

15

**Meaningful Mouthpieces:
The deconstruction of texts for theatrical (re)presentation**

by

Heike Gehring

GHRHEI001

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

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Signature

Date

Signed by candidate

1/10/2001

Heike Gehring

1 October 2001

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We already live out the aesthetic hallucination of reality. Today the real and the imaginary are confounded in the same operational totality, in the black box of the code. Surely this must mean the end of the theatre of representation – the space of signs, their conflict and their silence.

- JEAN BAUDRILLARD (Birringer 182)

FIGURE 1.1



FIGURE 1.2



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments		V
Abstract		VI
Introduction		1
Chapter One	DE(CON)STRUCTION	6
Chapter Two	FORM(IN)G CHAOS	12
	□ Linear-post-linear	14
	○ Fragmentation	20
	○ Displacement	24
	○ Layering	32
Chapter Three	E(MERG)ENT FORM	35
(Non)conclusion		38
References		39
Annexure A	DRAMATIC TEXT: TRIVIAL PURSUIT	

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this research is the translation of deconstruction theory into theatre practice. This is proposed as a way of challenging notions of truth and myths perceived as truth. In dealing with this challenge, notions of post-linearity were applied to text. The application of post-linearity resulted in a theatre collage reminiscent of collage as visual art form.

The translation of deconstruction theory into theatre practice was explored by creating and directing a play entitled Trivial Pursuit with senior performance students from the Drama Department of the University of Cape Town. The play premiered at the Standard Bank National Arts Festival in Grahamstown on 29 June 2001, followed by a short season at the Arena Theatre of the UCT Drama Department.

The following written submission is divided into two parts. The first is an exploration of the theory and creative method that was applied in the process of creating and directing Trivial Pursuit. The second contains the theatrical form of Trivial Pursuit.

Part 1

The theory of deconstruction is explored and examined in its application to theatre practice in the first chapter.

Ways in which notions of post-linearity can be applied to deconstruct dramatic and nondramatic texts to create theatre are examined in the second chapter. Specific reference is made to the application of these notions in creating Trivial Pursuit.

The form of Trivial Pursuit is outlined and related to the postmodern world in the third chapter.

Part 2

Dramatic text of Trivial Pursuit.

Truth changes in the course of history

- EISENMANN (Papadakis 17)

Figure 2



INTRODUCTION

In the theatre project Meaningful Mouthpieces: The deconstruction of text for theatrical (re)presentation, the dismantling of dramatic and nondramatic texts is explored via the translation of deconstruction theory into theatre practice. It is done as a means of unsettling myths perceived as truth in a theatre practice that, too often, is locked in logocentric notions. The practical exploration is primarily based on an appropriation and application of terminology offered by post-linearity, as referred to in The Routledge Reader of Politics and Performance. (Goodman)

Notions of truth

Truth is traditionally associated with what is perceived as real and accurate. Thus, to establish a truth, what is being posed as true has to be in agreement with what is known or factual. A truth can therefore be constructed from a core or origin. Myths, on the other hand, are conventionally fabrications which explain phenomena that are otherwise incomprehensible or inconceivable.

Individuals and social groupings may often be influenced to accept myths as truth. This leads to practices based on perceived truths. The status attached to myths will often depict to what extent they are accepted as truths. In theatre perceived truths may determine theatre practice. A truth may also be introduced or supported by those in authority who assist in constructing these beliefs. Such a truth would favour and support a specific point of view, based on someone's beliefs. It could be argued that there are as many truths as there are points of view, thereby negating the possibility of a single truth.

Deconstruction offers a way of challenging so-called truths, suggesting that they are all myths. Derrida¹ suggests that there is no truth, only ideology.

The influence of deconstructive thinking is strongly reflected in the recent work of the South African theatre director, Martinus Basson. His move away from logocentric approaches to theatre is apparent in Ek, Anna Van Wyk, Boklied and Waarom is die wat voor toyi-toyi altyd die vetste?².

In Ek, Anna Van Wyk, for example, the young Anna is played by a man. The actor who portrays the part of the director intervenes in the action during the performance, breaking the illusion that it is a fixed play being performed. The linear flow of narrative is interrupted and contributes to the impression of continual action. Basson introduces elements of surprise by upending traditional notions around theatre.

Basson's theatre productions come across as sensory experiences, offering the audience a myriad of visual and verbal imagery, seemingly without the intention of making sense in a rational manner: the audience is left to derive its own answers and meaning. It has to do this by means of active engagement.

Kozel concurs that "...in addition to letting viewers play an active role in creating meaning for themselves, [it] let(s) us decide what to do about it. It is political, but it avoids being prescriptive" (260).

¹ Jacques Derrida is a French philosopher whose essay Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences began a new critical movement called Deconstruction. (Cullon 222)

² Ek, Anna van Wyk premiered at the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees in 1999, Boklied at the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees in 1998 and Waarom is die wat voor toyi-toyi altyd die vetste? at the Aardklop Festival in 2000.

The lack of answers, perpetuated by an eclectic theatre form in which a free play of signs³ is evident, encourages the audience to participate in an active investigation to find meaning. Bennington claims:

Dekonstruktion ist nicht was Du denkst - wenn das, was man denkt, ein Inhalt ist, dem Gehirn gegenwärtig, "in the mind's presence-room". Aber daß man denkt, könnte schon Dekonstruktion sein (1).

[Deconstruction is not *what* you think - when what you think is content, the brain acting consciously, "in the mind's presence-room". But *that* you think could already be Deconstruction.] (Own translation)

Basson's work offers the audience an opportunity to interpret his work in a subjective manner. His works are of an interactive nature, as they encourage the audience actively to engage in the process of creating meaning. This challenges traditional notions that the meaning of a production is constructed solely by the theatre maker, who offers it to the audience as truth.

Deconstruction in the rehearsal room

The actor-director relationship should ideally also be interactive, thereby preventing one from gaining superiority over another. The workshop process is ideal for deconstructive practice, inviting actors to relate personal experiences of the addressed subject matter. The theatre makers in this project were able to make a strong contribution to the practical investigation of deconstruction theory. Notions of post-linearity were applied to shape this exploration.

The choice of actors was determined by the need to explore the notion of myths perceived as truths in South Africa's political history. The group finally included Xhosa-, English- and Afrikaans-speaking people, with black, coloured and white African backgrounds. The

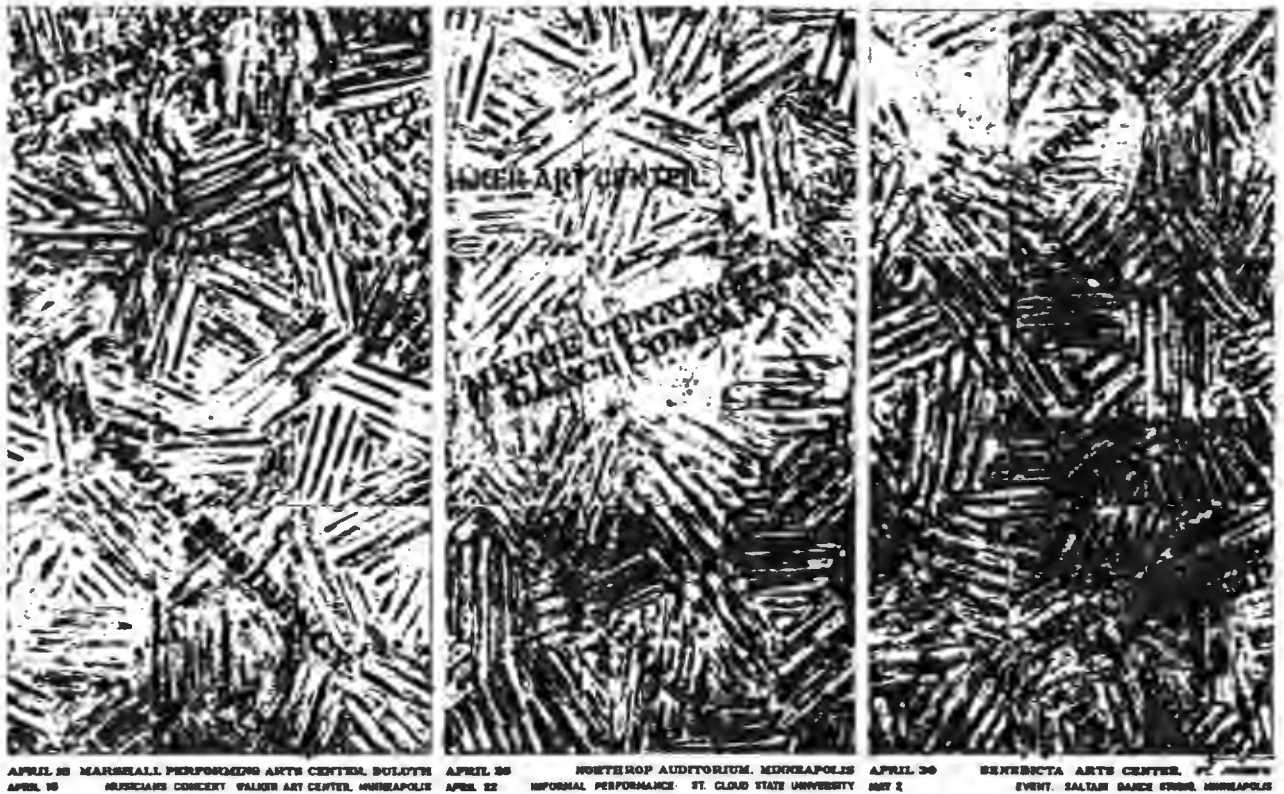
Finally one begins to have no further idea of what is meant by coming, coming before, coming after, warning, coming back and the difference between generations, as well as inheriting, writing one's own will, dictating, speaking, being dictated to...

- DERRIDA (Birringer 86)

CHAPTER ONE

DE (CON) STRUCTION

Figure 4



Deconstruction⁴ was developed by Jacques Derrida as a critique of metaphysical thinking - an approach to uncover the multiple layers and meaning of text. It is regarded as an antirationalist, sceptical, anticommon sense, antihumanist and antiscientific way of thinking. Deconstruction is based on the argument that meaning can never be mastered. As Norris points out, Derrida does not accept "the 'common sense' notion that some texts are straightforward and can be interpreted as such" (qtd in Stevens 9).

⁴ Deconstruction refers to a particular kind of practice in reading and thereby a method of criticism and mode of analytical inquiry. "Deconstruction can perhaps best be described as a theory of reading which aims to undermine the logic of opposition within texts" (A Dictionary of Critical Theory 210).

According to Derrida, all texts exhibit *différance*⁵: they allow multiple interpretations. He argues that meaning is diffused, not settled, and that textuality always gives us a surplus of possibilities (Jones 1-2).

Derrida suggests that the craving for origin, truth and presence is an intrinsic part of Western thinking and uses deconstruction as a critique of this way of thinking. He refers to the search for origin and truth as a "logocentric myth" (Stevens 10) in which one term is privileged over another. Literary text, reality, structure and author are often privileged in a logocentric approach.

In privileging one term over another, binary oppositions are formed in which the former is regarded as superior to the latter, for example good vs. evil, male vs. female, First World vs. Third World, text vs. spoken word and rationale vs. instinct. In theatre, examples of binary oppositions are author vs. actor, theatre vs. dance, actor vs. audience and text vs. improvisation.

A logocentric approach to theatre texts may narrow down the possibilities for interpretation as these interpretations are generally based on established value systems, beliefs and methods, leaving limited alternatives to theatre makers and the audience. In these belief systems, theatrical components such as dialogue, actors, costume and set design have to relate to a final message, geared towards a specific interpretation of the play. These components, used in the context of the production, are therefore consistent with the intended meaning of the playwright, director or performers. An adherence to a distinct categorisation of components can, however, be perceived as stifling the creative process of making theatre.

⁵ *Différance* is a word coined by Derrida and refers to "inserting the gap between signifier and signified [which] disorganises established knowledge. What is left is a play of signification, a process without end or closure. The meaning of a sign lies in its difference to other signs, but this meaning is always endlessly deferred" (Stevens 10).

A significant amount of rehearsal time may be allocated to the interpretation or establishment of the playwright or director's intention in order to confirm it during the performance. This usually leads to one point of view being privileged over another. The audience may perceive this point of view as "truth" and the recognition of alternative meanings inherent in the text may be obscured. The text or production is treated as closed, encouraging the audience or theatre maker to treat it objectively: the audience or theatre maker is asked to observe and understand rather than to be part of the experience. The emphasis is placed primarily on interpretation and not on creation.

Deconstruction, as an alternative to this approach, is used to rebel against the attempt to find consistency in meaning and to validate all interpretations of texts according to a core or origin. Owing to its anti-authoritarian nature - rebellion against common-sense criticism - deconstruction offers a less limiting and stifling approach both to theatre makers and the audience. Stevens argues that "deconstruction might be seen as sympathetic to the actual processes of creativity and artmaking, which are often personal, variable, ambiguous and indefinable" (11).

The rebellion against logocentric approaches is activated by deconstruction in that it works from within the logocentric text, using it as a critique of itself. The duality implied in the word illuminates this approach to text: the term "deconstruction" draws immediate attention to the structure of texts. However, the purpose is to approach existing structures in a critical manner. By the same token, it does not annihilate or demolish components of text, as is often incorrectly claimed.⁶

The application of deconstruction theory in theatre may ultimately lead to a product in which there is no distinction between audience and performers; in which improvised

⁶ Cuddon argues that what is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, if anything, is the "claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. A deconstructive reading is a reading which analyses the specificity of a text's critical difference from itself" (222).

performances and the re-arrangement of theatrical components result in a different product every time. In this approach to text, a sense of closure is avoided. A product can be created that derives its meaning from the sensory experience of the audience, not from a rational analysis of text.

The works of theatre makers Robert Wilson and Laurie Anderson are prime examples of productions in which strong emphasis is placed on the interplay and displacement of theatrical and nontheatrical components. Wilson's use of stage is comparable to a laboratory of "image associations, sci-fi simulations, polyphonic sound landscapes, abstract sculptural designs, uninterpretable and self-recursive signs" (Birringer 195). In Anderson's United States performance, "the visual information...moves around as if we could not perceive anything...as we try to keep up with the transitional ready-made images from the postmodern media" (Birringer 30).

They create productions that are seemingly chaotic and in which meaning is derived from the audience's experience of the work. Both these theatre practitioners view the world as a place in which reason has failed as a means of making meaning and address their audiences by means of "nonreason"⁷. The audience and/or theatre maker becomes empowered, as Stevens succinctly points out:

He or she is encouraged to discover personal responses and associations within the play of references of an artwork, and to be sceptical of all 'experts', whether these are artists or critics (11).

This notion deprives the author or theatre maker of ownership over the product in so far as he or she has no control over the possible meaning a performance can offer an audience.

⁷ A multiplicity of meaning is created, which, if viewed simplistically, seems like a constitution of nonreason or chaos.

A negation of control enables theatre makers and audiences to throw off the restraints of interpretations based on existing critical traditions, practices and value systems. Instead, artists are liberated and freed to “fuse forms, break barriers, and mix approaches” (Stevens 8), enabling a free play of signs, which engages them in exciting multiplex and antitotalitarian projects.

Through its antitotalitarian approach, the distinct boundaries between various types of art, literature and philosophy in Western thinking is diffused by deconstruction. What used to be labelled as theatre, dance, opera, art and architecture now become performance art, dance theatre, architectural theatre landscapes, theatre engineering and operatic theatre.

An example of this is Robert Wilson’s Einstein on the Beach, which, according to Marranca, is an opera. However, it “recalls many moments in art history..., creating a verbal text from a variety of sources that include pop lyrics, the WABC round-the-clock disc jockey schedule, ...and written speeches of cast members”. It is so far removed from opera that it actually becomes an “anti-opera” (Marranca 119). Similarly, in Trivial Pursuit components are borrowed from various art forms and disciplines. These will be discussed later.

According to Stevens, deconstruction enables a “shift away from the object itself and from the aesthetic issues that were the major concern of modernism, towards a concern with social and cultural interpretations of an intertextual⁸ nature, a kind of merging of concerns” (3).

⁸ Intertextuality opens the space in which free associations can be made – [it is] “...everything we already know and which the image may therefore evoke, whether by intention or not. These intertextual fields are themselves in a constant process of change” (qtd in Stevens 9).

The concept of progress is to be grounded in the idea of the catastrophe. That things 'just go on' is the catastrophe. It is not that which is approaching but that which is.

- WALTER BENJAMIN (Birringer 180)

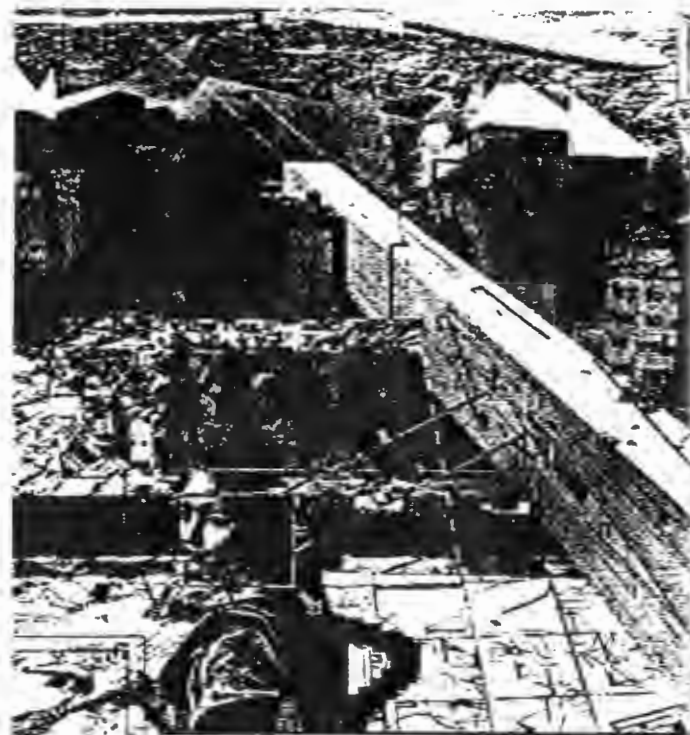
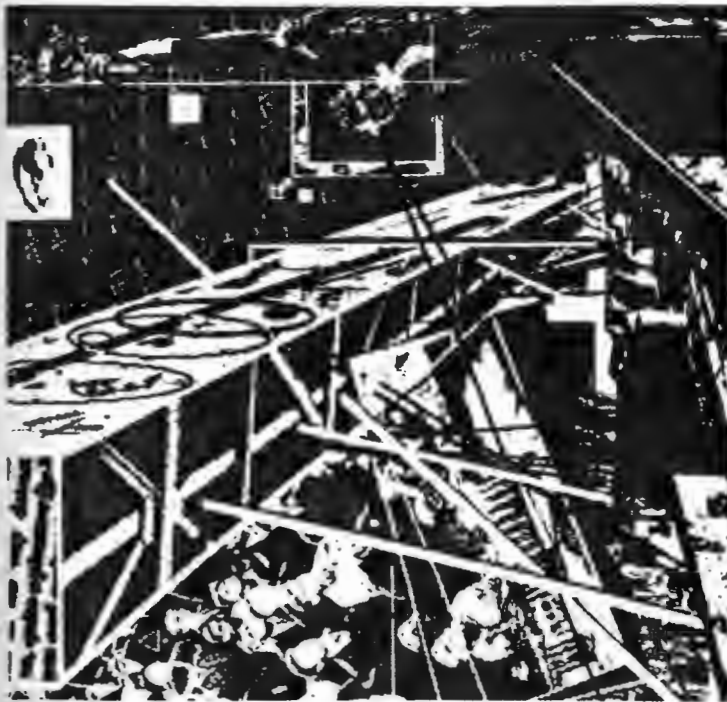
CHAPTER TWO

FORM(IN)G CHAOS

Deconstruction negates the appeal to an authority to define the meaning of components in a text. It is, therefore, rather difficult to generalise about deconstruction practice.

Post-linearity is a term that originated as part of the jargon of digital systems. In theatre it is used by some theatre practitioners as a way of referring to performance⁹. Post-linearity offers concrete ways in which the text can be dismantled to create meaning. It implies, in essence, a move beyond linear narrative, offering ways in which a multiplicity of meaning can be created.

Figure 5



⁹ For a broader discussion, see Kozel in *The Routledge Reader in Politics and Performance*. (Goodman)

I am working with time in the same way I am working with space, stretching it, compressing it, twisting it, manipulating it.

- MEREDITH MONK (Steinman 130)

Figure 6



Linearity derives its meaning from analogue systems in which there is a systematic, uninterrupted flow of codes. The video and tape recorder, as well as the record player, are examples of analogue systems. Although the tape and video recorder facilitate a flexibility of movement, the format remains analogue. In order to reach a point, the user still has to go through unwanted material, no matter how fast it happens. It remains a linear approach to reach a specific point and arrive at the desired material. The following statement illustrates how Susan Kozel views linearity:

Linearity and clear narrative structures have been associated with conventional or 'mainstream' theatre. Politically they have been associated with totalitarianism or, on the softer side, simple conservatism. The performance invited by linearity (as either an actor or a citizen) is one of 'following the line', whether this be dictated by tradition, a political party or a playwright (258).

This statement illustrates how linear performance relates to logocentrism. In a linear theatre performance a "line" will be "followed" by means of a master narrative through which a single "story" is narrated. The only way in which other "stories" can operate within a linear context is as complementary to, and consistent with, the master narrative: the main "story" is assisted and highlighted by others.

Post-linearity, on the other hand, similar to deconstruction, has been associated with “a radical explosion of meaning. [It] translates into a fragmentation of histories and language where it is up to the reader of multiple social texts to create meaning” (Kozel 258).

Flowing from this, the theatre maker can create a product that is not based on theories or methodologies formed by existing theatre authorities:

The subject has no rational way to evaluate a preference in relation to judgments of truth, morality, aesthetic experience or objectivity. As the old hierarchies of thought are torn down, a new clearing is formed on the frontiers of understanding... consisting of subcultures, without specific morals; historical or aesthetic codes that are followed. (Kozel 260)

This ties in with deconstruction theory, where intertextuality enables theatre makers to reflect on a world that is “fragmented culturally and aesthetically, a world of subcultures... one in which a comprehensive, integrating cultural theory is lacking” (qtd in Stevens 11).

Post-linearity can be compared to a network or a spider’s web. The post-linear performance relates strongly to activities that form part of postmodern mass culture, influenced by the use of digital systems.

A track on a CD player can, for example, be skipped in order to listen to another track or to listen to tracks in random order. This is done at the touch of a button, thereby eliminating unwanted material. Computers have a cut-and-paste function, enabling users to move information around and work in different files simultaneously. Moving material backwards and forwards; editing, inserting and deleting information have become an intrinsic part of Western mass culture. Television programmes are interrupted by advertising breaks. The remote control, used to switch from one channel to another, has become a common commodity in many households.

A change in direction is implied by these activities and functions. In theatre, this change in direction can refer to the interruption of a scene at any given time and the insertion of another, unrelated scene. In Trivial Pursuit this is illustrated by Mother's "Woolworths" speech (9-10). It interrupts the preceding scene, "1,2,3...1,2,3..." (8-9), and stands by itself, unrelated to the previous scenario. It abruptly cuts the linear narrative, functioning in a manner similar to buttons in digital systems. The scene ends abruptly too, without offering the audience or viewer¹⁰ any answers, and cuts back into "1,2,3...1,2,3..." which continues from where it was interrupted, without any reference to Mother's speech. It is from the relationship or lack of a relationship between the two scenes that meaning emerges.

The interruption of linear flow and the change of direction within theatre productions can be constructed in a variety of ways. In a multimedia theatre performance the live stage performance can be interrupted and/or layered by, for example, a film screening or the use of slides or video clips. Motion-tracking and motion-capturing systems is another way in which the performers' movements can be portrayed in alternative ways, thereby offering alternative perspectives on what is already perceived during the live performance. In this way the perception of "truth" (what is perceived on stage) is challenged by offering an alternative "truth" (the translation of gestures into alternative forms through motion-tracking).

The possible formation of a singular truth is negated, posing the option that what is perceived as truth might be a myth altogether. There is no hierarchy of importance in the text and components of the text function independently of one another.

¹⁰ Owing to the link between post-linearity and digital systems, audience members are also perceived as interactive viewers.

Although the term post-linearity originally formed part of digital jargon, the application of multimedia is not imperative in the creation of a post-linear performance. It can also be constructed by, for example, mixing different disciplines such as fine art, dance, opera and literature, allowing them to interrupt one another in a performance in which the direction of the narrative constantly changes. In this way the notion that theatre is viewed as a single art form is challenged and hierarchies, as constituted by binary oppositions, are broken down owing to the displacement of art forms and the equal status given to all disciplines of art. According to Derrida, "there are no governing structures" (Stevens 6),

In Trivial Pursuit, this is most evident in the combination of literary texts taken from different genres to form a dramatic text: poetry, political speeches, political slogans, extracts from newspaper articles, monologues and extracts from the performers' diaries were merged.

Barriers between literary genres are broken, challenging traditional perceptions of the contexts in which these texts should be applied. In other words, a political speech is no longer used by a politician propagating a political ideology at a political meeting and a poem is no longer recited as a closed entity. By the same token, dramatic dialogue, which is traditionally accepted as the main form of narration in theatre, is of no more importance than the other forms of dialogue.

In Trivial Pursuit, the application of various acting styles, based on different disciplines, serves as a further way of upending "logocentric myths". Pina Baush's *Tanztheater*¹¹, Grotowski's use of masks¹² and Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*¹³, mixed with elements of realism, opera, dance and African praise poetry, turn the performance into an

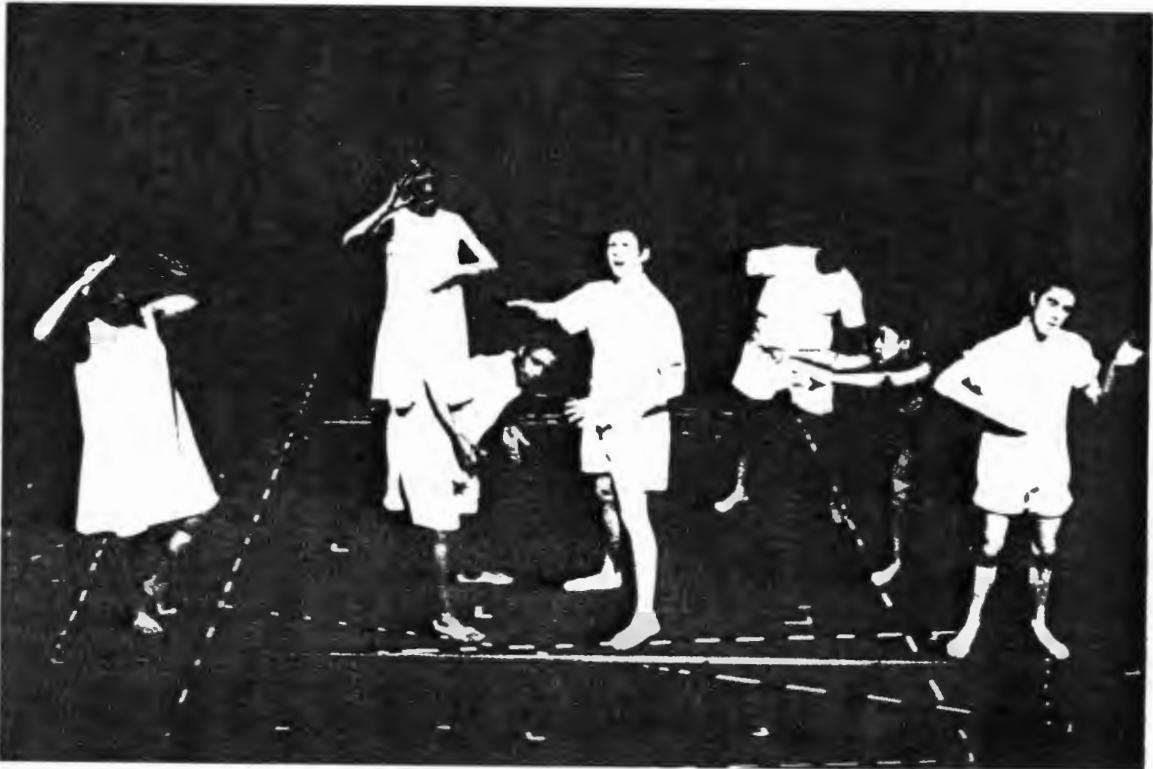
¹¹ Bausch uses repetition to caricature human emotion. (Birringer 164)

¹²According to Grotowski "impulse and action are concurrent. The body vanishes, burns and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses" (Grotowski 22).

¹³ Brecht developed a technique where the actor distances him- or herself from the role by restricting him- or herself to what happened. (Murray 87)

interdisciplinary event and frees the theatre maker from feeling obliged to confine him- or herself to a consistent use of style.

The application of intertextual and interdisciplinary notions when conveying narrative enables the separate treatment of verbal and gestural texts, thereby facilitating a multitude of narratives. The body and the spoken word do not have to function in a complementary manner, but are used as theatre components, conveying separate narratives which do not "follow the line" (Kozel 260).



In Trivial Pursuit the bodies are used out of a human context and inconsistently with the spoken word in the scene "Sonke's Nightmare" (32), where the characters transform into dolls. The separate operation of verbal and gestural narrative allows for a bigger diversity in meaning. This interpretation of post-linearity is evident throughout Trivial Pursuit where human bodies are used as objects, challenging "truths" about human physical behaviour.

The above-mentioned notions of interdisciplinary and intertextual performance lead to interculturalism in which the domination of one cultural practice over another is negated. In Trivial Pursuit this is evident in the integration of languages: Afrikaans, English and Xhosa

are used in the same production. Not only does it negate cultural superiority, but in the case of Trivial Pursuit also serves to negate a single truth about South Africa's political history: actors from different cultural backgrounds relate to the same subject matter in ways that often seem unrelated to one another.

Post-linearity enables the theatre maker to shift from present to past to future, making use of interdisciplinary and intercultural notions in order to interrupt texts and disrupt meaning. This constant shift in narrative forms a sense of so-called chaos and diffusion, creating a rich performance in which "there is a pluralism in art, criticism and philosophy. [It leads to] "... a plurality of styles, plural ways of thinking about art, and to a disintegration of boundaries between high art and popular culture, so that the field of culture appears to be extremely full and diverse" (Stevens 10).

The diversity of culture connects well with South Africa's political history, which is often referred to as turbulent. Alex Sudheim, in referring to South Africa's history, concludes that:

The task of defining some sort of coherent trajectory... must have been like trying to write a thousand different scripts for the same movie. With history resembling a shattered mirror, finding the true reflections of reality is practically an impossible task (Sudheim 1).

Post-linearity, due to its complexity, offers exciting challenges to theatre makers as a means to resist closure, open texts up to new viewpoints and encourage creativity. It is just as challenging to the viewer. Susan Kozel regards the task of the viewer in post-linear performance as follows:

[It] can be hard work for the audience. It often operates contrary to the belief that performance exists as escapist, feel-good entertainment. Effort is required to dispel confusion and understand what is going on, and discomfort can be the result of being presented with a dystopian picture of a particular slice of our social and political reality (260).

It is important to note that post-linearity is not a negation of linearity, but rather stretches possibilities beyond the linear. According to Kozel, post-linear performance "...plays with the space, time, and context of narration. Like a flood, [it] ignores the boundaries of the river of theatrical convention and engulfs the many positions of the viewers, the actors, the critics" (144). This can be compared to a computer game that has the structure of a network. It is possible to play the game from beginning to end, but the linearity can also be interrupted at any given time, depending on the choices the player makes.

Through constant interruptions or layering of the narrative, a linear performance can be pushed into another dimension where multiple meanings can be offered owing to the use of multiple narratives. The result is "a scavenger hunt for meaning, hither and thither, under bushes of convention, behind fractured syntax and fragmented tradition" (Kozel 258).

The "hunt for meaning" (Kozel 258) to address notions of myths perceived as truth was facilitated by notions of post-linearity. The following three notions were applied in a functional manner: fragmentation, displacement and layering.

Fragmentation

Figure 7



Fragmentation offers a way to place "an emphasis upon the essentially plural and diffuse play of meanings across the boundaries of individual works" (qtd in Stevens 9) by disorganising and destabilising established meaning. Theatre maker Matthew Maguire offers a useful way of referring to fragmentation:

I fragment, suspend and recombine the many stories coming into my eyes. Each one is a straight, linear story - but I don't experience reality that way. They're all flooding me at once, interweaving, overlapping, intercutting, overriding, interbinding, overtoning. I take the pieces, I chop them up, I keep them all floating at once, and then I reintegrate them so they fit at the same time (qtd in Steinman 124).

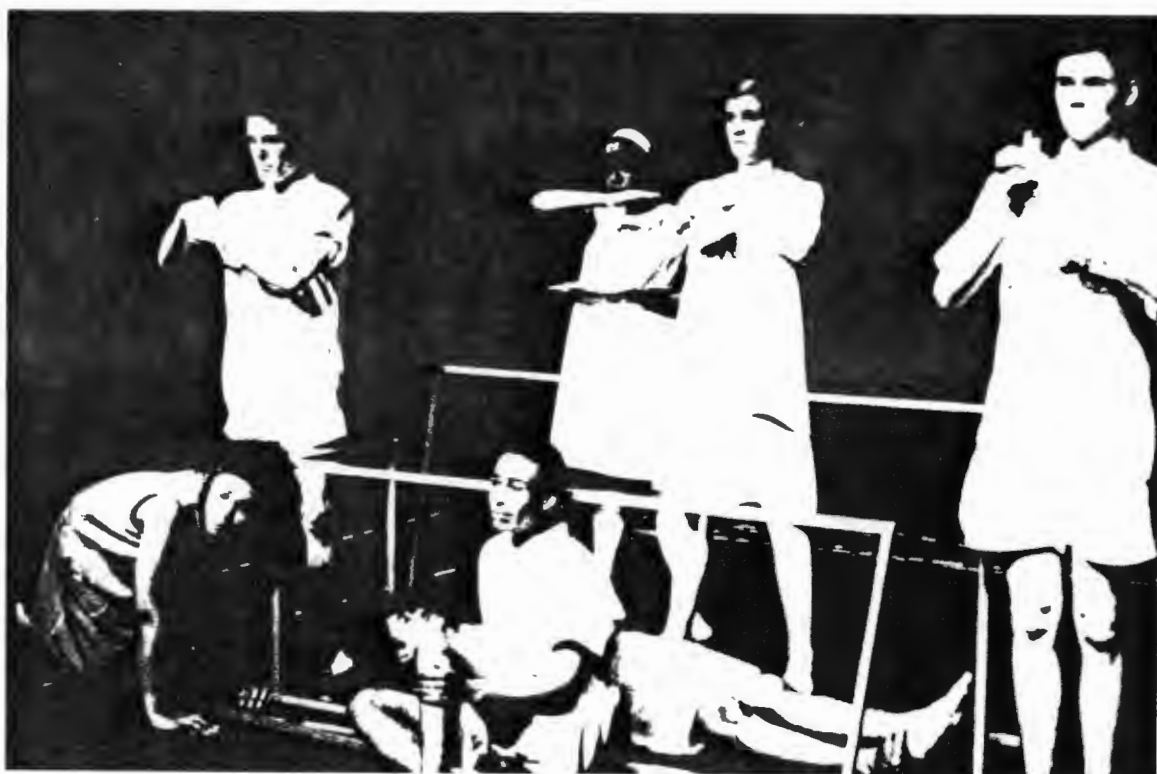
Fragmentation implies that there is no "logical" manner in which texts have to be applied and theatre makers are encouraged to approach a text from any side and in any manner. The narrative is scattered in multiple directions owing to the absence of a beginning, middle and end in accordance with the structure of the well-made play.

Unrelated fragments of text can function in the same manner as buttons in digital systems, causing interruption, repetition, segmentation and a scattered focus. According to Stevens "even so-called basic structures can be broken down into further underlying structures. All that remains is a free play of relationships between signs." (6)

Fragmentation does not terminate the flow of narrative, but rather allows for movement in multiple directions. The interruption of a linear narrative creates "a shift of emphasis from centred to decentred structures or from the centres to the margins" (qtd Stevens 11). One is now in the realm of what Fuller refers to as the "shifting pattern of changing strategies and substitutes, a shuffling of semantic codes and devices, varying ceaselessly according to audience and circumstances" (qtd in Stevens 6).

A "cut-and-paste" method was mainly used to fragment texts in Trivial Pursuit. Literary texts, including political speeches, political slogans, poetry and journal entries (each designed to propagate ideologies unrelated to one another), were literally cut up into smaller segments in order to reconstruct them and find alternative meanings within the shreds of written texts. Scenes were then constructed around these pieces of text. Once the scenes had been created, selected poems were placed between the scenes as a further means of breaking the linear flow. This flow was further interrupted by adding pieces of text written by the actors. These texts were created through improvisatory exercises and also by encouraging the actors to keep a daily journal, offering glimpses of the actors' life experiences.

The supper scene, "Yes Daddy, No Daddy" (19-22), in Trivial Pursuit, which initially seems to depict a domestic event is interrupted by Sizwe's delivery of a political speech, *Unite! Mobilise! Fight On!* (Mandela 1), and the meaning shifts to a moment in history. This is interrupted by the delivery of a poem, *The child who was shot dead by soldiers in Nyanga* (Jonker 10), in which the family members shift identity. The poetic interlude is interrupted again by reverting to the supper scene, and is ended by a delivery of a one of the actor's diary entries.



Fragmentation of the body as text is another way in which a single focus can be diffused. This is evident in the therapist scenes in which the group (re)presents a single person. The impression of one person holding multiple personalities, of many within one, is created. This challenges traditional notions of people as unitary entities; of centred individuals with core characteristics.



The interrupted, fragmented nature of speech patterns in Trivial Pursuit is illustrated by the following extract from Sonke's dialogue:

I....I don't.... I don't know.... I don't know what ... I don't know what to say... (5)

In this example the stop-start-pause motion is evident, avoiding a linear flow from beginning to end. Fragmentation is also used in the recurring therapist scenes, which interrupt and are interrupted by other scenes. Initially there may still be a single truth attached to the delivered lines or action, but after continuous repetition, nonobvious layers of meaning surface.

By shuffling texts and scenes around, they become further removed from an origin. Ideally scenes can be reconstructed endlessly, resulting in an open-ended product in which there is neither a clear sense of beginning nor an end: "there is no point at which the process can logically stop, there is no underlying truth, there is no so-called master narrative that is beyond question" (Stevens 6).

Viewers are encouraged actively to engage in the production as they constantly have to think and rethink, adjust and readjust, in order to derive meaning. In this manner the work becomes political without being dogmatic.

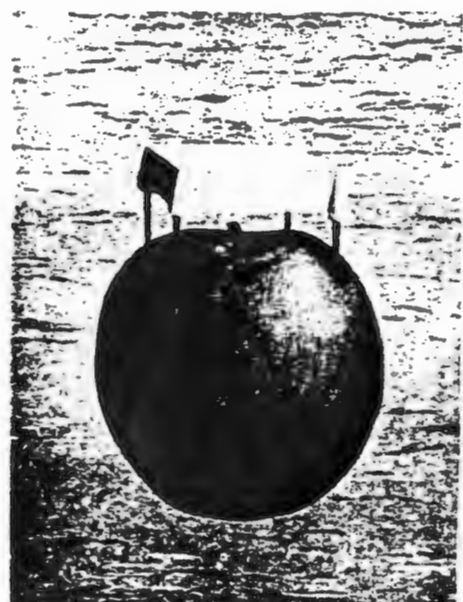
Derrida argues that "meaning is only ever produced within a complex play of relationships in which the final closure of meaning upon a point of original certainty is endlessly deferred" (qtd Stevens 9). This relates to the subject matter of Trivial Pursuit, which reflects the individual's feelings of unsettledness and instability. These feelings are caused by constant self doubt and perpetuated by a conflict between the inner and outer world which, in turn, is caused by myths perceived as truth in South Africa's political history.

Displacement

Figure 8.1

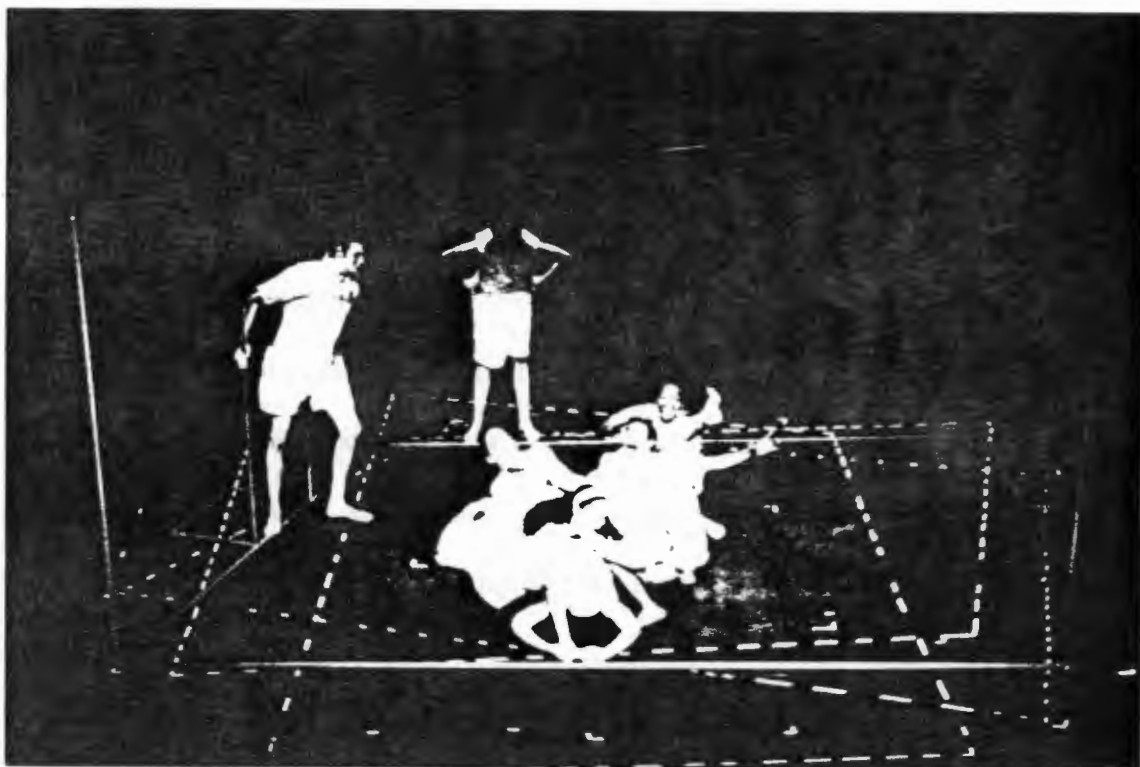


Figure 8.2



Displacement refers to properties that do not belong, properties that have been taken out of their original context and applied where they are not usually seen, used or expected. Synonyms for displacement are dislocation, disarticulation and disruption. In the same way that notions prefixed by "inter-" play an important part in post-linear performance, notions prefixed by "dis-" are intrinsically part of this approach to theatre. Texts are (dis)mantled in order to be re(inte)grated.

In Trivial Pursuit, extracts from unrelated nondramatic texts contributed to a sense of displacement. In the argument between Mother and Father during the "Mud Wrestling" scene (16-18), the dialogue suggests an argument between husband and wife, but is based on an extract from a debate between H.F. Verwoerd and Helen Suzman (Hansard, col. 145-146). The dialogue is taken out of context and applied in an unconventional manner. Furthermore, the domestic situation is presented as a ballroom dance, which is interrupted by the presentation of a wrestling match. In this case unrelated events – a debate between party politicians, an argument between parents, a dance performance, a wrestling match and a children's game – are used to form a scene in which the absence of a single origin diffuses the possibility of "truth" or single interpretation.



When components of performance are used in unexpected ways, the viewer can be drawn into the present as general perceptions of, and the use of, such components are challenged, irrespective of whether they refer to action, words or media. Answers are not given, allowing the viewer to question the function of components and re-examine their meaning in relation to how they are used in a production. A "politician" performing acrobatics can, for example, lead to a questioning of the credibility of "truths" uttered by that person.

Jumping from one unrelated genre, language or image to the next can constantly unsettle the viewers' understanding of the content, urging them to adapt to uncover meaning. Similarly, theatre makers are encouraged freely to play with theatrical components. A chain can be formed in which the constant substitution of theatrical components creates a multiplicity of meaning.

The implied interruption of linearity facilitates a space in which more than one narrative can be conveyed simultaneously without superiority of one narrative over another. The disruption of linearity can lead to instability, which can be useful in constructing a sense of turmoil experienced by certain individuals in search of political identity. As "truths" are generally related to fixed ideas, an instability of meaning offers possible ways in which notions of myths as truth can be challenged.

By combining unrelated texts, a new (con)text is formed in which the original is barely visible. However, it is still present in that each text refers to another and that text, in turn, refers to another, so that "nothing exists outside the text" (qtd in Stevens 12). The displaced components refer to something other than themselves, forming a text that is not a "stable, unified or autonomous object, but a network of references" (Stevens 10).

What is not present is also present because of the endless reference of the text to other texts. The viewer can now freely make associations due to the unrelated nature of signs in the text. The process of displacement is endless and it is impossible to reach a fixed meaning. Possible applications of the text, previously hidden by logocentrism, can now be recognised and used meaningfully.

In Trivial Pursuit, the political argument in the "Mud Wrestling" scene (16-18) is barely noticeable, yet traces¹⁴ of it are still present. The original is therefore used as a critique of itself. The original source no longer exists, yet the text is not annihilated, but applied in an alternative way, indicating that meaning is unstable. In the "Mud Wrestling" scene a mockery is made of the seriousness with which "truths" are often treated, destabilising the so-called "holy territory" of party politics.

The juxtaposition of unrelated theatrical components leads to gaps or spaces where new meaning can be formed. The following statement supports this point of view:

Through post-linearity gaps are provided for us to insert our views, our preferences, or for us to self-consciously chart our own course through material based on our likes, dislikes or habits. These habits become clear through the process of active engagement (Kozel 260).

The "glue" or "paste" necessary to form a whole or to connect theatre components to provide answers is missing and viewers are left to find their own references to the unrelated components. The "spaces" created by means of displacement are:

Made up of endlessly proliferating meanings which have no stable point of origin, nor of closure. In this concept of 'text' the boundaries which enclosed the 'work' are dissolved; the text opens continuously into other texts, the space of intertextuality (qtd in Stevens 13).

¹⁴ The notion of "trace" is used by Derrida to explain the network of references in an artwork where "each sign in a text carries traces, or multiple references to other signs. For Derrida, this substitution of one trace with another, is an infinite process. There is no centre, no finite meaning that can be uncovered to stop the process" (Stevens 10).

During the workshop process, various methods were used to create displacement. Extracts from nondramatic texts such as political speeches were most frequently used in improvisations that lead to scenes that were unrelated to the original texts. During these improvisations, actors were encouraged to follow their instinctive reaction to the extracts, which resulted in a free play of elements. There was no intention to treat the texts as part of a specific context. The distinction between the nondramatic and dramatic can be blurred in this manner, ignoring traditional categorisations of text. This was challenging to the actors, as the general tendency was either to create linear narrative or to be true to the original text.

It was useful to break the literary texts into smaller fragments in an attempt to free actors from reverting to the original meaning. The sentences or phrases can be mixed with other, unrelated sentences or phrases, heightening the sense of displacement. An example from Trivial Pursuit is Father's speech directed at Sizwe during the supper scene. In the (con)text of this scene, Father refers to a plan, by implication the menu. However, in the original political debate from which the fragments were taken, the reference is to the constitution.

Repetition of verbal or gestural action is another way of creating displacement. During the rehearsal process, "clips" from texts were repeated until alternative speech patterns, gestures or word orders emerged. After continuous repetition, the actors entered a trance-like state of mind, which aided them in steering away from logical derivations of the text.

A strong sense of play was present during these exercises, freeing the actors from the linear interpretation intended by the authors of the original texts. Words, syllables, ideas and speech patterns were misplaced, replaced and displaced during the repetition of extracts from texts.

These exercises formed part of an attempt to use the performers as “elements and catalysts of the visual, kinesic and sonic arrangement of the stage picture/architecture”¹⁵ (Marranca 170), similar to the way in which Robert Wilson makes use of displaced text. Wilson creates scenes in which the performers are meant to have no “psychology” or personality, but are simply part of the stage arrangement. A space is created in which body as text is used out of context, opening the text up to new levels of interpretation.



During the supper scene, the movements and sounds of performers are used to create the image or idea of a mechanism or machine in operation, rather than representing the eating habits of people. The bodies are objectified, following an antihumanist approach. “Truths” about the application of the human body are challenged. This links to the political subject matter. The support structures - the bodies - are viewed as repressed and submissive to the bodies they have to support.

¹⁵ Bauhaus artists call this “ambulant architecture” (Marranca 171).

According to Wallace Stevens these intentions are reached with great difficulty as "speech is not easily translated into meaninglessness; both in referential meaning and in its gesture, speech contains the potential for presence and its investment in meaning and power" (Marranca 170). Stevens proceeds by claiming that gestured speech will always be perceived by the audience as reflecting a state of mind of the character, an attitude to some action or to the words themselves.

It is crucial to find ways in which the actors can be freed from inhibited thought formed by preconceived meanings attached to the words. Physical and verbal games were introduced to free the actors from such preconceived ideas. Often these games were based on existing childrens' games or theatre games taken from, for example, Games for Actors and Non-Actors (Boal). The intricate nature of the games enabled the performers to steer clear of a preoccupation with text analysis and lead to a free play of the body which, in turn, lead to experiments with the impact of words on the actors' bodies. Gestural narrative was neither used as complimentary to the verbal narrative nor as an attempt to bring the verbal "in line" with the gestural.

In forming seemingly innocent dialogue from political speeches and debates that are iconic of violent events in South Africa's history, a strong sense of displacement is implied, which is intended to discomfort the viewer.

It can be described as follows:

The terror lies in the apparent innocence of the work. One might only be looking at neat little phrases composed of essentially harmless words, yet the bloodshed, pain and anguish they represent beyond their clinical abstraction is dramatically accentuated by the apparent guiltlessness of the words themselves (Sudheim 2).

Multiple narratives can furthermore be created by combining unrelated gestures and literary texts. This is illustrated in the scene "How to fit in?" (12) in which the family members

form a tower with their bodies while the dialogue encompasses a variety of domestic situations and is totally unrelated to the physical formation. The tower formation relates to notions of hierarchies, categorisations and breakdown of structures.



The attempt to offer viewers an experience that stimulates all the senses allows a shift from the conscious to the unconscious layers of meaning within a text. This can best be described by Bonnie Maranca's observation of the works of Phillip Glass:

Usually, one experiences a concert as a division between the auditorium and the stage, as if one were watching it. Listening to Glass one is in it and of it, consumed by the shimmering beauty and spirit of the moment. One is forced to *experience* it... (Marranca 137).

It enables viewers or theatre makers to go into what performer-director Matthew Maguire calls "a vast free fall" (qtd in Steinman 124).

Figure 9



Layering is used to convey unrelated images and texts simultaneously. During the workshop process, scenes that were constructed independently were merged, immediately causing the narrative to scatter in multiple directions. In this way it is possible to make references to multiple texts and combine linearity and post-linearity. In Trivial Pursuit the reference to multiple narratives is useful as a means of conveying the way in which history is integrated into the individual's life. Nothing can escape the text and everything relates to another text. In "Want to Play?" (34-37), Father has a conversation with Pietie in front of the television. At the same time Sizwe and Conrad are frozen in positions which suggest that they are doing exercises, while Mother and Lesley are frozen in a position that suggests domestic activity. These images were created during the workshop process, but originated from different sources.

Multiple perspectives can be cast on the subject matter by means of layering texts, but layering can also offer a plurality of visual and sonic images. Viewers are encouraged to relish all their senses in an art form that lacks a single focus and one in which the spoken word or gestural narrative forms a component of the product in a way that is similar to the use of set, music and lighting.

It is not surprising that the voices that artists find to express experiences seem fragmented. They are necessarily fragmented, because we are standing in the ruins of a fragmented culture.

- VERA FRANKEL (Steinmann 120)

CHAPTER THREE

E(MERG)ENT FORM

Figure 10



The form that emerged from the application of notions of post-linearity in the deconstruction of texts relates strongly to the collage as defined by the Oxford Dictionary:

An art form in which compositions are made out of pieces of paper, cloth, photographs and other miscellaneous objects, juxtaposed and pasted on a dry ground; any collection of unrelated things (438).

In the same way that pieces are used to give the collage its form, pieces of text were put together to give form to Trivial Pursuit. In creating a visual collage, material is torn, cut, stretched, shredded, pasted or pierced, similar to the treatment of text in Trivial Pursuit.

A portrayal of multiple perspectives on a single subject matter is reflected in Trivial Pursuit. Similarly, the collage enables the viewer to find multiple perspectives within a piece of art. In a self portrait in the form of a collage, multiple images of a person are seen within one composition. Various fragments and elements of a person's life or thoughts are portrayed rather than a single image reflecting only one aspect of the person and allowing only limited interpretation.

A way in which montage, the collage form in film, can be used meaningfully is suggested by Eisenstein:

Any two pieces of film stuck together inevitably combine to create a new concept, a new quality born of juxtaposition. The innovations of cinema have influenced and affected the Western perception of time, space and reality. The possibilities of the cinematic form are perfectly suited to convey the restlessness and speed of the human mind in action. Performers now use filmic concepts of montage-cutting and rearranging the fragments of sensation and experience into a new live composition. (qtd in Steinman 124)

Following on from this, the collage is the ideal art form to relate to a mass culture in which "the appropriation, misappropriation, montage, collage, hybridisation, and general mixing up" (Stevens 1) of art forms is made possible by digital systems.

A theatre form that relates to the postmodern experience, caused by digital systems, is imperative for the survival of theatre. As Werner Herzog, the German filmmaker, concludes:

If we do not find adequate images and an adequate language for our civilization with which to express them, we will die out like the dinosaurs. It's as simple as that. (Steinman 52)

The collage, the form that emerged from creating Trivial Pursuit, is ideal for reflecting on the fragmented nature of the postmodern world and also on South Africa's political history; which is known for its social and political displacement, fragmentation, brutality and complexity.

An art form in which there is a lack of given answers ties in well with a postmodern world in which there is a lack of authoritative culture and only a multitude of subcultures exist. The eclectic nature of the collage enables viewers to derive meaning from their personal reference to the work.

In a world where people are confronted by multiple visual, cultural and sonic experiences, audiences need to be stimulated by complex art forms that capture their interest through constant change of narrative. By making the barriers between art forms indistinct and using different art forms to create a product, theatre makers are empowered to work more creatively, offering audiences an experience that is potentially fulfilling and entertaining in its complexity.



(NON)CONCLUSION

Fragmentation, displacement and layering as notions of post-linearity were useful in creating a textured product. Even though these notions are similar in meaning, the subtle differences in their application made a deeper investigation of myths perceived as truth possible. The application of these notions provided the opportunity to treat the nondramatic texts in a more creative manner than would have been possible with what these texts offered on the surface. It allowed for a free play of texts that resulted in a process in which the theatre makers were challenged to combine their creative energies in fragmenting, displacing and layering text.

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ANNEXURE A

DRAMATIC TEXT: TRIVIAL PURSUIT

TRIVIAL PURSUIT

a multifaceted collage



Directed by
HEIKE GEHRING

Workshopped in conjunction with senior performance students of
the Drama Department of the University of Cape Town

Trivial Pursuit premiered at the Standard Bank National Arts Festival in Grahamstown on 29 June 2001, followed by a brief season at the Arena Theatre of the Drama Department of the University of Cape Town. The cast members, in order of appearance, were:

SIZWE / THERAPIST

PATIENCE / THERAPIST

CONRAD / THERAPIST

MOTHER / THERAPIST

LESLEY / THERAPIST

SONKE

FATHER / PIETIE / THERAPIST

Toto Raba

Roxanne MacKaiser

Lulama Masimini

Libby Dougherty

Frankie Nassimbeni

Nkuli Sibeko

Bruce Little

CAST

FATHER

MOTHER (PETAL)

SIZWE

CONRAD

LESLEY

SONKE

PATIENCE

PIETIE

THERAPIST

Autocratic couch potato

Shopping therapy practitioner

Rebellious teenager

Sloganeering baby

Delightful dust bunny

Confused Samaritan

Manipulative live-in cook

Motor-mouth suck-up

Sanctimonious psychopath

SONKE'S DILEMMA

The family members are standing in a straight line, as if at a banquet table, facing the audience. They address the audience, creating the illusion that the audience are people sitting on the opposite side of the table. Sonke tries to say something too, but as soon as she tries, someone interrupts her. Father covers his mouth with his hands and does not say anything. The illusion is created that they are in a fiery debate and there are a lot of interjections between each person's comments. Their actions are grotesque.

- SIZWE People should start counting our achievements, like the establishment of a youth desk, rather than concentrate on the negative.
- PATIENCE Where does the US find itself in the light of global trends? Will the US be embarrassed one day to have remained in the moral shadows for so long?
- SIZWE It is at this stage not the policy of the government to supply those medicines and it causes problems for the department to try and explain to ordinary people.
- CONRAD The youth commision is failing to work on political education programmes.
- MOTHER All the hospital equipment just keeps on disappearing. Nothing's done, nothing's done...
- CONRAD There are no HIV kits available in the hospitals.
- SIZWE There is no money to keep them going.
- LESLEY In the current curriculum for social work, homosexuality is still defined as an abnormality and a disorder.
- CONRAD There are these houses. They call them pondokkies. You can't even fit a pig into those houses.
- LESLEY It is unacceptable for these institutions to continue

propagating misinformation about gay and lesbian people.

MOTHER And what about the whole arms deal?

SONKE Will somebody please listen to me?!!

Dramatic music. Lighting change.

THERAPIST 1

THERAPIST 1 Hallo Sonke...

CHORUS Hallo Sonke.

THERAPIST 1 My name is Doctor, Doctor...

CHORUS *(whispering)* Doctor, Doctor...

THERAPIST 1 Welcome, sit down, make yourself at home...

CHORUS Make yourself at home.

THERAPIST 1 This won't hurt a bit...

CHORUS BIT!

THERAPIST 1 Whenever you're ready you can start.

CHORUS START!

SONKE I... I don't.... I don't know... I don't know what... I don't
know what to... I don't know what to say...

THERAPIST 1 Tell me anything...

THERAPIST 2 anything you please...

THERAPIST 3 whatever...

THERAPIST 4 the first thing that POPS into your mind!

THERAPIST 5 Just relax....

THERAPIST 6 and be...

SONKE I say it Be fore Hand - LOUD – I Stand for No Thing, I Join Ranks with No Where, No bo Dy Comes Near Me. All of Them Look the Same: All are Men, All are Necks, All Pods of Pow Er.

THERAPIST 1 That’s a bit pessimistic. What about your...

CHORUS FAMILY!

SONKE I want nothing to do with them...!!

Lighting change. Sonke is pulled into the frame by an invisible rope. During the voiceover, the group forms a family picture. They walk in “Charlie Chaplin style”.

VOICEOVER The family is the primary social unit which ideally provides care, nurturing and socialisation for its members. It seeks to provide them with physical, economic, emotional, social, cultural and spiritual security.

THE ORIGIN OF SONKE’S DILEMMA

Father leaves the group and assumes the role of choral director. The rest of the group form a choir, representing little children. They start humming the old South African national anthem – Die Stem. Father walks to the front of the frame and recites a monologue in the style often seen at primary school concerts.

FATHER Uit die diepte van my broeksak moet ek sorg vir hierdie familie. Om voedsel in oorvloed uit moederaarde te haal vir my gesin. Hier staan ons trots voor die ewige gebergtes van die volgende dorp en staan ons op ferm grond. Met min tyd kom ons oor die weg, met baie prestasie. Gou aangelewer en

altyd gereed is onse strewede. Soos my vrou se tuisnywerhede wat nie oortref kan word nie. My gedissiplineerde kinders, elkeen op sy plek. 'n Beter verhouding tussen familielede sal jy nie kry nie. Want as die leier en vader so geplaas deur God, weet die familielede dat teenoor my te stry is om teenoor God te stry en dat net gehoorsaamheid sal maak elke lid...VRY! Hier is geskep en word gehandhaaf, vir elke lid van die familie.

CHORUS

As ons so aanhou sal hierdie nasie van ons net elke dag groter en sterker word.

They applaud themselves. Father interrupts the action.

FATHER

Dit kon beter...

The choir looks at him, scowling, and freeze.

SONKE IS LEFT BEHIND

CONRAD

(breaking the freeze) Daddy, won't you take us to the drive-in?

The group sings "Ag pleez, Daddy" by Jeremy Taylor. While they sing, they set up doorframes to form a car-like structure. Sonke is left behind and desperately tries to reach them. Sonke's movements are accompanied by music, while the family members are singing in the background. Their actions become increasingly chaotic as every member wants to go in another direction and tries to confuse Father.

CONRAD

(steps out of the car, miming a hijack situation) Daddy, please take us to the drive-in!!

FAMILY

(scattering in different directions, dismantling the structure)
Whaaaaaa!!

THERAPIST 2

THERAPIST 1

And how did that make you feel?

Sonke walks into her oblong light, but bounces back as if something is pushing her out of the light.

THERAPIST 1 And how did that make you feel?

Sonke bounces back again.

THERAPIST 1 And how did that make you... feel?

SONKE The Generals and Brigadiers and Ministers and Headmen-Generals sit Cuddling their Cocks, Plaiting their Penises, TRASHING A WHOLE COUNTRY WITH THE ALTERNATING FAECES OF POLITICS AND VIOLENCE!! All are Sly, All feel Fuck All... I'm not very good at expressing myself.

CHORUS No, that's good, that's very good.

THERAPIST 2 Anything you'd like to add to that?

SONKE Not particularly!!

Sonke is pulled into the frame. A soundtrack of tremendous applause drowns her voice. The family members freeze in dancing positions.

1,2,3... 1,2,3...

"The Blue Danube" by Strauss starts to play.

FATHER *(indicating that he wants to dance)* Shall we, Petal?

Father and Mother start to dance. The other family members push Sonke out of the way as soon as she wants to join them, until she eventually leaves the frame and dances by herself with an invisible partner. It seems as if she is pushed and pulled into different directions, without being able to control her movements.

MOTHER I need to speak to you about Patience.

FATHER Yes, Petal...

MOTHER Have you noticed she's a bit cold lately?

FATHER She's probably just going through a rough time, Petal.

MOTHER Actually... I think I know what's wrong with her...

FATHER Yes, Petal...

MOTHER It's because of the way you treat Sizwe and Conrad and Sonke and Lesley for that matter...

FATHER *(He spins her around with increasing speed, so that she loses control)* Now, now, Petal, we're not going to discuss this again. Patience is not part of this family. She's different from us. She's been influencing the children way too much with her foreign ideas. She's here to keep the house and that's it.

Father lets go of Mother and the momentum spins her in the direction of the audience. She recovers and addresses them. The music stops. The rest of the group change their positions and freeze.

WOOLWORTHS

MOTHER When life gets too much for me I go to Woolworths. The bright, clean aisles, the fresh colours of the fruit – only the best products – the friendly faces of the cashiers and the way they say “Have a nice day!” when I leave. I find heaven in Woolworths. I can spend hours reading lists of ingredients on the backs of products: the varying degrees of fat in the different yoghurts...

When I walk into Woolworths I take a deep breath of clean filtered air and I feel whole and at peace. I know who I am at Woolworths. I'm special and I make choices: I like fat free not just low fat, chopped-and-peeled not just peeled, rye not whole wheat. I'm in control at Woolworths...

The only problem is, I seem to be going there too much

lately. And everytime I leave, the world seems darker and dirtier, the traffic louder, the people uglier, the faces of the street kids more demonic...

The other day I was walking out of Woolworths, laden with packages, when this hoard of little kids started pulling at my clothes and my bag and before I knew it, I was hitting out with Woollies packets, screaming: Fuck-off, you bastards!! You're killing me!! Don't you know it?! You're killing me!! I ended up lying in the gutter outside Woolworths while the street kids made off with my groceries, knowing that if I had better aim, I would have crushed their skulls against the pavement.

Mother turns back to Father and they resume their dancing.

MOTHER Yes, I'm afraid she's going to leave us soon if things don't change.

FATHER My dear Petal, Patience will never leave us. She needs us. Where will she find another family that pays and treats her so well? I'm telling you, it's just a phase.

MOTHER I hope you're right.

FATHER Of course I am. Just keep on saying your prayers and everything will be just fine. Good night, Petal.

They take a bow amidst huge applause.

SONKE'S GHOSTS

Applause changes to industrial music and everyone turns into robot-like figures, while moving frames. They settle down and become characters from a dream, repeating their lines over and over again, speaking semi-audibly. Sonke is walking between them. When she comes closer to a character, they increase the volume, intriguing her at times and scaring her away at others.

SIZWE I have had this dream for some time. I shall fight for this dream...

FATHER Die vraagstukke sal opgelos word...

MOTHER The truth will out...the truth will out...the truth will out!!

CONRAD Landlessness will make Africans powerless, perpetual beggars, perpetual beggars...

LESLEY Sonke, if I stretch my arm I can reach the milky way....

PATIENCE The world recognises goodness; hankers after goodness. The world recognises goodness...

Sonke leaves the frame and wakes up with a start. Industrial music resumes and the characters become robot-like again, shifting the frame into another position. Once the frame is in the right position, they become the therapist.

THERAPIST 3

THERAPIST 1 Hm-hm....

SONKE
What Does One Do With The Old
How Do You Become Yourself Among Others
How Do You Become Whole
How Do You Get Released Into Understanding ?

THERAPIST 3 I'm not sure I follow you, Sonke...

THERAPIST 4 Are you saying you feel displaced...

CHORUS *(whispering)* PLACED?!

SONKE No, not displaced!! It's just... I wasn't always sure about my position...

Sonke walks into the frame and falls down as if something pushes her from above. The group start to form a pyramid by staggering themselves on top of one another. Sonke operates in a frame, separate from the group. Every time one of them jumps on the other's back, she falls down again, as if they are jumping on her back.

THERAPIST 1 Position?

THERAPIST 2 Position?

THERAPIST 3 Position?

THERAPIST 4 Position?

THERAPIST 5 Position?

THERAPIST 6 Position?

SONKE *(recovering)* Everybody else seemed to fit in...

HOW TO FIT IN?

The therapists have become the family members again. The conversations that follow happen in rapid succession. Sonke stands in a frame next to the structure that frames them. She reaches in front of her as if she is trying to catch something. Every now and again she repeats what the family members are saying. She does not leave the frame.

SIZWE Mother, I've decided to leave. Father has left me no other choice.

SONKE ...choice...

MOTHER But, Sizwe, what about me...?

LESLEY What you doing?

Father forms the bottom of the pyramid and is building an imaginary house of cards.

FATHER I'm building a house...

SONKE ...a house...

LESLEY Like ours?

Pause.

LESLEY Like ours?

FATHER Yes...

SONKE ...yes...

LESLEY I wanna see...

FATHER Wait now, I'm concentrating...

LESLEY Does one have to concentrate so hard just to build a house?

SONKE ...concentrate so hard...

CONRAD Houses are not built in the sky or in the air...

SONKE ...built in the sky...

PATIENCE Conrad...

CONRAD They are built on the land...

PATIENCE Conrad, let go of Patience!

SONKE ...let go...

SIZWE Mother, you always taught us that we are born of a people who are heroes and heroines. We are born of a people who will not tolerate oppression.

SONKE ...heroes and heroines...

MOTHER But Sizwe, after everything I've done for you...

LESLEY I also wanna build a house!!

FATHER Wait now, Lesley...

SONKE ...wait...

LESLEY Don't call me that. I'm the dustbunny!!

FATHER Don't you have other things to do?

LESLEY No... Ag komaan Pa, I wanna see!!

He pushes down onto Mother's back, causing the whole structure to domino and leaving Father flat on the floor.

FATHER Bliksem!! Kyk nou wat maak jy. Jy laat my my konsentrasie verloor!!

LESLEY Issie, ek het tjoepstil bly sit.

FATHER Dit lieg jy. Hou nou op om my siel so te verpes.

PIETIE Moffie!!

LESLEY *(enraged)* Don't you call me that!! *(recovering)* I'm the dust bunny.... *(to himself)* ...dust bunny, dust bunny...

SIZWE At present there is really no serious indication from Father about a peaceful solution to our family crisis. Therefore I have to leave!

SONKE ...peaceful solution...leave...

MOTHER But son...

Sizwe breaks out of the structure and stands outside the frame.

CONRAD It is obvious that as long as the people of this country are betrayed on the land question...

PATIENCE Conrad, Patience is losing her patience now...

CONRAD Homelessness and filthy and unhealthy squatter camps will be part and parcel of life in what is called the new South Africa...

PATIENCE Patience has had enough!!

She gets up and leaves, which causes the structure to collapse.

CHORUS A-a-aaaa!!!

They dust themselves off and become the therapist.

THERAPIST 4

THERAPIST 1 And what did you do about it?

SONKE I tried to be the best daughter I could be. *(As if lashed by a whip)* I tried to be... I tried!!

The therapists move the frame while speaking

THERAPIST 1 Define best.

THERAPIST 2 Define best.

THERAPIST 3 Define best.

THERAPIST 4 Define best.

THERAPIST 5 Define best.

THERAPIST 6 Define best.

Sonke has her hands tied behind her back by an imaginary rope. She moves towards the frame as if someone is prodding her along.

SONKE Best is when you try to keep everyone together, when you only try to keep people off one another's throats....

MUD WRESTLING

Sonke joins the rest of the children where they are standing, peeping through the door frame. Mother and Father are inside the frame. Sonke is interrupted by loud applause.

FATHER Petal, shall we....?

They start waltzing, as in the previous dance scene.

MOTHER I don't have much time, I'm on my way to the hairdresser, but I do feel that I don't agree with you denying Sizwe his pocket money.

FATHER Oor regverdigheid in daardie verband sal ek later iets sê.

The dance starts getting out of control.

MOTHER How the poor boy is supposed to survive without it is just beyond me!

FATHER We can't let him run wild financially, Petal. Is jy werklik bereid om deur Sizwe se opstandigheid opgesluk te word? Alleenlik as ons bereid is om onder te gaan, kan ons sy tienerrebellie steun.

MOTHER I just don't understand this verkrampte attitude... *(She slaps him in the face)* And what about your newly acquired hunting rifle?

FATHER In dangerous times, silence is a very good argument...

Father runs towards her, as if he wants to tackle her. They wrestle and Mother manages to tag Sonke, who is pushed into the ring by the other children. Sonke and Father carry on wrestling while Mother stands on the side. The rest of the children rub her shoulders similar to assistants in a boxing match.

MOTHER

I think if financial sacrifices are going to be made, they should be made by you who has a responsibility to look after these children. Otherwise that boy is going to experience a groundswell of discontent that will cause chaos in this family, and then your discipline will be as effective as bows and arrows against sophisticated weapons.

Father manages to tag one of the other children so that he can leave the ring. While Father and Mother have an argument on the outside of the ring, the children are attacking one another inside of the ring. Their movements are grotesque and the impression is given that they are making a big noise, even though they are mute.

FATHER

Speaking about financial drawbacks, perhaps we should consider your weekly shopping spree at Woollies as surplus cash expenditure. Yes, Petal, you are a "babe in the woods". And when the shit hits the fan, you run to Woollies!! Ja Petal, jy sal nog eendag beskaamd staan vir die teenstand wat jy weer vandag geopenbaar het teen my strewe om 'n sterk gesin te skep.

MOTHER & FATHER *(to children)* SHUT U-U-UP!!

Everybody freezes for a moment. Then the children disperse and Mother and Father move to opposite corners of the frame, addressing the audience simultaneously.

MOTHER

I had a husband once, maybe never. Sometimes I cherished little moments of thoughts, similar, of dreams, shared, of visions, now mere faded memories. Or was it? I willed him as partner to build and make prosperous. My husband is a stranger. Pity, that. My impossibly inflexible husband. And I?

FATHER

I had a wife once, maybe never. Sometimes I cherished little

moments of thoughts, similar, of dreams, shared, of visions,
now mere faded memories. Or was it? I willed her as partner
to build and make prosperous. My wife is a stranger. Pity,
that. My impossibly forgiving wife. And I?

SONKE

(lying on floor) And I...?

THERAPIST 5

CHORUS

Sonke, Sonke, Sonke....

SONKE

(getting off floor, speaking cautiously) It's as if Between
Nnnnobody Nnnnothing Nnnnowhere Gets Healed Between
Nnnnowhere and Nnnnobody Nnnnothing Survives Nnnnobody
Offers Nnnnothing Nnnnothing Vapour Nnnnothing Balming
Nnnnothing Something Healing Something Gentle...
Nnnnothing... Mildly... Human...

THERAPIST 1

(uncertain) Yes...

THERAPIST 2

Remember, it's not your fault...

THERAPIST 3

fault...

THERAPIST 4

We are working towards your well-being....

THERAPIST 3

well-being...

THERAPIST 5

your voice is your right...

THERAPIST 3

right?!

SONKE

Maybe I'm just paranoid, but nobody ever seemed to... *(she
moves and talks like an electrical toy that is stuck)* listen to me listen
to me listen to me listen to me listen to me listen to me
listen to me listen to me...

The therapists are clearly not listening to her, as they are moving frames around and setting up for the next scene. They speak over one another.

CHORUS Yes, we're listening...talk to me, Sonke... Hang on, I'm just... yes,yes,yes, yes, carry on...I'm one big ear, Sonke...

She twirls into the frame. The other family members are seated around the door frames that are now used as a table. Some of the characters form chair-like support structures on which the others are seated.

YES DADDY, NO DADDY

FATHER *(interrupting Sonke)* Uit die blou van onse hemel, uit die diepte van ons see, ons sal lewe, ons sal sterwe, ons vir jou Suid Afrika, Amen.

CHORUS Amen.

FATHER So, Patience, wat is die vyf-punt-plan vir vanaand?

PATIENCE Meneer, ek het vanaand weer u gunsteling - bobotie - voorberei, natuurlik gemeng met 'n bietjie inflasierys.

PIETIE Ek haat rys.

FATHER En...

PATIENCE En 'n mengelslaai bestaande uit VW en Ford met US dollar-broodjies.

PIETIE Hmm, my favourite!!

FATHER *(flirtatiously)* En...

PATIENCE En...

FATHER En...

PATIENCE En...

FATHER En...

PATIENCE En...

FATHER En...

PATIENCE *(coquettishly)* En dis al, Meneer!

The rest of the family sigh audibly, pulling grotesque faces. They freeze in those positions.

FATHER *(noticeably disappointed)* Is jy seker, Patience?

PATIENCE Doodseker, Meneer.

FATHER En what about my Olympic Cup of Coffee?

CHORUS Ooooooh!! *(they freeze again)*

PATIENCE *(sings in operatic style)* Meneer, die dokter het uitdruklik gesê dat u nie meer koffie mag drink voordat u nie meer AANDAG aan u LIGGAAM gee nie.

FATHER *(also sings in operatic style)* Maar my magtag, Patience, in hierdie huis het ek die laaste sê!

CHORUS *(chant)* Pappa het die laaste sê-ê-ê...

PATIENCE *(sings in operatic style)* Meneer, ek is jammer, maar ek kan dit nie oor my gewete kry om u toe te laat om voort te gaan om die koffie te drink nie.

FATHER Wel, in daai geval, Patience, sal ek maar net my eie koffie beginne brou....

They are carried away, clearly enjoying the singing.

PATIENCE Ha-ha-ha-ha...

FATHER Ha-haaaaa...

PATIENCE Ha-ha-ha-ha...

FATHER Ha-haaaaa... *(realising he had become carried away)* Huh-huh...
Kom almal, eet, die kos word koud.

They mime eating, creating various sound rhythms, which sound like a machine in operation. Sizwe breaks the rhythm by interrupting with a contrasting rhythm.

PIETIE Pappa, Pappa, Sizwe willie sy kos opeet nie!!

FATHER *(very animated)* Kom, kom nou Umkhonto weSizwe, jy ken mos die reëls. Dis die enigste manier hoe jy ooit gaan GROOTWORD.

SONKE But Dad, he's big enough already...

SIZWE I don't like bobotie. I've had enough...

FATHER RESPECT those who've worked to build and develop this household. As elkeen nou gaan staan en rebelleer, dink net waar gaan ons opeindig. REËLS IS REËLS en basta met die res!

CHORUS *(creating a rhythm)* Reëls is reëls en basta met die res!

SIZWE I don't want to eat anymore.

CONRAD *(Repeating after Sizwe so that it seems as if he is toyi-toying)* I don't want to eat anymore... I don't want to eat anymore... I don't want to eat anymore...

Conrad lifts Sizwe on his shoulders, facing the audience.

SIZWE

(addressing the audience as if at a political rally) UNITE!
MOBILISE! FIGHT ON! BETWEEN THE ANVIL OF UNITED
MASS ACTION AND THE HAMMER OF THE ARMED
STRUGGLE WE SHALL CRUSH APARTHEID! We face an
enemy that is deep rooted, an enemy entrenched and
determined not to yield. Our march to freedom is long and
difficult. But both within and beyond our borders the
prospects of victory grow bright. Our people must be united
into a single massive and solid wall of resistance, of united
mass action. Every effort to divide the blacks, to woo and
pit one black group against another, must be vigorously
repulsed. Our struggle is growing sharper. This is not the
time for the luxury of division and disunity. At all levels and
in every walk of life we must close ranks. Within the ranks
of the people differences must be submerged to the
achievement of a single goal - the complete overthrow of
apartheid and racist domination. VICTORY IS CERTAIN!!

CHORUS

*(chanting softly in the background, moving closer to him, almost
as if they are creatures from a nightmare)* Hou jou bek, staan op,
sit stil, hou jou bek, sit stil, hou jou bek...

FATHER

(stretching out his hand) HOU JOU BEK !!

SIZWE

*(falling into Conrad's arms, recreating the image of Hector
Petersen's death)* Aaaaah!!

*Conrad places Sizwe inside the table, using it as a coffin. He sits in front of it and mourns
Sizwe's "death" in silence. Father, Mother and Lesley gather around the table as if they are
performing an operation. Patience becomes the respiratory machine, making the necessary
sounds. Sonke stays next to the table.*

CHORUS 1

(chanting sotto voce) Langa, Nyanga, Orlando, Sharpeville,
Langa, Nyanga, Orlando, Sharpeville...

SONKE

The child is not dead
The child lifts his fists against his mother
Who screams Africa shouts the scent
Of freedom and the veld

In the location of the cordoned heart

CHORUS 2

(chanting sotto voce) The child is not dead the child lifts his fists march of the generations shouting Africa shout the scent righteousness lifts his fists and in the streets of his warrior pride the child is not dead the child the child is not dead the child righteousness lifts his fists and...

SONKE

The child is not dead
Not at Langa not at Nyanga
Not at Orlando not at Sharpeville
Not at the police station in Philippi
Where he lies with a bullet through his brain
The child is the shadow of the soldiers
On guard with rifles saracens and batons

CHORUS 3

(chanting sotto voce) In the march of the generations who are shouting Africa shout the scent of righteousness and blood in the streets of his warrior pride

SONKE

The child is present at all gatherings and law-giving
The child peers through the windows of
Houses and into the hearts of mothers
The child who just wanted to play in the sun
At Nyanga is everywhere
The child grown to a man treks all over
Africa
The child grown to a giant travels through
The whole world
Without a pass

CHORUS 4

Oooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!!

The group stands in silence. The chorus mime washing their hands. Lighting change. They gather around the table again, as in the previous scene.

FATHER That's it, that's a good boy.

SONKE But, Dad, he didn't even eat...

FATHER Kom, almal, eet, die kos is koud.

The eating rhythm is repeated, but this time more aggressively.

FATHER *(as if prodding a horse to run faster, speaking in the style of a racing commentator)* Ai, ons is darem maar gelukkig. In 'n tyd van wêreldonrus veroorsaak deur magte wat ook ons nie graag onaangetas wil laat nie, triomfeer my gesin se gebruikelike gesonde verstand, sy sin vir orde en sy vaderlandsliefde. Ja-nee, my dienste, my hart en gees, wil ek meer as ooit tevore toewy aan hierdie wonderlike huisgesin. Mag die Allerhoogste my daartoe genade skenk.

PIETIE Wheeiii! *(recovering)* Net jammer van Conrad en Sizwe, né Pa.

MOTHER Pietie!

FATHER Pietie, eet jou kos!

Pietie makes eating noises.

SIZWE *(crawling underneath the table)* Psst, Patience! Can I please have some more dollar rolls?

PATIENCE *(flirting underneath the table)* But of course, Sizwe...

FATHER Sizwe!!

SIZWE I told you I'm tired of your orders.

SONKE It's not as if you ever take any...

FATHER Selfbeheersing, my kind, is in belang van goeie verhoudings, 'n gesonde naasbestaan en altyd groeieeie-einde welvaart.

CONRAD Whee, Amandla ngawethu...

MOTHER *(throwing Father off her back, attending to Conrad)* Sh-sh-sh,
Baby, quiet now, Baby...

FATHER Nee nee nee, vir wat is ons dan nou so ongelukkig? Daar's
mos nou nie rede om so tekere te gaan nie.

PIETIE Sluit hom in sy kamer toe, sluit hom in sy kamer toe!!

Everyone freezes. Lighting change.

HAVE YOU EVER...

CONRAD *(breaking freeze, addressing audience)* Have you ever been held
against your will? Have you ever screamed and no-one heard
you cry? Have you ever died so that you can live? Have you
ever lived so that you can die? How I wish I was the
outcome of black and white, because maybe both would
compromise. Though I survived the valley of the dead in
search of truth to free myself, I have tolerated this trial for
too long. I have wished and prayed until my voice was
silent. And now... I - a prisoner - stand waiting at the
forthcoming night of judgment. To end this black trial...

Lighting change. They become the therapist.

THERAPIST 6

THERAPIST 1 Sonke, it seems as if you are suffering from an Iphigenea
suppressed...

THERAPIST 2 self-actualisation syndrome.

THERAPIST 3 It's very rare...

THERAPIST 4 ...very rare.

THERAPIST 5 But rarity is good because you're an individual

THERAPIST 6 And you are...

CHORUS Uni...que!

SONKE I am unique...

CHORUS Yes!

During this, Lesley grabs hold of a paper flower and runs around the frame as to sneak up on Father.

SONKE I am unique...

CHORUS Yes!

SONKE I am unique...

CHORUS Come on, say it, Sonke!!

I AM UNIQUE

Sonke runs towards Father. Lesley is running towards him too. They arrive at the same time.

SONKE & LESLEY *(in unison)* DADDY!!

LESLEY Daddy, I made you something!!

They start a rhythmic dance-like action, which increases in volume and intensity and culminates in a climax.

SONKE Daddy, I'm unique!!

LESLEY Daddy, I made you something!!

SONKE Daddy, I'm unique!!

MOTHER He can wear his shirt.

FATHER He must put it away!!

MOTHER He can...

They tear the shirt. Music stops and there is a moment of silence where Father and Mother stare at each another. Lesley steps out of the frame to address the audience. Father and Mother slowly turn their backs on the audience and Patience, Conrad, Sizwe and Sonke perform movements in slow motion, which create the illusion that they are tortured.

EVERYONE IS EQUAL

LESLEY It seems that everybody is equal in the glow of radiation. You should be careful of following your dreams, you might follow them into a revolving door. Or if you manage to survive the hype, you might follow your dreams to a place where you can hear the sound of rushing water... Behind the waterfall I will keep all the things I do not trust: the milkman, oleander, the smell of bleach...love. When the wind changes, my face is going to stay like this and I am excited about the transition... And when you are gone, I will open up all the umbrellas, and open up all the doors. My life space presenting presenting presenting... We, that is I, have been told that we have committed multiple crimes against humanity. Nothing makes one so bold as being told that one is a sinner...

Lighting change. Transformation into therapist.

THERAPIST 7

SONKE *(as if balancing herself on a tight rope at the edge of the frame)* If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external or internal

controls would be necessary. So why can't men just be angels?

CHORUS *(yawning)* Who knows? Let's talk about it...

SONKE *(desperate)* Talk, talk, talk... Words words words... Does it make any difference? That's what THEY used to do...

THERAPIST 1 I don't know, Sonke, you tell me...

THERAPIST 2 That's what we all do, Sonke...

THERAPIST 3 That's what who used to do, precisely?

Lighting change. They transform into family members and gather around a table-like structure.

WHAT TO DO?

FATHER Uit die blou van onse hemel...

CHORUS Amen!

FATHER So Patience, wat is die vyf-punt-plan vanmôre?

PATIENCE Vanmôre het ons u gunsteling bacon en eggs, US dollar rolls en Engelse tee...

FATHER *(flirtingly)* En...

PATIENCE *(teasingly)* En...

FATHER En...

PATIENCE En... en dis al Meneer.

FATHER *(highly disappointed)* En wat dan van die olie op die eiers?

PIETIE Ja, waar's die olie?

PATIENCE Meneer, hoeveel maal moet ek nog vir u sê dat die dokter u ten strengste verbied het om olie te gebruik. U moet eers meer aandag aan...

CHORUS ... u liggaam gee.

The children play a game under the table.

MOTHER Yes, dear, if you keep on ignoring what the doctor says you are heading for a disaster.

PIETIE *(to Mother)* My Pappa is te sterk vir disasters!

MOTHER *(frightened)* Wha!!

FATHER I will and must maintain the right to manage my own affairs. Kom kinders, eet, die koud word kos.

They all rise from underneath the table, except Sizwe.

PIETIE Pappa, Pappa, Sizwe...

FATHER Sizwe...jy ken mos die plan.

SIZWE I'm not hungry...

FATHER Maar my magtag, Sizwe, ons het dan nou spesiaal die plan aangepas ter wille van jou.

SIZWE *(jumping from underneath the table in "super hero" style, as if breaking through the invisible table top)* The changes you boast are cosmetic and token changes. They don't bluff me and the rest of the household sees them for what they are: cosmetic and token changes!!

Sizwe aggressively walks around the table in the direction of the other children, turning his back on Father.

LESLEY (scared) COSMETIC!

CONRAD (scared too) TOKEN!

FATHER (rising from the table) Wat jy so pas gesê het sal ek uit die pad veeg as 'n stukkie onsin wat vandag hier verkondig is. Eat your food. You need it to function at school.

SIZWE I'm not going to school today.

Father and Sizwe stand at opposite sides of the table, facing one another. The children, Patience and Mother hide underneath the table. They make shivering noises to indicate that they are scared.

FATHER WH-WH-WHAT?!!

MOTHER (addressing audience in a monotone voice from underneath the table) How can he possibly compare the quality of education given to white children with the quality of education given to black children?!! (to Father) Leave him, dear, he's not feeling well.

FATHER Oor regverdigheid in daardie verband sal ek later iets sê.

SIZWE Just leave me alone, OK!

FATHER Van wanneer af besluit my kinders sommer self hulle gaan nie skool toe nie?

LESLEY (peeping out from underneath the table) Daddy, investment in the younger generation is an important ingredient for the moral renewal of our society.

CONRAD (agreeing with Lesley) We cherish the ideas of liberty, equality and justice.

SIZWE I've already spoken to Mother about this. I have a right to be

free and I shall be free!

LESLEY & CONRAD We have a right to be free and we shall be free!!

Father breaks the table structure.

FATHER *(shouting)* SIZWE!!

Music overrides Father's shouting and the family members are scattered like leaves in the wind. The lighting changes to indicate a dream-like state.

SONKE'S NIGHTMARE

Music box music. Performers represent various types of dolls. Father and Sizwe stand in the centre of the frame, surrounded by the others. Sonke frantically runs around the frame, reaching into the frame at times and then pulling out again as if stuck in a sticky substance. The mood is sinister.

FATHER What a hopeless family...

SIZWE Nationalism is good in its place...

FATHER Africa is dying...

SIZWE ...but is an unreliable friend and an unsafe historian...

FATHER Ons moet oppas vir die woord demokrasie...

SIZWE It blinds us to many happenings and sometimes distorts the truth...

CONRAD I am a people that never gives up!

MOTHER We must never forget our essential humanity.

LESLEY *(singing staccato)* A partner is a person irrespective of sexual orientation or marital status.

PATIENCE *(warningly)* The frontiers of white supremacy are shrinking...

Sonke "wakes" from her nightmare and stands in front of the frame, facing the audience. Sound of clock ticking. The group stands behind her, inside the frame, and reach out their hands like macabre creatures wanting to grab her.

SONKE *(slowly, trance-like)* Walls are dangerous companions. They make you a prisoner and a slave.

She turns around to face the group, but she turns to the front again as if she hasn't seen them. As she turns around, they cup their hands in a caring gesture and transform into the therapist.

THERAPIST 8

THERAPIST 1 Sonke, we can't make further progress unless you...

CHORUS *(in evil manner)* TRUST!

THERAPIST 1 ... yourself.

SONKE What does trust mean, anyway?!!

THERAPIST 2 Well, what is the first word you think of when you think of trust?

SONKE war..

THERAPIST 3 Do...

SONKE people...

THERAPIST 4 you...

SONKE act...

THERAPIST 5 trust...

SONKE immoral...

THERAPIST 6 me...

SONKE empty...

THERAPIST 1 Sonke?

They get into position for the next scene. Sonke is scratching herself, as if she is itching terribly.

SONKE flowers

THERAPIST 2 water

SONKE bridge

THERAPIST 3 sand

SONKE witch

THERAPIST 4 ice cream

SONKE promises

THERAPIST 5 sunflowers

SONKE trust

THERAPIST 6 balloons

Snap into lighting change.

WANT TO PLAY?

Mother and Lesley stand on boxes outside the frame, creating a still image of a domestic scene. Father and Pietie are seated on the floor, as if watching television. Patience is lying on the floor, her face framed by one of the smaller frames, as if she is the television presenter. Conrad and Sizwe stand on opposite sides of the frame, creating still images of people doing exercises.

PIETIE Wha!!

FATHER Sjoë, Pietie, hoe laat jy jou pa nou skrik!

PIETIE Wat gaan Pappa nou maak?

FATHER Jy weet mos jou pa kyk altyd 'n bietjie TV voor slapenstyd.

PIETIE Kan ek ook kyk?

FATHER *(warningly)* Pieter Willem...

PIETIE Ag toe...

FATHER Nou maar toe dan, Pa se grootman.

PIETIE Pappa, wanneer gaan ek nou my eie kamer ver weg van Sizwe en Conrad kry?

FATHER Maar jy het mos jou eie kamer, Pietie.

PIETIE Maar nie ve-e-e-e-e-r van die ander af nie. Conrad huil die hele tyd en Sizwe is alewig besig om vir goeters te oefen.

FATHER Watse goeters, Pietie?

PIETIE Vreemde goeters, Pa... *(they freeze)*

Lighting change. Conrad and Sizwe create the illusion that they are playing soccer.

SIZWE *(breaking the freeze)* Psst, Conrad, we must fight to end Dad's monopoly, which will mean a family free from violence, hunger and exploitation.

CONRAD So you want more bobotie?

SIZWE Conrad, you won't understand.

CONRAD All Dad's sanctimonious bellowing is utter hypocrisy. He has been brought up on ruthlessness and the philosophy of Calvinism.

SIZWE *(surprised)* Yes, Conrad... Let the struggle continue! *(As an afterthought)* He took my pocket money...

CONRAD So he has put up an economic blockade.

SIZWE *(even more surprised)* Yeah, Conrad!

CONRAD Well, touch pocket money, touch fire! An injury to one is an injury to all!!

SIZWE Yeah...

CONRAD The oppressed people must unite!!

SIZWE *(uncertain how to react)* Okay!

Conrad and Sizwe move towards Mother and Lesley at the back, as if they are at a political rally.

CONRAD Amandla ngawethu!!

SIZWE Amandla!

They join Mother and Lesley, forming a tableau in the back. They freeze. Lighting change.

FATHER *(breaking his freeze)* Ag dis sommer bog...

PIETIE Ja, maar ek hou nie daarvan nie; dit maak my bang.

FATHER Nee, kom nou. Pappa se grootman is mos nie bang nie.

PIETIE Ek weet, Pappa, maar...

FATHER Wag, sjuut, ek kyk nou TV.

PATIENCE *(climbing out of the frame)* Ekskuus tog, Meneer, ek hoop nie ek pla nie...

FATHER *(taken by surprise)* Patience! Waarmee kan ons help?

PATIENCE Meneer, ek het net gewonder of ek maar betaling kan kry voor ek die naweek huis toe gaan.

FATHER Maar alte seker, Patience! Wag ek gee dit sommer nou vir jou. *(draws a diamond shape in the air and gives it to Patience)* Kla-kla, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle...

PATIENCE *(taking the invisible object, drawing a diamond shape in the air)* Kla-kla, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle... Vreeslik dankie, Meneer. *(about to leave)*

FATHER *(pulling her back)* Patience!

PATIENCE Meneer?

FATHER *(flirtatiously)* Hoe nou gemaak met die koffie?

PATIENCE Meneer weet wat die dokter gesê het. *(pushing him away)* Totsiens, Meneer!

PIETIE *(insulted)* Blêrrie meid!!

The rest of the family turn to Father with shocked expressions. They freeze in that position. Lighting change. Transformation into the therapist.

THERAPIST 9

THERAPIST 2 Sonke, have you experienced any feelings of GUILT lately?!

SONKE *(falling down, as if hit)* Guilt?! No, no guilt whatsoever, no guilt at all...

CHORUS *(in evil manner)* Are you sure?!!

SONKE Yes, absolutely...

Lighting change.

GO, GO, GO!

Sonke is pulled by her neck by an invisible rope. She joins the group which consists of Patience, Conrad, Lesley and Mother. They stand at the back of the frame, acting as spectators at a sports match. Sizwe and Father stand in separate frames, their backs turned to the audience. What follows is a vocal simulation of a dog fight.

FATHER *(growling)* As jy nie diskriminasie wil hê nie, dan is daar net een metode en dit is skeiding. *(barks)*

SIZWE *(growling)* I want to dedicate myself to constructing a society in which all people may live in harmony. *(barks)*

FATHER Ek sal aparte ontwikkeling deurgevoer kry. Dit is die enigste realistiese beleid. *(barks)*

SIZWE The supremacy of moral law without which there cannot be enduring peace. *(barks)*

FATHER Met elke ander metode sal daar net aanhoudende botsings bestaan. *(barks)*

SIZWE I shall ensure that democracy indeed constitutes government by the people for the people. (*barks*)

A vocal presentation of dogs attacking one another is heard. The spectators' facial expressions are grotesque and indicative of what is happening during the fight. It is clear that they are enjoying it, especially Sonke. The fight ends with Father's dog killing Sizwe's dog. Father mimes putting an imaginary rope around Sizwe's neck.

FATHER Dit sal vir jou 'n les leer!!

Sizwe's head drops as if he has been hanged. The group slowly turn their backs on the "killers", looking very guilty. Sonke walks away from the group. It seems as if she is being attacked by invisible bugs.

SONKE (*clearly tormented, keeping the bugs away*) I never meant to... I never meant to... I never meant to... I never meant to...

Lighting change. Transformation into the therapist.

THERAPIST 9

SONKE I NEVER MEANT TO UPSET ANYONE!!

CHORUS (*falsely*) Of course you didn't...

Lighting change.

AT LONG LAST!

Sonke is pushed into the frame again, joining Mother, Lesley and Conrad who are standing as if to attention in a military camp. Father represents the person in command. Patience and Sizwe are standing outside the frame, their backs turned to the audience.

FATHER (*sings in monotone voice*) Uit die blou van onse hemel...

CHORUS (*saluting Father*) Amen!!

FATHER So, Patience, wat is die vyf-punt-plan vanaand?

Silence.

FATHER Patience...?

No response.

FATHER PATIENCE!!

MOTHER *(nervously saluting Father)* Patience isn't here...

FATHER *(walking up to her, speaking in a condescending manner)* I can see that, Petal. Maybe you want to tell me where she is...

MOTHER Patience has left us and she's not coming back.

FATHER Sommer net so...sonder om my in die saak te ken?

MOTHER She's been threatening to leave us for ages. I told you it was going to happen!! *(bursts into tears)*

FATHER Kom, kom nou, Petal, dis regtig nie so erg nie.

LESLEY *(saluting him)* Daddy, she said she's had enough of the way you treat us.

CONRAD And the way you treat Umkhonto weSizwe.

FATHER Wel, dan moet ons maar net sonder haar klaarkom. Niemand sal vir my voorskryf hoe ek my kinders moet grootmaak nie. *(mock suffering)* En dit ná alles wat ons vir haar gedoen het!

PIETIE *(same tone as Father)* Patience was ondankbaar!

FATHER Ek het nie eers van haar kos gehou nie...

PIETIE Patience se kos was SWAK!

SONKE Shut up, Pietie!!

FATHER Dis nie asof ons nie weet hoe om ons eie kos te kook nie. As Patience ons nie wil hê nie, dan het ons haar ook nie nodig nie. Sy sal gou genoeg haar fout agterkom. Dis hoeka hoogtyd dat ons weer vir 'n slag vir onself sorg.

CONRAD Wheee....Azania!!

FATHER Conrad, I'm going to send you to your room if you don't stop crying.

LESLEY Daddy, why did Sizwe leave us?

FATHER We won't mention Sizwe in this household anymore. He has divorced himself from us and we will do the same.

CONRAD How does one work for reconciliation and peace under a state of emergency - with black areas under military occupation, when people's organisations are banned, leaders are either in exile, prison or restricted, when the policy of apartheid with its violence is still being enforced, and when no conditions for free political expression exist?

LESLEY Daddy, what's di VORCE ?

MOTHER That's a very good question!

FATHER Dis grootmensdinge... Kom almal, eet, die kos is koud.

Nobody wants to eat, pulling faces of disgust.

PIETIE Pappa, Pappa, niemand wil eet nie.

LESLEY *(crying)* Ons wil Patience se kos hê!!

FATHER Solank as wat julle onder hierdie dak woon, maak julle soos ek sê. EET!! *(pressing down on their heads, as if playing a musical instrument)* Eet! Eet! Eet! Eet! Eet!

Conrad transforms. Samba-like music is heard as they dance around Father's body freely and wildly. Sonke breaks away from the group.

SONKE *(as if talking to herself)* I know...let's have a party!!

MOTHER *(to the group, oblivious of Sonke)* I've got an idea... let's have a party!!

SONKE *(to herself)* We could invite Sizwe...

LESLEY *(to the group)* I know, I know... why don't we invite Sizwe...

SONKE *(to herself)* And Patience can cater...

CONRAD *(to the group)* And, and, and... Patience can cook...

SONKE We can play outside...

CHORUS Let's go and play outside!!

SONKE *(joining the group)* The first thing we need to do...

CHORUS *(surprised)* Sonke... where have you been?

LESLEY We're having a party, Sonke. It's brilliant!!

CONRAD How come you're so quiet, Sonke? Did you know...

LESLEY Dad is dead!!

SONKE I know, I was there.

MOTHER Sonke, take notes.

The group follows Mother around the frame. Father rises from the floor and walks to the back while Sizwe approaches him from behind. When Father passes Sizwe, he hands him an invisible token.

MOTHER

I see balloons, different coloured balloons; eleven official *hors d'oeuvres*, intelligent lighting, affirmative singers, topless dancing cowboys, ethnic delicacies, CNN, BBC...

They notice Sizwe standing centre stage and stop their action. He exchanges a warm, big smile with them. Music and lighting change.

LET'S CELEBRATE!

The family members are standing in a dance formation, making percussion-like sounds. While Sizwe is talking, they dance in formation.

SIZWE

(in R & B-style) I would like to thank all the people in our household who participated in organising this welcoming party. This is a very proud occasion for every member of the family, because it is not only a party for myself, but one that takes into account the interests of all the family members!! We must all strive to be inspired by a deep-seated love of our family, without regard to race, colour, gender or station in life. We must strive to be moved by a generosity of spirit that will enable us to outgrow the hatred and conflicts of the past. We must anchor all our efforts in the common determination to build a family that will be the envy of the world!!

They applaud him and transform into dolls.

MOTHER

I do not think anybody will ever forget these words, because they are such a lesson to us, and, whatever the divide, whatever the differences across politics and parties, we must never forget our essential humanity - the fact that we are really, all together, one family.

SIZWE

(pulling Patience on an imaginary string) Patience, I have succeeded through your help. Thank you very much for that help. Now I want to ask you, on behalf of the rest of the family, to help us to become the scintillating success that we should be.

PATIENCE Sizwe, there is no limit to us extending our services to our neighbours across state-made frontiers. I am glad to be back.

CONRAD *(unwinding like a wind-up doll)* Patience, I want Pietie's room and my freedom, please!

LESLEY *(unwinding)* Patience, I want Ma-do-nna...

SONKE *(unwinding)* Patience, please make us one big happy family!

MOTHER *(unwinding)* Patience, I want a ticket to London.

Lighting change. Transformation into therapist.

THERAPIST 10

SONKE For the first time in my life...

A clock is heard ticking.

SONKE Ah, Sonke, look at the time...

THERAPIST 2 time...

THERAPIST 3 time...

Therapists mime tearing pages out of a notebook.

THERAPIST 1 That will be one big budget musical and a holiday house in Knysna.

THERAPIST 2 That will be a farm in the Transvaal.

THERAPIST 3 That will be one Mercedes please, strictly hush-hush...

THERAPIST 4 Scuba-diving lessons in Mauritius!

THERAPIST 5

Two-hundred-and-fifty-two million!!

Blackout and sound of people at a party.

When the lights go on again, the setting is similar as in the beginning. Everyone stands at the invisible banquet table, having the same conversations that they had in the first scene. This time they talk simultaneously

SIZWE _____ *(trying to get group's attention)* O.K. everybody, let's eat...

No response.

SIZWE *(louder)* O.K. everybody, let's eat...

No response.

SIZWE *(shouting)* O.K. everybody, let's EAT!!

Lighting change. Sonke experiences a flash-back.

PIETIE Eet Eet..... Eet Eet Eet.....Eet Eet.....Eet Eet Eet...

CHORUS Eet, Eet, Eet...

SONKE No, leave me alone!! I don't want anything to do with you!!
Leave me alone, you don't belong here!! *(running to group, facing them)* LEAVE ME ALONE! *(collapses)*

Lighting change. The group resumes their conversations as if nothing has happened. Slowly they become aware of Sonke. Transformation into therapist.

THERAPIST 1 Sonke...

CHORUS What is the matter with you?

Music comes up and lights fade slowly.