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By

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A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Social Science in Political Studies

Supervisor: Professor Thiven Reddy

BLACK HERE, BLACK THERE, BLACK EVERYWHERE: *Using theatre to understand what Being-Black-in-the-world entailed during apartheid South Africa.*

Question: How did Black theatre help understand the being of Blackness and all that it entailed in the world?

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For Smiles and his dear mother.

(I will write more for you)

Abstract

"*Sizwe esiMnyama soya njalo phambili xa sime sibanye*"

[Black nation, we will only be able to go forward once we stand together as one]

- Simphiwe Dana (*Bantu Biko Street*, 2006).

Black theatre addresses the Black experience, attributing it to colonialism and/or apartheid. It also calls for Black solidarity, in the quest for a new and true humanity – whereby all the shackles do not exist. Through Black Consciousness, theatre-makers such as Matsemela Manaka, Mthuli Shezi and Maishe Maponya saw it best to portray what they met on the streets in theatre. They were to produce didactic and agitprop theatre, open to entertainment. The Seventies called for a theatre that would bring about change to the Black situation. While the play entertained, it was also to spread the message of Black Consciousness to the people, to realise what was going on in the country and create platforms to communicate what was to happen to change such a situation. Their aim was to communicate the message of Black Consciousness to Black people, to call on them to first understand what their Blackness entailed and its positionality in the race-based society – it also taught of the Black (positive) history which (they felt) was distorted by the White history writer. The Black nation was divided, so theirs was to encourage unity within Black people. Their understanding was that once a nation – in racial terms - is conscious of all that makes it, and is united, it will be a giant leap for them to strive to go forward and resist against oppression with the aim of attaining freedom, and put an end to the racist system.

Key words: Black, consciousness, solidarity, a true humanity.

A Brief Author's Note

I wrote this paper while seated on my chair before a laptop. Without the beautiful music that plays in the background, I do not know how I would have been able to put my thoughts together for a full paper. The conceptualisation and the writing of this paper came at a very harsh time of our lives, a time we would never deem possible, a time overpowered by a COVID-19 pandemic leading to a strict Lockdown of the country. Libraries and other institutions of physically gathering information were closed. While writing must go on because one must submit one's dissertation at the end of the day for the attainment of one's degree, it becomes close to impossible to gather thoughts and information. The pandemic takes a stroll on one's mental health, bringing closer constant anxieties and reader's and writer's blocks. Due to the closure of the institutions of knowledge, I was only dependent on online journals and books which are very difficult to find as the topic covered by this paper is one that is rare. Writings on Black Consciousness as well as the theatre that was produced in South Africa mostly from the years of 1940 to 1988 are as scarce as hen's teeth, especially online – I was mostly dependent on books found at the University of Cape Town's library and hoped to visit the National English Literary Museum (NELM), located in the town of Makhanda, however due to travelling restrictions and the scarcity of funds, was unable to. Thus, I worked through those many journals found online, and in some physical paperback books I kept for reading and archiving, and some from my friends. The paper becomes a reflection to my love for theatre (and the arts in general) and all that entails Black Consciousness. Without art, I am not sure what this world would have been.

Contents

Chapter 1:

Introduction

According to Peffer, “Art [for Black people] was a tool for self-exploration that also interpreted the world of black persons” (2009:6). Orkin speaks of the theatre of the oppressed as the theatre that was to agitate the audience; “When the show ends, the audience is so emotionally charged that they will not calm down before everything in the vicinity, from buildings to cars and even other people, have been attacked”, said Stoffel Botha, Minister of Internal Affairs (1988). Here, Botha recognises the impact that theatre has on people. After a play, it was almost impossible to control people’s behaviour. The play had done its job, it was up to the audience to act according to how they pleased. Albie Sachs argued that “the power of art lies precisely in its capacity to expose contradictions and reveal tensions” (1990:20). A huge problem with political theatre was that while a show would be playing on stage, people would constantly look at the back door to see if the police will not come in. All those in the venue – not only the artists – would be in trouble should the police see what was happening. The act of dividing the attention – between the stage and worrying about the police getting in – reduced the ritual of experiencing and sufficiently enjoying theatre. That becomes the premise of this paper, to understand what plays did to ensure that the consciousness of Black people in understanding what it entails to be Black has been sparked, the plays calling for unity within Black people, and agitating them to change their situations.

The theatre-makers of Black theatre had no proper halls and sufficient equipment. Hence, they would be seen adopting techniques of ‘poor theatre’. This adaptation was forced by their daily-life conditions, unlike the European practitioners who chose to use few to no props. As Manaka and other practitioners attest, Black theatre is a theatre by Blacks, for Blacks and with Blacks where Black people stay. Being Black does not necessarily qualify one as a Black theatre theatre-maker, it is a theatre based on the principles of Black Consciousness. They were catering for Black audiences in the townships. It was rare that their plays would go to proper theatres in town. They would usually be performed in church halls, school halls, outside on the field, on people’s backyards, and community centres such as the Donaldson Orlando Community Centre (DOCC), and the Dorkay House. Soweto in Johannesburg, New

Brighton in Port Elizabeth, and Nyanga and KwaLanga in Cape Town were hubs of Black theatre.

Black theatre, a theatre premised on the principles of Black Consciousness, was hugely influenced by H.I.E. Dhlomo, Gibson Kente and Nelson Mungwane, and was led by such theatre-makers as, but not limited to Manaka, Mthuli Shezi, Maishe Maponya, and Fatima Dike. These theatre-makers would go on to criticise Kente for his ignorance towards what was happening in the country in the Seventies. As much as they appreciated and acknowledged his contribution to theatre for Black people, they were against his usage of the same style of theatre, and mostly they criticised his decision to not portray current situations and attribute them to apartheid (Wakashe, 1986). They were also critical of the multi-racial theatre groups that rose to focus on Black experiences.

In the multi-racial companies, the plays were produced by White directors who had the first and the last say into what happened in the play. Black actors would be expected to workshop their daily experiences that would be converted into a script by the White director. The experiences that these directors wrote about were alien to them. Unlike plays produced in the township, plays by these multi-racial groups would be performed in cities and overseas. It would be until after their first play, *The Fantastical History of a Useless Man* (1976), that the Junction Avenue Theatre Company would comprise mostly of Black actors, however their directors remained White – while they produced Black content (Purkey, 1986). What happened in one group happened in most.

The main question of the first chapter, as well as that of the whole paper, is 'When does it become Black (Consciousness) theatre?' The first chapter reviews literature that was written on Black theatre. The authors of the literature that was used were concerned with understanding, first, what we mean by Black theatre and, lastly, what it comprised of. The Seventies were a decade hugely active on politics and resistance against apartheid, one had to know where their strength lied and use it as a contribution in the resistance struggle against apartheid. The chapter aims to define Black theatre as that which is produced by Black theatre-makers, for and with Black people. It displays the experiences of Blacks on stage with plans of opening room for discussing how Black people got to arrive at the point they are at and how they will be able to overcome that and move forward to a life without shackles. It is a theatre created for those people who went through what is being portrayed on stage. The aim is not for them to feel pity about their situation but to promote change. This chapter is

concerned with the representation of the Blacks and why that representation is important. It questions why Black people want to see images of themselves on stage. It will do that by mainly visiting Bhekizizwe Peterson's conception of representation on stage. It will then bring in contradicting views from different scholars, such as Wakashe, Rangoajane, Simbao, Steadman, Tomasselli and Coplan, of their understanding of Black theatre and different labels they give to it, such as 'committed theatre', 'popular theatre', 'alternative theatre', 'poor theatre', 'protest theatre' and 'theatre of resistance'. The chapter will conclude that the depiction of Black experiences matters because it teaches of what Blackness entails and forges unity within Blacks across gender, class and ethnicities, and urges Blacks to change their situation.

Chapter two sets the broad conceptual framework to locate Black theatre. I adopted the concept of *being-Black-in-the-world* from Chabani Manganyi's 1973 book of the same name. In this chapter, that concept will be used as a point of departure. To explore the concept, I will draw from such writers as Fanon, Sartre, Biko, Ramose and More to make sense of what Blackness entails in the world. These ideas are then used to measure the significance of the plays that are referred to as Black theatre and those that are not. Discussing the being-of-Blackness, the chapter focuses on the idea of 'consciousness', to discuss how consciousness leads to freedom. When one is conscious of the situation that one is in, one will be bound to change that situation for a better one. Consciousness propels change. It is the chapter that will help understand if the plays did take the audience to the moment of understanding what it means to be-Black-in-the-world. *Being-Black-in-the-World* (Manganyi, 1973) poses as the central text of the chapter as well as that of the paper. As discussed above, the chapter also brings in Frantz Fanon's conception of '*The Look*'. Here, the *look* is used to understand the powers it carried during apartheid: concerned with who is a *looker* and who is *looked*, and what happens when the one being *looked* at wants to return the *look*. It also goes to the understanding of what becomes a human being, and stumbles upon the topic of 'existence' and 'existentialism' from thinkers such as but not limited to Descartes (*cogito*), Sartre, Hegel, More and Ramose. From then, the chapter briefly goes to the questions of self-hood, asking what and who is a Black person. The chapter seeks to define a Black (African, Coloured, Indian) person through the Black Consciousness inclusive definition. To understand what it is to be a Black person, it first asks what it means to be human. Then it goes to discuss the quest for a true humanity and why should one feel the need to decolonise. It is a chapter based on Blacks' yearning to make sense of their Blackness in the world.

The third chapter uses Matsemela Manaka as an example of a producer of Black theatre. It looks to his contribution to the struggle in the Seventies, as an activist both on stage and outside of the theatre hall, as a member of the Black Consciousness Movement. The chapter looks at Manaka's understanding of Black theatre, using his plays, his interviews and what he wrote on Black theatre. As much as Manaka was influenced by such theatre-makers as Kente, he questioned their decisions to stick to one form of theatre-making and not moving with the times to see what was urgent then. He also was hugely critical of White involvement in Black theatre-making. The chapter then reviews his two plays, *eGoli* (1979) and *Pula* (1982) as examples of Black theatre. The main message between both plays is the unity of Black people, they show why Black people are divided and why they should unite. Manaka motivated Black people to prioritise self-assertion and mental emancipation. The chapter concludes that Black people must always be willing to teach fellow Blacks about their Blackness and ways to escape oppression. Black theatre is not racist by reacting to racism.

The final chapter is based on those who produced what is not deemed Black theatre. As much as at some point their theatre might be focused on the Black situation, it still did not go to the extent of calling for the unity of Black people, teaching about being-Black-in-the-world and motivating Black people to strive for a new humanity. This was a theatre by such theatre-makers as Kente, Fugard and Mshengu, and groups like the Junction Avenue Theatre Company and Workshop '71. Their plays were selling a pitiful Black person who needed a White hand in pacifying, but not thoroughly ending, their situation. They followed this kind of theatre-making because it sold in the White theatre spaces, especially to those White people who felt pity for Black people and those who were overwhelmed with guilt because of what fellow Whites were doing in South Africa to Black people.

Below are the questions that the paper is preoccupied with. It will, although not directly, be answering them. When does the seeking of recognition (by the subordinate to the dominant) begin? This question is taken from Georg Hegel's conception of the master/slave dialectic where, at the battle of death, both consciousnesses (of the master and the slave) meet for the first time and seek recognition from each other while aiming to cancel each other out. It is a question that seeks to understand why the Black subject wants to be recognised no longer as an object but as a subject. This interpretation of Hegel is to help understand whether the plays I will look at did show a Black person who is on a quest of ending his oppression and that of his people by resisting against the oppressor. Most importantly, that resisting Black does not just call upon his people to fight oppression, he first makes them aware of the shackles they

are in, discuss with them how to break and end them. What do the Black Consciousness plays do before pushing for the Black subject to fight for their recognition? This one is a question of didactic theatre, asking the essence of the play. It aims to know the starting point of such plays. In terms of the new humanity, do plays teach the Black person about their positionality in the world, about its current humanity? How do these plays see the world? Does the subordinate understand the base of the current humanity? What is it about this current humanity that the Black subject is so agitated to change? Is the Black subject ready for the new humanity? This question stems from the knowledge that before Blacks are pushed to resist and strive for emancipation, are they united and equipped to stand against their oppressor, to take their oppressor to the anti-thetic zone?

Literature Review:

Representation in Black Consciousness Theatre: Why Does the Depiction of the Black Experience Matter?

Black theatre is a theatre by Blacks, for Blacks, with Blacks and where Blacks are. The first premise to Black theatre is that it is theatre produced by Black people (mostly in the Seventies) as a response to the inequalities they were subjected to through apartheid policies. As there were differing points of view, some theatre-makers of the Seventies would adopt the philosophy of Black Consciousness to produce theatre which would give rise to a new political consciousness based on pride and unity of Black people. Sepamla added that "We believe that the Black mind has gone to sleep and it is for this reason we are using the concept of Black Consciousness to re-awaken it" (1979:17). According to Rangoajane, Black theatre is that theatre whose "practitioners, playwrights, performers and directors are black and the objective is to capture and dramatise as closely as possible the lived experiences of the black masses" (2011:10). Combrink saw theatre as an "irreplaceable weapon in the armoury of a society that is struggling to achieve for its people a meaningful life" (1985:243). The definition does not only end on the artists being Black themselves. There are great chances that the playwright and the performers might have gone through the exact or similar experiences they portray on stage. It contains the content – personal, political, social, cultural – that pertains to Blacks, and targets Black audiences. It goes to the point of teaching and

arousing the consciousness of what it means to be Black. Its main aims were political and social change.

Why does the depiction of the Black Experience Matter?

The depiction of the Black experience promotes unity within the Blacks, outside of, but not limited to, class, gender, and ethnicities. It realised, through Black Consciousness, that Blacks are discriminated and oppressed through apartheid because they are Black first, thus it saw the need to respond to that (Peterson, 1995). Black Consciousness theatre assumed that through displaying the Black experience there could be a rise in the political commitment by Black people. The portrayal of the Black experience was important in inspiring Black consciousness, solidarity and self-determination. The Black experience would stimulate the Black aesthetic in theatre; to embrace the Black form of expression, independent of Whiteness. The Black aesthetic becomes a strategic response to the racial formations that make up the South African society. Peterson hoped for Black theatre to be a 'temporary thing' that would soon be replaced by a non-racial theatre in a racist-free South Africa – reading from Biko's text, *Black Consciousness and the Quest for A True Humanity*. The depiction of the Black experience is aimed at ironing out the contradictions which exist within and amongst Black people. This text by Biko is important because it encouraged Blacks to yearn for more, yearn for better. Through Black Consciousness, Black people were to understand the position they were in in a society under apartheid, what their Blackness meant, and they were to discuss a way forward, how to live in a society not based on race, a society that does not deem one group inferior and another superior. They sought to redefine their humanity.

The paper reads from Chabani Manganyi's conception of *Being-Black-in-the-World*, hence it argues in this section that for theatre to call for the rise of consciousness and the solidarity of the Blacks, its first premise must be the representation of the Black situation, by Black theatre-makers, for and to Black people, and where Black people are.

Black Consciousness Theatre, through Fanon's *Fact of Blackness* [read *The Experiences of the Blacks*], blurs the line between the audience and the performers – between imagination and reality – since it displays the everyday life of Black people. Like Manganyi, Fanon was interested in psychoanalysing the effects of anti-Black racism and what Blackness was to mean in an anti-Black society. He dealt with the dilemma of existing as a Black person in a

world that is built against his people. His text is important in this thesis because it seeks to help understand, through theatre, what Black people ought to do when they found themselves living in a colonial world characterised by a White *look* – chapter two will explain the *look* further. The people spectating the show playing on stage might be going through or have gone through or seen someone they know go through the events being depicted. This is what this thesis is mostly interested in. Black Consciousness theatre is theatre hugely based on representation.

The main trend in the literature used in this section is that in trying to give a definition of this theatre that their works are based on, none of the scholars and critics used call it 'Black Consciousness theatre' but 'Black theatre' although it ticked all the boxes that Black Consciousness was based on; the awakening of Black people, Black pride, Black self-assertion, Black independence, Black solidarity, non-collaboration with Whites and the call for the overthrow of apartheid as a system (and being produced by Black Consciousness members and sympathisers). The tone of their writing goes towards labelling it the theatre of Black Consciousness as much they do not use the term as it is. The majority of these scholars who wrote on Black theatre were White, and some would prefer the doing away with the term 'Black theatre' to come up with alternative terms such as 'committed theatre' and 'popular theatre'. The essence is not entirely on the labelling and defining Black Consciousness theatre – keeping in mind that even Black Consciousness theatre-makers had conflicting definitions – but on what this kind of theatre aimed to do. Black theatre is aware of the conditions from which it arises, portrays the everyday life of its creators and its spectators, and opens a conversation for finding solutions to what was displayed on stage.

Is there a link between the representation of the Black experience and the development of self-consciousness? What is it about Black people, through the representation or misrepresentation of their daily experiences on stage that is important? Why was there a need to create a theatre that the audience would relate to? This paper is concerned with the representation of Black experiences and the reactions of Black people after seeing such a portrayal of their lives on stage. This section is based on representation and why should it matter that people see their lives on stage. How their lives are displayed and the reasons for that display are important as they contribute to how the spectators would feel (and react) after seeing such a display. The section looks at the relationship between the imaginary (performance on stage) versus the real (reality – people's everyday lives), and its effects on society. It looks at the effects of the imagination of real-life issues, the imagination that also

gets broadened by real-life issues. The real issue gets taken to the imaginary world and as it returns, it brings with it new effects and influences to the real world, and from then, the real world gets transformed. Why the need to combine the definition of Black theatre with representation at the same section? Because the first premise of defining Black theatre is "Who/what does this kind of theatre represent?" The display of Blacks is important here.

This section will be analysing literature that has been written on why representation in theatre matters and what do we mean by Black Consciousness Theatre. It will be reviewing the works of literature whose ideas were based on what the depiction of the Black condition during apartheid represented. It is a first step to the paper's main concern, which is understanding Black Consciousness theatre through Chabani Manganyi's conception of *Being-Black-in-the-World* which is read alongside Frantz Fanon's *Fact of Blackness* (in this paper read as *The Experiences of the Blacks*). Both these texts are important, especially Manganyi's because it gives a view of what it is like to be a Black South African under apartheid and proposes that the adoption of Black Consciousness by all Blacks will be a step towards attaining freedom. Manganyi's text helps us understand the importance of consciousness, and this paper is concerned with how the plays can help raise one's consciousness. It seeks to understand the effects of depicting the experiences of the Blacks on stage. As much as this section will be analysing various scholars' opposing views on what entails Black theatre and why representation is important, one of its key purposes is to provide the reader with a historical context of Black theatre and life lived under apartheid from a perspective of a Black person.

On Representation in Black Theatre

In theatre, representation is to be understood in three respects. First, representation "must be understood as meaning more than merely the 'reflection' of the historical experiences of Black people in dramatic narratives" (Peterson, 2000:8). As much as the plays deal with the historical, they should also look at that past concerning how it shapes the present and preparing for the future. A profoundly textured history is portrayed, and, to give meaning, it must be put into question why it is important to portray that particular segment of history. Secondly, look at the institutional politics that go to shape how a performance is created, received, and critiqued (Peterson, 2000:8). With possibilities of quantitative research, we look at how different racial audiences view a certain play; for example, did White audiences

receive *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972) the same way as Black audiences? Specific questions must be asked on how one play can be received differently by difference spectators. What limits do or did Black theatre-makers face? Political, social and economic factors influence the making and the reception of a production. Lastly, the meaning is not only carried by plays on stage but also by social relations outside the theatre hall (daily interaction), that influence or make part of the performance. Since theatre displays everyday experiences, those experiences influence what is to be done inside that theatre hall and the play gets to influence that very same society. There is a strong interdependent relationship between theatre and people's everyday lives.

For a long time in South Africa, because Whites controlled the means of knowledge production, they controlled the portrayal of the African. De Jagger added that Africans should not have followed the Eurocentric route (De Jagger, 1992). The drawing of Africans in, for example, isiXhosa attire, can be seen as resistance to White supremacy (in (the narrative of) the arts) as they are focused on 'self-identification', 'self-reclamation' of African history and power (Simbao, 2011). De Jagger's and Simbao's proposals are not enough because one can wear an African attire, be focused on selling African artefacts, and sell African drawings yet be not of Black Consciousness mentality. Sobukwe would accuse the likes of Mandela, Sisulu and Tambo for tribalism as they would usually appear in the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) meetings wearing their *imibhaco* (traditional isiXhosa attire), and Mandela would mostly prefer to be called by his clan name, Madiba (Sobukwe & Gerhart, 2016). To Mdanda, "Black Consciousness sought to counter the mentality of inferiority and the state of powerlessness colonialism imposed on Africans by asserting the humanity of Africans and fostering pride in African culture" (2004:193). Simbao (2011) added that student riots of the Seventies had changed lives for Blacks, made them conscious of their Blackness and eager to express it through any possible art form; the conscientisation of Black people and the instillation of Black pride was aimed at resisting against oppression. Black Consciousness aimed at destroying the stigmas associated with Blackness, to hold Blackness with pride; the pride that had been lost through years of colonialism and the negative display of Blackness. Black theatre was aimed at continuing with this on stage.

Peterson (2000) argued that missionaries, especially between 1879 and 1940, introduced theatre to the urbanised Blacks in South Africa in their quest to lure them towards evangelism and pedagogy, thus, to incorporate Africans into the colonial and capitalist society. The missionaries knew that if they were to spread the Gospel, they had to use theatre as it permits

one to educate while entertaining. Theatrical works, performed in Mariannhill, KwaZulu Natal, such as *Joseph in Egypt*, *Job*, and *Indodana Elahlekileyo* (which translates to *A Lost Man*) portrayed backward African values and ways of doing things, with intentions of encouraging Africans to convert to the Christian way as it promised redemption (Peterson, 2000). Reading from Fanon, Peterson argues that these works distorted, disfigured, and destroyed African history. Through various means, with theatre as one of the main, missionaries aimed at ridding Africans off their 'paganism', ignorance and superstitions – they would be moved from 'darkness' to 'enlightenment' (Peterson, 2000). Black people would have a minimal voice in their portrayal.

It was until the 1940s in South Africa that theatre would begin to speak for the dominated and marginalised people; a shift from seeing theatre only as that of the middle-class occupation. With the emergence of many Black artists and groups, there would be a demand for the (re)definition of theatre which identifies the non-Eurocentric traditions (Bennett, 1997). Some groups would centralise the audience in their productions. The main reason for the inclusion of the audience in these 'Black' plays was that it would be easy for the actors to interact with those spectating since they were portraying experiences related to theirs (Bennett, 1997). What was being portrayed on stage was evident in the yards of the spectators.

Audience Participation

Russian theatre-maker, Vsevolod Meyerhold wrote on *Meyerhold on Theatre*, "Now we have to protect the interests not of the author but of the spectator. The interests of the audience have assumed a vital significance" (1969:166). He writes this promoting the inclusion of, or the interaction with, the audience during a performance of a play. Drinking from the same well as Bertolt Brecht, Meyerhold spoke against the bourgeois theatre of illusion and escapism. The link between theatre-makers of South Africa and those of Russia and Germany is that they all produced plays against an oppressive system and hoped to change it. Later on in the paper, I will briefly discuss how Manaka's theatre form and content overlapped with that of theatre-makers such as Brecht and Grotowski.

In Bennett's (1997) view, marginalised groups would get their struggles and interests addressed on stage, in return, they (the marginalised groups) would partake in this address as it is done on stage. They do so because they adequately identify with the artists on stage and those events being displayed. Martin Esslin (1976) links drama to ritual, arguing that they

both enhance consciousness, bringing to life what was thought to not exist. Theodore Shank, in related words, argues that drama "articulates for the audience something vital about their own emotive lives that previously they had not been able to grasp" (Shank, 1969). This is in line with the 'imaginary' versus 'real' worlds. Here, I am discussing the impact of drama on audiences generally, however this is linked to Peterson's first respect on representation: the reflection of people's daily experiences on stage does not end there, it influences the audience to participate as they relate to what is portrayed on stage, and from then, they will be able to discuss means of changing their realities.

When a Black person sees a display on stage of a fellow Black person getting killed by a White person, why do they not intervene to stop that killing from happening? One would answer, 'Because it is just a performance. That Black person is not literally getting killed. It is all an act'. Fair enough. Then why does that spectating Black person get a heavy heart when he sees that killing being portrayed on stage? Is it because it is an experience he is familiar to? He has seen his fellow Blacks getting killed in front of his eyes. What does he do about what he sees on stage? What does the play do to his psyche? Richard Schechner, using Goffman's words, argues that the events on stage must be experienced as, what he deems, 'actual realisation': meaning that "the reality of performance is in the performing" (Bennet, 1997:11). Because the violence taking place on stage is only a performance, the spectator does not intervene as he might in an actual violence he would see taking place outside the theatre hall. However, that does not, as Schechner puts it, make the violence 'less real' but 'different real' (Bennet, 1997). The imaginary world of theatre is not an entirely 'unreal' world, it is a world based on real occurrences. These real occurrences are taken to the imaginary world with hopes that when they are returned to the real world they will impact it in different ways, in ways set to transform it.

While theatre exists in a world of 'play', it, simultaneously, represents serious subjects: what is portrayed on stage is not reality but the representation of the real (Krueger, 2008). Representation gives us access to that reality. The representation of Black life on stage gives us access to the realities that Black people go through in their daily lives. When a Black actor portrays a person being beaten by the police, the audience knows that the actor is not getting beaten right then, but since some of them (the audience members), including that very same actor, might have went through what is displayed on stage, it touches their hearts and has an impact on them. Richard Schechner introduces us to 'double consciousness' in the world of theatre when he argues that due to illusion, the performer is 'not herself' but because the play

occurs in reality, the performer is 'not not herself'. According to Richard Bauman, “all performance involves a consciousness of doubleness, according to which the actual execution of an action is placed in mental comparison with a potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model of that action” (Krueger, 2008:29). The main cause of this doubleness is the two selves on stage: one of the artist and the one being represented.

Krueger adds that theatre “can be seen as a representation of a public imagination, as a forum in which a private, subjective enunciation is made communal, and yet what is being displayed is also some version of a reality with which an audience is able to identify” (2008:31). Through theatre, and reading from Peterson’s third respect of representation, there exists two worlds – the imaginative and the real – and it is dependent on the spectator whether to keep them separate from each other, keeping in mind that the consequences of the actions one takes, because of those two worlds, are real (Krueger, 2008). Checking the relationship between the imaginary and the real, are we able to separate the ‘imaginary’ from the ‘real’? Is it a must that the imaginary should affect the real world? Does the imaginary, by virtue of representing reality, affect real life? According to Krueger, “If one claims that the imaginary world is similar to – if not commensurate with – the "real" world, one runs the risk of requiring stringent censorship over-imaginative material which is not in line with, say, ethical, national, or political ideals” (2008:31). The close correlation between the imaginary and the real is the one that led to the imposition of restrictions and censorships to artists during apartheid. The apartheid government had realised that the imaginary world on stage represented the real world, and if the artists (as the portrayers of the worlds) were not restricted, the imaginary world would influence those in the real world to resist against the government. Theatre is a metaphor of reality. The merger of both worlds was a key theme to Black theatre, to use metaphor to transform their daily reality.

On Defining Black Consciousness Theatre

According to Gaffney (1985), definitions are often predictable and tend to reflect the political, social, economic and cultural biases existing in a particular system. He takes us to why he believes that there should be other means used to investigate and inform the essence of a term being used. He believed that “'Black theatre’ is concerned with those broad movements of action, ideas, concepts and symbols which have crystallised in moral and ethical guidelines that are significant to a given people” (Gaffney, 1985:25). Black artists are

forces of change in society through resisting and challenging the oppressive authority while creating an alternative space for them, independent of Whiteness. The Black Consciousness Movement had brought about radical changes to Black artists' lives where art took a political-ideological turn; with theatre-makers seeing the need to produce plays that spoke to the conditions of the Blacks under apartheid. He adds that Black expressions cannot be articulated through Eurocentric artistry, Black theatre-makers would go on to adopt strategies that would speak to their Black realities, adopted explicit politics (Gaffney, 1985).

> Separate a person from his/her history, from the context of his/her culture, from the words that are extensions of him/herself, from the specifics of his/her life; and no way is left to provide him/her with a true identification of him/herself related to that history, culture, language and life (Gaffney, 1985:25).

This speaks to exactly what Black Consciousness stood for: revisiting Black people's history that had been tarnished by years of colonialism, to retell it using a Black voice. For example, a play such as *The Sacrifice of Kreli* (1976) tells the history of the amaGcaleka people in the Eastern Cape who had fought in a battle under the leadership of King Sarhili against the British for cattle stolen; the play revisits history – going back to Peterson's first respect of understanding representation – while at the same time it promotes self-reliance and aspirations for a true humanity. With the play mentioned above, Fatima Dike revisited history to show that the tensions between Whites and Blacks were not only due to apartheid, they had existed before then. On the issue of stolen cattle, she denotes that Blacks are poor now due to their stolen wealth.

Hill opens by using W. E. B. Du Bois's words on Black theatre, stating that it is a theatre "about us, by us, for us, and near us" (1979:29). It must be a theatre which displays the Black experience as it is from the perspective of Black theatre-makers who understand what being Black at that particular time entails, played for Black audiences' entertainment and approval, and in Black communities to primarily be accessed by Black audiences. As much as Hill agrees with Du Bois on those grounds, he, however, alludes that Du Bois's definition of Black theatre is limited as it does not elaborate on the form and style that Black theatre should take. That is inspired by his grievance over Black theatre makers adopting White forms of making theatre. According to Hill, Black theatre-makers, following White forms, tend to have a proscenium arch setting in mind, not asking themselves whether this form of theatre might accommodate the presentation of the Black experience. Proscenium arch setting

is seeing theatre from one angle, without having to move around – the actors are only on stage, the stage that is facing directly where audiences are. He criticises that kind of theatre-making for limiting the physical relationship between the actors on stage and the audience. His stance is that if we cannot decide on what form should Black theatre take then we might as well put into question the existence of Black theatre (Hill, 1979). One might disagree with Hill because Black actors would interact with the audiences, either while on stage or get off the stage and include the audience in the play by going to them and, for example, sell imaginary alcohol. Another point that could be disagreed with is that Hill wants to limit Black theatre to a form, not putting to attention the content that a play must have.

In concluding his paper, Hill puts forwards what is required of the producers of Black theatre: the recognition and participation of Black audiences; Black theatre-makers to be familiar with Black verbal expressions in their speech and writing; display the rhythms of Black movement and music; the use of word as metaphor; Black artists seeing themselves as communicators of Black experiences; produce art that promotes recognition and solidarity of the Blacks (Hill, 1979). He asserts that theatre must, more than anything, be focused on the past, gather the forms of Blacks' ancestral performing experiences, and apply it in theatre today. With hope, he adds that a theatre that focuses on authentic Black heritage will lead to an authentically and undisputedly Black theatre (Hill, 1979).

Steadman goes on to argue that "Black theatre, then, is more than a genre, a movement or a posture based on ethnicity" (Steadman, 1981:2). Here, Steadman deviates from the point of concern, Black theatre was mostly focused on racial issues faced by Black people under apartheid than ethnic issues. Ethnicity was given less attention. The label identifies certain values belonging to the Black Consciousness Movement which define the function of performance in apartheid South Africa. Steadman further defines Black theatre as 'proletarian theatre' which portrays life lived by Black people and is schooled by ideology and politics. 'Proletariat' is a term usually associated with Marxism. During the nationalist struggle, there was always tensions between the Marxists and Black Consciousness on their perspectives of the state South Africa was in and in measures that needed to be taken when going forward. Marxists labelled Black Consciousness racist with its focus on race rather than class dynamics of South Africa (More, 2017). For Steadman to associate Black theatre with the term 'proletariat' was to spark yet another debate. Black theatre is, in a nutshell, a theatre which fuels radical and fundamental change in the social structure of apartheid South Africa.

The works produced were not hugely aimed at getting published but to reach as wide a Black audience as possible. Since most of the works were workshopped, they aimed to reveal that images speak more than words and action is symbolic and evocative. To substantiate his point that township theatre was not hugely focused on text, Steadman (1981) referred to the gumboot dance in *The Hungry Earth*, and the labour and the mining scenes in both Manaka's plays, *Imbumba* and *eGoli*, respectively, which display the harsh conditions that Black people faced at home and at work.

In his paper, *The Semiotics of Alternative Theatre in South Africa* (1981), Tomaselli argued that many theatre teachers and critics naively focused on the "tribal" elements of Black theatre while ignoring the influence of apartheid towards the depiction of the images and expressions shown in Black theatre; theatre being Black theatre when it focused on the tribes. He adds that Black theatre is the medium for popular expressions of the working class. Through Althusser's words, "art makes us 'see' conclusions without premises", Tomaselli adds that the combination of Black theatre and ideology led theatre-makers (and audiences) to the conclusions of freedom - seeking and inspiring freedom during apartheid through theatre (1981:14). Through his reading of Shakespeare's *Jaques* who denoted that "All the world's a stage", Tomaselli asserts that one must not separate actor and spectator, stage and life or performance and reality for they are part of the whole which connects art to life (1981:14).

Tomaselli (1981) is against the usage of the term 'Black Theatre' for he believes that the term does not move anything forward, it does not account for cause, content, process, nor consequence, but is only rooted to the fact that the skin colour of most of its participants is Black. He adds that it is redundant to say that it is Black theatre since it deals with Black experiences when the cause of those experiences is ignored. One of his main reasons to the rejection of this label, and the term "White theatre", is because it adopts and extends the dualism and the divisionary mentality that the South African society was based on – institutions, locations and life marked as White or Black or Indian or Coloured, and seeing the comparison of either Christianity or paganism, civilisation or savagery, culture or naturalism, modernism or tribalism, politics, or art, and so on. He argues that this label comes much into question when Black directors work with White theatre-makers – what becomes of the label in such a situation? White artists played huge roles in the creation of such plays as *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *Ilanga Lizo Phumela Abasebenzi*, so he shows concern about the erasure of those White colleagues in the labelling of those plays as Black art (Tomaselli,

1981). In deciding which play should be labelled 'Black theatre', in the same breath as Tomaselli, Steadman (1981) begins by asking whether we can label Sizwe *Bansi is Dead* as Black theatre; looking at its creation (a play created by a mix of Black and White theatre-makers), its subject matter (life of a Black man under apartheid) and its intention. Should White theatre-makers who prefer the Black experience as their subject matter be referred to as creators of Black theatre? This point will be discussed further in the last chapter.

According to Tomaselli, the inclusion of the label "Black" is reductionist as it oversimplifies and ignores the process and causation of such plays. He proposes the use of the term "committed theatre" as it is to expose and to reveal the "consequences of ideology determined by a particular politico-economic and social conjuncture" (1981:17). Committed theatre reveals ideology from the inside. He asserts that as a theatre which arises directly out of the social experiences of everyday life, it is "committed politically to the emancipation of a repressed, largely illiterate society" (1981:18). Steadman asserted that Black theatre was bound to be political as it was created under political restrictions (Steadman, 1981). The creators of those plays referred to as Black theatre were to reflect their lives and their fellow Black people's lives. The reflection of their lives was to influence an action against oppression. Althusser denoted that the artist does not give the spectators the knowledge of the world they describe but make them 'see', 'perceive' or 'feel' the nature of the reality of that world (Tomaselli, 1981). Tomaselli believed that in plays like *eGoli*, for example, there is no distinction between performance and reality or art and life since the actors and the audience are physically, ideologically and psychologically one – the play displaying the experiences they have gone through and those that some are still going through (Tomaselli, 1981). But isn't Tomaselli wrong to assume that the actors and audiences share the same bases of psychology and ideology, just by being Black? Not all Blacks see life (and politics, for that matter) the same way. Such plays as *eGoli* helped both the audience and the actors see, perceive, and feel the reality of the South African society under apartheid. Unlike the Black, due to his race and class position, the White spectator strengthens the boundary and distinction between art and life, and performer and audience; because what he sees being displayed on stage – a Black play – is alien to his everyday reality.

Through theatre, Black artists were able to articulate their ideology, expose apartheid and communicate with fellow Black people about their conditions of existence. Unlike other recorded forms of media, theatre was difficult to censor; the apartheid government was able to formally censor recorded media but could not ideas. Since Black Consciousness theatre

was rarely written down, it was difficult for the government to repress it. It was easier to restrict recorded media since written text and other forms of recorded media would be produced as evidence in court. Ideas could not be restricted, and oral evidence could not stand in court. Notwithstanding, those artists who performed in conventional spaces such as church and school halls did face various forms of intimidation from the police. Through the intimidation, the law would continue to strengthen the relationship between the performers and the audience. Tomaselli adds that an "actor cannot escape the consequences of his actions and the audience are reminded of the consequences of their actions being recreated by the actor" (1981:22). Tomaselli considers theatre as "an index of the values, attitudes and conditions of existence of the society which sustains it" (1981:52). In South Africa, Black theatre would usually be the index of the values of the townships that are hugely dominated by Black people.

Black theatre has had terms such as "alternative", "committed", "township", "poor", "popular" in its labelling. It is a theatre of the "politically excluded, economically exploited, socially subordinated" people of South Africa (Coplan, 1987:6). Coplan then tries to examine each of these terms associated with Black theatre. He asserts that the term "alternative" has an anti-establishment sound to it, a sound of a non-starter, the side-lined, and a "definition-by-what-it-is-not" (1987:6). He, like Tomaselli, agrees with the "committed" term as he believes that it promotes political radical change and inclusion of everyone who aims to better the conditions of the marginalised. Committed theatre reads from BCM in its motive of Black solidarity, high Black self-esteem and principled political action. Popular theatre, with much support from the working class, is one 'by' and less emphasis on being 'for' the people – it would be best for it to be theatre by the people, for the people, with the people (Coplan, 1987). Popular theatre promoted people's interests, against the negative portrayal of people, and mobilised them for total liberation, hence Coplan prefers the term "People's theatre" than "Popular theatre". Coplan argues that popular theatre arises from people's theatre as it "advances popular consciousness and aspirations by maintaining continuity – but culturally and institutionally – with the community that it serves" (1987:7). Brecht argued that popular theatre is "intelligible to the people as it enriches their forms of expression and takes leadership to consolidate their standpoint" (Coplan, 1987:7).

Of all these terms, Coplan prefers to use 'Black theatre' as the main term and sees others as sub-terms which are still put into question. Black theatre is by, for, about and with Black people. Coplan, as most scholars used in this section, seems to not differentiate between

'Black Consciousness theatre' and 'Black theatre' as he asserts that Black theatre of, mostly, the Seventies, is one whose values are articulated by the BCM as it (Black theatre) "dedicated itself to the depiction of life lived as a black man" while promoting socio-political change in challenging the social structure (1987:7). For Mafika Gwala "the Black in Black drama is allied with liberation; the search for dignity and self-reliance" (1973:105). Gwala adds that it is a theatre based on a 'Black ethic', for people allied for common humanity.

Tomaselli (1981) adds that White South Africans have a misconception that plays like *Ipi Tombi*, *Mzumba*, *Meropa* and *uMabatha* are Black 'indigenous' theatre, due to their 'tribal' depiction of Black life. He argues that since the proper theatres were owned by Whites, Black theatre-makers were denied access to city theatres. So, they had to remain producing their works in the townships. However, the conventional venues in other townships were under the control of the Bantu Administration Boards, so plays that exposed apartheid would get suppressed. The abovementioned productions would be accepted and supported by Whites as indigenous theatre. They attracted many White crowds because, as Tomaselli argues, they carried on the tribal and mythological stereotypes drenched to Blacks by Whites. In the later chapters, there will be a discussion of these tribal stereotypes and the typical *Jim Comes to Jo'burg* mentality that such plays promoted. Such plays portray to White audiences the conception they already have of Black people. They enforce the false consciousness that Black people already have of themselves; that they need the White hand to save them from themselves, and that White culture is the superior culture (Tomaselli, 1981). In the service of White capital, Black players find themselves acting out this false consciousness in these White-financed musicals. In addition, "a false perception of his actual conditions of existence is extended to the black, just as the white believes that his dominance accrues from his superior intellect rather than the forces of capital" (Tomaselli, 1981:54). For example, Gibson Kente's *Mama and the Load* (1979) was accepted by the White audience with its portrayal of a broken family, irresponsible husband, dominant matriarchs and independent children – basically, the hardships of township life. Whites believed that such things were consequences of Black people's traditional and tribal habits, not influences of apartheid.

In *eGoli – City of Gold*, Matsemela Manaka depicts Black people through their actual conditions of existence, conditions of economic exploitation. Both White and Black audiences did not see *eGoli* as entertainment through its uncomfortable display of the myths being instilled on Black people's minds about their inferiority, and exposure of economic exploitation (Tomaselli, 1981). Black people thought the play was important as it exposed

their living conditions and traumas brought to them by apartheid. Tomaselli denotes that the class, ideological, and politico-economic position and perception of the spectator is important in interpreting the play. According to Tomaselli "the black participant-viewer interprets the play within the mode of relations which govern his social context, while the white, in contrast, isolates out the play from life because, in terms of his conditions of existence, the experience enacted does not exist" (1981:54).

The Black social experience gave rise to Black theatre. It was based on the need to communicate than to produce mere entertainment. Tomaselli argues that "Black theatre cannot be dyadically separated from the wider society because the wider society is contiguous to and causes the lifestyles of black people" (1981:56). For Black spectators, political plays operate "as a mode of relations connecting performer and spectator into a single entity to communicate dissatisfaction with their lot, to regenerate their spirit and, most importantly, to raise their consciousness through the explication of their opposing ideology" (Tomaselli, 1981:57). Tomaselli concluded that "[t]he purpose of theatre is not measured by its entertainment value, but by the veracity of the relations exposed in its investigation of conflicts and contradictions which govern society" (1981:51).

When Does it Become Black Consciousness Theatre?

Coplan (1987) contentiously denotes that Black theatre was popularised by the arrival at Johannesburg from Port Elizabeth of Athol Fugard, and the creation of *King Kong*, the multi-racial play. The young Fugard introduced himself with the infusion of Western forms with African expressive techniques, using Black actors in his 1958 play, *Nongogo*, to reflect the South African social experience. Workshopping was his greatest form; using improvisation in coming up with *The Blood Knot* (1962) with Fats Bookholane and Zakes Mokae, and *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972) alongside John Kani and Winston Ntshona, amongst his plays (Coplan, 1987). *King Kong* was based on the rise and fall of the young Black boxer, Ezekiel Dhlamini. It was a creation of Black and White theatre-makers, played to audiences in the city – mostly Whites. The play was promoting collaboration through the belief that social and political change in South Africa will come about through the working together of Blacks and Whites. After its overseas tour, many of its musicians and actors parted ways while others, like Miriam Makeba, were forced to remain in exile (Coplan, 1987). Gibson Kente, a composer, director and writer, parted ways with the Union Artists to produce his own township musical

theatre. In 1963 he produced *Manana*, *The Jazz Prophet*, and *Sikalo* in 1964. His plays were based on Black city life. The stage was where the people would go to see their lives being depicted, there was complete, recognizable authenticity where plays restricted disbelief but presented the relationship between lived experiences and theatre (Coplan, 1987). These playwrights and their productions will be discussed extensively in the next sections of the paper.

The Seventies put Kente in an awkward position, he had to choose to either become irrelevant – as many artists were going towards political theatre – or risk getting censored – because political plays were getting banned by the apartheid government (Coplan, 1987). Kente would take a covert approach in depicting Black life and its problems, personal morality, community solidarity, suffering and self-reliance. He did not portray them as caused by apartheid, like the next generation of theatre makers did. The younger generation, whose influence came from Black Consciousness, confronted the system directly through their plays, attributing Black suffering and the breaking of the Black family to the apartheid government and colonialism (Coplan, 1987). The success of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and the rise of Black Consciousness began to put pressure on Kente's form of making theatre, he had to examine political conditions of South Africa and how they affect the people that lived in the country. This pressure came more from the young Black Consciousness members who were highly critical of his form of theatre. He would then produce political plays that depicted intolerable conditions of Black life, calling for radical social and political change, such as *How Long*, *I Believe*, *Too Late* and *La Duma*. Kente was subsequently arrested in 1976 when he attempted to film *How Long*. For the state to arrest Kente who was considered moderate at that time showed the fear and concern that they were developing towards the power of Black theatre. For a playwright like Kente to join the politically overt theatre meant that he would reach a wide range of the Black population which might join in the struggle against apartheid. "Kente has had an enormous impact simply by creating a new popular theatre with the potential to transform black political and cultural self-consciousness" (Coplan, 1987:18). Coplan says this with regard to Kente's influence as the 'father of township theatre'. It is such theatre which depicted Black life that promoted the rise of political theatre, and by that time Black theatre had attracted a huge number of Black audiences and theatre-makers. Coplan adds, "Participation in theatre allows black people to express their creative potency and to achieve some mastery over their lives; to communicate their agony, resilience, and social vision when institutional means are denied them" (1987:18).

Maishe Maponya produced *Hungry Earth* both in Soweto and London. This 'hungry earth' is the soil that 'swallows' Black workers who die in the gold mines of Gauteng and in the industrial companies, as well as the unnatural deaths that Black people experience. Monologues, songs, mime and chants are used to depict working life and its harshness in these places of employment. The actors interact with the audience to break the barrier between spectators and actors, and a remembrance that the life depicted on stage affects them too (Coplan, 1987). That kind of theatre-making, Richard Schechner calls the "actuals": art as an event which happens to both the actors and the spectators here and now, affecting the consciousness of the participants (Coplan, 1987). While the play might be an experience lived, either by the audience or its creators, the performance lives now. The audience is not treated as mere money-paying strangers but addressed as fellow members of the same community as the actors. They are all existing at the same time and place. The audience easily participates because they relate to the experiences being portrayed on stage. Another form of attracting audience participation was through song; the audience would sing along to a known song, especially struggle songs, giving them the energetic feel.

Peterson uses Mafika Gwala's text, *Towards A National Theatre* to revisit those questions that H.I.E Dhlomo was preoccupied with in the 1930s. Gwala's paper is based on 'Black theatre', 'Black sub-culture' and 'Black ethics'. Gwala adds that what is portrayed on stage is determined by national politics outside of the theatre, hence there is a need to produce a theatre that concerns itself with Black liberation. The stance is that "the Black in Black drama is allied with liberation; the search for dignity and self-reliance" (Gwala, 1973). Maishe Maponya added that "as long as blacks do not have equal rights there'll always be black theatre" (in Peterson, 1995:575). Black theatre is concerned with the Black experience. Peterson, in his works, prefers to rather use the term 'African theatre' in speaking of Black theatre and argues that it is the product of Black social experiences. This experience is based on identity and knowledge formation focused on political mobilisation. Matsemela Manaka added that their adoption of Black Consciousness theatre was to expose the hardships of existence in a race-oppressive South Africa. The Black reality had been distorted; thus, their art was to recreate it in their independent view. Peterson concluded that there was no way that during apartheid their theatre could be colour-blind; in their portrayal of the Black experience, it had to also display the aspirations of Black people.

Briefly on Entertainment

Michael Venables argued that:

> one of the major divisions between theatre enthusiasts is between those who are primarily interested in the literary value and socio-political import of what is presented and those whose chief joy is acting. And I make no bones about the fact that I am in the second category ... If I am to see good plays badly done, I'd be better off reading the scripts at home than having my teeth put on edge and my stomach turned (in Tomaselli, 1981:55).

Tomaselli (1981) asserts that the term "entertainment" has been done injustice, especially by the critics who pull in different directions, some yearning for theatre for art's sake and others seeking theatre for politics' sake. Holding one's attention through entertainment has always been a major tool for theatre, however, entertainment – the amusement of the audience – has never been the primary purpose of theatre (Tomaselli, 1981). To substantiate his point, he adds that theatre in Ancient Greece was another form of education, a tool to explore people's environment and social and religious life (Tomaselli, 1981). It was through theatre that people could study society and communicate their findings. In South Africa, Black theatre-makers are using theatre for the same purpose: to explore and communicate. To communicate to other communities outside of theirs, the women of Crossroads township, in Cape Town, produced a play titled *Imfuduso* (1978) based on the resistance by the people of Crossroads against the forceful removals and demolishment of their township by the apartheid government. *Imfuduso*, he believes, was communicative in form and had 'no entertainment value' – depending on one's definition of entertainment - to it, it takes the form of early Greek theatre (Tomaselli, 1981). The play expressed "the social traumas of black society with the goal of making public the plight of the exploited and to expose their inhuman conditions brought about by big business through apartheid" (Tomaselli, 1981:56). The play is to communicate and confront.

Conclusion:

This section has discussed what Black theatre entails. It is a theatre produced by Black theatre-makers, for, with and where Black people are. It depicts Black everyday experiences. There is a great chance that those on stage and those in the audience have went and are still or

know someone who has went through what is acted on stage. Its form was one that encouraged interaction between the actors and the spectators. The spectators are called to join in because they mostly resonate with what is being acted on stage. It read from such theatre-makers as Grotowski and Brecht. It took a form of poor theatre, however, unlike Grotowski, the conditions that it was created under called for it to be poor. The few to no props at all was due to the scarcity of resources and means of production that its creators lived under. Its creators such as but not limited to Manaka, Maponya and Dike were prepared to create theatre that was agitating for change, not one that would portray and produce a Black person that needs sympathy. What was portrayed on stage was to not leave the spectator feeling sad and pity, but to open a space for conversations that would lead to Black people uniting and resisting against oppression. It was didactic in form and political in content; teaching about what Blackness embodied in an anti-Black, apartheid society. Those teachings were not about how a Black person must live within an apartheid society but to resist against it, to put an end to it.

In this section, I have reviewed texts from such scholars as Peterson, Rangoajane, Steadman, Hall, Sepamla, Combrink, Schechner, Coplan and Tomaselli who wrote opposing texts in terms of what Black theatre means. They all had an understanding of what Black theatre was but their ideas conflicted when it came to labelling this kind of theatre. Most were discouraged from using the label ‘Black’ thus decided to call it ‘alternative theatre’, ‘progressive theatre’, ‘people’s theatre’, ‘protest theatre’ ‘township theatre’ and ‘theatre for resistance’. It was to be a theatre of Black Consciousness. Their ideas suggested that this kind of theatre differed from and harshly criticised the one produced by such theatre-makers as Gibson Kente and Nelson Mungwane whom this paper will widely discuss in the last chapter. The main ideas which this section was hugely concerned with came from Bhekiziwe Peterson who wrote on Black theatre and representation. The section is concerned with the depiction of the Black experience and what that will lead to. It is concerned with why Black people want to see themselves on stage, the effects that will have on them during and afterwards. The next sections are to give further explanations to why representation in theatre mattered during the Seventies in carrying on with the struggle against apartheid.

Chapter 2:

Consciousness in Theatre – Theatre for Consciousness

Introduction

There is a place that Black people occupy in the world, by Black I mean those, in the Biko sense, who are historically, culturally, politically and socially discriminated against as a group. A place occupied only by them and those who share the political history of being discriminated against. This positionality gets to be informed by a number of things in the broader ordering of society. For example, when met with the White subject, the Black subject begins to develop a sense of an inferiority complex and this tends to a creation of a negative consciousness towards himself. Fanon refers to this as a third-person consciousness; the inferiority that has nothing to do with you, where you begin to see yourself through, and in comparison with the other person. He adds that the body is "surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty" (Fanon, 1967:83). One who is Black becomes more conscious – however negatively conscious of themself – around Whites. Fanon makes this claim based on the scene in the train where a White boy that sees him frightenedly shouts to his mother, "Mama, see the Negro!", making him, from there and then, conscious of his lack, the absence of his humanity which is characterised as cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, racial defects, inferiority, and slavery attached to his Blackness – all which were made known to him through mythology and legend stories imposed to universal knowledge by White historiography (Fanon, 1967:84). He became responsible (as an individual for a collective 'race' – racist ideology) for his body, race and ancestors.

With all this, how does a Black person become a human being amongst human beings of the world? How does he contribute to the bettering of the world? Asked differently, what is the Black mode of being-in-the-world? In what ways does this mode of being find expression and co-exist in a world that is structured against them? Closer to the central thesis of the paper, can Black theatre detangle the Black subject from the overdetermined position in which they find themselves as a collective? In the quest of being human, nothing but a human, can the Black subject find solace in Black theatre as a form of expression in which to escape their position of being-Black-in-the-world? These questions and many concerns will be the guiding themes which this chapter wishes to address.

In an attempt to attend to some of the questions and concerns in this chapter, this paper uses Chabani Manganyi's book, *Being-Black-in-the-World* as a point of departure to locate Black theatre. Manganyi explores a number of issues on his seminal work, however, all of the author's concerns are addressed to the experiences and the subjecthood of Black people. His work, from the title invites us to think around the idea that the Black subject preoccupies a particular position in society that warrants a different experience than other people, for example White people. This, Manganyi attentively called the different sociological schemas of existence. In this paper, I am interested in ways that this positionality and experience of the colonised subject is represented and spoken about through plays in theatre, particularly Black Consciousness theatre. There are various ways in which this paper aims to accomplish its intended goal. This chapter will first discuss Manganyi's ideas of *being-Black-in-the-world*. The main component of the paper is the idea of consciousness as freedom or freedom as consciousness and this will also be linked to how Black theatre played a role in the consciousness of the oppressed people, using Theatre Council of Natal's (TECON) work as a guide of 'consciousness' in theatre. Adding to the theoretical framework that helped make sense of the being of Blackness, the paper looks towards the idea of othering, here of course othering has many ways in which it takes place but I am particularly interested in how Fanon's concern of '*the look*' plays a role in one's consciousness and how it has also been deployed in theatre productions. The paper will use TECON play, *Black on White*, to make sense of '*the look*' in theatre. In looking at the theorists who helped make sense of Blackness, the idea of solidarity will be used as an important tool in which Blackness can be understood not only as a group that has been historically, socially, politically and culturally discriminated against, but as a political strategy to tie down the division within the oppressed group.

The chapter briefly discusses the philosophical background that the Black Consciousness plays used to raise Black people's consciousness during the Seventies. Writings from such scholars as Manganyi, Fanon, Sartre contributed to the conceptualisation of the idea of existing Black-in-the-world; these writings will be discussed alongside those by Biko, More, Ramose and Dladla to make sense of the plays' contribution to society. In this paper, these ideas are combined and explained through theatre – and also used to understand how the plays presented these ideas to discuss the state of Blackness during apartheid, and ways of changing their situation. Unlike other chapters, this chapter does not deal much with plays but with writings from the abovementioned scholars and their contribution to the concept of being-Black-in-the-world.

Manganyi and the Concept of *Being-Black-in-the-World*

In this part of the chapter, Manganyi will be used as a point of departure into understanding the concept of *being-Black-in-the-world*. This section will engage his ideas, mostly from the chapters *Black Consciousness* and *Being-Black-in-the-World* of his book, *Being-Black-in-the-World*. The abovementioned chapters which this paper deems the most important in Manganyi's book will be used to make sense of the experience of the Blacks under apartheid and how that experience was portrayed in theatre.

Professor Noel Chabani Manganyi is a clinical psychologist who, in the 1970s, was an active member and writer of the Black Consciousness Movement. According to the American Psychological Association (2014), clinical psychologists "provide clinical or counseling services assess and treat mental, emotional and behavioral disorders. They use the science of psychology to treat complex human problems and promote change. They also promote resilience and help people discover their strengths." As a clinical psychologist – and as can be found in his abovementioned book – Manganyi sought to understand what Blackness (socially) embodied in apartheid South Africa. He wrote the book to call for Black people to investigate this, raise their consciousness, discover their resilience as individuals and as a group, and promote change; change that will come through Black solidarity. This paper is concerned with using theatre to understand all this. His conception still matters today: living in post-apartheid South Africa and calling for decoloniation, we are to understand what this Blackness entails. Some of his famously known books include *Mashangu's Reverie* (1977), where he explores the effects of violence and places Black Consciousness as an anti-thesis to White racist domination, *Looking Through the Keyhole* (1981), examines the effects of racism on Black people, and *Exiles and Homecomings: A Biography of Es'kia Mphahlele* (1983) and *Bury me at the Marketplace* (1984), both books based on the life of writer, Es'kia Mphahlele. Sharing his thoughts as the first Black psychologist in the country, he recently wrote his autobiography, *Apartheid and the Making of a Black Psychologist: A Memoir by N. Chabani Manganyi* (2016).

The world that the Black man lives in is that of White people's own ends. Manganyi's writings are focused on psycho-analysing the world to make sense to Blacks. In his works, he deals with the psychological effects of racism, concerned with how humans experience violence as a human reality. He writes of the Black body as an attraction to violence; the absence of liberty subjects society to violence. He (1977) asserted that the Black

Consciousness Movement was an anti-thesis to the anti-Black racism, through its (BCM) role of seeking to retrieve and create a new identity for Blacks; for them to positively redefine their stigmatised identity.

In speaking of art and its role on consciousness, he asserted:

> The unconscious as part of and mediator of the black experience (or any other for that matter) comes to constructive life in the literature, theatre and other arts of a people. This should remain true even at a most superficial level of analysis, for it is art at its best that explodes for our usually mundane consciousness those resonances which lie buried in man's innermost being. Art, like unconscious process, possesses the quality of shocking us out of our complacency by reflecting those contradictions and dimensions of human existence which prey on us while we sleep (Manganyi, 1977:55-56).

In *Being-Black-in-the-World*, Manganyi writes as a Black person who sees himself in a White-dominated world, a world of White aspirations and order. He seeks to know if there is a Black mode of being-in-the-world and to understand what that mode entails. His works are to psychoanalyse humans who live under apartheid, and, as he states in the introduction, channel the experiences of the Blacks (the fact of being Black), aiming at liberating Black subjectivity. In this part of the chapter, I will provide a summary of some of the chapters in the abovementioned book. These chapters were found important in understanding what the Black mode of being-in-the-world entails.

Manganyi opens chapter 1, *Who are the Urban Africans?,* by lamenting that Africans live in unhygienic communities and work in unhygienic workspaces. Amongst many issues, these very same Africans are characterised by alcoholism, uncontrollable crime, and high divorce rates which create problems between them as parents and their children. From an early age, they live with malnourished self-esteems, and – men – are emasculated. Due to many reasons, which can be attributed to being a Black person living under apartheid, some children and wives have no respect for their fathers and husbands. Positively, the Black father has a will to survive, he is resilient. Regardless of what the world throws at him, he wakes up the next day ready to make plans to put food on the table. Mostly, it is those plans and/or the absence of those very plans at the core of this lost respect from the wife and children. Those who observe argue that, by nature, the African is without any initiative, "he has a low aspiration level", and is submissive; says 'yes' even in situations of saying 'no' (Manganyi,

1973:11). This is not at all African nature; they are traits that some Africans adopt in the unfriendly and threatening environments they live and work in; yes, they can be found in some Africans but they are not in African genetics. In this discussed chapter, Manganyi slightly differs from the writings of Biko (and fellow Black Consciousness writings) whose definition of Black is inclusive of Coloureds and Indians. Here, with an influence from Pan-Africanism, Manganyi focuses strictly on Africans' oppressed experience.

In *Us and Them*, chapter 3, he asserts that in South Africa, there are two beings-in-the-world; *being-Black-in-the-world* and *being-White-in-the-world*. It is because of history that the experiences of being-in-the-world differ for Blacks and Whites. Unlike animals, man is a historical being. The 'us' and 'them' categories are categories of interaction and interpersonal relationships. Being-in-the-world equals to existence; the basic structure of existence is historical, making man a historical being. Existence is dialogue; relation. A human is always relating, first relates himself to his body as an existential fact, then is in dialogue with others, with objects, with time, and sometimes with God (Manganyi, 1973). Black and White experiences differ in relation to the body. There is the 'good' and the 'bad' body. Good: the White body, standard, norm of beauty. Bad: the Black body, inferior, unwholesome. This then informs the interpersonal relationships across the colour line. The body is the individual's point of view, it tells the world who one is. The body determines distance and relation (dialogue). Manganyi added that "A negative sociological schema and by the same token a negative individual schema, inevitably lead to the unhealthy objectification of the body" (1973:29). Due to the sociological schema's predominance over the individual schema, the individual starts to see his body as an object, it's like his body is something outside of himself (Mangayi, 1973). The two existential experiences – *being-Black-in-the-world* and *being-White-in-the-world* – will continue to be as long as there is a coexistence between the (negative) sociological and individual schemas. Black Consciousness called for a new, realistic sociological schema to be defined and developed by Blacks and replace the already existing negative sociological schema.

Reflecting as a Black clinician, in chapter 6, Manganyi looks at the socialisation of the Black body image. The White sociological schema of the Blacks is negative, through this, a Black person sees his body as undesirable and unattractive. Blacks have to constantly improve the socialisation of the Black body; they have to work towards the eradication of the negative sociological schema attached to them by the Whites, for the Black body to stand on its own

without any more borrowing from the Whites. Manganyi adds that a "socio-cultural assault on the bodies of a whole people is perhaps one of the most vicious tragedies that can befall a people" (1973:52). The physical body is the first reference of an individual, it tells who one is, a person relates to others, to space and to objects through the body. Integrity is the foundation of the body. The violation of integrity is the violation of the experiences of the body. Manganyi argues that Blacks and Whites never really talk to each other, but down and up to each other; the White commands and the Black succumbs and follows. In the White person, the master is doing the talking, and in the Black person, the servant is responding (Manganyi, 1973). The White instructs whereas the Black apologises, for reasons unknown.

In chapter 7, he asks if Blacks and Whites can agree on the meaning of change in South Africa. Blacks and Whites do not share the same experiences of South Africa. Whites only want change for their self-security, same as Biko puts it on *Black Souls in White Skins*, Manganyi asserts that change in South Africa is not going to come from the White components. A liberal White person will go to a conference in New York, say with enthusiasm that they have succeeded in telling the South African factory industry to stop calling its employees 'boys'. With that enthusiasm, he would expect to receive a Nobel Peace Prize for his actions. Then it ends there. Back in the country, there is no structural change. At least, his conscience has been cleared, he believes that he has done enough for Blacks, and is justified to speak on their behalf. Manganyi asserts that Whites are altruistic, "Since the dominant component is not likely to introduce changes meaningful to the black components it seems likely that most of the change which may overtake South African society may be of the unplanned variety" (1973:69). For one to be certain of how meaningful change must come about, one must be aware of the realities of the spatial system that South Africa is based on. Peaceful existence between Blacks and White is only possible through meaningfully planned change. Until then, both Black and White will continue to coexist as oppressor and oppressed, under the negative sociological schema.

Looking Through (the Keyhole of) Theatre

Manganyi's concerns about the being-of-Blackness-in-the-world are articulated through a number of questions which he asks. Key to these questions is whether or not there is a mode of existing in the world that is comprehended or experienced by Black people? If there is such a mode of being-Black-in-the-world, what form or shape does this mode take? Asked differently, in what ways does the Black subject get to feel that their existence and their

experience is unique, an existence that has been shaped by the events of the past and present (colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism)? In accordance to the author in question, is whether the suffering, meaningless characteristics of life, can be spoken for both the Black and White subject (Manganyi, 1973). Here, Manganyi invites us into thinking about the Black position as something completely different from White subjectivity in terms of experiencing the world in which they navigate. Not only the Black subject must be a being, it must be a being in a world that is characterised by the dominance of White norms, values, cultures and orientation. This idea is emblematic to Fanon's understanding that not only the Black man must be Black, but must also be Black in relation to the White (Fanon, 1967). This relation is purely differential and located in the discourse of 'us' and 'them' in a sense that it attempts to create an othering of people through their differences. Manganyi and Fanon provide an important intervention in the many ways in which the Black subject is othered in society and how it navigates its environment. For Manganyi there exists a different sociological schema that Blacks occupy in society that is characterised by suffering and meaninglessness of life; while Fanon stretches this realisation when dealing with *the look* in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967).

Consciousness as Freedom

This section of the chapter deals with the idea of consciousness as freedom, and in the later sections will help understand the role Black theatre played in the consciousnesses of Black people. In the chapter *Black Consciousness* of the discussed book, Manganyi (1973) aims to look at the connection linking the words 'Black', 'consciousness' and 'solidarity' in order to understand their meanings and all that they entail, as a response to the suggestion that they might mean racialism or *swaartgevaar* (Black danger). Manganyi first takes to the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* as a base definition of consciousness which puts it as 'mutual knowledge' - "knowledge as to which one has a testimony within oneself" and, he adds, "the totality of the impressions, thoughts, and feelings, which make up a person's conscious being" (1973:18). Black consciousness, further to Black solidarity, is rooted on mutual knowledge; but mutual knowledge of what? Back to the definition, Black consciousness is "something about which each black person has evidence (testimony) within himself" (Manganyi, 1973:18). It is about acknowledging (and testifying to) oneself as Black, and aware of all that entails Blackness. "Black consciousness should be understood to mean that there is mutuality of knowledge with respect to the 'totality' of impressions, thoughts and feelings of all black people" (Manganyi, 1973:18). Sartre's focus on existentialism was

consciousness as freedom, being free to create and define yourself in whatever form. More wrote on consciousness of something outside itself, "A black consciousness is a consciousness of its blackness or of its body as black in an anti-black world" (2017:90). Consciousness is not an object; thus, it can never be fulfilled. It is full of possibilities and is free. A conscious being is free to choose, act and define itself. Objects have no responsibilities because they have no consciousness. Sartre (1956) argued that humans are 'condemned to be free', freedom is our necessity. Consciousness propels one to flee anguish; you first have to be aware of what you want to avoid (More, 2017). When answering the question, 'What is a human being?', Sartre answered "a being such that in its own being, its being is in question" (1956:47). By way of concluding, Fanon prayed, "O my body, make of me always a man who questions" (1967:181). Here, both philosophers were on the quest to understand what it meant to be human, what their existence on earth accounted for. The questioning of our being propels change. When Blacks investigate what their Blackness represented under apartheid (and colonialism) that would allow them to call for change to their situation. Blacks find themselves asking such awkward questions, "Am I less human than the White man? Is my culture indeed intrinsically evil and inferior? Am I indeed predestined to remain the subject of the White man? Am I really meant to have no say in the Government of my life, my country?" (Mafungo, 1971:8).

The "existential fact of the black body has also meant certain specific ways of relating to the world and to others", with positive and negative features (Manganyi, 1973:18). Negative: being a colonised people; centuries of suffering. Black Consciousness informs the 'mutual knowledge' of suffering due to White domination. This shared experience of suffering and abuse is part of Black people's consciousness, not that of self-pity. Positive: Black consciousness is aware of the past, present and the future. It is not only bound to mutual knowledge about past and present suffering, but it also aims to prevent future suffering. Solidarity – it desires to establish a community feeling. Solidarity becomes a result of common existential experience (Manganyi, 1973:19). Mutual knowledge and solidarity come together.

As much as Black consciousness and solidarity are living in the present, with mutual knowledge of the past, they are also futuristic in perspective. The present meaning of Black consciousness and solidarity is the key determiner of what the future upholds. Solidarity informs sharing amongst people; the sharing that embraces all, not only materialistic as it also

shares the suffering and the entailment of being-Black-in-the-world (Manganyi, 1973). The sharing becomes the product of the mutual knowledge of suffering. With this mutual knowledge and sharing, things like tribalism become those of the past. Consciousness and solidarity get interdependent as they are to determine what kind of action is to be taken, going forward. It is this consciousness that leads to action. Manaka's plays were mostly based on this solidarity, especially *Pula* (for example, in the scene where '*The Voice of the People*' calls for all shebeens to be closed for all Black people to commemorate all Black people who died in the hands of authority) and *eGoli* (for example, in the scene where John is beaten by his employer and another White person passing by, while fellow Blacks watched and did nothing).

Culture becomes the bridge between man and the universe, and this is proof that there are many different modes of being-in-the-world, due to the existence of various cultural patterns. We exist and are perceived differently. The task now is to find if there is a Black mode of existing in the world, "whether one may identify an ontological structure that may be associated with being-black-in-the-world" (Manganyi, 1973:38). They ask of Africa's contribution to philosophical anthropology. Is it possible for the Black to look back? This, as More would say, the questioning of Africa's ability to philosophise, is basically challenging Africa's ability to reason, to think. And taking it to Descartes, those without an ability to produce thought do not live – *cogito ergo sum (I think therefore I am)*. In a continent with no humans, but only dominated by animals – in Descartes's *Meditations* (1641), a human is a rational animal – it seems fit for one to just come and take over it without any consultation, for a man can never consult an (irrational) animal, as their abilities of communication and (levels of) rationality differ. Manganyi adds that Africa has always had the philosophy of dialogue, relation, interdependence, and the total existential situation (Manganyi, 1973). Blacks can distinguish between plant and animal, and between animal and man, knowing that at the centre of it all is life. The ontology of Blacks puts at the centre that before understanding one's status at a particular time, it is best to first understand the totality of one's existence. In this section of the chapter, I argue that before we understand what it is to be *Black-in-the-world*, we first have to understand what it is to be a *human-being-in-the-world*. In the next chapter, we will then channel how these definitions could be applied to the Black Consciousness theatre of the 1970s. I will discuss how the plays portrayed a sharing of 'mutual knowledge' of Blackness - as Manganyi puts it - and presented (and provided space to discuss) ways of resisting against oppression.

In the chapter, *The Making Of A Rebel* (1981), Manganyi motivates that Blacks must move from victimhood towards a consciousness and ethic of hope. One becomes a rebel to the system of oppression because they now begin to fully understand their positionality in the world. A victim does nothing to change their situation, they have given up. The "pariah status leaves the victim virtually without significant options since his universe is defined radically by those who created him – by the actions and attitudes of his superordinates" (Manganyi, 1981:169). A rebellious moment is when he begins to question his mode of existence and wants to make sense of his situation. Black Consciousness deals with Blackness in positive ways, to eliminate the negatives with which Blackness had been drenched through centuries of colonialism, slavery and apartheid. Through self-definition and self-reliance, Blacks are to cherish Blackness and see it in positive ways, with dignity, leading to the statement 'Black is beautiful'. Such Blacks have embarked on a quest to psychological liberation – moving from being a victim (a human without hope and self-respect) to a rebel (who understands history and is destined for a better future) (Manganyi, 1981). Black Consciousness seeks to make Blackness-a-positive-presence-in-the-world.

Towards A New (True) Humanity

The minute the slave gets sold to the slave owner, it dawns to him that by seconds and seconds his freedom fades. He will remain a slave until further notice. "Theoretically, it should be possible for the slave to adopt the attitude that he is going to fight his master in order to regain his freedom" (Manganyi, 1973:23). The slave gets met with two possibilities, depending on his actions, whether to continue living as a slave - with the knowledge that his parents were slaves, he is a slave and if nothing gets done about his situation, his children will also be slaves - or fight against his master for the attainment of his freedom. The fight for freedom can also be met with two possibilities, either the full attainment of freedom or death. Death can also come in two ways, either by the hand or the will of the master, or by suicide. "Self consciousness incubates terror and dread, specifically in respect of a full recognition of the cynical reality of the human body" (Manganyi, 1981:105). This consciousness which incubates terror makes death an inevitable phenomenon since decolonisation is by nature a violent system; death for either the colonised (who now resists against colonisation) or the coloniser (who might have or have not anticipated the resistance). For the colonised to deny death (as inevitable) is to deny its body, its being; keeping in mind that decolonisation is the slave taking the master to the battle of death (Manganyi, 1981).

This is to show that death becomes a great possibility in the quest for freedom, and it is what the mutually suffering must always be aware of when taking actions inspired by their mutual knowledge. Manaka discusses this in his play, *eGoli*, when John and Hamilton struggle to break their chains. Consciousness takes one to an action of freedom or death (Manganyi, 1973). The realisation of the slave is the slave coming into consciousness, it is the slave realising the facticity of his situation. The potentiality for resistance, which is necessary for freedom, was given by coming into consciousness. The suffering has a "duty to be conscious of [their] responsibility to deal with limitations to [their] freedom" (Manganyi, 1973:23). Black consciousness and solidarity promote a rational, organised activity. The aim is to move away from indifference, as it promotes ignorance. The next part of the chapter will discuss decolonisation and what it means for Fanon – as an action towards freedom, when the Blacks have gained their consciousness and united.

Other Theorists' Contribution to our Understanding of *Being-Black-in-the-World*

This section of the paper deals with the works of such writers as Fanon, Biko and More as a contribution to Manganyi's concept of *being-Black-in-the-world* as a theoretical framework of Black Consciousness and its role to Black theatre.

How do we understand the being of Blackness in the world? How is the Black perceived? What are the contributions of Blackness? How does Black relate to the world? It must be recognised as fact that Blacks are also part of the human race. Take it to Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe's assertion that there is no race (biologically) superior to the other – there is only one race, that is the human race. Through Negritude, the active presence of the Black personality is considered by the very Blacks as a positive one, contrary to the White belief of Blacks only holding a function of servitude.

Fanon wrote *Black Skin, White Masks* as a person on the quest, through ontology (as a means of understanding one's existence and being in the world), to understand and explain the being of the Blacks, not only Black but Black in relation to the White man (Fanon, 1967). During colonisation, Blacks were painted as barbaric people without morals, values and customs. Black customs were wiped because they were a stumbling block to the civilisation promised by the White, the civilisation that the Black did not understand nor agree with.

Fanon's encounter in the train took his Black body and returned it recoloured, distorted and dehumanised. It reminded and continued to be instilled in him that the Negro is bad, an animal, mean and ugly. It is interesting when Fanon speaks of the Negro in the train shivering, and the little boy trembling. It is out of coldness that the Negro shivers, while the boy's trembling is due to thinking that the Negro shivers out of rage and hunger for him (Fanon, 1967). It is interesting how the young boy, at a very early age of his life, believes that Negros eat people. The late famous rapper, Tupac Shakur, lived by the notorious acronym "THUGLIFE", which stands for '*The Hate U Give Little Infants Fucks Everyone'*. That is because children are usually an outcome of their upbringing. What they are taught at home, they take it outside. Manganyi makes an example:

> it seems reasonable to assume that in the case of white children who grow up in a white racist environment, the development of self-hate and negative self-evaluation is ameliorated and cushioned by the existence in such cultures of the negative sociological schema of the black man's body (Manganyi, 1981:112-113).

To the White child's consciousness, Blackness is associated with dirt, smell and impurity. The boy on the train had been trained to believe that a Negro is one who eats Whites, so he should not be comfortable around any Negro. The boy was made conscious that he was a human being and a Negro is a beast that eats humans. What, then, does the Negro do?

"I identified my enemies" (Fanon, 1967:86). It is usually in such times that the Black gets to be reminded that the White is not a friend. They, when all is shiny, live under bad faith that White and Black are brothers until met by such negative actions toward the Black. Now, the Black subject remembers that he exists with the White on a relation that cancels (or aims to cancel) each other out. The Blacks always wait until something wrong is done unto them by Whites for them to realise that the Whites see neither equality nor mutual humanity between Black and White. It is dependent on his calculations whether he takes his "enemies" to the battlefield or carry on living under siege.

While humans are expected to behave like humans, Black people are expected to remain in their place as Negros – not complete people (Fanon, 1967). The world continues to protect itself against the Black man. Black people find difficulties and impossibilities in asserting themselves as Black people in the world. They are born with an inferiority complex, in times when they feel that the world hates them, they are denied recognition. On times when they

should be the ones doing the hating, they get rejected. They cannot breathe. Since they cannot be recognised, they put it to themselves to make themselves recognisable (Fanon, 1967). They believe and remind the world that they matter. Because of this inferiority complex of the Blacks, Whites remain the ones with the ability to look. How then can Blacks be able to return *the look*? This question remains in the next chapters where we want to understand how Black theatre advocated for the return of *the look* and why it mattered that *the look* be returned

According to More (2017) the concept of the other has a broader meaning, and goes beyond, *the look* – the other is referred to in texts, songs, as a dominant racist discourse. However, *the look* is and will be embraced within the concept of the other. The Black subject, whose existence is nullified through speech and text, exists in the world as a suspicious character whose existence must constantly be doubted. One level of this act is through the gaze which is always deployed on them: meaning the other determines their existence through the gaze. As I become an object that is being looked at and seen by the other, then do I succumb to that level of an 'object' that the other has subjected me to? Does the other know me better than I know myself as it holds this secret about myself which I am unable to access? Do I go on a journey of accessing and changing that secret? *The look* makes one ashamed of oneself and restricts one's freedom. Sartre (1956) asserts that it is a shame of self. This *look* is negative, dehumanizing, objectifying, and oppressive. For me, to regain my freedom I must return *the look* to the looker, reduce him to an object while he also does the same. The central question becomes: Who gives the looker all this power to look upon the other? Can the subject that is being looked at return the gaze? Or would that require the same historical experience that gave the looker the power to look upon the other? All these questions are to think about how *the look* informs the consciousness of the other who has been made an object to be looked at, spoken about and painted as an invisible creature, which in part is what this chapter is concerned with. The return of *the look* is an attainment of consciousness of your being in the world. The body is seen in ways that its owner would never imagine. *The look* feeds to otherness or othering. Seeing without being seen. The White man put himself as God, the one who sees but is not seen, the one who laces all the rules. More (2017) calls it the 'unlooked look', the 'unseen-seeing'. With the return of *the look*, White people have been exposed by what More (2017) refers to as the *Black look*. It now no longer becomes the 'unlooked-look'. The rediscovery of Blackness reverses *the look*. In using the Hegel dialectic diagram to better explain the situation of *the look*: the thesis is the *White look*; the anti-thesis is the *Black look*;

which will lead to the synthesis where the Black is seen as a fellow human being in a raceless society.

The definition of what it is to be human comes after human existence; you must exist before we define you. Sartre (1956) helps us understand this by asserting that 'existence precedes essence'. He takes this from questioning the Western philosophy of Descartes, Kant, Aristotle, Plato and Hegel which places 'rationality' as a definition of human nature. Western philosophy believes in the rational order of the universe where there is the 'knower - the rational being/subject - and the 'known' - the object. Africanist ontology of Ramose, as its contribution to philosophical anthropology, expands on this point by placing relation (dialogue) as the fundamental category to being-in-the-world, to existence; the relation to the body, to others, to objects, to time and space (Manganyi, 1973). No one lives in a vacuum. Dladla takes to Ramose's contribution and critic of Descartes's understanding of what entails a human. Ramose added "to be a human be-ing is to affirm one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis establish humane relations with them" (Dladla, 2018:74). Bujo added, "For Black Africa, it is not the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* but an existential *cognatus sum, ergo sumus* [I am related therefore we are] that is decisive" (2001:22). Culture becomes the existential medium of the relations between man and the world (Manganyi, 1973). Manaka's plays asserted that wherever Black people were, they should recognise other Blacks as one. The plays underpinned that when other Blacks moved from rural areas to the cities, they must not be made to feel like strangers in places where other Blacks exist.

Questioning Selfhood

On questions of liberation and identity, we hear: 'Who are Black people?' 'What are Black people?' ''Who' or 'What' am I?' The 'who' is the question of selfhood, whereas the 'what' is about Black identity in an anti-Black world. More argued, "If the black subject at a certain stage of existence is compelled to ask the question 'Who am I?' it is precisely because his identity as a person or human being has been challenged or questioned" (2017:105). Liberation is rooted on 'ought' or 'why'. Lewis Gordon (2000) argued that whatever we may be now, we have to focus on what we ought to become; 'what-ought-to-be'. He brings in the combination of identity and liberation when he asks, 'Who is to be liberated?' For us to know what we ought to do is dependent on us knowing who we are, and that is dependent on knowing and/or discussing what we ought to be doing. As it will be discussed further in the

next chapter, before the plays can provide a platform to discuss ways to resists oppression, they first had to educate about Blackness and explain the situations Blacks were facing under apartheid. Either in the plays or afterwards, there would be discussions on what Blacks ought to do to change their situation. In defining Blackness, Biko (2004) signalled that it reflects a mental attitude rather than a matter of pigmentation. Those who define themselves as Blacks are journeyed towards liberation; they unite to fight against oppression.

A human being is understood to be a free being, so to deny one freedom, you are denying one humanity: through exploitation, oppression and racism. Racism "restricts or negates the existence of the fundamental and basic feature of what it is to be human – freedom" (More, 2017:108). The aim is to negate the negation of Black humanity through the quest for a true humanity. Biko defines freedom as the "ability to define oneself with one's possibilities held back not by the power of other people over one but only by one's relationship to […] natural surroundings" (Biko, 2004:102). To be able to make choices, to have a liberated consciousness, to be self-conscious is to be human. More adds, "we cannot be conscious of ourselves and yet remain in bondage" (2017:109). Freedom is meaningfully attained through resistance. As discussed above, it is consciousness that propels one to seek freedom. Black Consciousness teaches that "if one is free at heart […] no man-made chains can bind one to servitude" (Biko, 2004:102). Freedom is not only an absence of external limitations or obstacles (More, 2017). Freedom that came without a struggle will leave one with an inferiority complex, when you have been freed by your oppressor: the jump from the thesis straight to the synthetic stage without entertaining the anti-thesis. Biko believed that freedom from within was very important, as it gave meaning to the freedom from without. Free the consciousness of the Blacks from the fear of White people, inferiority complex, and self-hate. Free them from the oppressive machinery. Black Consciousness advocated for Black people to first be free psychologically for them to be free politically, for people will find themselves free, in a democratic South Africa, yet still believe that they need White people to help them get out of the shacks that they put them in. As the paper discusses Black theatre as theatre by Blacks, for Blacks, with Blacks and where Blacks live, it explains that Black theatre, reading from Black Consciousness, was against White involvement in their mission of educating Blacks about their conditions under apartheid. TECON restricted their cast, crew and audience only to Blacks. Cone added, "No man can give me freedom or help me get it" (1969:28).

SASO Theatre Initiative

In December 1966, the Avon Theatre, which was later to become the Theatre Council of Natal (TECON), produced what is regarded as the first show to present Black people's situation in the hands of White people in South Africa, *Black on White* (Gwala, 1973). Produced by Strinivasa 'Strini' Moodley and fellow students from the University College of Indians, *Black on White* was a political satire about how Blacks saw Whites and vice versa. The play criticised apartheid and commented on the disunity among Blacks and the housing problems Black people faced throughout the country (Gwala, 1973). Gaining great momentum in the late 1960s, a period when Blacks left the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) to start their own South African Students Organization (SASO), TECON had started a trend of Blacks doing their own thing, without White assistance. Moodley's interest to politics was sparked by reading works of such scholars as Fanon, Nyerere and Kaunda. *Black on White* was premised on Fanon's concept of *the look*. These artists were set to return *the look* to the looker, according to More (2017), to regain their subjectivity and freedom, and not be reduced to a perpetual thing. The play was performed to larger audiences. The creation of *Black on White* was to spark a new conversation in the making of theatre – to make theatre that speaks to and is aimed at changing the conditions of Black people (Magaziner & Moodley, 2006). Through the play, Black people were to investigate the positionality of Blackness in the world and the ways Blacks saw themselves in the presence of the Whites. For these Indian students to call themselves Black (in the mid-1960s) was to inspire SASO's definition of Blackness (inclusive of Africans, Coloureds and Indians). The play presented the Black mode of being-in-the-world and challenged the 'us' and 'them' relationship between Blacks and Whites.

Moodley met with Biko before SASO was founded. One of their cast members who was a student at the University of Natal had told Biko about *Black on White*, Biko asked to meet with Moodley, and used the play to raise funds for Natal's Students Representatives Council (SRC). Upon forming SASO, they worked to conscientise university students across the country by setting up workshops to get them to participate in community development. Plays were part of the conscientising programs used to change people's negative perspectives of themselves. SASO would use plays to redefine Blackness and motivate people to not be ashamed to call themselves Black, as Black was declared beautiful. Theatre groups would be developed in many campuses across the country (Magaziner & Moodley, 2006). By 1971,

TECON had strongly declared itself as a Black Consciousness theatre group when it produced *Into the Heart of Negritude*, spreading the message of Negritude amongst the people through poetry, music, irony and humour, and when it produced *Antigone '71* to comment on the South African political system (Gwala, 1973).

Zakes Mokae, upon his visit to from overseas, motivated that theatre develops Black identity for Black awareness and national consciousness. The plays were to 'correct the situation' and transform the material conditions that Blacks found themselves living in (Gwala, 1973). SASO's plays were not quick to push for confrontation; they read the program of conscientisation from Paolo Freire:

> you work in small groups, you get people to realise that they have the capacity to take control of their lives, that no one controls them, no one gives them their bread or takes it away from them, that they are humans, they must tie up their boot straps, stand up, define themselves, and determine how they want to conduct their lives from there. And in that process there would be in terms of the program, cooperation, consultation, and right at the end confrontation, but which was the last (Magaziner & Moodley, 2006).

To place Black Consciousness only on the awareness of skin colour is not enough, but one must go to the sociological and psychological significance of the Black skin. Yes, Black Consciousness starts from the existential significance of the Black body because skin becomes significant in terms of the body. It calls one to be conscious of their body, with aims to fight the negative sociological connotations that the Black body had been drenched with by White people. TECON as well as other Black Consciousness affiliated theatre groups saw theatre as a liberating tool to free Blacks from psychological oppression. As per this paper's definition of Black theatre, these theatre groups argued that Black theatre is not limited to its actors and directors being Black, and on the depiction of Black scenes, they affirmed that if a play "does not place sufficient emphasis upon the creation of a revolutionary mood and does not see Black liberation as a priority then it is not Black drama but drama presented by Blacks" (Gwala, 1973). They aimed to discuss possible solutions to the White problem. Black theatre is to rally Black people towards "the search for dignity and self-reliance" (Gwala, 1973:106).

Black Consciousness theatre groups read from the SASO policy manifesto that:

> once you have identified the problem, which in this country is white racism, you look to a solution, and the solution is black solidarity. And then how do you define black, and we defined black. And that when the time came we would be so united in black solidarity that we would be able to bargain from a position of strength. That is one of the key elements in the SASO policy manifesto (Magaziner & Moodley, 2006).

As much as Black theatre-makers will choose what plots, characters and literary styles to use, they (theatre-makers) are, however, chosen by their themes. Black theatre-makers were compelled to portray the situations they lived under, attribute them to apartheid and discuss Black unity in theatre. On a daily, the psych of these theatre-makers was filled with ways of tackling apartheid as a system, they then would put it to stage as a form of discussion and conscientisation. "Since the creative impulse tends to straddle itself across several layers of the individual's consciousness, the act of *choosing* is part of a more cognitive set of conditions and at the tail-end of the process and probably not part of the incubative stage" (Manganyi, 1981:61).

Conclusion

This chapter is centred on the experiences of the Black in-the-world. It has dealt with the questions and discussions such as: What kind of world does the Black exist in? Is it a White/anti-Black world? Maybe it depends on the gaze through which one looks at the world: to Marxists, it is a capitalist world; to feminists, it is a patriarchal world; to Christians, it is God's world filled with sin; and so on. Does the Black subject feel accommodated in this world? In *Fact of Blackness*, Fanon speaks of finding himself in the world in which he came to find a meaning of things as an object among objects. Through Biko's *Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity*, Manganyi's *Being-Black-in-the-World*, and other philosophical works of Black Consciousness, it is revealed that Black people are yearning to make sense of their Blackness in relation to the world; trying to figure what this Blackness entails. Black theatre aimed to makes sense of the world on stage; it aimed to discuss what position Black people held in the world and provided space to discuss ways of changing their oppressed situation.

I had opened the chapter by extensively discussing Chabani Manganyi's concept of *being-Black-in-the-world*, to try understand if there is a Black mode of existing in the world,

alternatively to understand whether there is then a White mode of existence in the world. This is premised on the idea that Blacks and Whites have distinct ways of experiencing the world. *Being-Black-in-the-world* helps us better understand Black Consciousness and that pushes us towards the understanding of what Black theatre did to make sense of Blackness during apartheid. I then moved to discuss other scholars such as Fanon, Sartre and More as an addition to the understanding of what being Black entailed during apartheid. In the section of *the look*, I had asked whether a Black subject is able to access and change the secret that the White subject holds and knows about it? It will take decolonisation for that to be changed, destroying the whole system that seeks to place Blacks as subordinates. Before that, it will take a change in the consciousness of the Black subject of its positionality in the world. Blacks will have to realise the being-of-Blackness-in-the-world, unite with fellow Blacks in engaging in the struggle to destroy the system that deems them inhumane. The chapter is concerned with understanding the existence of a Black mode of existence in the world. What does this mode of existence entail? From here, it goes to the next chapter where we investigate the role of theatre on the consciousness of Black people, and whether theatre did teach of the-being-of-Blackness-in-the-world. What kind of solidarity and mutual knowledge did it speak of? We find if the Black subject can find solace in Black theatre as a form of expression in which to escape their position of being-Black-in-the-world?

In this chapter, I have used Manganyi's concept of *being-Black-in-the-world* as a theoretical framework for Black Conciousness and contributed to Black theatre's role in society. I have explored Manganyi's concept and extended it through the writings of such theorists as Fanon, Biko and More. Now, in the next chapter, I will be going into Matsemela Manaka and how he put the understanding of being-Black-in-the-world in theatre to make sense of what it entails to be a Black person living under apartheid.

Chapter 3:

Matsemela Manaka & Black Consciousness Theatre

Introduction

In Todd Matshikiza's novel, *Chocolates for My Wife* (1961:44), a character named William Smythe utters the following remarks to Matshikiza, "You blokes want to start a Black theatrical movement. Where do you think you'll perform in your great big, beautiful country? You're hoping to get your Whites to come and see you in Orlando? Be reasonable. Why should they come to Orlando to the segregated Bantu area to see natives doing Shakespeare by candlelight." This statement carries multiple sentiments. The main message is that there is no need for an establishment of Black theatre, the emergence of young Black theatre-makers must either succumb to the kind of theatre that already exists in town, waiting to be cast by White directors, or they can simply quit theatre. Smythe believes that the Black theatre-makers will need White audiences (for revenue and development of these actors), however, these White spectators must not go to the township, for many reasons including the segregation laws. Also, since Blacks have no resources, on and off stage, their theatre will be poor, without props and equipment, thus, it will make no sense for the Whites to watch a show which, for example, is not effectively lighted. And, he is convinced that Black artists are unable to come up with their own content, they will still perform adaptations of works by European writers' such as Shakespeare (Matshikiza, 1961). Another character named Ferguson intervenes, saying that he does not know much about the South African theatre scene, but he knows that theatre companies and venues are owned by Whites and Indians, and that Black theatre-makers must not be concerned with starting a Blacks-only kind of a theatre, rather they must think of uniting with other races for a universal South African enterprise (Matshikiza, 1961).

Initially, there was controversy around the establishment of Black theatre, before it could be defined. The controversies and disagreements behind its definition are products of controversies around its founding; with many, especially from the White side, not understanding why Black theatre-makers should start their own theatre whereas they could just listen to the directions of White theatre-makers. Maishe Maponya had a problem with White theatre-makers for various reasons. First, they viewed themselves as the lifeblood of theatre. That is why, in Matshikiza's novel, the Whites did not see the need for Blacks to

establish their own theatre. Second, they defined theatre for themselves and others. White theatre theorists like, for example, Ian Steadman, are more concerned with defining Black theatre than the theatre of the Whites. Third, they thought that their ideas could not be challenged. They did not accede to valid contestation. Last, they held the arts at ransom (Maponya, 1998).

Between 1900 and 1940, South Africa was increasingly structuring a modern state through racial dominance and capitalism, enforcing maximum segregation of goods and services between Blacks, and ensuring that a very small, to none, number of Blacks owned land, and increasing a reproduction of African labour (Peterson, 2000). Before Fugard's departure from Port Elizabeth and the rise of Kente as the father of township theatre, there were prolific writers such as, but not limited to H.I.E Dhlomo and Benedict Wallet Vilakazi who pioneered Black theatre. Their focus was more on literature, poetry and theatre, writing about Black kings and heroes such as, but not limited to, Moshoeshoe, Shaka and Cetywayo (Couzens et al., 1989). In his plays, Dhlomo was challenging social policies. He was projecting a vision of "a past and a future still to be achieved" (Peterson, 2000:6). Dhlomo and Vilakazi wrote to influence Blacks to have pride in their cultural heritage. They had hoped for Africa's response to oppression through theatre. In their works, "White people, while not centre stage, exercise a cataclysmic, colonizing presence which finally wills the sun to set on the remaining independent African polities" (Peterson, 2000:6). Both inspired an African rejection of White tutelage, while embracing self-definition and determination. Before them, John Dube wrote *A Talk About My Native Land* (1892), *The Zulu Appeal for Light* (1909), *Amagama Abantu* (1911) and *Insila kaShaka* (1930), the first Zulu novel. Magema Magwaza Fuze wrote *Abantu Abamnyama Lapa Bavela Ngakona* (1922).
These all were based on the cultural and historical narrative of the African people (Peterson, 2000). Like the Black Consciousness theatre generation that rose in the Seventies, their works brought history to interpret the present (Barrios, 2008). Dhlomo's famous play, *uNongqawuse – The Girl Who Killed to Save* (1935) – later inspiring Fatima Dike's *The Sacrifice of Kreli* - focused on the cattle killing movement that was led by Nongqawuse's prophecy. A few decades later, Black Consciousness theatre-makers would come to revisit the definition of Black theatre. With different and sometimes conflicting labels and meanings that came, they were adamant that it was to be not a theatre of 'mere' entertainment. Through their rejection of 'mere' entertainment, they had questioned and challenged the theatre produced by such theatre-makers as Gibson Kente and

Nelson Mungwane who had inspired their taking into theatre. The entertainment that came with it was to communicate and educate about what was currently happening in South Africa at the time and how they were envisioning a way forward. They were concerned with what their theatre was to mean to society and the message it sent. Their theatre was to be a theatre of Black Consciousness, a theatre that made Black people aware of their positionality in society, a theatre that called for unity within the dispossessed, and a theatre that would provide a platform for a discussion of a way forward; a quest for a true humanity.

The previous chapters have defined Black theatre and discussed the importance of representation and the rise of consciousness through theatre. This chapter focuses mainly on Matsemela Manaka, and his contribution to both the struggle against apartheid and theatre in South Africa, mostly from the latter half of the Seventies. Most importantly, it focuses on Manaka's view of Black theatre, and why it is important to go through Black Consciousness. It first gives a brief biography of the theatre-maker, focusing on Manaka's activist role, mostly being an activist through theatre. The second section reviews two of his plays, *eGoli* (1979) and *Pula* (1982). In reviewing the plays, I used my interpretation of the playscripts by reading the scripts and giving my summary and a review of the plays. Due to the scarcity of recordings of most Black theatre plays, I was only dependent on reading the scripts and interpreted them from what I read and tried to make sense of Manaka's techniques of mime, song and dance within the plays. I also used a few reviews from scholars who had seen the plays being performed live. After that, the chapter goes to investigate Manaka's view on Black theatre, looking mainly at what he understood Black theatre to be, especially since he was a member of the Black Consciousness Movement and was active in the events of the Seventies. The chapter concludes that Manaka's theatre, which mainly focused on mending the broken unity within Black people, was concerned with teaching about *being-Black-in-the-world* and called for Black people to prioritise self-assertion and psychological freedom.

Knowing Manaka

Matsemela Manaka, a playwright, poet, producer, choreographer, painter, and above all, a Black Consciousness political activist, was born on 20 June 1956 in Alexandra township, studied in Diepkloof, and spent most of his life in Soweto (Schauffer, 2003). In 1976, he enrolled at Ithuteng Commercial College to study Commerce. As he had to learn Afrikaans to

enter, he enrolled for the Afrikaans matriculation examination at Madibane High School as an external scholar. Due to his active participation in 1976 marches, stayaways, and boycotting exams, he was excluded by Madibane High School (Manaka & Davis, 1997). These events would soon inspire his love for art. After a brief period in police detention, while most of his peers went into exile, he relocated to Pietersburg, where he explored his talent in poetry, oil painting, composing and performing music, and writing plays. Upon his return to Soweto, he and fellow Madibane students formed the cultural group, Creative Youth Association, (CYA) which would soon find a voice through the banning of the Black Consciousness Movement and all its associated organisations. This voice was found due to art, particularly theatre, becoming the main vehicle for the struggle against apartheid (Manaka & Davis, 1997). CYA held itself with pride as a youth cultural group that aimed at developing and promoting young people's creative talents from all aspects of the arts. It was in that year, 1977, that Manaka collaborated with fellow CYA artists to produce his first play, *The Horn*. A year later, CYA, with an influence from the Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka, would go on to found the Soyikwa Institute of African Theatre as its drama wing (Schauffer, 2003). 'Soyikwa' is an isiXhosa word which colloquially means 'we shall be feared', which the group translated as 'we shall overcome'; overcoming the challenges under which the group was founded (Manaka & Davis, 1997). *We Shall Overcome* was also a song sang at most of the American civil rights movement's meetings.

In 1977, *Ravan Press* trusted him to spearhead its new cultural publication, *Staffrider*. He assumed the position of coordinating editor for *Staffrider* from 1979 to 1981, and through that role he accepted submissions from fellow young Black writers under the theme '*Writing for Liberation*' (Schauffer, 2003). With the Black Consciousness Movement's writing and publication programmes banned, they used *Staffrider* for consciousness-raising purposes (Manaka & Davis, 1997). Manaka and his actors reworked the scripts with each theatre move because for him, "theatre was a dynamic process that implied the constant revisiting of the pieces as part of the living act of theatre; an interactive, ultimately ephemeral reality that can only exist in the moment of action" (Schauffer, 2003:181). Despite its subsequent successful European tour and its accolade as the *Best Play of the Year* in London in 1982, at home, his then new play, *eGoli*, was banned under *Section 47(2)(e)* of the Publications Act of 1974, after the Publication Control Board deemed it to be "prejudicial to the safety of the state, the general welfare or the peace and good order" (Manaka & Davis, 1997:6). While preparing for the 1984 tour of both *Imbumba* (1979) and *Pula* (1982), Manaka was refused a passport by

the South African government to travel abroad, without any reasons stated (Manaka & Davis, 1997). His passport was only to be restored in 1985 when he was invited by the United States Embassy to visit American theatres, arts centres and arts educational institutions. Manaka transcended from performing in the township alternative theatre venues to 'proper' theatres like the Market Theatre to travelling the world performing in big stages of Berlin and London (Manaka & Davis, 1997).

His theatre influence came straight from Gibson Kente and Nelson Mungwane. Speaking on the adoption of political theatre, he argued, "Because of '76 we started to grow up with the notion that the type of theatre we were seeing produced by people like Gibson, Nelson Mungwane and Boykie Mashwane, it was good theatre but we saw there was something lacking" (Schauffer, 2003:184). John Kani and Winston Ntshona's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972) and Mthuli Shezi's *Shanti* (1972) began to shed some light towards a new and intensely political venture of theatre. These two plays were released immediately after the decade known as the 'Silent Sixties', when overt political work had subsided in the country due to the banning of frontline political organisations such as the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) and the African National Congress (ANC), as well as the banning, exiling, arrests and death of many political figures. These plays then come in to expose and challenge the "dystopian apartheid system" (Sommers, 2015). Manaka added "Then when I started writing and telling stories people would say that I was Brechtian […] when I wrote I had never heard of Brecht, I didn't know about Grotowski. It was because of the poor conditions in which we lived that led us to create similar to what Grotowski was doing. […] You know, it just happened. It was the way we told our stories" (Schauffer, 2003:197). The conditions that theatre-makers such as Manaka grew up and created their theatre in were practical to what Grotowski and Brecht theorised about. Due to the scarcity of resources at home, their theatre was bound to be poor.

As he progressed to a project director of the Soyikwa Institute of African Theatre by 1984, he produced *Children of Asazi* in Market Theatre, and later that year he took a job as a coordinator of the Arts Centre at the newly opened *Funda Centre* in Diepkloof. With funding from the technology firm, IBM, and land donated by the Urban Foundation, Funda was to become an arts education college for Black students of arts across the country. With *Dumba - The Last Dance* (1986) he hoped to create a politically and artistically unifying production, and from then, his works would be Africa-oriented. Learning from Black Consciousness's mentality of self-help and self-establishment, he, alongside Alistair Dube, Sipho Buthelezi,

Patience Mongwane and Ray Hlongwane workshopped a play titled *Siza* (translated as 'help' or 'relief'), the same year (Manaka & Davis, 1997). Succeeding that, he would produce plays such as *Koma* (1986), *Toro - The African Dream* (1987), *Goree* (1989) (directed by John Kani), *Blues Afrika Cafe* (1990), and *Ekhaya*. Between 1977 and 1991, after which he focused on writing poetry and short essays on theatre and literature, he produced fourteen plays (Manaka & Davis, 1997). His plays comprised of all-Black casts, with few White characters portrayed by the same Black actors. The White characters are always aloof people who represent White authority such as Bosswinkel in Pula, the mine supervisor in *eGoli*, the housing official in *Children of Asazi*, and the pass officer in *Vuka* (Manaka & Davis, 1997). His actors - as in Ngema and Mtwa's *Woza Albert* - would use pantomime noses and spectacles to portray these White characters (Manaka & Davis, 1997). He sadly died in 1998 in a car accident.

Reviewing *Pula* & *eGoli*

This section of the chapter will be investigating two of Manaka's plays, *eGoli* (1979) and *Pula* (1982). Most of the comments were a product of reading the scripts of both plays, and a few reviews by researchers who saw the performances of the plays. From reading some of Manaka's plays, these two stand out in their message of Black Consciousness, especially in calling for Black unity, bringing in history to trace the origins of the destitute of Africa, revealing the conditions of Blackness in the cities, townships and in the rural areas, and challenging the apartheid government's segregation policies.

eGoli (1979)

Summary

eGoli was initially performed in 1978 by John Ledwaba, Susan Shabangu and Daniel Stoppa Lekalakala at community halls, churches and schools around the townships of Johannesburg, produced by the Soyikwa Institute of African Theatre. Lekalakala was later replaced by Hamilton Mahongwa Silwane, and when they were preparing for a Cape Town tour, Shabangu's parents reprimanded her leaving Johannesburg, making the play a two-man show; John playing a character of John, and Hamilton playing Hamilton. It was initially directed by a collective of three Soyikwa artists, Manaka, Richard Lebelhe and Raymond

Hlongwane alongside the cast. In the tours of Cape Town (at the Space Theatre) and Johannesburg (Market Theatre), the play was directed by Rob Amato. *Ravan Press* published its playscript which was later banned by the South African Censorship Board. It then toured West Germany, and later performed by various German theatre companies (Manaka & Davis, 1997).

In the first scene, John and Hamilton appear in their room in the compound of a mine on the Reef. In the room, there are neatly folded blankets made for sleeping, and two beer boxes by the blankets used as chairs, a record player, a few mine newspapers, a knife, a lit candle, a plastic bucket used as a source of water, and mining equipment. Just like most of his plays, this play follows 'poor theatre' techniques with its usage of fewer props, and with the audience seated around the stage. Both actors are chained together from their necks like slaves, with no clothing except the baggy pants. In the first scene, John tells Hamilton that they are tied together by the chains of Johannesburg (eGoli), the city of hatred and misery (Manaka & Davis, 1997).

From the first dialogue, Hamilton says, mockingly, that John, whom he escaped prison with, is too stubborn and unprepared to fight for his freedom (Manaka & Davis, 1997). John reminds Hamilton that he used to speak for him and other inmates and would lead protests in prison. Within a few things said, they quickly start a song. Manaka's use of theatre incorporated various art forms, especially music. The actors appreciate the struggle songs and while discussing the history of these songs, they are reminded of the resistance their ancestors held against the settlers (Manaka & Davis, 1997). As they disagree about the events that led them to prison, John reminds Hamilton how unforgivable his cause of arrest is – Hamilton raped and killed a Black woman, so John gets terrified as he thinks that his ex-cellmate violated one of "our black mothers" (Manaka & Davis, 1997:55). A fight between the two erupts. As the fight ends, Hamilton shows remorse of what he did and pleads with John to never remind him of such memories. Here, Manaka sparks an interesting aspect to look at, the distinction between the political/activist imprisonment and the self-inflicted/ordinary criminal activities which will lead one to jail. As much as many people were arrested for political activities, there were always gangsters lambasting other Blacks in and outside shebeens, especially by night. Manaka wants to discuss the reasons behind the things that make it easy for Black people to violate fellow Blacks and what can be done about that. Prisons were filled not only by political activists.

Johannesburg, to the characters, is a place of either fight or despair. One lives through fighting, but when Johannesburg persists in bringing about misery, one despairs. John reminisces about seeing *amagoduka* – migrant workers – making their ways to the mines of Johannesburg for the first time (Manaka & Davis, 1997). He was more saddened by the happy faces of the newcomers who thought that working in the mines would bring betterment to their lives. They were promised a golden life for when they go back home, with gold in their pockets and gold dust on their breath. As mime is hugely used in Manaka's plays, John mimes the arrival of migrant workers at Park Station, offloading bags, blankets, pots and pans from the train to the platform (Manaka & Davis, 1997). When the actors reminisce about the past, especially talking about how hard they worked, they would mostly mime it. The language mostly used in the workplace, especially in the mines is *Fanagalo* – a dialect, mixture of mostly isiZulu, Sesotho, Afrikaans and few languages from Southern Africa. The characters use *Fanagalo* to show communication in the workplace – from when *amagoduka* are introduced to the mine, to the communication between miners and employers, and to the communication within the miners (Manaka & Davis, 1997).

There is no brotherly love in Johannesburg, especially at the workplaces. John tells Hamilton that his pride took over when he was kicked in the bums by his employer telling him that he is lazy, he must work and never talk, so he fought back. One White person passing by saw the fight and helped his fellow White brother (Manaka & Davis, 1997). Here, the play revisits Black Consciousness's urge of unity and not fearing when standing before a White man. John laments about his fellow Black brothers and sisters watching him battle against the two White men who, eventually, beat him to a pulp. He, subsequently, forfeits his work and goes back home to his family for a year of starvation. Fortunately, he gets another job at a mine upon his return to Johannesburg (Manaka & Davis, 1997).

Both characters are struggling to break the chains on their necks. Hamilton recognises that the chains are not only those binding their necks but also on their minds, taking the audience to Black Consciousness's constant caution against mental slavery. Hamilton takes a stone and wants to break the chain around John's neck. John is scared that he might die. Hamilton keeps on reminding him that the chains are the ones that hold his freedom back, so he must risk death if he wants to be free (Manaka & Davis, 1997). This is taken from Georg Hegel's *Master/Slave dialectic* and Biko's discussion of death as inevitable or highly possible during the fight for freedom (Biko, 2004). Hegel asserted that "it is solely by staking one's life that

freedom is proven to be the essence" (2018:111). They finally break the chain off and treat it like a dead snake, beating it while they sing (Manaka & Davis, 1997). They then reminisce of how they almost died inside the mine when it fell. They, however, managed to escape and be free. John later hears the news of his son's death, Oupa Ledwaba, inside a mine shaft. He is shocked because he left his son at home. How can he die in Jo'burg? He then receives a letter from his wife telling him about her losing her job due to the closing of the farm she worked in. Now there is great hunger, his children are eating soil and tree leaves, and dying of drought (Manaka & Davis, 1997). The soul-stirring part is when they lament about all that entails their survival in Johannesburg:

> Egoli. Egoli. Egoli. People slave, Egoli. People die, Egoli. Egoli, together we slaved. Egoli, wearing chains on our brains. Egoli. The place where our people have lost a sense of respect for their own culture. They mock their beliefs. They curse their customs. They forget all about traditions. Egoli, city of misery. City of hate, Egoli, it's Egoli (Manaka & Davis, 1997:62).

Analysis

A week before the opening of *eGoli*, Manaka commented that his play will be shocking to both Black and White audience members. He added, "Shocking to blacks, because most don't know mining conditions, and to whites because they also don't understand black theatre" (von Keyserlingk, 1979). The racism that meets him outside the theatre hall found a place in his play-making (von Keyserlingk, 1979). The play deals with the humiliation and suffering faced by Blacks in the White-dominated society of South Africa, particularly in Gauteng (Daniel, 1979). As the two young Black men escape from Leeuwkop Prison, they go to find work at a mine, upon working there, they realise that the conditions underground were more life-threatening than those in prison, hence they are seen going "from chains to a living grave" (von Keyserlingk, 1979). In what might be a reference to Workshop '71's play, *Survival* (1976), Manaka commented that the play was written on survival parallel to the Soweto uprising; "Miners are dying every day in their attempt to make a living. In the same way, Soweto children died in their fight for survival" (von Keyserlingk, 1979).

As the two mine labourers revisit their detrimental escape journey, their discussion is elongated by their cry of alcoholism and sexual deprivation, as well as John's son's death at

the mines. John blames his alcoholism for this encounter, lamenting that had he sent the money home, his family would not be starving, and his son would still be alive (Barrell, 1979). The sad narration of the play is pacified by the humour that is frequently used to tell other parts of a life lived in the City of Gold.

What made the theatre of the 70s interesting was that there was an emergence of many young talents - writers, directors and actors with new and fresh theatre techniques (Barrell, 1979). Mime is a technique frequently used in the play. Daniel (1979) asserts that Ledwaba and Silwane's acting made *eGoli* a 'pure theatre magic'. There is great audience participation. John also interacts with the audience when he is about to go to a shebeen, he presents in front of them two trousers and asks which one he should wear. It becomes a nice moment of laughter when they disagree among themselves on which trousers are best (Manaka & Davis, 1997). Von Keyserlingk (1979) further added that the audience is part and parcel of Black theatre through the interaction they have with those on stage. In Black theatre, audience members are able to do what could be frowned upon in White theatre, such as shouting and swearing at a sadist character on stage. Through an influence from Brecht's didactic theatre, Barrell (1979) asserts that *eGoli* is an intense educative experience. Critics and audiences compared *eGoli* to *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* in terms of structure, theme and quality (Barrell, 1979). Daniel commented that "by and large, this is the most compelling piece of black theatre I have seen since "Survival" and "Small Boy" explored on our consciousnesses a few years ago" (Daniel, 1979). This play was performed when many people were migrating to the cities, especially Johannesburg, for employment, to enrich their families back home. The plot, with two characters on stage, reminds them of their lives in hostels. The two actors represent the experiences of the audience at that current state, they see their harsh living and working conditions. The play instils on the audience's consciousness that unity is the first step to escaping the conditions under which they live.

Pula (1982)

Summary

Initially, *Pula* was played by four actors, Danny Moitse, David Sebe, Makarious Sebe and Ronnie Mkhwanazi, and directed by Matsemela Manaka. The first performance was in February 1982 at the Blackchain Hall, in March it moved to the Nunnery Theatre, then to the

Laager at the Market Theatre. These four actors play various characters (Manaka & Davis, 1997).

The story begins in a village where there is a celebration 'in the name of the people'. There is a cow being slaughtered. Using 'poor theatre' techniques, two actors mime as a cow, while two others mime slaughtering the cow, then they mime taking the pieces of the cow to cook and braai in celebration. The singing is the appraisal of African kings such as Shaka, Moshoeshoe and Ngqika. As they are busy singing, ululating and dancing in celebration, they foresee the coming of the White man and his troops carrying guns to kill the indigenous people and take over the land. As the indigenous people were not aware, thus did not prepare for this coming of the Whites, they get defeated; blood floods the land. From then on, the land gets dry as their cattle are taken and some killed along with the crops. Drought has taken over; in one of the choruses, they utter "We can see how our fertile fields became a desert to suck our souls dry" (Manaka & Davis, 1997:76). Clouds of rain are no more, leaving the souls dry while the people continue to cry. There is great fragmentation within the native people.

Izwe, a young man from the village, cannot wait for the rain any longer, so he decides to leave for the big city to start a music group that he believes will bring him and his family money for survival. He is adamant, and no longer wants to listen to the warnings of his father, Mkhulu, against the big city which he calls the 'human jungle', as well as his plea for patience (Manaka & Davis, 1997). He cries of the livestock and crops that have died due to the dry land, and non-availability of grazing land. Mkhulu finally lets his son go and gives him a necklace that he must take to the city and return if and/or when he loses it or else his gods will turn against him. Every encounter is either opened or closed by a song. Mkhulu and Izwe sing a song for Izwe's departure. Izwe's departure for the big city was seen as an addition to the big homeless and unemployment numbers of the people in the big cities. He settles in Kliptown, Soweto and gets a job at a shebeen. His exodus was a movement from drought to floods (Manaka & Davis, 1997).

The second scene starts at a shebeen where Juluka, an old man, goes to buy alcohol where Izwe works. Then there is a baseless altercation between Juluka and a well-dressed young man named Dannyboy (Manaka & Davis, 1997). Izwe tries to pacify the conflict with threats of police, ironical of him to call police whereas he sells illegal alcohol – it was mostly illegal for Blacks to sell 'hard' (spirits) alcohol in the early apartheid years. He fails. The shebeen

was always a turf for tsotsis/the gangs to compete for territory and impress ladies. There is a character named Jimi Mbijana, the owner of the shebeen and leader of the Bagoshedi Congress Party, a rival to the People's Congress Party. Jimi claims that his party deals with diamonds, not people. Jimi and his friend, Dannyboy are not happy to see old Juluka leave the shebeen with Pam (there is no actor playing Pam, but she exists in the story). Juluka, eventually, returns bleeding and is without his money and his girl (Manaka & Davis, 1997).

This scene, unlike the first, is filled with dialogue. There are two men who enter wearing face masks claiming to be 'the voice of the people' and ordering Izwe to close the shebeen on the week of October 19th, for the October 19th clampdown. 19 October 1977 was when the Black Consciousness Movement and all its affiliated organisations were banned. Izwe complains that 'the voice of the people' is inconsistent in the days chosen to commemorate by demanding businesses close because at first it was on the 16th of June, commemorating the 1976 Soweto uprising, then it was 12 September, Biko Day, commemorating the death of Biko in detention (Manaka & Davis, 1997). His main concern is that the shebeen will lose money. Jimi says that the way the country is moving there will be commemorations every day. This scene shows the contradictions within Black people: Jimi and his men, who frequently buy alcohol at the shebeen, alongside the seller do not want the shebeen to close; on the other side, 'the people' want to commemorate all Black people who lost their lives in the hands of White authority, and they believe that the shebeens are holding the struggle back because people are flocked there and not active in the events taking place outside. They go to shebeens to forget. The week of October 19th is to become a mourning period where everyone abstains from alcohol (Manaka & Davis, 1997). Here, Manaka depicts the tensions about politics and political consciousness, and shows that within Black people there were the ignorant, the impatient and those who had given up. They understood that apartheid was wagging its tail but they had to continue with their everyday lives, and that activists had to see that life should not only revolve around politics. Manaka brings this conversation to the table for public scrutiny.

In the final scene, Izwe is seen going back home to the same conditions he had left them in; there is still drought and death of babies, people and cattle. Mkhulu calls the village girls to sing and perform the rain dance for the rain to come and wet the lands that will bring food to the people (Manaka & Davis, 1997). As the day goes to dawn, they go on a search for tomorrow – a quest for a true/new humanity – where there is no hunger nor drought; a

glorious and victorious tomorrow. A later reference: in 1981 there was a show titled *Ilanga Lizophumela Abasebenzi* (the sun shall rise for workers) which was displayed the harsh conditions of the workers, in *Pula*, there is a chorus that sings 'imvula izonela abasebenzi' translated, '*rain will come for workers'*, and when that rain comes, the workers will no longer work in such inhumane conditions (Manaka & Davis, 1997).

Analysis

Pula gets its substance from the droughts that befell South Africa between 1981 and 1982. Due to those droughts, economic and social dislocation intensified, with the homelands - hugely dependent on livestock and crops - suffering more. During that time, Black political unity was fragmented, with Biko and other Black Consciousness members being killed, jailed and exiled, and with Black Consciousness Movement's associated organisations banned. With the play, Manaka calls for the rain to come to quench the thirst for Black political unity and direction, attributing the disunity to the economic devastation faced in the rural areas due to the drought. By that time, many people fled to the gold mines of Johannesburg to find employment (Steadman, 1986). In one of the choruses, the actors sing, "In the name of the people, let us not allow our differences to stand against our national aspirations" (Manaka & Davis, 1997:88). Whatever group they assign themselves to, and wherever they stay, the people are people. Oneness must be the order of the day and the path to happiness. They emphasise on the beauty of the people as Black Consciousness does with 'Black is beautiful'. In this play, Babylon – referring to the West – is blamed for causing disunity within the indigenous people (Manaka & Davis, 1997). South Africans lack solidarity, Blacks rob and kill one another, despite the oppression they face under White rule (Wakashe, 1986). In the last scene, the four actors tie themselves in ropes and pull closer together, uttering "we are fragments of a common segment cemented by the blood of a common struggle" (Manaka & Davis, 1997:93), and continue to tell the audience how disunity is destructive. The play cries of a lost African Utopia.

Typical of Manaka's work, *Pula* took a form of song, dance, and mime, with most dialogues in English to accommodate various indigenous language speakers in the audience. "If a performance is to convey a message of solidarity that is meaningful for all who attend, it cannot be spoken exclusively in one regional language" (Wakashe, 1986:42). It is ironic that

political theatre used a colonial language, English, as a bearer of the revolutionary message, notwithstanding, British colonial history must not be forgotten. Achebe (1975) argued that nothing was wrong with using English to bring out a new voice which speaks African experiences because English is a universal language. *Pula* uses township English, as English varies from region to region. Achebe once advised Africans to use an African English in writing African literature (Wakashe, 1986). There is also a great use of *tsotsitaal* as the actors hold dialogues with themselves and with the audience (Steadman, 1986).

The mid-1970s showed us Blacks who took things into their hands, in charge of their lives and voices – one of the main reasons for Biko and fellow Black students' departure from the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) was White-leadership and Black inferiority. *Pula* was based on Black Consciousness's yearning for self-definition and challenging the inferiority complex that oppression had drenched them with (Wakashe, 1986). Black Consciousness was against the view of 'White leadership' as it fuelled White arrogance and Black inferiority. The only kind of integration Black Consciousness would accept would be one where "there shall be free participation by all members of a society, catering for the full participation of the self in a freely changing society as determined by the will of the people" (Biko, 2004:24).

Pula, rain in the Sotho languages, is needed to quench the thirst of Black people. Solidarity will ensure that Blacks repossess their land. The strong acting got to the audience's hearts. "It was sincerity that gave force to their plea for solidarity, commitment, and action. If at that moment the actors had dared to call on the audience to rise and reposes [*sic*] their lands, I believe all of us would have gone" (Wakashe, 1986:42). Wakashe heard someone behind him, as he was also in the audience watching the show, sigh deeply, "amabhunu" – the Boers – signifying a fit of anger and disgust towards the violent acts and policies of Whites towards Blacks (Wakashe, 1986). This goes to prove that Manaka's plays did agitate Blacks to act against their oppression, the acting comes after the rise in consciousness. It dawns to the audience what the Whites are doing to the Blacks is inhumane and has to be changed.

In His Own Words (On Black Theatre)

In his article, *Theatre of the Dispossessed* (1980), Manaka begins by asking the simple yet not the easily answerable questions. He tries to investigate what 'our' theatre was before the

arrival of White people on the African shores; and in this instance, the 'our' refers to the Blacks. Due to his prioritisation of communication, he asks, between the dispossessed (Blacks) and the dispossessor (Whites), who does Black theatre communicate with. He bases his questions on that and focuses on the class distinction between both groups. In many of his main questions, he asks for the definition of the theatre of the dispossessed. Since its inception, he and other theatre-makers and theorists of Black theatre were concerned with understanding the meaning of the theatre of the dispossessed (Manaka, 1980).

The point to begin with is that since apartheid was still wagging its tail, Black artists had to be wary of the type of entertainment they provided for Black people at home. Artists had to be aware of the situations under which Blacks existed and familiarise themselves with the aspirations of the Blacks. Black people are poor:

> They are desperate for the realisation of their aspirations. They are in the quest of freedom. They need no entertainment that shall make them oblivious of their state of subservience. They need no entertainment that shall make them submissive to their state of poverty and servitude. They need no entertainment that will be irrelevant to the black man's bone of contention (Manaka, 1980:29).

The kind of entertainment they need is one that is realistic and will lead them to a true humanity. The kind of art that Manaka believed in was positive, purposeful, communal, and based on survival and liberation (Manaka, 1980).

Through Black Consciousness, people aimed for self-management, self-assertion, and to say what they wanted even in the presence of the Whites without any fear. Manaka advised all Black people to go through Black Consciousness for the priority which is psychological freedom. There must be a focus on the creative resources of our communities, he added, "If I cannot reflect that situation, if I cannot look at it deeply, forget it. Without those roots in the community, an artist ends up writing plays for Whites because you want to tell them how Blacks live, you don't want to talk to Black people" (Wakashe & Manaka, 1986:49). Whites think that these plays about what is happening to the Blacks are good plays, then it ends there. Blacks must not write to tell the obvious, they must go into the depth of the already known (Wakashe & Manaka, 1986).

Manaka's focus was on the human experience, dealing with human problems that result from a political situation, on the conflict of the South African experience (Wakashe, 1986). To him, theatre is a celebration of life, even when one laments about socio-political issues, one seeks to celebrate life (Schauffer, 2003). He hoped for Black theatre to exist outside of Whiteness and oppression, unlike the protest theatre which reacts to White domination, however, this kind of theatre must not be ignorant of the consequences of White oppression. The distinction between protest theatre and theatre for resistance will be discussed further in the next chapter. The theatre of the Seventies and Eighties was a response to race relations; whereas he believed that before theatre adopts a feeling of protest, it should first go to the self, for Blacks to speak to themselves first and understand what it entails to be Black in the world. To have a theatre that prioritises Blackness. He promoted a theatre that will first define and educate about Blackness before going to protest. His concern was that every time "the system creates a "homeland" there is a play protesting that. In this way the oppressive system controls what we think" (Wakashe & Manaka, 1986:50). Black people have to know who they are, where they come from, to avoid being mere reactors, they have to look closely to African cultural values and rituals. Unlike Schauffer who argued that Gibson Kente's work reflected a political reality by showing the human experience, Manaka agreed that yes, credit must hugely be given to Kente for his major contribution to the development of theatre in the township, notwithstanding, he was critical of Kente's stagnancy to one formula, and his avoidance of political theatre for a long time (Schauffer, 2003). His stance was that there was more to theatre than being bound only to Black rhythm, singing and dancing (Wakashe & Manaka, 1986).

Manaka argued, "historically, we would want to call ourselves Black because of the oppressive situation we came from. We refer to black theatre, black music because it is created by people with Black Consciousness" (Schauffer, 2003:208). What if a White person – like Fugard and Simon – created a play based on Black experiences and has done it accurately, do we call that Black theatre? Where does the 'Black' start and end? What do we say when we hear a Black artist say "I am a theatre artist not a township theatre artist. I live in the suburbs, so now what do you call me?"? Matsemela said it is African theatre solely because it comes from Africa (Schauffer, 2003). There then rises a need to revisit Ngugi wa Thiong'o when he writes of African theatre in *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986). Ngugi believed that the real language of African theatre was to be found only in the life, history and the struggle of African people for it was through those struggles that a new Africa would be born.

African theatre needed no building because it is people that make theatre; it is through people's life that theatre becomes alive (Thiong'o, 1986). Manaka's stance, and as that of this paper, before looking at the content, is that it is only Black people that can produce Black theatre. To see Black theatre, Manaka adds that we have to look at the form and then the content, "You know when you read Soyinka you call it African theatre because you know or you were told it's by Soyinka but if you just read it without knowing you may think: 'This is a European piece.' Sometimes academic definitions can be frustrating and problematic" (Schauffer, 2003:209). Africa has a problem with understanding and defining itself, "We even grow up with the idea that African writers were not revolutionary because to be a revolutionary writer you were supposed to write in English for Staffrider" (Schauffer, 2003:210).

Theatre for Communication

In theatre, there is a huge issue of communication, not in terms of language because regardless of the language used, the language must communicate with those being addressed. Does the language fulfil its purpose? This kind of theatre is directed more towards the dispossessed than to the dispossessor. Should you use English, be wary of different groups within the dispossessed; there are the literate and the illiterate - the middle class and the workers. Accommodating all the dispossessed becomes a struggle to the theatre-maker. Then, what about the use of various languages within one play? The dispossessor does not mind the usage of English, in fact, he rejoices because it is his (Manaka, 1980). Theatre is a universal language of communication, not English; English dominates because of Britain's successful colonial history. Language should not hinder communication beyond different cultural barriers (Manaka, 1984). It may be a problem when trying to address both the dispossessed and the dispossessor at the same time. Hence, we see other members of the audience, in mixed crowds, laughing while others are confused. Manaka (1984) believed that the problem will persist so long as there is apartheid. Theatre is mostly based on the physical word than the written. It is good acting that makes up theatre. In Black theatre, both the actors and the audience witness the experiences of the Blacks outside the theatre hall. Since drama is drawn from life, the actor must ensure that they put life into the stage, make the audience see themselves, however both the actor and the spectator must not get emotionally attached so that they are able to think outside of what is being portrayed on stage. When the audience participates, they do not become submissive and feel pity about themselves (Manaka, 1984). Performance becomes more important than the script. Manaka would use mime in most of his

plays, maintaining his point that it is not what you say but how you show it that is important in theatre. Hence, some people would rather sit at home and read the script than go to watch a play if it is going to be badly performed. The script is the bones, the performance becomes flesh and blood (Manaka, 1984). Theatre can exist without the written word but not without an actor.

Conclusion

South Africa is a society built on racial disharmony. In whatever Black people do, they must not forget to go 'back-to-roots' because, as Biko puts it, "A people without a positive history is like a vehicle without an engine" (Biko, 2004:32). The historical past of Blacks will determine the fruitfulness of their struggle. The liberation struggle does not begin with them in the Seventies or the Eighties, there is a past to be looked at. Manaka denoted that historical development of resistance in South Africa should be the theme of Black theatre. Black theatre is the current embodiment of Blacks' cultural past while it paves way for a better society in the near future. "Our African identity should therefore take the lead in singing liberation blues" (Manaka, 1981:33). Black theatre in South Africa is about expressing the "hardships of existence in a race-based society" (Manaka, 1981:33). This chapter has shown that Manaka's Black Consciousness roots allowed him to assert that theatre must be based on love for humanity, focusing on the love for Black people and inducing pride into the Blacks. It also must confront and tell the 'truth'. Combine art with African cultural values and ghetto lives. Throughout the whole paper, Black theatre is understood as theatre by Blacks, with Blacks, for Blacks, and must be where Blacks are. In terms of language, it must be presented in various township slangs such as iScamtho/Seqamtho, Sepantsola, and Tsotsitaal (Manaka, 1981). The masses are hungry for teachings of a revolution. Prepare the people for freedom! It must reflect the present in relation to the past and prepare for the future. From this, Black theatre will not only be based on reacting to White supremacy. Blacks must not sound apologetic in their defence of Black theatre. They are critical of White oppression and exploitation. It is not racist by fighting against racism. Why do people join in the chorus, for example, when Joe Rahube starts his play by singing '*Senzeni Na?"*? It was because Rahube had mastered the art of blurring the gap between the audience and the actors (Manaka, 1981). The previous chapters have shown the importance of the interaction between the audience and the actors. After the song, Rahube starts a poem that reminds the audience about the

situations they face under apartheid. When we have received freedom - a true humanity - theatre will not stop, but its content will slightly change to that one which celebrates and is one with Black life. In conclusion, Manaka, through his theatre, was concerned with understanding and opening platforms to discuss in detail what entails Blackness. Through the understanding of what it means to be Black-in-the-White-dominated-world, Black people will commence on a journey of unity and strive for a new and true humanity, defined by Black people themselves. They will not depend on Whites, as William Smythe believed in *Chocolates for My Wife*.

Chapter 4:

Not Black Theatre? On Kente, Fugard and Multiracial Companies

Introduction

Despite the African National Congress's belief that the late Seventies to the Eighties period united Blacks and Whites against White oppression, Breyten Breytenbach, as well as the Black Consciousness Movement, argued that there was no place for Whites in the Black struggle (Kenton, 1990). Those White people in the struggle, unlike Blacks whose necessity it was to fight against apartheid for their own liberation, were fighting out of guilt, guilt that their fellow Whites were responsible for the oppression of Black people. Many White writers found interest in the Black culture and would run or supervise several multi-racial groups whose work focused on the Black subject. As Gibson Kente focused on township theatre, Athol Fugard produced plays whose main focus was the Black experience for White audiences. He would work with Black actors to get his content before the final write up of his plays. From then, there would be a rise of multi-racial theatre groups, under White direction, covering the situations that met Black people in the townships.

This chapter aims to follow on Matsemela Manaka's perspective of Black theatre to argue that the theatre produced by theatre-makers like Gibson Kente, Athol Fugard and others in multi-racial organisations like Workshop '71 and Junction Avenue Theatre Company was not Black theatre. In this paper, Black theatre is understood as theatre produced by, for and with Black people, where Blacks stay, and concerned with the message of Black Consciousness. The above-mentioned individuals and groups did not aim to instil the philosophy of Black Consciousness on the minds of those who came to spectate and call for the unity of the Blacks before charging them to fight for their liberation. They would rather produce protest theatre, a theatre based on the helplessness of Black people and appealing to White people for rescue. The chapter will begin by looking at Kente and his jovial township theatre and also challenge his take on political theatre. From then, it will go through Athol Fugard's theatre and deem him a friend of the native, not a producer of Black Consciousness theatre. As much as his works were political, however, due to his everyday life experience as a privileged White person in apartheid South Africa, the experiences he portrayed on stage were alien to

him. The chapter will close off by looking at the multi-racial theatre organisations mentioned above to find reasons why they were concerned with the Black situation under apartheid.

Protest Theatre vs Theatre of Resistance

Zakes Mda, in his article, *Current Trends in Theatre for Development in South Africa* (1998), reawakens the contrast between 'protest theatre' and 'theatre of resistance'. He argues that the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement changed politics from 'protest' to 'challenge'. There would be a shift from protest theatre to the theatre of resistance as a mode of expression. Theatre became the weapon for the struggle (Mda, 1998). Protest theatre was practised by both Black and White artists and was addressed to the oppressor to appeal to his conscience. It was a theatre of "complaint, of weeping, of self-pity, of moralizing, of mourning, and of helplessness" (Mda, 1998: 257). It did not go beyond the display of sad situations that Black people were in. Fugard and Kente, on their transformation from 'mere' entertainment to political plays, produced protest theatre. On the other hand, theatre of resistance was always geared for change, it was dealing with consciousness (Maponya, 1980). Black Consciousness theatre was beyond protest. Activists from different ideological grounds later joined in on the theatre for resistance, advocating for liberation. It was minimalist in nature: used few to no sets and props; highly mobile due to those few props; usually consisted of not more than four performers, but mostly two. It mobilised the oppressed to fight against oppression. It was more directed to the oppressed than appealing to the oppressor. Its stalwarts were artists such as, but not limited to, Manaka, Mthuli Shezi and Maishe Maponya (Mda, 1998). Beyond theatre, throughout the arts, some artists did not want to be associated with the word 'protest'. Mongane Wally Serote believed that labelling his poetry 'protest poetry', even though it was based on the consciousness of defiance, was unfortunate and reducing its value and significance (Serote & Solberg, 1998).

These abovementioned artists criticised those who produced protest theatre for attempting to "reveal the blacks to the whites" (Mda, 1998: 257). They described theatre for resistance as 'agitprop', as it propagated its message and agitated "for the oppressed to act in order to change their situation" (Mda, 1998: 257). "The process of conscientization involves the active participation of the people in transforming themselves by engaging in a dialogue through which they identify their problems, reflect on why their problems exist, and take

action to solve the problems" (Mda, 1998: 260). Theatre is to be created 'with' and not only 'for' the people. Theatre-makers became the 'catalysts' in the struggle for liberation. Theatre allows for the interaction between the world of play and the world of the community. It portrays the social reality and people can identify their problems on stage. When theatre represents the problems, does it also provide the solutions? Is it its purpose to bring about solutions? That would seem as dictating what the people must do. Theatre presents a platform for discussion. It lays down a problem, should the people identify with it, then a discussion around solving that problem will be held. It provides a platform, through audience participation, for people to come up with ways of solving their problems. Practitioners do not pose as experts who know everything about the problems affecting the community (Mda, 1998). As much as there were disagreements between protest theatre and theatre of resistance, there were also plays which were not concerned with political life (Maponya, 1998).

Not Black Enough? On Kente: The Father of Township Theatre

Gibson Kente was born in 1932 in the Eastern Cape and trained as a social worker before venturing into theatre. His theatre focused on adultery, violence, alcoholism, deaths, marriages, church meetings, and tsotsis among its various topics. In 1963, he produced the musical, *Manana, The Jazz Prophet*, led by Letta Mbulu, and played to township audiences. According to Coplan, "*Manana* was a black play, produced, directed, written, and scored by a black playwright, using black actors to dramatize their experience according to emerging black urban aesthetic conventions" (2007:268). Blacks in the audience could see their concerns being portrayed on stage. The play focused on African Christianity: personal morality and social responsibility. It is through Kente that Black theatre would be jovial and attract mass Black audiences, as it was also cheap and accessible. He then produced *Sikalo* (1966), a musical dealing with gangsterism, township suffering and social disorganisation, with Magaret Singana, Simon Sabale, Kenny Majozi, and Cocky Thlothlalemaje, as its leading actors. The play gained a successful showing and positive reception at Mofolo Hall in Soweto, and the Union Artists took it to the Great Hall of Wits University to mixed audiences. For a long time, people remembered and praised it for its artistic dynamism and social authenticity, but still critiqued its political shortcomings. He would later break ties with

the Dorkay House, to produce *Lifa* (1968) and *Zwi* (1970) on his own (Coplan, 2007). He and Nelson Mungwane would influence the rise of many young Black theatre-makers.

Schauffer comes confidently with a comment that is rarely made, he commented that Kente's work reflected a political reality by showing the human experience. He starts the conversation that asks, 'How does Black theatre portray political situations if it does not reflect the Black situation and their experiences?' Wakashe added that Black theatre is a successor of Kente's township musical theatre while it differs from it. Kente's work reflected the aesthetics of township cultural life, using township music and dance, portraying urbanised and dislocated Blacks. The Black Consciousness youth was quite impatient with such township art as Kente's, expressing that township theatre was inadequate and unrealistic for the South African situation of the Seventies, and hoping for a militant theatre, and dismissed his 1974 (political) play, *How Long*, as 'trivial entertainment' (Wakashe, 1986). Black Consciousness had an attitude towards the *Ipi Tombi* kind of theatre. With the rise of the young, enthusiastic Black Consciousness theatre-makers, his kind of theatre would later be viewed as pure (aimless) entertainment, holding no political statements. The issues he wrote about were acknowledged as serious matters as they were problems to the Black community, but he was criticised for his failure to attribute them to their root cause, colonialism and apartheid, as other political playwrights would (Horn, 1986).

With inspiration from Fugard and the Serpent Players, as well as the pressures from young theatre-makers, Kente would join political theatre in the early Seventies, focusing on the power relations and advocating for resistance. The change of approach to theatre was due to his style of theatre losing relevance – the Seventies being a decade that agitated artists to deal with the immediate; apartheid – hence he decided to produce political plays. He would produce his political work between 1973 and 1976, with *How Long*, *I Believe* (1974) and *Too Late* (1976). In his political works, he blamed the suffering of the Blacks (in the township) on apartheid, and praised Blacks for their resilience and striving for their true humanity – he began to do what the Black Consciousness youth had long been criticizing him for. *Too Late*, the most popular of the only three works by him that were criticizing the racially divided society, spoke against pass laws, police brutality, Group Areas Act, and forceful removals (Horn, 1986). Orkin added that the play "juxtaposes images of ordinary everyday township life with frequent enactments of police harassment that in almost every scene repeatedly interrupt and impede the dramatic action" (2001:170). In the play, a young, crippled woman

gets killed while resisting police violence. By presenting that, Kente wanted to show that the presence of the police in townships was not to bring about order but to extend the everyday suppression of township families. The dialogue was accompanied by physical enactments of scenes that encouraged resistance. According to Orkin, Kente's dramatisation of police violence and people's resistance won greater township support than those works by the Black Consciousness-related theatre groups, and the Serpent Players because, as Coplan argued, Black supporters of theatre complained that the works by the Serpent Players, despite their strong quality content, were too 'talky', had complex structures and expressions, and lacked musicality (Orkin, 2001). They concluded that they were too Western and unworthy of being seen more than once; "Africans might return any number of times to Kente's *How Long*, but *Sizwe* [*Bansi is Dead*] is not a 'renewable experience'" (Orkin, 2001:171). Could that all have anything to do with Fugard's, or any political theatre maker's, direction? Kente's was different from Fugard, as it reached thousands of Black township audiences, and developed a theatre of Black daily experiences (Coplan, 2007). When Kente changed his approach, to focus on political theatre, he retained his style of direction; with less text, focused on imagery and song.

Black Spots? On Fugard: A Friend of the Native

"Our white compatriots in South Africa also stand behind their cell doors, peep through the keyhole and wonder what the world outside (the future and black South Africa) has in store for them" (Manganyi, 1981:1-2). They are optimistic that the door will one day open and Blacks and Whites would live peacefully in a free country. Like Blacks, the White compatriots are searching for answers to the state of apartheid South Africa. White writers who stayed amongst Blacks or in Black communities or befriended Blacks and produced theatre that, in a way, reflected Black experiences thought they were producing Black theatre. To them, Black theatre was just "a literary subject, and a profession and most of all a business" (Rangoajane, 2011:12). Todd Matshikiza tells on *Chocolates for My Wife* that he had once done research on the story of the notorious Spoilers gang in Alexandra township for *Drum* magazine. When summoned by the leader of the gang, he told the White chief reporter of *Drum* that he needed protection from the gang and other gangs and individuals that he might investigate. The chief reporter seemed to take this lightly, and when Matshikiza warned him against undermining the Black underworld, the researcher uttered "Look ol'

chap, I've reported in this Black paper for donkey years, I don't think there's anything I don't know 'bout the Black world. Let alone the Black underworld" (Matshikiza, 1961:115). Matshikiza reminded him that he, the chief reporter, only knows about the Black world from his work desk and telephone, but for himself, Matshikiza, he is Black, lives amongst Blacks and is absolutely part of the Black world. Eagleton argued that "Writers are not just transporters of trans-individual mental structures, they are also workers hired by publishing houses to produce commodities which will sell" (1976:59). Hence, through Matshikiza and Eagleton, those White writers saw that the narrative of apartheid, through a Black perspective, was selling, and decided to join the bandwagon. The most famous of all those White writers and directors is Athol Fugard.

Before moving to Johannesburg in 1957, Athol Fugard had been involved in 'amateur' theatre in Port Elizabeth. He would later organise the founding of the Black group, the Serpent Players, with artists such as Nomhle Nkonyeni, Fats Bookholane, Welcome Duru, John Kani and Winston Ntshona. In 1958, after his relocation to Johannesburg, he produced his first play, *No-Good Friday*, in collaboration with Nat Nakasa and Lewis Nkosi, with a cast (of individuals who were soon to be big in the arts) that included Bloke Modisane, Dan Poho, Steve Moloi, Corney Mabaso, Sol Rachilo, Ken Gampu, Zakes Mokae, Gladys Sibisa, and Fugard himself. Before the play was put into paper, the actors would be given skeletal scenes to improvise on. Actors and playwrights came with their improvisation to put life to the story with their experiences of township life and gangsterism, then Fugard would take a role as the final scriber of the script. The play is about a young man who stands against gangsterism taking place in townships. As much as the play is focused on Black urban life in the gold-digging Johannesburg, it, however, "avoided larger political, economic, and racial issues", as Coplan (2007:267) believes. The show played at Brooke Theatre in Johannesburg and enjoyed a wide White audience. Coplan added, "one result was that Fugard and his talented actors left the township audience behind. There was no mass African audience for theatre, and most Africans were not prepared to accept Western dramatic forms even though their content might be familiar" (Coplan, 2007:267). Why did Fugard feel the need to discuss Black life, especially its defects such as gangsterism? Did he feel that he had a responsibility of (helping in) challenging the problems faced by Blacks? What were his main reasons for communicating Black experiences to White audiences?

Fugard continued to address Black experiences, without Black audiences in his next plays such as *Nongongo* (1959), *Boesman and Lena* (1960), and *The Blood Knot* (1962). *The Blood Knot* would help him gain an international reputation, and open London and New York doors for co-star, Zakes Mokae (Coplan, 2007). Talking about *The Blood Knot* and workshop theatre, Fugard argued, "This is the most important thing happening in South Africa today" (Nakasa, 1963:65). For a long time, he did not consider the townships as a place to showcase his works, up until he worked with Kani and Ntshona on *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972) (Coplan, 2007). He would go on to produce more workshop theatre plays in collaboration with the Serpent Players in Port Elizabeth, such as *The Coat* (1967), *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, and *The Island* (1973). They were meant to "contradict the racist, segregationist ethos of the day, and signify a commonality of human endeavour in defiance of state intention" (Holloway, 1993:18). Fugard needed Kani and Ntshona for *Sizwe Bansi* and *The Island* to hold cultural and social knowledge that these plays were based on. It was a trend that White playwrights would need the Black actors to bring their knowledge of the townships as these experiences were foreign to them. His works were overtly political when he worked with the Serpent Players (Holloway, 1993). Zakes Mda saw "Fugard's plays, no matter how radical, as depicting blacks as helpless, dispirited, dumb and bereft African workers, suffering in silence and stoically enduring their tragic situation" (Duggan, 1999:2). According to Mda, "any person who stands behind a pen must be just as effective as any person who stands behind a gun in the service of progress" (in Duggan, 1999:2). It is for such reasons that Fugard's theatre cannot be Black theatre.

On White liberals, Fatima Dike expressed:

> Now we have a problem here in that a lot of the people in our White society sympathise a lot with black people, but there is one thing that they tend to forget – that the black pain can only be experienced by the black man. They can only accompany us on our journey as far as the door, but they cannot cross the threshold which is the pain of being black (Gray, 1980:163).

It is only Blacks who suffered oppression and sought liberty in South Africa, not Whites; to White playwrights and audiences, Black theatre is foreign, a commodity, and something to satisfy their fantasy of what Blackness entails. Fugard's theatre, in the Manganyi's terms, cannot teach about the Being-of-Blackness-in-the-world. You should see White tourists when they walk around the township, smiling and taking pictures of this world they find exciting

and could not picture until they went there physically. You should see their excitement when they go to buy the 'African' artefacts at the Greenmarket Square in Cape Town CBD. They have now become the target market of those African vendors selling there. Like the White tourists, it was through the assistance of Bloke Modisane and Lewis Nkosi that Fugard would walk around townships to gather information; this information is gathered through an anthropological form – he gathers it as an outsider (Nakasa, 1963). What could have compelled or inspired Fugard to leave his comfortable White community every day to go work with these Black actors at the Dorkay House? The (racial) alienation between Blacks and Whites is the first thing that proves that Whites cannot produce Black theatre. As with Black Consciousness's rejection of White liberals, White playwrights, like Fugard, who produced works that represented the Black experience were highly criticised for not thoroughly presenting the Black situation. That was attributed to them not being Black – thus, not having empirical experiences of Blackness – and avoiding offending fellow Whites in power and in the audience. It was not a matter of "If you are going to portray the Black experience, please do it well", NO, by virtue of being White meant that they would not be able to thoroughly present Blackness and all that it entailed. According to Dike, they were shouting from the outside (Gray, 1980).

Biko spoke against White liberals having double standards; they can move between both Black and White spaces and enjoy trust and benefits from both to maintain comfort. Black theatre was for Blacks to redefine themselves, without White involvement. White writers misinterpret and misrepresent the Black experience. Hauptfleisch and Steadman controversially argued that Black theatre is 'Black' not in terms of its creator's skin colour, but their ideology and social consciousness inspired by Black Consciousness (Hauptfleisch & Steadman, 1984). Following on this definition, one runs the risk of confirming Fugard, Kavanagh or any White theatre-maker whose concern is Black life, as creators of Black theatre. Biko defines Black Consciousness as "the realisation by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their operation – the blackness of their skin – and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude" (2004: 52). Thus, Black theatre travels towards emancipation and is committed to fight against forces that seek to label Blacks as subservient beings (Biko, 2004).

Why did White playwrights choose to associate themselves with Black theatre? If they wanted to speak out against apartheid, wasn't there another way? Or were they also using the

only way they knew how? Rangoajane asks if Hauptfleisch and Steadman and other White theatre-makers of Black concern "have any idea what transpires in the mind of a black playwright to write a monologue of this nature: "Abelungu abathakathi. Bulala abathakathi" (Whites are witches, kill the witches)" (2011:16)? Do they have any experience of what it feels like for a black actor to take to the stage and utter such words and end up chanting: "Amandla! Amandla! Amandla!"? What does a play intended to raise the consciousness of a Black person do to a White person in the audience? Rangoajane is adamant that White theatre-makers do not produce Black theatre, and it is only Black people who can produce Black theatre.

White Souls in Black Theatre? On Multi-racial Theatre Organisations

Between 1953 and 1955, Ian Bernhardt helped find the Bareti Players who would stage one-act plays in the townships of Johannesburg, beginning with Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*. From then, Bernhardt, alongside Guy Routh, Meshack Mosia, Gwigwi Mrwebi, Sipho Sepamla, Don Poho, Bob Leskoi and more, would go on to establish the Union Artists, a theatre organisation open to all. They worked at the Dorkay House to produce *King Kong (1959)*, *Township Jazz*, and more musical theatre. Bernhardt claimed to protect the rights of Black artists and create a community not based on race, between Black and White artists (Coplan, 2007).

Horn speaks of 'theatre of exploitation' as the theatre that does nothing to bring change, which was later highly criticised by Black artists (Horn, 1986). Roughly before the Seventies, we were introduced to those internationally successful productions such as *King Kong* (1959) and *Sponono* (1964). They were mostly for White audiences and commercial means. The first of their formulas is that they have the mentality of *Jim Comes to Jo'burg*: a young naïve Black man moves from the rural areas to the city in pursuit of greener pastures. He gets blinded by the city lights; along the way, he loses his roots and subsequently returns home after the city had corrupted him (Horn, 1986). These kinds of plays present a jovial practice of African tradition with a great deal of drum beating, people bouncing half-naked around the stage, yelling and singing loudly. Such plays sell a happy and rhythmic African image, romanticizing African societies, depicting Blacks who choose the rural areas over the cities,

for example, in *Ipi Tombi* (1973). These forms continued with the state's separate relocation policies, placing Africans in the Bantustans while Whites enjoy life in the cities. They saw it as reasonable and historically legitimate. These kinds of plays appealed more to White tourists than the Blacks in the townships.

If these shows did not go overseas, they would be seen by touring groups and Whites who reside in the country. Such plays included, but not limited to *uMabatha* (1973) by Welcome Msomi, a Zulu adaptation of Macbeth, which toured London (1974) and America (1979), *Mboni* (1973), *Meropa* (1975), which was changed to *Kwazulu* on its London tour, *Mma Thari* (1975 - 1980), published in White press, *Mzumba* (1968–1978), a "traditional musical with sexy performance acts" (Horn, 1986:214), *Ifindo* (1980), based on the ancient act of killing the second-born twin, and *Ipi Tombi* (1974) by Bertha Ethos. *Ipi Tombi* was initially titled *Iph'intombi* (translated as 'Where is the girl') but somehow changed due to being played for European audiences. It played in London for 6 years, the United States, Nigeria as an opener for the then newly built National Theatre in Lagos, Israel, and Taiwan amongst its many international visits. It is the descendant of the *Jim Comes to Jo'burg* storyline (Horn, 1986). It was criticised as a White person's fairy tale, meant for White self-admiration, painting the Group Areas Act as best for Blacks, and that Black people are happier at the rural areas than in the cities.

Multi-Racial Theatre

In 1959, *King Kong* would make way for 'formal' theatre in the country. Corney Mabaso came with the controversial and contested statement that it was until Fugard moved from Port Elizabeth to Johannesburg in 1957 that Johannesburg would start having African drama (Coplan, 2007). H.I.E. Dhlomo's *Moshoeshoe* was deemed too rural and folkloristic for the urban taste. In the late 1940s to the early 1950s, when many people were migrating to the cities, there arose conflicting ideas between these rural values, Western culture, and urbanism in theatre, and the arts in general. Theatre in the townships would go on to adopt the urban lifestyle (Coplan, 2007). Dan Twala produced *Isinkwa*, with the White theatre-maker, Michael Kittermaster, about a deteriorating Black family. In the play, the rural village adopts Christianity, one family is forced to move to the town, where their son will be overtaken by

gambling, losing their savings while their father slaves in the mill factories. The mother of the house gets arrested for illegally brewing and selling alcohol, and their daughter disappears in the city. The last scene of the play shows the mother praying at the father's deathbed (Coplan, 2007). These kinds of plays showed how dangerous city life was for Blacks, and that only the villages were good for them. They were to motivate Black people to have the eagerness of going back to the homelands. Black-run theatre organisations in Johannesburg disappeared after Khabi Mngoma and Es'kia Mphahlele's Syndicate of Black Artists was forced by the government to disband in 1956. They were dramatizing African folk tales and doing comic sketches and scenes from English plays while organizing school concerts and festivals. The majority of standing theatre organisations would be those run by Whites.

Workshop '71

Founded in 1971 as an Institute of Race Relations for the promotion of multiracial cooperation, under the leadership of Robert "Mshengu" Kavanagh, at Johannesburg, Workshop '71 came in the Black Consciousness-dominated Seventies as an arts organisation which promoted the collaboration of artists beyond colour lines. The White theatre-makers, just like in any multi-racial group, would do the most talking and maintain control; the collaboration was on the account of the Whites (Copteros, 2002). The group's first workshopped show was *Crossroads* in 1972. As with other workshopped plays, *Crossroads* was based on actual experiences of the artists and other Black people outside of the theatre venue. The show was located in White City Jabavu, a poor, crime-ridden township in Soweto, with Left Mann as its central character based on the actual life of Lefty Mthembu, a 1960s leader of *The Spoilers* gang in Alexandra township. The play used Tsotsitaal as a central language to portray the actual experiences of the cast members and fellow South Africans (Holloway, 1993). The problem with *Crossroads* and other multi-racial workshop plays was that they were usually performed in town theatre halls and reached a very minimal township audience. This inhibited its function as a tool for Black conscientisation. *Crossroads*'s strong emphasis on gangsterism clouded its message against the forced removals of families, influx control, and economic exploitation; the show painted gangsterism greater than the social ills, rather, this was to "confirm stereotypical views of the innate violence of black society" (Holloway, 1993:19). The White members, as in any multicultural organisation, had the first and last voice in Workshop '71 (Holloway, 1993:19). For Black Consciousness, White involvement in Black political and cultural activity was controversial, a massage to White

guilt, and detrimental to the anti-apartheid struggle (Biko, 2004). The group disbanded in 1976 after threats from the South African government after it took *Survival* to Europe.

Junction Avenue Theatre Company

As Workshop '71 disbanded in 1976 after the European tour of *Survival*, its members went to exile while some of its township members who remained in the country moved towards the newly found Junction Avenue Theatre Company. The company was founded in 1976 by University of Witwatersrand students, aimed to reclaim and popularise South Africa's history hidden by the apartheid government. The company promoted non-racialism, focusing on oppression, forceful removals, the social order and domination as its topics (Copteros, 2002). As a group, they were producing a theatre that would interpret South Africa, theorise about the future, while creating a new, informed, and articulate generation (Purkey, 1986). Was theirs a formation of an inclusive generation? A 'quest for a true humanity' for all? Their first project was a play titled *The Fantastical History of a Useless Man* (1976), played by an all-White cast, based on the country's history from 1652, the arrival of Jan van Riebeek, to 1976, the year of the Soweto uprising. The play was evaluating the role of the English-speaking White person during the uprising of 1976 (Purkey, 1986). It claimed to investigate and reveal the history of South Africa not taught in the institutions of learning. Copteros argued that it was referred to as a new perspective of looking at the situation of South Africa – but what was new about Whites teaching history (to Blacks), especially in the mid-1970s when Blacks were complaining about the kind of education they were receiving? The bearer of the narrative had not changed, hence some saw nothing new with what the group was doing (Copteros, 2002). Black South Africans were in a situation whereby they had been revolting against Bantu Education that taught them a fabricated history because the narrative was controlled by a White hand, so for these White students to come up with a play that spoke of South African history was not new to the Blacks.

After their first project, they decided to include other races to the organisation: "if we were to begin to reflect the true nature of the conflicts around us, we had to become a non-racial group" (Purkey, 1986:ix). As Black artists joined in, its contents broadened: focused on liquor and labour in the gold mines, *Randlords & Rotgut* (1978); the life of Breyten Breytenbach, *Will of a Rebel* (1979); relationships between maids and their madams, *Dikitsheneng* (1980); unemployed men turned into dogs, *Security* (1979); workers' theatre, in

collaboration with trade unions, *Ilanga Lizo Phumela Abasebenzi* (1982) and; forceful urban removals (in Doornsfontein in the 1930s and 1940s), *Marabi* (1982) which was adapted from Modikwe Dikobe's novel, *The Marabi Dance*, speaking on the state's destruction of the Marabi culture (Purkey, 1986). From then on, most of Junction Avenue's main actors would be Black. In *Sophiatown* (1986), besides the writer and director, there was only one White actor. *Sophiatown* focused on the 1950s forceful removals from Sophiatown to the township of Meadowlands. The play was a narration of the cries of those moved out of the town and also plays along with the diversity, survival, creativity and lyricism, and energy of the people who lived in that area before moving out (Copteros, 2002). *Sophiatown* can be labelled theatre of resistance, however, since it is a creation of a White theatre-maker, and following from this paper's definition of Black Consciousness theatre, the play cannot be labelled Black Consciousness theatre.

Conclusion

South African theatre, mostly in the Seventies, was a response to apartheid and a conversation starter amongst Blacks, amongst Whites, and between Blacks and Whites to reveal the contradictions in the broader society of South Africa. Between Blacks and Whites, it is clear who oversaw the conversations, who spoke and who listened. The paper is aware that even amongst the Blacks, there were internal disagreements. However, the theatre of the Seventies was partisan, it had to choose a side, with apartheid fuelling its content. Purkey called it a theatre of energy (energetic theatre) – "This energy is centred in a deep-rooted spirit of revolt which informs the very heart of these plays, even when they deal with the most horrific social and political events" (Purkey, 1986:v). They relied on improvisation of sound, dance, physical performance, song, and mime. They later got translated into text whereas many, especially those produced solely by Blacks, did not get to see the publishing rooms and are unable to be found on paper today. With Manaka and other theorists who viewed Black theatre as a theatre for Black people, with Black people and by Black people with Black Consciousness, this chapter has proven that the theatre produced by Gibson Kente, whose more focus was township life, Athol Fugard and theatre-makers who worked under multi-racial theatre organisations was not Black theatre as its focus was to appeal to the White audiences. These theatre-makers' depiction of being-Black-in-the-world was one that justified the government's separate development policies.

The theatre of the above-mentioned theatre-makers does nothing to pacify the destitute of Black life: it says, ‘REMAIN IN THE BANTUSTANS IF YOU WANT TO AVOID LIFE LIVED BY BLACK PEOPLE IN THE BIG CITIES”. They paint the cities as the only problem to the Black but do nothing about that besides displaying a helpless Black person who must go back to the homelands. It is usually when people show emotions on stage that we admire them for their ‘good acting’, tears become equated to good artistry. When the scene slows down and the actor takes the audience to that moment of sadness, they feel pity for that actor: ‘Oh no, it is sad what they are going through’, then it ends there. The audience feels sad when the main character feels sad, and is applauded for being a good actor. Emotion ties you to the stage against your better judgement, as if you are in a moment of trance. This is the kind of theatre that Kente, Fugard, Mshengu and other theatre-makers engaged in multiracial theatre groups produced. The audience often leaves the theatre hall feeling pity of the character, then it ends there. They will continue with their lives under apartheid. The play did not communicate any message of solidarity and a quest for a true humanity. The Black Consciousness youth was very critical of such a theatre. This theatre failed to attribute the fact of Blackness to apartheid and further colonialism. It was not a theatre that pushed, through Black Consciousness, for Black people to strive for true humanity whereby no race rules the other, however, it was on the receiving end, portraying Black people for whom pity must be felt.

Conclusion

Why does it matter that the people must relate to what is being displayed on stage? The conditions of Black theatre were the same conditions of Black people outside the stage. The paper is premised on Black theatre as that theatre that is produced by Black theatre-makers, for Black people, with Black people, where Black people live, and with a philosophy of Black Consciousness. Through the conception of being-Black-in-the-world, we understand Black Consciousness as the mutual knowledge and sharing of suffering, and the mutual knowledge and sharing of the past - understanding why Blacks find themselves in the situation they are currently in - and the mutual sharing of aspirations of a better future. The paper has investigated the plays of the 70s to see if they did teach of such mutual knowledge and sharing. Black theatre opened a platform to discuss the conditions of Blackness, discussed a way to resist apartheid, and called for the rise of Black people's consciousness and Black unity. This paper reads the theatre produced in the 1970s through Manganyi's conception of *Being-Black-in-the-World* and reads it alongside Fanon's *Fact of Blackness*. The paper discussed those plays which portrayed Blacks who shared 'mutual knowledge' of the quest to end suffering. The conditions portrayed on stage were conditions that the artists were going through in their daily lives, and there was a good chance that those in the audience had gone through or were going through or knew someone who had went through what was being displayed on stage. Not having a theatre hall to rehearse in, being forced to rehearse and perform in church and school halls and outside in the fields and in people's yards was an extension of not having a 'proper' place to call your own, so you must rent a house that will become your home. The conditions at home – not having resources – forced them to adopt 'poor theatre'. Black theatre-makers had no props and full theatre equipment, on stage there would be alcohol crates used, for example in *eGoli*, as beds and chairs. Manaka comes to criticise the European concept of 'poor theatre' arguing that for such theatre-makers as Grotowski it was a choice, but for township theatre-makers it was a reality, hence there was a lot of imagination used. Not having enough time to yourself and family, these artists also had no time for theatre-making as they would come late from work, tired but still met to workshop and rehearse these plays for few hours per night.

Why do White liberals leave their places of comfort and go work with Black theatre-makers in the township? Through Biko, we understand that it was because of guilt – the guilt of being

a White person in apartheid South Africa. Superiority vs inferiority. In multi-racial theatre, White people decided on what should be done, with Blacks only listening. The Blacks improvise their experiences as Black people, then it gets scribed by one White – Fugard, Kavanagh, Simon - who will take the role of writer and director of the play. After a few weeks, the scribe will be expected to gather those thoughts into a script then the final play will be staged mostly in the cities for White audiences. The White audiences rejoiced and loved those plays whose core was Black suffering. They agreed that these were good plays and were sad that such things happen to Black people, however, them (White audiences) do not take responsibility of the White government's actions. Nothing would be done about the Black condition. The main message behind these plays was that Blacks were best in homelands than in the urban areas, for they will suffer there. That was seen as an extension to the government's segregation policies.

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