

University of Cape Town
Faculty of Humanities

Towards Performing an Afropolitan Subjectivity

Name: Mwenya Kabwe
Student Number: KBWMWE001
Course: MA Theatre and Performance – Thesis Explication
Supervisor: Yvonne Banning & Jay Pather
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Thesis Statement

A theatrical inquiry into notions of hybridity, dislocation and the negotiation of difference from an Afropolitan subject position.

Introduction

Emerging directly from three devised performances conducted as practical research projects in the exploration of my thesis, the production supported by this explication titled *Afrocartography: Traces of Places and all points in between*, (*Afrocartography*) is located within a series of works that explore an Afropolitan subject position. Towards the goal of articulating a theatrical form, style and aesthetic of this so called *Afropolitan* experience, the first section of this paper serves to locate the term *Afropolitan* within a personal contextual frame from which the paper progresses. The second section begins the task of locating the productions within broad theoretical frameworks addressing notions of liminality and post-coloniality respectively. Illustrated by previous works, that have fed the exercise of unpacking aspects of my personal Afropolitan experience, the following three sections serve as a performative map of sorts leading to the formation of the thesis production. The charted section headings being: *Performing Autoethnography*, *Performing an Afropolitan Experience* and *Performing Hybridity*. The seventh section titled *Afroaesthetics* begins a series of three headings that examine the progression of aesthetic choices made for the thesis production. *Afropoetics* introduces a style of poetic text that I have begun to produce and experiment with in performance, locating this form of writing within a historical practice of reforming the English language to accommodate newly emerging, culturally hybrid identities. Section nine follows to posit a re-centering of a particular subject position, in this case an *Afrosubjectivity*, by examining the notion of Theories of the Flesh in the practice of using autobiographical material to create performance work. Given that this paper has been written during the process of devising the performance that it is intended to support, the concluding section outlines the conceptual tracks of the production and their performative interpretations as they have been envisioned at the submission of this explication.

Section One ~ Afropolitans

Afropolitans [are] the newest generation of African emigrants, coming soon or collected already at a law firm/chem lab/ jazz lounge near you (Tuakli-Wosornu 2006:55).

Among the more complicated questions that Afropolitans are regularly faced with, is 'Where are you from?' Not only because a truthful response requires a fairly elaborate answer that could easily be misinterpreted, but also because it is yet another reminder that we are not always entirely sure of what the answer is. Personally, the temptation to dodge directly answering the question is always high, but somehow responses like 'I am from many places' are unnecessarily cryptic, and to launch directly into the details of one's life story at first introduction, tends to be inappropriate at best. Out of necessity then, a Readers Digest response has been formulated: 'I was born and buttered on one side in Lusaka, am half Zimbabwean, lived in England for a while, spent some time in Ghana, I have a base in Boston, family in New York and pay rent in Cape Town at the moment'. Regardless of how many cities and countries are reeled off, the average Afropolitan response to this question inevitably connotes a sense of drastic displacement and identity confusion; human features that are becoming increasingly more common in our rush towards a globalized world. Afropolitans are a community of international wanderers who vacillate between feeling at home anywhere and nowhere. We are ethnic mixes and cultural mutts with 'American accents, European affect and African ethos' (Tuakli-Wosornu 2006:55). There are as many variations of us as there are possible cultural concoctions that could exist within an individual. What is invariable however is that there is at least one place on the African continent to which we locate a sense of self. A particular class of Afropolitans resonate strongly with the airport transit lounge as a holding space between our 'home' countries, a space that conveys the limbo, in between-ness that characterises our lives no matter which city has just announced the arrival of our flight. In the transit lounge, no explanations are necessary. In his essay titled *Living in the Transit Lounge*, Pico Iyer writes, 'I realized that I am an example, perhaps of an entirely new breed of people, a transcontinental tribe of wanderers' (Iyer 2004:9). The connotation here is that these 'Transit Loungers' (Iyer 2004:9) in fact form a community of sorts whose commonalities include similar stories of delays, layovers and lost luggage.

If that is the case, then within this 'tribe of wanderers' Afropolitans form a sub-group, and the implication is that despite the vast differences in the details of each of our fragmentations, there are in fact ties that bind. Among them, I believe is simply the commonality of being charged to make sense of a collection of disparate experiences that include a relationship to the African continent. It is a virtual community on a number of levels: We typically rarely have the opportunity to literally group together en masse and among the first locations to identify in each new neighbourhood, is invariably the cheapest internet café. A shared experience of 'otherness' also tends to determine who we might befriend at each stop. In an article describing the work of printmaker and fellow Afropolitan, Ernestine White (based in Cape Town after having lived in the United States), Thembinkosi Goniwe writes:

Her mobility contradicts the notion of home as a traditional dwelling entrenched in a geographical region, understood to preserve the continuity of collective customs that provide kinship and belonging (Goniwe 2004:406).

Personally, some of the elements of this traditional sense of belonging are still very rooted to Zambia through birth, language, tribal affiliation and the possibility of physically connecting with extended family. My migrations have diluted this sense of belonging however, and it is perhaps only within the 'community' of Afropolitans where I can safely claim to be 'at home'.

Personal references aside, Afropolitans are in reality, simply searching for an inclusive definition of what it means to be African in the twenty-first century, and continuing the trend of the naming of Pan African identities. The term is simply an informal addition to the list that already includes West Indian, Anglophone, Francophone, Afro-Asian, African American and Afro-Arab to name a few. The necessity of re-naming has been historically documented as one that creates spaces for alternative identities to exist 'between legal categories, historical legacies and changing political landscapes' (Joseph 1999:4). In writing about his own culturally hybrid existence, Pico Iyer articulates a sensibility that is shared by my definition of Afropolitan. He says, 'This is not I think a function of affluence so much as of simple circumstance, [...] I am simply a fairly typical product of a movable sensibility, living and working in a world that is itself increasingly small and increasingly mongrel' (Iyer 2004:10).

The word 'cosmopolitan' from which Afropolitan is grafted, is defined in the 2002 Collins Dictionary and Thesaurus as '1. Composed of people or elements from many countries; 2. Having lived and travelled in many countries' (165). Ideally, by this definition, the cosmopolitan individual is one who celebrates and values human variety in all its forms. For the Afropolitan, it is as a matter of self-validation that ranges of human variety are acknowledged. As Appiah distinguishes, where 'the humanist requires us to put our differences aside, the cosmopolitan insists that sometimes it is the differences we bring to the table that make it rewarding to interact at all' (Appiah 1997:19).

The term Afropolitan has the possibility of incorrectly implying a peaceful acceptance of the hybrid elements that make us up as individuals. It must also be noted that just as the elements vary within each person, the relationship to each cultural component is also directly affected by myriad life circumstances including the reasons for the migrancy. As expressed by Olu Oguibe, 'It is not so much the essential act of departure as the nature and condition of that departure' (Oguibe 2004:22). With at least one piece of the ever-forming self-identity puzzle (with ever mutating pieces, I might add, none of which seem to have a straight edge) rooted on the African continent, it would seem that Afropolitans are endowed with a full richness of resources with which to self-create our identities. However, as far as this is often recognized as a privilege, it does not counteract the utter confusion of the task of self-identification or the perpetual sense of 'Otherness' to which some of us never seem to become accustomed. 'Continually positioned in the space between a range of contradictory places that co-exist' (Bhabha 1994:48), we are constantly needing to (re)define and (re)negotiate our relationships to the places we live and the people who live there. I am acutely aware for instance that the particular subgroup of Afropolitans that I align with occupies a class position that is at odds with the majority of Africans, allowing me access into certain spaces including the academic institution that has required the writing of this paper.

In my experience, it is a rare and treasured occasion when a global nomad has the space in which to share the complicating effects of what is often misinterpreted as a gloriously freeing lifestyle of travel and adventure. As an Afropolitan theatre maker, I am acutely sensitized to narrow, (mis)representations of both generally African and specifically

national identities. I therefore aim to make work that calls for multiple angles of analysis and critique and challenges notions of authenticity, purity and aesthetic value. My theatre making impulse is drawn largely from this desire to self-represent, a notion that will be explored further in following sections.

A visual art exhibition in June 2006 at the Michael Stevenson gallery in Cape Town titled *Distant Relatives/Relative Distance* featured six works by Afropolitan artists. One of them, Senam Okudzeto, expressed driving impulses that resonate with my own. In an interview that asked what relationship her different geographical locations have with her work, she replied:

My works also constitute biography, and all comment directly, or indirectly, on my love of displacement and multiple identities. I keep a studio in Basel, live in London, research in Ghana and spend a great deal of time travelling to other places. I am constantly confronted with the idea that my itinerancy dilutes my Africanness, and yet in my experience my itinerancy underlies my Africanness (Okudzeto 2006:42).

The daily task of an Afropolitan is to forge a sense of self from disparate sources and either overcome, mask or 'play with' the self consciousness of being so 'in-between.' The production of *Notions of Home* created and performed at the University of Cape Town in June 2006, examined the use of theatre as a means to investigate contradicting tensions of hybrid cultural identity, national belonging, and the numerous associations of global citizenship. It explored the performance potential within the complexities of identity formation in light of a colonial legacy; historically based notions of essentializing African identity and the formation of counter-normative identities. As Ampka states, 'theatre spaces facilitate a dialogue with other people's understandings of who we are to each other and to ourselves' (Ampka 2004:16). The production of *Please Do Not Leave Your Baggage Unattended (Baggage)*, created and performed at the Drill Hall in Johannesburg in December 2006, explored themes of migration and xenophobia in South Africa. This production sought to invite conversation around the shifting identities of black Africans who happen to migrate to this country, and their relationship to the black South Africans who receive them.

The question of who qualifies to be Afropolitan in the first place, poses itself. As a term that operates to identify a subject position that exists where different cultural influences overlap, it does suggest that this fluid, liminal space in fact has boundaries of some sort that determine who is in and who is not.

Section Two ~ Liminality

In a nomadic world, telling our stories is one way to establish our place in time, especially when ties to extended family and community become tenuous and personal histories may be fragmented by moves, scripted by family mission or silenced by the need to conform. Finding a voice can be difficult when language and location are always changing (Edise 2004:4).

As illustrated in the quote above, issues of rootlessness and displacement lend themselves to expressive art forms as ways to explore the situation of hybridity as it relates to one's sense of identity and of belonging. My own impulse to create work stems from a desire to self-represent and deconstruct notions of otherness as they exist in liminal spaces between what are often mistakenly perceived as binary cultural poles. The concept of liminality as theorized by anthropologist Victor Turner was introduced into academic circles in reference to his experiences with the Ndembu tribes of Central Africa and their ritual processes. As he explained in the late 1970's:

The essence of liminality is to be found in the release from normal constraints. Liminars¹ have the power to reveal the freedom, the indeterminacy underlying all culturally constructed worlds, the free play of mankind's cognitive and imaginative capacities (Turner 1995:528).

Later in the paper, the state of liminality in which Afropolitanism may exist, will be discussed further, particularly in relation to how it differs from Turner's use of the term as a space within a linear ritual process.

Donald Weber contests the relevance of the term 'liminality' when applied to the arena of hybrid identity politics. Instead, he prefers the term 'border' to describe this limbo, 'betwixt-and-between' state of outsiderhood (Turner 1999). I believe Weber's term has particular contemporary significance as it relates to the contested flexibility of lines of

¹ A person in the middle stage of a rite of passage between their former identity and the one they will assume after completion of the ritual

inclusion and exclusion. An illustration being a recent news feature that reported how the current Zimbabwean government has chosen to selectively redefine the definitions of nation and nationality for the convenience of contesting the citizenship of *Mail&Guardian* owner, Trevor Ncube. The contentious position that historically formed boundaries have on our current senses of African identity formations, and the territorial disputes that have inspired many of the continent's conflicts, are all included in the range of border and boundary discourses in which I am interested in locating my performance practice. In this paper then, I use the term liminal as well as its allied terms to refer to a porous, creative middle space between two or more seemingly binary positions in which imaginative capacity is heightened and the possibilities of re-invention abound.

Section Three ~ Post-Colonial Perspectives

The self is above all a dramatic propositional, a derivative of movement between positions, a series of displacements which adhere only if seen simultaneously from differing perspectives of culture, temporality and place (Benston 2002:238).

This 'series of displacements' characteristic of the nomadic nature of the Afropolitan, are also a result of what has been theorized as the postmodern project. This project is defined by the *Post-Modern Reader* as: 'an intense concern for pluralism and a desire to cut across the different taste cultures that now fracture society; an obligation to bring back selected traditional values [...]; an acknowledgement of difference and otherness' (Jencks 1992:7). This 'concern for pluralism' and 'acknowledgment of difference and otherness' reflects the idea that cultural forms, habits and individual identities are continually in a process of reinvention through multicultural contact resulting in a cultural hybridity. As in the preceding productions, the performance space of *Afrocartography* becomes a negotiating area that interrogates the places where particular cultures overlap, contradict or complement each other, thereby challenging suggestions that these cultural norms, forms and habits have 'an ordered and predictable evolution from pure to impure, simple to complex' (Ugwu 1995:15), validating postmodernism's celebration of the 'other'. This 'other' in its various guises, performs the role of 'saboteur, continually undermining the efforts to instil any group or philosophy as the privileged purveyor of truth and reality' (Heartney 2001:51).

Homi Bhabha describes the 'performative nature of differential identities [as] the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually, contingently opening out, remaking boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference, be it class, gender or race' (Bhabha 1994:219). For the purposes of this paper, this notion of 'other' as it relates to postmodernism and Africa will be situated within discourses of post-colonialism. *Notions of Home* explored the 'other' as a figure displaced from a sense of home, a nomadic cultural hybrid existing in a liminal state of homelessness and *Baggage*, as mentioned, was concerned primarily with the displacement experienced by African immigrants to South Africa. Performed in March 2007 at UCT in response to a task to create a solo performance work based on a personal obsession, *for nomads who have considered settling when the travel is enuf (for nomads)*, attempted to articulate some of the ramifications of this displacement on the development of one's political consciousness. In all cases a displacement as articulated by Mbembe that is 'intended to signify dislocation, transit or the impossibility of any centrality other than one that is provisional, ad hoc and permanently being redefined (Mbembe 2001:15). This points to a dislocation that perhaps should be referred to as the continual, dynamic transformation that comes from new and unexpected combinations, that 'harbour the possibility of a variety of trajectories, neither convergent or divergent, but interlocked, paradoxical' (Mbembe 2001:16). I believe the title of the thesis production: *Afrocaratography: Traces of Places and all points in between*, encapsulates these notions of displacement and the reality of instability in specifically African contexts.

The dynamic, non-linear process of the intermingling of culture must be stressed here so that the 'post' in post-colonial is understood in the context of this paper as a period after independence and not as a stage achieved after the fact of colonialism. As passionately articulated by Tejumola Olaniyan:

[...] what greater evidence of its inapplicability to Africa can we find than the continent's world-historical debt peonage to its former colonisers; its chokehold by foreign-owned multinational corporations, and its invasion by ever more irresistible weapons of Euro-American cultural imposition (Olaniyan 2005:39).

Notions of Home opened with a movement piece that on one level, spoke to the colonial legacy that constitutes part of our baggage, and the repercussions of the cultural fusions

that ensued. As mentioned, the production allowed me to fulfil a fairly self-indulgent desire to self-represent an identity that cannot be essentialized, particularly in the wake of a colonial legacy that relied on essentializing African identities in order to exercise and maintain its control.

Mary Louise Pratt describes the space of encounter between the colonised and the coloniser as the 'Contact Zone'. Borrowed from a Cuban Sociologist in the 1940's, she offers the term to describe a liminal area of possibility and creativity, as it is 'among other things, a space in which the colonised respond and resist, collaborate and adapt, communicate and imitate' (Barker 1994:7). This hybrid zone has an inferred positive essence, as it allows one to view the colonial encounters as 'productive of novelty – new spaces, new languages, new tribes – rather than simply a matter of subjugation or imposition' (Barker 1994:6). She further attests that:

Cultures are not 'overthrown' like empires, or 'taken over' like capital cities, or 'razed' like temples and palaces. They simply don't 'fall'. Under conquest, culture in both broad and narrow senses enters the realm of that which has existed and exists; that which continues to be but not at all as it was before (Pratt 1994:26).

In Zambia for instance, this Contact Zone generated a hybrid form of theatre practice that was recognized as an 'important cultural strategy for the political project of decolonization' (Coombes 1994:90). A combination of dance, drama and revolutionary politics was an important local weapon in the nationalist movement of the 1960's. Employing both traditional and modern theatre forms and techniques, satirical, anti-colonial sketches were produced, aimed at mobilizing the Zambian masses against the colonial regime (Crehan 1994:266).

In light of a post-colonial reality, it appears as though the space of liminality occupied by Afropolitans is an inherited one on some level, the notion of the independent African country into which I was born, being partly a European construction. Where Turner's 'liminars' exist during a particular rite of passage from which they emerge different from how they entered the process, Afropolitan liminality is the entire experience, devoid of a linear process. The theatrical exercise then is not one of collecting memory fragments or

(re)constructing history in order to locate one's sense of belonging, but an attempt at making sense of sitting in a present that is itself fluid and indeterminate. Having said that however, just as Turner's liminars are 'released from normal constraints' so Afropolitan liminars can be viewed as being released to some extent from some national and patriotic constraints that may bind more established citizens. With that release comes both a certain ability to ascribe to aspects of a culture that appeal, discarding those that do not, but also an accompanying distance from that culture that is intractable.

Anne McClintock reminds us that post-colonialism has not developed, or been experienced evenly across affected nations or between genders (McClintock 1995). This then prompts me to be wary of such theoretical terms that have the capacity to mask very specific, emotionally loaded, individual experiences in what can appear to be all-encompassing, academic jargon, even when the terms themselves are said to be concerned with nuance and subjectivity. In contestation of the post-colonial term, and reflecting a sentiment from a distinctly Afrocentric viewpoint, Ghanaian playwright Ama Ata Aidoo says:

[.....] perhaps the concept was relevant to the United States after its war of independence [...] Applied to Africa, India and some other parts of the world, 'postcolonial' is not only a fiction, but a most pernicious fiction, a cover up of a dangerous period in our people's lives (Zeleza 2005:18).

Section Four ~ Performing Autoethnography: *for nomads who have considered settling when the travel is enuf*

As alluded to already, I have a keen interest in autobiographical theatre making material, and the term 'autoethnographic' has been used to describe texts in which people

undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them [...] They involve a selective collaboration with the appropriation of idioms of the metropolis or conqueror. These are merged or infiltrated to varying degrees with indigenous idioms to create self representations intended to intervene in metropolitan modes of understanding (Pratt 1994:28).

Born of mixed race in Pittsburgh, USA in 1931, playwright Adrienne Kennedy lived and worked in both Ghana and England over the time that she wrote her plays. Her works are known to be autobiographically inspired, and incorporate apparently unrelated images from literature, pop culture, film, religion and history; sources that she considers

influential in forming a sense of self. Renowned for creating fragmented and idiosyncratic characters that are presented as alter egos of a central character, Kennedy's works have resonated strongly with me since my initial contact with her plays as an undergraduate student. In her first one-act play *Funnyhouse of a Negro* for instance, the protagonist Sarah, known also as 'Negro' interacts with Patrice Lumumba, Jesus Christ, Queen Victoria and the Duchess of Hapsburg as other aspects of herself. The contradictions embodied in her characters not only refer to race and gender, but also colonialism and independence. This sense of a dislocated self is one that has also become a through line in my own recent work. Kennedy's autoethnographic impulses and characteristic themes include 'self-narration as crisis and quenchless need; the crossings of race and gender in the construction of identity; arresting but enigmatic juxtapositions of spectacle and verbal image [and] echoing ruptures between various historical and cultural formations' (Benston 2000:228). Her works are known to have laid the foundation for more recent black, female playwrights like Ntozake Shange and Suzan Lori Parks (Unknown, Vanderbilt University website).

My solo piece, *for nomads who have considered settling when the travel is enuf*, was inspired not only in title, but also in its choreopoetic form by Ntozake Shange's groundbreaking 1977 work, *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*. As a dramatic prose poem, *for colored girls* reveals itself as an overlapping of theatrical forms including, dance, poetry, prose, storytelling and music. Shange also takes liberties with the standard presentation of the English language as she chooses to write her text phonetically ignoring traditional rules of punctuation and grammar. In doing so, she creates a highly personalized writing style that corresponds with what appears to be highly personalized content. As the result of an exercise to create a work that is based on a personal obsession, the script of *for nomads* similarly makes an attempt at a personalized written language, in this case one that is based on an expansion of the term Afropolitan, to create other words and their definitions that have Afro as a prefix. This will be explored further in the section titled *Afropoetics*. It is the notion of self-representing, as described in Pratt's quote above that prompts me to consider all my work to date, but *for nomads* in particular, in an autoethnographic light.

Section Five ~ Performing an Afropolitan Experience: *Notions of Home*

With this autoethnographic impulse and Kennedy's work as a reference, the first of these practical research productions, *Notions of Home*, was conceptually shaped by my own nomadic experiences and created from material generated by five women exploring our relationships to our home spaces. The choice to co-create the production with women focused the project on a gendered interrogation of the multiple levels relationship to 'home', from the micro level of home as a private, domestic realm to which women are too often assigned as natural cultivators, to debates about home in reference to national allegiances and cultural identities. By way of incorporating an experiential sense of mobility, the audience was taken on a journey to three separate locations at which the different scenes of the production were performed. Since displacements from a sense of home can be mediated by varying degrees of technologically advanced communication, I chose to open the production with a return to a more intimate form of correspondence: The first piece begins with an actor completing a hand-written letter to a friend that expresses her need to relocate for reasons unspecified. The idea of the consequences of the colonial encounter in the Contact Zone was most clearly articulated in the second scene located on a landing between two sets of stairs. An actor wearing black face, an afro wig and layers of African fabric was chained to the banister and stood on a rostrum delivering a piece of prose in English in a style of exaggerated parody. The third and final scene occurred in a room whose walls had been covered floor to ceiling, with newspaper. A performer emerged from her home beneath a pile of crumpled newspaper under the table and recited pieces of the South African constitution that relate to the rights of citizens to equality, human rights and access to quality housing.

Although structural decisions were made within the last two weeks of rehearsal, it remained a fluid, building process allowing input and experimentation until the very last minute. This process emphasized a perpetual sense of the incomplete and the corresponding importance of feeling confident that the decisions made within that liminal and porous process were the right ones at the time. This experience of the incomplete

interestingly mirrored some of the kinds of identity spaces that the project as a whole was attempting to explore.

Section Six ~ Performing Hybridity: *Please Do Not Leave Your Baggage Unattended*

In relation to discourses of hybridity within the African continent, the notion of Pan-African identity as a rallying foundation for black self-determination produced an idea of citizenship that was simultaneously national and international (Joseph 1999). As movements to gain independence gathered momentum on the African continent, it was necessary for people to form new identifications for themselves that challenged the binary classifications that imperial powers employed for the business of colonisation, and the term 'hybridity' has been used to refer to the results of this culture clash. In terms of locating a sense of identity across social categories, a culturally hybrid individual is challenged with the task of 'flourishing in the cracks of a mainstream culture [that is] determined to annihilate, by integration or eradication, anything different from itself' (Olalquiaga 1999:173). Post-colonial, hybrid identities continue to exist largely between the cracks of governing laws and borders, and as a result, internal and external migrants, refugees, exiles and other marginal and nomadic communities, often do not feature highly on the list of direct concerns for either national or international legal processes. With the rapid rise of migrations around the globe, it can appear as though the laws and regimes that attempt to control the movements of people are increasingly tightening and being enforced with greater vigilance (Joseph 1999), with apparent amnesia to the fact that migration has always existed as a factor of the human experience.

Please Do Not Leave Your Baggage Unattended addressed some of the consequences of migration for both the unassuming migrant and the equally unassuming host, in the context of South Africa. The use of skin lightening products so as not to appear too dark, lest one is mistaken for an 'amakwerekwere', the levels of sacrifice endured in the anticipation of possible financial opportunity, as well as the often violent battle for resources that immigrants and locals are sometimes forced to engage in, were all themes of this production.

Towards seeking a theatrical form that can carry a sense of the multiplicity of Afropolitanism, the production of *Baggage* experimented with a hybridity of artistic media by blurring the boundaries between dance, instillation and theatre and continuing to question the definitions of the disciplines themselves, as other multi-modal artists continue to do worldwide. Natalya Fink comments on the various fields in which discourses of hybridity and 'third space' are to be found when she writes:

Since the 1930's various conceptual frameworks for galvanizing ideas of plurality and multicultural citizenship against mono-cultural national identities within the state have been pursued, by positing notions of a 'third' space politically, geographically and historically. The idea of a third space in aesthetics, political affiliations, and the international political economy keeps interrupting the seamless narrative of oppressed and oppressor, colonized and colonizer, First World and Third World, dominant and subaltern (Joseph 1999:9).

In relation to *Baggage*, this 'third space' referred not only to a mixing of art forms, but also to the focus of content on realities that exist largely below the radar, several rungs down the national, political and social hierarchy of priorities in this country. The production also pointed to the complexities of the relationship dynamics between black African immigrants here voluntarily or by force, and black South Africans, still awaiting the promised post-apartheid nirvana, and who may regard the influx of the former as an untenable invasion and appropriation of what does not belong to them as 'non-nationals'. Working with direct reference to wider political and social concerns, *Baggage* engaged the use of various forms in a manner that resonates with Catherine Ugwu's definition of what is known as a Live Art project, she defines the form as:

Conceptual in nature, the work [is] invariably driven by the expression of ideas rather than the desire to display particular fictional others. It incorporates and fuses a range of media. It is incessantly concerned with images of the moment; any cultural symbol, reference or icon is appropriated and subverted; the world is up for grabs. Process, context and site are significant, as is the direct and unmediated interaction between the artist and the viewer (Ugwu 1995:9).

In *Baggage* the use of 'images of the moment' as referred to in the quote above were very much located in the use of suitcases as set, prop, furniture and building material, as well as what are known outside the continent as 'Africa bags', and inside the continent as 'China bags'. They are the plastic, seemingly bottomless, chequered bags of red, blue, green and white combinations common to informal traders throughout the continent.

These bags were cut up to serve multiple functions including a series of footprints; a layer inside several suitcases in an installation; as luggage tags, and patched together to form a floor covering under a second installation piece that consisted of items suspended in mid air as though falling from a small, open suitcase. These falling items included a mop, a bottle of Coca Cola, piece of 'African' cloth, a used charcoal brazier, a plastic afro comb, a bible, a bundle of traditional incense, a jar of Vaseline, a box of Omo and a plastic stool commonly used by informal traders. All items that hint at some aspect of continental existence and mobility.

The 'direct and unmediated interaction between artist and viewer' described by Ugwu as one of the defining characteristics of a Live Art performance, were tested in two improvised situations during the performance. The first was an invitation to some audience members to carry a suitcase each from the courtyard into the upper gallery space where the performance continued. The second, scenario was where an actor dressed in a wedding dress approached members of the audience and asked them if they were South African, and if so, if they would agree to marry her. Here, both situations take advantage of 'the living, collusive circle of an audience' (Ugwu 1995: 25) to collectively create the performance in the moment and potentially transfer some measure of responsibility for its outcome.

Themes of migration across borders are driving influences for Guillermo Gómez-Peña's work. They are not only personally relevant for him, but are also themes that he considers central to our current era. In an articulation of his multi-layered and multi-modal performance practice, he incorporates ideas discussed in this paper relating to a fluid and hybrid identification and the interdisciplinary, performative possibilities that lie within that:

I am a nomadic Mexican artist/writer in the process of Chicanization, which means I am slowly heading North. My journey not only goes from South to North, but from Spanish to Spanglish, and then to English; from ritual art to high technology; from literature to performance art; and from a static sense of identity to a repertoire of multiple identities. Once I get 'there,' wherever it is, I am forever condemned to return, and then to obsessively re-enact my journey (Schechner 2002:258).

Section Seven ~ Afroaesthetics

Location

Often occurring on an holistic and phenomenological level for both artist and site user, site comprises both tangible (location, architecture) and intangible (atmosphere, phenomenon) components and has the potential to influence and shape the creation of movement, material, dynamic content, structure and form (Hunter 2007:113).

The production of *Baggage* at the Drill Hall became central in aligning notions of dislocation with my preference to avoid staging my work in traditional theatre spaces. For an audience, this potential site of dislocation lies in an interruption of the familiar use of a particular site. *Notions of Home* for example, was staged in two classrooms in the university's Drama Department and on a landing between two floors. It became an exercise in the transformation of a site with a particular public use into an imagined and imaginary place for a short, suspended space in time. The process of devising a work that is site specific not only enables a theatre maker to be influenced by what is already invested in a site, but also to activate a particular location by creating a dialogue with it and the live performance event. In a series of written vignettes, titled *Towards an ethics for a dislocated body: Vignettes on the amnesia of the 'astronaut'*, Acty Tang responds to a self-posed question relating his motivations for choosing to work in situ: 'Why do I choose to work on site? I am trying to resist the rules of behaviour in the theatre space. I don't want spectators to look at a stage that is wiped blank every time, failing to make the link with their realities' (Tang 2007:96).

The themes of intra-Africa migration and xenophobia explored in the piece, both lent themselves to, and were informed by the location of the Drill Hall and its controversial history. Located in the heart of downtown Johannesburg, the Drill Hall was once an inaccessible military base used for drilling practice by the military, and then as the only venue large enough to accommodate so many of the accused, it first hosted the 1956 Treason Trial. In the early Nineties as people flooded into Johannesburg and business flooded out, abandoned buildings were occupied by a new generation of city dwellers until a fire gutted the entire central block of the Hall. The site was redeveloped on account of its history to become the open semi-public courtyard that it is today, among

the buildings on the property being the Point Blank Art Gallery run by the Joubert Park Project, with whom *Baggage* was produced as part of an arts residency programme (Joubert Park Project 2006). The Drill Hall is situated opposite a busy taxi rank and is surrounded by high-rise flats overflowing with occupants from all over the continent whose numbers far exceed the capacity that each building can safely manage. It was within this vibrant and historical setting that *Baggage* was devised and performed. The city ambiance on its one night of performance included lightening, police sirens and the constant buzz and florescent light from the petrol station and taxi rank; the smell of dust, exhaust fumes and over-inhabitation, combining to provide a textured experience that could not have been fabricated to the same effect.

This 'dislocated' performance personally highlighted not only issues of access to performances in conventional theatre spaces, but also notions of an audience for works whose content is drawn largely from particular life experiences that may not include the propensity to frequent 'The Theatre'. Despite the show's 'one night run', the process of creation experienced layers of audiences with different roles in the realization of the final product. The audience who attended the one and only official show experienced and participated in the result of a six-week devising processes. There was a more consistently present public audience however, who witnessed and occasionally commented on the devising and rehearsal process. In this case, it became a shared, public act of creating and being informed, being witnessed and held to a certain level of accountability to a particular reality of the life experiences of the pedestrians, patrons and drivers of the nearby taxi rank and residents of the surrounding high-rise flats. The piece moved from the outside courtyard of the Drill Hall into a gallery space constructed mostly of glass and back outside again, crossing the borders between what may be perceived as an artistic and a non artistic context in a continuing attempt to 'operate in the world, not just [in] the art world' (Peña in Ugwu 1995: 208).

Structure

A structural pattern that has become apparent over the previous three productions, and one that will naturally feature in *Afrocartography*, is that of journeying. In both *Notions of Home* and *Baggage*, this expressed itself not only in the content of each production,

but also in the decision to move the audience from one performance point to another. In *Notions of Home* this was a two-part occurrence as the audience moved from one room in which the performance took place between two parallel rows of audience facing each other, to standing in a stairwell, to another room where they were seated in a more typical proscenium configuration. Here the first and last audience arrangements use a fairly controlled audience structure compared to the middle section of the unstructured grouping of audience members hustling for a sight line on a stairwell. In *for nomads*, this aspect of journeying was restricted to the staging of the performance itself and the building of a 'journey instillation' created from the contents of a suitcase and a pile of 'Africa/China Bag' feet, resulting in a three-dimensional floor map. This notion of mapping and personal geography has become the conceptual basis for *Afrocartography*. As Shishir Kurup notes below in the opening of his article titled *In Between Space*, the multiple geographical locations that form part of one's identity as a global nomad, insist on a dynamic view of the world map as one is called to negotiate its shifting dimensions with each re-location.

My 'people' hail from the southernmost Indian state of Kerala. I however, was born in Bombay, then raised in Mombassa, Kenya and came of age in the United States of America. Consequently I call myself an Indo-African-American and have been the *other* from the day I was born (Ugwu 1995:34).

As writer, director, performer and musician, Kurup also combines a range of media in his conceptual works that are often autobiographic in content. As expressed by Catherine Ugwu, this practice is one that 'black artists working in the area of Live Art engage with because it allows them the unruly polyvocality required to represent a difference that hints at what is formative not of nation but of both individuals and society' (Ugwu 1995:54).

Material Image/Object

Without a clear linear narrative *Baggage*, included two suitcase installations made from found objects one of which was constructed during the course of the performance; movement, music, and text; the overall composition of the piece relying heavily on the visual image. *for nomads*, on the other hand was largely text based and again involved the construction of an installation during performance. This notion of a process and

production as a dialogue between a live, temporally based ephemeral experience and the object that is produced as a trace of the performance and fixed in time in the form of an installation, is one that continues to feature strongly in *Afrocartography*.

Particular objects as representations of journeying have reappeared in different capacities over the past three productions, namely suitcases and airmail envelopes. In *Notions of Home*, the approximately forty suitcases were piled at one end of the first performance space and from which one actor emerged, the airmail envelopes functioning simply as the poster for the show. In *Baggage* the suitcases assumed a more prominent role in the production and were transported by audience members from one performance space to another, used to build set pieces and installations; they were used as props, realistically (as items of luggage) and figuratively (as a baby). Each audience member was given an airmail envelope on arrival with a piece of original text printed on the front and containing the programme for the performance. In *for nomads*, the envelopes were once more available for each audience member, the title of the show printed as a recipient's address would appear, and containing slips of paper with pieces of written text that featured in the performance. Two suitcases in this instance were contained within a larger one to be revealed gradually along with their contents during the production. As mentioned, other objects/icons of migrancy and journeying have included Africa/China Bags, foot prints, passports, flags and luggage tags. The choice of these objects over other objects such as backpacks, shoes, water bottles, that are also associated with journeying, has to do with the formation of a particular aesthetic. These objects have also kept emerging because they are a material expression of a personal life story and trigger particular sets of memories that are connected directly to the themes of the work.

In terms of costume, there has also been the reoccurring use of an afro wig. Speaking less to notions of journeying and perhaps more generally to this notion of an Afroaesthetic, socially and theatrically. Other uses of iconic imagery that have sought to confirm this subject position have been the use of red, green, black and yellow items of clothing in *for nomads*. Similarly, the thesis production employs the colours black, red and green as symbolic of a Pan African nationalism. In *Baggage*, a central image became that of a wedding dress. As an object in and of itself, a wedding dress does not

necessarily immediately evoke notions of journeying; however, for African immigrants in South Africa for example, there is an option, however contentious, of obtaining residence in the country through marriage to a local.

Section Eight ~ Afropoetics

Cultural identity is not something that already exists, transcending place, time or history. Identity is about being positioned and investing in a particular (subject) position. This process of positioning cannot be understood outside discourse and power (Baaz 2001:5).

An expression of an alternative African way of life, Fela Kuti's travels took him from West Africa through England and America and back to West Africa culminating in his manifestation of a unique, hybrid musical style he termed, Afrobeat. Similarly driven out of impulse, the writing of what I have termed the *Afroisms*, grew out of an intuitive reaction against a certain inadequacy in the standard English language to describe a particular culturally hybrid subjectivity that holds Africa at its core. What started as an exercise out of curiosity to see what new meanings might be implied by simply placing 'Afro' as the prefix to a list of words, grew to initially include the creation of a short definition of the new word. For example:

Afrometric: According to African measurements

Afroholistic: Addicted to Africa

Afrogram: A personal measure of Africanness

Afropotent: Powerfully African

These definitions gradually evolved into longer pieces of poetic text, for instance:

Afrogaze:

It will sweep you in a steady motion from the feet lingering on the eyes; inspect the hair, carrying on to the backside, until you have been thoroughly committed to memory.

Afroliminal

It's the space between breaths, the space in the blink, the space between making a mistake and realizing that it's a mistake. The space between the jump and the landing; between the impulse to sneeze and the sneeze itself. The space between what you see and what you get. The space between shall I stay and should I go. It's that space that vibrates when all else is still.

Within the context of self-representation, this process of writing became an exercise in re-centering a dislocated African subject position through a process of re-scribing the colonial text. It has been, in a way, an exercise in the development of a terminology in an attempt to engage with the question of 'how, within the increasingly urgent sense of our own multi-constituted selves, do we name our own subject-positions' (Tiffin 1994:9).

In the context of the great colonial project, troublesome notions of 'authentic' representation and the maintenance of power structures and dominant discourse have been enabled through an elusive process of textuality.

[...] the guide, by definition, has knowledge or traveling skills which enable the exploration to proceed. Nevertheless, the pragmatic account of [such] voyages has the guide leading the European to some place or some thing which the European then 'discovers' (Tiffin 1994:2-3).

The textual control of language reveals itself in numerous historical accounts that have systematically highlighted and obscured to indicate whose experiences matter and whose do not. The textual influence of images continues to be preserved by magazine covers that dictate standards of beauty, and the textual authority of information is operative in the ways in which crime statistics are communicated. A particularly effective technique that often works at an unconscious level, textuality functions to confirm and perpetuate unless it is directly challenged and deliberately made contentious.

The textual control of language – who speaks for whom and under what circumstances – continues to protect and procreate a certain sense of authenticity from which the growing numbers of hybrid individuals are excluded. As I think in English about the appropriate English vocabulary and Standard English sentence structure to use in this paper for example, I become painfully aware of how the textuality of the British Empire has written itself across the globe (Tiffin 1994:218). In light of this legacy of colonial textuality, the post-colonial subject has adopted a strategy of defining her/his own terms in response to a lack of existing inclusive frames of reference of which the construction of the *Afroisms* is an example.

Afrotextual

Lurking somewhere in the not so distant distance is Heart of Darkness, Out of Africa and Tarzan of the Apes. Reality displaced by explorer's tales, diaries of

missionaries and colonial ethnographers, and now Hollywood's Blood Diamond, Shooting Dogs, The Last King of Scotland.....but your English is so good, and Cape Town is so.....civilized. How come the white people in those movies never die? And if they do it's at the hands of a mass of savage, voiceless, black thugs to whom they have dedicated a life of holy and noble service. At height of our ingratitude, we either sic the malaria mozzies on you; shoot you in the side so that you bleed out romantically clutching the brown earth to your dying breast in the glory of a great African sunset. Or we hang you by your skin. Thank God for your notebook and camera, because a story that is twice removed is better than no story at all, I suppose.

The *Afroisms* function as a form of appropriation of English words that generate an African subject position and thus a consideration of a new meaning for the new word. After this re-oriented starting point, taking the liberty of poetic definitions allows for a creative interpretation of the new term that seeks to not only challenge notions of authenticity and question certain assumptions, but also to respond to a certain descriptive inadequacy in the language of the colonizer. The transfer of the location of an *Afrosubjectivity* from the periphery of an Africa textualized by a western colonial machine, to the centre, also becomes part of an effort to destabilize the continuation of this textual control. The location of this subjectivity, achieved by using the word Afro as a prefix, does also imply a certain Pan-Africanist sense that may be seen as contradictory to the highly individuated narrative journey of cultural dislocation that the full performance text of *for nomads*, reveals. The text is comprised of a series of *Afroisms* performed in succession. This script relates a personal story through images of travel, relocation, frustration borne from the persistence of a textuality that essentialises African experience, the inadequacy of existing frames of reference, the liminal space occupied by the global nomad and the awareness of multiple realities that is afforded by that experience. The Afro prefix in this case functions as an indication of specific placement, but instead of being confining, it may be more useful to view it as a lens through which the challenge of making sense of a multiplicity of experiences is explored; A lens that has been historically disregarded.

Perhaps the work of the migrant artist should not be considered simply as a representation of the place of origin or the place of arrival, but as a metaphor for the process of travel (Lavrijsen 1998:22).

In relation to the majority of people who occupy the African continent, I am aware that this is a privileged exercise of self-reflection that may be much less relevant to the vast majority of the population in Africa whose major concern is the 'quest for a sustainable lifestyle' (Baaz 2001:13). Nevertheless, as a project of representation, I believe that the performative result of such a self-reflective exercise can be made accessible beyond a formally educated, middle/upper class elite. A small step in this direction is my decision to stage *Afrocartography* within a migration resource centre for African immigrants.

Afroisms in Performance

Rhythm is the modality of the word, and because the word and its modality of rhythm and meaning are inextricable, it is in the particular conjunction of rhythm/meaning/word that we find performance (Madison 1998:336).

In *Baggage*, the *Afroisms* featured in the production as texts printed on airmail envelopes to be read. However, it was with *for nomads* that they came to their fullest expression in a performative context. Clearly, the medium of spoken performance has the capacity to deliver layers of nuance transmitted through various rhythms in the voice by contrasts in tone, mood, intonation, accent and emotive quality, and complimented by a large range of rhythmic, non-verbal performative techniques, including movement, and the use of costume and objects. Unlike in *Baggage*, where the production was dominated by visual images, it was the text that held the central function of creating images in *for nomads*. The latter production revealed the ways in which the poetic text becomes 'dependent for its meanings on the variable interactions between text, performer, audience and occasion' (Hoyles 2002:51). As Leopold Senghor eloquently states,

[.....] rhythm is expressed through corporeal and sensual means; through lines, surfaces, colors and columns in architecture, sculpture or painting; through accents in poetry and music, through movements in the dance. But, doing this, rhythm turns all these concrete things towards the light of the spirit. In the degree to which rhythm is sensuously embodied, it illuminates the spirit (Madison 1998: 337).

Although the image of a piece of poetic text on an airmail envelope might have been an interesting addition to a production that was dominated by visual imagery, the notion of the performance poet's craft as designing material for the stage, as opposed to the page, was not wholly apparent to me until the devising of *for nomads*. The history of orality to

which the spoken-word poets pay homage, I believe further contains the *Afroisms* within an indigenous African performance tradition. As mentioned in earlier sections, *for nomads* borrows many structural elements from Ntozake Shange's *for colored girls*, a production 'conceived as a series of poems and distilled over time and interaction into a work of prose poetry' and choreographed dance, and described across artistic categories as a choreopoem (Shange 1978:i). The intention with *for nomads*, was, as Shange describes, 'to move what was my unconscious knowledge of being in a colored woman's body to my known everydayness', layered by a life experience of movement and re-location (Shange 1978:xi). The works also share a creative journey that began with the writing of individual poems, to a process of selection to combine them into one larger theatrical piece with a narrative structure.

Section Eight ~ Re-Centering Afrospectivity

There's a certain freshness and innocence in people who have always lived in one place and can count on witnesses to their passage through the world. In contrast, those of us who have moved many times develop tough skins out of necessity. Since we lack roots or corroboration of who we are, we must put our trust in memory to give continuity to our lives...but memory is always cloudy, we can't trust it. Things that happened in the past have fuzzy outlines, they're pale; it's as if my life has been nothing but a series of illusions, of fleeting images, of events I don't understand, or only half understand. I have absolutely no sense of certainty (Allende 2003:79).

In the quote above Isabel Allende speaks to notions of witnessing, of memory, and of uncertainty, aspects of working theatrically with autobiographical material to create original work that will be respectively probed in this section.

As a one-person performance based on a personal obsession, *for nomads* evolved from a very solitary devising process, unlike the previous two works that were collaboratively produced. In terms of the witnessing of the life journey alluded to by Allende, the exercise of making and presenting *for nomads*, became an important construction of a witnessable life-journey. A result of the production that was personally satisfying was the call to be present in body and spirit in the enactment of my own memory stories. A challenge of being located somewhere when there are a string of other locations to make comparisons with as well as other people in those places with whom one shares some

history, is in the situation of having one's attention constantly divided. The act of performing *for nomads* then, also served in some way as a space to exist in with some of those other places and people called forth or represented in some way to be held simultaneously in a moment of presence and be witnessed. These memory stories told through a narrative composed of Afroisms were set sometimes in celebration and other times in regret and disappointment, but as a whole served to 'bridge the contradictions of [my] experiences' through what Gloria Anzualdúa and Cherríe Moraga have termed 'theories of the flesh' (Madison 1998:319):

Theories of the flesh mean that the cultural, geopolitical, and economic circumstances of our lives engender particular experiences and epistemologies that provide philosophies or 'theories' about reality different from those available to other groups (Madison 1998:319).

The notion of theories of the flesh, for me speaks to this idea of autoethnography that I endeavour to explore in my work. This area of inquiry is largely understood to be one that responds to questions concerning 'who' and 'what' we are, 'how' we became and 'why' we remain that which we are, and to what extent we have both the capacity and the ability to become something different' (Hall 2004:5). The practice of creating work from an Afrospective/Afropolitan vantage point then, operates from the assumption that we do have some freedom to recreate our selves at will, that we are agents in our own becoming. This supposed freedom of choice however is exercised where we are 'presented with a suspiciously narrow range of options and avenues that will allow us to fit comfortably into society and our particular gendered, regional, ethnic, sexual subset of it' (Hall 2004:1). The performance of autobiographic material then is held within this notion of theories of the flesh in the hope that it serves to not only self-validate but in so doing, offer others an opportunity to see themselves reflected. As Madison describes, 'when we speak from theories of the flesh, we are speaking from a homeplace and in turn, naming the location from which we come to voice' (Madison 1998:320). This notion of a 'homeplace' for me is particularly interesting in light of a life experience that has perpetuated an inability to locate this place geographically. What this does then, is offer an alternative 'homeplace' located within my personal, subjective experience, inviting me to claim to be at home in the way I live in the world.

Theories of the flesh speaks also for me to notions of the potential of the body to retain, recall and represent what the intellect may have rendered inaccessible to ensure survival. The possibility of making theatre that employs a physical language then is layered beyond the sensory appeal of creating living images. As bell hooks notes 'direct experience is privileged in many of the debates surrounding identity politics as the most relevant way to apprehend reality' (hooks 1995:12). In application of this notion, what has been common across the two projects that involved other people besides myself, have been personal experiences of the group members of profound dislocation as a way of knowing. Theories of the flesh have also been called 'repositories of a people's theories of themselves' and if my understanding of them is correct, then in order for these theories (that are based on how life has been lived) to have meaning they must re-live; they must be recalled and recreated/re-presented in some way. Madison writes that 'thinking of theories of the flesh as essentially performative, as emerging from a paradigm of life performances, focuses their location, as well as their meaning and function, for their creators' (Madison 1998:338).

Instead of taking a speculative, abstract position associated with the word 'theory', theories of the flesh refer to something that is not hypothetical, but based on practice, on lived experience. The performativity of these highly individualised theories of the flesh then, becomes a way of accessing common experience and a shared humanity. In other words, one is one's own theory and that theory is applied to one's own life story. Madison notes that 'framing this self-theorizing in and as performance puts into high relief where and how people are giving name to themselves, their experiences, and the meanings embedded in both' (Madison 1998:338).

Conclusion: Afrocartography: Traces of Places and all points in between

I map therefore I am (Harmon 2004:11)

The notion of cartography as the art and science of making maps operates under the contestable assumption that the world is measurable. Applying this notion to a subjective exercise, I am intrigued by maps that inspire associative journeying through forms of creative cartography. Stuart Hall alludes to this associative potential when he writes,

[...] crashing through the larger landscapes of memory and experience and knowledge, trying to get a fix on where we are in a multitude of landscapes that together compose the grander scheme of things. Orientating begins with geography, but it reflects a need of the conscious, self-aware organism for a kind of transcendent orientation that asks not just where am I, but where do I fit into this landscape? Where have I been? Where shall I go, and what values will I pack for the trip [...] and what pattern, what grid of wisdom, can I impose on my accumulated, idiosyncratic geographies? (Hall 2004:15)

Conceptually framed within these alternative notions of mapping, the production of *Afrocartography* seeks to create an experience of journeying to mythical, imagined destinations that are located in the sense of personal geography to which Hall alludes to above. Inspired by ideas of charting life experiences in highly personal ways through photo albums, diary entries, embellished stories of childhood memories, writing and receiving hand written letters, or fragmented recollections of significant events, *Afrocartography* relies on a form of mapping that combines memory and imagination to chart the course of the performance.

Characteristic of previous works, the production will be dominated by visual images and will employ a physical language to complement a text that is an expansion of the Afropoetic form. The narrative structure of the performance is envisioned as following a dreamer/traveler on their expedition with a character known as the Mapmaker. Part Sangoma, part Fairy Godmother and wielding immense power, the Mapmaker has been sought in order to lead the dreamer/traveler 'home'. Instead, the Mapmaker guides the audience to three distinct locations. The first of them being The Black Place of Fables:

.....Skilled in the art of shape-shifting, the Mapmaker shakes loose from a nearby pillar and presents herself in nothing but her fullest afro. "Mapmaker, Mapmaker make me a map", I offer. "There's no place like home" she replies, "No shit" I think to myself. She sweeps me in a steady motion from the feet lingering on my eyes, inspects my hair, and carries on down to my backside until I have been thoroughly committed to her memory.

Guided by starlight she leads us through passages and caves around fountains, mountains and monuments, under ancient memories of a time before travel, a time that never existed, out the other side of an embellished experience and into a labyrinth of train tracks, airplane wings and tractor tires and piles of shoes with the soles worn thin. As day light approaches, I ask again "Mapmaker, Mapmaker make me a map". "Pay attention", she scolds as all the creatures of the night one by one return to the haven of her huge hair to rest for the day. Before charting a new course, the Mapmaker unwinds a fable from a time before witches.....

The Green Place of Letters follows:

....Letters to remind, to remember, to hold on, to feed the ache of loss, of leaving, of arriving somewhere else without my things, without all the stuff that I really need. Letters that smell of sadness and surrender, letters that surprise, letters buoyant with good fortune, and others weighted by foul fortune. Letters that plead and beg and promise to never ever in this lifetime repeat the same thing that drove you to the other side of madness where you now dwell nursing a gaping wound. Letters that circumvent, and approach sideways in carefully penned compliments. Letters that offer delayed advice. Letters for bravely revealing what the mouth has always held caged, freed now in eloquent passages that declare undying love safely over the distance in between. Letters thinly disguising long held animosity for the fact of your departure, a cathartic release for the abandoned, left behind to continue to spiral while you charge ahead leaving your self behind. Letters that regret to inform.

All these letters undelivered to their intended recipients, trapped in mid flight and stranded forever at the intersection of Afroliminal, third worlds, caught in the space between breaths, the space in the blink, in the space between the jump and the landing, the space between what you see and what you get. Letters caught in the space between staying and leaving. Caught in that space that vibrates when all else is still.

The last destination to be visited on this particular journey is The Red Place of Conjuring:

....Reaching deep into her Afrospace, into the spaces between the curls where all her grandmother's wisdom sits safe and protected, between the curls to where all the good sense to do it right, hovers next to the energy to try again, The Mapmaker pulls out a 3-legged, cast iron, pot, conjures a fire from the one in her belly and we watch as the air turns slowly black, while she adds ingredient after

mysterious ingredient, concocting the potion of our times to feed back to us lest we forget that we induced our own anticipation of post-apartheid nirvana. She adds

2 pints of paranoid hysteria

10kg of unsinkable spirit

12 litres of underlying turbulence

4 tablespoons of mysterious disappearances

A pinch of stubborn arrogance

7 grams of overdiscovered

8 pounds of revolution

A splash of magic

Not one ounce of objectivity

A teaspoon of entitlement

A bag of double standards

3 portions of invincibility

A good dose of waiting

13 cups of shitty transitions

Half a gallon of an exaggerated sense of freedom, and

A dash of something very, very spicy.

She grabs the pot from the flame, shakes it with a vigour born of a history of spirit possession and we watch the broth transform, changing colour, form, density. Raising the pot above her head, the Mapmaker pours a libation to herself made of a thousand others. The air at its blackest, she spoons a portion of potion from her cupped palms into our wordless mouths.....

The site that will contain this journey will be the Scalabrini Centre on Commercial Street in Cape Town's CBD. Functioning largely as a migration resource centre, it is a four-floored building flanked by a police station on one side and the Department of Home Affairs on the other, that infamous point of call that many of the African immigrants that are served by the Centre must inevitably contend with. The site also houses a number of creative projects, including an arts collective known as Voyage Ensemble, consisting of an equal number of refugee and South African visual artists who create and exhibit work together. Among other services offered by the facility are computer training and English language courses. The choice of this particular site for the production of *Afrocartography* seemed like an inevitable one, considering the overlap of the mapping theme and the functions of the centre as a stopping point for journeys that have originated elsewhere in the African continent.

As stated at the beginning of the explication, my thesis is that of a theatrical inquiry into notions of hybridity, dislocation and the negotiation of difference from an Afropolitan

subject position. I intend that the production of *Afrocartography* encapsulate this inquiry in a performance that blurs boundaries between theatrical forms, as previous works have attempted to do, by presenting a work that includes installation, movement, spoken poetic text and song. By situating the production at the Scalabrini Centre, I also hope to draw attention to Afropolitan experiences that might differ from my own and yet share a characteristic sense of displacement and the re-negotiation of a 'home' space.

Adopting a more fantastical quality than the previous works have done, I hope to create a sense of a liminal realm that exists where dreaming, waking, memory and imagination overlap, where as Hall reflected at the start of the section, there is a call for a transcendence of sorts, that affords a view of the landscape from a different place.

University of Cape Town

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