

**A Museum of Bottled Sentiments:** the 'beautiful pain syndrome' in twenty-first century Black South African theatre making.

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## ABSTRACT

**A Museum of Bottled Sentiments:** the ‘beautiful pain syndrome’ in twenty-first century Black South African theatre making.

This study is about contemporary black theatre makers and theatre making in the ‘now moment’; this moment of recovery and gradual transition after the fall of apartheid in South Africa. The ‘now moment’, for these theatre makers, is characterized by a deliberate journey inward, in a struggle towards self-determination. The ‘now moment’ is the impulse prompting the ‘beautiful pain syndrome’, and through performances of uncomfortable attachments and rites of passage, generates and dwells in the syndrome. Uncomfortable attachments are unsettlement and anxiety wrought by the difficulty of the ‘now moment’. These manifest in the work of Black South African-based contemporary theatre makers, Mandla Mbothwe, Awelani Moyo, Mamela Nyamza and Asanda Phewa, within the duality of the ‘beautiful pain syndrome’. The ‘beautiful pain syndrome’ is a cultural dis-ease revealed by the individual theatre makers through the aesthetic interpretation, or beautiful consideration of inherently painful material – a condition or predicament that best contains and yet attempts to unpack this shifting impulse of the ‘now’ moment. The works around which this study revolves, namely Mbothwe’s *Ingcwaba lendoda lise cankwe ndlela (the grave of the man is next to the road)* (2009), Moyo’s *Huroyi Hwang – De/Re Composition* (2007), Nyamza’s *Hatched* (2009) and Phewa’s *A Face Like Mine* (2008) are rites of passage works, representing a passage or transition from one phase of life to another, which occurs on multiple levels. Through guiding thinking tools, which include intuition, my own positioning, observation and comparative and cultural performance analysis, the four selected works are described, probed and, interrogated; with their purposes and poetics investigated and articulated in different ways. The study does not complete the assignment of unpacking the four works but continues to wonder and worry at them, while investigating a particular aesthetic of dis-ease through the artistic assemblage of symbolic categories. These rites of passage works reflect or echo the transitions in the country’s shifting identity, along with the identities of the individuals who inhabit it.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“A body can act as a container of experience that contributes effectively to its inherent memorability” – Creswell, 2004:86

### **Museum of bottled sentiments: Expression, Purgation and Healing**

In South Africa, we, the nation’s majority black citizenry must acknowledge that there are connections and continuities between the apartheid past and the present.<sup>1</sup> Indeed the social manoeuvring and subjugation engineered by apartheid is so severely ingrained in the country’s memory and history, that it is still flagrantly evident in contemporary society. Celebrated South African writer, Zakes Mda rightly asserts: “we are products of our past. We have been shaped by our history. Our present worldview and our mind-set is a result of our yesterdays” (2002:280). Despite our pain-filled legacy, in *Entanglement*, South African cultural theorist Sarah Nuttall calls for new kinds of explorations to explicate the predicaments that emerge in the ‘now moment’ (2009:14). “Entanglement offers, for me, a rubric in terms of which we can begin to meet the challenge of the ‘after apartheid’” (Nuttall, 2009:11). Nuttall is the foremost scholar when it comes to conceptualising and contextualising the ‘now moment’ in South Africa. In the last ten years at least she has written several articles and books that comment on the importance of explaining the ‘now moment’ (2000, 2004, 2009). It is really Nuttall’s theorising about the ‘now moment’ that encouraged my fascination with considering the shift happening in black South Africa-based contemporary theatre making, and therefore I stand firmly on her shoulders in this regard (see pages 30-33 for a more detailed account of the ‘now moment’)<sup>2</sup>. While it must be acknowledged that there are many inequalities that still need to be addressed, to say that not much has changed in South Africa since the fall of apartheid is to undermine the vast transformation that has taken place. Neglecting this change also undercuts the opportunity

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<sup>1</sup> I often use a plural ‘we’, ‘us’ and ‘our’ in my argumentation. This is because, as a black South African woman, I speak from a space of ‘shared blackness’ to the majority of South Africa’s citizens in particular and then I am addressing a global audience. As a writer, I choose to prioritise and foreground black experience.

<sup>2</sup> I use ‘see page’ to refer the reader to where a particular subject is discussed in a different place in the study.

to inspect exactly what has changed and find a way to account for these changes (Nuttall, 2004:731). Probing the 'now moment' provides an opportunity to explain these changes. In attempting to take this task on, I use the 'beautiful pain syndrome' and its symptoms as a method of exploration as well as an instrument of examination in engaging with this 'now moment'. What I hope to offer through the explication of the 'beautiful pain syndrome' is a means for elucidating not only the predicaments of the 'now moment' but the way these are embodied, shared and aesthetically represented in black contemporary South African-based theatre making practices.

These are new predicaments so they must be looked at anew. The 'now moment' can and must stand on its own (Nuttall, 2009:28). As tempting as it may be to examine the 'now moment' through a lens that always takes into consideration the apartheid past, it would be negligent to do only this as we would be overlooking the opportunity to take on the new challenges and intricacies presented by this moment, now. The way Nuttall authenticates this is by asserting that: "Apartheid was a time of deadness" (2009:151). Deadness here incorporates the many people that died during this violent, cruel and disgraceful period. Deadness refers to the forced silencing of voices and suppression of rights. Deadness points to there being a lack of emotion from a 'dead' society (especially those people of colour) who everyday had to exist under the thumb of tyranny (Nuttall, 2009:151). It is not easy to feel anything other than anger, anxiety and persecution under these circumstances and so what happened, post liberation, is that sentiments came to the forefront and were privileged because now South Africa is alive and we are dealing with how a sense of re-birth –a coming back to life – manifests.

Now that we, as black South Africans, are 'alive', now that we have a voice and agency, now that we can openly share our sentiments, what have we got to say? These bodies, these containers, these museums of bottled sentiments are now open for public expression, reading, sharing, understanding and dialogue. This must happen now because what theatre makers of the 21st century seem to be expressing is that when experiences are kept hidden and are not represented in some kind of way, victims/theatre makers/sufferers are deprived of important sources of acknowledgement, emotional validation and social support. When individuals find ways to depict, articulate and share moments of pain; when language,

vocality and the body become outlets for traumatic experiences or are shared with responsive observers and spectators through performance, dance and ritual, psychological repair becomes possible (Stepakoff, 2008:17). When the bottle is uncapped, the material of our past can dialogue with the conditions of our present and our expectations for the future ...the 'after'. The term, 'a museum of bottled sentiments', captures several thoughts: museums are spaces where people can actively recover and assemble memory in the first place; and negotiate and reconcile fragmented narratives, ruptured identities, both individual and collective (Hutchison, 2004:62).

This museum metaphor also accommodates the complexity of blackness and the black body in performance. Blackness, history and memory are embodied – the predicament is bottled in the body – it must be let out and is being let out by theatre makers now. The theatre makers step forward to confront, and are at the same time accosted by, South Africa's tumultuous past, a past that has assembled itself in the body. Ultimately the body is the receptacle, the container of pain.

What I discover about pain is that it is not always an immediate, continual physical pain happening in the 'now'. Sometimes the pain that I write about belongs to the past, is buried in history, in memory, in lived experience and autobiography, and yet is felt in the present. The pain is not all now and it is not always painful, sometimes it is hidden by beauty, at times it is revealed through the ugly and grotesque, other times it subsides, sometimes it is not noticeably there at all but there is always an element of residue; the debris of pain in the body and performance discourse. The body is the holder of bottled emotion, the holder of feeling (physical and psychological). The body, this edifice or museum of memory, so to speak, conserves, stores and exhibits our sentiments, our thoughts and feelings which we convey through words, performance, art, gesture and life acts. This is what I mean by 'a museum of bottled sentiment' – it is both the theatre maker's/ performer's body and their act of embodiment. The body in this instance is the 'real' medium. The (material) body's experience becomes a container of expressive arrangement. In these works, the body is a carrier of symbols and the agent of the social construction of the subject in performance (Carlson, 1996:167). The body is the repository – a museum of bottled sentiment. Let us also consider museums to be a place where we can connect the 'now moment' to past

places, histories and points of separation. The museum and therefore the body becomes a site, a hub of activity that responds to and corresponds with everyday lived realities (Hutchison, 2004:65). Anthropologist Arturo Escobar recognizes that place, body and environment interface with each other – that places [such as museums and in this case bodies] gather things, thoughts and memories in particular configurations (Escobar, 2001:143).

This study is about the ‘now moment’, this moment of recovery, resurgence and gradual transition. This moment is delineated by a kind of a poesis – ‘making meaning’ or formation – of selfhood. This action of formation of the self is a material activity evident in the body (through performance), sentiments and aesthetic practices. The way that I have come to see this manifesting in the work of Black South African-based contemporary theatre makers, Mandla Mbothwe, Awelani Moyo, Mamela Nyamza and Asanda Phewa, is within the duality of the ‘beautiful pain syndrome’.

### **The ‘beautiful pain syndrome’**

I coined the term ‘beautiful pain syndrome’, which contains and yet unpacks this predicament of the ‘now moment’. I understand that the word syndrome points to a pathology and while these theatre makers are not sick or ill in the real sense of the word, in this instance, syndrome points to the ‘dis-ease’ of the contemporary black South African identity both in theatre making and in the everyday. Syndrome refers to the homologous instances, events and actions that occur in Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa’s theatre making and in their everyday experience of South African contemporaneity. Syndrome points to the patterns and set of symptoms that bring these four theatre makers together. Thus, the ‘beautiful pain syndrome’ is a cultural dis-ease revealed by the individual theatre makers through the aesthetic interpretation (beautiful consideration) of inherently painful material.

The ‘now moment’ is the impulse prompting the ‘beautiful pain syndrome’. The ‘now moment’ is characterized by a deliberate journey inward in a struggle towards self-determination. The ‘now moment’ births the ‘beautiful pain syndrome’, and through performances of rites of passage and uncomfortable attachments, generates and dwells in

the syndrome. Thus uncomfortable attachments are central to these rites of passage works and therefore this study. The works around which this study revolves, namely Mbothwe's *Ingcwaba lendoda lise cankwe ndlela (the grave of a man is on the side of the road)* (2009)<sup>3</sup>, Moyo's *Huroyi Hwangu – In De/Re Composition* (2007)<sup>4</sup>, Nyamza's *Hatched* (2009) and Asanda Phewa's *A Face Like Mine* (2008) are rites of passage works, representing a passage or transition from one phase of life to another and this happens on multiple levels. The works mark a moment of change in the individual theatre maker, in the performer and inadvertently, South Africa. These rites of passage works reflect or echo the transitions in the country's shifting identity, along with the identities of the individuals who inhabit it.

This study is a rites of passage study in the sense that it is about passing through something; an event, a state of being, a sense of self and practice in this 'now moment'. We pass through, not because we think that what is on the other side is better, but because we must experience and deal with what we have *passed* through and what we are *passing* through now in order to move forward. In this manner the 'now moment' itself is, to some extent, liminal. And yet we must linger in order to progress: this is uncomfortable attachment. Uncomfortable attachments are emotional sentiments which characterise the 'dis-ease' in these works of dis-ease. This is affect at work; the unsettlement and anxiety wrought by the difficulty of the 'now moment'.

For in us, emotions effect changes. I am reminded that this is what led me to this study, and in particular, these individual theatre makers to begin with. As I recall the initial extract of *Hatched* I watched, I remember Nyamza appearing wearing a white tutu weighed down by the dozens of wooden clothespins attached to it. Some few paces from a tree lies a voluminous deep red crushed organza skirt that spans meters and meters – an eye-grabbing feature in an otherwise sparse outdoor site. Nyamza is wearing pointe shoes; she is on the tips of her toes – *en pointe* – considered the ideal taking-off position for flight in ballet (Haskell, 1938:29). She carries a bucket on her head, her muscular back is towards the audience and she is topless. The image reads like a struggle between two antithetical yet

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<sup>3</sup>Production will hereafter be referred to as *Ingcwaba*.

<sup>4</sup>Production will hereafter be referred to as *Huroyi Hwangu*.

recognizable worlds; that of the Westernized ballerina and the archetypal rural black African woman. There is a clothesline that hangs above her, anchored from the tree and a building wall; where clothes hang, all of them red in colour. Nyamza proceeds to take a red vest off the line, puts it on and turns around to face the audience, finally revealing her face. Until this point, all we have seen is her back. This revelation shows her resistance to her bifurcated world, her dis-ease, her trouble made evident by her pained facial expression – furrowed brow, trembling lips, pleading watering eyes – and the contorted physical gestures that follow. The image leaves open the possibility for multiple interpretations. The remainder of the performance fragment involved her extrication from the billowing skirt after being tangled, then scrambling, unravelling and straightening out again, depicting a clear struggle to escape her ensnared circumstance.

What struck me most about her work was my visceral response to it. I was intuitively overcome by the work's haunting beauty. The piece was evocative, Nyamza was exquisite in it, and yet what we are eventually confronted with is a painfully worn out face. I was moved in a way that surprised me and what is more, Nyamza was doing so little. With over five minutes of the piece spent with her back turned towards the audience, in her unhurried movement her body exudes potency. The specific details of this particular showing are no longer very clear in my mind. I was not watching the piece with the intention of critical and intellectual examination, but I was unnerved by the beauty of the predicament that had been presented and I wanted to understand why. This went beyond interest, I was attached, I was aware, I was held emotionally. This is brought about by affect; ambivalence and entanglement (see pages 45–47 and 65–68). I was attentive to Nyamza's emotional treatment; it was affect that had her allowing that moment, fulfilling that image, letting it be. She took her time, she moved at her own pace and she was deliberate about it...she could wait. In this sense performance is the handling of sentiment with due regard to the use of time. The emotion arrives; she takes it in, takes it into her body and then, only then, does she share it with the observer. She allows things to happen to her, to take her over. In her, sentiments do things.



Figure 1: Mamela Nyamza in *Hatched*. Photographer: John Hogg

The dis-ease of this kind of uncomfortable attachment inheres in the 'beautiful pain syndrome'. For uncomfortable attachments are those things that we draw near/nearer to ourselves no matter how painful they are because what they reveal about us is too poignant to overlook. It is necessary to endure uncomfortable attachments/ beautiful pain in order to pass through and on. What makes this study significant is that the 'now moment' is here. In this instant I ask: what kind of aesthetic experience is revealed by these contemporary black South African-based theatre makers through the 'beautiful pain syndrome'? If 'beautiful pain' is an expression of the 'now moment', this moment of becoming aware of, confronting and therefore accepting pain; how are these theatre makers using uncomfortable attachments and rites of passage to experience this moment? Additionally, while the study is indeed about here and now and capturing the bits that make it beautifully painful, South Africa's troubled historical legacy is nevertheless integrally part of the now.

The painful effects of apartheid and its aftermath devastated the social fabric of South Africa. The gross violation of the human rights of non-white persons under the law of apartheid is well documented. Apartheid was iniquitous, denying black South Africans the right to self-determination and discriminating against them on the basis of race and colour (Hopkins & Roederer, 2004:133). From 1948, when they came into power and over the next three decades, the Nationalist Government in South Africa promulgated a series of laws to define and enforce segregation. These brutally racist acts of legislation formalized the apartheid system in South African society, deciding social standing according to race (Stent, 1994:53). A person's race profile would regulate their access to rights of property, quality of life, "freedom of movement, opinion, expression, peaceful assembly and association" (Hopkins and Roederer, 2004:133).

Amongst some of the heinous and absurd laws enacted by the Afrikaner Nationalists was the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, Act No 55 of 1949, which outlawed marriages between white people and non-whites. The Population Registration Act, Act No 30 of 1950, declared that every person's race be recorded through a national register. The Group Areas Act, Act No 41 of 1950, enforced physical separation between races by establishing different residential areas for different races (Stent, 1994:54). The Natives (Abolition of Passes and

Co-ordination of Documents) Act, Act No 67 of 1952, commonly known as the Pass Laws, stated that black people had to carry identification with them at all times in the form of a pass book which included a photograph, details of place of origin, employment record, tax payments, and encounters with the police etc. (Stent, 1994:54). One of the most damaging pieces of legislation to the progress of black South Africans was the Bantu Education Act, Act No 47 of 1953. This Act established a black Education Department under the Department of Native Affairs that assembled a curriculum which (according to Hendrik Verwoerd, then Minister of Native Affairs and later Prime Minister) matched, what he presumed to be the character, class and needs of black people. Verwoerd declared that

racial relations cannot improve if the wrong type of education is given to natives...if the result of native education is the creation of frustrated people who...have expectations in life which circumstances in South Africa do not allow to be fulfilled immediately (in Stent, 1994:60).

In other words, this piece of legislation legally blocked Africans from receiving an education that would empower them to aim for skilled work and professional positions and was instead created to equip them only with skills to serve other black people in the homelands or to work in labouring jobs under whites. In his chapter called *The Pillars of Apartheid*, columnist Michael Stent says of the disgraceful apartheid laws: "each of these pieces of legislation might have been comic had it not been for the enormous suffering, disruption and degradation they also brought" (1994:56).

The injustices of apartheid were not just confined to legislation (Hopkins & Roederer, 2004:131). Discrimination permeated the everyday lives of black South Africans who were exposed to groups of law officials scrutinizing

the structure of people's hair, their nose shapes or the colour of their fingernails to reach a decision that would determine where they could live, how they would be educated, what medical care they would receive, what jobs they could do, who they could sleep with, who they could marry, even where they could be buried (Stent, 1994:56).

Furthermore, the apartheid laws gave white people a sense of protection that maintained white supremacy while perpetuating black oppression and it is this troubling legacy that has continued to survive long after the end of apartheid's legal mandate (Hopkins & Roederer, 2004:131).

As a result of apartheid, ambiguous patterns of the telling of pain have emerged. Of course the expression of pain differs from locale to locale and from one individual to another but what we can agree on is that in South Africa, the events of the past have had a profound impact on our ability to consider and deal with pain. Living in and being South African raises feelings of ambivalence. It is a country whose oppressively divisive past is never far from the consciousness of its citizenry, who are in a process of undoing or at least acknowledging and refiguring the present that is incessantly haunted by the past. As a country that has been gradually transforming for some twenty years, this process has precipitated a noticeable development in performance practice, particularly since the millennium.<sup>5</sup> In the midst of this transformation, black South African theatre makers, in particular, have had to ask: who are we and how do we define ourselves? This issue of identity is foregrounded especially because what the apartheid laws cemented was a way to contain black South Africans, to “define them; separate them; put them in their stratified place; and keep them there” (Stent, 1994:54). Apartheid stole from South Africans – in particular those people of colour – the reality of multiple identities in the name of forcing an agenda that promoted oppression, segregation and exploitation. Thus the defiant need for self-representation is not surprising, as the recent history of South African performance has revealed. The human psyche finds few things more oppressive and painful than being told who, what or how to be. Moreover, post-1994 political liberation also made it possible for theatre makers to focus less on suppressive externally enforced identities and apply greater responsiveness to the more remote landscapes of individual being. In other words, what was previously inaccessible is countered by a performance of subjectivity in the everyday lives of those who are fortunate enough, and of these theatre makers. Understandably, the task we now have is to identify, become acquainted with, and give acknowledgment to, multiple identities. This task appears to be daunting and leaves us with more questions than answers.

In his article *South African theatre in an era of reconciliation* Zakes Mda quotes renowned South African playwright Athol Fugard, who in a television interview said: “The best thing that could happen to a storyteller is to be born in South Africa” (Fugard quoted in Mda, 2002:279). This is because this is a country that is remarkably multifarious; where the

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<sup>5</sup> See pages 35-44 for more on trends in post-apartheid theatre.

personal is political and the potential for weaving narratives is endless. That said, there are many South African scholars and writers (I am busying myself with this very activity) who have tried unsuccessfully, or have attempted to grapple, with understanding and trying to make sense of this country, or “at the very least try to represent its breath-taking extremes of beauty and inhumanity” (Cole, 2010:xxiv). Here ‘beautiful pain’ becomes a useful trope because, in South Africa particularly, it is difficult to separate pain and aesthetics (as our performance traditions indicate).

South Africa’s history of oppression as a result of a repressive system of governance saw the birth of emotionally unique theatre movements that publically and surreptitiously expressed the grievances of the South African people. Performance was rampant amongst black South Africans during apartheid and led to the emergence of a beautifully distinctive theatrical style (Thompson, 2006:48). It was from oppression that cultural practices, which sought to give meaning to individual’s experiences of social activities and transformations, developed. Black Theatre became a means of hegemonic contestation and was extreme in its disapproval of the state. Black theatre as a radical movement of state opposition presented the possibility for different histories and hopes (Peterson, 1990:229).

Professor of African literature Bhekizizwe Peterson uses the term ‘Black theatre’ which is associated with the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). The BCM was influenced by the American Black consciousness movement and the writing of anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko. Biko was a founding member of the South African Student Organization (SASO), an entirely black student organization that emphasized the need for black South Africans to unshackle themselves psychologically and to strive for self-reliance in order to fundamentally transform South Africa. The establishment of SASO in 1969 marked the start of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM).

It was really the rise of the BCM from the late 1960s that radicalized theatre, promoting black autonomy and power. This meant that Black Consciousness (BC) influenced Black theatre “was to be transcendental and prefigure the return of Africa...black theatre was to be about collective black liberation” (Sitas, 1996:84). Sociology professor and poet Ari Sitas notes that BC “created a new set of aesthetic performance parameters and through those parameters it launched a new, tactile, body-centred, sensual presence on stage that was

transgressive” (1996:84). In some way, BC influenced Black theatre forecast the course of this study in that it encouraged black performers to move beyond ‘victim’ status and fight to become “revolutionary dancers” (Sitas, 1996:84). Sitas observes that “Black Consciousness crafted bodies to express, in theatrical terms, a utopian vision that involved poise, sensuality, movement, and anger, prefiguring bodies of the future, crafted from imagined pasts” (1996:86). While ‘Black theatre’ of the apartheid years is to some degree, an antecedent to the Black contemporary theatre of the ‘now moment’, this moment is much more about individualism than a collective plight.

The term ‘Black theatre’, however prickly, has managed to stick around but now it has different implications and serves a different purpose. At a time when black people did not have much authority and freedom of art was severely censored, BC influenced ‘Black theatre’ became an audacious and militant way to claim space and self. In this manner the ‘black’ refers to the human being, not exclusively to a performance style. Peterson writes that the ‘black’ in ‘Black theatre’ was associated with freedom, solidarity, dignity, self-identification and self-determination (1995:576). The emphasis on solidarity amongst blacks during apartheid privileged a unified identity over categories of class, ethnicity, gender etc. This unified front was a direct response to the subjugation and mistreatment of black people by the apartheid state (Peterson, 1995:576). Comparable to the need to re-work black identity in South Africa in the ‘now moment’, the territory claimed by black identity then, was new, not black identity itself. In the ‘now’, the experience of the ‘living of blackness’ has changed and our claim over our own blackness has changed. What the BCM shows us is that the past spills into the present, which means we also carry the pain of the past. Peterson references poet and editor Mafika Gwala, who emphasized the need for a black aesthetic as a deliberate but passing reaction to the explicit racial nature of the ambiguities that characterise South African society. Gwala thus referred to ‘Black theatre’ as “a process, ‘a temporary thing’ that will, hopefully, be replaced by a non-racial culture in the future” (in Peterson, 1995:576). Gwala already recognized the need for this to take place in the early 1970s. Except, the need has not yet passed. This is why this ‘now moment’ is a necessary rite of passage, a moment to be passed through in order to move on.

My study also argues how Blackness supplants the performative, in that blackness does not have to be knowingly performed because the racial experience of black people becomes a discernible way of knowing (Johnson, 2003:8). As the BCM prefigured, it is not blackness alone that surpasses the performative but blackness in relation to South Africa's socio-political and socio-historic positioning. There is a legacy of "complex interaction between history and performance" and a theatrical practice and practitioners that took subject matter, concepts and organizational motivation from political developments of the time (Peterson, 1995:574). Apartheid became "the main trope from which African theatre teased out its stark thematic battles between good and evil, victims and torturers, the haves and the have-nots" (Peterson, 1995:574). It is this "complex interaction" (Peterson, 1995:574) that incited a surging dynamism in Black theatre from the 1980s onwards. Successively then, there is little doubt that the BC influenced 'Black theatre' is significant, as an antecedent of the poetics of Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa.

The change of South Africa's political climate after the 1990s further impacted upon theatre. The immediate transformation of the country meant that theatre had to transform alongside it. Thus began an ambiguous and irresolute period in theatre history where practitioners were left figuring out the direction for South African theatre without the struggle of apartheid as a thematic trope. The arrival of the new democratic dispensation post 1994 marked another great transition in South African theatre and this would carry on well into the millennium.<sup>6</sup>

'Black theatre' proved that even in pain-filled strife there is space for beauty to become known. As such, this study also addresses some of the ways in which these contemporary theatre makers intricately weave beauty and aesthetic form into narratives of pain, loss and change for ameliorative purposes. *This is performing pain and seeing beauty.*

Performing pain and seeing beauty is a challenging condition of the 'now moment' that points to the troubling appeal of pain or the 'lure of tragedy'. The ability for pain to draw individuals in was seen in the extraordinary public performance of pain in South Africa by

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<sup>6</sup> See pages 35-44 for more on contemporary South African theatre.

way of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)<sup>7</sup>. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission dealt with South African pain and looked explicitly at black pain in a way that had not been done before. It rendered black pain visible. Thus it is illuminating to think about the TRC as this 'now moment's' real-life dramatic ancestor, a sort of parallel referent, which I have found useful in this study. The real life narratives that were publically demonstrated and played out during the TRC serve as a poetics of pain that I find useful in this moment, a 'how to do', 'how to tell' or 'how to unpack' pain draft. This is not because the events are the same – I cannot reduce the TRC in that way – but because the TRC provided a look into how we express narratives of pain, how pain is told such that it reaches sometimes unforeseen levels of aesthetic poignancy, even performativity (see Butler 2010). Except in this 'now moment', pain is not exclusively a response to a political act, framed in a political agenda as it was during the TRC, now it is social, personal and expressly performed – pain is delineated in such a way that shifts the politics – which is not to say the works in this study are not in some way political (Grunebaum, 2011:10). Nevertheless the TRC is profoundly useful as a discernible corporeal, incarnate ghost whose shape we can still make out, whose material is always there to go back to as an event in which real bottled sentiments, narratives, tragic stories of pain and loss were uncapped and allowed release.

The power of pain is precarious in the 'now moment' and we see how this is aesthetically handled in these contemporary artworks, as a sentiment to which there is both an aversion and attachment and as a guiding emissary through the rites of passage. That pain sometimes becomes the only legitimate expression, that pain is somehow more meaningful and more authentic than any other sentiment, becomes a matter of deliberation. This is always a point of contention in Black American novelist, Toni Morrison's work for instance; that she too readily turns "horror into pleasure, violence into beauty, mourning into nostalgia" (Matus, 1998:34). Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1997) also serves as a parallel referent in my analysis. This is because Morrison offers a homologous literary elucidation for what the theatre makers in my study are doing. Bearing in mind that my study concerns real life artists and their fictitious imaginative creations (which are sometimes influenced or inspired by real life experience and people), I am nevertheless inclined to place emphasis on the importance of

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<sup>7</sup> Visit the TRC's website for reference to all official transcripts: <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/>.

the metaphor of Morrison's fragmented protagonists (and her) own involvement with beautiful pain, in that she uses art and beauty in the representation of historical pain. Morrison's novels are a form of historical and cultural memory; she explores the relation of aesthetics to memory and the representation of trauma and pain (Matus, 1998:34). Morrison does this knowingly and this is why she is such an indispensable model for this study, because there are pieces of the past that must be remembered even if – and especially when – they are disquieting and cause us pain: “they are never comfortably possessed and they can never be redeemed” (Matus, 1998:35).

What literature Professor Jill Matus is precisely talking about above are uncomfortable attachments, particularly those attachments of the nostalgic variety which in my analysis manifests as an unending sense of loss, a perpetual grieving over some thing, person, place, that we are at once, sure and unsure of. After a lack of expectations being met, disappointment with the ‘now’, disillusionment when ideals have been destroyed and illusions shattered, what are you left with? After all of this, what are you left with? Your self. But what happens when yourself – and your sense of self – is so fragmented or worse yet, ordinary? When there is nothing to struggle for and with...what is there? This unfulfilled nostalgic inclination fills the theatre maker with dissatisfaction but also a pressing need to come to grips with the ‘now’.

Academic and cultural theorist Njabulo S. Ndebele, in his seminal book *Rediscovery of the Ordinary: essays on South African Literature and Culture* writes that rediscovering the ordinary is the opposite of spectacular. The ordinary comes with a certain lucidity and clear-headedness that forces “attention on necessary detail” (Ndebele, 1991:50). The latter part of this statement is paramount: “necessary detail”. This is what was glossed over in the past, this is precisely what the ‘now moment’ wishes to draw attention to: “necessary detail”. The detail involves those stories which were not told but which need to be told. The detail involves delving into those innermost parts of ourselves that beg for focused attention. It is necessary because “paying attention to the ordinary and its methods will result in a significant growth of consciousness” (Ndebele, 1991:50). It is through rediscovering the ordinary that we are reminded of the unavailability and inevitability of telling these stories, because the predicament of the South African social order is multifaceted and cannot be

represented by one single thing (Ndebele, 1991:55). This complex predicament is what I look at through the 'beautiful pain syndrome' but is also both the expected trajectory and the point of arrival, considering South Africa's history. The way black South Africans have made art for a long time was through a kind of reification of this notion of a beautiful struggle with little idea for what it meant to be ordinary, and accordingly we have arrived at what that 'beautiful struggle' looks like now.

As Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael state in *Sense of Culture: South African Culture Studies*, part of the struggle is the way South Africans have come to understand and deal with the terms 'healing' and 'freedom'. This has been largely ambivalent because, on one hand, there is a desire towards reaching a 'singular self' and on the other hand a desire to assert selfhood as part of a community. In other words, there is a vacillation between the freedoms of being one's self versus the responsibility of being part of a collective struggle (Nuttall & Michael, 2000:300). This is not surprising as history has called for us to transition from the latter to the former and that requires a new kind of understanding of the freedoms that accompany self-determination. The complexity here is the ambivalence about making meaning of self-expression, selfhood, autobiography and singularity (Nuttall & Michael, 2000:300).

What is particular about this 'now moment' is that "the autobiographical act in South Africa, more than a literary convention, has become a cultural activity" (Nuttall & Michael, 2000: 298). Ideas of memoir, nostalgia, real-life performance, confession, and personal testimony surface as different kinds of autobiographical acts and cultural instances of identity practice that have certainly influenced and are very much a part of 'now' (Nuttall & Michael, 2000:298). This autobiographical trend – the need for individual disclosure – has become a reconstructive impulse and a legitimate part of the project of democracy particularly since the political transition of 1994. Harnessing the influence of this transition from exteriority to interiority, literary theorist and academic Anton Krueger discusses the emphasis on the individual voice in contemporary South African theatre. Where he offers thought-provoking insight is in his detailed exploration of the personal subjective voice consciously distancing itself from the larger community and group representation (Krueger, 2010:121). Nuttall and Michael foretold this: "The individual...emerges as a key, newly legitimized concept...talking

about their own lives, confessing and constructing personal narratives – on the body, on the air, in music, in print - South Africans translate their selves, and their communities, into story” (2000:298).

The autobiographical self presented by these 21<sup>st</sup> century theatre makers, is often a traumatized, scarred, pained ‘self’ but this ‘self’ must still exist and function as part of a community. Perhaps the ‘self’ on its own is such a troubled subject because it does not understand how to be itself let alone a whole subject. This is partly because

the physical identification under apartheid was intent on defining a body not only as ‘itself’ but, more importantly, as part of a collective, as part of a group of bodies. In this sense, the individual body was located and defined as being part of a particular narrative (Krueger, 2010:xii).

Again literary theorist Anton Krueger reminds us that “No ‘body’ is self-explanatory”, that is, individual identities are always situated in relation to a “narrative structure” meaning every “body needs a story before it can become a self” (2010:xii).

This ‘now moment’s’ predicament then is not only thinking about our ‘narrative structure’ as South Africans and as a country but also our stories as individuals. The process of telling one’s story, performing one’s truth or reciting one’s memory becomes an essential aspect of recovery after apartheid. It is through a seminal event like the TRC and other such instances of ‘telling the self’ – including performance – that national and individual healing becomes a possibility by “giving sound to wound” (Davids, 2007:108).

This project is about Mandla Mbothwe, Awelani Moyo, Asanda Phewa and Mamela Nyamza busying themselves with the activity of ‘giving sound to wound’, giving action and a face to pain through poignant performance. In Mandla Mbothwe’s *Ingcwaba*, Awelani Moyo’s *Huroyi Hwangu*, Mamela Nyamza’s *Hatched* and Asanda Phewa’s *A Face Like Mine* we come to see how the ‘beautiful pain syndrome’– this cultural dis-ease – and its pattern of symptoms evokes the ‘now moment’. These four productions occurred between 2007 and 2013; most were conceived and first performed in Cape Town and subsequently performed throughout South Africa in some of the country’s most celebrated theatres and national festivals. *Ingcwaba lendoda lise cankwe ndlela* is an isiXhosa production that was initially

created as part of the Magnet Theatre Educational Trust training programme<sup>8</sup>. *Ingcwaba* first played at the Spier Infecting the City public arts festival in Cape Town in February 2009. After its successful debut it played in July that same year at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown and then at the Arts Alive Festival in Johannesburg. The production also enjoyed a run at the Artscape Arena Theatre in Cape Town in February 2010 and then toured various improvised venues around the Eastern Cape that year<sup>9</sup>. The audiences for the production have been diverse, ranging from the festival going public, to audiences attending specially set-up showings in township community halls, as well as audiences attending the show in resourced theatres. Awelani Moyo's *Compositions* series includes: *Composition A* (2007), *Composition Z: House of Stone* (2007) *Huroyi Hwangu – In de/re Composition* (2007) (A version of the original *Compositions* that combines 'A' and 'Z') and again *Composition Z: House of Stone* (2008). The entire *Compositions* series was performed in Grahamstown with the final edition of the series playing at the 2008 National Arts Festival. The productions were funded by Moyo, the Rhodes University Drama department and the National Arts Festival. The audiences have mainly consisted of students and the festival going public. Although I have seen all four versions of *Compositions*, I will be referring mainly to *Huroyi Hwangu* because this version integrates the series, but I will specify when I refer to another version.<sup>10</sup> Mamela Nyamza's *Hatched* (2009) was developed from the production *Hatch* which premiered in 2007. Since its conception, *Hatched* first played at New Dance in Johannesburg, later played at Cape Town's Out the Box Festival in March 2010, went on to the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown in July, the Fugard theatre in Cape Town in September and the Biennial Danse l'Afrique in Mali, followed by a run in Ethiopia later in the same year. In October 2011 *Hatched* played at the Dance Umbrella in London. *Hatched* also played at the Quartier d'ete in Marseilles, France as part of the South Africa-France season in

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<sup>8</sup> The Magnet Theatre Educational Trust is funded by a number of organizations which include the National Arts Council of South Africa, the National Lottery and the Arts and Culture Trust amongst others. Based in Cape Town, the Magnet Theatre training programme caters for youth who come from various community theatre groups who struggle to be absorbed into the training at the University due to different issues including educational and financial disadvantages. [www.magnettheatre.co.za 7/1/2013]

<sup>9</sup> By 'improvised venues' I mean to say sites or places, which temporarily became performance venues for the purposes of this show. Mbothwe selected such sites as resonant with the show's themes.

<sup>10</sup> I use *Compositions* when I am referring to general aesthetic, textual or conceptual meanings common to all four versions.

July 2013 and will play again at the upcoming Infecting the City public art festival in March 2014 in Cape Town. Because of its extensive international and national performance life span, *Hatched* has played before a diverse audience and has mainly been funded by the various festivals and organisations that invite Nyamza to perform the work. Asanda Phewa's *A Face Like Mine* premiered as part of her final practical requirement for her Theatre Making degree at the University of Cape Town in 2008. Produced by Lara Foot, *A Face Like Mine* enjoyed a successful run at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown and thereafter was funded by festival invitation. In September and October of 2010 it played at the Afrovibes Festival in London and the Netherlands. In August 2011 it was performed in the Drama for Life laboratory season at Wits University in Johannesburg. The production has played before a range of audience members including students, festivalgoers and theatre attendees. Due to the expansive life span of these productions and the different versions (according to venue, sometimes cast and sometimes content), I will be referring to the versions that I saw live and am most familiar with (I saw all versions of the *Compositions* series live), whilst bearing in mind and acknowledging the disparities from other versions that I will also account for where required. Readers who are encountering these works of theatre for the first time, may at this point wish to read Appendix B which describes all four works.

### **How this study proceeds**

This study attempts to explicate the aesthetic motifs, thematic strands and performative rites of the 'beautiful pain syndrome' in the selected works of Mandla Mbothwe, Awelani Moyo, Mamela Nyamza and Asanda Phewa. The examination of the works within the thesis is divided into five chapters: the Introduction chapter, the After Pains chapter, the Methodology chapter, a chapter for Uncomfortable Attachments and lastly, a Rites of Passage chapter. The introduction chapter provides a conceptual framework for the study. It maps out the theoretical territory by venturing into reflections on the past, which are still affecting the present. The After Pains chapter involves a cultural theorising of the 'now moment'. It does this by examining how performing blackness in the 'now moment' is brought about by South Africa's past. At the insistence of the 'now moment', theoretically, After Pains (and the study as a whole) investigates how negotiating the present, influenced by an unstable past, generates questions around truth. The chapter scrutinizes symbols,

voices of truth-telling and introduces the constructive metaphors 'after-image' and 'after-growth'. 'The World to Which Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa Belong' section of the chapter provides a brief summary of post-apartheid performance art in South Africa – introducing artistic contemporaries of Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa – in order to place the latter in context. The literature review surveys the primary literature that shapes and gives voice to the study, identifying influential thinkers in this territory.

The methodology chapter offers a detailed examination of the tools, ways of thinking and methods of analysis used in the study. This thesis is patterned in the sense that it is recurrent and cyclical; problems, propositions, abstractions and images reappear, persist and develop in different forms – and manifestations overlap, echo and reflect similar aspects in a variety of ways. Recurrence and change characterizes its development in which the four selected works are described, analysed and interrogated. Thus this study does not complete the project of unpacking these four works, but continually worries at them and attempts a sensitive, sensory and emotive account of their poetics and purposes as it progresses. The reader should note that dealing with the individual works is not limited to specific chapters; discussions of the works are illuminated in different ways in each of the chapters. In the development of the thesis I will refer the reader to other parts of the text by means of a 'see page', this is so that the reader is mindful of associations and links being made throughout the study.

Chapter four is a deliberation of uncomfortable attachments. This section commences with the discernment of emotions in the 'now moment'. We move next to an interpretive analysis of the uncomfortable attachments examining unsettlement and anxiety as symbolic and performed symptoms. The uncomfortable attachments section also looks at intuitive symptoms of the dis-ease; examining acts of the body, the voice and the visceral behaviour we see exhibited in the works. These are hysteria, vocality, 'the cry' and nostalgic hallucination/dream.

The final chapter, five, is devoted to rites of passage in the works. It discusses Mbothwe, Moyo, Phewa and Nyamza's works as rites of passage works that are involved with performative practices of transformation. Using anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep's (1960) classification of rites, this section explores how uncomfortable attachments urge the theatre

makers to perform rites of passage: rituals of transition, acts of movement through time and space utilising objects and costumes. The study ends with reflective after thoughts.

The majority of works that I examine in this study, specifically including those I focus upon, *Huyori Hwangu (Compositions)*, *Hatched* and *A Face Like Mine*; as well as the works to which I refer as part of the same oeuvre, are unpublished works. *Ingcwaba* (and Mbothwe's subsequent work *Inxeba Lomphilisi*) are published as part of *The Magnet Theatre 'migration' plays* anthology (Reznek et al., 2012). All production details for unpublished works are referenced by title in Appendix A. Where the text has been published, this is found referenced by author in the reference list. Text quoted from the *Compositions* series is taken from unpublished play scripts found in Moyo's Masters Dissertation appendix (2009). All text quoted from Mbothwe and Phewa's work is transcribed from video footage in performance. In Phewa's case this is transcription of English text in performance (I have specified where the text is in isiZulu in performance). For Mbothwe this transcription is taken from the English translation of the spoken Xhosa text, which is projected digitally onto the backdrop, during the play, in live performance. The play was first performed in 2009 whereas the play anthology was published in 2012, subsequent to my study. With the passing of time, the editors have seen fit to alter the initial translations found in the performed work. The reader can refer to the recently published anthology for an updated version of the translation (see Reznek et.al., 2012). Appendix B contains an outline description of *Huroyi Hwangu*, *A Face Like Mine*, *Hatched* and *Ingcwaba* in performance. Readers may be unfamiliar with the works and are encouraged to refer to the appendix at any stage. The Bibliography follows my References and draws the reader's attention to further research I have undertaken, but to which I have not referred in the thesis.

For these four theatre makers, processes of documentation (by way of video footage or publication) of the creative works are a crucial part of 'narrating the self' and archiving the telling of our stories. As South Africans, telling 'our story' begins with an understandable preoccupation with the 'after'. 'After Apartheid' produced different kinds of expression (both pedagogic and imaginative) as a means of "embodying the trauma of surviving Apartheid" (Coombes, 2003:10). Just as important as what we left behind is what we have to look forward to.

## CHAPTER TWO: AFTER PAINS

In this chapter I fashion key metaphors with which to frame my study theoretically. The metaphors, and the theorisation which they encapsulate, include consideration of socio-political, cultural, aesthetic and performative features, and emotions.

### A cultural theorising of the 'now moment'

On the threshold of South Africa's democratic transition, former constitutional court judge and anti-apartheid activist Albie Sachs in his eminent speech *Preparing Ourselves for Freedom* (1991), voiced the following unforgettable words:

We all know where South Africa is, but we do not yet know what it is. Ours is the privileged generation that will make that discovery, if the apertures in our eyes are wide enough. The problem is whether we have sufficient cultural imagination to grasp the rich texture of the free and united South Africa that we have done so much to bring about; can we say that we have begun to grasp the full dimensions of the new country that is struggling to give birth to itself, or are we still trapped in the multiple ghettos of the apartheid imagination (1991:187)?

These words uttered some 22 years ago are more urgently relevant than before. Perhaps the first line might, at this time, be appropriately amended to read: 'we all know where South Africa is, but we do not yet know *who* we are.' In the same vein, a South Africa that was struggling to give birth to itself in the new democratic dispensation has now become a South Africa teeming with individuals who must give birth to new identities, new 'selves'. This section is appositely titled 'after pains' – this metaphor seems apt in describing the pain that follows bringing new life, new identities, and new breath into this world in the after days. It is not a simple process and it is a terrifying responsibility.

Is it not curious that 'after' alludes both to a past and a later time, a 'behind' and a 'following'? In this manner 'after' feels both retrospective and forward-looking. This notion of looking back in order to see ahead is how I will shed light on the works of these four theatre makers in the sense that they all journey to the(ir) beginning in order to explain how and where they locate themselves in the present. Theatre director and performance theorist Greg Homann in his exposition of the early post-apartheid period of theatre in South Africa between 1996 and 2002 (2009:7), introduces the subjective attitude that this period

encouraged – in which the “subjectivity of truth” was heightened and goes on to say that perhaps the most significant contribution to informing South African theatre’s post-apartheid narrative and thematic discourse has been the TRC (Homann, 2009:10). After this period Homann terms 2002 to 2008 the post-apartheid period (2009:11). In this study I pick up more or less from where Homann leaves off. I am looking specifically at the 2007-2013 period; call it post-post-apartheid or the period of recovery.

Additionally, it seems apropos to pick up the baton from Homann and begin with this murky business of truth. In this moment of ‘after’ what is it that we seek? Truth. The theatre makers I discuss appear to want to hold on to and articulate their dedication to their personal truths even if these truths are from the inside looking out. Truth is what we hold on to in the ‘after’. The constructive metaphors, ‘after-image’ and ‘after- growth’ come to mind as a way in which I can begin to engage with what truth is for these four contemporary black theatre makers. ‘After-image’ alludes to an unrelenting, inescapable feeling or sensation, particularly an aesthetic or visual one. This feeling, sensation or sentiment remains even after the imaginative provocation has gone (Brown, 1993:38). Paradoxically, apartheid has become a kind of ‘after-image’ for people working creatively in South Africa. The ‘after-image’ is primarily produced by the imagination. It is the emotional or psychological recall/re-imagining of something that is not immediately present to the senses, often involving memory. In this manner, the ‘after-image’ is a subjective truth.

*Ingcwaba* for instance is loaded with after-images, those material remnants assumed by the nostalgic in the form of reminders of the disruption of homeplace. There are always the recurring images of suitcases and different kinds of personal belongings, images of the road, shoes and walking feet that evoke the feeling of longing for the home that is no longer. There are also passages laden with sentiment and vibrant mnemonic imagery that linger even when the stimulus is no longer before you. This world of dreams created by Mbothwe generates after-images, reflected in the elegiac and prosaic language. An example of this is when Mbothwe’s central protagonist, the wife and mother, reads a letter that was sent to her by her husband who has left home, she reads: “Flowers are red, leaves are green. I remember you like the rain in barren soil, just where the roots spring out” (Mbothwe, 2009b).

Another poignant moment of imagery-laden recall, driven by this loss of home, is when a male voice from the chorus utters: “Last night, my home was engulfed by blazing flames of fire, I saw my grave, my ancestors calling me” (Mbothwe, 2009b).

The rest of the chorus then joins him as they continue:

I saw my grave, my ancestors calling me. At home, I heard a voice calling me, many voices from the river. I saw my grandfather with his left hand on his head, his heels in front; his toes facing backwards; his stomach flat on his back. I saw my neighbour, giving me a tomato; asking me to taste it. Home at last, hail ye my Lord. I ask for forgiveness. I heard those voices calling me, hands waving, calling me. My elders told me they supported me. The noise of the dogs chasing a baboon. I heard my mother’s voice in my ears, moaning. I heard myself in the gathering of the sangomas<sup>11</sup> singing but I could not remember this song when I woke up. I saw my deceased grandmother giving me meat on green leaves; must I eat this? I smelt the frog-infested water that had an old coat on it. The smell of dead dog made me sick in my soul (Mbothwe, 2009b).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>A *sangoma* is a practitioner of traditional African healing arts.

<sup>12</sup>*Ingcwaba* is performed in the Xhosa language. All quotes from the play are taken from the English translation of the spoken text, digitally projected on the backdrop. Translation is by Thoko Ntshinga.



**Figure 2: Faniswa Yisa as the wife/mother in *Ingcwaba lendoda lise cankwe ndlela*. Photographer: Sean Wilson.**

Closely linked to ‘after image’, is ‘after-growth’. This ‘now moment’ is a moment of after-growth, branded by change and transformation. I understand this to be a ‘coming into being’ of sorts – a kind of initiation into being. In *Hatched*, a strong after-image is that of the red garments that hang on the clothesline. After-image can be just as much material as it is imaginative. In performance Nyamza glides across the stage with a zinc bucket on her head. There are red garments spilling out the top of the bucket and as she moves across the stage,

sand spills over from the bucket onto floor. She comes to a stop and dumps the bucket with a 'thud' on the ground. She then takes a pair of red shorts from the bucket and hangs them up; this happens in complete silence, the action is performed in a very natural and everyday manner. The next item she hangs is a red dress; this is all being done at a fairly quick pace, as though it is one chore amongst several. She begins to hum as she hangs the third item, which is a red t-shirt. The hum turns into her singing as her volume increases. The song is a gospel song; she sings "umphefumlo wami uwile" in Xhosa (Nyamza, 2009), which loosely means: 'I have a heavy heart' or 'I feel low in spirit'. She then hangs a long sleeved shirt, then red pants, a red shirt and a red wrap-around skirt; there is a slight urgency to the way she hangs the clothes now. She then hangs a red jersey and goes back to humming. The obvious questions at this stage are: whose clothes are these? Who do they belong to? The different items could belong to a girl, a boy, a woman, a man. We quickly realize that these garments represent Nyamza in the different phases of her life as she begins to interact with the articles. The last item she hangs is a red coat; she takes a step back, taking in the whole image that she has just created. The clothesline that was previously empty is now full of red garments. The dominant red is both striking and ominous. Through her engagement with the items, we are able to recall and re-imagine each moment with her as she seeks and finds her connection to each garment. With childlike curiosity, she searches the garments for familiarity, she touches them and she searches them with her eyes. She eventually gets to the shorts, removes one clothespin from them and thoughtfully considers them as she feels them out – even as she gazes at the shorts with interest, she does so with bird-like mannerisms, cocking her head to one side and then quickly to the other, engaging her neck. She continues to move between the garments and we catch glimpses of her when we find her standing in an open space in between two garments. There is something so telling, so memorable, so edifying in her gaze...it is heart wrenching and painful as we get the sense of her desperate desire to connect with and find some kind of inherent sense of knowing that will put her at ease with this lost part of herself. This becomes a moment of after-growth, a metaphoric journey through her rites of passage for here we are with Nyamza transforming before our very eyes from a bird-like creature in her birth/rebirth stage, to a young girl, to a young woman, to a ballerina and then to the performer who switches between these images.

Really the 'after' invokes ample thinking around idiosyncratic truths but my aim is not to get lost in a discussion of such a slippery subject as truth but rather, to search for what truth means in the context of these works. Applied Theatre practitioner Amanda Stuart-Fisher, drawing on the ethics of French philosopher Alain Badiou, calls for us to identify truths that relate to each of the different circumstances we come across rather than to search for any kind of over-arching definition of truth (Stuart-Fisher, 2005:248). It would seem that truth is concerned with a sense of accuracy and precision and yet this seems an impractical undertaking when talking about the 'self' and contemporary identities in 21st century South Africa. For our strength lies neither in exactitude, nor are we fixed or secured; but rather our strength lies in the sincerity of truth-seeking and truth-telling. For these theatre makers, this is the overriding motivation in their work. Truth is the new creative and imaginative stimulus – we are here to tell the truth or at least, our version of it, however shifting and unstable.

Homann points out that the TRC really propelled the dialogue for what constitutes 'truth telling' during the early-post-apartheid period of theatre making in South Africa, because the TRC thrust South Africans into a state that begged us to question who we are. Not only did it challenge previous notions of selfhood, but also asked that we confront our personal 'truths'. South African scholar Nadia Davids recognised this as a necessary step in the in the project of recovery: "In the re-writing of a national history, South Africans were encouraged to come forward, speak their truth and allow their lived experience find legitimacy in the national archive" (Davids, 2007:108). Homann continues this thought by observing that "our emancipatory politics appeared to be leading us to the emergence of work concerned with truth and to an increasing fascination with addressing the nuances and complexity of representing truth" (Homann, 2009:9). For the theatre maker, this comes through speaking one's truth and telling ones story through performance.

"Theatre, after all, combines the emotional weight of storytelling with truth telling" (Martin, 2006:14). Complication lies in the recognition that what is real and what is true are not necessarily the same. "A text can be fictional yet true", or equally, "a text can be nonfictional yet untrue" (Martin, 2006:15). The performances of these theatre makers fall into the former category. While the very nature of these theatre maker's works are illusory and imaginative, they are rooted in the real, in the 'truth'. In other words the stories are creative

imaginings but they hold within them personal truths revealed by the individuals who live them. In this manner, the importance not only lies in what truth is being told but who is telling it and how it is being told. While this truth is subjective, it also has an undeniable commonality. For these theatre makers the truth can be found in the staging of “bodies of evidence” (Martin, 2006:15). This is a phrase that Professor of Performance Studies, Carol Martin uses in her article of the same title. In Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa’s performances, their bodies are the closest real thing we have to truth – they are performing their truth. The body is the proof, the mark and the methodology. These are real bodies of evidence. Nuttall quotes art historian Hal Foster who writes: “For many in contemporary culture, truth resides in the traumatic or abject subject, in the diseased or damaged body. This body is the evidentiary basis for important witnessings to truth, of necessary witnessings against power” (in Nuttall, 2006:16). This remark echoes my earlier assertion that the ‘self’ presented by these twenty-first century theatre makers is often a traumatized, dis-eased, scarred or pained ‘self’. Seemingly on the one hand, truth is often considered most sincere when associated with pain – particularly in a historical context like South Africa’s. Yet on the other hand, influential academic and theorist Elaine Scarry asserts in *On Beauty and Being Just* that “beauty really is allied with truth. That is not to say that what is beautiful is also true” (Scarry, 1999:52). Even Scarry changes her position in her argument which only points out the clashing views on the relationship between beauty, pain and truth that I will continue to explore as I go along. What is noteworthy for me in my consideration is beauty’s meaningfulness because beauty is artistry; it is form in performance even through pain. Moreover, it is our acknowledgement of “the *human* in the situation that enables us to see the *truth* of a situation” (Stuart-Fisher, 2005:249), and on the stage, as in real life, truth can be beautiful but it can also be painful. Badiou argues that it is the acknowledgement of the truth of an experience that “compels us to decide *a* new way of being” (2001:41). Because arriving at the point of the truth of an event is, for Badiou, a great moment. It is a moment of transformation where we are compelled to (re)consider our understanding of the truth. Our devotion and commitment to that truth is put to the test and is therefore a moment of radical subjectification (Badiou, 2001:43). This is what is happening in the ‘now moment’, the event of coming to personal truths above all else.

Indeed truth is an entangling thing but in these performance works, truth points to a reality, an existence, an experience and a sincerity. Truth is of the sentiments. It is in the interest of truth-telling, of full disclosure, that Phewa in *A Face Like Mine* can so sincerely confess the reality of the thin grasp she has on herself:

I feel myself coming out of my body. This is ridiculous. Parts of me, my feelings are seeping from my hands and thighs. When I walk, parts of me, my thoughts drip from my calves behind my knees. I'm leaving puddles of myself and I can't pick myself up and put myself together. This is a fucking mess. I want to put myself together (2008a).

It is in the interest of truth-seeking that Moyo – in a bid to come to terms with her fragmented migrant identity – in *Huroyi Hwangu* asks: “

Where do these things go after I've cried and fallen and can't seem to get up again? I plan, I plot, I draw, I lead, I compose something but I cannot go home. Not yet, I think. I still have those stories to tell” (2009:104).

This fixation with the 'after' in South Africa is not by accident, it is a purposeful endeavour to take on truth and make meaning in the period after-post-apartheid. In this 'now moment', this after period of recovery, these buzz words are on the lips of many: 'struggle', 'pain,' 'identity', 'wounds', 'scar', 'aftermath', 'after-after', 'hangover'. These words call for, or suggest some kind of revival, rebirth and re-imagining. We are not through working on ourselves, we are not through figuring ourselves out, in fact, there seems to be an increasing anxiety in working at this. Mbothwe articulates this point:

Our stories were prematurely archived; we were forced to bandage our wounds too soon, without attending to those wounds. Now in the last few years, people are starting to un-bandage those wounds, it is painful, uncomfortable, and the damage has been done. The wound comes up in different ways – it is time for us to deal with the pain. This is what we are doing; we are dealing with our stories (2011a).

Even in *Ingcwaba* members from the chorus anxiously say: “I was dragging a bag full of sorrows and jublations” (Mbothwe, 2009b), the 'sorrows and jublations' of memories of a lost home – this bag contains the long-lasting wounds and scars that we carry with us in the course of living life in the middle of nowhere.

Perhaps the anxiety experienced and put across in the 'now moment' stems from the 'always about to happen', 'always coming' and the unease of the 'after'... 'after this'... 'after that'. As I undertook this study, it was hard to ignore these recurring issues that have been

plaguing South Africans and infecting our stages. In the second decade of this new millennium, South Africans are still having conversations similar to those that we were having at the start of democracy some twenty years ago, and consequently for these 21<sup>st</sup> century theatre makers, recovery, truth and meaning making are at the centre of this decade's pursuits. The 'beautiful pain syndrome' and its uncomfortable attachments become the way that these obsessions are enacted, uncovered, identified, and embodied. In this study, all four theatre makers are saying similar things in different ways that we are still a country in pain – we are still a people in pain. Accordingly they write and create from the 'self', employing an altered level of interiority that differentiates them from their contemporary counterparts working in theatre today, for the reason that they are abstracting, writing, and performing them 'selves'. They are involved in a living practice of autobiography – having similar conversations onstage as they are off stage.

University of Cape Town Professor and theatre maker Mark Fleishman, at the 2012 University of Cape Town Drama Department Research Day asked: is it possible to do anything about and in the 'now' in South African performance, without referring to the past? In other words, given South Africa's volatile socio-political historical past, is it possible to do performance now despite and in spite of the past? The past has material and symbolic effects on the present. The past continues to speak to us, only now it no longer speaks to us as an uncomplicated, truthful 'past', "since our relation to it, like the child's relation to the mother, is always-already 'after the break'" (Hall, 1993:395). The past is always before now, and so is it possible to do performance about 'now'? This is a pertinent question with which to understand what I mean by the 'now moment', that demands elucidation. For Nuttall, theorizing the 'now' in South Africa firstly means: looking at how the past relates to the present, how the past and the present sit alongside one another and what of the past still remains in the present. Secondly the 'now' comprises of looking at what has not happened yet, this is – in effect – the 'after' and what is currently happening (Nuttall, 2004:731). What is especially noteworthy about Nuttall's propositions is that we are misguided if we think that apartheid was predestined, in the sense that everything leads to it and everything flows from it. While it is true that traces of the oppressive system of apartheid are still obvious in this 'now moment', this moment also has its own predicaments, its own stuff. South Africans

cannot continue to have the shroud of apartheid over our eyes as it prevents us from seeing what we need to be seeing in this 'now moment'.

This business of contemporaneity has been a theoretical prompt for centuries. Esteemed French philosopher Michael Foucault deemed Immanuel Kant's question, "'what is Enlightenment'" (Kant, 1784 in Foucault, 1994:335) a remarkable and perplexing one because it was the first time that that renowned German philosopher undertook a philosophical approach to probe "not only the metaphysical system or the foundations of scientific knowledge but a historical event – a recent, even a contemporary event" (Foucault, 1994:335). Foucault goes on to hypothesize that "when Kant asked 'What is Enlightenment?', he meant 'What's going on now?' What's happening to us? What is this world, this period, this precise moment in which we are living? In other words, what are we?" (Foucault, 1994:335). Foucault compares Kant's proposition to the Cartesian question, 'who am I?' which he explains, could be meant for anyone, anywhere, at any moment. Whereas Kant's 'what are we?' situates one in a particular moment of history. Kant's proposition "appears as an analysis of both us and our present" (Foucault, 1994:335).

The implication is that each moment requires its own analysis for the individuals living it. Each moment in history has its own predicament therefore uncovering this 'now moment' is this generation's predicament. This 'now moment' is characterized by the 'beautiful pain syndrome' or the 'traumatic aesthetic'. It is evident then, that this is neither solely a process nor product oriented study, but rather this is also a moment and event-oriented study. In the case of South Africa and its theatre makers, the event, the experience of living in this country at this time, makes one susceptible to and acquainted with the 'beautiful pain syndrome'. The very association of the word 'syndrome' suggests causality. It suggests that 'b' is because of or as a result of 'a'. In other words, there have been historical prompts that have ignited this phenomenon of 'beautiful pain'.

Although the past is critical to discussions of the 'now moment', Nuttall warns that

There are also enough configurations in various spheres of contemporary South African life to warrant new kinds of explorations, with new tools of analysis, new archives and new ethnographies. These include city, migrant as well as youth cultural formations. To confine these configurations to a lens of 'difference' embedded

squarely in the Apartheid past may miss the complexity and contemporaneity of their formations (Nuttall, 2004:732).

The three lenses' that Nuttall names, "city, migrant as well as youth cultural formations" (2004:732) are insightful in this study because Cape Town is the spatial nucleus of this study, migration is a recurring theme and performances by young theatre makers is the way that predicaments of this 'now moment' are brought to light.

In the 'now' time South Africa is "faced with complexities and ambiguities that we need to interpret" (Mda, 2002:282). This is an intricate and delicate path to tread, thus rather than look at the 'beautiful pain syndrome' and our fixation with 'looking back' as an issue, let us consider it to be the reverse. Let us consider this 'now moment' as an opportunity to uncover something new; to uncover the stuff we are made of. We, as South Africans, are left with ourselves and in more ways than one our 'selves' have been shaped by the unfortunate legacy we have inherited. For theatre makers, this 'now moment' presents the prospect of facing one's self, of making allowance for our make-up. The lens has narrowed, the gaze has shifted and it is a significant shift because like anything that is new and altered, it takes some getting used to, some explicating and some analysis in order to recognize. The art itself is not new knowledge. Rather it is our approach to the art and our way of seeing and understanding the art that has to be new, so that the art enables new knowledge. The shift is from the macrocosm, the entire thing (apartheid personified) to what can be the startling reality of the microcosm...the self. It is an historical, political and artistic synecdoche. For that reason, the 'beautiful pain syndrome', is not only the condition and the predicament but also provides its own elucidation.

The 'now' predicament is also a problem of identity. Identity serves as an instrumental way of understanding pain. For these theatre makers in particular their identity as black African theatre makers generates a common understanding of pain. For this reason, pain is also the means, the catalyst that facilitates our thinking around issues of identity. The theatre maker's self, their input and involvement is repeatedly foregrounded, often unashamedly so. They choose to honour truth by accurately representing themselves in a way that they believe to be genuine, in a bold confrontation of pain and its antecedents, theatre makers turn the gaze inwards. The dynamic of self-determination challenges and calls into question

the close relationship between the 'self' of the performance artist and the 'self' being presented.

In some ways Foucault's work might be beyond the scope of this thesis as my study is grounded in the aesthetics, not necessarily in the politics of power Foucault writes about. However I would be remiss if I did not briefly discuss Foucault's constitution on the subject within the discussion of the 'self' and identities of these theatre makers and their performing subjects. Foucault's exposition of the expressive and confessional mode of narrating the self is profound. Whereas the preoccupation about (and expression of) the self on the subject of the "I" dates back centuries in scholarship, it is not an advantage that was necessarily afforded to black South Africans during apartheid. This is because the political atmosphere and the structural subjugation of black people by those in power fostered feelings of repression when it came to voicing the varied truths of the black experience and thus it restricted the expression of identities. Foucault offers a new analysis of power, where the focus shifts not only onto the subject and the subjected self, but also onto opposing systems of power. Pertinent to this study is Foucault regarding "the subject as engaged in multiple relationships of power, on which she depends to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct her identity" (in Anderson, 2010:129). Since one is made into a subject through and not outside the exploitation of power, 'liberation' for the individual becomes a far more intricate and complicated encounter than before. Foucault is instructive in questioning whether these modalities of subject construction are, in fact, effects of governmental power, rather than effects of standing outside them. Especially pertinent is Foucault's exploration of possibilities for new forms of subjectivity, particularly "how the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion through practices of the self" (Foucault, 1997:291). Foucault asks if there are experiences or instances in which the subject might be able to detach from itself, sever the relation with itself, lose its identity? (in Anderson, 2010:128). These concerns are particular to the performing subjects of my study and are explored in detail in the separation phase of the Rites of Passage section (see pages 155-165). I argue that what Foucault proposes can be deemed to be a daunting but hopeful time because the detached individual uses this time as a chance for self-examination, analysis and searching. Withdrawal and separation are a requisite step in the effort of re-integration.

For Foucault this separation is not only about renouncing who one is, or who one is made to be (that is, the subject as constituted by external relationships of power,) “it is also about positively and creatively constructing a self, inventing a self whose life can truly be considered a work of art” (Anderson, 2010:130). Foucault rejects the impression of the subject as a transcendental category, where there is a single fixed identity. Instead, he calls for multiple resistances, conjoined with an obligation to reject what one is forced to be, and a compulsion to create oneself anew (Anderson, 2010:138). Such selves are not absolute, and they are individual (see the impressions of re-birth shared by Nyamza and Moyo in the Rites of Passage section, pages 166-173). In my consideration, “creating oneself anew” means actively refiguring one’s positioning and renaming of self (Anderson, 2010:138). In this ‘now moment’, this does not mean that the collective will necessarily agree with or even accept the self that you are presenting to them – as we see with Nyamza and later with Phewa especially – but that finally the protagonist is in a position to realize, to bare ‘self’. This is an initiation into being as a chance to begin again and resolutely to settle into whatever you want to be.

As a subject who continually has to reconstruct itself, the Foucauldian self is typified by incompleteness, by anxiety and by the determination and need to withdraw from the idea of a given identity (Anderson, 2010:138). Look, for example, at the discussion of Phewa’s decision in the Rites of Passage section (see pages 179-180), where she makes an unexpected choice to become a maid, not necessarily because she desires to be a maid but because the complexities of indeterminate, contemporary blackness are disorienting, and she does not know what it is to perform “correctly”, to do blackness. She therefore chooses to work with the trope of the domestic worker, whose place is neither that of insider nor outsider. In performance, part of the creative process incorporates the necessity for the self to demolish what she already is in order to escape a forced, imposed and fashioned identity and to see unimagined potentialities (Anderson, 2010:138).

In Foucault’s terms the subject does not place herself outside of power in an act of resistance but rather, finds ways of creating conflict within relationships of power (Anderson, 2010:130). This subversive act describes the post-apartheid voice which has seemingly always been characterized by an assertion of freedom and the destabilisation of

government and societies that seek to silence the voices of the oppressed. The preoccupation with subjectivity and identity is evident in my discussion of Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa's works. We also see an assertion of selfhood, identity and a resistance to structures of power in the works of some of the theatre makers belonging to the same period as the elected foursome.

### **The world to which Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa belong**

Whilst I identify the works of Mandla Mbothwe, Awelani Moyo, Mamela Nyamza and Asanda Phewa as having a particular bundle of attributes which particularly attracts me to their analysis, they do not exist in a special world of their own. There are theatre makers who have come before them and they have contemporaries whose works share similar themes. However, the works of this foursome in particular aroused my interest as I perceived common trends in social historical background, staging and thematic content. The foregrounding of 'self-presentation' was glaringly apparent. They were actively engaging with various emotionally terrifying, hard truths, and absurd, daunting and dangerous new possibilities, not only about what it means to be young, black and living in South Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but also what it means to be a young, black theatre maker working out of South Africa now. Importantly these theatre makers are intrepid in their choice to do the kind of art that deals with them 'selves'. What transpires is that in performing them 'selves', they are heavily engaged in the living act of autobiography and what simultaneously occurs for the observer is a shared reflexivity in biography (see Methodology chapter for more detail on what unites the foursome).

Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa are conceivably influenced by the South African theatrical canon, since South African theatre has been artful in capturing the country's troubled history. As previously noted Greg Homann does an admirable job cataloguing the three pre-post-apartheid periods of South African theatre: 1990-1996, 1996-2002 and 2002-2008. Homann observed that the first period was identified by the impending arrival of democracy and political arbitration where local theatre makers sought new subject matter beyond the agit-prop and protest theatre that dominated during apartheid (Homann, 2009:3). In the euphoria of the transition to democracy and reconciliation, performance

showed a political lethargy, with 'protest' being pronounced as passé. The notion of the 'post this or that' became the discourse of the political forefront and the jargon of conceiving cultural policies (Peterson, 1995:573).

Theatre began exploring issues that were censored or banned under the apartheid government. A variety of avant-garde and hybrid styles were used to engage with previously taboo themes (Homann, 2009:4). During this period, there was also the relief of being able to mount productions purely for entertainment value without a dominant focus on apartheid. Homann notes that "it is the absence of significant new plays that define this period" (Homann, 2009:7). In his chapter *Patterns of Change: Audience, Attendance, and Music at the 1994 Grahamstown Festival*, writer Dudley Pietersen charts the changes in theatre after the new democratic dispensation in 1994 through documenting his experience at the 1994 Grahamstown Arts Festival. He writes specifically about the growing attendance of women writers, producers and directors. Pietersen saw women vocalise and express topics significant to women (1999:45). There was also an increased exploration of previously taboo subjects like "sexual ambiguity, sexual humiliation, abuse, gay issues, family violence, incest" in quite a few plays on the Main and Fringe festival programme that year (Pietersen, 1999:47). Moreover, the re-assertion of identity in a transforming society emerged as a dominant subject (Pietersen, 1999:47). It is important to note that while such issues had been presented on stage before in South African theatre history, it had never been with the same fervour and force as one saw post-1994. Furthermore the open and explicit manner in which women's work reflects her experience without the aid of a man, articulates her emotional state and anxieties and voices her position in the world, was different (Pietersen, 1999:48).

The next period documented by Homann is the early-post-apartheid period: 1996-2002. This second post-apartheid period overlaps more or less with the start of the TRC and is heavily influenced by the discourse engendered by the TRC (Homann, 2009:7). This is evident in works like the Khulumani Support Group's *The Story I'm About to Tell* (1997), the Handspring Puppet Company's *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1997) and Thembi Mtshali-Jones's *A Woman in Waiting* (1999) (Homann, 2009:7). By 2005 reflections on the TRC had become virtually a genre of its own. The TRC played a considerable part in forming South African

theatre's post-apartheid subject matter with a theatre that looked into and questioned the identity of our nation. Homann asserts that the new millennium signaled the arrival of the truly post-apartheid play (2009:11). Theatre makers finally began to deal with contemporary issues rather than return to past concerns – even though these concerns are never far from our minds. This becomes even more pronounced in the post-apartheid period, 2002-2008. Theatre makers like Aubrey Sekhabi, James Ngcobo, Bheki Mkhwane and Warona Seane amongst others, have worked actively in this period. Here we see a diverse and flourishing combination of new works that detail individual stories rather than relying entirely on the social and political state of affairs as subject matter. This time also saw a significant cluster of one-person identity-specific shows that encouraged a more subjective position (Homann, 2009:13). My study is concerned with the period in the region of 2007-2013.

Although the Black Consciousness, Workshop, Agit-prop and Protest theatre that once dominated South African theatre have since faded into the background, “the social issues, if not the political context, that this theatre took up, sometimes in courageous cultural isolation, have not faded” (Homann, 2009:9). This ‘now moment’ illuminates that we are determined to come out of enduring oppressive conditions and collective disorder inculcated by apartheid. Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa’s personify this voice of recovery. Before I focus on the works I have specifically selected for this study, I survey some works by my selected theatre makers and works by some others whose works share related aesthetic strategies as well as concerns around gender, race, family, identity, migration and language.

In 2001 South Africa was devastated by the news of the horrific rape of a nine-month-old baby, Tshepang, in Louisvaleweg, a small town in the Northern Cape. Moved by this brutal story, prominent South African director Lara Foot reacted by writing *Tshepang* (2003). She explains, “While searching for meaning in the incomprehensible brutality of this heinous and senseless act of brutality, I wanted the play to bring insight to the audience and, perhaps, in its small way, even offer some sort of healing as well” (Meersman, 2009)<sup>13</sup>. Although the topic is traumatic, it is handled with extraordinary imagination and a subtle and sensitive

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<sup>13</sup> Production blurb: <http://markettheatre.co.za/shows/watch/tshepang1> [accessed 6/23/13].

aesthetic, including striking visual imagery. The ugliest circumstances are performed through physical theatre. By turning everyday objects into symbols and endowing them with emotional meaning, we experience the horror poetically...this is beautifying pain. Ruth, baby Tshepang's mother, is silent throughout. While Simon, an observer, tells the story to the audience, Ruth enacts her sustained anguish, grief and guilt by curing a goat/sheep/cow hide, continuously rubbing it with salt from a large pile found on stage. On her back is a small iron bedstead, bound to her back like a baby (Foot, 2005). In 2007 Foot created *Karoo Moose* in association with the cast, in which she returns to the subject of child rape in a shattered rural town where responsible father figures are absent. Fifteen-year-old Thozama, played by well-known Cape Town-based actress Chuma Sopotela, is sold for sex to pay off the gambling debts of her unemployed and downtrodden father. Her rape is depicted with disquieting lyrical intensity. Thozama stands in a basin of water with a goal post net draped over her, and is used for target practice by men kicking soccer balls at her legs and cheering (Foot, 2009:28). Later, a scene in which Thozama stands in the same basin and desperately scrubs herself after being raped is almost too painful to watch (Meersman, 2007). Phewa addresses such sexual violence in *Reclaiming the P...word* which she directed in 2009, a piece about sex, sexuality and the sexual rights of women that she devised in response to the increase of violence against women and girl children in South Africa (Nyamza also tackles such issues in *Kutheni* (2009) and *I Stand Corrected* (2012) (see pages 109-111).

It should be noted that there is a huge debt to Magnet Theatre Educational Trust's work on physical theatre which has profoundly affected Asanda Phewa, Mandla Mbothwe, Thando Doni, Mwenya Kabwe, Lesoko Seabe, Faniswa Yisa and Chuma Sopotela, all of whom are mentioned in this section and all of whom are students of Professor Mark Fleishman or Jennie Reznik or both. Most of the cast of *Karoo Moose*, for instance, are students from the University of Cape Town, who have done physical theatre with Reznik and theatre making with Fleishman. Mbothwe is a director of the Magnet Theatre. Magnet Theatre's lyrical physical theatre style has also penetrated the work of community theatre groups in the townships from whence Thando Doni came. Doni was mentored by Mbothwe and participated in workshops held by Fleishman and Reznik many years before he was even a Magnet trainee. Accordingly, it is no coincidence that the works of Fleishman, Reznik and

former Magnet trainee, Doni speak to similar themes as Mbothwe's, and are in some cases executed with a similar lyrical physical style.

Fleishman's *Every Year Every Day I am Walking* (2006) tells the story of a mother and a daughter, played by Magnet co-founder Jennie Reznik and prominent Cape Town-based actress and theatre maker, Faniswa Yisa. They portray a pair of refugees who irretrievably and brutally lose their family and home in Francophone Africa. In the course of their forced passage to a new home down South, they face peril and anxieties. Once within the borders of South Africa, they encounter the threat of xenophobia, having to put up with the insult of 'makwerekwere'<sup>14</sup>. The play deals with displacement, identity, home, loss and freedom, and works towards recovery and healing (Thurman, 2008). *Every Year, Every Day, I Am Walking* illustrates dislocation on both a collective and an individual level. Towards the end, a mature version of the young refugee, Agi, reflects on the precariousness of homeplace and her feelings of placenessness, observing: "I don't know much about here. And I don't remember much about there" (Reznik et al., 2012:51).

In *Inxeba Lomphilisi – The wound of a healer* (2010), Mbothwe also explores migration, using the N2 an arterial national road connecting Cape Town to the Eastern Cape – as a motif. A long deserted road delineated by red soil and a fence stretches from downstage centre to the backdrop. In this passage between home place and hope of a better future, black Xhosa woman, men and children – the 'living dead' – tell their stories of pain, rape, pilfering, disease, murder and famine (Baum, 2011). These restless spirits are observed by a wandering *sangoma* (healer), played by Yisa, who attempts to alleviate the pain of these poor wraiths. She drifts among unmarked graves with her relics and herbs telling her own story of loss. The ghosts are ultimately led back onto the path to be buried in the soil that holds their stories (Baum, 2011).

Thando Doni features in both Mbothwe's *Inxeba Lomphilisi* and in *Ingcwaba*. Recently, Doni is emerging into the mainstream theatre as a promising theatre maker in his own right. Doni's *Eutopia* (2012) performed in isiXhosa, explores the state of waiting; waiting for

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<sup>14</sup>'Makwerekwere' is a derogatory name for an 'undesired foreigner'. See page 106 for a more detailed discussion of the word.

change, for the ideal world, by following the story of a young boy who is searching for utopia. The play draws its insights from the experience of millions of South Africans who are still waiting for the country that was promised after the first democratic elections: *Eutopia* questions whether these promises and changes will ever come to pass. Doni also explores a taboo subject by framing the narrative around a family trying to reconcile with the news that their father, a former *Umkhonto we Sizwe*<sup>15</sup> cadre who has returned from exile, has now come out as homosexual. Doni says, “I want to create a dialogue with this play, to acknowledge something that happens in the community that doesn’t get spoken about” (in Smith, 2012). Doni’s *Mhla Salamana (When our eyes met)* (2012) is about a woman and man whose love for each other and their child cannot survive infidelity; their home and marriage eventually disintegrate as a result. It is the mother and child who are left to pick –up the pieces of a shattered family. The story is told through physical theatre supported by the moving harmonies of the *a cappella* group Muziek sensation, a poetic Xhosa text, and symbolism that draws attention to the beauty in a painful situation. The father desperately grapples with the remnants of his deteriorating life. The boy dances his way towards the root of his pain while the mother, in defeat, struggles to hold herself together (Ngwabeni, 2012).

Beyond the Magnet Theatre grouping, theatre maker Mwenya Kabwe’s *Afrocartography: traces of places and all things in between* (2008) also deals with the subject of refugees and immigration. It examines the paradoxical anxieties of hybrid cultural identity, belonging, and the various identifications of a global nationality. The narrative follows a traveller and a mapmaker who forms new passages, retraces embedded routes and creates a world where incongruity, ambiguity and complexity are a point of departure. Kabwe explains “*Afrocartography* is inspired by my own Afropolitan story – I was born in Zambia, my mother is Zimbabwean, I spent six years at boarding school in South West England, my undergraduate years on the east coast of the United States and have lived and worked between three South African cities since 2004” (Kabwe, 2012).

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<sup>15</sup> Ukhonto we Sizwe (often abbreviated MK) translates as ‘Spear of the Nation’ in the Zulu language. MK was the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC) that took up guerrilla warfare in a bid to fight against the South African apartheid government.

Analogous to issues of linguistic deracination expressed by Phewa in *A Face Like Mine*, upcoming theatre maker Lesoko Seabe voices her linguistic dis-ease as “the struggle to communicate meaning through the language I was supposed to know, but around which I struggled to wrap my tongue” (2012:15). Seabe continues to say that this “made me feel like I was failing a self-prescribed identity test which rendered me not quite black enough” (2012:15). Again, the dilemma of “not quite black enough” is the conflict Phewa deliberates over in *A Face Like Mine*. The way Seabe chooses to deal with this however, is in a manner similar to Moyo’s, by performing a harrowing babble of gibberish in a screeching, crowing voice, which tries to articulate all her languages (those she was born into and those with which she connects) in a single utterance. In Seabe’s performance project, *There was this sound* (2012), she goes beyond language into the incoherent as a means of challenging the language of the colonised. Seabe reveals, “In the confrontation the voice is so discordant it is close to insanity” (2012:21). A similar linguistic discordance is performed by Moyo’s hysterical subject, Dombo (see page 136). My own research and performance (prior to this study) has been preoccupied with the playing of memory with reference to narratives of loss. In my production *Katuntu (...and you too)* (2009), this was represented by a loss of language especially, which resulted in the playing of unnerving memory fragments. The primary driving force of this loss has been the notion of an uprooted childhood. Language reflects values, humour, history, pride – all the unspoken suppositions that form a sense of self and identity – and leads to bonds between speakers. In using a particular language the speaker is also expressing affiliation. Language is performative and became a part of the unspeakable disorder that I was trying to articulate in the work.

These issues extend to art making as evidenced by South African visual artist Mary Sibande who uses the human body, through painting and sculpture, to look at identity in the post-colony (Mbembe, 2001). She also attempts to analyse conventional representations of black women in our society (Allen, 2009). In her series *Long Live the Dead Queen* (2009), she uses the trope of the domestic worker to channel her alter-ego Sophie, a maid adorned in Victorian attire. Motivated by the role of the black women in her own family, Sibande says: “I am the first woman in our family who was allowed to study. I want to celebrate that. That’s the reason why I started to look back on the former role of my mother, my grandmother, my great grandmother” (Sibande in Zvomuya, 2010). Sibande’s appropriation

of Sophie, cast from her own body, is inspired by the choices that women have had to make since the beginning of democracy. "My grandmother didn't have a choice, yet I have a choice – even the choice to dress up as Sophie" (2010). This resolute exercise of agency recalls Phewa's decision that she makes at the end of *A Face Like Mine* (see page 180). Analogous to Phewa's work, Sibande's work shows a continued fascination with servitude, the domestic space re-imagined and the binary of slave and master. By creating Sophie's hybrid dress, Sibande destabilizes the simple maids' uniform. The uniform becomes this contrived Victorian dress that turns into a superhero's ensemble, allowing Sophie the freedom to express her imagination and becomes the canvas for Sibande's storytelling. Sophie travels to dreamlike spaces and times through her imagination. She is always in a state of transformation beyond the everyday expectations of being a maid, but it is obvious that she is dreaming; her eyes are always closed. "If she opened her eyes, she would be back at work – cleaning the house" (in Zvomuya, 2010). Sibande says of her work:

History has taught me that our past is very painful but that things will be okay one day. My art expresses the pain of the past but not in a painful way. The work has to be beautiful; it has to speak of progress and moving forward. I did not want to make it "angry". There is a lot of anger in people. I want to say yes, you have this history, but if you look you can find a positive corner. If you think of negative things all the time you will end up crazy. Only by seeing the positive are we going to become better people. Our responses to certain art works expose where we are now. We're in a very fragile place as a nation. It's going to take time to move away from that. We have to learn to find a way to move forward and progress as people (in Barron, 2012).

In *Scars* (2010), Asanda Phewa writes and directs a movement piece that continues to give voice to the voiceless, this time exploring coloured identity in an attempt to deconstruct falsehoods and fallacies about what constitutes 'coloured'. In *Scars*, established local dancers Celeste Botha and Megan Erasmus, investigate their heritage as young coloured South African women, embracing their connection to both their black and white ancestry while looking at the influence colonialism and apartheid have had on their hybridized ancestry.

Celebrated South African Nelisiwe Xaba shares a similar background to Nyamza in that she is also a black woman who has been classically trained as a dancer. In fact, Nyamza admires Xaba and calls her an inspiration (Nyamza, 2013). In Xaba's two solos, *They look at me and that's all they think* (2006) and *Sakhozi says NON to the Venus* (2008) the central figure is

Sarah Baartman, known pejoratively as the “Hottentot Venus”. Xaba is inspired by the life of Sarah Baartman, a Khoi woman transported to Europe to be displayed for public viewing in London and later Paris (Gqola, 2010:61).<sup>16</sup> In her work Xaba allows the spectator to view her even when she feels this gaze – directed at the black body – is not devoid of exotic voyeurism. Her dress of prearranged wire rods and parachute fabric protruding from her frame resembles a bustle, once common in European women’s dress. She later drapes her body in bubble wrap evoking the ‘peculiar object’ ready to be shipped off to Europe (Kirkham, 2011). The story of Sarah Baartman is a kind of metaphor of Xaba’s own artistic journey from Soweto to the world of European art today. Nyamza explores related themes in *Okuya Phantsi Kwempulo – The meal* (2012). The meal anticipates the ambiguity of the connection between the worlds of Western ballet and the rootedness of the African dancer. The pair of dancers, Mamela Nyamza and young Kirsty Ndawo, perform a contemporary South African dance sequence (incorporating local popular dance moves) whilst wearing pink ballet tutus, which they receive in return for their blankets. The duo caricature ballet steps while musician Dinah Eppel plays the uhadi<sup>17</sup>. As philosophies of ideal body, aesthetic frameworks, and stereotypes in local dance become challenged in South Africa by female choreographers like Xaba and Nyamza, one needs to be reminded of how these reflect the exploration of shifting identities (Samuel, 2011:45), which are occurring in the ‘now moment’.

All of the works discussed in this section evoke the ‘beautiful pain syndrome’ in that...they find captivating aestheticized means of giving voice to some painful or troubling subject/object in the world. The fact that Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa have coalesced their personal experience and centred it in the works makes them the correct subjects of this thesis but this section gives emphasis to the fact that my chosen foursome did not spring out of nothing. There are of course other theatre makers who are operating in

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<sup>16</sup> Sarah Baartman is also referenced in a scene in *A Face Like Mine* in which the black female body is subjected to the oppressive white male gaze (see page 178-180).

<sup>17</sup> A traditional instrument of the Amakhosa people. It consists of a lightweight single string bow having a resonator gourd tightly attached with a wide mouth facing away from the string. The string is struck with a thin stick or reed.

this 'now moment', but the above mentioned are those most pertinent to the interests of this study<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, the focus of my study is on black South Africa-based theatre makers. While theatre makers like Fleishman, Foot and Brett Bailey for instance, may create works that share comparable concerns to those articulated in the study, it was my prerogative to concentrate on the 'shared experience of blackness' and none of these (three listed) theatre makers are black (though I do not discount their frequent involvement with all black casts). A look at my literature review will explain some of the conceptual frameworks that additionally bind my choice to analyse these specific works of Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa.

### **A brief review of literature**

This study concerns itself with contemporary South Africa and its performance inclinations, seen in the light of beauty and pain. For the reason that there are limited regional resources, I have appropriated relevant theory from Western scholarship more broadly, which is pertinent to this study. Furthermore, because of the paucity of documentation on contemporary South African performance, this study may make a possible contribution. In conceiving of the concept of the 'beautiful pain syndrome', I have not only turned to theorists that hypothesize beauty and pain but have also looked at those who examine contemporaneity in South Africa. The limitation with the latter is that it is often confined to the socio-political or the cultural pulse of the country, rather than focusing on the discipline of performance. Nevertheless this has been advantageous in that it has led me to consider performance as an event that incorporates past and present, that interprets a culture, rather than merely as literary drama or conventional theatre. The study concerns itself with the influence of South Africa's socio-political and cultural past – apartheid, the transition to democracy and the TRC – on theatre, the after-effects of which are felt in the present. What is more, I consider how and what these after-effects *affect*. In other words, my study is also rooted in the exploration of emotions: internal behaviours and feelings, and expressed and observed emotional reactions.

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<sup>18</sup>The reader might possibly be surprised by the absence of the the works of Mbulelo Paul Grootboom, Dada Masilo, Khutjo Green, Princess Zinzi Mhlongo or Athi Patra-Ruga for example, but the requirements and timelines of this thesis have constrained what I can thoroughly cover. I have chosen to devote the bulk of my words and attention to the works which are substantive to this study.

## **Affect: sentiments do things**

Since this is also a study of emotions and emotions are such slippery things, I am obliged to, briefly, explore affect theory. In *Non-representational theory: space, politics, affect* (2008), renowned academic Nigel Thrift remarks that:

there is no stable definition of affect. It can mean a lot of different things. These are usually associated with words like emotion and feeling, and a consequent repertoire of terms like hatred, shame, envy, fear, disgust, anger, embarrassment, sorrow, grief, anguish, love, happiness, joy, hope, wonder [...]. (2008:175)

Thrift continues to say that not any of “these words work well as simple translations of the term ‘affect’” (Thrift, 2008:175). In a keynote address at a symposium titled *Directors and Directing: Playwrights*, University of Cape Town Professor Mark Fleishman argued that in the Humanities (in performance especially), affect calls for a move away from a mere reading of symbols, from what things mean and the practice of interpretation, to a greater exchange between the performer (from one party) and audience (to another) (2012:11). As English professor Lauren Berlant observes in *Critical Inquiry, Affirmative Culture*, analysts (in the Humanities) have often disregarded emotions arguing that they can be misrecognized and are, in any case, “things perceivable through common sense” (2002:447). However the recent theoretical interest in affect involves a shift from thinking about the performance event as just a message where a particular content is transmitted from the performers to the audience, “to thinking of it as a transaction in which, what is generated by both parties through the event, passes between them, to a significant extent on an affective level” (Fleishman, 2012:11). Such an interaction is about fostering relationships and finding a meeting point with others and with a range of ideas, places and objects. It is not, as James Thompson argues in *Performance affects: applied theatre and the end of effect*, “a field of particular communicative content, but rather of capacity and intensity” (2009:119). Accordingly, it is not only the impression, the feeling that cultivates the attachment, but the compulsion, the affect, is also in “the dynamic texture of the work” (Thompson, 2009:132). Thompson reminds us that “affects last beyond the event and ... they can *linger*” (2009:235). This opposes the predominant idea that performance is transient and that when it ends nothing remains (see Grehan’s notion of ambivalence on pages 67-68). The vestiges of affect draw out “performance across time and space” (Thompson, 2009:158).

Fleishman suggests that there is a way in which “particular effects – things done – produce particular affects – things felt” (2012:9). I repeat a phrase taken from academic Sara Ahmed’s article *Affective Communities* right through this study; “emotions *do things*” (2004:119). Instead of viewing emotions as abstractions, not grounded in the real or as belonging solely to an individual psyche, in this study, I consider how they help us negotiate our place in the world, how they move through our bodies in real ways, affording us an opening for taking hold of a collection of other experiences outside the realm of language. This description might best be explained as ‘affect’ or ‘affectivity’. Emotions consume us; they grip the performer and the spectator mediating the relationship between the individual and collective. Emotions can be intense and help describe the way we interact with the world because they are bound up with historicity.

Sociology and Women’ Studies professor, Patricia Clough, in her introduction to *The affective turn: theorizing the social* describes affect as: “a substrate of potential bodily responses, often automatic responses, in excess of consciousness” (2007:2). She describes the way the body attaches and reacts to a collection of various things, people or matters. Ahmed furthers this notion in observing that emotions “align individuals with communities—or bodily space with social space—through the very intensity of their attachments” (2004:119). These notions situate the concept of affect beyond individualized impulses, such as “I have a feeling”, “I am sad” or “I am happy”, to what Thrift calls a type of energy sphere, “an affective energy – a ‘buzz’ – that exists on a pre-subjective and non-representational level” (in Fleishman, 2012:10). In his reading of Thrift, Fleishman further explicates this notion, asserting that “such a field consists of forces and intensities to be experienced, entered into, rather than as particular representations filled with ciphers to be communicated or interpreted or to be owned by individuals” (Fleishman, 2012:10). The force of this ‘buzz’, this ‘affective energy’ is what I experienced in the theatre when I saw Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa’s works. I was left trying (sometimes unsuccessfully) to articulate what I felt. And yet perhaps it is enough to say that *I felt something*. I remember when I first saw *A Face Like Mine*, I felt overwrought, I felt ashamed, I felt many things that I could not admit to myself until much later when I expressed to Phewa that it was tough for me to watch the work and in reflection it is because I recognized a part of my story and myself in her many faces.

Literary theorist Anne Kosofsky Sedgwick in *Touching feeling: affect, pedagogy, performativity* comments that, “affects can be, and are, attached to things, people, ideas, sensations, relations, activities, ambitions, institutions, and any number of other things, including other affects. Thus, one can be excited by anger, disgusted by shame, or surprised by joy” (2003:19). Berlant foreshadows this when she notes that

at the same time that emotions bring us toward others (even internal others, say the psychologists) in a way that merges self-continuity with the continuities of repetition and futurity, there is a whole field of negativity that is not the opposite of cultivated emotion (2002:449).

Clough, in addition, suggests that affect refers to “the augmentation or diminution of a body’s capacity to act, engage, and to connect, such that autoeffectation is linked to the self-feeling of being alive – that is aliveness and vitality” (2007:2). Affect, therefore is an embodied distillation of experience, aesthetics and history.

To sum up, with Fleishman’s eloquence, “affect concerns embodied responses and attachments, actions and interactions, that generate a field of energy: of forces and intensities, through encounters between and amongst places, people and things, which produces a sense of vitality, of being alive” (Fleishman, 2012:11). There is a growing body of work on affect theory and while affect is unquestionably significant to my analysis, just as Thrift notes, there is no one way to decode and interpret affect. This section on affect theory points toward and names the argument I take up in chapter four: Emotions in the ‘Now Moment’. How affect is demonstrated in this study is through the unsettlement and anxiety wrought by the difficulty of the ‘now moment’. Affect is also inextricably interlinked to my reading of beauty and pain, the embodiment of uncomfortable attachment and the experience of moving through rites of passage.

## **Beauty and Pain**

I started with theorists who write about the disparate concepts of pain and beauty. The most prominent became Elaine Scarry. In *The body in pain: the making and unmaking of the world* (1985) and *On beauty and being just* (1999) Scarry’s ground-breaking commentary affirms beauty’s existence and verifies its relation with truth. Beauty is real and legitimate and is a fundamental part of our way of life, despite sometimes being overlooked in the Humanities

and its conceptual authenticity being challenged. That is not to say that Scarry herself does not challenge the concept, destabilizing the idea that there is only one way to think about beauty. Scarry provides further revelation by maintaining that beauty and pain are attached to the body – beauty as a stimulus or prompt of the body – in a way that is undeniable.

Writer and practitioner Susan Broadhurst – on the matter of aesthetics as representations of dis-ease – acknowledges that every performance (especially the form of liminal performances discussed in this study) strives in some way to present the unrepresentable (1999:170). Broadhurst appropriates Kant’s concept of the sublime, which Kant explains as constructing feelings of “negative pleasure”, that anticipate the sensations of anxiety, disquiet and discomfort produced by the liminal (in Meredith, 1911:91). I cannot fully go into Kant’s concept of the sublime as it does not serve my argument but it must be noted that Kant distinguishes between the sublime and the beautiful, regarding the distinction as fundamental to understanding the “judgment of taste” (Meredith, 1911:12). In my study however, ‘beautiful’ is used both as a general word of aesthetic celebration, and more specifically, to suggest a particular kind of charm by which we may be enraptured or captivated. In this manner, ‘beauty’ is not merely aesthetic consideration that characterizes some object in the world, but is the thing that “gives voice to an encounter, a meeting of a subject and object” (Scruton, 2009:61). My use of ‘beauty’ is inspired by the combining force and implications of affect: the difference between ‘I saw something beautiful’ and ‘I *felt* something beautiful’. In my use, the word ‘beautiful’ behaves more as an image rather than a literal description.

Beauty was problematized in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by the avant-garde in its different attempts to expose the construction and function of art as based on historical conditions. Beauty’s standing became a subject of much contention after World War II, though mostly from an ethical standpoint. Art historian Alexander Alberro cites sociologist Theodor W. Adorno’s famous assertion that “to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” which Alberro explains as Adorno disputing the very possibility of an aesthetic of romanticized unity and harmony in the wake of inconceivable atrocities (Adorno quoted in Alberro, 2004:37). This kind of disapproval is probably one South African composer Phillip Miller can identify with after creating his beautiful and incomparable *ReWind: a cantata for voice, tape and*

*testimony* (2006) ten years after the TRC, which has met with some ethical interjection. Miller had to defend himself against criticism that there is something ethically reprehensible with creating art from the pain of the testimony of survivors (families and victims) of the TRC.

Criticisms of beautifying pain do not end with these two examples. Scarry's analysis of beauty remarks that by consuming our attention, beauty distracts awareness from immoral social actions; "it makes us inattentive" (1999:58). In this regard beauty has been accused of minimizing suffering. Conversely Scarry also argues that beauty distracts us from suffering and in this manner, actually assists us in the work of tackling injustice by requiring of us continuous insight by immersing us into acts of seeing, hearing and touching (1999:62). I am more inclined to agree with the latter of Scarry's assertions for beauty creates both a filter and a prism; a filter that pain has to pass through to be sifted because the bits, the particles are the stuff of concern, the detail that was glossed over in the past. The business of pain can be devastating and all-consuming, causing those subjected to it to disengage. This makes it necessary then for beauty to function as a kind of prism through which pain's affects can be expressed in such a way that both the subject and observer are not disaffected.

What of the accusation that beauty is inauthentic and has no reality (Scarry, 1999:86)? This pertains to 'looking' or 'gazing' at something beautiful. "When we stare at something beautiful, [we] make it an object of sustained regard; our act is destructive to that object" (Scarry, 1999:58). Similar to Scarry, philosopher and public commentator, Roger Scruton also responds to and argues against his own exploration of beauty by drawing our attention to how the qualities that previously signified beauty's aesthetic failure are now cited as marks of success. These qualities regarded beauty as something too sweet, too escapist and too far from reality to receive our undeceived alertness (Scruton, 2009). When art is too beautiful, it beguiles and mesmerizes when it should agitate and disturb, or it incites euphoria when what is needed is a gesture of dejection (Scruton, 2009). Scruton, like Scarry, calls attention to beauty's potential to be dangerous and unethical, distracting us from injustice, degradation and consequently making us negligent and inattentive. But perhaps these are the very impractical features that bring to light beauty's appeal.

Scarry claims that beauty prompts us to look outward where pain demands a focus on internal experience and material. While Scarry's exploration of pain is incredibly inspiring, it tends to be limiting to this study because for the most part, it pertains to physical pain. Perhaps academics Patricia L. Starck and John P. McGovern in *Hidden Dimension of Illness: Human Suffering* (1992) more appropriately describe the kind of pain I am interested in. They write about suffering as a condition of pain and this is seen to be a consequence of personhood rather than body. In performance the body is the semiotic conveyor of pain but that does not automatically suggest that the body is necessarily in physical pain.

Other thinkers who take their lead from Scarry and lend their voices to my study are philosopher and political commentator Crispin Sartwell (2004), professor of applied and social theatre James Thompson (2006), professor of medieval history Esther Cohen (2010) and academic Kristin Bordreau (1995). They write about beauty and pain in an expository way. Both Scruton and Sartwell in *Beauty* (2009) and *Six Names of Beauty* (2004) respectively consider beauty through a metaphorical lens, discussing beauty as both an abstract concept and as a concept that deeply affects the senses. To explicate the dichotomous relationship between beauty and pain in this study would be to assert that if pain simply decentres, disengages, and thrusts the subject into loss and suffering, sending the subject into crisis, declining identity and agency, then it is beauty's job to create a delicate sense of perfection, repletion and completeness (Alberro, 2004:38). If pain disrupts, beauty replenishes. One empties you, the other fills you up.

Recent art and performance has been transgressive, when the work begins to resemble the ugliness of the condition it is describing. The binary between beauty and ugliness in Africa is the premise for Nuttall's *Beautiful Ugly* (2006). She surveys the notion of beauty being found within the confines of ugliness and the close connection that beauty and ugliness share in Africa and in other places (Nuttall, 2006:8). The aesthetic experience is multifaceted because it includes ugliness, disgust, abjection, violence and fear (Nuttall, 2006:16). There is room for the disruption of beauty in beauty itself, because even horrifying, evil and typically ugly things have those basic characteristics so that they can be taken up into human aesthetic experience and can also be beautiful (Sartwell, 2004:52).

## **The effects of our troubled history**

In *Theatre, Sacrifice and Ritual: exploring forms of political theatre* (2005), noted theorist Erica Fischer-Lichte investigates the 20<sup>th</sup> century as an age of transition. She discusses the many changes brought about in different cultural fields, particularly the redefinitions that two interactions experienced in this period of time: the connection between mind and body and that between individual and community (2005:14). South Africa has come to be characterized by considerable transitions in different spheres: historical, political and cultural. I would like to take a moment to briefly discuss the kinds of national and political transitions that have influenced the development of theatre making in South Africa recently and that serve as departure points for this study. These are the fall of apartheid, the emergence of democracy, The TRC, the consolidation of the national constitution and the bill of human rights towards the end of the 20th century, resulting in a shift from a preoccupation with the collective, to a necessary fixation with the individual in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Professor of visual culture Annie E. Coombes in *History After Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa* deliberates the penetrating consequence that South Africa's dual legacy of colonialism and apartheid have had on the present (2003:4). There are still tensions among different racial and ethnic groups because the prejudices and discriminations stimulated and sanctioned under apartheid have been internalized to some degree (Coombes, 2003:3). It is the combination of these historical conditions, political and social legacies, which have made the transition to democracy from the late 1980s to 2000 tumultuous, and still problematic (Coombes, 2003:7). Allowing for the past to shape our present, predictions made by such thinkers as Njabulo S. Ndebele (1991a, 1998), and Sarah Nuttall (1998, 2000), that the focus would shift from the collective to the individual, have come to fruition. Nuttall and Coetzee note the "shift away from what could be called 'cause' writing, associated with and reflective of the political struggle", to an "autobiographical mode of writing which is conventional in another way, concerned as it is with offering stories of redemption and healing" (1998:6).

In *The State of Research on Performance in Africa*, performance theorist Margaret Thompson Drewal notes the shift from the "collective to the agency of named individuals" in African

performance as one of three coinciding paradigmatic shifts she sees emerging in African performance (1991:3). The other two are shifts are: “from structure to process...from the normative to the particular and historically situated” (Drewal, 1991:3). Drewal critiques Western academia’s inadequate dealings with performance in Africa. Seventeen years after Drewal’s article was published, writer and literary theorist Therese` Migraine-George in *African Women and Representation: from performance to politics* –maintains that using a logocentric lens of Western modes of analysis can be unproductive considering this way of viewing’s inability to capture non-linguistic aspects of African performance (2008:8). Seminal performance theorist Catherine Cole justifiably opposes this point by asserting that although outsider perspectives sometimes suffer from blind-spots and omissions, they also offer insights less easy to obtain from those embedded within such a polarized society as South Africa (2010:xxiv).

Performance in Africa often feels participatory. Homann reminds us that in early post-apartheid South Africa (1996-2002), theatre makers began to embrace a more dialogic position. This dialogic position becomes a methodological and conceptual stance in this study in the sense that this is how, as researcher, I am operating with the works of Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa. I include my own experience and thoughts in conjunction with elucidation and analysis. Not only is this a connection with the individual theatre makers and their performing ‘selves’ but the conversation extends to how their respective works are in dialogue with each other, including personal and social predicaments in contemporary South Africa. This dialogic stance is typified by multiple identities at work, multiple ideas of interpretation, the telling of individual stories and theatre making that questions the identity of South Africa and its citizens (Homann, 2009:10).

### **The Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

This dialogic orientation is perhaps a natural progression after the individual testimony, and telling of pain heard during the TRC. South African scholar, poet and activist Heidi Grunebaum in *Memorializing the Past* reflects on the effects of time and historicity, which have shaped what it means to live with and understand brutality and pain in South Africa in

the wake of the TRC (2011). Grunebaum discerns how shifts “of events and happenings, of sense and sentiment, of violence and recovery, of the ‘past’ and the ‘new’ have been managed” in South Africa (2011:2). It is through the TRC process that a public language of ‘memory’ materialized, which in turn, “has informed collective modes of meaning-making about and after apartheid” (Grunebaum, 2011:2), and we are continuing to find ways of making meaning in the ‘now moment’.

Many readers turn to prominent South African poet Antjie Krog’s *Country of my Skull* (2002) when researching the TRC. By Krog’s own admission, her book is a deeply personal version of her own truth and she takes imaginative and creative license. One cannot deny that her book is an inspired secondary source but reliance on it is disadvantageous, which Cole points out in *Performing South Africa’s Truth Commission: stages of transition* (2010). What Krog manages to do in her eminent work is to “give words to moments of the commission that exceeded words, moments that seemed beyond articulation” (Cole, 2010:78). In other words Krog succeeds in articulating the emotionally meaningful embodiment that comes to stand in place of the actual content of what people said during the TRC (Cole, 2010:78). In this respect, Krog is an emotive resource but, not the foremost source for my interaction with the TRC. For a comprehensive engagement with the commission, I rely closely on Catherine Cole who sheds light on a fundamental part of the commission, which until her monograph was not explored in great detail, and that is the TRC’s dimension of communal performance. Other than viewing the TRC as a form of transitional justice from authoritarian to democratic ruling, or at a broadly comparative level as has been done before, Cole deals with the TRC’s performative principles, methods of speaking and telling and artistic embodiment (2010:xv). In addition, Cole examines the layers of performance, peeling back these layers and points of mediation to interpret the viewpoints from participant, spectator, witness, journalist, audience and interpreter. Most decisive though is Cole’s use of performance studies language, discourse, methods and theories to examine a key characteristic of the TRC: its public performance (2010:xvi). In this manner her book goes beyond examining this event through a juridical structure of guilt, blameworthiness and restoration and emphasizes the pretext of performance in the telling and retelling of cultural memory and the ambiguity of language (2010:xviii). For these reasons I acknowledge that I stand firmly on her shoulders in my discussion of the commission. In thinking about the TRC, I also adapt ideas from South

African politician Alex Boraine (2000), academic Kristine Segall (2001) and cultural theorist Rustom Bharucha (2001).

The problems captured by the 'beautiful pain syndrome' in the performance works of the 'now' – are directly or indirectly catalysed by the wounds of apartheid with which the TRC started to engage in the 1990s. The TRC was a public demonstration of real-life scarring. What is evident now is that we are still dealing with a scarred nation and contemporary performance is doing what the TRC only began to do. Performances of trauma expose social wounds and bring the problem of scarring to light, which is what performances of the 'now moment' deliberately set out to do. Black American literary theorist Carol Henderson, writing about the scarring of the black body, defines scarring as: "a mark left on the skin or other tissue after a wound, burn, ulcer, pustule, lesion has healed, a marring or disfiguring mark on anything, the lasting mental or emotional effects of suffering or anguish" (2002:3). Henderson maintains that the human body has repeatedly been used as a symbol of perceptions and theories of national identities. Thus, our corporeality tells its own story, apparent in South African contemporary performance, in which the black body carries the scars of a reluctantly inherited history (Henderson, 2002:3).

Though the rules have been altered and responsibility has shifted, the need for a symbiotic telling/re-telling of pain is alive, threatening and ubiquitous. This is precisely what performance calls attention to – which was iterated by the TRC – that it is important to remember and to re-tell stories of suffering and to consider how this can be curative (Segall, 2001:iv). In this study, this notion of telling stories, sharing one's narrative and personal testimony, which the TRC shares with the 'now', repeats a trend that emerged after liberation. It is scarring that drives the individuals to share their stories; it is the residue of past pain from the brazen scar that compels the theatre makers to cry out even now.

South African columnist Robert Greig believes this to be a setback and his views are worth considering because he raises a justified, though alternative point, about the danger of personal story-telling on South African theatre stages because of the ambiguousness and slipperiness of this kind of telling. How does one qualify and justify something based profoundly on individual emotion? Doesn't this obscure the discipline of theatre? Greig observes that:

Between stories and drama falls a shadow, and this shadow reduces the brilliance of [some of these plays]. 'Telling our stories' – always said now unctuously – is not the same as making theatre. Everyone can tell stories and far too many. Few can make theatre and few do. The challenges are different. One is immediacy, a rule of thumb: stories happen then and there, drama happens here and now, as you watch. The current fad for narrative is deadly to theatre (2000:11).

Greig maintains that the personal story telling impulse, which materialized post 1994, might undermine the theatre. His contention made me ask what these contemporary theatre makers are doing. Are they telling stories, making theatre, or does one influence the other? Speakers during the TRC were pointedly telling their stories. They were obviously not making theatre and the narratives they related cannot be relegated merely to story-telling. Theirs were statements rooted in real-life traumatic experiences. When it comes to the work of these four theatre makers, what is happening is not simply truth-telling or an emotionally laden telling of problems and dis-ease through theatre. Rather, the 'beautiful pain syndrome' must be considered to be an attentively executed aesthetic approach to giving an inimitable account, not only of individual painful material, but the national collective dilemmas that have manipulated this telling. In this manner, the stories do not just belong to the theatre makers and are not sentimental chronicles that are inaccessible or immaterial to observers. Over and above there being a strong need to tell for restorative purposes, there is a sense of responsibility that lies with this generation's theatre makers; a responsibility that is wrestling against forgetting, being silenced by the fear of re-visiting our past and present pain, as well as disparagement from those who seek to overlook or disregard the past and the extent to which this past has influenced personal histories and lived experience.

In this manner art in South Africa has come to model real life in a most confessional and intimate way. Where the TRC was criticized for tending to "focus on victims rather than 'survivors', suffering rather than agency" (Cole, 2010:xxvi), 21<sup>st</sup> century contemporary theatre making is a theatre of candour and claiming ownership, not an accusatory one that points fingers. Black South Africans cannot continue to depend on pain and suffering for their validation – this was commonly seen in the theatre of the 1990s – but what should and has started to happen in 21<sup>st</sup> century theatre making is a significant transition from attesting to, and merely telling pain, to coming face-to-face with accepting what that pain embodies (Bordreau, 1995:448). So the stories being told might bear some resemblance to past stories

but the reasons for telling have deviated somewhat and the way the telling is achieved is decidedly different. It is not a matter of glorifying pain or even claiming that pain is what makes us human and validates our experience (Bordreau, 1995:451). I cannot therefore agree with Grieg's undermining of the value of telling stories in a South African context, even when he feels it fails the discipline of theatre. As cultural critic Rustom Bharucha incisively writes: "pain is actually 'born' – created, stimulated, and embodied – through the telling of the story itself...[but] We need to acknowledge that not every history of pain finds itself articulated in a story" (2001:3764). That is why there is a need to continue to find different ways of vocalizing pain through telling. The exposition of pain will not always be lucid but telling is the only way to work towards reformation. In effect, there is a troika at work in telling; there is a speaker, a hearer and the remembrance wrought by the processing of the telling. It is not just about speaking and listening but also about what happens in that exchange. Pain cannot simply be remembered, it cannot simply be "confessed". It must be testified to, in a struggle shared between a speaker and a listener to recover something the speaking subject is not – and cannot be – in possession of (Felman, 1993:16).

## **Beloved**

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1997) has been a literary revelation of the aestheticization or beautification of pain for my study. *Beloved* incites one to ask the question: what are the repercussions of a readerly response to work that gives joy while it represents horror and pain (Matus, 1998:34)? Literary critic Barbara Johnson articulates the implication of Morrison's aestheticizing of trauma:

Choosing to aestheticize a father's rape of his daughter, a mother's murder of her grown son, a daughter's watching her mother burn and the scars on a slave woman's back, Morrison makes the aesthetic inextricable from trauma, taboo and violation. It is not a matter of choosing between politics and aesthetics but of recognizing the profoundly political nature of the inescapability of the aesthetic within personal, political and historical life (Johnson cited in Matus, 1998:86).

A novel that acknowledges the devastating effects of slavery, *Beloved* refuses to celebrate the pain that has produced its fragmented figures, although the work "offers moments in which it approaches a romantic, beautified version of pain" (Bordreau, 1995:453). One such moment is when Sethe, remembering her final days at Sweet Home, finds that the brutal

measures on the slave plantation and the horrors of her experience there, escape her memory and have been substituted by an idyllic image of Sweet Home (Bordreau, 1995:453):

Nothing else would be in her mind...Nothing. Just the breeze cooling her face as she rushed toward the water...suddenly there was Sweet Home rolling, rolling, rolling out before her eyes, and although there was not a leaf on that farm that did not make her want to scream, it rolled itself out before her in shameless beauty. It never looked as terrible as it was and it made her wonder if hell was a pretty place too...Boys hanging from the most beautiful sycamores in the world. It shamed her – remembering the wonderful souging trees rather than the boys (Morrison, 1997:6).

A romanticized notion of home, of one's roots that symbolize one's place in the world, is a common theme in the work of the theatre makers in my study. However such romanticisation comes at a price as we learn from the anxiety and hysteria depicted by Moyo and Mbothwe's performing subjects (see the Nostalgic hallucination/dream section on pages 142-150). It is not just Sethe who suffers from the dilemma of beautifying pain, Sethe recalls the white girl's description of the lash marks on her back, she tells Paul D: "I've never seen [the scar] and never will, but that's what she said it looked like. A chokecherry tree" (Morrison, 1997:16). Even Baby Suggs, Sethe's mother-in-law, aestheticizes the scar when she contemplates the "Roses of blood blossom[ing] in the blanket covering Sethe's shoulders" (Morrison, 1997:93). But unlike the white girl and Sethe, Baby Suggs covers her mouth with her hand as if to admonish herself for finding beauty in such a shameful sight. Similarly Paul D, who is at first captivated by Sethe's symbolic account of her scar, almost immediately discredits that explanation (Bordreau, 1995:454). He decides that the mark is: "In fact a revolting clump of scars. Not a tree, as she said" (Morrison, 1997:21).

The novel then promptly rebukes its own disposition to beautify pain. Perhaps what can be said about the theatre makers whose work I discuss is that they do not deliberately call attention to their own beauty therefore they do not purposefully have to reject beauty. Beauty is interwoven in the narratives. It is not used as a disguise or denial but rather an indelible part of the exploration of pain. In the same way "*Beloved* challenges the romantic notion of beautiful, transmissible, and humanizing pain by calling attention to the role of pain in unmaking language – not just the language of pain, but any language whatsoever" (Bordreau, 1995:456). This notion of 'humanizing pain' is crucial – perhaps 'humanizing'

extrapolates 'beautifying' in a more consequential and justifiable way. What *Beloved* edifies is that beauty as an ideal, survives even through the most difficult times, such as slavery or apartheid. Reasonably the performance of beauty in these instances is not an affront to the gravity of these atrocities or the reality of the people who have had to suffer through them, but instead a determined response to them (Thompson, 2006:49). A performance of beauty, that is one that (un)consciously calls for responsiveness to the beautiful, could be a performance act directly related to one that moves and fosters community and social justice. Furthermore "an attention to aesthetics as 'beauty' is not an alternative to a 'social' performance but a necessary part of it" (Thompson, 2006:49).

It seems to me that the romanticization and consequent embrace of pain has been traditional in Western culture. On the other hand, a "reading of pain also occupies a prominent place in the writings of groups long victimized by bodily, economic, sexual, historical and psychological violence" (Bordreau, 1995:448). What a curious quandary to note that those who have not necessarily experienced the historical immediacy of pain's violation still romanticize and are fascinated by it. Yet those who have known and experienced the historical immediacy of pain's violation also cannot move past what it means/ has meant to suffer it. They want to look at it closer, probe and problematize it. What is it about pain that unsettles the body and mind so? What is it about pain that draws us in with such mystifying urgency? Perhaps the rejoinder lies in Morrison's and these theatre makers' creative processes. Morrison's fictive process in *Beloved* can be usefully compared with Scarry's description of the transfiguration of pain into an objectified medium that allows others to see the interiority of that pain (Scarry, 1985:3). It is possible that demystifying pain in creative processes is an attempt to take power back by placing those painful subjects outside of ourselves. In making pain a speaking subject, in making pain a tangible object, one simultaneously brings to light the inadequacy of pain on its own, thus relinquishing the burden of pain. *Beloved*, the ghost of Sethe's daughter is such an 'object'. In making consciousness visible, Morrison externalizes her interior language of pain. Morrison's creation of *Beloved* offers another way to read the language of the scar itself. *Beloved*'s inability to speak can be viewed as a symptom, not only of her young age at the time of her death, but also of the failure of language to fully articulate pain (Henderson,

2002:94). In this project, the body speaks as much as the voice in articulating pain so that even in silence, the body becomes voice.

## **Rites and Ritual**

This final section of the literature review involves a reading into rites of passage. My entire study feels as though it is a rites of passage study in the sense that it is about passing through something; an event, a state of being, a sense of self and practice in this 'now moment'. The four thinkers that I turn to are distinguished French folklorist and ethnographer Arnold Van Gennep (1960), noted cultural anthropologist Victor Turner (1982, 1986, 1990), Erika Fischer-Lichte (2005) and performance theorist Susan Broadhurst (1999). Van Gennep's pioneering work, *Rites of Passage* (1960) categorizes rites of passage into three phases: preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition) and post-liminal rites (rites of incorporation) (Van Gennep, 1960:11). Turner and Fischer-Lichte assist me in interpreting Van Gennep's rites of passage in such a way that they are more applicable to performance rites. I find Van Gennep's triad of separation, transition and incorporation to be edifying when analysing these theatrical acts even though Van Gennep used his rubric to examine rural initiation rites. Unlike Van Gennep's initiate subjects, this study is concerned with the rites of passage of the theatre makers and their performing subjects. Van Gennep's phases aid in explaining the dramaturgy of the works in my study because my argument is that the performers and even the theatre makers (in the process of creating) go through a transformation. The transformation is psychological, emotional and even physical. In this manner, there is an analogous emotional process for performers in these rites of passage as there are in Van Gennep's analysis of initiates. I demonstrate these rites of separation, liminality and integration in different yet equally destabilising ways.

In my appropriation of Van Gennep's classification of rites of passage, separation reads as a withdrawal from one's previous social status, self or place. The liminal is the in-between phase of transition, where the ritual subject passes through a time and area of uncertainty, a place of limbo. This is the phase that these theatre makers work and linger in most because this is the phase where creativity, though at times terrifying, is abounding. Broadhurst describes the features of liminal performances as indeterminacy and fragmentation

(Broadhurst, 1999:13). The liminal phase insists on an amorphous style and there is a certain sense of exhilaration generated through the discomfort of ambiguity, in which uncomfortable attachments are lively. In the liminal, disruption is expected because, for liminal artists, prominence is placed on the emotive, instinctual and immediate (1999:13). “Liminal performance demonstrates a need for a new form of aesthetic interpretation, given that beauty and harmony are not appropriate descriptions of liminal sensibilities. Rather, the exciting or unsettling are closer to the mark, nearer to the sensations evoked by the sublime” (Broadhurst, 1999:171). Mbothwe is also a supportive voice in expounding on the liminal when I recall his production *Isivuno Sama Phupha – Harvesting of Dreams* (2007) where he turns to ritual. Through an exploration of ‘liminality’ and ‘communitas’, the work embodies ambivalence, decomposition and crisis (Mbothwe, 2010:241). What Mbothwe emphasizes – which rings true for all the works I discuss – is the importance of symbols and objects in aiding transformation. The use of symbols and objects in performance rites necessitates emotional involvement that moves beyond the literal or a cognitive comprehension of language (Mbothwe, 2010:246). “So that in performances of liminality, spoken language is often minimised and replaced by song, dance, images and symbols that express the complexity of feelings and emotions more accurately” (Mbothwe, 2010:249). This feeling of liminality drives the experience of migration in Mbothwe’s work and the experience of displacement as a result of immigration in Moyo’s work. This is exemplified by their ritualised performance.

Finally van Gennep talks about rites of incorporation. This is the integration phase that represents the return of the subject to their new position in society (Turner, 1982:24). This integration phase is what is still being passed through in the ‘now moment’. Integration is complex in these works because while there is resolve in the form of a choice or decision, there is also a sense that these are subjects still in flux long after the spectators have left and the lights in the auditorium have been switched on. In considering rites of passage in these works, it is evident that they are brought about through unsettling, chaotic, and ambivalent interactions.

Rites of passage denote the experiential discernment that social life is a progression of movements in space and time, a succession of changes of action and a series of

conversions in positioning for individuals. Such movements, such life-crises, such changes are not merely marked but also effected by ritual (Turner, 1982:78).

Performative rites are those acts that carry these theatre makers through and across the uneasiness of the 'now moment'. I examine these performative rites of separation, liminality and integration in accordance with their sequential development as delineated by Van Gennep but in my analysis, the phases do occur in overlapping waves because rites of passage are not unambiguous or static. It is not a fixed position but a passing through.

Now that I have outlined some of my major theoretical frameworks and prompts, framed in the historical, the socio-political, the aesthetic and the emotional, in chapter three I move on to a more detailed discussion of why I felt impelled to do this study and more importantly how I went about doing it. In my discussion of my methodology, I consider how my intuition, positioning and culture plays a strong role in my analysis. I highlight how my use of observation and comparison tools, oral narrative, affect, beauty and pain support my understanding and analysis of the performance works.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

My methodological approaches involve phenomenological hermeneutics as well as cultural performance analysis. This is in part because I am studying an experience and the arrangement of that experience by affect-driven means, ranging from emotional response to insight, recall, imagination and nostalgia. I also use processes of selection and intuitive awareness, which takes into account watching and making associations, one's own experience and embodied action. All of these practices include interaction, responsiveness to other people and vocal and linguistic activity in a particular culture.

The way I have gone about doing this research involves a number of fixations, choices and guiding thinking tools. What I am looking at is a particular aesthetic of dis-ease through an artistic assemblage of symbolic categories in these rites of passage contemporary performance works. Where the foci merge and split in locale and performance, where do individual qualities overlap? I make choices that surface from the same or similar axes of affiliation. Hence it is my business to uncover these choices using a combination of: 1) intuition – my own interests and preoccupations; 2) purposeful positioning, delicate and relevant lenses of analysis and cultural identity (as discussed in chapter one); 3) observation and comparing; 4) Oral narrative/history and 5) probing beauty, symbols of pain and performance, as a methodology for doing this research. This chapter uncovers how I arrived at each of my methodological tools and how each contributes conceptually to my study, in the order of the numbering above.

### **Intuition**

In recent years I have been exposed to innovative and heightened performances around South Africa and especially in Cape Town. I became both intrigued and unsettled when I watched the works of Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa and curious about the reasons. What was this niggling feeling that remained with me long after I had seen these productions? The curiosity persisted because it was not just by the four works that I discuss in this study that I was stimulated, but by the other works I had seen by these same four theatre makers. I consciously went out of my way to see the other works they produced wondering if they would elicit a similar response in me. Selected other works, just to name

few are, Mbothwe's *Inxeba Lompilisi – The Wound of a Healer* (2010), in the case of Nyamza, it is *Shift* (2010), Moyo's *The Water Glass Women* (2006) and Phewa's other work is *Enter the Maids* (2010). These works resonated with me and piqued my interest as I became aware of common trends developing in background, material, staging and thematic content. In this post-apartheid period of recovery, theatre makers no longer fit easily into group identities – though similarities occur – instead, there is greater emphasis on reclaiming the 'self' and certainly a more assertive expression of selfhood. I started to wonder why these theatre makers would want to put themselves in such a precarious and vulnerable position to begin with. What is this despairing audacity, this barefaced exposure? In my quest for answers I began to think perhaps this is an act of autonomy against oppression and silencing. Or perhaps it is a yearning to bring to remembrance that which has been lost or forgotten culturally, personally, historically, linguistically or familially. Then I thought perhaps there is a need to search for a performance practice, a rite of passage, which might assist the individual and inadvertently the collective, to come to terms with irrecoverable losses and fragmented identities. Perhaps it is for all of these reasons that these theatre makers voices are emerging strongly and with an imposing presence because it is looking to the past that helps us function in the present. Prolific writer Salman Rushdie notes that humanity is haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim and to look back. His answer to being unable to reclaim what has been lost is to create fiction – imaginary worlds (Rushdie, 1991:12).

Using intuition as my prompt, I have not let the palpable lack of documentation on the processes, work and performances of black contemporary theatre makers in South Africa, deter me from what I increasingly feel is a subject that needs to be recognized, because it is going on with or without me. Whether or not I choose to shine a light on this predicament, this 'now moment' lives and breathes. There has also been very little in the way of attempting to define or name what it is that we see happening in theatre making of the 'now moment'. This is the opposite of the fairly large body of documentation and theory that has been amassed about the theatre traditions of the pre-apartheid period, the apartheid period and the contemporary styles that began to emerge in the years immediately after the fall of apartheid (see Coplan (1985), Kavanagh (1985), Larlham (1985), Steadman (1990), Orkin (1991), Gunner (1994), Kerr (1995), Davis & Fuchs (1996), Hauptfleisch (1997), Blumberg

(1999)). This research is important then, not only as a contribution to the archive of documentation on contemporary South African performance works but also as a legitimate and necessary investigation of why and how contemporary theatre making is a product of the lingering past, a pulse of the ambiguous and fecund present and a presage of a hopeful future.

This study therefore intuits and details a particular performance aesthetic and offers interpretive insight into recent South African-based works as well as creators and performers who have not yet been written about in great detail. These works, creators and performers are lending their voices to our burgeoning theatre tradition. They are producing relevant and pertinent work that allows for thorough analysis and critique. Although there have been several South African practitioners writing about performance practice in the country, this study is pioneering in that it engages with detailed performance analysis of specific new works and offers original understanding of these works as they relate to politics, personhood and performance in past and present day South Africa. In this manner, this study can function as an encouragement and referent to those future researches who wish to engage with similar projects.

### **Positioning and Cultural Identity**

My positioning is strongly evident in this research, which revolves around my perceptions. A significant aspect of doing this research involves my awareness, sensitivity and reading in addition to the insights of the theatre makers, which includes both their materiality as individuals and the documented discussions I conducted with them. For this reason I do not purport to make claims or guesses about the audience. While I must make assumptions and determinations in this study, this must not be misunderstood to be, or mistaken as, mere rhetoric or postulating. On the contrary, it is my intuition, positioning and my own historicity that forms a legitimate and observable part of my methodology, because it is my pre-understanding, experience and interactions with the subject/s – that has had impact on the direction the study takes.

As a young Black South African woman involved in theatre, I have a shared experience with these theatre makers, which only heightens my understanding and sensitivity to both what

they do and how they are going about it. I have the privilege of knowing all of them personally and in some way, there is an element of self-reflexivity at work as I engage with their preoccupations alongside my own. My past research has been preoccupied with playing memories pertaining to narratives of loss. This loss has been represented by a loss of language, place and family because of an uprooted childhood, resulting in the playing of unnerving memory fragments. The subject of my enquiry has always been black girlhood and the ability of black girls/women to see (in other black girls/women) something that triggers or incites your own memory, which aids you in working towards completion of self. This kind of reflexivity reveals the black female subject's obsession with the irrecoverability of the past, manifesting in corporeal ways in both herself and her reflective 'other'. Whether or not completion of self is possible, what is discovered is performance's ability to ameliorate feelings of placelessness or atopia. One can see how, with my positioning and these fixations, I might be drawn to the work of Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa who share, however latently, similar fixations.

The way that I negotiate and put into practice the familiarity of my positioning is by employing several useful lenses of analysis: Sarah Nuttall's discussion of 'entanglement' (2009), scholar Helena Grehan's handling of 'ambivalence' (2009, 2010) and academic Maaiké Bleeker's 'seer' (2008). In this study, I confess to using Western forms of analysis to look at a particularly South African problem. Nevertheless I try to make up for this in my inclusion and detailed discussion of cultural and racial identity, while also taking into consideration and allowing space for the existing Western voice in South Africa. The key is recognizing that there can only ever be one of this current moment, this moment has its own belongings and material. These are things that can, in some instances, be accredited to some kind of past thing and previous moment but this moment noticeably has its own pulse, its own vibration that is not easy to capture without placing some kind of emphasis on historicism. For this reason, while I am not proposing some radically removed way of analysis to the afore-mentioned trend, what has been critical in the development of my study is an intuitive understanding of cultural and historical context that stems from familiarity and entanglement. Nuttall in her book *Entanglement* references writer Mark Sanders notion of complicity when she writes about entanglement as:

[A] condition of being twisted together or entwined, involved with; it speaks of an intimacy gained, even if it was resisted, or ignored or uninvited. It is a term which may gesture towards a relationship or set of social relationships that is complicated, ensnaring, in a tangle, but which also implies a human foldedness (2009:1).

Entanglement attempts to capture the messy business of this current locale we find ourselves in, in contemporary South Africa. Entanglement “works with difference and sameness but also with their limits, their predicaments, their moments of complication” (Nuttall, 2009:1). Entanglement speaks to likeness and connections as well as disparity and disconnection.

Grehan writes through the lens of spectatorship in performance but before I deal with her ideas, I appropriate the term Maïke Bleeker uses in place of spectator that tends to place one on the outside as a mere observer of action, because Bleeker’s term immediately locates me on the inside: ‘*seer*’ (2008:18). Bleeker asserts that the word spectator connotes passivity or passively looking at what is there to be seen. Even the term ‘observer’ similarly suggests that the one who is seeing is always doing so from within a prearranged set of possibilities rooted in a system of principles, rules, boundaries and restrictions (Bleeker, 2008:18). By some means the observer’s way of seeing is the creation and result of cultural practices that stipulate how this person will see. Indeed, I am a spectator and observer in the manner that Bleeker is describing but I am also more. The term ‘witness’ is also one that has emerged in this study, mainly in regards to the TRC. Because I come from a place of familiarity and knowing, I cannot consider myself to be only a spectator, purporting to be outside of the activity. By my very own argument, my historicity and positioning in this study implicates me and suggests a certain level of complicity. My interest and response to the works counteracts a meagre act of spectatorship, in that, not only is my curiosity piqued to the extent that I have been moved to investigate the reasons, but I also immediately locate myself in the dilemma of the ‘pain of now’. The stakes are not only deeply personal but also high. Not only am I a spectator, witness and observer, but have in addition appropriated ‘*seer*’, an endowment that allows me to always see more than is there, which is imperative in this performance study. The term ‘*seer*’ apart from “meaning the ‘one who sees’ and ‘an overseer, an inspector’ is also associated with insight, revelations, prophecy, second sight and magic” (Bleeker, 2008:18). The seer must make use of ambivalence in all that she sees because there is always more than is there to see, which she can see by harnessing that

unknowingness, that instability and fragility of ambivalence. The seer must be profoundly intuitive.

Now, if I were to carefully mull over my own historicity and why these particular theatre makers and their works are the subject of my study, Grehan's ideas on ambivalence seem apropos (2009, 2010). Ambivalence, like the study, encourages symbiosis between self and other, locality and nationality and past and present. This way of viewing, this attitude calls for the painful eking out of difficult subjects because pain not only appears to be a personal thing but it is also social. Grehan regards ambivalence as something that has the potential to inspire on-going reflection, commitment to, and participation in the ideas stimulated by a work, rather than as an unconstructive experience or one in which individuals or spectators are left faltering and directionless, which is the way ambivalence has often been interpreted (Grehan, 2010:10). In this manner, the experience of ambivalence creates an opportunity for thorough consideration and response. Actually ambivalence should be seen as a creative and dynamic state where numerous and contrasting reactions can be worked through.

What Grehan allows me to do is negotiate my position both as an individual and as part of a collective, as a researcher and as a seer. Grehan makes some intuitive remarks about ways of viewing that resonate with me with regards to performance: the work that I write about is invested in exploring social, political and cultural issues of selfhood. When a spectator leaves these art works they seldom leave feeling simply entertained or encouraged but rather, these works follow, worry and trouble the spectator. Although I may try to subdue my emotional responses or find ways of existing with them, "the nagging remains and demands consideration" and ultimately, it cannot be eased (Grehan, 2009:6). This irksome feeling drove me to find ways of changing, or at least challenging, these feelings personally or politically so that the 'dis-ease' is somewhat soothed (2009:6). Thus ambivalence is understood as a productive space that allows for the ideas, concepts and concerns in the performance to permeate the viewer's discernment (Grehan, 2009:34). What Grehan makes sure to point out is that the sense of responsibility, or being moved to some degree, might lead the viewer to experience ambivalence. What we do with the responsibility produced by and in response to the work, as well as how we choose to engage in a process of ethical

reflection, is up to us (2009:34). This is about engaging with the reverberations of a performance. Additionally this does not mean that this reaction or reflection has to be homogeneous. By its very nature ambivalence means that you are sensitive to the unstable or conditional nature of any response that you might make.

Ambivalence is understood here as a radical unsettling. Ambivalence involves negotiating between the real bodily feelings unleashed by a work (for example, goose bumps, the retreat behind clasped hands, the feeling of nausea, the audible gasp etc.) and the intellectual responses to what those reactions might mean both in terms of the performance and its ramifications outside the space and into the 'real world' (Grehan, 2009:35).

This feeling of 'radical unsettling' (Grehan, 2009:35), of occupying a space of liminality, presents the *seer* with a predicament. The way South African black contemporary performance is reflected back to us incorporates several lenses. These include our visceral response to work, an emotional response that emerges from a sense of entanglement and beauty, and the intellectual (emotional) response that may be a reaction to the socio-political condition of everyday living in 21<sup>st</sup> century South Africa. Ambivalence requires that we look closer at how the 'self' functions with others in relation to society (Grehan, 2009:35). Ambivalence requires that we carefully consider these theatre makers and their works however unstable, delicate and politicized our responses. These three lenses, entanglement, seer and ambivalence give support to the ways I negotiate my positioning. The bridge between entanglement and ambivalence is that I, the seer, am entangled in the art and so my attention as critic is always shifting, always unstable and as a result it is I, the seer, who repeatedly has to contend with feelings of ambivalence.

I can identify with these theatre makers (especially the women) and what is more, I recognize a shared experience. After all, as cultural theorist Stuart Hall points out cultural identities are those unstable points of identification or connection, which are created "within the discourses of history and culture" (Hall, 1993:395). These identities do not come about by merely adopting a principle, belief or opinion but a positioning. Where do you locate yourself? Where do you place yourself within a particular cultural framework? It is a matter of constant negotiating and that is why there is always a politics of identity, a politics of positioning (Hall, 1993:395).

Bearing this in mind let me take a moment to explore the identities of the individual theatre makers. All were based in South Africa and at the conception of my research all were based in Cape Town<sup>19</sup>. Also, all are formally educated art makers. Mbothwe holds a Master's degree in Theatre and Performance from the University of Cape Town. Moyo received her Doctorate in Theatre Studies at the University of Warwick, UK and she holds a Master's degree in Drama from Rhodes University. Nyamza trained as a dancer at Zama Dance School in Gugulethu, Cape Town, and later attended the Dance School at Pretoria Technikon where she received a National Diploma in Ballet. She furthered her studies at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Centre. Phewa hold a degree in Theatre Making from the University of Cape Town. More important is that all of these theatre makers are black Africans of various ethnicities. Mandla Mbothwe is a Xhosa male in his early 40s, Awelani Moyo is a part-Venda part-Shona woman in her late 20s, Mamela Nyamza is a Xhosa woman in her late 30s and Asanda Phewa is a part-Xhosa part-Zulu woman in her late 20s. Not only do these ethnic identities add substance to their respective works, but also, there are ways in which Blackness surpasses the performative, in the sense that blackness is not or does not always have to be consciously performed (Johnson, 2003:8). It is the unutterable yet incontestable racial experience of black people – “the ways in which the ‘living of blackness’ becomes a material way of knowing” – that is knottily implicit and internalised, whilst communally discernible and visible in performance (Johnson, 2003:8). This is the case in these performance works and consequently in this research: the material knowing of blackness is implanted in what is being performed – it is a physical knowing of a black identity. That is why this study deals with the performers as individuals within the works as well as the works themselves. It is not blackness alone that exceeds the performative but blackness in relation to South Africa's socio-political and socio-historic positioning. These performances present the opportunity to *re-work* and *re-imagine* how blackness is communicated and understood in the ‘now moment’.

Theorist Elin Diamond has this to say about the ‘re’ in performance:

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<sup>19</sup> In 2013, as I write this, Nyamza remains based in Cape Town still actively involved in theatre making. Mbothwe moves between theatre making in Cape Town and King Williams Town, where he is the Artistic Director of the Steve Biko Centre. Moyo has received her Doctorate at the University of Warwick and Phewa is currently training in traditional healing and spiritual practice.

While a performance embeds traces of other performances, it also produces experiences whose interpretation only partially depends on previous experience. This creates the terminology of 're' in discussions of performance, as in *reembody*, *reinscribe*, *reconfigure*, *resignify*. 'Re' acknowledges the pre-existing discursive field, the repetition – and the desire to repeat – within the performative present, while 'embody', 'configure', 'inscribe', 'signify', assert the possibility of materializing something that exceeds our knowledge, that alters the shape of sites and imagines other as yet unsuspected modes of being (Diamond, 1996:2).

What I take from this is that perhaps all performance relies on some kind of past, some kind of precursor. But what the performative present exhibits, with the continuation of the 're', is the possibility of new territory. Even though the 're' calls back to itself, requires a 'going back to' something, it does so with the knowledge that a return to a previous experience can mean giving birth to something new – this is the 'after'. This notion extends to my look at black identity in South Africa. The territory claimed by black identity is new, not black identity itself. People have always been black; this has not changed, but our experience of the 'living of blackness' has changed. Our claim over our own blackness has changed. This has not happened in this way before and so it must happen now. Of course the past spills into the present, which means we also carry the pain of the past. Accessing that pain in performance is what gives us authority over what that pain means in our lives in the now.

The thing with Blackness is that it is one of those dicey signifiers that one is constantly trying to get a hold of and once you think you have a hold on it, it changes into something else and takes a different course. Although tenuous, this does not prevent me from trying to pin down this slippery concept because "the pursuit of authenticity [here] is inevitably an emotional and moral one" (Johnson, 2003:2). Performance artist and scholar E. Patrick Johnson hits on a couple of key points here: first, the notion of a purpose-filled search for truth and legitimacy within blackness – whatever that may mean to an individual when that 'truth's' connection is not only to sentiment and emotion but to ethics as well. Add to this the slippery term performance and you have two discourses whose histories come together at a site of difference (Johnson, 2003:7). Ethnographer Dwight Conquergood states that performance is also "associated with feelings, emotions and the body" and "is constructed in opposition to scientific reason and rational thought" (1992:57). These terms are contested and subject to scrutiny because they are so difficult to quantify. Yet one cannot undermine the power of racial identification particularly in a South African context and as writer Rinaldo

Walcott emphasizes: “to read blackness as merely ‘playful’ is to fall into a wilful denial of what it means to live ‘black’” (1997:xi). It is this living of blackness, this embodying blackness (however knowingly or unconsciously) that becomes an added layer in the reading of these South African-based theatre makers and their works.

Actually, blackness proposes a way of reconsidering performance theory by obliging it to ground itself in praxis. Whether they conscious of it or not, these theatre makers are engaged in a performativity of blackness and consequently a big part of doing this research is observing the ‘doing of blackness’. While well-known philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler’s celebrated theory of “performativity” is deliberate in rendering hegemonic notions of identity as fictions (Boucher, 2006:112), one cannot negate the force of and attachment to racial identification, especially for black people in South Africa. Nevertheless Butler’s concept does offer some understanding of the connection between person and social identity particularly where issues of power (or politics) and resistance to social structuration is concerned. Since performativity “describes the culturally-scripted character of identity, which is generated by power through repeated citations of norms and their transgression” (Boucher, 2006:113). In the end, performance and blackness are distinctive discourses with their own agendas but these slippery signifiers both converge and deviate, making full use of their dialogical/dialectical relationship and presenting a unique viewpoint for understanding, safeguarding and transforming identity and culture on a large scale (Johnson, 2003:9).

Still, what happens when blackness is embodied? In *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality and Blackness* (2011), scholar Nicole Fleetwood talks about how blackness becomes visually knowable through performance, cultural practices and psychic manifestations. The discourse of blackness is positioned around a recognizable, perceptible and performing subject and consequently, the process of interpretation is itself a performative act of classifying blackness (Fleetwood, 2011:6). In this manner, blackness circulates, because blackness and black life become intelligible and respected through a performance of a racialised discourse (2011:6). Blackness cannot be defined by one history or authenticated by one kind of person or thing, it circulates and it flows but this does not destabilize its power (2011:6). This is a huge point of contention for Phewa who expresses deep frustration at the tendency to want

to homogenize blackness, to perpetuate this notion of 'one experience, one identity' (Phewa, 2011). Phewa asserts that she finds little freedom in defining contemporary blackness and yet we must. There is no one answer for the question: what is black? Phewa challenges with the retort: who are the gatekeepers of black? Who are these 'authentic blacks' that somehow get to create the mould for what black ought to be? She asks these questions with a degree of sadness because whoever the self-proclaimed caretakers of blackness are, they have often not been all-encompassing and have certainly not always been inclusive or accepting of her (Phewa, 2011). Cultural theorist and sociologist Stuart Hall alludes to this in discussing cultural identity. He acknowledges that

[A]s well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant difference, which constitute 'what we really are'; or rather – since history has intervened – 'what have we become'. We cannot speak for very long, with any exactness about 'one experience, one identity' without acknowledging its other side – the ruptures and discontinuities which constitute... 'uniqueness' (Hall, 1993:394).

Accordingly as much as there are similarities and affinities between these four theatre makers, there are also places of divergence and these disjunctures hold value in this period of recovery's expression of singularity. These differences include gender, language, sexual orientation, country of birth and identification. After all cultural identity is as much a matter of 'becoming' as it is 'being'; it belongs to the future as much as to the past and is the stuff of the collective as well as the individual. This is something academic Kevin Quashie explicates in *Black Women, Identity and Cultural Theory: (un)becoming the subject*, using black women as subject through the 'girlfriend aesthetic'.

The selfhood offers an instability occurring via two levels of identification between self and other; identification *with* and identification *as*. The constant movement between with (in which a subject materializes comparatively) and as (in which the subject materializes metonymically) also represents (dis)identification, because the subject is always being dislodged/dislodging herself from a settled identity with her other (2004:16).

Thus identities are not things that already exist outside of place, time, history and culture. On the contrary, much like blackness, "cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories" but they experience constant transformation (Hall, 1993:394). Where performativity works in the performance of transforming identities, is in resisting certain metaphysical presuppositions about culturally formulated categories. Instead it draws our

attention to the diverse arrangements of that construction (Butler, 2010:147). Performativity in my analysis of Phewa, Nyamza and Moyo for instance, involves the performance of multifaceted identities that are based on the individual's disruption of cultural rules and are enacted through the individual's own determination and will (Boucher, 2006:137).

Black identities are subject to the incessant 'play' of history, culture and power and are far from being forever bound to a predetermined past. "Blackness fills the space between matter, between object and subject, between bodies, between looking and being looked upon. It fills the void and is the void. Through its circulation, blackness attaches to bodies and narratives coded as such but it always exceeds these attachments" (Fleetwood, 2011:6). In South Africa, we have grown accustomed to these attachments that are an indelible part of our historical legacy but they are also attachments that fill us with a sense of dis-ease and pain: uncomfortable attachments. Blackness must surpass these attachments and instead locate the problems and difficulties in the in-between spaces. It is when these in-between spaces are not problematized and probed, when silences are not resisted, that unsettled individuals are brought into being.

### **Observation and Comparing**

In theorising blackness, in relation to my own intuition and positioning, it is evidently no coincidence that I have selected to study these particular four theatre makers who are all black and of African heritage ranging from their mid 20s to 40s. Doing this research however has also involved observing and comparing, not only the theatre maker's works but also the theatre makers as individuals. The most obvious observation is that among the four theatre makers, three are black women and one is a black man. Why is this so? Why include a man at all? Well, as I mentioned earlier I initially felt a resonance with the black female theatre makers and their works because of a certain degree of familiarity of experience. Migraine-George draws attention to the African woman playwright and performer and her role in particularizing multidimensional and dynamic forms of representation to discover the spaces from which African women can speak and have spoken (Migraine-George, 2008:8). The African woman theatre maker has not only to reflect on representation and address the content of that representation, but she must also maintain awareness of the process and

politics of representation by questioning the blind spots, discontinuities, gaps, and silences (2008:8). Since theatre in Africa has habitually been used as a site to debate contentious political and social issues, women use ritual and performance to unsettle habitual domestic hierarchies and to practice social, political and spiritual authority in their communities (2008:25). The foremost idea I appropriate from Migraine-George is African women using performance to carve out autonomous spaces in their immediate communities, but also in the public sphere (2008:199). In South Africa, this is not just true of women (hence the presence of Mbothwe). The passage to self-determination is both a shared and individual journey in this 'now moment'.

The connection with Mbothwe's works is also strong because the women in his works are prominent. An admirer of the matriarch, Mbothwe creates female characters that are revered and treated with respect. This is mainly because of his sustained concern with family and notions of home. In his work, the woman is the centre that holds the family fabric together, even in the presence of a male. Mbothwe overturns any misconceptions one might have about women in South Africa because his women are not one-dimensional and stereotypically poor, degraded or downtrodden, with no rights or morals, and constantly subjected to mistreatment (Kshama, 1989:7). This is not to say that such stereotypes are all false (see Gqola on pages 97-98). Phewa expresses her disgruntlement with the lack of balanced representation of black women even in contemporary creative roles:

As an actress, I have always been frustrated with the notion of playing a woman I do not know. By that I mean playing a black woman on stage whose sole purpose is to serve others before serving herself. Women of colour in South African plays mainly serve as a prop or support for the black male fighting the social upheaval and struggle of the time. While under apartheid and perhaps even through the early years of the democratic change, many women may have agreed with the kind of representation they were receiving in the plays, today I am astounded by the deafening silence of women's voices in theatre -- particularly black women (Phewa, 2008b).

For Mbothwe, a depiction of powerful women appropriately reflects their important role as educators and moral custodians...those people who "will always be there" – not just because they have been left behind – but also because they are at the epicentre of life and family (Mbothwe, 2011b). Mbothwe says:

I am very fond of my mother for the things that she has done, I respect her, she is very strong and I think that is why...[woman are so prominent in my work]...I'm not sure if I do it consciously...but there is just something about women. Also, historically in an African context, we know that they are the people who built the foundation of our education. Even before migration. They were always left behind when the men were hunting. Men were always out of the house...and women will always be there (2011b).

Blackness and a focus on women are not the only things that bind Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa. What are some of the other elective affinities? Importantly these theatre makers are intrepid in their choices, their decisions to do the kind of art that deals with them 'selves'. What transpires is that in performing them 'selves', they are heavily engaged in the living act of autobiography and what simultaneously occurs for the observer is a shared reflexivity in biography. At this juncture, let me point out that again, Mbothwe differs from the other three theatre makers because he does not perform in his own works. Nevertheless I feel that his inclusion is validated by his spiritually-rooted and involved conceptual and creative process, which he initiates and which, for the most part, is written by him. Mbothwe is inspired by the world of dreams his vivid world of dreams, his ancestral connections and the world of traditional healers. In his works he often turns to ritual which, he considers, finds a balance between reality and magic (2011b). My fourth reason is that, unlike their contemporaries, this foursome's work is not driven by an easily recognisable socio-political agenda. The stories come from the theatre makers and are not calculatedly political, although one cannot shy away from the socio-political implications that accompany performing the 'self'. Any(body) put on a stage for spectators is going to be politicized to some degree in a South African context. My fifth reason would be that this foursome is doing works conceived, written and mostly performed by them. For this reason there is a sense of complete ownership – there are seldom other voices to be listened to, no other authority. These theatre makers have really elevated this trend at this time in this country. Whether or not they continue to make art or perform, they have been an active part of a moment – a 'now moment', a trend necessary to the progress of this country's creative and artistic voice. They have gone beyond saying that 'we are going to make the art that we want see' and have instead declared 'we will make the art that we want, that comes from us, that is reliant on who we are and where we come from'. Furthermore, they have declared that 'we are going to make the art that we *need* to see' and this, in my view, is a fortuitous ameliorative act of nation building. These theatre makers do their utmost to make art about 'us' – but the

'us' is the complex bit. Who are 'we'? That is the thing: trying to uncover, discover and work through the stuff we are made of. These theatre makers have put themselves out there to be adjudicated by a public that not only needs to share in the pain for collective healing, but needs to hear of that pain in tandem, in order to try to make sense of it so that healing continues to take place – this is the nature of recovery.

This may seem like an exasperating responsibility but in this period of recovery there is no walking around the wound. One must face it head on – one must hurt to heal. In being mindful of the slippages around blackness and performance as well as the points where identity politics and history converge, we can start to unpack all of the stuff that we are made of – it is a painfully challenging undertaking. Perhaps playwright and director George C. Wolfe, in an interview with Charles H. Rowell titled *I Just Want to Keep Telling Stories* (1993), articulates this most aptly when he recounts his own approach to dealing with this delicate complexity in African American culture. He says:

It's so incredibly tricky, exploring that complicated combination between power and pain and brilliance that it seems to me a sort of extraordinary triad that is African-American culture: I can't live inside yesterday's pain but I can't live without it. My power is in my madness and my coloured contradictions. It was like, "no, you don't have to choose; you are all of this (Wolfe in Rowell, 1993:620).

Indeed Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa are "all of this", inheritors of troubled histories and themselves hybrid beings, creating works that deal with the intricacies of living in the 'now'. All of this adds to the way identity is demonstrated in this 'now moment' – it manifests as a return to autobiography where particular attention is paid to the individual as well as the historical/past problem. Working alongside such overloaded 'histories', these theatre makers turn their attention to questions of contemporary identities.

### **Oral narrative/history**

As I was conducting my research and gathering my data, I had the urge to discuss the work with some of the theatre makers. Although all four knew that their works were the subject of my study, I had not planned necessarily to engage with them from the beginning. But as I went along, I found that my desire to hear from them became pressing. I called these meetings 'discussions' rather than 'interviews' because I knew that I may or may not use the

data in the actual study. Rather the discussions may simply have been helpful in crystallizing some areas of ambivalence for me. I also referred to them as discussions because they were undertaken informally. Since I had some sort of a relationship with each theatre maker, we usually talked at a restaurant over a meal, where I had a recording device and the subjects were made aware that they were being recorded. The subjects also gave permission to be quoted. The way these different conversations feature in this study is not characterized by any single method.

For instance, I used only selected aspects from my discussion with Nyamza. I sensed that because Nyamza is a trained dancer her work springs primarily from movement and she appeared to find it difficult even exasperating to talk about her work intellectually. I also did not have a formal 'discussion' with Moyo because she has methodically probed and eloquently articulated her own work in her master's thesis (Moyo, 2009). I also have the advantage of having known and studied at university with Moyo. Consequently I had background information and experience of her aesthetic and the source of her performance preoccupations. It did, however feel crucial to have discussions with both Phewa and Mbothwe. Mbothwe does not perform in his own work and so I had many questions about his creative process as well as what compels him to tell the stories he chooses to tell. Furthermore, because he is the oldest of the foursome he has more subjective experience of the apartheid and post-apartheid years. It felt necessary to counter this experience with Phewa's. She is the youngest of the foursome and her perspective is that of a black, middle-class, post-apartheid child of progress.

The quotes from Moyo, Phewa and Mbothwe elucidate and support my propositions. They do not speak for me. Despite the fact that these discussions were held quite far into my research process, ultimately they do reinforce, although they do not guide, the research. They were able to endorse and sometimes elaborate on aspects that I had speculatively conceived. They served to corroborate and validate my own experience and intuition about these works. In a study that is focused on the subjects performing themselves, the last thing I wanted to do was misrepresent them. It became a way to correlate the evidence with my experience in order to ensure a productive engagement with the autobiographical mode in theatre making.

## Beauty, pain and performance

At this point, I have answered some important questions pertaining to why I chose these four theatre makers as my subjects, discussed what world they belong to, and have begun to highlight some of the comparisons and dissimilarities between them. Now comes the time to discuss their aesthetic likenesses in their involvement in the practice and performance of beautiful pain. Doing this research means that I have closely examined each work on its own, in order to describe, order and organize aspects of each work according to certain categories and then place the works alongside one another. It was here that I began to look at the concept of beauty as a kind of methodology for the theatre maker. In other words, I became mindful of the theatre maker using beauty as a tool for doing this kind of work of dis-ease. Finding beauty in and amongst dis-ease serves as a call, in that beauty demands that we purposefully search for the beautiful things that move us. This means quite frantically sifting through the rubble of pain in search of patterns, details and life-imitating similarities – this is how they are able to stage and perform pain through beauty. Beauty, then, can be said to aid us in the business of dealing with pain – the very pain that it might sometimes overlook. Beauty does this by calling for constant insight, perception and engagement of the senses. This also means having a steady awareness of beauty's dichotomous nature in that it engages with both the real and the artificial, in a parallel of the way that performance engages with the real and the fantastical.

Our understanding of beauty, particularly in performance, also extends to metaphor and imagery (Scruton, 2009:1). The main issue with a metaphor is not what material thing it represents but what experience it suggests. Moyo uses this effectively in the *Compositions* series, her protagonist, Dombo is a walking metaphor. The blue body make up that she dons, striking as it may be, and even beautiful – is not just for aesthetic purposes. Moyo's blue body make-up, required by the character of Dombo, portrays the foreignness of her migrant body.



**Figure 3: Awelani Moyo in *Huroyi Hwangu – In De/Re Composition*. Photographer: Lauren Clifford-Holmes.**

Moyo draws from storytelling tradition combining heightened visuals and beautiful imagery in this examination of inner veracity. Moyo narrates the story of Nainai, the beautiful bird who endures a painful ordeal because of her otherness:

WOMAN: As always, it was pitifully hot in the faraway land of Eeinaa. It was not quite humid, but the wind blew sunny and strange, and combed the golden hair of the village people. A beautiful bird settled on the rooftop of the tallest house on the highest cliff on the furthest point of the world. Her skin was blue-black because each day as she walked through the town, past the village people whose golden locks curled round each other's eyes, she was pummelled with tiny pebbles until she would take off again.

As always, it was pitifully hot in the faraway land of Eeinaa. Nainai dived into the water to soothe her burning skin. The townspeople cried 'the blue woman is in the water'. The People pummelled her with rocks.

As always, it was pitifully hot in the faraway land of Eeinaa. A great heat dried up the rivers and the seas. Nainai dived and was swallowed up into the earth. It was hot in Eeinaa. The sand became a great glass. The townspeople raised Nainai up to the heavens, but she fell to the earth and was shattered into a million tiny pieces (Moyo, 2009:95).

Nainai's transformations are a method of resisting the townspeople's efforts to assume power over her. This kind of poignant metaphor used by Moyo is the spirit of beauty. Beauty

as symbol and image is a methodological pointer in the study, how I unpack key metaphors in the theatre maker's works is by placing them in generated symbolic categories.

There are questions that arise in trying to elucidate beauty's ambiguity. For instance why do we call things beautiful and for what purpose (Scruton, 2009:2)? Is beauty a matter of appearance or of being and does beauty examine sentiment rather than form (Scruton, 2009:4)? These are productive questions for understanding beauty is in this study. In my analysis, I have been unable to avoid equating beauty with meaningfulness. Beauty is evocative; it is consequential because in this study it is just as much about sentiment (emotion) and being, as it is about form. What is at the heart of my investigation is beauty's meaningfulness; it is the exquisite in performance even through pain. Beauty is aesthetic; it is fascination with an image, object, person or thing. More than that, beauty is something poignant and stirring that touches a deep place even when what it awakens is painful. Beauty is embodied in performance through a sensory experience. Beauty is traceable and tactile; it is shape, colour, sound, design, craft, concept, structure and style. When something, such as a performance is beautiful, it engages all senses, it is overwhelming, it is real, it is vivid that if you were to shut your eyes long after you leave a performance space, you are still able to see those images; you are still able to experience the sensations that inundated you and you are still able to suffer its poignancy. Beauty is sanctified and unparalleled. Beauty is ritual...beauty swells up and increases. It makes life more vibrant, dynamic and worth living. "It adrenalizes. It makes the heart beat faster. It makes life more vivid, animated, worth living" (Scarry, 1999:22-24). Beauty is life saving.

Nyamza's *Hatched* captures the meaning of beauty, in the first ten minutes of her performance.

French composer Camille Saint-Saens enchanting music from Fokine's, *Dying Swan* sets the tone of the piece, which opens on a little boy Amkele Nyamza (who I later find out is Mamela Nyamza's son) under a table sketching in a book. The stage is completely dark; the only source of light comes from the lamp under the table, illuminating the boy's face as he sketches. The table is covered on all sides by a capacious red fabric. Because of this, the light reflects a burgundy hue. So really the boy is not just under a table but also under the fabric – the image lingers for a few seconds – and the lighting is isolated so that the boy stands out

alone in the darkness. The image is intimate; the boy could be in his bedroom. In fact the image is reminiscent of the make-believe bivouacs/shelters or secret 'hide-outs' of childhood play and games. Slowly a general wash fades up and here we see clearly that the fabric draping over the boy is a voluminous skirt – the boy has been encased in the skirt – his mother's skirt. The first thing we see as our gaze is directed upwards are hundreds of white leaves scattered upstage in a straight line. Then we see Nyamza situated downstage right, arms akimbo. Above her hangs a clothesline with wooden clothespins attached to it. Nyamza has her back turned towards the audience. She is topless and wearing a white tutu with a brown patterned skirt wrapped around it, and clipped on to the skirt are dozens of wooden clothespins, weighing it down. She is also, paradoxically, wearing ballet shoes. Her son begins turning the pages of his book. There is so little yet so much to take in regarding the texture and colour of this opening. The feel and quality of the visual is electrifying. The crushed organza of the red skirt and the white tulle against the wooden clothespins picks up the white leaves. Nyamza's brown skin against the black backdrop contrasts with the white of the skirt, her powerful physique, with her muscular back and baldhead giving an air of androgyny. There is detail in the simplicity – the palette effortless yet distinct.

At first Nyamza is slightly hunched over, her head hung low, she is fidgeting slightly. She adjusts the skirt and with that her hands slowly shoot up and are aligned with her face. What begins now are a series of slow bird-like movements. They begin in the winding of the shoulders and the back, we see every muscle in her back moving and working but it is graceful...the movement travels to the hands, the arms and then to the head. These slow, staccato twitches resemble a new bird preparing to flap its wings – as if it were discovering them for the first time. Every movement is new and different. Her head and the hands make a circular motion, so do her wrists and neck. She slowly lifts her shoulders up and down, front to back, twisting them. This sequence evokes the image of a baby bird hatching. This delicate and understated introductory sequence ends with Nyamza's hands at her waist as she turns her head and we see a profile view of her face and what appears to be a slight hint at a smile. She turns her head away again, stoops and bends down to the ground. There has been no acknowledgement between mother and child.

She gathers the red skirt and covers herself with it by going underneath it. She begins to gather the fabric, until she finds the opening, pushes her head through it and wears the skirt. She takes a red vest from her garments in the zinc bucket that she has carried in and slowly puts it on as she proceeds to hum. Now she is fully clothed in the red skirt and the red vest. When the skirt is fastened and on properly, she turns around, this is the first time she has turned to face the onlookers – she makes nothing of it initially as she proceeds to gather the skirt, pulling at it from different directions. We are hardly aware that this is the first proper revelation of her face nine minutes into the production because she is so busy gathering the skirt in a haphazard, everyday fashion. It is when she has completely gathered the huge length of material that she brings it up in front of her face, only to let it scatter again. It is in this breath-taking image, this moment as the skirt cascades to reveal her face that we really see her properly for the first time.



**Figure 4: Mamela Nyamza in *Hatched*. Photographer: John Hogg.**

Even with her eyes closed her face is a picture of quiet distress and suffering. Her eyes remain shut as she lets the skirt drop, slowly lowering her arms to her side and raising her gaze to meet the audience. As she meets the audience's gaze, she slowly takes a few steps

forward but discovers that the shirt and consequently her body are tied to the clothesline. The clothesline restricts her movement and how far forward she can go. She steps back again and makes a second attempt but realizing her limitations, she moves back towards the clothesline. She brings her hands up slowly to cover her face...in despair. The presence of pain in Nyamza's bodily discourse is infused by its heart-rending beauty, knowable through her embodied performance. Her womanhood is distorted within the maze of her marvellously voluminous red skirt. Unable to proceed, she is trapped to the clothesline and all it represents while simultaneously ensconced in and suffocated by the skirt. Her face, when finally revealed to us, is a picture of pain, doubt, distress, helplessness and then acquiescence. The image is breath taking and yet, even this cannot deter us from what is really there to be seen; the pain of a trapped woman yearning to be liberated. Indeed this opening sets the tone for the kind of compelling connections beauty and pain are making by considering beauty's role as medium – as the intermediary that bends and shifts, a methodology to communicate to an audience, a way to produce an effect.

Instead of juxtaposing two noticeably disparate concepts, beauty and ugliness and pain and euphoria, I opted to take on pain and beauty as two dissonant yet connected concepts. I have, in the past, accused some works of being 'too beautiful'. I have in my own work been accused of being 'too beautiful', suggesting pointlessness or a falsification of some sort. My point is that beauty can be extremely constructive, both in its creative process and as an act. Why can we intellectualize and legitimize pain and yet struggle to find authenticity in beauty? More than that, it is in moments like when Nyamza lets the skirt pour over her as she raises her eyes, as they first meet the audience, that provides us with proof that it is through beauty in performance that you are able to see something else. Here beauty arouses sensations. This is affect at work, demonstrating the body's ability to act, captivate and connect. Here Nyamza's body is alive and dynamic and there is a force of energy created between her and the spectator. Indeed, in my analysis beauty operates as a lens through which greater concerns are revealed. I choose not to look at something beautiful as being merely pleasing, or something attractive to the eye. Instead in my exploration, beauty, just as pain, through affect, elicits a bodily and emotional response in these dynamic and textured works.

Just as with beauty, I have also criticized some works (and have been criticized) of being heavy handed, too emotionally charged and laboured. This is crucial because even in performances of pain, extreme pathos or unresolved angst, severe displays of physical pain, torment and suffering can sometimes alienate an audience. It seems as though isolated and inaccessible illustrations of 'doing pain' or 'doing beauty' do not work as single fixations but are most successful when they play off one another. It takes something dark or ugly to expose beauty and it takes something ravishing and breath-taking to reveal pain. They operate best in tandem.

The function of the visceral concepts of pain and beauty in performance is to share the unshareable and – as vividly as possible – how that pain belongs not only to the sufferers hoping for relief or empathy, but to society as a whole (Cohen, 2010:40). This is what motivates Phewa, what leads her to say:

I cannot speak for everyone but I can certainly speak of what I know and of what hurts me in the hopes that it will heal me. By starting the dialogue of what I am going through, I hope to give more people the voices to not only say, 'I know what you're going through' but to continue the dialogue and share their stories too (Phewa, 2008b).

Performance is what offers Phewa the opportunity for this collective ameliorative experience where she attempts to share as lucidly as possible what is unshareable.

## **Performance as methodology**

Since performance is a methodology, in order to understand the development of contemporary performance in South Africa in this 'now moment', perhaps it is useful to briefly outline the existing theoretical designations that have informed my own enquiry. What this provides more than anything else is an appreciation for ways of looking, ways of engaging with such an ephemeral discipline as performance. I do not wish to simply regurgitate what has been written about performance and performance studies, one can consult the writing of Richard Schechner (1976, 1988, 1990, 1993, 2002), Dwight Conquergood (1992, 2006), Victor Turner (1982, 1986, 1990) and Marvin Carlson (1984, 1996) for that. I am more concerned with identifying what performance studies and contemporary performance are in order to recognize what behaviours go into theatre making. Furthermore, I would like briefly to draw attention to existing discourse around

performance conventions in order to identify the type of performance that I am dealing with in this study.

The act of 'performing' or 'to perform' can be understood as a way of 'being', 'doing', 'showing doing' and 'explaining showing doing' (Schechner, 2002:22). 'Being' is by its very nature, existence. 'Doing' is the active movement of all that exists. 'Showing doing' is performing: demonstrating, highlighting and displaying doing (Schechner, 2002:22). Performance, renowned for endeavouring, at times working to undermine convention, can provide a site for the exploration of new and alternative structures and patterns of behaviour. Whether performance within a culture serves most importantly to reinforce the convention of that culture or to provide a possible site of alternative assumptions is an on-going debate that provides a particularly clear example of the contested quality of performance analysis (Carlson, 1996:15). Although performance studies scholars use archives extensively – what is in books, photographs, reviews, the internet, archaeological records, historical remains, and any recorded data etc., their focal point is on the 'repertory', that is to say, what people do in their activity of doing it (Schechner, 2002:1). Drawing heavily on Schechner, I am most in agreement with his idea of performance studies dealing with behaviour – artistic, everyday, ritual and playful. As a field, performance studies is sympathetic to the avant-garde, the marginal, the unusual, the subversive, the abnormal, the queer, people of colour and the formerly colonized (Schechner, 2002:3). Two things here are critical for me: the first is the value of being very familiar with your research/performance subject and what it is they are doing. This familiarity is one of the tools of analysis I utilise. The second thing is that performance studies is on the side of those who are not always in a position of power or influence, those who have been previously neglected or silenced, for example African women (see pages 97-98). It is for these reasons that theatre professor Marvin Carlson points out that the intellectual, social and cultural concerns raised by most contemporary performance art works include what it means to challenge and relate to structures of power in life, the quest for contemporary autonomy and identity and the varying challenges of gender, race and ethnicity (Carlson, 1996:7).

Performance studies professor Henry Bial defines performance as a state of liminality, "an inbetweenness that allows for social norms to be suspended, challenged, played with and

perhaps even transformed” (Bial, 2004:27). Unquestionably the theatre makers I write about challenge social norms by exploring what may be considered unspeakable subjects – homosexuality, the shame of cultural self-loathing, experiences of xenophobia and linguistic humiliation. For it is through performance that we are able to find alternative ways of articulating what is otherwise unspeakable – all the while, re-figuring the past and playing precariously close to the edge of socially acceptable and conventional behaviours. English professor Jon McKenzie suggests that asking the broad question ‘what is performance?’ holds all the trappings of a forceful question that has one single answer. Instead, McKenzie suggests that we ask ‘which performance’ because the ‘which’ presupposes a multiplicity of forces that must be dynamically assessed (McKenzie, 2004:30). Asking ‘which’ demands that the referent be further identified and specified. This is productive when dealing with contemporary performance modes in Africa, where the theory on performance is perhaps not as well documented. Asking ‘which’ suggests that performance is not only acknowledged but also particularized even when, and especially when, numerous dialogues are concurrently taking place. African performance is after all a space in which multiple and often simultaneous discourses occur (Drewal, 1991:2).

Contemporary performance draws on the live bodies of the performers for its materials, as well as multimedia, visual images, autobiographical material, narrative, dance, and music. The distinctiveness of the form relies a lot on atypical juxtapositions of incongruous, apparently unrelated images (such as ‘beautiful pain’ or ‘uncomfortable attachment’) and an open-endedness of form (Carlson, 1996:80). Turner asserts that performance probes into a community's weakness and desacralizes values and beliefs to which we attach too much importance. It also portrays characteristic conflicts, suggesting remedies for them and generally takes stock of its situation in a 'known' and 'unknown' world (Turner, 1982:9). The ‘*desacralizing*’ of cherished ideals offers an opportunity to unearth painful material and subjects in *A Face Like Mine*, *Ingcwaba*, *Hatched* and *Huroyi Hwangu*. Bearing this in mind then, the ways in which these theatre makers communicate is not limited to words – pain is not expressed through verbal language or symbol alone. Performative communication, as Victor Turner notes, uses a wide sensory range to relay its message (Turner, 1982:12).

The point of theorising the territory of performance is so that it is not forgotten that I am in reality writing about imagined creative works, twice-behaved behaviours and not real life. This becomes tricky when the inherently painful material is authentic and is performed with and on real bodies. Furthermore the idea of separation or disentangling becomes even more complicated when dealing with theatre makers who both conceptualize and perform their own works. Bleeker quotes poet William Butler Yeats' famous line from the poem *Among School Children*: "how can we know the dancers from the dance" (Yeats quoted in Bleeker, 2008:80). This question is apt with regard to the contemporary stage, where bodies and other signifiers seem to rupture or shatter any illusion with regard to dramatic structure "in order to present 'themselves' instead of functioning as a sign for something else" (Bleeker, 2008:80). Accordingly how do we know the theatre maker from the performer and consequently, how do we know the person from the predicament? I suppose we don't really. When we enter the performance space we assume that what we are watching are fictive creations and that is indeed the case. However the subject matter, the material presented, is deeply personal that it is not a mistake to think that theatre makers are, at times, simply presenting themselves. The slippage is subtle so that the distinction between theatre maker, performer and character is unclear. Feminist scholar Peggy Phelan remarks: performance is on one hand attached to the corporeal, "the body Real", and on the other hand, the "psychic Real" (the spiritual and intuitive) (Phelan, 1993:167). While Scarry argues that pain asserts the truth of the body (Scarry, 1985:4).

I want to mention what Scarry says pain is, in order to emphasise what pain is not in the performances that will be discussed because we must not lose sight of the fact that I am discussing practised, imagined creations. These skilled theatre makers and performers have developed techniques and expertise that enables them to create an illusion of pain and suffering – caused by external or internal factors – without actually inflicting physical pain on their own bodies (Fischer-Lichte, 2005:5). Scarry declares that narratives of pain are problematic because pain is not its description in the sense that real physical pain defies description (Scarry, 1985:4). Consequently then, pain is what it is, across a particular body at a particular time...a description or representation of it is something else, something removed from it (4). In other words, the representation of pain, the performance of pain, can never be that pain, it is a re-enactment. Bearing this in mind then, the most fitting way to put in

plain words the kind of performance in my analysis is to say that these are not performances of pain per se but pained subjects performing. I do believe and wish to iterate though, that the subjects' pain comes from an authentic place, particularly when we enter the territory of autobiographical performance. It comes down to truthful intention. Illustrious performance artist Marina Abramovic maintains that performing, as opposed to acting, is real, in that, you immerse yourself with unabashed commitment (in Stiles et al., 2008:25). It is this kind of fearless commitment that saw Moyo viewing the physical challenge of performing *Composition Z: House of Stone* as a necessary rite of passage: "The bruises and cuts I sustained from the strenuous physicality of performance became like my own involuntary scarification as I returned to rub more blue make-up into the wounds each night" (Moyo, 2009:58).

Abramovic pioneered the performance art movement by using the body as an instrument and as the main means of visual communication by enduring physical pain to conjure forth psychic pain. In her work the body serves "as a witness to history and a vehicle for offering corporeal testimony to psychological, social, cultural and political experience" (Stiles et al., 2008:34). Despite the different aesthetic intentions that Abramovic works with, the principle and point of entry is the same as for my subjects. However Abramovic is actually inflicting physical pain on herself, which is not what my subjects do. Here a boundary must be drawn between the semiotic and the real body of the actor. "It is the semiotic body which brings forth the expression of suffering, while the phenomenal body does not actually suffer" (Fischer Lichte, 2005:4). I am talking about a performance art in which the pain is semiotic to embody a real emotional pain related to past, identity and memory.

I am interested in this notion of 'being' within theatre making and the duality that it presents in South Africa; where, with the very act of 'being', comes a set of variables. 'Being' for the theatre maker is accompanied by the inconsistency, unsettledness and ambiguity of identity. 'Being' is the predicament, but also what makes performance stimulating, for there is also beauty in the journey of exploring the potential of what 'being' can be in 21<sup>st</sup> century South Africa. The formidable task that the theatre makers face, the hand they have in the project of recovery, is one inherited from when South Africa first experienced liberation from a turbulent past. The theatre makers' duty is not to resolve the disorder, but to recompose it.

The sense of responsibility felt in the project of nation building and settlement also fills one with anxiety (De Kock, 1998:61). But let us not confuse these theatre makers with martyrs, nor self-appointed righters of history's wrongs, nor guardians of South Africa's crypt of pain, nor are they necessarily reinventing what performance is or should be. What they are doing is lending their voices to the project of uncovering the disparities and complexities of the 'now moment' in a fearless way. They are doing the kind of work that is not easy to do but must be done because it is rooted in shared experience, yet these are the experiences that their contemporaries are not dealing with, and if they are, not in the same way. There is a change in the way the telling of pain is treated and a common development in the kinds of subjects that are broached, even if treatment of these subjects is different. This will be carefully examined in the next section.

## CHAPTER FOUR: UNCOMFORTABLE ATTACHMENTS

“Find the edge between social relevance, your truth...and make that beautiful.” –Asanda Phewa, 2011

This chapter is a deliberation of uncomfortable attachments beginning with a reflection on emotions in the ‘now moment’. Following which I will explain and interpret uncomfortable attachments using unsettlement and anxiety as symbolic and performed symptoms of the ‘beautiful pain syndrome’. This section also looks at intuitive symptoms of the syndrome examining acts of the body, the voice and the visceral behaviour we see revealed in the works. These symptoms/acts include hysteria, vocality, ‘the cry’ and nostalgic hallucination.

### Emotions in the ‘now moment’

The ‘beautiful pain syndrome’ is a cultural predicament uncovered, exhibited and made manifest by the theatre maker through an aesthetic (and here aesthetic encompasses imaginative creation and beauty) elucidation of painful subjects and material. Accordingly the ‘beautiful pain syndrome’ is grounded in emotion and feeling. Affect is the overarching conceptual term under which my discussion of emotion falls in theoretical research but in my study ‘emotion’ is not a substitute term for affect. This is a study of emotion and as I pointed out in the Affect section (see pages 45-47), an analysis of emotion can be problematic precisely because emotions are unpredictable and unfixed. Instead of seeing this as an impediment though, let us consider this to be an opening because in the ‘now moment’, a fixation on emotion is stimulating and restorative. Emotions are/ may be the way in which we navigate through theories and perceptions of the past, art, and lived experience. On the other hand, there has been criticism for shifting our interest to erratic things like emotions, in those paradigms in which important factors like ‘power’ and ‘ideology’ feature prominently (Berlant, 2004:445). Also with discussions of emotions, there is a tendency to make assumptions and misinterpret some emotions as collective which is not always the case (Berlant, 2004:447). This is particularly relevant in a South African context in which power and ideology have greatly affected the way we understand emotion; particularly the challenge of separating ourselves from collective ideologies or oppressive authority, which was dealt with earlier.

So really, what is the big issue with talking about emotions? If anything, it represents a turn to the human. Emotions become most heightened when discussing everyday experiences and situations – related to politics, family, government, religion, or art. Thus it would seem that emotions are not solitary things. They bring us towards the other/others, even if that ‘other’ happens to be the feeling individual self – in a way that paradoxically promotes self-stability (Berlant, 2004:449). Indeed emotions can be a very social and public thing, as we saw in the TRC. They can be celebratory – for example South Africa winning the 2010 FIFA world cup bid and the public euphoria that accompanies such events, or exceedingly destructive: for instance the brutal 2008 Xenophobic attacks, or the 2012 public outrage over the President’s exposed genitals in an artwork<sup>20</sup>. Berlant theorizes the sociality and affect of emotions, noting that collective social responses revive what cultural theorists call the “history of the present” (2004:450). While she acknowledges the changeability of emotions, she also draws attention to how fruitful emotion can be. Thus, Berlant uses the phrase “collective attachment” and describes this theory as a show of optimism, demonstrating how emotions can bring individuals together (2004:450).

But what if it is not just optimism that brings people together, but rather, shared and identifiable unsettlement and anxiety – uncomfortable attachments? These latter are the common sentiments in the creative works examined in my investigation. It is the struggle within a liminal condition, that place of in-betweenness, a rupture of selfhood and identity, which has these subjects crying out “I am troubled”. In *Ingcwaba*, the young daughter says to her troubled mother: “I will look and search in the dark, waiting, being strengthened by the pain of the disappearing answer” (Mbothwe, 2009b). It is a rupturing that acts as a prompt to search for answers. It is the pain of unsettlement, the discomfort of grasping in the dark for reaction. It is what we call beautiful that urges the mind to travel back, to seek patterns, attachments and answers, in order to move forward into new acts of assemblage, to bring new things to light even when the stimulus is pain (Scarry, 1999:30). Beauty is an interpretive tool; it aids us in the business of searching not only for answers but for meaning as well. Roger Scruton asserts that “art moves us because it is beautiful, and it is beautiful in

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<sup>20</sup>Artist Brett Murray in his infamous painting “The Spear” depicts a likeness to South Africa’s president, Jacob Zuma in a Lenin-style pose exposing his genitals. The painting was divisive, inciting much political and racial debate leading to several arrests and a defamation lawsuit.

part because it means something. It can be meaningful without being beautiful; but to be beautiful it must be meaningful” (Scruton, 2009:99). The girl in *Ingcwaba* is defiant in her search for answers, she shouts to her mother: “My life is a riddle, I’m searching for meaning” (Mbothwe, 2009b). In searching for answers, the girl is not alone. Phewa, in *A Face Like Mine* finds her answer in the extraordinarily banal. She resorts, or perhaps even reverts, to being ‘the maid’ because the anxiety and burden of being anything else proves too much to bear: “What this? This is my fantasy! This dress gives me an identity. Definite rules laid out for me to follow. I become part of a struggle” (Phewa, 2008a). For Phewa it is better, in fact a relief, not to have to struggle on her own but to be part of a suffering collective in which she can shirk the burden of endlessly grappling for answers, for her place; and rather rest content by settling for a predetermined identity. The beautiful pain of her situation leads her to a new act, one that sees her exchanging who she wants to be for who it is easier to become – a maid. It is resolution of a sort, and she is sure that she can learn to appreciate the merit in that chosen identity. However for the seer, the pain of her resignation is glaring. As though she were trying to convince herself in the final moments of the production, she says:

I’d be admired. Accomplished because I worked so hard to be so ‘well spoken’ and ‘not like the rest’. I’d be part of the maids too because we’d all have a common interest in our suffering and hard life. I’d be one of those that do all the special classes like First Aid, or table-laying and take courses on how to make French sounding meals. I could deal with that. I could deal with people not wanting to look at me or despise me because of the guilt I remind them of. It’s so much easier than being Nelson’s dream because...no one thought that his dream would have *A Face Like Mine* (Phewa, 2008a).

Ahmed uses a theory of ‘affective economies’ to explore the social influence of emotions beyond interiority, paying greater attention to the exterior effect they have on public discourse and collective belonging. She writes:

[...] Emotions *do things*...Rather than seeing emotions as psychological dispositions, we need to consider how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective (Ahmed, 2004:119).

Indeed emotions do things, they are active and dynamic. They not only dwell dormant in the mind and body – they cause individuals to act. This resolves the matter of judging emotions as formless and fickle, because in this study, emotions *do things* – they become the basis for performance and reaction.

Nyamza's *Hatched* depicts the level of liveliness and potency that the body can exhibit in the doing of emotion. The erratic, rapid changeability of her emotional state is the apotheosis of unsettlement; a woman struggling with her emplacement between different positions, neither of which she occupies with any sense of completion; a woman struggling to give birth to her new self and dying to be reborn. Her devastating and exquisite motion lends itself to the impulsive emotionality of a woman searching for the 'disappearing answer' through broken movement. As Nyamza frees herself from the enveloping skirt, there is seemingly nothing comfortable about her liberation. Although she is fully unravelled and the skirt has fallen to the ground, still she writhes and kicks to get the restrictive skirt off. As she crawls out of it, we are reminded of the opening image. Here we see the bird-like creature we saw at the beginning, she jolts, alternately jerking and contracting rhythmically. She pivots from her centre, following an impulse that sweeps through her. Her shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, head, neck, legs and feet are moving. Every movement is new and apparently unknown but there is very little that is exciting about this unknown. Instead the movements feel hesitant and daunting. Nyamza eventually brings herself to a position where she attempts to stand; she does so quickly, getting on to her feet *en pointe*. From her torso upwards she furiously uses her arms and hands waving and swatting away at her face, there is panic and alarm in her movement. From her waist down the movement is contained, her feet are steady as they move from the left to the right *en pointe* and then she stumbles. She continues to swat away at her face, torso and head as if ridding herself of a kind of itchiness or some great disturbance. She raises her arms slowly while her hands hang limp at the wrist, almost as though she were going to take off. As her hands move above her head she quickly and unexpectedly goes into first position. As she comes out of first position, she slowly begins to turn in a full circle, coming back around to face the audience. Again she takes up her furious jerky, jolty arm/hand gestures, swatting away at her face; moving in between this gesture and an *arabesque*, she moves agitatedly, ripping the red garments from the clothesline. Nyamza moves her emotionally heightened body with an active anger, with a feverish passion. What she shows here is that performance serves as an intervention that articulates the materiality of our emotions.

The way we can identify with the unpredictable and erratic features of emotions is by realizing that they are not exclusively located in objects, bodies or symptoms but that they

move amid and between these things (Ahmed, 2004:120). Emotions are malleable and change as we associate with impressions of home, locale and country, or concepts of the masculine, the feminine, flesh, and skin colour. Let us consider emotions to be locomotive moving to the left, right, up, down and sideways through unsettlement and anxiety. That is why emotions can also move backwards. Sentiment drives the person having the emotional response to look to the past because “repression always leaves its trace in the present--hence ‘what sticks’ is also bound up with the ‘absent presence’ of historicity” (Ahmed, 2004:120). Ahmed describes this absence of historicity as about “being not quite present rather than, as with anxiety, being nowhere at all” (2004:120).

Berlant and Ahmed call attention to the movement of emotions – emotions bring people together, they are shared and they do things. This is the “I know what you are going through”, emotional contribution from spectators that Phewa speaks of. This is the sense of pathos shared by her audiences (black and white) around South Africa and even in Europe as she revealed to me some the responses she received to *A Face Like Mine* (2011). We must consider emotions to be dynamic, actively involving and connecting us with people, symptoms and things. They are not always positive even when possession of them is affirming. And just as quickly as emotions connect us to/with people, they can also fill us with a sense of detachment, loneliness and retreat – a state that can intensify when emotions are left unspoken and begin to fester. Perhaps this is what Moyo is admitting to as she shares her diary entries on the days before the conception of *Compositions* when she suffered a real-life emotional and psychological breakdown, which not only saw her being hospitalized, but catalysed her decision to create *Compositions* in order to get to the bottom of the sense of otherness that was troubling her. She speaks of the development of her authorial voice in her confession:

It [her authorial voice] was fed by the anxiety that remained after my disappointing experiences of group therapy and individual cognitive analysis, which both failed to remedy or address the prolonged sense of displacement that I could not seem to outgrow. It flourished in this liminal space, but then seemed to recede into safety once I had emerged again from my artificial chrysalis, still feeling a little unprepared to face the world of super complexity (Moyo, 2009:74).

By all accounts then, engaging quite actively and deliberately in emotionality for Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa is to deal with these emotions because not doing so is

unproductive and detrimental but also in sharing comes the realization that sharing is a restorative act. There is also communality and release in the realization that 'I am not alone in this feeling', and finally, the body in performance articulates the materiality of our emotions where words are sometimes inadequate.

In this study, pain, beauty, and the emotions which these sentiments or aesthetics evoke, *do things*. Pain is the driver and beauty is the vehicle. Pain is a sentiment, a sense, a feeling. Beauty elicits a sentiment, a sense, a feeling and is stimulated by such. Here, performance relies on the ability of beautiful symbolic arrangements to materialize experiences that can be described in relation to painful sentiments. Pain is a consequence and at the same time, a motivation; a consequence of *becoming aware* in these works, a motivation for actively engaging with fractured identity and circumstance. The aestheticization of pain is a meaning-making tool. Another way to say this is that beauty is intermediary because beauty can be found in and through works of pain, since it is the theatre maker who "carves pain into the ears of the uncaring and converts the rustiness of pain into the ripeness of rebirth for society" (Launko, 2000:viii). It is not just performing emotions that bring the works together in my analysis but also, shared and identifiable unsettlement and anxiety – uncomfortable attachments.

### **Uncomfortable Attachments**

Uncomfortable attachments pervade these works and are felt by the seer. Uncomfortable attachments are the emotional, material and corporeal symptoms of the 'beautiful pain syndrome'. In these contemporary South African performance works, uncomfortable attachments – unsettlement and anxiety – exist at the same time in the same place, tumultuously interfacing with one another. These uncomfortable attachments can be considered to be vocabularies of feeling or languages of emotion – expressions that are underpinned by feelings of pain, anger and shame – conveyed by a confounding beauty (De Kok, 1998:60). There always seems to be a degree of disorder. I am not suggesting that other people around the world are somehow more certain, but that a series of events and circumstances has affected the way South African-based theatre makers connect to certain things, people and symbols in the 'now moment'. Uncomfortable attachments are those

things that must be brought to consciousness by being performed and from now on, made known...no matter how uncomfortable, the need to do so is paramount. Uncomfortable attachments present a conundrum in the present day, this kind of attachment does not sit well, it is irksome and there is a lack of ease and security. This echoes the kind of ambiguity that defines this 'now moment'. There is a sense of uncertainty in the citizens of the country having to re-negotiate their positioning in contemporary South Africa and these theatre makers are left charting their identities and current situation. Unsurprisingly then, South Africans may feel a sense of unsettlement.

## **Unsettlement**

The act of unsettling suggests a disturbance, an interruption. By definition to unsettle is to "disturb, discompose, disconcert, to deprive of fixity or quiet" (Brown, 1993:3508). The type of pain that is explored in this study concerns itself with the disturbance and disconcertion of the mind and emotions. Thus uncomfortable attachments present feelings of unease, the kind of dis-ease that is painful but elicits a reflexive connection from its afflicted. This word 'reflexive' connotes affect: an automatic impulse in the task of *doing* emotion, this kneejerk response suggests an inherent instinct that becomes an active way of navigating an uncertain present. What is being performed is an act of unsettlement, emerging as a result of incomplete selfhood. This unsettlement arrives partly as a result of not knowing one's place (or 'self') in the present and resultantly one experiences feelings of liminality. Krueger expresses interest in examining representations of, and reactions to, the loss or lack of a clear unity of self. He presents a paradoxical binary in the way we understand identity and individuality in contemporary South Africa. Is the foregrounding of selfhood and the privileging of individuality necessarily restorative? Is our perception of contemporary identities as unpredictable, undefined a sign of crisis, or can we regard the prospect of intrinsic transformation as a sign of health (Krueger, 2010:4)? By inference individuality is defined by separation, having to renounce one's sense of association, of belonging, and this may be a potentially painful undertaking (Krueger, 2010:15). Theatre makers explore what it is like to walk around as pieces without a clear unity of self. To occupy such an unsettling position of liminality and in-betweenness makes it difficult, but necessary, to identify with individual identity. This is what Nyamza, Phewa and Moyo are busying themselves doing,

particularly through re-negotiating what contemporary black womanhood is and the responsibility of the young black female theatre maker to comment on this, although such identifications are unsettling and destabilizing. Thus black womanhood is undergoing its own rite of passage.

## **Unsettling Black Womanhood**

As a black woman, any time I write about black womanhood which, of course, is not homogeneous, I vacillate. Not in my intention or purpose but because of the implications, rationale and effect I may have. This subject is close to me and I am familiar with it. The personal stakes are therefore high, and as a result, I am always vigilant. The two words, black woman, placed alongside one another, seem to be contentious. There are many misconceptions, cultural myths and stereotypes about black women in South Africa. Understanding what being a young black woman in contemporary South Africa is, perhaps involves understanding the nature of traditional African societies, taking into account the assimilation of women in the world of male authority, cultural dominance and control over sexuality by way of marriage (Kshama, 1989:35). Add to that the socio-economic structure that is male dominated then, without a doubt, for centuries black South African women have been oppressed.

Nevertheless women being marginalized and subjugated for centuries is not unique to black women. Moreover the absence of female voices (in comparison to their male counterparts) in the literary and theatrical world has been a universal problem. White South African director Claire Stopford draws attention to this predicament:

There were few parts for women, few plays that reflected my experience of being a woman, and many male critics who to my mind were limited in their view of what makes 'good theatre'. While my experience of sexism and a male dominated world cannot fairly be compared with the kind of oppression experienced by the black population under apartheid at the time, I passionately resisted this feeling of exclusion and invisibility (Stopford, 2013:5).

Militant South African feminist, Phumla Gqola in her thesis *Black Woman, you are on your own* (1999), outlines the conventional roles assigned to black women, which are relevant to the tensions expressed in Nyamza and Phewa's work. Gqola is examining the dominant images of black women presented in the first five years of *Staffrider* magazine – a magazine

established March 1978 that grew to be a formidable representation of the South African literary and cultural world (Gqola, 1999:ii). *Staffrider* concerns itself mostly with short stories written in the English language and most of the writers in those years were men. Of Gqola's observations the most pertinent are the stereotypical roles afforded to black women: the black woman's position is inconsequential and she is denied the means to voice her own anxieties. Those that are domestic workers are seen as extensions of their masters, helpless and incapable of speaking out (Gqola, 1999:137). Their portrayal is limited to the binaries of wholesomeness or wickedness, never possessing any agency. When black women overstep restrictions of 'good' sexual conduct for women, they are castigated and seen as immoral. (Gqola, 1999:143). Often, the encounters between black women and white men are described in a sexualised manner (Gqola, 1999:179).

Feminist writers like Ama Ata Aidoo (1970, 1999), bell hooks (1981, 1984, 2000), Patricia Hill-Collins (2000, 2005, 2006), Elaine Aston (1994, 2007, 2007, 2008), Alice Walker (1983, 1984, 1993) and Phumla Dineo Gqola (1999, 2010) draw attention to and challenge such stereotypes while feminist critics and philosophers like Sue-Ellen Case (1988, 1990, 1996, 2009), Judith Butler (1990, 1993, 2004), Simone de Beauvoir (1972), Luce Irigaray (1985, 1989, 1993, 2004), Helene Cixous (1986, 2008) theorize about gender, the female body, sexuality and feminine identities. Discourses initiated by these feminist thinkers are performatively carried through with fervour by black woman theatre makers like Phewa and Nyamza in the 'now moment'. After centuries of dealing with stereotypes that see African women being depicted as stoical and compliant to all discrimination, as down-trodden, degraded, poor, barefoot, bucket-on-her-head, baby-on-her-back and servile, the time has come to wrestle against stereotypes and explore what contemporary associations of black womanhood are. Phewa and Nyamza play within the boundaries of these archetypes which they work at turning on their heads. Now it is about the "deconstruction of prevailing ideas about gender, race and sexuality, offering alternatives to the so-called 'norms'" (Goddard, 2007:54). These works are provocative, and challenge racist and hetero-sexist theories, producing new meanings (Goddard, 2007:54). "Phewa performs the 'sources' informing a fragmented sense of self through staged images, these images are informed by familiar discourses about black womanhood, from the historical to the popular, and expose the 'unspoken', pervasive but apparently invisible discourse of whiteness" (Flockemann,

2011a:168). Nyamza confronts issues of sexuality, motherhood and marriage within her female identity. In the same way that social norms that favoured men were uniformly part of socialization, black woman now are establishing new standards, new ways of being that depict the multifaceted identities that constitutes black womanhood. The black woman theatre maker is no longer dependent on those who are too readily disposed to defend, look after, safeguard and speak on her behalf in the 'now moment'. As often as not, such people are neither black nor women.

We do not have to venture far to see that history, art, popular culture and even music is satiated with examples of the black woman as a subject of romanticization, fetishization and of commodification, not only in Africa but in the USA as well, as evident in iconographic images and stereotypes such as 'Mammy'.

The mammy image is central to intersecting oppressions of race, gender, sexuality and class. Regarding racial oppression, controlling images like the mammy aim to influence Black maternal behaviour...Mammy is the public face that Whites expect Black women to assume for them...The mammy image is one of an asexual woman, a surrogate mother in blackface whose historical devotion to her White family is now giving way to new expectations. Contemporary mammies should be completely committed to their jobs...The mammy typifies the Black mother figure in White homes (Hill-Collins, 2000:80-83).

Whilst South African black women and African American women might have aspects in common, Phewa is referencing South African black women when the protagonist in *A Face Like Mine* gallantly declares:

I'm not the loud and jolly round-faced *Sisi* from next door. My being is not defined by poverty and struggle. I am poor, but that does not define who I am, my reality, nor who I ought to be. My voice therefore does not rest in the fact that I am poor, nor should that be the standard combination of our identity as a people...a black people. This does not mean I should be lacking in the fluency of English or the comprehension of it (2008a).

The reason I even mention the American parallel is that in this particular context, Phewa uses '*Sisi*' to refer to the demeaning adaptation of 'sister,' a junior version of 'mama' ('mother') which in domestic work is one of the most established tropes of black womanhood; in similar vein to 'mammy' (Johnson, 2003:105). In *A Face like Mine*, '*Sisi*' is nameless and perpetually cheerful suggesting that she is, in some manner, impervious to her disenfranchisement. This is not to be confused with the way that '*Sisi*' is often used in Xhosa

culture as a polite way to address a 'sister', whether biological or by companionship, or perhaps a woman who is slightly older as a sign of respect. Where Phewa's hypothesis is problematic is, if we question whether the 'jolly *Sisi* next door who struggles' is something to be disparaged? Does this not imply that one is looking through a white, upper class lens? So really what is Phewa trying to achieve here? This is perhaps evidence of her real-life negotiation of unsettlement in black womanhood, reflected in her creative work.

This last passage I have quoted from Phewa is loaded and I would like to get to the heart of this because Phewa is not alone in this quandary. Paradoxically it is precisely the notion of the 'new black woman' that leaves Phewa unsettled, and has her suggesting that she is occupying a 'nowhere', both in her real life and as the protagonist she plays in *A Face Like Mine*, until she chooses where and who to be at the end of the production (but certainly not in her real life). The way that I understand and position myself on this complex issue is through the lens of ambivalence. Uncomfortable attachments in performance bring to mind a kind of emotional disturbance symptomatic of Grehan's explication of ambivalence. My approach to observing this work is also ambiguous, because like the theatre maker and the materials that are being performed, I (the seer/hearer/researcher) am also a casualty of a turbulent past and an uncertain present by virtue of being South African. Grehan explicates the unsettling nature of ambivalence by asserting that it is a:

form of radical unsettlement, an experience of disruption and interruption in which the anodyne is challenged (2009:22). Ambivalence is a key aspect of contemporary life. Instead of seeing ambivalence as something that leads to stasis or inertia, it should be re-imagined as an unsettling and productive space (2009:34).

Thus the troubling image created by Phewa is evidence of her own unsettlement. She is negotiating her role as part of the predicament while trying to shed light on the predicament. She highlights her imperfections as a product of history, background, upbringing and circumstance while trying to 'settle' within a changing black female identity. In my conversation with Phewa, she spoke of an audience reaction to *A Face Like Mine* from a group that she was especially nervous to perform for. The anecdote emphasizes the ambiguity of Phewa's own black middle class positioning, which might be unintentionally disparaging of those who are not of a similar class, not as an indication of superiority but as a result of deep self-consciousness. She talked about performing her production for a

predominantly black Xhosa speaking audience; young people who were booked to see Mbothwe's production *Ingcwaba* at the University of Cape Town's Drama department (which is in isiXhosa) for school study purposes. When attending Mbothwe's production, they heard that Phewa's production would be performed shortly after, and they all decided to stay on to watch. Phewa recalls being surprised by their response after her show. As a so-called 'middle class black with middle class issues', she felt her anxieties and troubles were inconsequential compared to what these young learners have to contend with being from the township. She says, "I felt embarrassed and ashamed about complaining about my issues in light of what they face" (Phewa, 2011). Phewa is perhaps being presumptuous because living in the township does not automatically make you some kind of sufferer. There is a disconnection in this kind of thinking, yet it is also an accurate reflection of certain prevailing attitudes. This kind of inadvertent detachment is also a manifestation of the difficulty of contemporary blackness and the scarce attention that is paid to intra-black dynamics and conflicts, which are seldom if ever tackled and fleshed out. These stories of intra-racial anxiety and schisms between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' have hardly been addressed in contemporary South Africa. However they cannot be ignored because not only are these conflicts the remnants of apartheid that Phewa is speaking to, but she is also addressing the effects of colonisation –that still troubles present-day South Africa. In an attempt to propagate mistreatment and exploitation:

the coloniser not only creates a system to repress the cultural life of the colonized people; he also provokes and develops the cultural alienation of a part of the population, either by so-called assimilation of indigenous people, or by creating a social gap between the indigenous elites and the popular masses (Cabral, 1993:57).

This gap is the cause of misinterpretation, feelings of detachment or separation in this 'now moment'. For individuals like Phewa, being black middle-class, and raised in a 'privileged' environment could persuade her to consider herself 'less black', 'less real' or 'authentic' than someone who may have grown up in the townships. She remarks:

When I go to Durban for instance, there's a certain way that a 26 year old Zulu girl is expected to be, and I'll never be that because of the way that I've grown up. I can't be that. I'm still in the process of negotiating who I am and who I hope to be. And the person that I hope to be is someone who is able to **be**...wherever they are (Phewa, 2011).

Phewa's performance adds to the "already complex, democratic South African social fabric." Hers emerges as the "voice of the post-apartheid, black, middle-class" child of advancement and transformation who identifies "with neither traditional African nor apartheid-era logic" (Lewis, 2010:277). Phewa recalls that as she was packing up her set after the same show, she found some learners waiting behind, a few of whom thanked her effusively and shared with her how moved they were by her story (2011). They shared with her that their parents do not understand what they have to deal with living in the township and then going to school in the city, consequently, they too are faced with the challenge of having to negotiate two worlds. The dichotomy of that divide is painful and unsettling for them and so they could identify with similar issues of ambivalence that Phewa addresses in *A Face Like Mine*.

As a black South African contemporary theatre maker in her 20s, Phewa is no longer under the colonizer's oppressive gaze, but in this 'now moment', blackness resides in the liminal space of the psyche where its manifestation is neither completely liberated nor entirely without agency, because blackness is indeterminate (Fleetwood, 2011:20). Phewa cannot avoid race talk and her protagonist propagates this in declaring: "I feel the loss of self because in reality, neither 'black' nor 'white' allows me the space and patience to be myself" (2008a). Phewa attributes this quandary to being exposed to a "greater palette of black" (2008b). For the reason that apartheid was racist and spread racist views whereas Black Consciousness spread a view of black essentialism, the 'now moment' shows us that there is no such concept as a complete or definitive black identity. Being black no longer equates with a uniform political or economic status.

It is not my intention to expose, challenge or to make Phewa even more self-conscious. Rather I want to highlight the struggle she and many others like her face. The burden of wrestling with redefining blackness confuses already complex issues of identity. It seems as though one is thrashing about in one's own head, navigating the depths of selfhood with all these loaded, personal and historic signifiers to consider. It is deeply confusing and unsettling and sometimes it is ugly and shameful but it is no longer an option to hide our discomfort, we must expose ourselves. The struggle continues and Phewa says of her identity issues: "I will have these issues for a long time still. As long as there are still these preconceptions of what a black African woman should be" (2011).

This territory claimed by black womanhood and black woman theatre makers has been a long time coming and continues to gain prominence. Black American scholar Ann DuCille expounds on the commodification of black womanhood by derisively stating that black women are billed as these “romanticized exotic, mythic black artist” figures (DuCille, 1996:83). In her analysis, DuCille sardonically terms this phenomenon “the occult of true black womanhood” within her concerns about the ‘critical stampede’ involving black women (81). DuCille claims that she, as a black woman, began to think of herself as some kind of sacred text because of all of the attention suddenly being paid to black women in the academy. It seems as if, when ‘othering’ and explorations of racial and gender alterity became a hot commodity in academia, it declared black womanhood its most important signifier (82). It is not just ‘others’; but black women are also culpable of ‘othering’ ourselves as Phewa does.

Nyamza and Phewa purposely play within the limits of the loaded signifiers of gender and race, in order to shed light on them and subsequently supplant them. Exoticization and romanticization might be at the forefront of our minds in viewing these works but it is executed in such a way that compels a dialectic, so that we are not immobilised or even worse, going backward. Rather, Phewa and Nyamza take the contention surrounding black womanhood and use it as a way to tell you what black womanhood is not. This is why Phewa’s protagonist can on one hand assert: “calling me a coconut<sup>21</sup> would suggest I have secret longings or want in earnest to be white. I do not. I am not” and then shortly after, in an unpredictable turn, re-assert: “today, I’m going to be a white girl. I’m going to wake up and lo and behold, I’ll be white” (2008a). It is about exposing all sides of the convolution of emotionality that contemporary black womanhood must contend with. In their respective works Phewa and Nyamza are saying, ‘you have no idea about the new unexplained positions that we are dealing with’. In this manner, black womanhood is gaining an altered sense of cultural currency and academic capital – it now belongs to the subject and the concerns are new even when they are manipulated and shaped by old concerns.

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<sup>21</sup> Coconut here is used as a derogatory slang term to describe a Black person who forgoes their own culture in favour of adopting a so-called ‘white culture’. They are termed a coconut because like the fruit, they are brown on the outside and white on the inside.

Phewa and Nyamza are saying what has seldom been said in a way that has hardly ever been voiced. However, unsettlement within black womanhood is not only about looking for personal connection with and through other black women. This kind of unsettlement is also, perhaps equally so, about difference and individuality. This kind of theatre maker and theatre making is a site for disparity and polarization because black women 'writing or doing themselves' is disseminated through what Caribbean-American professor Carol Boyce Davies explicates as "migratory subjectivity" (Davies, 1994:36). "Migrations of the subject promotes a way of assuming the subject's agency" (36). Here, the black women subject is composed of several, sometimes conflicting identities. It is the "slipperiness" or "elsewhereness" of the subject that allows her to surpass and refuse subordination and control (Davies, 1994:36). "The subject is not just constituted, but in being constituted has multiple identities that do not always make for harmony" (36). This is also entanglement.

Women, particularly black South African women in performance, are realizing the importance of self-representation. The "minutiae of our everyday lives is the site at which these powerful complexities are lived out" (De La Rey, 1992:78). In her article "Culture, Tradition and Gender: let's talk about it", academic Cheryl De La Rey recognizes the importance of reflection on the personal being at the centre of our feminist convictions in South Africa (1992:78). Although dated, her viewpoint is still relevant. Nyamza, recognizing how tradition and culture has moulded her life and identity, depicts significant and recognizable stages, which are represented by specific behaviours and rites of passage, across different cultural identities: birth, puberty and adolescence, career, sexuality and sexual relationships. In *Hatched* Nyamza explores womanhood and motherhood in connection to patriarchal convention. Within this exploration of womanhood, notions of sexuality are contained. Contained in Nyamza's portrayal of motherhood are ideas of gender identification: the 'butch' versus the 'femme' (see page 111 for more on this divide) and the anxiety and disorder of a traditionally enforced gender identity. *A Face Like Mine* shows a black woman's fragmented perception of 'self', examining the delicate relations and tensions between black women and white men, intra-black on black discrimination and how this enlightens one woman's outlook on her own femininity and identity. In dealing with these intimate subjects, Nyamza and Phewa demonstrate that an individual black woman can be empowered when her awareness regarding how she identifies herself, changes. It is this

awareness that inspires her to embark on the passage towards self-determination, even if this journey exists, at first, in her own mind. She may meet others along the way who are undertaking a similar journey -- even if these others are fictional figures or Black female creative paragons -- if she is fortunate enough, and together they can change prevailing and oppressive views of black womanhood (Hill-Collins, 2000:xi).

## **Migrant unsettlement and home**

For Moyo, what is already a convoluted black womanhood and black female theatre maker's transforming identity is continually placed in conflicted dialogue with her migrant position and deep-rooted ambivalence around her sense of home. Moyo has long been living in South Africa, unsettled and uprooted from her home and country of birth. It was playwright and storyteller Gcina Mhlope's *Have You Seen Zandile?* (1988), an autobiographical rite of passage work, that introduced Moyo to the possibilities of exploring her migrant self through narrative and aesthetic practice, presenting the prospect of self-invention (Moyo, 2009:18).

Obviously, I wanted to explore rites of passage in an urban African context and to use 'performance as a means of re-inventing and revitalizing [my] black female identity' (Moyo, 2007:2), a theme which I had explored in the past through the study of black women's autobiographical writing and performance, especially focusing on the work of South African storyteller Gcina Mhlophe, among others (Moyo, 2009:18).

This is not unique to Moyo. Davies notes that "the re-negotiating of identities is fundamental to migration as it is fundamental to Black women's writing in cross-cultural contexts" (Davies, 1994:3). Mhlope's *Have you seen Zandile?* is a 'coming of age' narrative dealing with the loss of family, place and language. Zandile is grappling with the loss of childhood, education and her grandmother's parenting, and finds herself thrust toward premature womanhood when she is still a young girl. The play is loosely based on the playwright's own experience of a disrupted childhood. It is a nostalgic longing for the stories and games of childhood as experienced in her grandmother's care, which is felt by both the title character and the author (Delisle, 2006:389). In *Have you seen Zandile?*, Mhlope is preoccupied with the traumatic rupture between past and present. The unsettlement that inclines one homeward, uproots the relation to the present by drawing one toward where one remembers feeling a sense of completeness and belonging; for Zandile this place is represented by her grandmother in Durban.

But for Moyo, unsettlement occurs on many levels and what has the most impact, which Phewa and Nyamza escape, is the problem of a nationalized 'otherness'. Moyo's latent and sometimes blatant experiences of xenophobia stimulate the tragic crisis of intra-black on black discrimination that I introduced earlier as affecting Phewa, in an entirely different way. The migrant's position is often one of unsettlement, whether it is through the state's restriction of an individual's freedom of movement, through a politicised African body or the violence that plays out when xenophobia erupts in certain societies. Within South Africa, *makwerekwere* is a derogatory term for black African migrants. The term suggests a person who does not confidently speak a South African language, and who has emigrated from a country believed to be economically backward and culturally different. "This migrant 'other' is generally believed to be the darkest of the dark-skinned, and less enlightened than their South African counterparts, even when more educated" (Nyamnjoh, 2006:39). Moyo recalls being subjected to this kind of unsettling racial stigmatization:

I can recall having once been called by this name [*kwerekwere*] (by a friend) at school soon after my arrival into the country. Though at first I did not know what the word meant, the experience impressed upon me the simple fact of my existence as an 'outsider' to the dominant South African national culture(s). This naming, although I understood it to be said in a playful manner, had the effect of making me severely aware of my body and appearance, and this new self-consciousness was of course compounded by my age (I was fourteen and was in the throes of adolescence). Although my experience of alienation was by no means as extreme as that of other migrants (I wonder how 'deep' my identity as a migrant runs?) it initiated a profound realisation that remained with me until it was finally explored in *Compositions*. For me, then, the displacement of migration will always be linked with the experience of being a young black woman, and when I speak of my migrant identity, I am also speaking of my racial, gendered, and cultural identities (Moyo, 2009:27).

To deny such an emotional contradiction of self in *Compositions*, Moyo opts to paint her entire body with blue makeup. As an immigrant, both language and the body are fundamental to her experiences of migration and the differences between 'insider' and 'outsider'. Dombo's combination of her 'blueness' and her gibberish give Moyo command over her own visceral language and she herself asserts "through this process of alienation my migrant 'outsider' body was able to temporarily transcend the racialized label of *makwerekwere*" (Moyo, 2009:59). Toni Morrison frequently if not compulsively constructs scenes of shame in her fiction by creating characters who when looked at or treated with derision or mockery by the shaming 'other', experience the inarticulateness and emotional

destruction of severe shame (Bouson, 2000:4). The way Moyo chooses to deny the shaming 'other' is through her blue-skinned protagonist and the gibberish language that she gives her.

Let me briefly turn to black womanhood, migrant identity and how this relates to impressions of home. Paradoxically, for the black female subject 'home' is sometimes a problematic space rather than a space of ease and comfort, in other words home can be a place of unsettlement, even if this is in retrospect. For instance, in *Hatched*, Nyamza shows the restrictions of being a wife and mother in the conventional manner that is expected of her. She is consumed by the red skirt and stifled by the clothesline. Here home space is rendered unsafe, not because she is in any real physical danger but because this destabilizes her latent sense of self. Davies argues that the image of home can be used to disrupt rather than affirm preconceived stable notions of female identity, such as ideas of domesticity (Davies, 1994:65). This is what happens at the end of *Hatched* when, in place of the red garments that initially filled the clothesline, we see the boy's drawings hung up on the clothesline. Together mother and son create their own image of what their domestic space is and will be.

In *Ingcwaba*, the mother figure (addressing her husband who has absconded) in a moment of anger and sadness at her ruptured state of homeplace says:

Have you even given yourself the chance to miss home? To remember home? Will you be able to soothe my soul when these bones and flesh are buried under the very soil you never watered. That you never tended to? In your wander-less travels, did you ever stop to cultivate the fruit that fed your family? (Mbothwe, 2009b).

Feminist author bell hooks maintains that the feelings attached to home are those of refuge and solidarity. She combines home and place and talks about 'homeplace'. Homeplace is a place often constructed by black women that becomes a safe place for black people to affirm one another and in doing so, repair many of the wounds caused for instance by racism. She clarifies that the task of making homeplace, of making home a community of resistance and struggle, has been shared by black women worldwide, especially black women in oppressive societies (hooks, 1990:42). What is clear from hook's and Davies is that whichever way you view it, homes offer a connection between our past and our present and our possible futures. They house our memories and reflect a sense of self (see pages 142-

150 for an exploration of the Moyo and Mbothwe and their performing subject's attachment to home). To lose a home is to lose a private museum of memory and identity, and to occupy a space of radical and devastating unsettlement (Miller, 2001:123). In *Ingcwaba* this is visibly demonstrated by one of the female performers (Nozenza). Holding a grass mat under her arm, Nozenza directs her monologue to the woman who is dressed in all white (we learn later that she is called Thembekile). As Nozenza delivers her text, the young daughter (a different female protagonist) stands on a makeshift box facing the projected backdrop and gestures throughout the monologue, slapping her hand against her head, shaking her head furiously from side to side and shaking her whole body. Unable to quietly exist in her present locale, Nozenza rejects the known in favour of her ancestry, what she believes to be her true origins and therefore, her real home. Nozenza continues on with a beautifully lyrical passage that ends in a listing of clan names:

I walked over the hills and mountains, crossing rivers, crossing fields. I asked the elders 'who am I'? Who birthed me? Where did they come from? My grandfathers tried to tell me in my dreams but I heard nothing. Other people swore at me, calling me a bastard. Others said that my father is different from theirs. Saying I had no history and no future. I asked the elders what all this meant. Instead, they fought like crocodiles. I heard them saying I am born of a woman. Ooradebe Oomila Oozanemvula Oogejana Oozula. I am the grandchild of Gcinumzi; born of John; born of Rhafu the eldest son of Ndingane from the plains of Tuku there at Tshefu alongside the Ngxuba river. I heard rumours that I am from the woman of the soil from the Tshonyane tribe. Onomawele Oosawa Oonxwabe Oompalo Oosizila Oopholwana nditsho mna Oonkomo from the Tweni village. Leave me to go. To carry my things back to my village back to my mother's village where I was raised, back to the amaHlubi village (Mbothwe, 2009b).

Nozenza repeats this last line in defeat, in melancholy, in pain of not knowing where she came from, where she believes her real home to be because the homebound longing of nostalgia suggests that one's contemporary place is, in some way, not 'homelike' enough (Pickering & Kehde, 1997:9). She walks to the centre of the stage and picks up a suitcase. She walks back to Thembekile who embraces her and comforts her broken spirit. Nozenza lays her head on Thembekile's lap who opens up her umbrella to cover herself and Nozena. Later they rise from their embrace and from the back of the stage we hear Thembekile repeatedly call out: "*Nozenza, masigoduke Nozenza*" (let's go home Nozenza) to an increasingly hysterical Nozenza (Mbothwe, 2009b). Nozenza replies: "Still leaning on your waist you tell me there is no turning back" (2009b)! Again Thembekile offers comfort, fighting spurned

advances; she goes in to embrace Nozenza affectionately calling her by her clan names that connect her to home. Nonzenza says in defiance: “I still swear by my father’s teaching that you chop leaves and drag them with you, that’s exactly what I’m doing” (2009b). Thembekile says: “A pigsty is not safe from rain but you will carry it kicking and screaming.” Nozenza retorts: “the only one who understands the road is the one who has travelled it, knowledge comes from the experience” (Mbothwe, 2009b). Nozenza then follows after Thembekile who has left her with ominous words that have unsettled her. The two are communicating mainly in idiom here and what is clear is that, it is the interruption of an established homeplace that leaves the subject in a state of unsettlement, on the threshold of hysteria always searching for answers and meaning.

The autobiographical account of black women is one of the ways in which concerns of home and separation are tackled. Home can be a place of comfort and security or a place of hostility and dislodgment, which serves as a site of oppression for women – as we see in *Hatched*. In these works, “the mystified notions of family and home are removed from their romantic, idealized moorings, to speak of pain, movement, difficulty, learning and love in complex ways” (Davies, 1994:21). As a result the multifarious notions of home echo the problematizing of identity and unsettlement.

### **Unsettlement and sexual identity**

Where Nyamza offers a completely different facet to unsettlement is through her exploration of the unsettlement of sexual identity in *Hatched*. The first version of *Hatched* that I saw featured performer Refiloe Mogoje. Mogoje sits topless underneath a tree braiding her hair. The strong female presence, and the absence of Nyamza’s son this time, heightens the crisis of sexuality especially since – I learned after the showing – that Nyamza is openly homosexual and most of her works deal with the problem of sexuality, sexual violence and gender in a patriarchal society. We see this in her works *Kutheni* (2009) and *I Stand Corrected* (2012). *Kutheni*, meaning ‘why’ in isiXhosa, is a brave movement piece that deals with homophobia in South Africa’s townships. In *Kutheni*, Nyamza presents a barefaced tribute to two lesbians, Sizakele Magasa and Salome Masooa of Meadowlands, who were murdered in Soweto on July 7, 2007 (Samuel, 2011:44). The performance depicts

two women who are in love and face an onslaught of hate and violence from their township community. One is raped and the other is beaten. The last few dance sequences show the broken women overcome by tears and pain as the lamentation hymn – a dirge of protest habitually sung during apartheid – ‘*Senzeni na?*’ (What have we done?), is sung. *I Stand Corrected* portrays two black lesbian lovers from two different countries, South Africa and England. The work is an artistic response to a pandemic of homophobia, trans-phobia, so-called corrective rape and murder in South Africa (particularly of black lesbians) and the strong anti-gay marriage campaign in Britain. Using a combination of physical theatre, dance, direct address of the audience and music, *I Stand Corrected* tells the story of a lesbian who rises from the dead, to play out the events leading to her brutal murder.

In *Shift* (2010), Nyamza explores sexual autonomy inspired by the murder of Eudy Simelane, a Banyana Banyana soccer player who was stabbed 25 times because she was ‘acting like a man’<sup>22</sup>. It pays homage to women in sport who are supposedly ‘too masculine’ and as a result, have to contend with harsh media scrutiny and discrimination for not being ‘feminine enough’. In *Shift*, Nyamza persuades her audience to freely pelt her with ping-pong balls. She later squeezes her oiled body into a white fridge that is positioned upstage right (Samuel, 2011:44). In all these works, Nyamza plays with notions of the masculine and the feminine both in behaviour and appearance. She consistently uses the body as text, using personal experience to investigate social topics such as domesticity, conventional roles for black women, sexuality and the commodification of the body (Samuel, 2011:44).

We cannot underestimate the courage it takes to be an openly gay black woman in South Africa, considering what the black South African lesbian has to face every day in an intolerant society, it is a profoundly unsettling and unsettled position. In Cape Town (already an historically segregated city), the townships are located on the outer reaches of the city and are growing rapidly in size. Being homosexual, specifically a Xhosa African homosexual, can be an unsafe and hostile experience in the township (Tucker, 2009:28). The so-called ‘un-Africaness of homosexuality’ is an on-going myth that has been proliferated and exacerbated by Black national leaders. Apartheid also affected the dynamics of sexuality in

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<sup>22</sup> Banyana Banyana is the South African national women’s football team.

South Africa because “apartheid ideology and spatial control not only limited the degree to which some African communities could maintain a history of same-sex desire but also because the ending of apartheid has only increased homophobia within Cape Town's former townships” (Tucker, 2009:29). Nyamza confronts her own sexuality alongside South Africa’s advancement of gay rights.<sup>23</sup> While the constitution asserts the rights of same sex couples in South Africa, in lived experience this is seldom the case, even though gay marriage was legally recognized in 2006. In fact in the last few years, there have been increasing reports of so-called corrective rapes and murders of black lesbians, especially those living in the townships.<sup>24</sup> However Nyamza discloses that although in her own community in Gugulethu she has never been victimized and is instead revered as somewhat of a local hero, she has sometimes felt unsafe and threatened in other South African townships (Nyamza, 2013).

In *Hatched* Nyamza’s passage to a chosen sexuality is performed through her embodiment of a series of recognizable though distinctive motifs: the archetypal image of the traditional Black woman, the Western ballerina, the dying swan and the ‘butch’, as against the ‘femme’ female. In *Feminist and Queer Performance: critical strategies*, feminist scholar Sue-Ellen Case discusses the mid-80s lesbian feminist movement and the butch-femme divide. What is interesting is her account of the lesbian feminist movement, which turned away from choosing a stringent position or an exact role to play: “Into a privileging of androgyny, or non-gendered, or non-patriarchal, or ‘natural’ styles as they insisted. When butch re-emerged out the other side, it did so with a vengeance -- so vengeful, in fact, that it associated its demeanour with the masculine rather than with styles among women” (Case, 2009:27-28). There is a similar pattern of gender defiance in *Hatched*. Nyamza vacillates between femme and butch, sometimes intermingling the two, but as the work concludes, we notice a clear choice being made; she leans strongly towards the masculine.

*Hatched* engages with issues of custom, ritual and sexuality for the contemporary Xhosa woman, and her navigation within and beyond patriarchal constraints. Nyamza’s sentient body serves as a tool for expression of this largely hitherto suppressed discourse. Jeanie

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<sup>23</sup> Visit the website for South Africa’s constitution/constitutional court. [www.constitutionalcourt.org.za/](http://www.constitutionalcourt.org.za/).

<sup>24</sup> Corrective rape, also known as curative rape, is a brutal act of violence in which African women and teenagers who are, or are at least assumed to be lesbians, are raped to ‘cure’ them of their homosexuality.

Forte observes, “one crucial aspect of contemporary feminism is the expression of pain, the pain of the female body in patriarchal culture” (Forte, 1992:252). Indeed, negotiating womanhood in this personal journey follows a progress of transgressing the barriers of societal convention shrouded in patriarchal inclination. It depicts an unnerving inner struggle at the same time as Nyamza is grappling with the societal issues of religion, tradition, motherhood and sexual identity. I have seen two different endings in two different versions of *Hatched*. In the first, a man’s blazer is suspended from the ceiling and attached to the blazer is a naked light bulb. The bulb is lit throughout the production. At the end of the performance Nyamza grabs her son’s hand, they walk to the blazer and she switches the light off. It is like extinguishing the burning flame of patriarchy and of course the moments leading up to that have been of Nyamza learning and unlearning identities. The most prominent of these is the masculine energy she assumes at the end, an image brought across by her choosing to wear the red coat and red slacks. In the alternate ending, both Nyamza and her son walk over to a lamp and her son switches the lamp off, there is no blazer.

With each of the red garments hanging on the clothesline – each representing a stage and ‘self’ in her life journey – Nyamza is most drawn to the coat. She slips her arms into the coat sleeves. With her back turned towards the audience once again, every so often we catch a glimpse of her profile and notice her smile. She checks the fit of her coat, adjusting and fidgeting with it. She recoils with her head hung low, the red coat covering her head. She pops her head up, adjusting the coat again, smoothing out its creases, running her hand over the fabric, tugging and pulling at the ends for the right fit. She puts her hands in the pockets and begins a movement sequence of feeling out the coat. She has not been this careful or taken as much time with any of the other garments, but we see her change before our eyes in this mens’ coat. The sequence escalates into a series of movements that point towards a kind of dance of release from confinement, a release from feelings of unsettlement. The feeling is embodied in a series of repeated gestures in this ‘liberation dance’ that suggests she is moving towards a position of comfort and ease. The gestures involve her hiding her face behind the coat collar, and then abruptly snapping her fingers with authority and a newfound confidence. The sequence also involves her re-adjusting the coat in a different way to what she did before – this time with a particular buoyancy, coolness and poise.

Though traits of this developing figure are beset with the girl child we saw earlier and the young woman, we must understand that they are all a part of her that never really disappears, and neither does the swan, we soon discover. Although glimmers of Nyamza at various stage of her life reappear, the coat gives her a masculine energy that we have not yet seen in her; she commands authority in this coat.

With this newfound masculine vigour Nyamza dances the liberation dance. She uses her fingers to point as she begins searching in different directions and following different paths, her feet glide across the floor. She repeats an action that involves shaking her index finger, her head and her foot in defiance as if to say 'no'. It is a bold move of disobedience. The dance is fast; her feet move quickly, almost in a stylistic mixture of tap dance or *pantsula*<sup>25</sup>. What is interesting is that she intermittently breaks out of this dance into her neutral body, as if she were truly herself – as if it were Nyamza that we are seeing on stage. In her search for direction she starts to spin slowly, gathering momentum as she goes, and soon she is this whirlwind spinning out of control but appearing to love the freedom that it brings. She smiles – her smile grows as she realizes what she is doing – until she is dizzy with happiness. She stops and sways forwards and backwards and then side to side. She takes a moment; she is overcome by the impact of what she has just undergone. Leaning backwards her knees buckle, her arms lift at her sides, her head faces up towards the sky and she sinks lower, buckling her knees. She is overcome and weighed down by the dance of assertion. The music stops and she collapses to the ground.

What Nyamza's dance of assertion evokes to me is Judith Butler's argument that gender "is not something one is, it is something one does, an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun, a 'doing' rather than a 'being'" (Butler, 1990:25). Butler develops this idea in the first chapter of *Gender Trouble* where she asserts that: "gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame

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<sup>25</sup>The Pantsula dance is a flat-footed African tap-and-glide style of dance. The Zulu word "pantsula" means to "waddle like a duck or alternatively to walk with protruded buttocks," which is a characteristic of the dance.

that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (1990:25). Furthermore, what Butler’s description of gender identity does is raise questions around the meaning of ‘performativity’, and whether it prevents or facilitates acts of agency (Salih, 2002:59). The figure played by Nyamza plays with numerous “styles of existence”, though she is never really settled – a large part of this has to do with negotiating gender positioning and sexuality – it is through gender performativity that she can work towards some type of stability.

Academic Joanne Tompkins in *Critical Theory and Performance* writes that unsettlement reads as a “fundamental unfamiliarity confronting the self...and perceptions of the present and the past” (2007:73). While this unfamiliarity may promote nostalgia, unsettlement also forces us to draw attention to the missing part of ourselves that may be impossible to recover precisely because they have been lost in the past. Uncomfortable attachments are an order of the ‘beautiful pain syndrome’ and its afflicted. Uncomfortable attachments mean being at once inextricably intertwined with, and deeply unsettled by, pain. To know unsettlement is to acknowledge troubling and disturbing influences, but not consent to be incapacitated and eternally encumbered by these destabilizing influences that act themselves out, often dangerously, in our emotionality. To know unsettlement is also to know that it is an on-going exploration that sees the subject, in this ‘now moment’, occupying a position of liminality. Unsettlement, just as with anxiety, is an unavoidable emotion on the course through rites of passage.

## **Anxiety**

Indeed unsettlement and anxiety are a reaction to the ‘now moment’s aggressive look at selfhood. This is inevitable in passage but the hope is that the subject will not be ‘uncomfortable’ forever. Anxieties materialize because the act of purposely separating oneself from the community, from a sense of wholeness in the name of asserting individual identity, results in the individual finding themselves in an in-between liminal space (Krueger, 2010:15). This is neither an unproblematic nor painless position, nor is it safe. However this liminal space yields valuable and creative results. It is not a complete severing of ties, but the unravelling of a new thing from an old one. Anxiety develops as a result of trying to

negotiate oneself between being troubled by something and the perplexing pull towards this very unsettling thing. It seems intuitive to confront this discomfort to get to the root of what ails us, to get to the core of pain towards a restorative affect.

Anxiety is elevated and heightened in these performances and another potential cause for anxiety is 'playing oneself' on stage. Metamorphosing oneself this way invites an audience into the pain, shame, indignity, disgrace and discomfort of the theatre maker/performer's consciousness. To strip oneself down truthfully in front of an audience, to be the subject of scrutiny even when it is your shame and pain that you are holding up to the light, is disquieting. Phewa admits that performing *A Face Like Mine* plunges her into a state of anxiety each time she performs it: "I don't like performing this piece, it's incredibly painful" (Phewa, 2011). For Moyo it was precisely her anxieties about her own identity that led her to pursue this subject through *Compositions*. She sought to alleviate the sense of detachment and displacement, which had persisted through several emotional breakdowns and almost two years of analysis, by articulating her anxieties through performance. However, it was not just anxieties about her identity, but anxiety surrounding the content and context of the work that plagued her. One of her foremost anxieties was that she did not want to use Zimbabwe as a mere backdrop for her story because that might suggest that she was trivializing the grave situation in Zimbabwe by undertaking a production that commented on it from her privileged position as a Zimbabwean living in South Africa. Moyo began to feel that doing creative work in light of these daily atrocities was self-indulgent and insincere, and she began to feel self-conscious about the nonsensical ramblings spoken by the protagonist, Dombo: "I began to doubt the entire process and to question my motivations for creating a work that focused on surreal and magical experiences in the face of such brutal social realities" (Moyo, 2009:78). But exploring such tough matters through performance has the potential to lessen these anxieties. The final monologue at the end of *Huroyi Hwangu* was written in response to her anxiety about this quandary. Part of it goes:

In all this – the inconsequential ramblings – there is a noise of clashing symbols. I feel the weight of my world, the birth of my address calling out to me from the nether regions of ineptitude. I wanted to dance, to tell the stories of these things, and all I could find was water...I am slung back and forth from new embarrassment, embrace my place. Here, I carry a heavy heart and a heady air...Mute as the moon, dressed in the comfort of my undoing...I compose myself, and prepare to begin again. I compose

myself, and prepare to begin again. I compose myself, and prepare to begin again (Moyo, 2009:78)

Here Moyo is responding to the anxiety she faces and confessing to the shame and humiliation she bears, not only in regards to her separation from home but also because of her uncomfortable position as 'other'. Not only is she an 'other' in this new place but separation from that old place has also made her somewhat of a stranger there as well.

Early on Moyo found herself marked by her growing painful awareness of her otherness when she recalls the story of her first menses. The mark of redness – although a common biological occurrence for females universally – in Moyo's own consciousness -- was a branding of dissimilarity and a shameful reminder of her alterity:

Soon after arriving in South Africa, I had my first menstrual period. It was a strange experience, as I did not feel any of the pain that I had been told to expect, but I was relieved nonetheless. Having just turned fourteen, I was beginning to worry that I was later than my friends and that there might be something wrong with me, so that the discovery was an exciting and welcome one that nevertheless occurred without much pomp or ceremony. The excitement I did feel was marred just a few days later at my new school. As I walked down the corridor, a new classmate of mine pulled me aside and whispered quietly to me 'Awe, you've got a spot on your dress'. Instantly, I turned my head to look where she was pointing and realized to my horror that there was a large red stain on the back of my school dress. 'Oh. Thanks' I said, and immediately ducked into the (thankfully) nearby bathroom. Tears welled up in my eyes as I pulled up to the sink and twisted the tainted part of my dress around towards the running tap...I felt so ashamed as I rinsed and scrubbed the cotton, watching the tinted liquid run down the drain the same way that the paint ran from my brushes, that I daren't go back out and face everybody...If I had felt alienated by the experience of starting at a new school in a different country before, I suddenly felt doubly ostracized because of this involuntary branding, this unforgivable disobedience of my bodily functions...What should traditionally have been a joyous experience of my very first weeks of womanhood became a memory of humiliation and self-consciousness about my body, and whatever naïve hopes I had had of re-inventing myself were swiftly dashed (Moyo, 2009:13-14).

Shame is associated with anxiety for both Moyo and Phewa.

Phewa, much like Toni Morrison's fiction (1973, 1997), chooses racial and cultural shame as the point of departure in *A Face Like Mine*. Morrison depicts situations/circumstances in which the shaming/shameful episode is painfully exposed. She exposes the shattering outcome of unremitting shame on her characters' sense of individual or social identity. Morrison recounts their self-loathing, tells of their self-contempt; their feelings that they are

in some fundamental way inferior, damaged or sullied (Bouson, 2000:4) – the “not enoughs” that Phewa confesses to in *A Face Like Mine*. As she proceeds to cream her face, she says:

Day to day I know I am not myself. I am a collection of ‘not enoughs’ and my mind is screaming for the world to stop coz I want to get off! I’m not suicidal! Just angry! I can’t enjoy my mind or body or cry or complain or celebrate or be strong without it being part of a discourse as to “What has happened to our children?” an indication to how much I hate my blackness or revere the white world (2008a).

One of the first questions I asked Phewa was, ‘how would you respond to anyone who says *A Face Like Mine* is about self-loathing’? Her answer to me after hesitating and a little nervous laughter was: “yes”. Her claim was that self-loathing is a result of “not liking ourselves” (referring to black people) and a constant questioning of “what would I be if I wasn’t me” (Phewa, 2011)? (See pages 175-176 where two women of colour, in Phewa’s subsequent work *Enter the Maids*, engage in a similar dialogue.) As if to reduce the impact of this statement, she quickly says that the piece is also celebratory, it is also a celebration of blackness. Perhaps she is referring to the monologue she recites celebrating the range of black complexions (see page 178). Phewa’s anxiety arises from a sense of shame and humiliation on a number of levels – racial, ethnic and linguistic – and she longs for the freedom to be herself without cheating or compromise. Her character in *A Face Like Mine* says:

I’m not black if black means being strong through the struggle, to carry the burden of suffering, to serve others before myself. I want to be so much more and I want it to be ok. I don’t want to be ashamed of who I am or feel guilt for what every freedom fighter died for me to have – a chance to just be (Phewa, 2008a).

Phewa reveals these feelings of self-loathing and self-contempt in a poignant scene of complete exposure. In isiZulu, Phewa confesses a moment of public shame as a consequence of linguistic deracination. The reason the confrontation of pain and shame in this scene is palpable is because Phewa’s mother (to whom this text is more or less directed) shares the stage with her daughter. Perched on a pedestal, Phewa’s mother, dressed in traditional garb, burns *imphepho*<sup>26</sup> whilst delivering an oration of clan names (see page 217). The mother’s

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<sup>26</sup>*Imphepho* is the wild plant known as *Helichrysum*. *Imphepho* is used in ceremonies and religious festivals as incense, but in South Africa, it is commonly used by Sangoma’s to induce a trance state. This is done by merely inhaling the smoke that the plant produces once it’s been burned. *Imphepho* is also used as a method of

skirt covers her knees; she wears a headscarf and a shawl over her shoulders. Phewa begins to speak as she changes into her pink domestic workers uniform:

*Izolo bengisetekisini. Ngikhathele. Anginakanga ngisho nokunaka ukuthi benghleli noobani nokuthi biyaphi. Kuthe, sengifuna ukwehlika, ngamane ngathi ku-driver: 'Short left here please driver'. Kwathi cwaka. Wonke umuntu wavela waqhuma intsini. Bagigitheka. Bathi bebengazi ukuthi bahleli nomlungu la etekisini. Wena awukaze uhlazwe kanjanyana. Awukaze. Wangiyekelani ukuthi ngikhule ngibe umuntu wesimame impela kepha ulimi lwami lubophekile? Isizulu nolimi lwami izinto eziqagqene. Wangiyekelani wangangikhombisa indlela na? It could have been so easy! Wawungazama kwabanzi. Manje ngiyathukwa ngaphandle. Leziintloni akusizona ezami. Ezakho. Namhlanje ngizokunika zona. Zithathe (Phewa, 2008a).*

[Yesterday I was in a taxi. I was so tired. I didn't even bother paying attention to who was sitting next to me or where the taxi was going. When I wanted to get off, I said to the driver: 'Short left here please driver'. Complete silence. Then everyone burst out laughing. Crowing and screeching. They said sarcastically 'oh, we didn't know we were sitting with a white person in this taxi'. You've never felt, never known such shame. You have never. Why did you let me grow up to be this person whose tongue is tied? My Zulu and my tongue is knotted. I am tongue-tied. Why did you not show me the right way? It could have been so easy! Now I get ridiculed and cursed at. This is not my shame. It is yours. Today I give it to you. Take it.]

This is an unusual performative act in that this purging of resentment, anger and shame is witnessed by the person for whom it is meant. "The burden of traditional expectations hovers over her throughout, embodied in the ever-present mother perched aloft on a platform" (Flockemann, 2011a:168). Phewa admits she was extremely anxious about exposing herself to her mother (not to mention exposing her mother) in this way, but the reaction she received from her mother lessened her worry because her mother admitted that she was receiving an enlightening education. Her mother asked her if she really still felt this way and Phewa replied, "No I used to, I'm fine now". However, what she meant was "No, I don't blame you", rather than "No, I don't have these issues anymore" (Phewa, 2011).

Herein lies the difference between theatre makers of the 'now moment' in South Africa and Morrison's protagonists. In Morrison's novels "when actual experiences are so overwhelming, you become detached or dissociate them from consciousness, when they are too terrible, traumatic, painful to utter aloud: this is the meaning of 'unspeakable'. This

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enabling communication between the ancestors, burned as ritual incense with the purpose of invoking the ancestors.

dissociation is protection from unbearable pain” (Bouson, 2000:7). Instead these theatre makers refuse to deny the shame, they do not detach from this pain even when tempted to. Although they may temporarily separate from their ‘selves’ and the subject of their pain through the performative act of their rites of passage – they find ways of expressing this pain through vocality, language and the body. It is precisely the unbearability of the pain that drives them to speak it. The shame (racial and gendered) might be aestheticized but it is not concealed. At some point during this passage (this text is part of a longer passage), Phewa follows this anecdote of her linguistic deracination by saying: “all I could think of doing, all I felt like doing, all I wanted to do was scream” (2008a). Shamed individuals may experience a short-lived flash of a painful feeling, a shock or shot of pain – a loss of words or thought following this moment of exposure. This is because such an uncovering exposes parts of the self that are sensitive, private and vulnerable (Bouson, 2000:10). To expose this is to have nothing left to cover, it means – in some way – to rid yourself of this painful shame by making it shareable. I remember these words reverberating in the performance space as Phewa’s disgrace and embarrassment was publically put on show. I remember an uneasy feeling in the pit of my stomach and swelling in my throat as I looked around the room searching other observer’s eyes for a shared admission of complicity in the dilemma of forgotten tongues. But the pain associated with the loss of language is ineffable. The experience of pain can dismantle language itself, so that pain results in the impossibility of any intelligible utterance (Bordreau, 1995:455). *Beloved* (1997) for instance, depicts “the role of pain in unmaking language – not just the language of pain, but any language whatsoever” (Bordreau, 1995:456). This is where alternative vocalities are required (see pages 132-136 on Vocality).

The performance of anxiety not only embodies anxiety symbolically and physically but also explains our ambiguous response to the ‘now moment’ and dis-ease in these works. Anxiety attaches to people and material that is dynamised in performance. For the seer, it is not because I approach the material with anxious preconceptions, but the stage action stirs up my anxiety (Ahmed, 2004:125), evident in another shaming, intimate scene in *A Face Like Mine*. Feelings of anxiety are awakened for the observer as we witness Phewa’s unrelenting interaction with a white man who shares the stage with her. A large zinc bath occupies centre stage. Phewa sits in the bath entirely nude, in part because it is necessary and

unavoidable to be naked, since the subject matter is the colour of her skin (Phewa, 2011). She confronts her white ‘lover-not-quite-lover-tormentor’ who sits outside of the bath. The bath is a private space – edifying the inner veracity of her mind as she shares her fantasy, her shame and yearning. It also becomes a cleansing space but what is being purged is still contained around her. The white man, simply called Boy 1, straddles the basin and washes her hair, exercising power and affection. He pours water over her head, taking gentle care and caressing her face. Unexpectedly, he violently submerges her whole head into the water, and then alternates the two actions. He does this while she speaks:

Today I’m going to wake up and I’m going to be a white girl. I’m going to wake up in the morning and lo and behold I’ll be white [...](Phewa 2008a).



**Figure 5: Asanda Phewa as Girl in *A Face Like Mine*. Photographer: CUEPIX/Olivia Lemerrier.**

He pours water over her head as she continues:

But first I'm going to have to call a white girl I know just to get more accurate information, like what's the first thing white girls do in the morning (Phewa 2008a).

She directs her speech to herself; it is reflective, although she directs her attention to the man at times. He reaches for a bottle of shampoo and begins to wash her hair. She goes on:

Do they wake up being glad they're not black? Do they worry about mom? Do they worry about how they're going to get to work? Do white girls worry? Do they wrap themselves in sheets playing Isadora and go tip-toeing around the kitchen. I know, the first thing white girls do in the morning is fling their hair (Phewa 2008a).

She flicks her head back as she says this and the white man dunks her head into the bath as if drowning her. As she struggles and comes up for air she adds:

I'm not, I'm not jealous of white women's reality. I'm not (Phewa 2008a).

Again her head is dunked in the water and as she comes up she continues:

But if I was to be jealous of something of theirs, it would be their ideology. White women are beautiful with long flowy hair, the whimsical creatures, modern day Peter Pans with all their sensuality and toys (Phewa 2008a).

This interaction is anxiety-filled as Phewa's thoughts move rapidly between all the things she covets about white women's idealism. It is these fast moving feelings together with the forceful way that she is restrained, that exacerbates the sense of anxiety. She is once again dunked into the water and when she comes up for air, maintains:

The world 'oohhs and aahhs' and cheer her on with all their stupor and admiration. She has been indulged and pampered and protected because she is a delicate creature of perfection (Phewa 2008a).

Her speech is more urgent here; she is dunked again, quickly, as if he is trying to silence her, but she carries on:

She's a glossy cover girl that tells me that my reflection is too dark, my body too much of the horizontal and not enough of the vertical (Phewa 2008a).

She fights to get all of her words out before she is dunked again and this time, her head is held in the water for quite some time. She struggles but the white man will not let her up for air. She grabs his shoulder and then his arm with her hand, still nothing. Eventually we feel her submit, she hands herself over as she remains submerged with his hand forceful on the back of her head. Eventually he releases her head and while she violently gasps for breath,

he strokes her face, freeing her face of hair and caressing her skin. He removes the towel from behind his neck, covers her head and dries her off with such delicacy as she whimpers:

I want that. I really want that...maybe I should've been a boy (Phewa, 2008a).



**Figure 6: Asanda Phewa and Ken Bullen-Smith in *A Face Like Mine*. Photographer: CUEPIX/Olivia Lemercier.**

During this whole interaction, her confession becomes increasingly urgent but each time the man quickly submerges her, as if trying to silence her, as if her words should not be heard, as if her voice were insignificant. Each time her breath is stifled, each time her voice is silenced we feel her surrender and capitulate. Ending the sadistic exercise, Phewa is left sobbing quietly as the man dries her off with unsettling gentleness. This is the pattern of the shame that follows a moment of total exposure. The white man is the conflicting opposite of her – he is her shaming other – he represents the instability and vulnerability of her psychological

space. Here Phewa is addressing the ambiguity of her identity as we question: what happens in the darkness of this beautifully lit intimate bathroom with a naked Phewa in all of her brown-skinned glory? Is it lovemaking? Is it a violent thrashing about or violation?

As Phewa thinks of more and more things to be anxious about, she becomes more urgent in her delivery. Her anxiety here is driven by hankering after something she will never be. But it is also detachment, loss or separation that stimulates anxiety. In these performances, this moves between self, identity, language, home, sexuality, race, gender, lineage, ethnicity and family. That is precisely why theatre making in the 'now moment' calls for an attachment to the very things that cause us anxiety. Anxiety tends to adhere to objects and in this study; "anxiety becomes an approach to objects rather than, as with fear, being produced by an object's approach" (Ahmed, 2004:125). In this manner, anxiety becomes a way to tackle this 'now moment's' predicaments by coming closer to them for inspection, by drawing them close to us: now we approach the wounds of our past, touching them and holding them up for scrutiny. If this does not happen now, then as with fear and anger, the predicament will inevitably come up to meet us in the future in a most direct and pressing way.

## **Anger**

South African poet and author Ingrid De Kok acknowledges that most people have an inclination to avoid or deny a clingy attachment to past injustices for the reason that such obsessions might lead to unseemly anger or self-destruction (1998:60). Alternatively, a rejection of past experiences might attach people to those very injustices and arouse anger in a more potent and perilous way, for denial is only a step away from forgetting and the latter increases the risk of repeating tumultuous histories (De Kok, 1998:60). In light of these problems of unsettlement and anxiety, it is no surprise that anger is a catalyst in theatre making of the 'now moment'. Regardless of whether the sentiment is reasonable or misplaced, theatre makers express anger and rage instead of keeping it bottled up inside. There is a residue of anger and it is not necessarily directed at any one person or thing. One could say that for theatre makers of the apartheid era, rage was indeed directed outward, perhaps even more so than now. The difference here is that in the 'now moment', the anger is not just against society per se (as it was in the past) but is also against an individual's

experience of society. That is not to say that anger was not individualized in the apartheid era, only that the collective was typically foregrounded. There are instances where we saw the performance of an individual's anger towards their experience of society, for example in *Woza Albert* (1981). What I am saying is that theatre makers of the 'now moment' are more brazen about expressing their individual rage because there is obviously a reduced – if not, non-existent – risk of political persecution. These contemporary performances take on a confrontational stance depicting ideas that refuse to hide behind the art, no matter how painful. This represents a fundamental step in the process of achieving self-determination. Black American poet June Jordan, in an *Essence* magazine interview with writer Alexis DeVeaux, makes this abundantly clear in her discussion of her poem, *Poem About my Rights* by asserting: "If somebody is trying to hurt you, to oppress you, you should be angry, and you should put that anger where it belongs – outside yourself" (Jordan in DeVeaux, 1981:139). Jordan goes on to illustrate her assertion by explaining:

I tried to show as clearly as I could that the difference between South Africa and rape and my mother trying to change my face and my father wanting me to be a boy was not an important difference to me. It all violates self-determination (Jordan in DeVeaux, 1981:139).

Could a similar contention be made in declaring that irrespective of whether you are dealing with South Africa's turbulent past, fragmented memories, displacement from home or loss of language – as a result of past political persecution and the consequent territorial dispersal within the country's social fragmentation – you should be angry? You are justified in your anger, for don't these predicaments all violate and impinge on feelings of self-determination in one way or another? But within this rage is also the impulse to locate or embody the rage outside of the self so that it may be dealt with. There is a conscious effort on the part of the theatre maker to actively work with and against the 'dis-ease' of the now, even when motivated by anger. For those reasons Phewa ties together the archetypal duality and tense relationship of the Maid and Madam in South Africa. She does this using the most ubiquitous markers of servitude as the maid in her archetypal pink apron and matching headscarf.

In her preoccupation with domesticity and servitude, Phewa draws attention to the trouble with agency and autonomy. The pale pink apron and headscarf of the maid – a quintessential signifier of the South African domestic worker – hangs in the space

throughout the piece. Thus performance becomes a site where a usually unvoiced or silenced piece of our history is given voice. I am not suggesting that the domestic worker trope has not been performed in South African theatre before. Acclaimed South African playwright Yael Farber's recent critically acclaimed work, *Mies Julie* (2012) – a reworked version of August Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (1888) set within a South African backdrop – uses the domestic worker image. Farber adds the paradigmatic mothering feature to the South African domestic worker who forsakes her own young to care for the 'Baas's' (boss's) child. Christine's (played by veteran South African actress Thoko Ntshinga) entrenchment in class and race and from thence deprivation, testifies exactly to what Phewa is talking about in employing the domestic worker trope. Christine is secure and knows what she is, who she is; being a maid gives her an identity. That is not to say that she or Phewa, is automatically empowered. On the contrary, one could argue that Phewa is regressing, reverting back to the maid as a means of coping and also as a protection against her own uncontrollable malleability. In her space, Phewa as the maid can show the schizophrenia and anxiety of her psyche. In this space, the maid can openly wrestle with the reality of her emotionality. It is part of her hysteria that she must relentlessly put away her anger, every morning and function as though she were self-possessed; play her role in society and then return to where she can openly express her anger in her personal space at night.

In a nation where the voices of the majority were previously silenced through various forms of brutality, persecution and shame, it seems obvious that this would provoke feelings of anger and bitterness that are still palpable in the 'now moment'. Anger becomes a physical way of articulating the ugliness of oppression and the perils of silencing. Now, it is anger that spurs the afflicted to grapple with uncomfortable attachments even when the sentiments are confusing and conflicting. Anger underlies the 'beautiful pain syndrome' and our attempts to make sense of our positioning in this 'now moment'. The expression of anger is no longer bottled within but is rather placed outside of the self, having a palliative effect. The angry expression of what troubles us is a step towards achieving self-determination. Anger unearths deep-rooted and far-reaching problems of fragmented identities. Anger is a dominant sentiment in the struggle against forgetting. This crisis of forgetting is often linked with the predicament of lost language, and consequently a sense of lost place, home and

even 'self' in these works. Forgotten language stimulates feelings of anger and shame and rightly so as Farber notes that:

Telling a story to reclaim yourself, in a language that has been enforced on you by a dominating regime, is a contradiction in itself...There's a fundamental connection between the psyche of the country and the languages that people speak. The denigrating of indigenous language through colonialism is a psychic violence (Farber, 2008:25).

For Phewa especially, the loss of her indigenous language is a source of huge anger and shame and this is why she exclaims: "I'm not suicidal! Just angry" (Phewa, 2008a)! Perhaps this predicament of language is why Mbothwe defiantly and consciously works in indigenous languages (mainly isiXhosa) working against the prevailing trend towards English. South African scholar Miki Flockemann iterates that "Mbothwe's decision to use isiXhosa is informed by his concern with revitalizing connectedness to vernacular experiences and traditions" (Flockemann, 2011b:136).

Having said this, let us also be mindful of the fact that while anger is perhaps initially constructive as a catalyst, it is also potentially dangerous and unproductive if misused. Anger is not useful or helpful if nothing becomes of it. Anger alone does not offer salvation; we must stop short of too readily embracing anger because anger may subsume other, more constructive impulses. Theatre makers realize this and that is why it is important to place one's anger outside of oneself – not only does the release prove to be cathartic and ameliorative but it also encourages opportunities for dialogue, in a scarred nation, to take place. Anger, like pain, possesses that allure, that feeling of righteous entitlement, but as Jamal notes, the focus should not be on anger or pain but recovery: "[...] To begin to feel, one must abolish vanity and self-possession, vanquish the fetish of pain" (Jamal, 2005:162). Indeed one must overcome the lure of pain in order to "begin...then begin again" (Jamal, 2005:162). It is not pain that is the indication of freedom and autonomy, "but that within pain that is not pain" (Jamal, 2005:162). *'That within pain that is not pain'* is, in this study, beauty...it is the theatre maker's ability to aesthetically convey recovery in the most poignant ways. In this, such a potentially harmful sentiment as anger is readdressed as a constructive sentiment of recovery and insight for a nation of scarred South Africans (Jamal, 2005:162).

Visceral and vocal acts of uncomfortable attachments, anxiety and unsettlement make manifest certain corporeal, visceral and vocal performative acts, which are: hysteria, vocality, the cry and nostalgic hallucination. In this study, the body is both subject and material: research that takes place in and through bodies (Allegue et al., 2009:20). The ways in which these theatre makers communicate is not limited to words – pain's expression is not contained within verbal language or linguistic symbolism alone. This is about the rhetoric of the body and voice. This requires sensitivity to and an observation of kinaesthetic sensations, awareness of bodily affiliation, structures and location in space and time (Pavis, 2007). Performative communication, as Turner notes, uses a whole repertoire of sensory communicative gestures that include: “manual gesticulations, facial expressions, bodily postures, rapid, heavy or light breathing, tears at the individual level; stylized gestures, dance patterns, prescribed silences, synchronized movement, marching, and rituals” (Turner, 1982:9). I would expand his list to include the visceral and vocal acts of hysteria, vocality, the cry and hallucination.

## **Hysteria**

Hysteria is a psychological disorder categorized by emotional eruptions and repeated physical symptoms like screaming, crying out, panicked and alarming movement. In the *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* hysteria is defined as “a syndrome whose symptoms include volatile emotions and behaviour with physical symptoms such as anaesthesia, tremor and convulsions that cannot be attributed to any physical pathology” (Brown, 1993:1298). In this study these physical symptoms include sudden jerking, jolting, twitching, erratic bodily movement, shuddering, shaking, twisting, bending, unpredictable turns, distorting limbs, writhing, kicking and thrusting. Hysteria is exemplified by any frenzied emotional condition or violent emotional eruption and its corporeal urge. Hysteria is a nonverbal tongue, a style of physical communication that transmits a coded meaning, a "symptomatic acting out of a proposition the hysteric cannot articulate...The hysteric 'articulates' a corporeal discourse; her symptoms 'speak' on her behalf" (Parker, 2001:2).

Relevant to my analysis of hysteria in these creative works is French feminist philosopher, Luce Irigaray's understanding of hysteria. Theorist Emma Parker, in *A New Hysteria: History*

*and Hysteria in Toni Morrison's "Beloved"*, explains Irigaray's reading of hysteria as a type of dissent in opposition to patriarchal rule given that hysteria has, for the most part, been associated with women (Irigaray cited in Parker, 2001:2). Parker draws attention (as feminists like Irigaray and Helene Cixous do) to the difference between hysteria as pathology and hysteria as a short-term and helpful tactic for subversion (Parker, 2001:14). Parker's proposition is apposite because the subjects in these plays employ temporary and dynamic means of dealing with painful material. One of the key tactics of the hysteric, according to Irigaray, is to decisively represent forced ideas of femininity as Nyamza does in her dressing-down of the ballerina. In excessiveness, even exaggeratingly, imitating hegemonic forms of behaviour, the hysteric not only resists but also challenges the dominant order (Parker, 2001:3). More importantly, Parker discusses hysteric manifestations in *Beloved* which reinforces my analysis of the novel as analogous to the mission of these theatre makers, in that, "Sethe retreats into the semiotic when she locks herself in the house with Beloved, her experience epitomizes the debilitating effects of the hysteric haunting of the present by the past" (Parker, 2001:13). Similarly the past haunts the present in this study and is a subject of discontent of the – at times – hysterical performers as they withdraw into the semiotic, playing out the symptoms of their dis-ease.

During the monologue in *Ingcwaba*, emphatically delivered by Nozenza (see page 108), the young daughter character physically demonstrates the painful dilemma that Nozenza poses. Nozenza, suffering a crisis of identity, bemoans her placelessness and her desire for a sense of familial rootedness. As Nozenza speaks, the daughter figure performs the former's growing hysteria. She places her palms over her ears as if to block out all sound. She strikes the sides of her head with an increasing violence. She violently scratches her head as if she is trying to shake thoughts/words/feelings out. She shakes her head quickly and feverishly from side to side. The shake extends to her arms, then her torso, until her whole body pulsates. This frenzied gestural sequence is repeated several times. She bunches her skirt at her sides in her tightly balled fists. She continues to shake with clenched fists at her side until the end of Nozenza's speech when she lets her arms fall over her head in exhaustion. Her desire for a type of self-fashioning shows that the hysteric's approaches to self-representation mimics the culture that generates her hysterical symptoms (Bronfen, 1998:44).

It is not only Mbothwe's protagonists who display hysteria. During one of the performances of *Ingcwaba* (2009), a girl in the audience randomly leapt onto the stage, in what I can only describe as a spiritual reverie. Possibly incited by the repetitive sung choral dirge and the drumming, the young woman appeared to be hysterical. She was screaming uncontrollably, distorting and jerking her body as if overcome by insurmountable emotion. Words can never explain what the body and voice finds a way of articulating. Indeed as Irigaray asserts, the hysteric "senses something remains to be said that resists all speech" (1985:193). Apparently unfazed by the unexpected interruption, the mother and daughter characters tried to restrain her as she wildly leapt up and down. The pair forced the hysteric onto a grass mat that they laid out, and eventually succeeded in getting her to lie down. The mother dips her hands in water from a bowl and wipes her own face. The daughter dips her hands in the bowl and does the same, also wiping the arms and then the legs of the young woman, whilst the latter continues to squirm on the mat. There is no answer to the question 'what are you doing?' The young woman was simply included in the action by the mother and daughter protagonists, who calm her, wash her body with water, and try to still her.

Moyo details her real-life emotional disintegration that was preceded by a real-life moment of hysteria. She recalls:

It was there on the night that I made the decision to erase myself and first began to do so, hysterically, by destroying every photograph of myself in sight. It was there as I expunged my image with black acrylic paint and revelled in the melancholic ecstasy of the act, feeling strangely euphoric, elated though bleak (2009:73).

Shortly after this anxiety driven frenetic act of self-elimination, Moyo found herself in the hospital. She writes after the fact:

At this deferred moment I am uncomfortable in my seat, I have a heavy feeling in my head, and my eyes repeatedly well up with tears. I am experiencing an acute sense of embarrassment and I would like to deny that such a thing ever happened to me. I would like to pretend that I did not suffer from clinical depression, experience a nervous breakdown or spend three months in hospital recovering from this ordeal, but the fact does not concede to conceal itself (2009:73).

The severity of her disjunctive identity and displacement caused Moyo's emotional collapse. Though she repeatedly uses the phrase 'compose yourself', both in *Huroyi Hwangu* and as her real-life mantra, the blue-skinned *Dombo* is anything but composed. Often erratic, *Dombo* exhibits abnormal behaviour and movement, embodying Moyo's 'otherness'. A

hybrid, between African folk and urban postcolonial, Dombo expresses the indistinctness of the migrant figure. Dombo's peculiar, sometimes frenetic movement becomes even more foreign when it is accompanied by her spoken gibberish. Her bird-like motion and agility is animalistic. She twitches, she shakes and she runs, wild and uncontrollable, in the space when startled. The untamed hysteric Dombo makes quick irregular movements, bending and distorting her body, slapping her hands against her head and then her body. She throws stones in the space; she swallows stones and spits them out. She writhes around and thrusts on the floor – she crawls, kicks and thrashes about. Even at the end of the work, when Moyo slips out of the Dombo character and in to what appears to be her real author self, she becomes hysterical when she delivers this final monologue by destroying the objects hanging from the cage, pulling the beads down and getting entangled in the web-like cage. The water balloons hanging in the cage burst and the water, combined with her tears, begin to wash off some of the blue makeup and partially expose Moyo. She grows progressively more unsettled as she speaks until finally she collapses to the ground with the material in the cage in pieces around her.

Nyamza also has moments of hysterical eruption in *Hatched*, intermittently obscured by the beauty of her dancer's body. Her shedding of the large restrictive skirt prompts a frenzied reaction. This skirt represents, not only her womanhood, but also her role as a mother. This is provocative because Irigaray associates hysteria with the role of motherhood suggesting that "hysterical discourse has a privileged relation to the maternal body" (Irigaray cited in Parker, 2001:3). Literary critic and feminist Elaine Showalter, supplements this notion by showing that "at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century hysteria was used as a label for deviant female behaviour that served to discredit and pathologize women's protest" (Showalter, 1987:145, (Parker, 2001:7). In "protest" then, Nyamza becomes increasingly hysterical about this brand new freedom found from getting rid of the confining skirt. In an emotional outburst she jerks her body, squirming about on the ground and kicking up a frantic hubbub. She kicks with a fury, limbs rickety, shaking and quivering, as though at any moment she were going to snap at the joints and break all the bones in her arms. Her shoulders wobble as she crawls and slides across the floor. Later she comes to the sand that has spilled out of the zinc bucket and she begins to play with the sand, drawing circles on the floor. The rhythm of circling increases until eventually she cleans the circle of sand and she is left tracing a circle on the

bare floor. However, no matter how hard she scrubs, the floor will not come clean. Panicking, she shakes her head frantically as she cleans the floor, moving her entire body as she works. She plops down; her elbows hit the floor and then give way, causing her to collapse. She comes up again and repeats this movement sequence several times. This repeated action grows more and more frantic as she makes bigger and faster circular motions. So incredibly fast and forceful is her movement that her figure is merely a blurred impression for the seer. She brings her hands up to her head while her elbows remain on the floor and repetitively slaps her hands against her head and then the floor and then her elbows.

All of these embodied acts of hysteria are an indication of emotion that simply cannot be articulated in words alone. Pain cannot always be adequately articulated: however embodied movement offers an opportunity for interpretation. In the opening to *The Modulated Scream*, theorist Esther Cohen cites descriptions of pain that date back centuries.

*Pain is the sensation of our own decay.*

-Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*

*Pain is the shrinking from those things that happen to us against our will.*

-Alexander of Hales, *Glossa in quatuorlibris sententiarum Petri Lombardi*, misquoting Augustine

*Pain is the rupture of continuity.*

-Alex of Hales, *Glossa in quatuorlibris sententiarum Petri Lombardi*, citing Aristotle (unverifiable) (Cohen, 2010:1).

The first definition locates pain within the territory of ‘feeling’ – a sensation that elicits, even demands, a response and affects consciousness. Common to all three definitions as emphasized by the words ‘decay’, ‘shrinking’ and ‘rupture’, is the notion of withdrawal, disruption or separation from, or as a consequence of, something. “Modern anthropological discourse on pain in a social context is very much aware of the sufferer’s own attempts to couch her message in a comprehensible form” (Cohen, 2010:113). One such way to express pain is through a lucid form such as performance, using “body language, spoken language, sounds, or any other means of communication that might be interpreted as pain” (Cohen, 2010:113). I provide evidence that performance of this type relies on the rhetoric of the physical and vocal body to communicate. What is apparent is that Moyo, Nyamza and

Bothwe create and utilize an astonishingly similar set of representational and bodily gestures to convey various kinds of emotional pain and disorder. Accordingly hysteria speaks to the concern as to how pain is shown in performance. For these theatre makers, as with Morrison's character's in *Beloved*, "there is no complete recovery from hysteria, only a potential for healing, something that involves learning to confront grief without being governed by it, to possess the past without becoming possessed" (Parker, 2001:16).

In her article *The Animated Pain of the Body*, Esther Cohen describes four forms of pain's expression that date back many years: bodily movement, stigmatization, lamentation, and screaming (Cohen, 2000:63). She also mentions uninhibited bodily gesture, thrashing about, and corporeal tremors as symptoms of pain. Cohen is talking about physical pain here but I have found the same to be true of the representation of emotional pain. Conceivably we know someone is suffering because of their demonstration of pain in facial appearance, bodily movement and altered behaviour. This display is often accompanied by the sounds of suffering such as moaning or a rhythmic and repetitive groaning sound (Starck & McGovern, 1992:9). These physical signs are similar to the hysteric's symptoms, except the hysteric's physical signs of pain are the consequences of embodying overpowering sentiments, not necessarily because of bodily pain itself (1992:10). The vocalities and screams of real pain originate directly in the body, they cannot be happily or falsely produced, nor can such responses be forced any more than the tears, shaking and jerking that pain elicits (Cohen, 2000:65).

### **Vocality: 'cries, songs and screams'**

"It was a scream back to my place of birth" – Stockenstrom, 2006:42

Vocality consists of all vocal utterances, verbal communication as well as disjointed language, non-language (gibberish) and song. This includes vocal utterances that express pain and at the same time resist language: screams, screeching, cries, murmurs, melodious harmonies, piercing laughter, shattering wails, grunting, panting, heavy breathing, moans and groans. Song is critical to vocality because it is a non-intellectual way of lamenting and transcending pain, as an evocation of social reality that encapsulates both individual and collective experience. Song is one component of telling because the exhibition of suffering

and social dis-ease can also be sung; for instance *Ingcwaba* uses song for this purpose. Thus vocality can be a container for everyday emotion, dis-ease and pain.

The nature of the language in *Ingcwaba* is remarkable. A projection across the backdrop helps non-Xhosa speaking individuals with a translation. So much of the language used is allegorical, idiomatic and poetic. The projected translation is problematic every now and then because it is unable to capture the essence of the symbolic language of the piece. The language is vivid, overwhelmingly poignant and aesthetically provocative. In fact it might elude even the everyday Xhosa speaker because it is cryptic and dense, such that even mature Xhosa speakers must pay sustained attention. Mbothwe asserts that writing his text in metaphor is inspired by the way the Xhosa Bible is written and the way that Xhosa traditional healers speak (Mbothwe, 2011a). As a result Mbothwe appropriates characteristics from *iintsomi* (storytelling), the Bible, Xhosa behavioural/ancestral codes and song and this all influences the way the language is structured. The ancestral and religious that usually clash are instead in supportive dialogue here – in fact Mbothwe does not even consider them to be disparate. The only reason I mention this is because we can see how the two worlds operate alongside one another in the work: there are many biblical references in the text and in song, as well as worshiping and praying gestures that are suggestive of the Christian religion. But then there is also an acknowledgement of the ancestors and this aspect of the spiritual realm: a kind of rootedness that represents this realm (Mbothwe, 2011a). In other words, relations with ancestors is often associated with going down on ones hands and knees, a recurring and musical clapping of the hands and stomping of the feet – this is coupled with being grounded and rooted which is maintained by the earthiness of ancestral principles. In South Africa, there are several rituals and celebrations which are deliberately aimed at safeguarding the spiritual well-being of the individual as well as the community; usually accomplished by placating and paying respect to the ancestors or those that came before who are in the earth and on the ground on which we walk (Magubane, 2001:7).

The intricacy and density of the language Mbothwe uses is decidedly effective as the linguistic embodiment of beautiful pain. Here I am not just referring to unembellished meaning, but also taking into account compound, linguistic meaning, which can take painful

sentiments and mask them with lyrical and beautifully spoken or sung utterances. A moment that left me decoding ambiguous language and meanings is a lyrically driven, rhythmically delivered, spoken passage that incorporates a number of vocalities and draws attention to Mbothwe's use of linguistic beautiful pain. The passage begins with the husband, father figure. He starts the text and says: "Come with us, we are leaving" (Mbothwe, 2009b). The entire chorus joins in and with every sentence uttered, the voices lament more, the volume increases and the mood becomes increasingly nostalgic:

I will go over the hills and mountains, crossing rivers, dark plains, fields full of shadows...The head spins and the heart is broken. Carry me on your back my home! Do carry me on your back. You showed me the way and now walking it is up to me. Colourful grandchildren give birth to me and then bury me. I am a traveller; I tend to branch off. I have released my mind while I crushed my heart. You ask those with experience. I drank from the swamp, wandering in a dark forest searching for my being, falling against gorges and rolling over through crevices and hills in search of a purpose. Life is a riddle and the only one who can interpret it is the Great One. They were visible in rituals and dreams but in the morning they vanished. The fruit went ripe till it rotted. Until when am I going to grow old on this road? I'm looking, be quick. Listen, I'm watching. Run before these eyes are closed (Mbothwe, 2009b).

This whole text turns into incantation – the speakers' eyes are shut, they clap their hands often. The chorus is unable to sit still and as a result they jump up and down lightly as though invested with a force greater than themselves. They wave their hands emphatically; some kneel down in a prayer position while others clasp their hands together in a prayer-like gesture. They continue:

In the middle of the night, palpitations, my heart nearly stopped. The one given up and the one smooth let us step on each other's consciousness. Things are bad. Go before the sun goes down, move before the calf is fed, move before it gets dark, make it quick before the calf goes to the mother. Lend me a straight pin. I need to sit and take out the thorns. It's enough. In our sorrows, the eye is watching; Come with us! Come with me! Come with us! (Mbothwe, 2009b)

The chorus quietens down, uttering the text in lower tones. It is the end of this prayer-like lamentation. Repetition is habitually integrated into Mbothwe's application of varied vocalities. Here repetition suggests progress and creates ritual – this might be audibly expressed by the constant clapping, a continuous knocking, or the repetition of a phrase or a song perpetuated by call and response. To Mbothwe, repetition incites ritual, indicative of a rite of passage; it is a way of accepting but also asking for strength (Mbothwe, 2011a).

Not only does Mbothwe privilege language; song lies at the heart of *Ingcwaba*. He draws upon songs that evoke different emotions; songs of hope, encouragement, mourning, celebration, optimism, songs of spiritual ecstasy, songs that reduce you to tears and so forth (2011a). The songs in *Ingcwaba* are frequently reminiscent of lamentation; the melodies are usually call-and-response and are repeated successively, with one voice initiating and the rest of the chorus responding. Repetition is a key factor in the way music is scored in his works. Repetition combined with drumming has the capacity to send his performers into a dreamlike state of euphoria, and sometimes the spectators as well, as we discovered earlier. Mbothwe illuminates this by saying that the singing, the drumming and the repetition in his works have the capacity to elevate his performers to another level, a sacred space, because the mixed elements of vocality elicit powerful responses (2011a).

Mbothwe relies heavily on song as a tool for telling stories, developing vocal metaphors. He attributes this to an early childhood memory that greatly affected him and led him to appreciate the influence of song:

There is something about song. It always reminds me of when my father was taken by the {Apartheid} police in the early hours of the morning. He was sleeping and these guys just came in. My mother asked them “where are you taking him?” And they suddenly became polite and insisted that he would be fine. When they left, my mother started singing and continued preparing us for school as if nothing had happened. And she sang this song “it is well, it is well, with my soul” in isiXhosa and isiSotho and it haunted me. As painful as it [the song] was, there was something about her becoming stronger, she became so strong and there was a great sense of faith (Mbothwe, 2011b).

This is how song empowers and embodies beautiful pain in a South African context. We come from a history of struggle songs giving voice to the voiceless, offering solidarity and manifesting suffering through song. The power of song was prevalent in these circumstances and its influence cannot be overlooked. Ralph Ellison makes a similar claim about the African American blues tradition in that through song, the individual is taken outside of himself and the pains that were secretly held on to are exposed to the world and become alleviated. He regards this vocal articulation as “an impulse to keep the painful details and episodes of a brutal experience alive in one's aching consciousness, to finger its jagged grain, and to transcend it” (Bordreau, 1995:449). Here transcendence not only comes from a consistent reflection on pain, but from the embodiment of some painful thing into something artistically shaped – the task is to find rhythm and lyrical meaning in the painful event

(1995:450). In *Ingcwaba* songs demonstrate transcendence, often spanning long periods of time – the longest goes on for twelve minutes – they accompany the rites of passing on and through, as well as communal camaraderie and solace for those who are leaving home and journeying to the unknown together.

Song is not Mbothwe's only instrument of vocal expression, he also utilizes gibberish:

I love using gibberish [in my works] because it accesses different emotions in humans but also it breaks away from the boundaries of spoken language which is guided by so many rules. Also because I'm in search of the world of dreams and it [gibberish] offers me a lot (Mbothwe, 2011b).

Moyo as protagonist also resists spoken language. Dombo's speech for instance was created through an unrehearsed arrangement of various sounds and word-fragments from Venda, Shona, and some Ndebele. The outcome was an experimental 'language' in the sense of a repeatable glossary of expressions whose meanings were obscure. Moyo discloses:

I did not have a precise translation for the language, but I worked in such a way that certain root phrases acquired meaning through the similarity they bore to real words or syllables. In this way I could speak Dombo's language with some degree of comprehension and intention (Moyo, 2009:59).

To the spectator, however, Dombo's language sounds like gibberish though we get a sense of her restlessness, her unsophisticated childlikeness and her hysteria. She gabbles, cries loudly, spits out an inept and awkward lump of consonants and extended vowel sounds. She screeches and crows like an animal. She screams.

Philosopher and political scientist Achille Mbembe recalls the screams introduced into Congolese popular music in the 1980s, which was a period of social unrest and of many atrocities committed in the Congo. Music was used in that context as an instigator of social revolt that embodied the many crises in that the devastation taking place was, by some means, artistically expressed through instruments and the voice (Mbembe, 2006:88). Music was pervasively used such that even violent horrors were musicalized through screams, cries, moans, groans, and other forms of vocal utterances that resist language, to convey social pain. Mbembe comments "similar to melody, rhythm and percussion, screams can therefore be read as that which bridges the gap between pain and its expression in

language” (Mbembe, 2006:88). Mbothwe incorporates screams and cries in his vocal score, along with ululation, incantation, whistling, hand clapping and foot stomping.

In the grave scene of *Ingcwaba*, Mbothwe works with a soundscape of hollow cries and screams. The daughter figure, in search of her father, ends up somewhere among the dead. The chorus circles her, causing chaos around her. She calls out for her father, ‘Tata’. The collapsed travellers arise quickly, scurrying about, searching. They all become still when they find what they have been looking for. In the palm of their hands is the earth – the soil, their soil. They lower their bodies slowly until lying on their sides on the ground. They gesture as though they are gathering soil from the earth in their fists and let it fall to the ground; it is an unearthing. The daughter moves amongst them, careful not to step on them, careful not to disturb them. They sound like the dead – there are shrieks, wails, bellowing calls, moaning, screeching and howling. Still the daughter calls out for her father as the chorus surrounds her, wailing. The projection on the backdrop shows night-time travel. The screen is dark with only streetlights shining along a dimly lit road. We see a man’s feet walking alongside the road. Though physically and emotionally drained, the daughter still cries out ‘Tata’. The chorus delivers text that brings to mind the chanting style of a children’s game. What they are actually saying is:

A fist in the stomach is very painful, my eyes are lifted to the hills even though I do not see because of the bitter water running across my nose. Painfully enduring pain from the heavy hardships, my thoughts going up and down, my soul feeling down. I am finished like a tree without leaves. It was up and down those plains carrying darkness; in the middle of the night, the wailing and crying way into the fields (Mbothwe, 2009b).

In this imaginative world and in reality, the scream, the cry is where anxiety and pain collect in the body, the impact of which is powerfully disseminated through the voice. Indeed the cry, the scream is the anxiety-burdened, voiced assemblage of pain in these works but in *Ingcwaba*, the cry is also personified by song.

## **The Cry**

“It was a sound that broke the back of words” – Morrison, 1997:261

This section is pertinently titled ‘the cry’ for the reason that shedding tears and crying is perhaps the most recognizable way of corporeally and vocally expressing pain. In thinking

about the way pain is aesthetically expressed by these 21st century theatre makers in performance, crying (and crying out) is their most accessible expression. However crying also serves as a metaphor for the effect these works have on the seer. The cry reverberates, is at once distant and then comes up to meet you, be it in the piercing cry of a performer or a pained look of inexpressibility. The cry exists outside of pain's ability to automatically always articulate itself with verbal language and thus relies on crying out for expression.

This recalls for me, an iconic moment during the TRC, which witnessed Nomonde Calata's heart-wrenching cry. Calata offered her testimony as the wife of slain activist Fort Calata and she appeared quite early on in the commission's proceedings, inadvertently setting the tone for what was to unfold. "When witness Nomonde Calata broke into a loud wail during her testimony, this disconcerting cry has since become an emblematic moment in public memory" (Cole, 2010:11). Four people who have captured the poignancy and affect of this shaping moment in the commission's history, are the deputy chairperson of the commission Alex Boraine (2000), writer Antjie Krog (2002), scholar Catherine Cole (2010) and composer Phillip Miller in his TRC Cantata *ReWind* (2006). "The importance of this sound – a wail that transcended language, and in doing so, captured something elemental about the experience of gross violations of human rights – indicated the degree to which physical expression was central to the TRC process" (Cole, 2010:11).

This universal echo of pain, when Calata broke down in the middle of her evidence, was complex because her cry suggested the pain of a nation over many generations (Cole, 2002:78). Enclosed in that wail was the complicity of citizens, admonishment of perpetrators, grief, allegation against an evil system and shame because "it caught up in a single howl all the darkness and horror of the Apartheid years" (Boraine, 2000:102-103). Hers was a visceral and impulsive cry from the depths of her soul; "it was that cry from the soul that transformed the hearings from a litany of suffering and pain to an even deeper level" (102-103). For many it was too much to bear, too immediate and too painful a reminder to willingly listen to, but it became difficult to avoid because it was constantly repeated on SABC radio and television (102-103). Antjie Krog, with her poetic ability observes:

For me, the crying is the beginning of the Truth Commission – the signature tune, the definitive moment the ultimate sound of what the process is about. She was wearing this vivid orange-red dress, and she threw herself backwards and that sound...that sound... it will haunt me forever and ever... [T]o witness that cry was to witness the destruction of language...as to realize that to remember the past of this country is to be thrown back into a time before language. And to get that memory, to fix it in words, to capture it with the precise image, is to be present at the birth of language itself. But more practically, this particular memory at last captured in words, can no longer haunt you, push you around, bewilder you, because you have taken control of it – you can move it wherever you want to. So maybe that is what the Commission is all about – finding words for that cry of Nomonde Calata (Krog, 2002:43).

Krog suggests that we take control of painful memories through this kind of visceral expression. This is self-determination and agency. This is not mere storytelling, it is not just empty lamentation; this is empowering. Taking charge, through performance, of something as uncontrollable and volatile as sentiments, is a step towards recovery. Calata's wail was even sampled by composer Phillip Miller in his beautiful and unparalleled work, *ReWind: a cantata for voice, tape and testimony* (2006) ten years after the TRC. The cantata used music to articulate the proceedings during the TRC hearings. Some met this with criticism and disapproval but in an interview in the *Mail and Guardian*, Miller observes that "a project of this nature is subject to certain ethical considerations – the artist doesn't want to cheapen the testimonies, the sighs, the wails and traumas of the living and of those departed" (Meersman, 2006). Miller emphasizes that his work is not a TRC cantata but a personal artistic act.

Still, Calata's testimony catapulted her into unwanted eminence and became a defining moment in the commission's history. In July 2007 Catherine Cole recalls her visit with Nomonde Calata in her home in the farming town of Cradock in the Eastern Cape. Cole asked her how she felt about her cry becoming an iconic moment of the commission, the attention it gained as a talking point among analysts and its repeated transmission across South African media. As you would expect Calata relays that that kind of attention was unnecessary especially because it had come from ineffable heartache. "She answered, if only the people who are bringing this thing each and every time up would feel as I felt that day, they wouldn't have done it" (Cole, 2010:79). Calata also recalls her interpretation of her harrowing wail, citing that her emotions had long been pent up and contained and with that kind of repression the thing the afflicted wants to do most is to put that kind of troubling

pain outside of themselves: “that is why I screamed – because I wanted the pain to come out. I was tired of keeping it inside [...]” (Cole, 2010:79). Her hope for coming before the commission was both to release her emotions and to speak to people who would listen to her, wanting to place that pain outside of herself in the only way she knew how to let go at the time (Cole, 2010:79).

Calata was not the only witness to viscerally display her suffering, for the duration of the TRC proceedings; from time to time, several witnesses broke down. What made for a particularly surprising dynamic however, was the Chairperson of the Truth Commission, Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s periodical, candid weeping. His act of weeping “was, at once, authenticated as the primary site of 'truth' and discredited for its emotional 'excess'” (Bharucha, 2001:3767). Archbishop Tutu was criticized for what others saw as histrionic teary sentimentality that undermined his role. In fact his actions even affected victims and witnesses because “instead of interpreting the tears and cries of the victims as a 'non-verbal' symbol of the destruction of language through [the visceral exhibition of] pain” (and being accommodating of the victims and witnesses overwhelming emotions), the public exhibition of emotion became the basis on which accounts of ‘truth’ were mistrusted. Tears seemed to undermine the truth, tears make people suspicious and at that moment truth and tears contradict each other (Bharucha, 2001:3767).

In the ‘now moment’ though, I do not think that truth and tears contradict or oppose one another. If anything truth and tears are a realistic and human(e) response to one another. Nevertheless, only a few autonomous interlocutors of the TRC process were able to unpack the phenomenological difficulty of emotional breakdowns whilst revealing the truth, which underlie the witnesses' testimonies (Bharucha, 2001:3767).

I suppose it was not really the TRC’s priority and task to handle the non-verbal signs of telling – by which I mean interpreting what every cry, scream, sigh or moan meant. There was however, an amount of comfort offered to the testifying sufferers. There were comforters on hand to assist with the fallout but this was to console, not necessarily to extract the meanings of all non-verbal sounds. But performance in the ‘now moment’ is able to pay close attention to these non-verbal dimensions in an exploratory, empowered and structured way. Where the TRC did not automatically dwell on these non-verbal signs of the

expression of pain, performance of the now deliberately involves itself with these signs, choosing creatively to fashion them into performances that deal with pain in a direct and unashamed way. This is why I made mention earlier of the TRC serving as an antecedent to performance of the 'now moment'. But in the end we must not conflate the two, although homologous in their 'behaviour'. Of course the TRC as an event cannot be reduced to performance, whereas harnessing non-verbal signs as an authentic way of surpassing language through the voiced utterance of pain, is something that is aggressively taken on, by performance, in this 'now moment'.

In this manner, 'the cry' in performance of the 'now moment' can be viewed as a premeditated component of the 'beautiful pain syndrome'. Here 'the cry' encapsulates truthful and actual crying, artificial staged crying, crying out, the imagery that permeates the cry and the socio-political history of the gravity and profundity of the cry's origin. The cry signifies the conversion of pain and suffering into a social and artistic vessel, an imaginative medium that performatively aestheticizes the political. Nyamza works within this paradigm in her recent work *Isingqala* (2012). Loosely translated from isiXhosa to English, *isingqala* is that moment when one has been crying for so long or heavily that when the tears and the wailing eventually subside, all you are left with is catching your breath between barely audible whimpers. Nyamza writes:

Let me begin with the bigger picture – the country as a whole. I think we are in a state of *isingqala*, we are crying inside. This is a kind of 'aftermath'. In fact, we seem to be in a constant state of 'aftermath' or 'recovery'. This crying does not end, the sounds seem different but I feel they are for the same things, about the same things. We seem to say the same things, ask for the same things; we seem to cry for the same things and yet we seem not to understand one another. I wonder what happens when that quiet crying inside becomes sound, what happens when that 'private' becomes 'public'? When others find their own cries in you? I would say that this is the human condition of continuation as a cry (Nyamza, 2012).

From the beginning of the study, I have been calling attention to the phase of recovery that South Africans have been undergoing for several decades, struggling with the complexity of the 'after'. A moment from Cole's 2007 conversation with Calata iterates Nyamza's proposition. Cole asks Calata: "how do you feel when that cry is used over and over again" (Cole, 2010:79). To which Calata responds, "I feel sad. I feel sad. Because I still feel that I'm still crying... What came out of me, it's still there [...]" (Cole, 2010:79-80). The cry is still in

progress, it is unfinished. The cry is an individual as well as a collective reaction and image, because there is not only one kind of emotional reflexivity at work. Even in the kind of emotional autobiographical reflexivity that we see in *Huroyi Hwangu*, *A Face Like Mine*, *Ingcwaba* and *Hatched*, the affect elicits a collective response.

Yes, the TRC was an earlier and initial stage for 'the cry', which in this study is instructive to the continued, though different sounding, cries of the 'now moment'. The appropriation of 'the cry' is powerful because it is a life-saving expression of pain. What is evident in these performances of the 'now' is that performance is moving beyond simply re-experiencing pain. Perhaps a better way to articulate this is that the 're', which suggests a return to something, is redundant in this case. Perhaps this is because pain of this kind is not necessarily being experienced for the first time but is certainly being uttered in this particular way for the first time. The dis-ease might have been inherited from the past but the now predicament presents new cultural dis-ease/s and elicits its own different sounding cries.

### **Nostalgic hallucination/dream**

Mbothwe and Moyo's protagonists cry for the loss of home and what it represents as they find themselves unsettled and wandering with no basis of stability. The cry manifests as an imagined vision of home. This is the unfortunate dis-ease of the nostalgic; the beauty of home is always seen through the eyes of loss (Lerner, 1972:41).

According to *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, hallucination is "the apparent perception of an external object when there is no object present" (Brown, 1993:1178). In this study hallucination captures the nostalgic's dream of a real and imagined home, particularly Moyo and Mbothwe's focus on the elusiveness of home. We see this played out through their protagonist's spatial, psychological and emotional alternation between dream, reality and illusion. Hallucination, inducing a dream world, is the nostalgic's haunting and illusory vision of home.

In *Huroyi Hwangu* and *Ingcwaba*, the idea and image of an intact home and family is a fantasy. It is the nostalgic's fantasy, embodied by both the theatre maker and their protagonists. This dreamy notion of home is the prompt for the subtitle of Moyo's

*Composition Z: the House of Stone*. 'The House of Stone' pertains not only to Zimbabwe as the collapsing House of Stone (the word 'Zimbabwe' actually means 'houses of stone'), hinting at the declining socio-economic circumstances of the country. Moyo also defines the troubled House of Stone as based upon the very notion of identity or self, in the sense that migration is considered an exercise in destroying and then re-assembling or re-enacting one's sense of self and, then recreating one's identity in a new home or country (Moyo, 2009:72). But we soon discover that romanticised conceptions of returning to an idyllic home space or 'going home' are easily shattered. Where Moyo is disillusioned with the dream of homeplace, Mbothwe and his protagonists are still searching for home because the alternative position is too liminal and uncomfortable to handle.

The importance of this search is deeply rooted in Mbothwe's own preoccupation with his origins and fascination with the world of ancestry. Unable to cut the genealogical umbilical cord, both Mbothwe and Moyo grapple with their beginnings as the subject of their artistic and personal journeys. For South African born Mbothwe this includes identifying and acknowledging his Xhosa, Pedi and Sotho heritage. He grew up in Nyanga East Township<sup>27</sup>, spent most of his life in Cape Town and recently moved to King Williams Town<sup>28</sup> in the Eastern Cape, the birthplace of his father, grandfather and those that came before. He has now become a migrant, moving to the Eastern Cape for work opportunities. Mbothwe expresses how thrilled he is to be living and creating theatre in the Eastern Cape, to tell the stories that were never told, to re-write his own identity and to continue to trace his lineage (Mbothwe, 2011a). This is paramount because amongst the Xhosa, prominence is placed on the patrilocal home; "a strong patrilineal principle ensures that children belong to the kinship groups of their fathers", and to not know this is to suffer the unsettling burden of rootlessness (Carstens, 1982:513).

In *Ingcwaba*, Nozenza decides to leave her known home and community in search of her kinfolk and lineage. We are taken into a performance that depicts the dislocating circumstances for many Eastern Cape migrants. In the play, migration is an inevitable, socio-

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<sup>27</sup> Nyanga East is a township of Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>28</sup> King Williams Town is a city of the largely rural Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

economic necessity that carries its protagonists through a journey of pain, searching and longing. The history of migration from the Eastern Cape in the early 1960s marred the social landscape of many parts of the region by the absence of at least half of the adult men, completely devastating any hope of intact family units (Mager, 1998:657). The collapse of the rural economy also signified a crisis of social identity. The increasing absence of men disrupted established rituals and routines for achieving cultural ideals of masculinity and femininity. However, migration was not only a necessary end, there was also the temptation of freedom from lineage rule and marriage, not to mention the opportunity for economic gain (Mager, 1998:657). This conflict is illustrated by the husband/father figure in *Ingcwaba* who, as if sensing an oncoming outburst, attempts to defend himself and placate his wife when he sings a song about 'going to eGoli' – Gauteng, the so-called City of Gold – justifying his actions because he is searching for work. His wife, not comforted, questions the state of their union when she says:

Have you even given yourself the chance to miss home...They must take you. I will let those who move amongst bury you. You will not be buried here. For years, I had been moulding clay, so as to sculpt an image of myself outside of you but now this ring has become too heavy...where did you find the keys to this house of tears and pain? My time is in your hands. I was shielded by lies not knowing and abused by pain. Looking at marriage, I felt I was on the other side of the fire (Mbothwe, 2009b).

Through the wife's cutting words, we get an impression of how much pain migration has caused and how it has destabilized familial structure.

This fixation with home, origin and lineage is exactly what prompted the conception of *Ingcwaba*, Mbothwe says:

We are all searching for somewhere to belong to, somewhere we call home, and it is unfortunate that we will depart this life still in search of that home. What we hunt for is not always what we really desire, so we remain on the road searching for what in most cases is already within us. We search for a fixed point: something to go back to, something to clutch on to, and something that we will leave behind for those following us. Home in an African culture is everything and the place or location is central. It is always associated figuratively and literally with words such as roots, the fall of the umbilical cord, the grave, earth, history, clans, and ancestors. If you don't visit or don't know where your home is, it is said that bad luck will follow you. Without home you are not protected. You are not fixed. You are just a wind (Mbothwe, 2009a).

The husband, father figure in *Ingcwaba* obsesses with the dream of a past home:

I had a dream last night. I was home. I smelt cow dung. I saw my ancestor's graves. I tasted fear on my breath when I saw the great home of Mkhontsho in ruins. I saw the difference between the smoke of samp and that of African beer. I picked up the decanter and poured out the first sip. I held the spear of the great Mpandla clan (Mbothwe, 2009b).

In this vivid image, his dream of home is lucid, although in the play, home is always a hallucinatory vision presented as an evocation and always with a degree of longing. That is why the following phrases are continuously repeated: "let us go home", "I was home", "I saw the great home", and "carry me on your back my home", "home at last", "remember home"? (Mbothwe, 2009b). Home, although ephemeral, is the only destination which will bring peace. Home almost gains numinous, human-like qualities, it becomes personified.

Homeplace is gendered in *Ingcwaba*. While the father is the wandering migrant who leaves home, it is the women who stay behind – with the exception of Nozenza who attempts to leave but we are not quite sure whether or not she succeeds. The young daughter also leaves home to look for her father but is followed by her mother who commands her to return. In the face of the palpable absence of the men, emotions are not only attached to a house, they are about home, what the homeplace represents, rather than the edifice; and at the centre of that, are women. When both girls are commanded to stay home by the mother figure and Thembekile respectively, we see the two girl figures weeping in the laps of their respective matriarch figures. But the two do not oblige without a fight. The daughter figure says to her mother: "Mama, this road calls me; waving for me to come, it is overwhelming. 'Masigoduke' (let us go home)" (Mbothwe, 2009b). This prompts an immediate response from the mother who does not like this at all; she waves a threatening finger at her daughter. She will not let her go; she does not want her to go. She orders the girl to sit down, looking at her in anger and disappointment. The girl reaches out to her and her mother slaps her hand out of her way, rejecting her offering. The girl asks for her mother's blessing to go search for her father, to which the mother responds with 'mxim' (a dismissive assertion). The girl asks again and her mother shouts 'mxim'. The girl, forcing herself onto her mother and embracing her from behind, says:

I heard my mother's bitter scream, the offspring is the enemy, please explain. I heard my mother's bitter scream. Help me understand. I heard my mother's bitter scream, suddenly

deep, even earthworms don't eat it. I lost the pipe when the grave sang. Give me your coat of patience (Mbothwe, 2009b).

Her mother continues to say no, she does not want her daughter to leave home. She cannot believe the defiance of the young girl! The daughter reaches up towards the sky with one arm; with the other she mimes a pair of scissors that will cut the cord. This is the imaginary cord that was fastened by her mother at the beginning of the play, the imaginary cord that was cut earlier by her husband evoking a visceral response from his wife. This is the connection, the thread – the centre that holds it all together. What will this gesture do to her mother now? The daughter 'cuts' the cord and this prompts an intuitive flinching from her mother who clutches at her stomach in pain. The family is no longer intact. The father, the head of the family, is absent. The daughter, in a bid to search for some kind of wholeness and parts of her missing identity, leaves to search for her father. What can the mother do now? The chorus look at her with compassion as she clasps her abdomen.

The mother is eventually led to a cemetery where she searches for her daughter who has fled and is now roaming among the tombstones in the graveyard. She moves amongst the tombs, touches the ground and flinches. Hallucinating, she imagines she sees her daughter, but she does not really see her. Her daughter eventually makes herself known and when she does, her mother says:

Tie the spear around your waist. The pains from this burden are itchy and make me sad; trying to defeat me, the heaviness of my sins. This silent thing in me is trying to get away. Flesh that comes from hunting is only thrown to the dogs. I am held down by your mistakes (Mbothwe, 2009b).

It is nearing the end of the play now and this insistent back and forth between mother and daughter to some extent captures the despondency of the effects of migration. Even so, the determined journeying back to the beginning is anticipated. Anxiety is heightened when the mother and daughter exclaim, "Sometimes I feel like screaming in despair" (Mbothwe, 2009b). This is at the height of their anger and fretfulness; this is when unsettlement proves to be so overwhelming that they wish to relinquish all connection to everything. When there is nothing else to be done or spoken, the place we go to is the beginning, to that scream 'back to our places of birth', our origin (Stockenstrom, 2006:42). Indeed, here we see that the dream of home is one filled with matriarchs who remain at its heart.

The concept and dream of home in *Huroyi Hwangu* is also gendered in the sense that, for Moyo, the deaths of her grandmothers deeply affected her and incited her quest for her cultural origins that drives the creative imagery in the *Compositions* series. The matriarch figure is also central to *Huroyi Hwangu* and is embodied by the Old Woman ancestral figure and the Grandmother puppet. Moyo recalls her actual journey back to her beginnings:

During a trip home to Zambia [to where her parents eventually moved] to visit my parents in December 2006, I embarked on a research to discover more about my 'roots'. Such an excavation had always seemed clichéd and superficial to me in the past. But this time, and quite suddenly, I was spurred on by the idea that I might find something: something that might help to alleviate the sense of detachment and displacement I had been experiencing for some time. I cannot now name the exact reasons for my sudden interest in learning more about my Venda heritage, suffice to say that I had in mind from the outset some creative project which I hoped would grow out of my discoveries (Moyo, 2009:16).

She then recounts the passing of her grandmother that remains a bright stain on her memory:

One week after writing about the phantom of the old woman, my paternal grandmother passed away. That night, my father and I sit together and watch a few family videos, remembering my grandmother in the images and in our conversation. There is a heavy, slow feel to the atmosphere in the house, and everything seems suspended in disbelief and unreality...In this atmosphere of mourning and loss I am struck by the transience of each present moment, and by the lack of her presence in the still and moving images that I am seeing. Even now as I write this paragraph and remember that experience, there is a loss contained in the words as though someone had cut her out of the entire realm of reality, history, and time. Coincidentally – I think – the last time I went home for a family Christmas in 2004, my mother's mother passed away, and shortly after her death I experienced my second major emotional breakdown in 2005 (Moyo, 2009:37).

Moyo's exploration of these matriarch figures in her creative work – the Grandmother puppet and the Old Woman – perhaps signifies a nostalgic longing for the relationship with her paternal grandmother. She says: "It is a strange feeling for me to not have living grandparents. My paternal grandmother was my last surviving grandparent. At her burial, I was struck by a strange feeling of rootless-ness, as though I no longer have a past; no longer have a history or an origin" (Moyo, 2009:44).

As a result, Moyo writes a Grandmother puppet into *Huroyi Hwangu*. The Grandmother in the work says:

*Nyika yaparara. Vana mazuva ano, va kuda kutiza misha, vachi jamba ma border. Iwe, mwana wangu, enda hako. Wonozvitsvakira kana ka slice, one, kechingwa. Kana ka teaspoon ke suga. Kana ka five litre ke petrol. Asi, ziva kwewakabva.*

[The world is finished, dead. Children these days, they want to run away from home, and they jump borders. You, my child, go on. You can find yourself even one little slice of bread. Even a little teaspoon of sugar. Even a little five litre of petrol. But know, remember where you came from] (Moyo, 2009:95).

Although the Grandmother in *Huroyi Hwangu* is encouraging survival by migrating, really she is cautioning the ‘children these days’ to have some sort of connection to their homeplace and to have some sense of belonging through history and community. Moyo becomes conscious of the fact that this Grandmother character may be speaking for her own grandmother. She reiterates that it is “as though she spoke from a time and a place long before ‘me, here, now’”. But now that word ‘grandmother’ has almost become an empty sign, for behind it there is no longer a living being to touch and see and talk with, to make the past real” (Moyo, 2009:44). That woman-centred attachment is never fully lost though; it becomes evident in the spiritual links that the liminal Dombo has with the Old Woman who invokes Dombo’s appearance.

Overcome by nostalgia, you can forget your actual past. Nostalgia is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is the reaction to loss and displacement but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy (Boym, 2001:xiii). The image of nostalgia has often been set-up as a double disclosure or a juxtaposition of two images – of home and abroad, past and present, dream and everyday life. Nostalgia is a kind of homesickness, a pain (algos) or longing to return home (nostos) or to some lost past (Pickering & Kehde, 1997:9). A revisiting of symbols of home through performance temporarily alleviates the pain by transmitting a nostalgic image that has been distilled and elucidated in order to substitute the indistinctness of flawed memory with aesthetic interpretation (Pickering & Kehde, 1997:9). The loss, painful as it may be, is transformed by nostalgic recollection into a beautiful form, because beauty as an ideal survives even through the most difficult of times (Pickering & Kehde, 1997:9). Let us consider beauty to be a form and pattern of behaviour for enduring feelings of anxiety and nostalgia. This is why Mbothwe’s protagonists can be breathtakingly melancholic and devastatingly poetic in their verbal outpouring of longing. In playwright and academic Svetlana Boym’s terms, nostalgia can be ‘restorative’ or ‘reflective’.

“If restorative nostalgia ends up reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and spatialize time, reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space” (Boym, 2001:49). While longing is universal, nostalgia can be unsettling. How can one be homesick for a home one never had or does not remember? Nostalgia depends on this kind of paradox and unpredictability and nostalgics find it difficult to locate exactly what it is they are yearning or searching for. At first glance nostalgia is a longing for place but actually it is also a yearning for a different time – the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams (Boym, 2001:xiv). Nevertheless, in reality Moyo has had to come to terms with her withdrawal from and disenchantment with home, despite her nostalgic inclinations.

My mother used to call us ‘the rolling stones’ because our family never seemed to stay in one house, city or neighbourhood for more than five years at a time...I remember that I was slightly nervous about moving. I envied my cousins, because they had lived in the same house since birth and had never had to be uprooted. But, once we were all packed and we got onto the road, I found myself wishing that the journey would never end. There was something quite comforting and pleasant about the experience, a hopeful promise contained in the imminence of something new. The prolonged anticipation allowed me to create this new experience in my imagination and shape it to my fancy...My journeys no longer seem to promise as much as they did before. I have not lived in Zimbabwe for nearly ten years, and on the occasional visit there I am confronted by the strangeness of this place that was once so familiar. Home is now instead a haunted space (Moyo, 2009:71).

Where Moyo used to seek comfort in unknowing, she must now be consoled by the reality that she will never know home, as it was, again. Mbothwe and his protagonists emphasize the importance of knowing homeplace and connecting with one’s present rootedness otherwise you are always wandering and unsettled. But really, for both Moyo and Mbothwe’s protagonists, the illusion of home is shattered. Home is now associated with anxiety and is a disturbing place to envision. The place you remember no longer is; it is not as you thought it would be, and perhaps it never was. This is why the troubled nostalgic can only cling to their vivid hallucinations and dreams of home. The pain lies in the unbearable beauty of the subject’s nostalgic dream of home (Lerner, 1972:47).

Uncomfortable attachments are characterised by ambivalence through the symptoms of unsettlement and anxiety. Unsettlement plays out through disrupting established notions of black womanhood, surveying migrant disorder around feelings of home, and examining

unsettled sexual identity. Anxiety emerges from separating oneself from established community, in favour of affirming one's individual identity, and as a result remaining in the liminal. Anxiety also emerges as a consequence of exposing shame and revealing latent feelings of anger. All of this materializes corporeally through visceral and vocal acts that involve hysteria, vocality and nostalgic hallucination. I have dealt so fully with emotionality because it is the beautiful vehicle by which pain can become visible, identifiable, acknowledged and possibly even transformed, which is examined in Chapter Four.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RITES OF PASSAGE

If Chapter Four about *feeling*, then this chapter is about *doing*. Emotions do things, yes. They urge the theatre maker to perform rites of passage. The rite is an act, it is a doing, and what it does is observe movement through time, body and emotion. Chapter Four aims its attention at feeling and sentiments, interrogating the integrity of choices, the state of identities and reflecting upon notions of selfhood. This chapter is about the rite, the concrete performative action insisted upon by the uncomfortable attachments explicated in Chapter Four. Chapter Four is about how emotional states impel the need for transformation; this chapter is about making and marking the transformation. Individuation might be the consequence of the rite and its intention, but now the focus is on the rite as a performative and aesthetic process. Rites are not solely about the narrative of the performance, but the ritual within the stage action. In other words, the focus is not on what the individuation does, but rather the rite itself, because it facilitates those undergoing transformation, to transform.

Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa's works are rites of passage works in various ways. There is a determined sense of needing to pass through some moment, some ordeal and some period in order to get to the next stage. Rites of passage consist of rituals that facilitate passing through and moving on. This is a particular type of transformation the theatre makers are involved in. Rites of passage facilitate such transformations, these points of turning at which one is encouraged to observe change, to honour transformation, to respect passing from stage A to B and pay attention to and absorb the implications. This noticed change is what permits passage from one stage to the next. When I talk of rites of passage, I am not only alluding to physical movement from one place to another; I include changes in identity and consciousness. Moreover this kind of passage is time oriented thus rites of passage involve both spatial and durational elements. In studying rites of passage and ritual, Van Gennep acknowledges that the meaning and operation of every single rite is not easy to know. This is why Van Gennep finds it essential to conceptualise rites and his taxonomy is what I use in this examination of rites of passage. In addition, I refer to Erika Fischer-Lichte and Victor Turner who both expatiate Van Gennep's findings instructively.

In my study rites of passage are therefore discussed as performative practices of transformation. These are the favourable circumstances that these theatre makers create; the space and time to mark changes in identity and in their state of being. The purpose of engaging in the ritual of theatre making may be in the hope that some kind of transformation is achieved through it. Therefore the act of making these works is also a rite of passage. The rite of passage is in the plot, the performance structure and the individual theatre maker's personal narrative. This is why this section also looks at what the ritual of performance achieves, what it is trying to move towards. Through performance, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa especially, get to publicly demonstrate profound changes in their lives and identities while embracing paradox and incompatibilities. The act of performing itself can be regarded as a phase in the progression of the rites of passage. After separation or withdrawal, the theatre makers and their performing subjects enter a new state where

they have all transgressed the boundary separating the 'normal' state from the different worlds – in to what Turner calls a state of liminality – which allows for many other kinds of transgression and, accordingly for new, sometimes shocking, confusing, horrible, in short, unbearable experiences (Fischer-Lichte, 2005:38).

A leading work to consider in the discussion of rites of passage is French/Dutch anthropologist, ethnographer and folklorist Arnold van Gennep's study, *The Rites of Passage* (1960), which investigates the practice of transformation, though he focuses primarily on initiation rites. While it must be noted that this work may be considered dated and an unlikely framework for my analysis, I found his triad of separation, transition and incorporation rites to be illuminating and useful. Van Gennep's scheme aids in outlining the ritualist features of the performances under discussion. Of course I recognize that Van Gennep's triad of separation, transition and incorporation rites deal with ritual practices that transpire in time and space with the intention of constructing gendered subjects within a community. However, I am using Van Gennep's phases to expose the dramaturgy of the works in my analysis. Van Gennep's rubric does not always fit neatly into my analysis as it must be noted that these are theatrical acts, which are very much restricted by time and space – they are set at established times and usually in a theatrically constructed space – not across months between the villages, bush and initiation huts – as in the rituals Van Gennep investigates. Theatrical acts are also watched, for the most part, by seated spectators who, while they may experience aspects of ambivalence and transformative affects, can remain

somewhat unchanged by the acts they witness. This is unlike the participants and initiates in Van Gennep's analysis, where a psychological and often physical transformation is required. Still there is an analogous emotional process for these theatre makers and their performing subjects, in that, in my analysis they (and not automatically the spectators who are privy to the experience) are also physically, psychologically, emotionally and otherwise changed – the performing subjects go through some kind of a transformation. I apply Van Gennep's triad of separation, transition and incorporation to assist me in explicating these works of beautiful pain.

Turner explains that Van Gennep's use of 'rite of passage' should be both for rituals accompanying an individual's or a group's change in social status; whereas the term has come to be used almost exclusively in connection with 'life-crisis' rituals (Turner, 1982:24). Nevertheless development or growth must not be confused and perceived as crisis, for this is the natural progression of life. Before going any further, let me mention author and journalist Gail Sheehy's *Passages* (1976) which also investigates the practice of transformation. I appreciate Sheehy's conversational and relaxed approach to the subject and recognize the parallels with this study. What I call uncomfortable attachments, Sheehy calls points of crisis or disruption. Rather than being continually bewildered by these moments of crisis in which we fumble about, trying to determine their connection with external forces or influences, Sheehy suggests that we begin by inspecting ourselves first; and scrutinize the 'dis-ease' that persists in our minds (Sheehy, 1976:14). Rather than denote crisis as negative, Sheehy asks that we consider these moments of 'crises' to be points of turning – passages. Thus 'crisis' in this study is about crucial stages of turning, of paradox. So we see that crisis is not a negative moment of weakness but an awakening, an opening. Where this awakening occurs and what comes after the break/crisis is also an essential part of my investigation.

Van Gennep detects patterns in the arrangement of rites and configures the process of transformation into three phases; rites of separation, transition and incorporation. These three sub-categories are not used or elaborated to the same extent or in every ritual system, nor are they always of equal importance (Van Gennep, 1960:11). In my analysis these rites are acts of self-examination, self-determination and self-development. Here rites of passage

facilitate inner life experience, turning points, truth-telling, and points of experimentation. Our rites of passage require that we shed a protective defensive layer of denial and consent to being wide open and embryonic as the figures in all the works do so unequivocally (Sheehy, 1976:30). Perhaps the most telling thing that Sheehy explicates is how we need to credit our internal life systems for life's crucial shifts as much as we prioritize outer forces. Therefore instead of always looking to these outward events which no doubt have great influence, we could also turn the mirror on ourselves and admit "there is some unknown disturbance within me and even though it is painful, I feel I have to stay with it and ride it out" (Sheehy, 1976:30). This is what these theatre makers are doing through performance – allocating imaginative and aesthetic meaning to the troubling and painful stages of life's passage.

The first phase Van Gennep posits is the separation phase – this is where those who are about to experience a transformation are alienated from and disturbed by their everyday life and social location (or positioning). In other words those who are about to undergo transformation, feel disconnected from their past place, time and social position (Fischer-Lichte, 2005:36). Also, the subject, in real terms, actually separates herself/himself in this phase. The second phase Van Gennep discusses is the transition or transformation phase; here the subject is in an in-between situation where uncertainty is expected. Being between different worlds permits entirely new, sometimes threatening experiences. This is the phase Victor Turner called 'liminal'. The last phase Van Gennep deliberates on is the integration phase where the newly transformed are reintegrated into the collective, and socially accepted in their new position. Integration is what is being negotiated in the 'now moment'. By this I mean that Phewa and Moyo, for instance, are still negotiating how and where they might be integrated into an accepting community because the feelings of unsettlement and anxiety, for them, still linger.

In this study, passage does not occur at the same time or pace, is not always clearly marked or enacted and some actions can simultaneously fall into two rites of passage categories. Van Gennep's starting point for what he considers to be passage is the transgression of a discernible boundary, passing from one place or state to another (Fischer-Lichte, 2005:36). To transgress a boundary in the works of Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa demands a

risk because safe passage is not guaranteed, both for the individual and the community involved (Fischer-Lichte, 2005:36). But the protagonists in these works are incited to move from their present place even if it means vacillating in an uncomfortable space for some time. We see this in all the works, when separation – even where deliberate – from a known place/self sees the subject dithering in a liminal state for extended periods. Separation and liminality occur in overlapping sequential waves. Although the separation, the initial break is important, emphasis is placed on what happens after. The liminal is the state that the works, their subjects and the theatre makers persist in. *Ingcwaba* is a world of liminality for the individual and the community alike. Though I emphasise the separation of the father – as it pertains to the absence of fathers and husbands as a result of economic migration – it is a liminal state that the father and the other figures are operating in. In *A Face Like Mine* though, separation and subsequently, a liminal state, is the only option for the girl because she can feel herself transforming despite feeling unsafe and unwelcomed in her community. She is constantly moving between separation and liminality and it is a conflict that has her perpetually placing herself with, as and against. Moyo is always in a liminal state as *Dombo*. Her migrant identity moves her past separation and pushes her into the liminal as she negotiates herself into a space of alleviation, or at least protection from the risk of the liminal, by painting herself blue. Separation is felt automatically because of her national ‘otherness’, but it is in the liminal, through *Dombo*, that she attempts to compose her migrant identity. Of all the works, *Hatched* is the work where all three phases are, in some manner, signalled and carried through. Integration is complicated in these works because while there is resolution in the form of a choice or decision, there is also a sense that these are subjects still in flux even after the spectators have left and the lights have been switched on. Passage implies motion, not a position. I will examine each phase – separation, liminal and integration – in accordance with their sequential development.

### **The separation phase**

The separation phase is a cause for anxiety and dis-ease because of the intimation of departure or withdrawal. Being part of a collective can consume you. In it you can languish, your voice can regress, it can be confusing, false and exceedingly painful, particularly when one feels stifled, unaccepted or disingenuous which is what is thoroughly explored in the

works of Moyo, Phewa and Nyamza. Mbothwe is aware of the danger of losing one's individuality within community, and being separated, or feeling a sense of withdrawal from community, even if it is a community you have been part of your whole life (Mbothwe, 2011b). In some instances, it is clearly the theatre maker's prerogative and in other instances the theatre maker speaks through a protagonist.

This phase is also a hopeful time however, because the individual uses this time as an occasion for self-examination, analysis and searching. Krueger holds the view that in:

defining oneself as an individual there may be a certain regret at having to relinquish one's sense of association, of belonging...Individuality, being defined by separation, is also associated with suffering...It does cast new light on philosophies which exhort one to find oneself in order to be happy, when the act of separating oneself from a community in order to achieve this, may well have the opposite effect (2010:15).

In this phase close attention must be paid to symbolic behaviour and processes which enact separation like Nyamza, who undergoes an embodied process of withdrawal through a physical separation from her child (motherhood), the clothesline (domestic sphere) and the clothing (identity) that defines her. Or in *Ingcwaba* when the husband who, in search of work, separates from his family, his community and his home. A close reading shows that the rites around his parting, the symbolic cutting of the umbilical cord and the ritual washing/cleansing, detaches the ritual subject from their accustomed social framework and relations. While the separation phase can stimulate feelings of anxiety; this phase is also bursting with the prospect of creative fecundity. This time is used to search for a possible direction. The separation phase presents the challenge of removing oneself from the social collective; it is a time of disentangling and embracing the difficulty this entails.

Nyamza performs separation when she decides to detach herself from the clothesline. In doing this, she separates herself from conventional ideas of a woman's work: performing expected domestic duties, cleaning, washing, but more importantly, she separates from assumed notions of 'black African' mothers/women. First she appears as a figure wearing a white tutu with wooden clothespins attached to it and ballet shoes, while carrying a zinc bucket on her head. She is dutifully performing her womanly chores, hanging clothes on the clothesline and as she performs this task, the red skirt fills the stage. Each gesture she makes depicts how difficult it is for her to break free from who she thinks she should be and others know and expect her to be. Wearing that stifling red skirt is Nyamza's moment of crisis but

by removing the skirt, she breaks free from her previous social status. She slowly turns her body; the skirt is lifted from the table and winds around her. The more she is entangled in the red skirt, the more it pulls away from her son. Her son, under the table, is put on full view. She moves away from him as she continues to move nearer to the clothesline, the skirt wrapping around her body with each turn. She moves away from him because separating involves withdrawal even if it is from loved ones, she will self-examine what constitutes 'motherhood' for her outside of the limits of tradition and when it is time re-connect with her son again. When she reaches the clothesline, she continues to move even further back, lifting the clothesline over her head and drawing her body away from it. She is pulling away from the kind of womanly expectations that see her toiling and exerting herself on the clothesline. Behind the clothesline she begins unravelling, letting the skirt separate from her body metre by metre until at last, she falls to the ground and uproariously kicks the remaining piece of the skirt away from her body.

In disentangling, as she explores the foreignness of her freed body, she is discovering a new self wriggling her limbs about. Nyamza fights to stand up even when it is a great effort and her limbs fail her. We witness her moving away from her son, the clothesline and removing the skirt (feminine ideals) that has restricted her. The decision to do so does not come easy; Nyamza moves meticulously slowly – it takes her six minutes to perform this. Her face is the picture of suffering; she takes short breaths and never once looks down at her son. Instead, unperturbed, he even assists her by shrugging the skirt from his face and body. In this physical and emotional separation she chooses to break away from the restrictions of custom in favour of exploring the act of individuation. She separates from convention when it is painful, terrifying and even dangerous to do so but she nonetheless separates because of her commitment to her truth.

The inspiring thing about this passage is that the theatre makers are able to work it to their advantage, both in theatre making and in their personal lives. With Moyo, for instance, real immigration precedes the separation passage. Although her move is pre-determined and involuntary, she is able to harness the uncertainty and unfamiliarity of it to her creative advantage such that what may have begun as an enforced disruption becomes a conscious and therefore empowering, ameliorative aesthetic process. Whereas for Nyamza, Phewa

and Mbothwe, the decision to embark on this passage in the 'now moment' is to an extent anticipated. The theatre makers are publically investigating the dis-ease they experience in this 'now moment', even when this exploration might provoke feelings of separation. It is not because you are somehow cast out, or cut off from the public, but that you must extricate your self to figure out who and what you are, outside of the collective.

Moyo underwent migration, an involuntary act of separation that propelled her into passage. Although her passage was initiated by her father's decision to move to South Africa, the resettlement precipitated a crisis. When we talk of rites of passage, the passage refers to changing from one social status to another often embodied in a corresponding movement through space. This can also include a geographical move. Thus real and permanent change of dwelling or geographical location can be a precursor to performing rites of separation (Turner, 1982:25), as is the case with Moyo. Awelani Moyo was born in Zimbabwe and is of Shona and Venda heritage. Being an immigrant in South Africa, Moyo is, according to *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, "a person who settles as a permanent resident in a different country" (Brown, 1993:1315). She recalls her exodus from Zimbabwe to South Africa, her family's (im)migration as a hope-filled plummeting into the depths of the unknown:

I was fourteen years old when the news of our family's planned migration was confirmed. As the first waves of unrest began to ripple across Zimbabwe in 1999, with farm invasions turning violent in the rural outskirts and mass stay-aways a frequent occurrence in the urban areas, the timing of our departure seemed almost perfect. From the moment our plans were finalized, I was excited at the chance to 'start a new life'; it seemed like the perfect opportunity to re-invent myself. I remember the build-up to the move, the thrill of the experience when I finally arrived in South Africa; and at last the strange newness of the foreign surroundings. I remember also, beneath all of this, the thinly veiled anxiety that surfaced as I began to grapple with this question of identity and belonging. Our move was a prolonged, drawn out process and it is perhaps because of this that quite some time before the physical act of moving from Zimbabwe to South Africa, I had already begun to experience this migration. It was, then, as much a mental process as it was a physical one (Moyo, 2009:11).

Migrancy also suggests the transformative shift from one state to another in one's consciousness.

Colonization and subsequently apartheid sought to discourage migration by establishing borders, by way of instituting pass books for example (Mbembe, 2007:27). This is

inconsistent with the culture of migration in Africa, in which people continuously moved throughout the continent (Mbembe, 2007:27). In contemporary Southern Africa and perhaps many other places, migration is “intensifying fear and reaction, and, at the same time creating more zones of cultural contact with creative constructions of identity and belonging” (Benmayor & Skotnes, 2005:vii). In this ‘now moment’ and especially after the upsurge of xenophobic violence that marked 2008, migration has emerged as an underlying theme in South African theatre, evident in Mark Fleishman’s *Every Year, Every Day, I am Walking* (2006) and Jonathan Nkala’s autobiographical play, *The Crossing* (2008) where he performs a real-life account of his own illegal border jumping from Zimbabwe to South Africa. *Infecting the City*’s 2009 theme was ‘Home Affairs’.<sup>29</sup> There were three prominent works, *Limbo*, *Amakwerekwere* and *Exile*, which spoke directly to themes of immigration, xenophobia and displacement. *Limbo* took place in Church Square, an historical Cape Town monument marking the place where white slave-owners bought foreigners. The work dealt with the suspended experience of refugees and immigrants in South Africa, conceptualised around the reality of the often dangerous journeys from the home country; applying for papers, visas, social grants, work permits and the intimidation, discrimination and insecurity around all of the red tape. *Amakwerekwere* explored the epidemic of xenophobia in South Africa, citizens’ reactions to immigrants portrayed as preconceptions, bigotry and stereotypes. *Exile* took place in and around Cape Town’s iconic Adderley Street fountains. The piece examined what describes our national identity, the place we were born, the place we live in, or the place we call ‘home’? What if, as a result of dislocation, home is nowhere at all except for the recollections, dreams and stories we carry within us? The politics of the body and language manifest strongly in the migrant condition in South Africa and theatre allows for the exploration of this through performative acts.

Impelled by her immigrant condition, Moyo employs what Van Gennep calls a direct rite (1960:8), one that generates immediate effect without interference from an outside

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<sup>29</sup>Infecting the City is an annual festival of provocative new site-specific international performance works, then curated by Brett Bailey and currently curated by Assoc. Prof. Jay Pather. The festival began in 2008, turning the Cape Town CBD into an edgy theatre venue to exhibit diverse, thought-provoking, well-crafted collaborative performance works.

intermediary, by creating her 'othered' protagonist, Dombo. Moyo performs this act of separation into the solitary blue figure. Dombo's blueness renders her stateless and liminal thus impelling the passage of separating. Her blueness distances her from any identifiable community, which is unavoidable if she is fully to conceive of and embody a new migrant identity. Through separating herself in this way, her blue de-racialized body makes her unknowable.

Moyo assumes the role of the unnameable and indecipherable Dombo and then narrates the story of Nainai. The story of Nainai reiterates the changes of identity ritualistically because of external influences. Rejected by her community, Nainai returns in multiple forms, undergoing physical and emotional transformations. First she is known as the "beautiful bird" that dives into the water, and then she is called the "blue woman", after which she is repeatedly stoned for her misbehaviour (shunned as a consequence of her otherness). When she dives into the water again, this time to soothe her burning skin, she is named "the woman of water". Lastly, after drought strikes the land and the earth swallows her, she emerges again and they call her the "woman of glass" but she falls to the ground and is shattered into a million tiny fragments that spread out across the earth. In the story Nainai is always in flux, constantly transforming and moving, both in the flesh and emotionally. The blue outcast is perpetuated and evoked through Dombo's corporeal separation. The Old Woman figure invokes ritual – and as an ancestral emissary, calls upon Dombo and the figure of the woman who washes. Thus the interactive troika of body, space and journeying lends itself to migration (spatial passage) as a rite of separation.

Still Nainai is not the only figure in passage to unfamiliar identities. Moyo explores transitions from girlhood, to womanhood and to the elderly matriarch. Inspired by her grandmothers and those that came before, the Old Woman embodies this in *Huroyi Hwangu* by taking the role of a kind of ancestral figure. Nevertheless these transitions are indistinct, the separated Dombo, for instance, is girlish in her manner. Her costume is a hybrid mixture of elements from several African cultures. Moyo combines glass beads with a striped loincloth, both of which are worn during Venda initiation rites for girls (Moyo, 2009:55). But perhaps it is Dombo's blue mark of separation that causes her to regress, to be childlike, almost feral. The Old Woman summons Dombo's presence. We are first introduced to the

Old Woman figure when she hobbles in, walking with a cane, draped in fabric and carrying her bag of rocks. With a white mask concealing her face, she walks to the centre of the circular space demarcated with rock, sand, stone, logs, water-filled jugs, eggshells, leaves and other material. Ritual spaces are often delineated by a circle of stones, a kind of symbolic barrier or enclosed space – although this alone is not enough to create a ‘sacred’ space. The space must hold some numinous quality of its own (Moore, 1991:16), which the Old Woman assists in creating as she bends over a large water-filled Perspex bowl. She undoes the fabric draped over her dress and cradles it tenderly in her arms as though it were a baby, rocking back and forth. Suddenly she gasps and discards the piece of fabric – throwing it far from her person – this blue unwanted fabric foreshadows the ostracized Nainai and the self-exiled Dombo. What the Old Woman does next is indicative of what Van Gennep calls an indirect rite – a vow, a prayer – a kind of opening act which sets into motion some autonomous, embodied or material force (Van Gennep, 1960:8). She kneels over the bowl and repeats a gestural sequence that involves sinuous arm movements; stretching her hands over her head and extending them to her sides as she hums what sounds like a spiritual invocation. The repetition of this gestural sequence prompts Dombo’s hatching from beneath a pile of newspapers. She emerges quite feeble and bird-like and as she rises to the tips of her toes, her head twitches from side to side. She shuffles forward and gasps quite loudly, inciting the grandmother figure to rise suddenly grunting and making guttural noises as she runs around the circular space. Dombo having frightened herself as well, runs wildly in the space screaming, crowing, and following which, runs into the cage and transforms into the narrator who sings ‘tell me a story’ and begins to recount the story of Nainai.

Turner expounds that, of Van Gennep’s three phases, the separation phase is the one that demarcates sacred space and time most clearly (Turner, 1982:24). Fittingly then in *Ingcwaba*, aiding in the symbolic behaviour of separation rites, articles of clothing and objects are treated in a sacred manner – particularly those belonging to or associated with the husband/father: the letter, the stone, his shoes, his hat, the bowl filled with water, the bowl filled with burning *imphepho* and his blazer. They are endowed with numinous qualities and are treated with such care because of what they mean to the individual, and what they represent of him to his family. The combined handling of objects and treatment of time and

recurrences, render certain moments ritualistic. Time is slowed down in these instances. For example, the ritual of the stone recurs. First the stone is handed to the father by his daughter. She rubs it on her body and gives it to him so that he may carry a part of her with him wherever he goes. Then, with care, he clutches the stone in his grip. In ceremonial behaviour the woman in white unveils his suitcase, she places it at the centre of the stage and props it open carefully while kneeling. Stepping backwards with her gaze lowered, she walks away from the open suitcase. The man turns to her and places the stone gently in her hand. Handling it devotedly, she steps forward again with the stone in the palm of her hands and places it graciously in the open suitcase. A song erupts from the chorus accompanied by rhythmic drumming. Prompted by the music, the daughter reaches behind her to grab her father's shoes, she hands these over to her mother carefully. The wife taking her time, and cherishing the shoes in her grasp, walks over to the woman in white and hands the shoes to her, bowing before her as she passes the shoes on. The woman in white places the shoes on the margins of the stage. The husband then hands a different pair of his shoes to his wife. They replace the old shoes that were taken away by the woman in white. In the boisterous musical ceremony, two chorus members approach the man and his suitcase; one hands a handkerchief to the man that he places in his pocket and the other places a bottle of brandy in his suitcase. As the music subsides the woman in white closes the suitcase and hands it over to the man. In calculatingly slowed down action, the husband waves at his wife and daughter with his suitcase in hand. The daughter and wife wave back as they embrace one another. The man exits the space. This slowed down ritual occurs over five minutes, there is conscientious attention paid to each individual action. The stone and shoes gain a rarefied intrinsic worth and are treated with such. The suitcase as a container of things, memories, people, place and reminder of home is treated with vigilance for safekeeping. This is the kind of symbolic rite of separation that we become acquainted with.

A ritual space, rendered sacred by the presence of water, is sustained in *Ingcwaba* when the 'present absent' father/ husband submits himself to a ritual bath when he leaves home. As he prepares to head off, he walks over to his suitcase, extends his arms out and unties the invisible thread that was tied by his wife earlier. He snaps the invisible thread, his wife winces, grabbing her stomach and laying her hand on her daughter's head. This snapping thread is suggestive of the umbilical cord, the connection to your mother, but in this

instance the suitcase also suggests a connection to home. Van Gennep notes that a delineation of childhood rites would contain the cutting of the umbilical cord, bathing and the loss of the remainder of the umbilical cord (Van Gennep, 1960:62). This is why the wife's reaction is so visceral as though she were being shaken to her core, because cutting the imaginary string is symbolic of the severing of the umbilical cord, life's first rite of separation.

Then the husband picks up the suitcase – he is pensive for a few seconds as if painfully contemplating his next move – and heads out. He moves past his wife and daughter tentatively and smiles. His wife smiles wearily at him as though she knows this time all too well. The daughter gets up and hurries after him, calling 'Tata' (father), she picks a stone, spits on it and rubs it under her feet, under her armpits as if to capture her very essence, her smell and the memory of her. She then hands this keepsake to him. The father smiles and breaks out into jovial booming laughter as she hands him the stone. He understands what this means and he leans over to kiss her on her forehead, and leaves. The daughter stands smiling and waving at him as he walks off.

As he exits, the chorus breaks out into shrieks of ululation, waving their arms animatedly and jumping up and down. Two men break into a stick fight in all the commotion. The women begin *umxhentso* – this is a traditional Xhosa dance. The father/husband seems lost as he moves amongst the melee, at times smiling and other times caught up in what is going on around him with bemusement. A woman carrying a grass mat steps forward centre stage and lays the mat out in front of the man. Another woman steps forward carrying a large bowl, sets it carefully on top of the grass mat and bows to him, which prompts the man to remove his shoes. All the while members of the chorus are kneeling or seated on the margins of the stage singing, clapping and looking on. He stands after he has removed his shoes and begins to remove his blazer and then his shirt and then his pants until he stands before the onlookers in his under garments. He steps forward onto the grass mat and the woman proceeds to wash him with water.



**Figure 7: Thando Doni as the husband/father and Thumeka Mzayiya as the woman in white *Ingcwaba lendoda lise cankwe ndlela*. Photographer: Sean Wilson.**

She cleanses his legs and thighs, his torso, his arms and his back. She bends over to pick the bowl up, holds it up to the man who dips his hands in it and washes his face and neck prompting amplification in the volume of the song from the chorus as the ritual reaches its culmination. He backs away, stepping away from the grass mat and stands facing the onlookers. The woman also backs away and hands the bowl over to the man's wife, they bow to one another and the woman rolls up the grass mat – the ceremony is over. The man turns to grab his pants and says, as he puts the rest of his clothes back on, "Come with us/we are leaving" (Mbothwe, 2009b) (he moves into liminality) and the visual projected onto the

backdrop is a long stretch of road. While it is an individual who chooses to separate in Ingcwaba, his decision affects and disturbs his family so that they too, bear the destabilizing consequences of separation.

### **The transformation phase**

According to Van Gennep, a prolonged liminal phase in the initiation rites of tribal societies is often noticeable by physical separation of the ritual subjects from the rest of the community (Turner, 1982:26). Turner writes:

In many societies the liminal initiands are often considered to be dark, invisible, like the sun or moon in eclipse or the moon between phases, 'at the dark of the moon', they are stripped of names and clothing, smeared with the common earth rendered indistinguishable from animals. They are associated with such general oppositions as life and death, male and female, food and excrement simultaneously since they are at once dying from or dead to their former status and life, and being born and growing into new ones (Turner, 1982:26).

Dombo is experiencing the liminality that Turner describes here. When she emerges from the cage "she has the peculiarity of a stone, she lives in the dark" (Moyo, 2009:104). She spits, hoots and bellows, jumps around intermittently, slaps her hands against her chest, grunts, writhes around on the floor, plays with the stones from her little bowl and throws them in the big bowl of water. She mutters gibberish, she is strange and the onlookers appear rather uncomfortable with encountering her; we do not know who or what she is. She breathes heavily and audibly as if seething aloud. She continues to throw her stones sometimes in the bowl, sometimes at the onlookers, sometimes around the space. She skips, jumps, wanders with curiosity in the space, interacting with objects, continuing her gibberish that she directs to no one in particular. Her voice echoes in the space. She has no community, she is alone and she is entertained by the doll-puppet in the space and the Dictaphone that goes off unexpectedly. She busies herself with the objects, crawling amongst the leaves and logs in the demarcated space panting like an animal. This regressive behaviour exhibited by Dombo, goes beyond separation and social invisibility, to a liminal state.

Liminality can be a state of dis-ease, death, dejection, regression and self-destruction. It may involve separation and anxiety when there is a breakdown – apparently of identity, self,

family – without the hope of ever feeling or being settled: “liminality is both more creative and more destructive than the structural norm” (Turner, 1982:46). This is the in-between phase where the liminal subject is experiencing puzzling uncertainty as to who the new self will be; it is a place between old and new worlds, between past and present.

Both Moyo and Nyamza play with the image of hatching as a symbol of rebirth or ‘beginning again’, using the association of the bird preparing to take flight. When Moyo appears as Dombo, she ‘hatches’ from underneath a pile of newspapers, her ‘hatching’ is evocative of Nyamza’s re-emerging in *Hatched* and her gesticulations of reincarnation. Still Dombo’s awakening sees her enduring ambiguity and social limbo for some time. The liminal is the state within which Moyo is working in the *Compositions* series; this is the phase that proves productive in imaginative findings for her migrant identity. As a theme of the performance, here migration is understood to be a liminal experience. The emphasis in *Compositions* is placed not on the start or the closing stages of passage, nor on the departure from, or integration into, a particular destination or culture, but instead on the negotiation of a choice of texts and meanings that characterise the space in-between. Moyo explains: “Liminality would seem to be the ideal state for conveying the experiences of the marginalised – in this case, for telling the story of the migrant, offering a way in which to articulate the tensions inherent in migrant identity” (2009:38). It is not just Dombo who persists in the liminal; Nainai also remains in the liminal phase with her blue skin bearing the mark of her predicament.

Moyo’s use of initiation rites and ritual is fitting for Dombo’s liminal condition in *Huroyi Hwangu*. It was through the haunting unsettling act of remaining for an indefinite period within the unspecified space of in-betweenness, and by taking the time to explore Dombo despite Moyo’s personal artistic insecurities, that *Huroyi Hwangu* attempted to articulate Moyo’s dilemma (Moyo, 2009:41). Susan Broadhurst offers a theorization of the aesthetics of what she terms ‘liminal performance’ which she defines as “being located at the edge of what is possible” (Broadhurst, 1999:12). In the final chapter of *Liminal Acts*, she concludes:

All liminal works confront, offend or unsettle...[and] display a parodic, questioning, deconstructive mode which presents a resistance, even when individual performances...appear in danger of being appropriated by the mainstream...the liminal mirrors and is an experimental extension of our contemporary social and cultural ethos...

Liminal performances are hybridized and intertextual, and share common quasi-generic aesthetic features, such as heterogeneity, indeterminacy, self-reflexiveness, eclecticism, fragmentation, a certain 'shift-shape style' and a repetitiveness that produces not sameness but difference...Liminal theatre displays distinctive aesthetic features, among them a blurring and collapsing of the barriers between traditional theatre, dance, music and art (Broadhurst, 1999:168-9).

Essentially the emphasis is on the slipperiness of liminal performance, the ability of the liminal subject to go up against, disarrange and decompose. Really Moyo's extended passage of play in the liminal shows her embracing the heterogeneity and discontinuity of her liminal identity, allowing herself to collapse in order to recompose once more.

Mbothwe's explication of the liminal shows an understanding of the fragmented nature of this state:

A person in a liminal state is in a process of becoming but is not yet; for s/he is not in a present fixed point nor is s/he in a future fixed point. S/he is in a passage in between...In essence I perceive liminality to be a dream-like qualitative state of being that can evoke a wide range of thoughts, feelings and possibilities including spiritual ecstasy and transformation (2010:244-245).

In *Ingcwaba*, the subjects are suspended in the liminal, always searching for home. More than a search for home, perhaps it is a search for meaning and belonging. As Mbothwe notes, "we remain on the road searching for what is, in most cases, already within us" (2009a). This search causes a sense of restlessness in *Ingcwaba*. When Mbothwe says "without home, you are just a wind" (2009a), he is essentially describing liminality. Wind is unpredictable and blows in any direction, much like the liminal subject. Most importantly Mbothwe explains that "without a home, you are not protected" (2009a). This is a precarious position to be in and is the prompt for the wondering and wandering experienced by his subjects: the daughter finds herself rootless without the presence of her father and she wanders to look for him. Nozenza, who is moved to search for home because her present home is not 'homey' enough, and she wonders about her origins. The husband/father drifts along an endless road, infinitely caught in-between: moving away from and journeying towards home.

In *Ingcwaba* passage and transformation are often demonstrated by some kind of celebratory or woeful rite. *Ingcwaba* begins with the nine performers situated on stage and around the auditorium, calling out the names of various towns in the Eastern Cape, using the

local, indigenous names of the towns and not the more widely acknowledged English names. There is a sense of imminent travel looming, of a great journey ahead and the anxiety that accompanies the quandary of separation, of uprooting oneself and absconding from the place you once called home in search of unknown prospects. Passage is quite literally represented by images of motion and travel. On the overhead projection, there are recurring images of trains, feet walking on endless roads, roadside hitchhikers, motor vehicles on long stretches of road and suitcases that exemplify passage. On stage we see satchels, suitcases, bags and other hand properties that demonstrate passage. This is supported by spoken utterances such as “until when am I going to grow old on this road?”, “I wandered and pushed through until my feet complained”. “This road calls me, waving for me to come, it is overwhelming”, and the final line of the piece (spoken by the central male protagonist): “through the ancient path, we blame the feet” (Mbothwe, 2009b). The rite of passage is to allow unsettlement even when it is seen as a cause of dis-ease, perpetuating feelings of the unknown and of interruption. Still the impression I come away with is that, despite the anxiety it causes, passage is both preordained and durational.

Passage, and in particular rites of separation and liminality, are ritualized through the use of the element of water. In *Huroyi Hwangu* water is incorporated in known rites as well as being embedded in everyday rituals, such as the woman washing her clothes in the river or Dombo playing in water-filled containers. Water is mentioned in reference to waterfalls and of course in the narrative of Nainai the water spirit. Dombo interacts with water when she plays with her stones, throwing them in the water-filled bowl. She also fills her calabash with water from the same large bowl. Towards the end of *Huroyi Hwangu*, when we have seen the last of her foraging and voyaging, she holds the calabash on her head, hops onto and walks along the log. She is apprehensive in her movement, tries to be careful and moves with a sense of journeying onwards. She walks on the tree log to the large water-filled bowl. She gathers water in the calabash and as she makes her way back along the log, she stumbles and falls, breaking the calabash and causing water to spill on the floor. Shaken, she rises as we hear the sound of pouring water (from the Old Woman figure on the margins). As Dombo stands alarmed, she gazes in an unexpected panic at the onlookers, jumps in the large bowl and begins to wash herself with fearful urgency. The Old Woman drums, setting a rhythmic tone for this bathing/cleansing rite, as Moyo washes the blue paint off her body.



**Figure 8: Awelani Moyo in *Huroyi Hwangu – InDe/Re Compositions*. Photographer: Lauren Clifford-Holmes.**

As Moyo prepares to deliver her final monologue; she smashes the water balloons that hang in the cage. The Old Woman throws a calabash from atop the cage and it crashes loudly and breaks. Moyo begins her final monologue pushing herself back into the entangled web of the cage and as she speaks, the Old Woman throws water over her from atop the cage. The water combined with her hysterical tears washes the blue mask of namelessness from her face as she repeats: “I compose myself and prepare to begin again” (Moyo, 2009:79). In this instant, Moyo is hinting at beginning her integration.

In these works, water’s significance and purpose changes often and water is variously contained. There is talk of rivers, wells and the sea, although water is also contained in basins, buckets, bowls, baths and calabashes. Mbothwe discussed the symbolic and emblematic importance of water in what he calls ‘bath prayer’, he describes this as waters’ ability to compose but also the sudden way that it can overcome. Thus water’s religious and spiritual connotations cannot be ignored. For example, Mbothwe mentioned that there is no ritual within Xhosa culture that does not use water in one form or another (Mbothwe, 2011a). It features as a means of healing in the most mundane instances, such as sugar-water for someone who is in shock, using a wet towel to cool the forehead of someone who

has taken ill, a pregnant woman on the verge of giving birth is sometimes placed in water, or washing someone's aching feet. In Xhosa culture, it is imperative to wash one's hands when you have returned from a funeral, which is perhaps an allusion to washing grief or the presence of the dead away. Water can thus be seen as essential to healing and yet there is also an element of danger and unpredictability in its power. In *Ingcwaba*, cleansing is implied as water is used to soothe, wash or clean. Rituals using water are performed on those who are embarking or have embarked, on passage, as in leaving or returning home in a farewell or welcoming ceremony and as a beginning or a beginning again.

A liminal state is embodied in *Huroyi Hwangu*, *Ingcwaba*, *A Face Like Mine* and *Hatched*. In *Hatched*, Nyamza welcomes paradox, playing in the in-between, this "middle space between two or more seemingly binary positions in which imaginative capacity is heightened and the possibilities of re-invention abound" (Kabwe, 2007:47). Prior to her passage into separation she recognizes that she is diminished and obstructed by the red skirt from the moment she puts it on. When she decides to separate, untangles from the skirt and wriggles herself free is when we begin to see the uncovering or unveiling of her 'self': this is hatching. Now, as she moves into metamorphosis, she attempts to progress and take her first steps, a struggle which she masters after several attempts. It is the death of an old self (one that she can no longer pretend to be or work at being) and the birth of a new self (one who she does not yet realise). Freeing herself and emerging from the limitations of the constricting skirt and all that it represents is her 'hatching', the rebirth of her identity. This is re-forming an identity that perhaps always was, what Kevin Quashie calls the 'waiting self': Nyamza's "self that was and is always there, and a self that was, is and (un)becomes" (Quashie, 2004:70). It is not only a becoming but an unbecoming as well. She shuffles when taking her first steps after her breakthrough. What is complex and critical about the image is that we see birth within a life that already exists/existed. Nyamza's body expressively dithers between a self that was always there and a new self, waiting to be born, who then comes to be. In the midst of this tumult we also see glimpses of her wrestling with being a mother in a new self. Rites performed around pregnancy in some African communities often separate the mother to be, from her community. Nyamza physically moves further away from her son as she separates. Pregnancy itself is a transitional stage. Van Gennep observed that the rite of childbirth is intended to reintegrate the woman into the community to which she belonged, or to

establish her new standing in society as a mother, “especially if she has given birth to her first child or to a son” (Van Gennep, 1960:41). The symbolic behaviour of couching her son in the safety of the voluminous red skirt until she is ready to separate is not a declaration of ‘unbecoming’ a mother or even a woman; that is not possible. It is rather an un(becoming) of what typifies the behaviour of a conformist black African women, the expectations of that prescribed role, and Nyamza boldly redefines what that entails for a woman who is moving to new passage.

In (un)becoming, Nyamza performs birth and death (as both the newly hatched bird and as the dying swan). But then playing in an in-between space is further habitation of a dualistic situation: the masculine and feminine, being born and dying, the ‘African-ness’ of her black body (which is rooted, grounded, voiced) and the white western ballerina (who is light, takes flight, is soft and silent).

Nyamza is famous for her interpretation of *The Dying Swan*, for which she received a FNB Vita Dance Umbrella Award in 2000, where she deconstructs the conventions of Western classical ballet. *Hatched* refers intertextually to this earlier work. As the dying swan, she is unable to get up. Her head is too heavy, her limbs fail her, until eventually she finds herself on her toes again. However, she is flailing, moving between composition, form, containment, and distorted disarray. Nyamza’s gestures of flailing are beautiful but they should not be, because what we are seeing is a tormented incongruous creature. The revolutionary *The Dying Swan*, Michel Fokine's solo, shows the death of a short-lived creature and not necessarily the proficiency of a ballerina (Haskell, 1938:96). The ballet later influenced interpretations of Odette in Marius Petipa’s *Swan Lake* where we see a strange creature, she is a woman but there is something fairy-like about her (Stoneley, 2007:47). In *A Queer History of Ballet*, scholar Peter Stoneley offers a view of the swan and its symbolism, particularly with regards to its connection to queer theory. He writes:

Perhaps the swan is peculiarly appropriate to queerness and to ballet...with its long neck; the swan is often depicted with phallic connotations. The swan's extraordinary shape relates to ballet's obsession with 'line'. The creation of a shape that is clear and balanced. The paradoxical beauty of the swan is largely due to the fact that it has too much line. With its long neck, it verges on the grotesque and ugly. The notion of redeeming an otherwise disgusting appearance serves as an embodied version of coming to terms with

the 'ugliness' of homosexuality. Swans have more generally been used to signify loss and melancholy and have been associated with wondrous fatality (Stoneley, 2007:61).

South African dancer and choreographer Steven Van Wyk writes that Nyamza's dying swan is an intertext in dialogue with "the historical flows of appropriation, the history of ballet in South Africa and the iconography of *Swan Lake*" (Van Wyk, 2012:36). It is difficult to ignore whiteness and its implicit power relations in the balletic discipline or that ballet's historic associations prompt anticipated identifications from its spectators (Van Wyk, 2012:40). Nyamza jokingly asserts that ballets like the *Dying Swan* and *Swan Lake* made her feel evermore like "a black swan" in that, she felt separated from ideals of the white delicate Western ballerina. This was empowering to her however because she is certain she will never realistically fit that mould and, knowing that, affords her a feeling of autonomy that makes it possible to re-imagine these ballets (Nyamza, 2013). Dance historian Sally Banes holds the view that although contemporary ballet presents alternative images of female ability; iconic ballets like *Swan Lake* depict conservative representations of women as weak, delicate and reliant on men (1998:59). These views bring up a number of issues that Nyamza challenges: the representation of women in the balletic art form, sexual identity in ballet, the symbolic emphasis placed on the dying swan in its perpetual state of in-betweenness and transformation, and the reinterpretation of a white dominated Western art form.

Nyamza plays on the edge of masculine and feminine identity and power in her at times flustered, at times serenely sustained, movements. As she rips garments from the clothesline, in one instant, she comes head to head with a red dress, but she tumbles and ends up in a heap on the floor. She finally succeeds in getting up and hides behind the red dress. There is an unanticipated and sudden transition in the mood of the piece as she begins to play with the dress and transforms into a flirtatious young woman and then to a young adolescent girl who is smiling, joyful and carefree. This is in direct contrast to the dynamic and commanding figure that later dances the liberation dance with such concentrated robustness. Despite these seemingly disconnected changes, the gestural vocabulary of the swan never goes away; she is always the swan. Petipa's *Swan Lake* features two very different female leads: Odile and Odette. Odile is the imposing, forceful and seductive woman; she has physically powerful and sharp movements, she is showy and holds a direct gaze. Odette in opposition has soft, graceful and delicate steps. Her

movements are lyrical and her gaze is always lowered. What makes Odile wicked is not her femininity but rather, her self-determination, prowess and her precision. She performs 32 *fouette* turns *en pointe* and she does this without any male support (Banes, 1998:61). Later during Nyamza's performance of transformation, her dance of liberation, she turns 25 times recalling Odile's turns.

Although Odette ostensibly longs for freedom from confinement, she also seems dutifully submissive to and accepting of her destiny. She may be weak in disposition, but to dance Odette's part also requires considerable physical strength; she uses a lot of rattled and panicked arm movements (these can become quite explosive, unstable and impulsive), she touches herself often and her downcast gaze perpetuates the idea of female fragility (Banes, 1998:61). So in *Swan Lake* there is a binary that sorts women into the categories of weak and strong, good and immoral, conveyed in conflict between submissive and active, yielding and aggressive (Banes, 1998:61). Nyamza assumes the identity of both women, she deliberately embodies a paradox. She plays along the clothesline as the young girl and then switches back to the demure young woman. Then she slips her hand through the red coat and wears it, which prompts her to become a reluctant and withdrawn young adult, attired in a red coat that appears to feel somewhat foreign. In a series of gestures the young adult fidgets and adjusts the coat, trying to figure out the proper way to move around in it, trying to adapt to a new character. She moves between a demure figure of a woman and a surging bold and defiant male-like energy. Sometimes she coyly hides behind her coat collar, other times she audaciously asserts her new role.

In her liminal state, images from separation reappear. She pulls items of clothes from the line perturbed that she is unable to connect with them, and that parts of her past no longer make sense to her in this liminal state. She is thrilled, though frightened by her freedom; she struggles to stand on her feet and becomes increasingly frustrated by images of domesticity that keep creeping in, like when she furiously scrubs the floor. She finds that she connects to the little girl's dress – a reminder of the days before she became encumbered by all these signifiers. It is in the liminal that she takes hold of the coat, intrigued by the power, strength and confidence it affords her. It is here that she dresses in this coat that somehow feels right. It is here that she dances to her liberation. We are active witnesses at the forging of

Nyamza's new identity as she ventures out of the liminal phase of precariousness and begins to move towards the beginnings of her passage into re-integration.

Phewa also lingers in a liminal state as if she is unsure of where to locate herself. The intimacy rites she performs in this liminal state strengthen her convictions and move her closer to being the person of her choosing. In memorializing her black body, confessing the lasting effects that colonialism and apartheid have had on her fragile identity, admitting that she has desired to be someone other than herself – all these revelations (celebratory, painful and shameful) strengthen her conviction in the decision she will make. We do not know if this is a noble decision or one of resignation because, as she explains, in all this wondering and wandering in a liminal state, she fears she may have “destroyed her rhythm” (Phewa, 2008a).

Though irksome, this is a phase of exploration and intervention. It is a particular intervention that moves an individual through the discomfort of uncertainty toward a kind of transformation of self.

### **The integration phase: an initiation into being**

The integration phase declares selfhood: ‘this is who I am, this is who I want to be and this is what I have to say’. Such selves are not absolute, and they are individual. They actively refigure one's positioning and renaming of self. In this ‘now moment’, this does not mean that the collective will necessarily agree with or even accept the self that you are presenting to them, as we see with Nyamza and Phewa especially, but what it means is that the protagonist is in a position to realize, to bare ‘self’. Having experienced the horrible business of estrangement and separation, now is the moment to take your standing in society, irrespective of the kind of attention that it draws. Krueger tells us that it is the theatre that permits us to embrace unsteady and open-ended identifications that are not yet known and can be discovered in performance (Krueger, 2007:52).

This is why a more suitable name for this stage is ‘an initiation into being’. Integration implies some kind of assimilation or conformity. This sounds predictable and uncomplicated but this is not necessarily what these theatre makers are doing. They are choosing what integration is on their own terms and it is not always orderly. An initiation into being is the

chance to begin again and resolutely settle into whatever you want to be. Ultimately, in the three phases, passage involves stepping into the unknown. In the separation phase this means withdrawing from the familiar, in the liminal phase it means allowing the chaos of creativity to work on you, while in the integration phase, it means generating new boundaries. That is not to say all integration in these works occurs in the same way; it is not all a welcomed celebration where the liminal subject is carried by their community. In some cases, it is a solitary event, a resolution made in private.

For instance, Phewa makes an alarming choice in the integration phase, not necessarily because ultimately she desires to be a maid. But she resorts to being the maid because the complexities of undefined, contemporary blackness are disorienting, and she does not know what it is to perform, to do blackness. “But everyone respects the domestic worker because to judge that would be judging every mother that had to make that choice. In South Africa, that's a lot of people's mothers” (Phewa, 2010a). Therefore she chooses to work with the trope of the domestic worker, whose position is neither that of insider or outsider. In their white ‘families’, black women not only perform domestic duties but also commonly form strong connections with the family, especially the wives and children (Hill-Collins, 2000:13). But these black women know that they can never hold a legitimate place in their white ‘families’. The outcome is that they occupy a liminal space, a problematic outsider-within social location, a place of precariousness that influences a black woman’s outlook on notions of blackness and femininity (Hill-Collins, 2000:13). This hypothesis is supported by the incongruous rituals performed in Phewa’s maid’s space. Every day she performs a ritual of domestication, getting dressed in the maid’s costume to serve others, whilst perfume ads and fashion spreads look in on her from the walls of her room.

Evidently Phewa has a genuine preoccupation with the philosophy of servitude as it relates to blackness, especially with the figure of the maid and the madam, or master and slave. Some time after *A Face Like Mine*, Phewa staged *Enter the Maids* (2010), performed in an historic church; this was her adaptation of Jean Genet's 1952 play *The Maids*. Bringing together the sisters Claire and Solange with her own creations Mooi and Ansela, the work adopts text from *The Maids*, presenting the sisters who immerse themselves in sado-masochistic role play, taking turns playing their mistress and each other. This is interwoven

with the figures of Ansela and Mooi whose language and behaviour suggests a South African context. In a pertinent moment in the production, Ansela says to Mooi:

Hey, who would you be if you couldn't be you? I don't know but my skin would be one smooth colour everywhere not these blotches that don't go together. I would be smooth as glass, no hairs on me anywhere except for my head. And there my hair would flow nice and long, so that I could flick it, this way and that (Phewa, 2010b).

These two women of colour in dialogue with one another reveal similar issues of black femininity as those explored in *A Face Like Mine*. In both productions, Phewa is demonstrating the historical, political and racial convolution of the relationships black women have with each other and the relationships they have with white women. In *A Face Like Mine*, Phewa's character says of colonization: "It is a systematic negation of the other person, and the furious determination to deny that person all attributes of humanity. Colonization forces the people it oppresses to constantly ask themselves this question: In reality 'who am I' (2008a)? This is the quest for identity that she labours over, a search that was denied by the apartheid regime that is openly explored in the 'now moment'. Phewa blames the establishment of colonialism for not only cheating her of multiple identities but of her femininity as well, because now her femininity is always held against a white female corresponding item (2008b). She reflects:

I think the institution of colonialism robbed me not only of identity but of femininity which is epitomized through white women in society. So instead of reclaiming it, we steal it in the night, under domestic uniform and in private as if we are ashamed of wanting it. I think we are. I think I am (Phewa, 2008b).

The scarring of colonisation and apartheid combined is why Phewa chooses to perform the domestic worker. But Phewa places her maid figure in the intimate separateness of her own room where she is free to listen to her own thoughts. In this private space she says:

It's [her thoughts] just this noise like a roar inside my head when it's silent. I don't want to talk anymore. I want to go home. But we're stuck here in this room. I know I came here voluntarily. I wanted to come 'coz I feel myself coming out of my body (Phewa, 2008a).

Her 'feeling herself coming out of her body' is her acknowledgement of her liminal state but 'knowing that she came here voluntarily' is evidence of her choice to become the maid, her means of integrating. Paradoxically, it is in the domestic workers uniform, in the night, in the privacy of her interior space that she repossesses her femininity, free from castigation and

the presence of external forces. Ironically the presence of the white men should make this a highly policed space but their presence is strictly on Phewa's terms, they are aids of her message and only speak to her, through her. In bringing the spectator into the maid's room, they enter an emotional site where she can think noisily, without restriction or obstruction, in a way that is ungoverned by outside procedure and expectation. In this space she can appear surprisingly erudite and unnervingly unguarded. The inwardness of the physical space; her bedroom and bathroom, mirrors the candour of her most secret confessions and her exposure of her naked body. Here she performs her intimacy rites, her rites of femininity when she indulges with body products, grooming and titivating herself. She savours the use of her special creams and moisturizers, staring at herself in the mirror and taking pleasure in the ritual of making herself up because in reality very few maids' rooms have the luxuries she has. This is seemingly in contradiction with what is presented as an archetypically prescribed role of the black female domestic worker. And yet, why should it be? This is an everyday ritual: bathing, moisturizing, shampooing, admiring herself in her vanity mirror, putting on her night clothes and going to bed.

These are intimacy rites. The intimacy rites are inside the rites of passage that she is performing. Phewa's passage into integration follows all the unsettled faces of black womanhood that she wears; as the maid, the girl who longs to be white, the lover, the woman who celebrates her blackness and sensuality, the angry student who detests carrying the burden of colonial and apartheid history, the resentful daughter, the eloquent contemporary black woman who is quick to articulate her position in the 'now moment', the daring theatre maker who exposes her truth no matter how ugly or beautiful, the anxiety-ridden young black woman who is constantly shifting uncomfortably, trying to find a semblance of settlement. She gets caught between phases and between selves, she passes through some, she lingers uneasily in others, but then again this is an intimate rite towards a workable identity, it is a practice of self, a passage to individuality. Phewa becomes conscious of the unavoidable passage through her numerous selves and concedes that they are all inescapably a part of her: "Looking back, I see all of them. All of me. And we're all walking to various rhythms. Sometimes I'm bright, goddam near white as they say. Other times I'm darker, brown, black. And we all have different rhythms" (Phewa, 2008a).

In performing these intimacy rites, Phewa works through the conflicting reactions affecting her blackness, she takes time to ponder her colour and what it means to her. I think that apart from the choice she makes to play the domestic worker in the end, a large part of her emotional integration comes from the acceptance, performance and memorialisation of her black body. This is perhaps why it was correspondingly imperative for her to be naked in reality (to mirror the complete exposure of her 'self' and thoughts): "I had to accept that the subject matter is deeply personal and as such, I wanted to take on the challenge of playing it myself" (Phewa, 2008b). The immediacy of the black female body cannot be denied when the subjects actually strip down layers to reveal an unclothed body. Nyamza appears topless, Moyo appears topless (though she is masked by the blue body makeup) and Phewa takes to appearing completely naked. Perhaps this is what it means to truly make oneself embryonic. Even the husband, wife and daughter (in *Ingcwaba*) strip down to their under garments. Being uncovered in this way is a demonstration of initiation into being.

In a scene that unwittingly criticizes the pain of not reflecting the range of our varied complexions, Phewa competes against any previous shame she may have possessed when she exuberantly charts the ins and outs of her body and its range of blackness. Bounded by powders, moisturizers and beauty lotions, she attentively examines her own exterior; her post-apartheid body and identity in this celebratory passage where she pronounces:

I love my body and its range of black. My ass is charcoal black and goes grey if unattended to! In winter, my legs are yellow with green veins playing hide-and-seek around them. They're dotted with fine hair and spots where sores once were. In summer they shine copper thanks to the sun and Body Shop's body butter. But my tummy is always a dull and flabby brown. My breasts the insides of my arms and my fingers all have a shy gild to them. The outside of my arms is chocolate and face a splash of all the hues (Phewa, 2008a).

This celebration of her body is juxtaposed with the relationship Phewa has with the two white men. They disturb/disrupt her intimacy rites, impinge on her space and time. They signify the other side of the problematic, painful and uncomfortable discourse of race and ethnicity in *A Face Like Mine*. Her relationship with the white men is, in part, the prompt for her black female self-loathing. Phewa illustrates the discernible scars of colonisation when she stares at Boy 1, shining a torch directly in his face. "In this scene, exposure is quite literal as she counters the gaze of others (including the audience) by taking ownership of the gaze

by gazing at her own body” (Flockemann, 2011a:168). The rest of the stage is in complete darkness and all we see is the two of them, topless – white skin opposite black skin, a black woman opposite a white man – illuminated only by the light of the torch. She scrutinizes him with the glare of the light, bringing to light his purpose as a representation of the ugliness and cruelty of colonialism – she delivers her colonialism text in this moment. He then wrestles the torch from her hand and flashes the torch in her face and on her bare body. In a role reversal, she is the one exposed. She covers her naked body gasping softly.

What follows this is Boy 1 reciting a monologue that features descriptions of Dr. Georges Leopold Chretien Cuvier’s depiction of Sarah Baartman’s body and genitalia (see Appendix B, page 217). This 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial memory of ‘Saartjie the Hottentot Venus’ haunts Phewa in the present. Considered peculiar due to her enormous posterior and her rumoured disproportionate genitalia, Baartman’s black South African body became the object of an offensive and licentious gaze, scientific interest and unsettling bewilderment in Europe (Elkins, 2007). Baartman was first thrust onto the stage in Piccadilly, England adorned in a “skintight, flesh-colored get-up, complete with a panoply of African beads and ostrich feathers” (Elkins, 2007). Baartman’s semi-naked exhibition exposed her reluctant body and only perpetuated England’s fascination with posteriors, both literally and figuratively. Unlike Phewa, a post-1994 black South African middle class women, the young Baartman had limited choices in her economic and bodily exploitation: she could either return to South Africa, where she would of course carry on a life of servitude, or unwillingly participate in her own exploitation in England, where she was, albeit dismally, remunerated and possessed a tiny scrap of freedom (Elkins, 2007).

As Boy 1 continues to speak, he shines the torch from a different angle illuminating Phewa’s face, she swats at the torch and yet he continues to find several directions to oppress her with the glare of the light. Paradoxically, Phewa *chooses* to expose her naked body on a stage for all to see, she *chooses* to cast a white man in the role of Boy 1, she creates the scene where her body is unforgivably scrutinized by the harsh light of the torch held by the white man. Additionally ironic is the choice Phewa makes at the end of *A Face Like Mine*, a choice that may be difficult for some to reconcile, but in a moment, I will discuss the potency of her rationale in making the choice she makes.

Within this 35 minute work, we see a girl in constant struggle with her identity. Quite early on, she cements her separation from expectation by declaring “I’m not the loud and jolly round-faced sisi from next door” (Phewa, 2008a). Nor, she shares, does she long to be white. She tells you what she is not in order to discover what she is. Until she makes this discovery or decision, she persists in a liminal state. What she reveals in the liminal, is a sense of thrill generated through discomfort from her exposure of her body, her intimate interaction with the white men, and her candid divulging of her racial and linguistic shame. In the liminal state, Phewa embraces the paradox of this middleclass, educated and eloquent black girl who chooses to be a maid. In her liminal state, she is self-consciousness and self-reflexive. In true form of liminal performance she rejects the notion of an “integrated personality [in favour of the destructured, dehumanized subject]” (Broadhurst, 1999:13). In her liminal state, she takes time to figure out who she will be until she decides that she will be the maid “It’s a hard play because you watch this girl go through all of this physically challenging stuff trying to exorcise her demons and in the end, she chooses to lose the war” (Phewa, 2010a). But integration is not always a joyful or empowering decision; the important thing is that subjects choose integration of their own accord. Phewa reiterates “I want the audience to celebrate the fact that today, she *can* choose” (Phewa, 2010a). In adopting the invisibility of the maid in the final scene, she is probing all of the unaccepted and inadequate masks that she always has to negotiate (Flockemann, 2011a:168).

Really the integration phase for these theatre makers and in these artworks is an ontological initiation. In this ‘now moment’, an initiation into being is explained as unravelling, making oneself over, realization, re-emergence and synthesis. An initiation into being is how we find ourselves coming into existence as we are transforming. This moment is clear in *Hatched* when on the cusp of integration Nyamza makes a choice to remove her ballet shoes, cementing the progress of her personal journey. The moment begins with a light change; a single spotlight is focused on Nyamza. She sits in what would be considered a very masculine, unfeminine way with her legs spread open, her feet flat on the floor, her knees pointed to the sky and hands clasped together with her head hung low. She surveys the audience and breaks the deafening quiet by uttering the words “can someone please borrow me a cigarette and matches” (Nyamza, 2009). She then repeats the very same thing in isiXhosa. She repeats this over and over until someone from the audience obliges. This is

Nyamza at her most candid. This is the audience catching a glimpse of her as a “living breathing being” (Bleeker, 2008:3). Here we see her at her most vulnerable in an unsettling moment of complete exposure. She is without airs or pretence as she sits facing the audience, out of breath, out of tricks and out of energy as she repeats her request for a cigarette. She seems to realize the recklessness of her hurriedness; she is fatigued and uses the time to gather herself in this painfully honest interaction with the audience. There, on that contemporary stage, Nyamza presented a truthful ‘glimpse of ‘herself’ as an “alive, breathing being, standing literally or figuratively naked before our very eyes” (Bleeker, 2008:3), and yet in contradiction she is heavily clothed in the red coat.

As she passes through different phases in *Hatched*, Nyamza’s new identity is anticipated, she clarifies this by covering herself with the red coat.



**Figure 9: Mamela Nyamza in *Hatched*. Photographer: John Hogg.**

In getting to know her ‘self’ in her new found position of masculine alacrity, time must be taken to become at ease with what it means to truly live in one’s skin. Nyamza realizes this when she arises again and assiduously participates in her own integration. She makes the choice to remove her ballet shoes, unfastening the red ribbons that secure them to her feet.

She holds the shoes in her hand for quite some time, her eyes fixed on them and all they represent – she gives nothing away but we realize that her discarding these shoes is an indication of her rejection of what they embody. With the shoes in her hand, she makes her way to the table where her son has left one of his drawings while he is busying himself with hanging the rest of them up on the now empty clothesline. He joins her at the table to get another drawing. They start to interact but not in any kind of profound way, it is all very domestic and ordinary. He shows her all of his drawings while she whispers inaudibly to him. He rushes to the line to hang another drawing looking back at her for approval; she follows him and hangs her ballet shoes on the line. The boy continues to hang his drawings, they are writing a new future for themselves as mother and son.

Nyamza takes to removing the white tutu and the brown clothespin covered skirt she has worn from the beginning of the performance, and lets them fall to the floor. She picks up a pair of red pants and proceeds to put them on. She is now dressed in the red coat and pants. With this new found masculine vigour she is getting to know her 'self' and the concept of direction becomes a recurring motif: questions of which way to go emerge. Enter the realization that time must be taken; she must learn to take steps, to settle and to reintroduce herself to her 'self'. She walks around the stage without any particular sense of direction as if to evaluate the new look. Her son looks up at her in a very matter-of-fact manner. She uses her index finger to point in space – bringing back some of the movement vocabulary from the dance of liberation; she talks softly to herself as she is led in different directions. Muttering softly in isiXhosa she says, *kweli cala, kwela cala* ('this side, that side), *ndathi* (... 'and then I did this') *nantsi* ('here it is'), *nqanda* (watch out) – this starts to clarify her internal dialogue during the 'liberation dance' and her gestural searching sequence (see pages 105-106). It is almost as though she were trying to retrace the steps of her emotional and bodily passage here, as though she were making mental notes of where she came from, where she went, when and how. Though she is unsure about which direction to go, she is steady on her feet. She turns to her son and asks him "where is it again?" She asks him: "which direction do I go in again?" (Nyamza, 2009). Here she engages with him directly and takes a few steps towards him to ask these questions. He points her in a direction to answer her question, he says nothing and he just points. She continues to ask him as the light fades and we can no longer see their faces but only their legs and feet, which are still illuminated

by the lamp. We can hear Nyamza's voice as she continues to ask the boy but he never responds verbally. The only thing left to see is Nyamza and her son's feet and legs as they circle the table, together they are looking for the way to go. Nyamza grabs him by the hand and we see them circling and crossing the stage together. They return to the table and the boy leans over to switch the lamp off and the piece is over. What we have just been witness to is the purging of an inauthentic and obsolete self, Nyamza has superseded her own self.

Through this autobiographical journey that illustrates the growing pains of coming into one's own, of being initiated into being, we bear witness to the 'heaviness of spirit' that comes as a result of challenging societal norms. But we also witness the cathartic moment of consciousness that Nyamza experiences when she confronts the different, unsettling facets of herself, past and present. When she is able to do this, the weight of her burden is somewhat lifted.

In Moyo and Nyamza's work, the rite of passage from one phase of life to another is marked by representations of different recurring figures. For Moyo, when and why these transitions occur is not always clear. In Nyamza's work, although they influence one another, clear transitions are made. We see her at the onset of puberty, her entry into courtship and marriage, her experience of motherhood, her disorientated journeying through prescribed gender roles and her rebirth. The red, assorted garments are also a clear material marker of the figure's passages. The images of childbearing and motherhood appear quite strongly through the presence of her son in his initial location under her skirt, an image that is redolent of the embryo in the womb. This image is echoed by Nyamza's own birth/rebirth as the bird/swan, as the caterpillar swathed in the skirt who, when extricated, becomes the liberated butterfly. This is a false start – rebirth and consequently integration is circuitous. In her wavering arrangement of her rites to passage, she is materializing turning points, edifying separation, liminality and integration. The liberation dance is an audacious bodily affirmation of a way towards integration. When she does this dance, we see the amalgamation of all of her 'selves' – each moment of passage needs to be experienced in order to proceed to the next. But the point at which she removes her ballet shoes is a spirited proclamation of re-emergence, because here she makes the choice; she decides who

she will be, opting to discard the ballet shoes and the heavy skirts that weigh her down in favour of the red slacks and the freedom to tread on her own two bare feet.

In the case of *Ingcwaba*, we do not know if the husband/father ever returns home, we are not offered that resolution. He simply walks off stage with his suitcase. Left behind, the mother and daughter perform a ritual of unification. They ritualistically light candles at his grave although we never learn whether or not he rests there. Perhaps such rituals are to ensure immovability; they are rituals that attempt to secure, where the impulse is always to pass through. Or perhaps the rituals are to ground the subjects in the real and material within the instability of liminality.

In the end of *Composition Z*, the Old Woman/ancestral figure takes Moyo in her arms and delicately washes the blue makeup off her body. This is an act of affirmation and acceptance, a nudge onto the path of integration where Moyo is no longer offered the cover of anonymity of the blue make-up. At last, a teary-eyed Moyo attests in her final monologue: “mute as the moon, dressed in the comfort of my own undoing” (Moyo, 2009:78). This is integration of one’s own accord – undoing in order to rebuild again. Collapsing in order to compose again and the assimilation is not well-ordered and seamless but there is a level of comfort provided by the hope and promise of immersing oneself in crisis, involving oneself in the performative practice of transformation. In reflecting on her research process, Moyo imparts, “when I began work on *Compositions*, I understood initiation as a symbolic process through which personal development is publicly celebrated and expressed in concrete physical terms” (Moyo, 2009:57). I think the important thing to note about integration in this study, is that it is less about being accepted into some social order and more about being initiated into oneself. The rites are performed so that it is the individual who is admitted to their own ‘self’ – in their own terms – this is integration. As with any search for identity or exploration of selfhood, the goal is not that the search leads to some kind of completion, or an illusory image of totality, because as celebrated scholar Homi Bhabha notes, this is an imaginary unity of self which can never be attained. He reminds us, “identity is never an a priori, never a finished product, it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality” (Bhabha, 1994:51).

Identity is never complete; it is just moving from one instant in time to another, it is amorphous and takes on different shapes. Human beings learn through experience, though all too often it is through painful experience. Perhaps the deepest experience is found in the performance of life which, in this study, is effectually represented and repeated through aesthetic and imaginative processes. "Life itself now becomes a mirror held up to art and the living now perform their lives" (Turner, 1990:17). The theatre maker of this 'now moment' is a sentient being, conscious of his/her own fragmented sense of self. At times, it seems that the search for identity appears to be a grasping after an unreal wholeness, but far from being fixed in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of self for perpetuity, "identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (Hall, 1993:394).

These theatre makers are busy with emergence and their works are performances of change. They are busy with making the 'now moment', now. Whilst this study has examined the 'beautiful pain syndrome', it is in the performance of rites of passage, that we can learn what happens to those carrying the syndrome and those afflicted by it. That is why these performances are rite of passage works; something is achieved through the ritual of performance.

### **After thoughts**

In *A Face Like Mine*, this 'face' that Phewa speaks about, is multifaceted in contemporary South Africa. In this 'now moment', Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa embody what this face resembles, as do their protagonists. All of these 'faces' are subjects whose bodies and voices put across an unsettling message about pain and withdrawal that cannot be articulated any other way at any other time (Parker, 2001:15). It is through such accounts, the anecdotes of beautiful pain, through the symbolic orders of vocality and physicality, that the subject is permitted to affect, manage and take charge of her story – rather than being physically controlled or emotionally dictated by it – as in pure hysteria. The theatre makers are compelled by uncomfortable attachments to tell their stories in a different way. Thus what was previously silenced, emerges in a new and distinctive form. "Narratives that

emerge out of hysteria thus have the potential to create a new perspective on the past that creates new possibilities for the future” (Parker, 2001:15). It is far from unproblematic, it is not a straightforward task, it demands a lot and it is not comfortable. There are those moments that make you shift your weight from one foot to the other, that cause you to break into a sweat, that leave you with a lump of dis-ease in your throat, that make you want to avoid eye contact, that move you to tears. The work that these contemporary theatre makers are doing is not about making the spectator feel at ease, the assignment is not to relax or to be cloaked by a false sense of security. There is no room for probing in that. In uncomfortable attachments we find a reason to defy, to problematize, to dispute, to ask, to offer and to receive; this is what rushes up to confront us and makes transformation possible. In an interview with Vincent Huck, Phewa says: “theatre is about putting the pains and suffering on stage, to understand the pain in order to change. We live in a country where theatre has a great role in facilitating the transitions of our history” (in Huck, 2009).

Restoratively embodying the symptoms of the ‘beautiful pain syndrome’, performance offers the theatre makers of the ‘now moment’, the prospect of challenging and addressing socio-political concerns following from South Africa’s past. They do this by using performance to confront issues of identity, gender, race, sexuality, patriarchy, dislocation, language, migration, home and the injustices of the past that have been a circuitous cause of today’s memory of pain. These theatre makers are additionally scarred by personal histories and personal life events, which need to be spoken about as fundamental issues critical in the development of selfhood and as they relate to the country. These theatre makers can take reflective introspections – primarily concerned with the purging of painful and unstable subjects – and present them anew in such a way that they take on a different aesthetic light and resonate with a wider social order.

What these works represent are (i) the complexities and ambiguities of living in South Africa in the now, while questioning artistic, cultural, social and political significance in the context of contemporary South African society. (ii) In addition, these works represent what embodied pain feels and looks like in 21<sup>st</sup> century South African performance. (iii) These theatre makers point to the formations that capture the essence of living in this ‘now moment’ by sifting through painful material, using symbolic performance arrangements that

also deal with the predicament of shifting identities in contemporary South African theatre. (iv) These theatre makers confirm the advantages of turning or looking to the past (both as an individual and as a collective endeavour) in order to find ways of plotting a course through the intricacies of the present.

The nexus, the common link between Mandla Mbothwe, Awelani Moyo, Mamela Nyamza and Asanda Phewa's work, is the probing of identities and they invite us to share, experience, understand and connect, because the dilemma, the crisis of identity is recognizable, since we know what it is, what it means to be South African. We know the account of the country's history – how long it has taken to reach *here*, what it has taken to reach *here* – but now what do we do, now that we are *here*, how do we deal with, understand and try to make sense, of what it means to be *here*? *Here* is this '*now moment*'. This locality, this present, this place, this world, and this life – this is all *here*. This is what makes these works captivating, contentious and personal. In drawing out feelings of entanglement, and at the same time eliciting feelings of discomfort and anxiety, they are not trying to make it easy for us to deal with *now*. They are posing questions, challenging the status quo and speaking the unspeakable. Engaged in acts of purgation, these theatre makers are saying, this is me, I am *here*...we are all still *here*. We are of a piece and we reform those pieces to structure some semblance of a whole.

It is evident that in thinking about pain it is not possible to divide the problem into bodily, emotional or collective parts without losing our grasp of it. Nor is it possible to give pain a singular name or face. In fact, these reflections on pain should enable us to see that there is nothing about the body that is not also imbued with emotional and social aspects. Equally there is nothing social that also does not belong to the body and the mind, and nothing of the emotions that is not also corporeal and social. We are of a piece. "What happens to one part of us happens to the whole and what happens to whole happens to every part" (Starck & McGovern, 1992:8). This point was illuminated at one of the TRC hearings when Catherine Mlangeni, a mother whose son Bheki was killed by the national security police, later joined the stage production of *The Story I am about to Tell* (1997) to continue re-telling her traumatic story. When asked how she could repeatedly speak of her pain, Mlangeni answered in words that echo piercingly even today "I want you to see that this is *your*

problem too. Everyone must be responsible" (Gevisser cited in Segall, 2001:217). Pain, we have learned, can be dangerous and shameful especially when it is buried. But we have also learned that pain is there to be uncovered and shared. When this is done truthfully, there is no denying pain's poignancy and beauty. Pain and suffering can even repair and humanize if one is able to re-imagine the painful events of the past and repeat them in one's own language, whatever form that language may assume (Bordreau, 1995:451). Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, however, in an attempt to keep the pain, horrors and atrocities of past in the past, concludes with this booming avowal: "This is not a story to pass on" (Morrison, 1997:275). But what Mbothwe, Moyo, Nyamza and Phewa are saying is that our stories should be told and passed on because as history has shown us, the benefits of passing our stories on, are an advantageous and determining piece of our shared project of recovery.

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## APPENDIX A: PERFORMANCES MENTIONED IN THE STUDY BY TITLE

**19 Born 76 Rebels.** 2013. [Creator] Mamela Nyamza. [Cast] Mamela Nyamza & Faniswa Yisa. [Costume design] Shiba Sopotela. [Place] Youngblood African Culture Development: Cape Town.

**A Face Like Mine.** 2008. [Creator] Asanda Phewa. [Cast] Asanda Phewa, Ken Bullen-Smith, James McGregor & Nombulelo Phewa with Nic Davies on guitar. [Production manager] Jess Mias. [Places] Arena theatre, University of Cape Town Drama Department: Cape Town (September 2008). National Arts Festival: Grahamstown (July 2009). Afrovibes Festival: London & Netherlands (September & October 2010). Wits University: Johannesburg (August 2011).

**Amakwerekwere.** 2009. [Creators] Steve Bandoma, Heeten Bhagat, Brigitte Defaix & Athi-Patra Ruga. [Cast] Patrick Amanya Mdahura, Habimana Omar, Adam Nugaruera, Ahamed Mohamed, Nuurh Hasan, Sakaria Aliabdi, Kalombo Somwe, Kilolo Dibwe Guvlain & the dancers from Jazzart. [Place] Thibault Square: Cape Town.

**Afrocartography: Traces of Places and all points in between.** 2008. [Creator] Mwenya Kabwe. [Cast] Lesoko Seabe, Lauren Steyn, Themba Stewart & Mwenya Kabwe. [Place] UNESCO World Festival of Theatre Schools: Barcelona, Spain.

**Blood Diamonds: Terminal.** 2009. [Creator] Brett Bailey. [Technical manager] Iain North. [Place] National Arts Festival: Grahamstown.

**Composition A.** 2007. [Creator] Awelani Moyo. [Cast] Awelani Moyo & Mmakgosi Kgabi. [Place] Lower Studio: Grahamstown.

**Composition Z – The House of Stone.** 2007. [Creator] Awelani Moyo. [Cast] Awelani Moyo, Sifiso Mabena & Mmakgosi Kgabi. [Place] Old Gaol: Grahamstown.

**Composition Z – The House of Stone.** 2008. [Creator] Awelani Moyo. [Cast] Awelani Moyo & Mmakgosi Kgabi. [Place] Botanical Gardens Amphitheatre: Grahamstown.

**Did We Dance – Ukutshona ko Mendi (the Sinking of the Mendi).** 2012. [Writer] Lara Foot. [Director] Mandla Mbothwe with the assistance of the company. [Design] Leopold Senekal.

[Musical direction] Bongile Mantsai. [Choreography] Owen Manamela-Mogane. [Lighting] Patrick Curtis. [Cast] Warona Seane, Bongo Nkani, Owen Manamela-Mogane, Thando Doni, Apollo Ntshoko, Bongile Mantsai, Mongezi Ncwadi & Xolani Ngesi. [Place] Baxter Theatre: Cape Town.

***Enter the Maids.*** 2010. [Creator] Asanda Phewa. [Cast] Chuma Sopotela & Jill Liebenberg with chorus. [Place] Central Methodist Church: Cape Town.

***Eutopia.*** 2012. [Director] Thando Doni. [Cast] Ntombi Mokhutshi, Kabi Thulo, Aphiwe Menziwa & Khayaletu Mofu. [Place] Theatre Arts Admin Collective, Methodist Church Hall: Cape Town.

***Ever Year, Every Day, I am Walking.*** 2006. [Creator] Mark Fleishman & company. [Director] Mark Fleishman. [Cast] Jennie Reznik & Faniswa Yisa. [Set design] Julia Anastasopoulos. [Music composer & performer] Neo Muyanga. [Place] National Arts Festival: Grahamstown.

***Exile.*** 2009. [Creators] Alfred Hinkel, Michael Lister, Mary Manzole & Penelope Youngleson. [Cast] Ciara Barron, Sinazo Bokolo, Nicole de Klerk, Luke de Kock, John Hendricks, John Jeje, Leilah Kirsten, Amy-Kay Klaasen, Aphiwe Livi, Adam Malebo, Mbovu Malinga, Robyn Poole, Ronald Sasman, Tamaryn Schultz, Tracey September, Elvis Sibeko, Enricho Solomons, Stephanie Swartbooi, Wendy Thoane, Ayden van der Westhuizen, Charlston van Rooyen, Darryl van Schalkwyk, Prosper Tafa, Rozendra Newman, Nosiphiwo Samente, Thabisa Dinga, Vathiswa Nodlayiya, Nkosinathi Sangweni, Luthando Ntsodo & Gordon Andries. [Place] Adderley Street Fountains: Cape Town.

***Hatched.*** 2009. [Creator] Mamela Nyamza with the assistance of Hannah Lowenthal. [Cast] Mamela Nyamza with Amkele Nyamza. [Places] New Dance: Johannesburg (August 2009) Out the Box Festival: Cape Town (March 2010), National Arts Festival: Grahamstown (July 2010), Fugard Theatre: Cape Town (September 2010), Danse l'Afrique danse!: Bamako, Mali (October & November 2010), Dance Umbrella: London, UK (October 2011).

***Huroyi Hwangu – In De/Re Composition.*** 2007. [Creator] Awelani Moyo. [Cast] Awelani Moyo & Mmakgosi Kgabi. [Place] Rehearsal Studio: Grahamstown.

***Ingcwaba lendoda lise cankwe ndlela (the grave of the man is next to the road)***. 2009. [Creator] Mandla Mbothwe with cast. [Writer] Mandla Mbothwe & cast. [Choreography] Maxwell Xolani Rani&Jennie Reznek. [Music] Nolufefe Mtshabe. [Drummer] Themba Pondo. [Multimedia editor] Sanjin Muftic. [Translations] Thoko Ntshinga. [Decor and Lighting Design] Craig Leo. [Costume Design] Shiba Sopotela. [Cast] Faniswa Yisa, Thando Doni, Luvo Tamba, Mziwandile Nofomele, Themba Nqinileyo, Nandipha Mnyuka, Thumeka Mzayiya, Asanda Rilitynana, Phumza Tshem. [Places] Infecting the City Festival: Cape Town (February 2009). National Arts Festival: Grahamstown (July 2009). Artscape: Cape Town (February 2010).

***Ilulwane***. 2011. [Creator] Athi-Patra Ruga. [Music] Athi-Patra Ruga & Spoek Mathambo. [Place] Museum for African Art presents Athi-Patra Ruga: New York.

***Interracial***. 2007. [Creators] Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom & Aubrey Sekhabi. [Director] Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom. [Music Director] Kholofelo Kola. [Choreographer] Israel Bereta. [Set & Lighting Designer] Declan Randall. [Cast] Vuyani Shadrack Dlomo, Loungo Masire, Koketso Mojela, Kedibone Tholo, Dineo Ramailane, Modise Mphatsoe, Olebogeng Boitumelo Phang Sebotha, Segomotso Modise, Thatale Klaas Motebejane, Gaolatlhe Mathenyane, Sello Johannes Zikalala, Brian Chokwe. [Place] National Arts Festival: Grahamstown.

***Inxeba Lomphilisi (the wound of a healer)***. 2010. [Creator] Mandla Mbothwe & cast. [Director] Mandla Mbothwe assisted by Faniswa Yisa. [Cast] Faniswa Yisa, Asanda Rilityana, Thando Doni, Luvo Tamba, Thumeka Mzayiya. Magnet Theatre Trainees: Aphiwe Menziwa, Nolufefe Ntshuntshe, Thembekile Komani. [Drummer] Mzimkhulu Mtelekiso. [Movement Director] Jennie Reznek. [Choreographer] Ina Wichterich. [Musical Director] Nolufefe Mtshabe. [Designer] Angela Nemoj assisted by Jennifer Bam. [Lighting Designers] Craig Leo & Mark Fleishman. [Multimedia] Sanjin Muftic. [Translations] Thoko Ntshinga. [Production Manager] Sherna Botto. [Place] National Arts Festival: Grahamstown.

***Isingqala***. 2011. [Creator] Mamela Nyamza. [Cast] Mamela Nyamza. [Place] National Arts Festival: Grahamstown.

***Isivuno sama Phupha (Harvesting of Dreams)***. 2007. [Creator] Mandla Mbothwe & cast. [Director] Mandla Mbothwe. [Costumes] Illka Louw. [Lighting Design] Luke Ellenbogen. [Cast]

Performed by students of the UCT drama department & selected members of the Magnet Theatre Community Groups Intervention. [Place] Performed around Hiddingh Campus, UCT: Cape Town.

***I Stand Corrected.*** 2012. [Creators] Mojisola Adebayo & Mamela Nyamza. [Director] Mojisola Adebayo. [Cast] Mojisola Adebayo & Mamela Nyamza. [Set & Costume Design] Rajha Shakiry. [Lighting Designer] Mannie Manim. [Music Supervision] Mix 'n' Sync. [Place] Artscape Theatre: Cape Town.

***Katuntu (...and you too).*** 2009. [Creator] Alude Mahali & Injairu Kulundu. [Cast] Alude Mahali & Injairu Kulundu. [Place] Hiddingh Campus: University of Cape Town.

***Karoo Moose.*** 2007. [Writer] Lara Foot. [Director] Lara Foot. [Cast] Chuma Sopotela, Mfundo Tshazibane, Thami Mbongo, Mdu Kweyama, Zoleka Helesi & Bongile Mantsai. [Musical director] Bongile Manstai. [Choreographer] Mdu Kweyama. [Set & Lighting Design] Patrick Curtis. [Props Designer] Henning Lüdeke & Koos Marais. [Visual Artist] Gerhard Marx. [Place] Aardklop Festival: Potchefstroom.

***Kutheni.*** 2009. [Creator] Mamela Nyamza. [Choreographer] Mamela Nyamza with the assistance of Hannah Loewenthal. [Cast] Phindile Kula & Refiloe Mogoje. [Set design] Carrie Shelver. [Music] Shwi Nomtekhala, Ladysmith Black Mambazo & Letta Mbulu. [Place] Kwamlamli's Place, Ny146, Gugulethu: Cape Town.

***Limbo.*** 2009. [Creators] Brian Geza, Fabrice Guillot, Kai Lossgott & Julia Raynham. [Cast] Themba Stewart, Herve Bagalwa, Kudakwashe Mahanya, David Arnold Johnson, Kenneth Zendera, Nobonke Van Tonder, Carlton Zhanelo, Alude Mahali, Baldwin T. Geza, Cindy Nolusindiso Mkaza & Peggy Zinziswa Tunyiswa. [Place] Church Square: Cape Town.

***'Long Live the Dead Queen'.*** 2009. Mary Sibande's exhibition 'Long Live the Dead Queen' opened at the Gallery MOMO in Johannesburg July 2009.

***Mies Julie.*** 2012. [Creator] Yael Farber. [Director] Yael Farber. [Design] Patrick Curtis. [Costume] Birrie le Roux. [Original music] Daniel and Matthew Pencer. [Cast] Bongile Mantsai, Hilda Cronje, Thoko Ntshinga, Thandiwe Nofirst Lungisa. [Place] Baxter Theatre: Cape Town.

**Mhla Salamana.** 2012. [Director] Thando Doni. [Cast] Aphiwe Menziwa, Mkhusele Tafane, Asanda Rilityana with *a cappello* soundscape by Muzik Sensation. [Place] Baxter Theatre Golden Arrow Studio: Cape Town.

**Mo(u)rning.** 2011. [Photographer] Zanele Muholi. Exhibition presented by Stevenson Gallery: Cape Town.

**Okuya Phantsi Kwempumlo – The Meal.** 2012. [Creator] Mamela Nyamza with assistance from Tossie van Tonder. [Cast] Mamela Nyamza, Kirsty Ndawo, Dinah Eppel. [Place] National Arts Festival: Grahamstown.

**Reclaiming the P...word.** 2009. [Director] Asanda Phewa. [Producer] Mary Hames. [Group] Abafazi Bafazi. [Cast] Yolanda Gomba, Yolanda Gonono, Yolanda Meslane, Tamlin Jeposa, Roche Kester, Tandeka Moletana, Kholofela Mashego, Akhono Mbombo, Hope Nebulu, Unathi Ntoyanto, Thandolwethu Ntshebe. [Place] Baxter Theatre: Cape Town.

**Rewind: A Cantata for Voice, Tape and Testimony.** 2006. [Creator & composer] Philip Miller. [Music director] Phillip Miller. [Featured soloists] Sibongile Khumalo, Otto Maudi, Stéfan Louw & Nozuko Teto with the Cape Town Opera Voice of the Nation chorus alongside the Heavenly Voices chorus, accompanied by a string octet led by Marian Lewin. [Director & designer] Gerhard Marx. [Conductor] Sidwell Mhlongo. [Video] Gerhard Marx & Maja Mark. [Additional vocal arrangements] Mduduzi Mofokeng. [Place] St Georges Cathedral: Cape Town.

**Sakhozi Says “NON” to the Venus.** 2008. [Director] Toni Morkel. [Performer & choreographer] Nelisiwe Xaba. [Sound & music] Mocke J Van Veuren. [Video] Lukasz Pater. [Place] *Musee de Quai Branley*: Paris.

**Scars.** 2010. [Writer] Asanda Phewa. [Director] Asanda Phewa. [Choreography] Celeste Botha, Megan Erasmus, Ina Wichterich-Mogane & Marlin Zoutman. [Musical Score] Denzil Erasmus. [Cast] Celeste Botha & Megan Erasmus. [Place] Artscape Theatre: Cape Town.

**Shift.** 2010. [Creator] Mamela Nyamza with directorial assistance from Hannah Loewenthal. [Cast] Mamela Nyamza. [Design] Craig Leo. [Music] Burial. [Place] Spier Contemporary Festival: Cape Town.

***The Crossing.*** 2008. [Creator] Jonathan Nkala. [Director] Bo Peterson. [Cast] Johnathan Nkala. The New Space Theatre: Cape Town.

***There was this sound.*** 2012. [Creator] Lesoko Seabe. [Cast] Lesoko Seabe. [Place] Little Theatre: Cape Town.

***The Story I'm about to tell.*** 1997. [Director] Robert Coleman. Devised by the Khulumani Support Group with Catherine Mlangeni, Duma Khumalo, & Thandi Shezi with Dan Robbertse, Ramolao Makhene & Kenneth Nkosi from the Market Theatre. [Place] National Arts Festival: Grahamstown.

***They Look at Me and That's All They Think.*** 2006. [Choreographer] Nelisiwe Xaba in collaboration with Strangelove. [Director] Carlo Gibson. [Animation] Lukasz Pater. [Place] FNB Dance Umbrella: Johannesburg.

***Tshepang.*** 2003. [Writer] Lara Foot. [Director] Lara Foot. [Cast] Mncedisi Shabangu & Nonceba Constance/Kholeka Qwabe. [Designer] Gerhard Marx. [Place] National Arts Festival: Grahamstown.

## **APPENDIX B: FOUR KEY WORKS IN PERFORMANCE**

This section outlines the four key works of this study in performance. They are detailed in chronological order of performance.

### ***Huroyi Hwangu – In De/Re Composition (2007)***

**Duration: 38mins**

The audience enter the space; it is a box-shaped rehearsal studio. The windows have been blacked out with black plastic bags. The room is dimly lit. The set and hand properties are arranged in such a way that creates a circular playing space. The space is dominated by a large black steel cage with bars that is placed upstage centre. There is wool strewn across the cage, giving the illusion of a web. There are glass beads and water-filled balloons dangling from the roof of the cage. There are also pieces of fabric draped across the bars of the cage. Outside, on top of the cage, there stands a wooden table turned upside down. On the upturned table stand several glasses and a larger glass bowl filled with water. There is a rock trail leading from the cage to a large Perspex bowl fixed in front of the cage, centre stage. The light shining off it gives the bowl a slightly blue hue. There is a paper trail from the bowl leading to upstage right where a second table is placed. There is a trail of logs that leads to Dombo's chaotic place of emergence upstage left. The second table is covered with a table cloth. On top of the table are pieces of paper and a pen, a Dictaphone, headphones and a lit lamp. A string of glass beads and cloth hang from the ceiling right down to the table. Just behind the table is a makeshift person. Constructed with pieces of sponge and clothed, this life-size doll resembles a person. Upstage left is an old shopping trolley, newspapers, plastics bags and paper bags, glass bowls, jars, and a calabash. There are also plastic bowls, bottles and cups, a paraffin lamp, soft drink cans, eggs, eggshells and empty egg cartons scattered about – this is Dombo's space. The rest of the playing space is covered with sand and leaves. The audience stands in a semi circle from the stage left to right.

*Huroyi Hwangu* contains eight scenes. Dombo, the border jumper and the Woman-who-washes are played by Awelani Moyo. The Old Woman is played by Mmakgosi Kgabi. The Old Woman does not speak but creates a soundscape and aids transitions. The Storytelling Bird

and the Grandmother are puppets manipulated by Moyo. Kgabi as the Old Woman wears a long brown dress with a grey head wrap. A piece of fabric is draped over the dress across her shoulders; she has strings of orange beads around her neck. She is barefoot. Her face is covered by a white mask and we only see her eyes and lips, her lips are painted blue. When she later removes the mask, we see her face is also painted white. She walks with a wooden cane. Moyo's entire body is painted blue. Her torso and face are also decorated with white tribal markings. She is topless and wears black sheer stockings and a striped blue loincloth with a string of beads around her waist. She too is bare foot.

Introduction/ entrance: we hear the author voice over a recording. She narrates a lengthy passage, in it we hear her turning the pages of her text, tearing her paper and clearing her throat. In the passage, she talks about Nainai. She talks about Dombo who 'has the peculiarity of a stone...who cannot be moved'. She says:

She lives in a cave filled with, things. Her bubbles, her breasts, her water-balloons. Her little feet, lightweight, and heady. She's the ballerina. Scoops up my thoughts with her head. Slender as a stick, stick-thin, silk skinned, and polishing her calabash. She lives in the dark. Bent double, kneeling, bent down, bent over. The weight of the world on her little shoulders. The water at her feet, weighted down. The sand beneath my feet, eroding, sinking. Like a tree on a dune as the wind blows, hits my face. She's whispering, she's speaking, she's lighting, she's dancing, she's throwing, she's pouring she's running, she's hiding, she's kneeling, bent down, bent double, bent over. She's greeting. She hides beneath the rock not wanting her dances to be known. Not wanting her words to be stolen (Moyo, 2009:104).

While the narration continues, the masked Old Woman shambles around, walking with a cane, and carrying her bag of rocks. She bends over the large water-filled Perspex bowl, unties the fabric draped over her dress and cradles it ever so gently in her arms as though it were a baby. Suddenly she gasps and discards the piece of fabric throwing it far from her. She kneels over the bowl and repeats a gestural sequence that involves fluid hand/arm movements; stretching her hands over her head and extending them to her sides as she hums.

Storytelling: Just then Dombo begins hatching from beneath a pile of newspapers; she appears quite fragile and bird-like. Dombo runs uncontrollably in the space screaming and crowing. Moyo, losing the Dombo mannerisms and becoming her neutral self, runs into the cage and sings 'tell me a story'. Lights come up and Moyo, as the strange blue figure

narrates: 'As always it was pitifully hot in the land of Einaa...' telling the story of Nainai, the beautiful bird, the unwanted woman of water (see page 79).

Dombo: Dombo emerges from the cage; she spits, hoots and yells, jumps around erratically, slaps her hands against her chest, grunts, writhes around on the floor, plays with the stones from her little bowl and throws them in the big bowl of water. She speaks gibberish, her voice echoes in the space. She fiddles with the objects on the table, talking to the doll that does not speak back. She speaks into the Dictaphone. She busies herself with the objects, handling the headphones and then crawling amongst the leaves and logs in the demarcated space panting like an animal.

Grandmother: As Dombo scurries back to the cage, a neutral Moyo emerges with the grandmother puppet who tells young children to 'remember where they came from'—speaking from the behind the bars of the cage (see page 148). The Old Woman makes a purging gesture – she screams in a haunting and frightened manner with short bursts of wailing in between.

Border jumping: a brief interlude. Dombo moves in the webbed cage, trapped inside, struggling, until she finds an opening and breaks through. When she does she becomes the young woman who puts on shoes, humanizing her from the Dombo figure.

Woman-who-washes: Dombo's manner changes here and she begins singing a song in Shona, dancing around in a celebratory fashion. She becomes the woman who washes fabric by the river. She pulls fabric from her costume and begins to wash it in the big water-filled bowl centre stage and hangs it on the cage when she is done. She does this with several pieces of fabric in a very domestic and every day manner. She directs her speech to the onlookers where she talks about being impregnated by a handsome stranger, giving birth to a blue baby and throwing it away.

The breakdown: Dombo fiddles upstage left with the glass jars, tins and a calabash. She holds the calabash on her head, hops on a log and walks along the log with a sense of journeying. She walks on the large tree stump to the big bowl; she gathers water in the calabash. As she makes her way back on the log, she stumbles and falls, breaking the calabash on the floor. Shaken, she rises, as we hear the sound of pouring water – from the

Old Woman on top of the cage. As Dombo rises alarmed, she gazes in a sudden panic at the onlookers, jumps in the large bowl and begins to wash herself with urgency. The Old Woman drums, rhythmically.

House of Stone: As Moyo begins to wash the blue paint off her body. The Old Woman throws a calabash from atop the cage and it crashes loudly and breaks. Moyo begins the 'inconsequential ramblings' monologue, as her neutral self, pushing herself back into the entangled web of the cage as she speaks. Part of it goes:

I am slung back and forth from new embarrassment, embrace my place. Here, I carry a heavy heart and a heady air. Pour drink unto the ground and pray for the intoxicating breath of self-assurance. I soil myself. In my house of stone I collide with stealthy visions; skeletons dangling from walls, blue earth, yellow light, centipedes and silence. Mute as the moon, dressed in the comfort of my undoing. Three fingers from my feet lie silk and bone, the blood of my brothers and the dream of a time as yet unknown. And in all these sequential amblings, the ambivalence of tales of sultry women and secluded havens begs of amusement to me. My characters laugh; they point accusatory fingers and hurl themselves towards my head. The grey matter pounds, the voices wail and quake my bed. I am a string of hair and torn scalp strung between the rabid teeth of what I cannot say. Still, I stay. I do not know what I am doing here. Anointed, with thick skin and stench of carcass in my lap, I tread lightly on severed ears, and belch the music of my mind. See it stick, soap, foam and bubble as it curdles in the air. The blue woman, the woman of water, the keeper of glass, rising all at once to throw me with stones. I sit and wait for the collapse of my house of stone. I sit and wait for the collapse of my house of stone. I sit and wait for the collapse of my house of stone, for fissures to writhe and the dust of ages to choke me in its grip. I sit and collapse in the weight of my house of stone. Heavy as the seeds of doubt sewn deep into the cloth of artistry. What chivalry travails to dig me out of the rubble, is feeble. The rooftops lop off. The hands caked in grime and sod, reveal a fortune in twine. Still, in the vivid clout of their work I seep through mossy pores. I, the arthropod, the black-eyed boxer the pattern the plan. I compose myself, and prepare to begin again (Moyo, 2009:78-79).

Here Moyo destroys the objects hanging from the cage, pulls the beads down, occasionally getting entangled in the web-like cage. The grandmother throws water over her from atop the cage. Moyo ends her narration, she grabs a piece of paper that hangs from the top of the cage, she holds it to her chest. Lowers herself and sings 'tell me a story' while the Old Woman continues her drumming. The piece ends with the lights fading on the figures of Moyo and the Old Woman.

## ***A Face Like Mine (2008)***

**Duration: 35mins**

*A Face Like Mine* is performed in an intimate space. The audience sits on three sides of the playing area. Performed in a box shaped rehearsal studio that is transformed into the Girl's room with its linoleum floor. The room is dimly lit with the windows covered in black plastic to block light from coming in. The back wall is covered with magazine cut-outs of white women in fashion spreads and advertisements. There is a white wardrobe in front of the wall where a pink apron hangs. A tall lamp is situated upstage right. Upstage left is where Nombulelo Phewa, Phewa's mother is situated, sitting on a windowsill. She wears a traditional orange dress with brown trim and a matching brown head wrap. There is a bed, a table, a chair, a stool and a large zinc bath filled with water in the space, these objects are moved around throughout the piece. The bed is covered in white linen and is initially placed in front of the lamp. The table, placed downstage left, is covered in white table cloth, on the table, we see: a paraffin lamp, a torch, various moisturizers and lotions, perfume and makeup. There is a chair placed in front of the table. On the stool rests a white towel, soap and shampoo. The stool is placed next to the bath which is centre stage. There are two white men in the space, simply called Boy 1 and 2. There is one moment where Boy 1 delivers a monologue but for the most part, they are silent throughout. Nic Davies sits on the periphery playing the base guitar on occasion. The boy's are dressed in jeans and are topless. Phewa wears a white makeshift pyjama set of a white lacy vest and white bloomers with a lace design. Later she changes into the domestic worker outfit, a pink overall and matching head wrap.

*A Face Like Mine* is performed in ten images:

Waxing on bed: the girl is waxing and rubbing herself with her lotions in her nightclothes on her bed. She talks about the universal measure of beauty, mentioning a book she read that found white women to be the most attractive race. She then she goes to bed.

Waking up: As she is sleeping, her bed begins moving, Boy 2 is moving it from underneath. She delivers her monologue about her every day morning ritual; waking up with her lover by

her side, mentally running through her to-do list, running the bathwater, watching morning television and starting the day.

Attack of the bed: This becomes a confrontation when the bed attacks her, manipulated by the boys. She struggles to stay fixed in one place as the bed is being shaken violently. Here she talks about her placenessness, wanting to leave the room and feeling herself 'coming out of her body'. The scene ends with her eventually securing her position on top of the bed and the boys shouting "Coconut, coconut" at her.

Creaming my face: here the girl uses her moisturizers, lotions and makeup, beautifying herself at her vanity table. She delivers a monologue about being called a coconut, not wanting to be white and the conflicts that surrounds her perception of blackness. As this goes on, her mother watches her from the windowsill. Boy 1 sits straddling the zinc bath and Boy 2 leers over her at the vanity table as she speaks. She moves over to the zinc bath and begins the monologue that celebrates the range of her black body. Here she and Boy 1 engage in a movement sequence that involves them touching one another gently, mirroring each other's hand gestures and the Boy cradling her over his knee.

Bathing: In this scene, the girl is in the bath with Boy 1 shampooing and washing her hair from outside the bath. He repeatedly submerges her head under water as she is talking. She delivers a lengthy monologue about being envious of the white girl/woman who, she can't imagine, to have more problems than she does, particularly those of identity (see pages 120-122).

Sugar: Here Boy 1 recites a monologue that features descriptions of Dr. Georges Cuvier's depiction of Sarah Baartman's body and genitalia, he talks about her:

Her hair was black and woolly, much like that of the common Negro, the slits of the eyes horizontal as in Mongols not oblique; the brows straight, wide apart and very much flattened close to the top of the nose, but jutting out at the temple above the cheekbones; her eyes were dark and lively; her lips blackish, terribly thick; her complexion very dark. Her ears were much like those found in monkeys: Small, weakly formed at the tragus, and vanishing behind almost completely. Her breasts, left free, hung and bulky and terminated obliquely in a blackish areola about 1 and half inches in a diameter pitted with radiating wrinkles, near the centre of what was a nipple so flattened and obliterated as to be barely visible: The colour of her skin was on the whole a yellowish brown, almost as dark as her face. She had no body hair apart from a few short flecks of wool like that on her head, scattered about her pubic parts (2008a).

Mother: we hear from Phewa's mother who delivers a listing of Phewa's Zulu and Xhosa ancestors and clan names:

*Phewa, Mthembu, Mvelase, wena owavel'enyangeni, Gqigqizela, Shongela, Ndimande, nina enipheka ngamabhodw'amakhulu ekuthiwa amahumela, umzukulwana wenu lo. Inkosazana kaBhikili, ozalwa uMasoka delani ka Zitha, kaSomhlola, kaSivilibana, kaMyayiza phesheya koMzinyathi kwesikankosi uMzonjani kaNgcobo.*

*Ukwangumzukulwana wasemaJwareni, ooMtika, ooMazaleni, ooJotela, ooSoga. Inkosazana kaThunjana intombi kaMtshatweni, ozalwa nguPana, kaMke, kaGcuwana, kaHiyana kwaMali phesheya kweQhagqiwa kumzi waseXaba (Phewa 2008a).*

Getting dressed: This is where Phewa narrates her humiliating taxi experience where she is ridiculed and mocked for speaking English in a taxi. She is on top of the bed as she speaks the text and she begins to put on the maid costume (see page 118).

Torch assault/ gazing: here Boy 1 and the girl illuminate each other's bodies with the torch. Taking turns, it is troubling to the girl who is completely naked. The examination begins with the girl shining a light on the boy's naked torso and face and ends with Boy 1 usurping the torch and shining it on her naked body and face.

Leaving: Before she exits, she leaves the onlooker with her statement about her decision to become the maid. She asks that the lights be turned on, turns on the lights and exists the space (see page 92).

### ***Ingcwaba lendoda lise cankwe ndlela (the grave of the man is next to the road) (2009)***

**Duration: 1h10mins**

The stage is proscenium arch. The space is sparse except for an open suitcase centre stage and two makeshift seats, one an upturned bucket and the other an upturned crate both covered by a pieces of cloth. Upstage left sits the percussionist with his drums and various other sound making tools. We see several props slightly off stage and these are picked up when they are needed and discarded when they are not. There are ten performers – five women and five men – including the percussionist. Visuals are projected on the backdrop along with the English translations of the Xhosa text. There is a sense that the piece takes place in a rural landscape. All of the women are in old-fashioned and conservative skirts and

dresses, some have their heads covered. They also wear cardigans and pinafores. The men are in formal chinos and dress shirts; some have waistcoats with peak caps on. They are all dressed in neutral colours, browns, black, beige, grey and white. All of the performers are barefoot, save for one of the men who wears brown lace-up shoes.

The father figure is called Zanentlahla but is never called by name. The mother figure is not named and the daughter figure is called Mesuli. These three are the only identifiable characters, each of whom is performed by a single player. The remainder of the ten person ensemble cast perform multiple parts.

The piece starts with the players situated on and around the stage calling out various towns in the Eastern Cape. One actress sits on stage, she is the wife/mother figure. She sits beside a suitcase with a candle burning inside the suitcase. The performers start a light hum that turns into a song loosely translated as "I've got my baggage and I'm leaving today". There is a flurry of activity on stage, most of the performers are now on stage, each has luggage that they hurriedly carry around while singing. One performer is dressed all in white -- she looks spirit-like/ghostly -- she has a white turban on her head, her face is painted white and she carries a white umbrella. The wife rushes forward and picks up a letter from the floor. She rushes off stage, giving way to the other performers hurrying onto the stage with their things. Some carry suitcases; others grass mats and woven baskets, satchels, plastic makeshift bags and sticks.

The performers dart across stage, to one corner, extend one of their arms up and make light bouncing motions, swaying side to side giving the illusion that they are on a train. The wife, separated from the group, walks across the stage reading the letter to herself. As she sits, the train congregation disperses, individuals partner up as they depart, each going their separate ways, waving goodbye to the people they have journeyed with. The men congregate together upstage right, the woman occupy several spots in the space. Two women performers find themselves perched on little makeshift stools upstage right. One picks up a man's shoe and begins polishing it with a piece of cloth while chatting to and laughing with her friend. Another woman upstage right echoes their movement and also polishes a single shoe -- she engages with the men, watching their captivating movement enthusiastically. The men stand in a diagonal line. They chat amongst themselves, shaking

hands and greeting one another cheerfully. They leap into a movement sequence which involves coordinated hand gestures that include rolling the hands in a wheel-like motion and a beckoning hand gesture – they repeat this.

The wife sits reading her letter. One of the young women gets up, peering over at her from a distance with familiarity and a playful look on her face – this is the daughter. The wife lights a candle, the girl joins her at the stool. The wife carries a man's hat and they examine its contents. She pulls out a stone and hands it to the girl, who excitedly rushes off with it, cradling it carefully in the palms of her hands. The wife reads her letter out loud; the text is projected on the screen as she reads "Flowers are red, the leaves are green, I remember you like the rain in barren soil, just where the roots spring out." She kisses the piece of paper. One of the men rises, he tugs at his blazer, straightening himself out in preparation for something – this is the husband/father. The girl walks across the stage to her mother, returns the stone which her mother carefully places back in the suitcase with her letter – she blows out the candle and shuts the suitcase.

The girl then walks over to the standing man in the black blazer, they exchange words, and he takes her in his arms and kisses her on the forehead. He takes off his blazer and hands it to her. She carries it over to the wife who has since picked up the suitcase and walked downstage right with it. When the girl reaches her mother, she places the blazer on top of the suitcase. The wife ties an imaginary knot – tying the suitcase to the blazer. The wife takes the blazer in her hands, cradling it as she strokes it.

The girl rushes centre stage where she sits down. The wife elatedly helps the man put on his blazer. The daughter sits at the feet of her parents, tugging at her father's pant leg. The husband and wife embrace each other. One of the women with a shoe jumps up and begins a celebratory dance, the men begin dancing across the stage in a single line. The couple gazes into each other eyes lovingly, stealing kisses through the action around them. The singing and dancing comes to a complete stop and the husband steps forward and addresses the audience: "I had a dream last night. I was home. I smelt cow dung. I saw my ancestor's graves. I tasted fear on my breath when I saw the great home of Mkhontyo in ruins." As he finishes his monologue, he walks over to the suitcase, extends his arms out and unties the invisible cord that was tied by his wife earlier. As he snaps the cord, his wife winces,

grabbing her stomach and laying her hand on her daughter's head. With this the husband picks up the suitcase and heads out, moving past wife and daughter. The wife smiles at him and the daughter hurries after him, calling 'Tata' (father). She picks up the stone, spits on it, rubs it under her feet and under her armpits. She then hands this keepsake to him. The other performers observe this intimate moment and smile. The father laughs, he leans over to kiss her on her forehead and leaves. The daughter stands smiling and waving at him as he walks off.

As he exits, the group breaks into shrieks of ululation, waving their arms animatedly and jumping up and down. One chorus member claps her hands spiritedly prompting the audience to join her. Two men break into a stick fight. The same female chorus member begins to *umxhentso* – this is a traditional Xhosa dance. The husband moves amongst this chaos. A woman carrying a grass mat steps forward once centre stage has been cleared and lays the mat out in front of the husband. The woman steps forward carrying a large bowl and sets it carefully on top of the grass mat, she bows to him which prompts the husband to remove his shoes, all the while the other performers are kneeling or seated on the stage singing, clapping and looking on. The man removes his clothes until he stands before the woman in his under garments. The woman begins to wash him. She holds the bowl up to him, he dips his hands in it and washes his face. He steps away from the grass mat and stands still. He puts his pants back on and begins his text "come with us, we are leaving" and he is joined by the chorus.

The man pulls the stone out of his pocket and hands it over to the woman in white who takes it cautiously, walks over to the suitcase and places the stone gently in the suitcase. The daughter rises, grabs her father's shoes which she finds upstage right, hands the shoes to her mother. Her mother carefully examines the shoes in her hands and then hands them to the woman in white, who walks off with the shoes and returns with a different pair of shoes. She hands the shoes over to the husband who passes them to his wife.

With this, song erupts in increased volumes – one of the chorus men blows a whistle rhythmically. One of the chorus women steps forward, dancing cheerfully and clapping. She springs forwards and backwards, up and down with much energy. She pulls out a handkerchief from her bust and waves it about. She folds the handkerchief neatly and hands

it to the husband. He puts it in his pocket. One of the chorus men blazes forward and moves vibrantly towards the audience in dance – in his hand, he carries a bottle of brandy. He dances to the suitcase and places the bottle in the suitcase. The woman kneels before the opened suitcase; she closes it shut, picks it up and hands it to the husband.

The husband extends his arm towards wife and daughter, reaching for them, unable to touch them – his wife reaches out for him. In recognition of each other they clench their hands into fists and bring the fists up towards their hearts – staring knowingly at each other. Just then the performers dart across the stage from different directions with small items of baggage. The husband walks off with wife and daughter calling after him, they dart in different directions calling out 'Tata' (father). The wife carrying her husband's hat, asks a seated man for directions to the taxis –she listens out for them, says thank you and heads out in that direction. In all of this running around, the husband appears on stage and he too is looking for direction though no one helps him. He sits and wipes sweat from his forehead. Six performers gather downstage in a linear formation as if on the side of a road, hitchhiking. They give up and disperse again, lugging their belongings. One performer shouts '*misa*' (stop).

The wife stands on top of the stool with her husband's hat in her hand, scouring the crowd for him, she calls out. The chorus quieten down and all we hear is the rattling of the percussionist. The wife circles the space moving in between the crowd, with the hat in her hand. A man calls out – she jerks and rushes downstage right. There she meets a man; she hums and holds the hat out to him expecting him to put something in it. He reaches into his satchel and pulls out a piece of paper that he places in the hat – we can see the husband in the corner also holding a piece of paper in his hand. She pulls the letter out smiling and humming. He smiles back at her and waves slowly as she turns away. She swings around in the space waving the piece of paper and continues to hum joyfully – she stands on top of an over-turned box upstage centre facing the projection which shows cars driving down a long stretch of road. The wife runs to the man who gave her the piece of paper before, she holds out the hat again expecting something else. She gets nothing; instead he shakes his head from side to side to say "no". The wife rushes to her husband – who has since knelt beside his daughter – and holds out the hat to him. The daughter girl rises slowly, dusts herself off,

prompting her mother to come out of her vision/dream/memory. Husband, wife and daughter spread their arms simultaneously and clasp their arms around their own bodies hugging themselves. They slowly walk back towards the projection facing the audience. Mother and daughter slowly turn away, their backs turned toward the audience, their arms still enveloping their own bodies. They eventually drop their arms as they walk away, they turn together to listen out for him once more and continue on.

The wife holds the hat in her limp hand; the girl sits expectantly on the ground. They wait. The chorus disperse and settle on the periphery of the stage in different groups – they pull out shoes from their luggage and hold them in their hands. They inspect the shoes smiling. The husband looks on, watching his wife intently. She turns to see him; they lock eyes and run to embrace each other. They hold each other tightly centre stage. As the two embrace, the other performers beat the shoes against the floor in a rhythmic rumble. They touch the soles of their feet knowingly and continue with the pitter-patter of foot-less shoes against the floor.

The wife slips out of the embrace, shrugging the man off who fights to keep her close to him. She backs away, they stand facing each other, their arms held out they inch towards each other again, this time walking straight passed one another. The girl gets up, rushes downstage right and knocks on an invisible door, calling out '*Tata*' (father). The husband and wife embrace their own bodies, once again. The girl rushes downstage left knocks again and calls out '*Tata*' (father). The chorus put the shoes back in their bags, close them carefully and bring them close to their bodies. The wife reaches out to her husband but he is longer there, he slowly approaches behind her and wraps his arms around her, she brings hers up to hold him but they do not face each other. The girl repeats the knock directly in front of the projection with her back turned towards the audience. This knock is less urgent, she is weary and says '*Tata, ndihambile*' (father, I have left). The husband and wife lower their bodies until they meet the floor – still embracing.

One of the female performers holding a grass mat under her arm delivers text about wanting to return to her mother's home. "I walked over the hills and mountains, crossing rivers, crossing fields. I asked the elders 'who am I'? Who birthed me? Where did they come from?" When she is finished talking she picks up a suitcase. She walks back to the woman in

white who embraces and comforts her. The wife walks over to the stool and sits on it. She takes the hat in her hands and holds it up to her and laughs. She dances in jubilation and wears the hat on her head. The daughter catches her doing this and laughs; the mother realizing she's been caught takes the hat off and giggles. The girl beckons for the hat, her mother hands it over and the girl also wears it on her head. She then starts to dance. The girl beckons for her mother to join her, holding out her hand – mother and daughter dance together. Meanwhile a long piece of string is being unravelled across the stage, held by two of the performers on opposite ends of the stage. The twosome continues to dance unaware. They stop suddenly and the mother removes the hat from the girl's head, the girl kneels and sits, looking up at her mother.

Tied to each end of the long string is a shoe – each of the two performers' holds a shoe up to their ear as if it were a telephone. The mother, taking the hat, walks off and the girl rises to follow after her, she calls after her: Mama. The mother returns with both the hat and a bowl in her hands, she sets the bowl down. She washes the hat with the liquid in the bowl. The girl comes up to embrace her from behind and the mother quickly shrugs her off – the daughter stays cowering behind her. The husband surges forward as if to reach out to them, but is held back by the string stretched across the stage. He holds his ear up to the string listening – the two performers holding the string are now engaged in conversation. The two performers on the 'phone' kiss each other goodbye, drop the shoes and the string and sit down. The wife begins an embittered, angry monologue that she directs to her husband (see page 107).

The girl sensing her mother's anger and sadness rises up, looks at her and with determination turns to knock once again at the invisible door shouting: Tata! She repeats this to no avail, he does not hear her, no one hears her. The wife pulls the letter from her bust, places it in the hat and tosses the hat aside in frustration. The girl runs, picks up the bowl and carries it downstage left, puts her hands in the bowl and washes herself with the water. The girl runs and kneels before her father who she does not see and in desperation screams: Tata! Her mother, hearing her cry, rises to look for her. 'Mesuli' she calls out repeatedly in search of her daughter. She finds her, picks her up and arm in arm, they walk together back to the stool.

The mother comforts her daughter, Mesuli, stroking her hair and rubbing her back. From the back, we hear: *'Nozenza, masigoduke Nozenza'* (let's go home Nozenza) – this is a parallel narrative. The woman in white follows after Nozenza (the girl who wants to return to her mother's village), repeating this. Nozenza says *'ndiyeke'* Thembekile (leave me alone Thembekile). Thembekile (Nozenza's older sister) tries to convince her to go home but Nozenza is hesitant, she gets hysterical, and lets out a piercing cry, she calls: Mama! Thembekile runs to embrace her, Nozenza then follows after Thembekile, she shouts her name but Thembekile walks along until she can no longer ignore her, she turns to face Nozenza, bends over, picks her up and carries her over her shoulder. She carries her across the stage until they eventually stop and sit. Thembekile embraces Nozenza, rocking her back and forth in her arms.

Mesuli says *'masigoduke'* (let us go home). This prompts an immediate response from her mother who waves a threatening finger at her. She orders the girl to sit down. The girl reaches out to her and her mother slaps her hand, rejecting her offering. The girl asks for her mother's blessing to go. Her mother responds with *'mxim'* – a dismissive assertion. Still the girl humbles herself and reaches for her mother, embracing her from behind. The husband enters the space and walks around them, suitcase in hand. The girl still asks for mother's blessing, she does not and cannot have her mother's blessing. Nevertheless, the mother stays holding the girl. Mesuli starts to slip away from her mother's arms. She walks briskly in a circle, her mother shouts after her *'Mesuli!'* Mesuli reaches up with one arm; with the other she mimes a pair of scissors that will cut the cord – the imaginary cord that was fastened by her mother at the beginning of the play, the imaginary cord that was cut earlier by the husband inciting such a visceral reaction from his wife. Mesuli now cuts the cord once more and this prompts a flinching from her mother who clutches her stomach. The rest of the chorus looks on in pity. Her mother calls out to her, pleading with her to stay and talk. Mesuli rummages through her suitcase pulling out a stone. She holds it out in front of her mother and sings, "the road is hard, the baggage is heavy". Mesuli rubs the stone on the soles of her feet, under her armpit. She walks towards her mother who continues to back away from her. Mesuli leaves the stone on the stool. She gives it a lingering look and walks off. The mother edges forward, picks up the stone. Holds it up to her mouth and

kisses it. She lifts her arms up placing her hands behind her head and cries out in anguish. She picks up the stool and calls after Mesuli.

The chorus begins to move around the space, partly dancing, and partly rushing with their baggage. Mesuli gets swallowed by crowd, she calls out 'Tata' and 'Mama' – the rest of the travellers are oblivious, carrying their things and determined to move on. Mesuli lost and carrying her small suitcase, stops to ask some of the travellers for directions but they do not hear her. No one pays her attention as she scurries from one person to the other. They circle her, causing chaos around her. She breaks out of it calling out for her father.

The light changes, it is considerably darker and all that lights the stage is a red hue – this gives an atmosphere of dusk. The chorus lower their bodies slowly until lying on their sides on the ground. They gesture as though they are gathering soil from the earth in their fists and let it fall to the ground. Mesuli moves amongst them, careful not to step on or disturb them. The chorus creates an ominous soundscape – there are shrieks, wails, bellowing calls, moaning, screeching and howling. Mesuli still calls out for her father, they surround her, wailing. They rise abruptly with their baggage in hand. Mesuli breaks away from them – she opens her suitcase, taking out the stones, rubs them on the soles of her feet and all over her body. She places them on the ground leaving a trail. She bangs the stones against the ground in frustration. She designs a trail of stones that create an X shape – two lines that intersect in the middle of the stage. We see a man's feet walking alongside the road on the projection. Mesuli is now drained though she still cries out, her voice grows hoarse. She cries out for her father, he does not come.

The mother searches for Mesuli through the cemetery, taking care not to step on anything. She moves amongst the tombs. She touches the ground and flinches. The other performers gasp as she does this. The mother walks up to the female performers on the periphery, confusing one of them for Mesuli but it is not her. She approaches a group of men to ask them if they have seen her, they do not answer her. Mesuli remains centre stage, hovering above the opened suitcase, her face turned up towards the sky; she shakes her head sporadically from side to side. The mother spots the stone trail left by Mesuli, she begins to pick the stones up. The mother adjusts her shawl to shield herself from the cold. She continues to pick to up the stones and every time she stands up, she sees thinks she sees

Mesuli. She continues to pick up from the trail of stones when suddenly Mesuli breaks away from the centre and runs to her, begging her to stop destroying her work. The mother raises her hand to slap her, shouting 'shut up'. Mesuli recoils, falling to the ground.

Mesuli attempts to rebuild the path her mother destroys. The mother orders Mesuli to pick up the stones and after hurling verbal abuse at her, Mesuli complies. The mother softens up, turns to Mesuli who cries silently, walks over to her and embraces her. In an embrace they walk together slowly until they are seated. Mesuli cries in her mother's lap. The mother strokes her, she begins singing softly. Mother and child arise. The mother walks over to the hat and letter she tossed aside earlier and picks them up, once again placing the letter in the hat. Mesuli places the man's shoes in the suitcase and closes it carefully. The mother walks over to her with the hat in hand; she places the hat in front of Mesuli who places the stones that she'd gathered in her dress, in the hat. The mother hands the hat over to Mesuli; they join hands and walk towards the projection. Together, they step over an imaginary cemetery fence, hands still linked. They kneel before the husband/father and light candles at his feet. They remove the stones from the hat and place them gently at his feet. They place the letter on top of the stones and place the hat on top of them—covering the contents. Rising together, they join hands and step over the fence once again. The mother removes her shawl and starts a ritualistic dance as the chorus erupts in song. Her shawl swings low, involuntarily sweeping the ground of the cemetery. The mother removes her shirt prompting Mesuli to remove her cardigan. The mother then removes her skirt as Mesuli removes her dress. The mother is left in her night slip and Mesuli, a bra and shorts – the woman in white walks forward, laying the grass mat out in front of them.

The husband paces up and down holding his shoes in his hands. Mesuli is introspective; she claps her hands lightly with her head lowered, the mother swings her hands back and forth. The woman in white lays the bowl on top of the grass mat prompting the mother to kneel before the bowl. The mother dips her hands in the bowl and wipes her face. Mesuli dips her hands in the bowl and does the same, also wiping her arms and then her legs. Another female performer walks over and hands Mesuli and her mother shawls to cover their bodies. The bowl starts smoking – it contains *imphepho*. The husband/father steps forward and says: "through the ancient path, we blame the feet". The chorus starts a song; the

mother picks up the bowl, raising her arm to silence the chorus. She looks at Mesuli, walks over to her and hands her the smoking bowl. Mesuli accepts it and start to sing, “this road is hard” as she rises. The mother picks up the grass mat and begins to roll it up. The mother looks at her and smiles knowingly before she joins in the song prompting the chorus to join in as well. The chorus move around picking up the baggage they had since left around and on the peripheries of the stage. The mother carries the mat and Mesuli picks up her small suitcase, the bowl and blanket. In a line, they all move out, singing in jubilation off the stage. This is the end – what remains is the image of the suitcase and the percussionist.

### ***Hatched (2009)***

**Duration: 40mins**

Movement 1: The piece is performed in the middle section of a large rehearsal studio. The audience are seated on one end; the remaining space is the performers space. We see a young boy, Amkele Nyamza, Nyamza’s son, under the table sketching. The stage is in complete darkness, the only source of light is a lamp under the table illuminating the boy’s face. The fabric draped over the table and the boy is a red skirt.

2. Lights come up and we see Nyamza situated upstage right, arms akimbo. Above her hangs a clothesline with clothespins attached to it. White leaves are scattered along the clothesline and there is a zinc bucket filled with red garments and sand standing upstage right. Nyamza has her back turned to the audience. She is topless and wearing a white and brown patterned skirt. Attached to the skirt are dozens of clothespins. She is also wearing ballet shoes.

3. What begins now is a series of slow, bird-like movements from Nyamza. They start in the rotating of the shoulders towards the back, then the hands, arms and finally the head. These are slow staccato twitches. Nyamza’s head and the hands make a circular motion at the wrists and the neck, she lifts her shoulders up and down, front to back, twisting and turning them. Nyamza pauses and kneels over a zinc bucket.

4. Then rises *en pointe* whilst hoisting the bucket onto her head. She begins to *bouree* in a straight line *en pointe* across the stage to the right. The red garments spill over from the top

of the bucket as she moves across the stage, sand spills over the edge of the bucket onto floor.

5. She slams the bucket down onto the floor and proceeds to hang the red garments on the clothesline. She begins to hum as she hangs the third item, a t-shirt. The hum turns into a song, a gospel song, she sings '*umphefumlo wami uwile*', meaning loosely 'I feel low in spirit'.

6. She gathers the red skirt and covers herself with it, going underneath it. She throws a part of the skirt over the clothesline and ties it into a knot, tying herself to the line. When she is through hanging all of the items in the bucket, she drags the bucket across the floor with her.

7. Standing, she gathers the skirt only to let it scatter again, letting it cascade to reveal her face. Here we see her properly for the first time. Her eyes remain shut as she lets the skirt drop, slowly lowering her arms to her side and raising her gaze to meet the audience. She slowly takes a few steps forward. She is tied to the line by the skirt and so when she moves forward, the line stretches toward the audience along with the garments hanging on it. It restricts how far forward she can go. She steps back again and makes a second attempt to move forward. After realizing the same limitations, she returns to her original place, close to the clothesline. She brings her hands slowly up to cover her face.

8. She makes a slow turn and when she is facing the audience again, music begins playing – a beautiful operatic aria – and the hands that covered her face begin to drop slowly. She turns around again while simultaneously moving back closer to the line; again the skirt is twisting along with her and around her body.

9. Eventually most of the skirt is gathered around her body and has left the table and her son under it completely exposed. He is lying on his side continuing with his sketches, unaware of her and the audience.

10. Nyamza is cosseted in the skirt, her chest is covered, then her hands and entire arms up to her shoulders. She moves back slowly and she begins to mutter inaudibly to herself. The skirt eventually reaches her neck, swallowing her. She wriggles slightly, fighting to bring her arms out of the only available opening. Her hands and arms come up past her face over her head as she struggles to free herself

11. It is silent again as she starts to unravel her body from the skirt in and amongst the leaves, moving further and further away upstage towards the back of the space. Her son continues to draw, unaware. At this point she is fully unravelled, although she still wears the red skirt, and she falls slowly to the ground. Then she begins writhing and kicking to get the skirt off. As she crawls out of it, she repeats the opening bird-like 'hatching' image, but this time she is on the ground.

12. Finally she attempts to stand; getting up to her feet and then *en pointe*. She moves across the clothesline *en pointe* to stage right. From her torso upwards she furiously uses her arms and hands waving and swatting away at her face, there is panic and alarm to her movement. From her waist down the movement is contained, her feet are steady as they move from the left to the right on *en pointe* until she stumbles.

13. Once more she begins the furious jerky hand gestures of swatting away at her face, spreading her wings preparing for flight. She moves in-between these gestures as she moves along the clothesline, ripping the red garments from the clothesline until she falls down.

14. She starts to play with the sand on the floor, drawing circles with the sand, the rhythm of the circling increasing until she is left tracing a circle with her hand on a bare floor. Her head shakes furiously as she wipes the floor bare of sand. She becomes frustrated with her inability to get rid of the sand on the floor, she flops and flounders, her elbows against the floor give way and she collapses.

15. She slowly brings her head up as she notices the red dress hanging in front of her on the clothesline. The light changes and becomes lighter as she is getting up. She grabs the dress between her hands, brings her head to the neckline of a young girl's dress – which is pinned to the line – and pops her head out between the clothesline and the dress, her arms pop out from the hole where her arms would emerge if she were actually wearing the dress. She smiles a wide, childlike smile. Her body language begins to change and she grips the dress between her hands on both sides, pivots side to side like a girl child showing off a new dress.

16. She jumps up and down as this little girl, the smile never leaving her face. She fiddles with her dress, claps her hands and places her hands on her hips – she repeats this sequence several times. Suddenly she rips the dress off the line in front of her, tosses it to the side,

coming out of the dream/vision/memory back to her neutral body. The bird-like physical language starts to introduce itself lightly in her body; in the hands, in the arms and her head.

17. She walks along to the clothesline to her left, comes across the red skirt still attached to the clothesline. She is entangled in it briefly until she frees herself once again. She then comes across the red coat hanging on the line, she takes it off the line and she puts it on. She cowers with her head hung low, the red coat covering her head. She pops her head up, adjusting the coat again, she smooth's out its creases, running her hand over the fabric, tugging and pulling at the ends for a snug fit. She puts her hands in the pockets – she repeats these gestures several times. She pops the collar of her coat and peers over it, showing us her profile, she peers coyly, smiling, and then shying away from us again. She adjusts the collar back to normal.

18. *Mbaqanga*<sup>30</sup> music begins; she turns around to face us this time as a shy but slightly flirtatious young woman. She begins moving with unsure footing. Her hand covers her mouth, she fidgets with her clothes and she wrings her hands together in anxiety. This sequence then escalates into a series of movements in which Nyamza is apparently looking for something. Using her fingers to point, she begins searching in different directions, following different paths. Her feet glide across the floor searching with her pointed index finger, facing different directions. Each time she leads with a different part of her body. Intermittently, she repeats an action that involves her shaking her index finger, her head and her foot in defiance as if to say 'no'.

19. In her search for direction she starts to spin slowly, she gathers momentum, and soon she is a whirlwind spinning out of control, she smiles through it until she is dizzy with happiness, this is her dance of liberation. She stops and lets herself sway forwards and backwards, side to side. Leaning backwards her knees buckle, her arms are raised at her sides. The music comes to a stop and she sinks to the ground. At the same time that she is collapsing, her son gets up and walks upstage towards the line.

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<sup>30</sup> A South African dance music that combines traditional elements (such as chanting and drumming) with elements of modern music (such as jazz).

20. She sits with her legs spread open, feet flat on the ground, hands clasped together and her head hung low. She surveys the audience; it is quiet except for the boy moving around. She utters the words “Can someone please borrow me a cigarette and matches please”. She then says the very same thing again in isiXhosa. Expecting an audience member to actually come down and heed her request, someone actually does. She lights the cigarette but does not smoke it.

21. With all these burnt out match sticks on the ground, she begins to remove her ballet shoes, unfastening the red ribbons. She holds the shoes in her hand for quite some time, her eyes fixed on them. She gets up with the shoes in her hand, the light changes; she goes to the table where her boy has left one of his drawings while he busies himself with hanging them up on the now empty clothesline, replacing her garments. He joins her at the table to collect another drawing and shows her all his drawings, as she mutters inaudibly to him. He rushes to the clothesline to hang another drawing looking back at her for approval; she follows him and hangs her ballet shoes on the clothesline.

22. Nyamza picks up a pair of pants from floor and to put them on. She is now dressed in the red coat and the red pants. She uses her index finger to point in space – bringing back the movement vocabulary from the dance of liberation. She is talking softly to herself, muttering *kweli'cala kwela' cala* ('this side, that side), *ndathi* (...and then I did this') *nantsi* ('there it is') walking frantically around the space following different directions.

24. It is now completely dark once again with the only source of light coming from the lamp underneath the table. We only see mother and child's legs and feet. Nyamza and her son walk hand in hand around the lit table. They eventually walk over to the table where her son leans over to switch off the lamp. They walk off stage together. The piece is over.