feel guilty for your impertinence. You have no respect for the dead.

ZEPPELIN

[sitting on the head of his bed]. This hospital doesn't have respect for the living.

GITEH

If you had respect you wouldn't be defiling those boots. His spirit is haunted now.

ZEPPELIN

Who?

GITEH

Sir Douglas.

ZEPPELIN

[stands up and climbs on top of the cube. He kicks the cube to damage the boots]. That racist. If it haunts him, I will abuse them more. I want him to turn in his grave.

GITEH

To the dead we only owe the truth.

ZEPPELIN

I know him. He never anticipated a patient of colour in this ward. I have no respect for these boots. *[As he kicks the floor and stops when Giteh comes back]*

GITEH

The whole service will put pressure on you to leave those boots alone. If you don't want to listen then serious measures will be taken against you.

[As she puts head covers on Zeppelin and Reito's heads ready for an operation]

I hope that makes some sense to you. Failure which, the doctor may recommend that your immediate family be barred from seeing you.

Your bank account may be frozen to recover money which you owe Trauma Centre.

All institutions where Dr Bretton is represented will be instructed to have no financial dealings with you.

And worst of all, the doctor may not prioritise your operation. Isn't that bad?

ZEPPELIN

[First talking to himself and then to Sonja]

I am aware the doctor is working closely with you and now my own friend Reito.

They want to trigger restlessness all over me. They want to influence financiers to suspend assistance to me.

Other patients with a worse record than me are being treated.

[He stands up and is now violent. He kicks the floor with his boots]

Let them keep their money...that old money. I would rather eat grass than have you boss over me.

[As he kicks beds and everything, he harms himself and writhes with pain]

The just struggle is being won and the fight will soon be over.

How can you be mad over boots that belonged to a Nazi, a person who did more cleansing than Milosovic. The doctor is being angered by the boots I am putting on, over which passion and impulse lead his policy and override what reason and basic morality would reject.

We have not asked their children like Reito here to pack and go where their fore bearers were born.

We have not even asked Reito to surrender all the land he holds after grabbing it without a single shilling.

All I get is 'respect the dead by returning the boots'.

I will not change from my position; those who want to go through a change are free to do so. I will go back to the trenches to defend my rights.

[He is now panting, kicking and limping terribly]

Reito, wake up. The world is upside down.

Horror oh horror!

Confusion has done its masterpiece.

Blow up the ward. It is housing deceit and hypocrisy. *[kneels down and rests his head on the side of Reito's pillow. He sobs and then sleeps]*

GITEH

Come help set up the theatre. *[Giteh exits left and Sonja exits right]*

REITO

Look we have got new hats. *[takes it off and examines the inside of it. He passes on his hat to Zeppelin].* Do you know what that means?

ZEPPELIN

[checks his head and takes off the hat. He examines the inside of it and receives the one Reito is offering him. He hands over his own to Reito while he examines the inside of his hat.

This game continues for five times and each time Zed and Rey discover more interesting things in the hats like apes puzzled by a mysterious object].

REITO

Yes! Operation. Hurray! At last.

ZEPPELIN

But this business of the doctor using his discretion is what kills.

REITO

Both of us have got new hats *[checking the inside of his hat again]*. Maybe his discretion has been extended to both of us.

ZEPPELIN

I suppose he can only operate one person at a time.

REITO

Don't say that Zed. Don't always be on the grim side.

Maybe they work as a team.

[Sonja comes into the ward from stage left pushing a stretcher bed on dolly wheels and Reito jumps on top of bed without realising that his trousers has fallen down to his ankles. Sonja parks the stretcher bed adjacent to Reito's bed.]

I didn't do it.

SONJA

[looking aside]. Pull up Reito.

REITO

I didn't pull up. I just discovered I didn't have it.

ZEPPELIN

Pull up your trousers.

REITO

Pull off your shoes.

SONJA

Your trousers Reito, your trousers.

REITO

[Realising his trousers is down] Sure, sure. *[He pulls up his trousers]*

But I didn't do it.

SONJA

Don't be remorseful. Get on your bed. Its now time *[Reito gets on the bed waves goodbye to Zeppelin and Sonja pushes it out of position towards an exit, inserts a mouth guard into Reito's mouth and sedates him. As she pushes it out of the ward she is stopped by Zeppelin's question]*

ZEPPELIN

And me?

SONJA

The doctor is sending a strong message to you.

He wants you to return the boots before he considers you for debt relief.

ZEPPELIN

I have always said that I will...

SONJA

Just be careful Zeppelin. He would like to see you do something about your choleric temper, which you sometimes use to insult him and farmer Reito and all of us here.

This is just a warning to you that you need to pay back what you owe Trauma Centre.

Failure to do so will be interpreted as rude and breach of contract. *[Fumbling through papers clipped to the file]*

In fact our records indicate that you owe Trauma Centre quarter of a million dollars. *[silence]*

ZEPPELIN

[restraining himself] I hear you Sonja. However...I ...I ...find it difficult to agree with you. I will raise my objections with Giteh or Dr. Bretton.

SONJA

The point is honouring your obligations. This part of the contract makes it incumbent upon you** to pay ten thousand dollars monthly. You signed it in your handwriting and we fail to understand why you are reneging.

ZEPPELIN

*[Interrupting from the point marked** so that they both speak at the same time]*

The doctor should have come here a long time ago and I wouldn't have incurred such a huge bill. I refuse to be enslaved by a piece of paper.

[He snatches the file runs round his bed and tears off pages of the contract crumbling them and throwing them on the floor and stopping on the edge of the head his bed]

SONJA

[Following Zeppelin and charging at him]

Trauma Centre will not tolerate this level of impudence** when patients dictate what they want. Do you think this is some kind of circus where people come to have funny?

ZEPPELIN

*[Eye to eye with Sonja and interrupting from the point marked** so that they both speak at the same time with each trying to outdo the other]*

I am not impudent...the doctor is and all of you are. I have a home. Why am I made to sleep here with no one coming to treat me?

[Silence as he walks to the opposite side of the stage with Sonja in hot pursuit]

I am not a fuss person. *[moving down stage right]*

SONJA

No one said you are.

ZEPPELIN

All I want is to be given my full rights as a patient, not a file of dictations telling me not to send my children** to school and...

SONJA

*[Interrupting from **]*

It's setting priorities right Zeppelin; not...

ZEPPELIN

[Interrupting and talking face to face with Sonja]

For the sake of pleasing a doctor who takes a million years** to cure two pathetic patients.

SONJA

*[Interrupting from** and pointing at Zeppelin's head]*

Isn't that evidence enough that the doctor is coming to operate on you today?

ZEPPELIN

[With an air of finality]

That's enough! *[limping towards his bed]*. There has been enough bullshitting around here.

[silence]

SONJA

[Subdued and pretentiously polite]

I must say the doctor is keen to help you. He would like to see you healthy again.** Only your impudence is standing between you and his grace.

ZEPPELIN

*[Interrupting in low pitch from the point marked** and gradually increasing in intensity to outdo Sonja]*

He is not interested in my health. He wants me to accrue bills for his pocket.

[Silence]

SONJA

[Flattering to win his attention]

Well, you are a remarkable gentleman and have great potential.

Just find one or two things that might please the doctor.

I will not sell you out to Dr Bretton. *[following Zeppelin to give him the paper]*. I will get a fresh page, redraft the papers you tore and ask for your signature again.

ZEPPELIN

[explodes again]

How dare you?*** I will not have your papers again!

SONJA

*[Interrupting from **]*

You will not boss everyone around here. Who the hell do you think you are?

Gunfire is heard. Reito wakes up with a roar. Sonja and Zeppelin run around like cockroaches at the approach a lantern. Sonja runs out through the downstage right exit with: 'Save your own life'. Zeppelin escapes through the upstage left exit. Lights change to indicate passage of time. Reito wakes up from the stretcher bed and goes to sit on his bed. When the mood of new time is established he delivers his thoughts.

REITO

I lay on my bed ready to be pushed to the theatre. I thought of the syringe, the excruciating pain, the numbness and oblivion that would follow. I thought of Dr Bretton cutting and amputating different parts of my body. I didn't give a shit about it. All I wanted was to be cured so I could sleep in peace. Then gunfire. "Lie on your bellies! Lie on your bellies!" somebody shrieked. I told them in my heart, "Shut up. I spent ten fucking years in the army. I know how to save my life". Jesus wept! Who were they to commandeer me to hide from fucking bullets? Where were they yesterday when commies shot the shit out of us? *[he undoes the spreading on his bed and begins to create an effigy out of the blanket and sheets]*

I might think that I am carrying a machine gun. I have forgotten to lock it and the trigger is accidentally pulled. This thought provokes a mental picture of a chest riddled with bullet holes. Blood oozing. Ravens hovering and crowing above. A vulture lands on the chimney of my farmhouse. Terrible thought and I hit my head hard for thinking those thoughts. I think that might come true and I tell myself never to think like that.

I wondered where all that shooting was coming from. I thought soldiers were on a rampage. But I told myself 'hey these guys are too busy in the Congo. They have no time to waste here'. It must have been old commies...ters and this time coming to take over the whole city. They might. They seem to know their history. They might know that this land belonged to chief Harari. It was taken without paying a single shilling. But where did they get the guns? When I thought of how many lives had been taken in the rural areas and on the farms, I didn't scratch my head too much. Only this morning did I get the information that coffin touts fought running battles against rival groups as they competed for corpses

If I happen to be carrying a machine gun at the time of thinking this thought, I immediately get superstitious about aspects of the thought. For example, if in reality a vulture lands on the chimney of my farmhouse, the ravens fly past crowing, I immediately start taking these events as omens. I bequeath the gun to my wife and begin to be scared of the thought.

Then I convince myself 'fuck... I am a man. Why should a thought get the better of me?' This time I invite the thought, but I get versions of it. I tell my mind to give me the original copy and there it comes. Rata ta ta ta ta. The thought bursts in. My cry is muzzled with bubbles of blood. My body in a pool of blood. My wife screaming. My children not able to face the picture. My daughter falls on me. I take my last gulp of breath and kick like a dying horse. The kick meets my daughter and sends her flying. *[cries as he goes up the down stage rostra]*. Life goes out. A vulture lands on the chimney of my farmhouse. A raven crows. The picture dissolves. The thought vanishes. And I am left without a thought in my mind.

ZEPPELIN

[Enters from where exited and sees Reito holding a pile of bedding up]

Are you now decided?

REITO

[startled] Are you still around?

ZEPPELIN

I wouldn't leave this place. Have you now decided?

REITO

Yes.

ZEPPELIN

[surprised] Wrong time.

REITO

This is the best time.

ZEPPELIN

You can't go now when everybody is running around to get the theatre ready.

REITO

I am not going anywhere.

ZEPPELIN

But... *[looking at the pile of blankets]* I mean there is no need to be secret about it. I am not a sell out.

REITO

I am not packing... I have...I have created Dr Bretton.

ZEPPELIN

Out of fondness...the desire to have him around.

REITO

Out of anger... out of anguish, out of...

ZEPPELIN

[descending from the high podium to his bed to take off the bedding]. Now you are talking. Gather everything together and burn it.

REITO

[Snatching the bedding from Zeppelin and spreading the bed]. That is terrorist mentality. The problem is not this hospital.

ZEPPELIN

It is precisely this hospital skuzi'apo.

REITO

It is the doctor and his staff.

ZEPPELIN

Do you have a lighter?

REITO

This country has seen enough destruction. We should be trying you instead.

ZEPPELIN

Don't ever say that to me. I fought for this country. People died for this country. *[pulling his shoulder to get his attention]*. Jesus!

REITO

But survivors are driving herds of cattle on wheat fields when the country has no bread.

ZEPPELIN

It's the third revolution. All revolutions have been bloody. The Chinese revolution was bloody. The Russian revolution was bloody.

REITO

Revolutions have size and direction. They are not haphazard. *[He puts the cube on his bed and places his effigy on top of the cube]*.

Now I am the judge. *[Ascends the high podium]*. Testify against the doctor.

ZEPPELIN

[pauses and then ascends the high podium to challenge Reito]. I will be the judge myself.

REITO

What do you know about law?

ZEPPELIN

And you ?

REITO

I prosecuted in military courts.

ZEPPELIN

Then that makes you the worst judge.

REITO

With all the experience?

ZEPPELIN

Rhodies will never deliver justice. You were sending freedom fighters to the gallows while you were doing your justice. Do you think you can now do justice?

REITO

Judges were following the law. That is what it said. What it says now is being followed.

ZEPPELIN

You are not fit to be judge. This is not South Africa.

REITO

You don't tell a judge what to do. *[throws a blow at Zeppelin, which he parries. Pause]*.

ZEPPELIN

You want peace, send him to the gallows. He is useless as it is.

REITO

I don't do what I wish but what the law says.

ZEPPELIN

[descending one step down and talking to the effigy]. What does it say about this killer, this liar, this...

REITO

He has to give the other side of the story. No one has the monopoly of truth.

ZEPPELIN

He must be hanged.

REITO

Judges are not ruled by politicians.

ZEPPELIN

[descending the last steps and back to his bed]. You better be careful with your judgement. We wouldn't like to see you hurt. You won't last in this profession.

REITO

Silence in court. *[Banging the floor with his foot]*

In the criminal case of Reito Albreckson, Esquire, His Highness' Fiscal at Trauma Centre, acting *ratione officii* by prevention...

ZEPPELIN

[clapping hands]. You have the language. Go on.

REITO

You are warned that you will be found in contempt of court if you continue with your senseless cheering. *[continuing]* ...acting *ratione officii* by prevention, versus

Bretton Wood [age 68. Born in Washington DC, United States of America;

Be it hereby made known that it has appeared to his Highness' Fiscal from a report dated 27 April 1990 from the patients at Trauma Centre to the Attorney-general's office, and from further preparatory information obtained in this case:-

That the defendant... *[Themba walks in from the podium entrance with beers again]*

ZEPPELIN

I can't stand that woman again.

THEMBA

What is the use of following rules? No one comes here and it's bloody boring.

REITO

The court is in session; take your seats.

THEMBA

[putting one beer before Reito]. Who is being tried?

ZEPPELIN

Dr Bretton.

THEMBA

He is too remote. Let's try Madness.

REITO

That the defendant Bretton Wood who having gained a work permit in 1990 A.D and employed as a medical doctor at Trauma Centre.

THEMBA

He is running all over this country. I will testify to the judge. One night he knocked at a house. May the owner rest in peace...and asked him to come out. Madness then used his knife to tear apart the petticoat of the house owner's wife.

ZEPPELIN

[moving towards Themba with the arrogance of an attorney]. Can you tell the court what happened after that?

REITO

Order! Order!... as a medical doctor at Trauma Centre is charged with non-assumption of duty as it is alleged that he deserted his patients...

ZEPPELIN

[Appealing to Reito]. But petticoats seem to be more interesting objects...

Give evidence Themba.

THEMBA

The wife was only wearing her bikini when she was taken out of the house. Madness began to attack her with logs on her buttocks.

'He then forced an iron rod into my private parts. He asked me to imitate sexual motions that I go through when I am in bed with my husband. It was painful but I was ordered to stop crying', she said.

ZEPPELIN

People are killing themselves. They should just listen and nothing will happen to them.

REITO

You believe this woman tortured herself?

ZEPPELIN

The gospel of latter-day saints will never get anyone anywhere. Where were they when we ducked bullets?

THEMBA

They were with you, but they never thought you would all go mad.

ZEPPELIN

[charging towards Themba]. Who is mad?

THEMBA

Madness is mad. He urinated into a container and forced the woman to drink it. She was threatened with the possibility of eating his stool if she refused.

ZEPPELIN

She must if she can't listen. There was a lot of sacrifice to come where we are. You born frees don't know a thing.

THEMBA

Born free? Free from what?

ZEPPELIN

From slavery, from racism, from bondage.

THEMBA

There is no freedom when people are maimed, raped and dispersed.

There is no freedom when daily people have to duck bullets; when they have to take cover in the forests leaving thugs to burn down their houses; when thugs are rented to cause harm to innocent people. I say no to any person who wants to build his fortunes over the dead bodies of his own people. Violence from either white or black is deadly.

ZEPPELIN

We are trying to protect that freedom. When you are on the verge of losing it, you fight again to get it back. It has been a long journey; I can't afford to walk backwards.

THEMBA

So Madness came to my house and I told him to go to hell.

But he had left a mark on my head. I will make sure he doesn't leave another one before I kick him out through the window.

An ambulance siren breaks the conversation between the patients. By association, it takes Reito back to the time when he came to Trauma Centre. He gets his mental excitement. Meanwhile Themba and Zeppelin stand without any clue about what they should do.

REITO

Give me my submachine gun. *[he stands on the chair].* Roger, just let me get onto the fucking tower and give them our bloody message. Where is this fucking piece of speech... It will be better when we've climbed up... Yah, I am just trying to get the thing ready...hundreds of gooks...there are everywhere...like fucking ants running there, eh? Jesus there is a swarm of them.

THEMBA

Can we call the nurses?

ZEPPELIN

Get real Themba. They will throw us in an asylum this time.

[Giteh and Sonja walk into the ward and everybody except Reito rushes to hide the beer bottles. Giteh is not entirely sure about what is going on but is very suspicious. Meanwhile Reito practices his shooting on Giteh.]

REITO

Die bitch! *[Sonja advances towards Reito to discipline him with the syringe. Reito jumps off the chair and pleads with Sonja]*

I am okay.

GITEH

The doctor is attending to more emergency cases and is not unable to meet you today.

SONJA

[as she sniffs the air] Sister there is something fishy in here.*[walks around to inspect the patients and soon notices that there are beer bottles around.]*

There is pandemonium as the patients throw away beer bottles and rush to take cover. Zeppelin knocks against one of the pillars as he flees and then stops to give it support. As both entrances are manned, Themba rushes upstage where he falls into a net which is in the background. The net snaps off from the holders, and the more he tries to pull himself out of it

the more he gets entangled. Zeppelin picks up his shrieking and wailing as he advances menacingly towards Sonja.

GITEH

[sits down on the great arm chair and writes in her file].

These are psychosomatic disorders.

Psychosis of the de-personalization type.

Symptoms of paroxysmal tachycardias.

Doctor to confirm.

Patients referred to Dr Bretton.

[She puts a full stop to the sentence and freezes in that position. Lights fade with music. Lights up and curtain call.

THE END.