OWN-MADE IN THE (POST-)NEW SOUTH AFRICA

A STUDY OF THEATRE ORIGINATING FROM SELECTED TOWNSHIPS IN THE VICINITY OF CAPE TOWN

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ABSTRACT

OWN-MADE IN THE (POST-)NEW SOUTH AFRICA: A STUDY OF THEATRE ORIGINATING FROM SELECTED TOWNSHIPS IN THE VICINITY OF CAPE TOWN

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This thesis sets out to develop a framework for the analysis and description of theatre practices evident in selected Cape Town townships during the past six years. Building an account which is both aesthetic and sociological and informed by political intentions; which considers the whole - the gestalt - and which adopts a located orientation; the study sets out to elucidate the theatre's connections to its locality and local culture, its particular organizational and aesthetic character, its idiosyncrasies and performance strengths, its concerns, and its struggle for distinction within the field of theatre in Cape Town.

The description takes into account the cultural context, the local performance-based cultural practices, the organization of theatre-groups, the township practice of theatre-making, and what the institutionalized theatre system in Cape Town offers and withholds. Some of the pervasive features of township theatre which emerge from this description are practices of collaborating in groups, patterning, storytelling, and making do with whatever comes to hand.

Viewing performances, interviewing township theatre-makers individually and in groups as well as groups of audience members and conducting a day-long symposium on theatre with township practitioners, were the main endeavours that comprised the fieldwork for this study. The theatre experiences and interviews were recorded, sorted, translated and sometimes transcribed to become the data used for the study.

The study draws on conceptualizations of theatre developed by the Theatrical Event Working Group of the International Federation of Theatre Research. These are sharpened by concepts drawn from the practice theory of Pierre Bourdieu. A framework for a conceptual analysis of the practice was developed. This was achieved by means of an iterative process of asserting theoretical relevances, then sifting and sorting through the data, and noticing recurrences that suggested the terms in which the language of description should be couched.

A conceptualization for the analysis of township theatre emerges, which emphasizes the interactions between context and aesthetic forms, continually shifting back and forth between the ideological and the kinaesthetic. While this conceptualization has generated a description of theatre-making in Cape Town's townships in particular, the broader conceptual framework is applicable to theatre anywhere.

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Funding from the University of Cape Town Research committee, the Humanities Faculty Research committee and the UCT Emerging Researchers Programme enabled the fieldwork upon which this study is based. The University Conference Travel grants committee enabled my engagement with the Theatrical Event Working Group of the International Federation of Theatre Research.

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This thesis is dedicated to my three sons; and to all those in Cape Town's townships who participate, in whatever capacity, in theatre.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter formulates the problem and the research intentions that the study wishes to address. The approach to the subject is characterised, and the research question and potential contribution of the study articulated. Certain key terms are explicated and finally the overall structure of the study is summarised.

Statement of the problem

Theatre in Cape Town's black townships suffers from problems to do with its visibility on a number of levels, both empirical and conceptual. These problems set up the challenge that this study attempts to address and are outlined below.

The first set of problems is mainly to do with the townships' spatial isolation. Township theatre is barely visible beyond the townships. Performances in the townships are mostly only accessible to those within the township informal network. Township performance venues, none of which are purpose-built theatre spaces, frequently pose substantial challenges. For instance community halls sometimes have extremely poor acoustics for the spoken word, rendering audibility a huge challenge. Night-time performances in town and township involve questions of personal safety, transport difficulties and concomitant high costs. Township theatre performed in both town and township tends to have a brief exposure with little pre-publicity and marketing so it is easy to miss. In general, township theatre is hard for non-township dwellers to attend and receives very little media exposure.

The second challenge has to do with the popularity and support accorded to township theatre that partially derive from its specific character. Township theatre deals mainly with uncomfortable and serious social problems such as crime, violence, abuse and HIV/AIDS and so may be hard to stomach for those reluctant to look thorny issues in the face. Township theatre is 'poor theatre', making minimal use of scenery and elaborate costuming or properties. It can therefore easily be perceived as lacking visual sophistication or glamour. In Cape Town township theatre can be relatively unintelligible to city theatre goers who don't speak *isiXhosa*, and uninteresting to anyone unconcerned about township issues because township theatre is inward looking.

Because township theatre tends toward an 'in your face' treatment of serious issues, paradoxically this affects the esteem accorded it. When it is labeled as issue-based, or applied theatre, that stamp renders it unworthy of the attention of the established theatre community (Walsh, 2006). It is disparaged because deemed to be 'amateurish' or 'community-orientated'.

By and large township theatre is also invisible in text format. Plays and theatre originating from Cape Town's townships are unpublished and few extant scripts are available.[1]

[1] See Brent Meersman's article, 'Publishing play scripts in English in South Africa' for a cryptic synopsis of the country-wide situation for plays publishing (2008). According to Meersman, Oompile Molusi's

Apart from scattered coverage in newspapers, publicity material, funding applications, websites, and a handful of published and unpublished scholarly papers, township theatre in Cape Town is very scarcely documented. Mbothwe (2008, 2004), Morris (2007, 2008), Rudakoff (2004a,b) and Spitczok von Brisinski (2003) are the only readings I could access that deal with theatre from Cape Town townships in any way whatsoever.

Nationally, only pre-1994 theatre originating from the townships is well documented. In the (post-)new South Africa, works from the townships that do not reach the National Festival of the Arts in Grahamstown or are not produced by an established city theatre such as the Market Theatre Laboratory in Johannesburg or the Baxter Theatre Centre in Cape Town, are largely excluded both from media attention and theatre studies. A degree of 'natural selection' must apply in theatre studies and the best receive the most attention. On the other hand scholarship is increasingly turning its attention to everyday life. Within this rubric, such a proliferation of intense socio-cultural and arts activity in a locality that receives little state or private support bears investigating.

For every one of the above reasons contemporary township theatre is only vaguely understood. After the millennium, since few scholarly studies have engaged with recent work, contemporary practitioners and even some academics continue to associate contemporary township theatre with conceptualisations developed in the apartheid era. Unsuitable and outdated lenses are turned on the work that hampers a more nuanced and relevant understanding. If we accept that plays of protest - against the pass laws, such as *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972); poverty brought about by apartheid, such as *Asinamali* (c1985); our treatment of the HIV/AIDS-infected (*The Miracle Begins* 2006) and crime (*Township Talks* 2008*),* all have protest in common, there are nonetheless significant differences in the reasons why such plays of protest were and are staged. The contemporary plays demand contemporary contextualizing. They must also be conceptualized in contemporary terms. Therefore it is inappropriate to import outmoded conceptualizations with which to interrogate today's plays.

But because township theatre is widely discounted its particular strengths are unrecognized and unknown and its weaknesses unexamined and barely understood. Essentially, the problem is that the scholarly language to include township theatre in the discussion of South African theatre is undeveloped.

Research Intention

The intention of this study is to develop the conceptual tools and language that will:

- capture the specificity of theatre as it is practised in the townships in this (post-) new South African moment by moving beyond othering that excludes township theatre from mainstream critical attention (Tomaselli 2008);

Itsoseng (2008) and *Township Stories* by Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom, & Presley Chweneyagae, Presley. (2006) are currently the only recent township plays that are published. Both works originated in Johannesburg.

- characterise the situation of township theatre within theatre in Cape Town as a whole;
- describe the intentions, vision and experiences of township practitioners and theatre followers;
- render its poetics intelligible;
- describe, analyse and interpret a sampling of the plays in order to shed light both on their particularity as African theatrical events and on how theatre may be used to critique the present or re-imagine a better future.

The selection of an approach

During the past two decades, studies of theatre and performance across Africa and including South Africa have been characterised by a cluster of common pre-occupations and concerns that are relevant to my subject.

Theatre and performance in Africa

Common threads to the teleology of theatre in Africa derive from a homologous set of experiences. First, the challenges of globalisation are widespread on a continent that is still grappling with its post-colonial aftermath. Secondly, each polity is engaged in internal power struggles or even war, fostering political nationhood, economic, institutional and social development (Salhi 1998). Thirdly, many African countries share the predicament of being home to lively indigenous performance traditions or cultures on the one hand, and European (colonial) theatrical traditions on the other (Barber 1997). These circumstances have generated studies that engage with these common concerns in different countries or regions (Conteh-Morgan & Olaniyan 2004). Tensions between the old and the new, the 'traditional' and the 'elite', improvisatory or scripted theatre, theatre for development or entertainment, alternative or mainstream are common themes pursued in many regional, national or even continental studies (Kerr 1995). Theatre in Africa reflects the migrations, creolisations and 'mongrelisations' of its cultures, social practices and peoples (Breitinger 1994). It has engaged with the flow from rural periphery to urban centre, the intermingling of oral and improvisatory cultural practices with literate and text-based forms of theatre, and the commingling of all the art forms in performances characterised by their mixtures of story, song, dance, masquerade or mask, heightened use of the spoken word and energetic use of the physical body in performance (Mlama 1991). Studies of theatre in South Africa, including theatre from the townships, fit snugly within such conceptions and analyses of theatre in Africa (Zegeye, Kriger 2001).[2]

[2] During the apartheid years, theatre and performance originating from the townships and worker experience on the Witwatersrand and in Kwazulu-Natal attracted considerable scholarly attention (Steadman 1985, Coplan 1985, Tomaselli 1981).

Applied theatre in Africa

Third world theatre across the globe is characterised by its engagement with social, political, educational and spiritual issues. In Africa many forms and instances of theatre unashamedly espouse the tasks of educating, informing, conscientising or radicalising the audience. Social or political engagement is second nature, whether employed for quietist or radical purposes (Salhi 1998, Byam 1999, Mda 1993). Post-independence Theatre for Development (TfD) has been espoused by many governments to support their particular developmental agendas so today many of the studies of African theatre consequently fall under the rubric of Theatre for Development. Conversely, there are scholars who, examining instances of theatre in Africa, willy-nilly adopt a TfD or 'community theatre' lens to inspect the work.[3] But the basis for adopting such a lens may in some instances lie with troubling applications of Westernised notions of 'professional' / 'amateur' or 'mainstream' / 'community' to the work that possibly are inappropriate (Fleishman 2001).

Given that applied theatre is a descriptor variously defined, understood and interpreted, both because and in spite of its multiple forms such as theatre for development, community theatre and theatre in education,[4] certain associations with the field of its practice are nearly impossible to dismantle. Applied theatre is instrumentalist. It is undertaken for the social agendas it addresses, whether or not it is aesthetically elaborate or reductionist (Taylor P. 2003, Nicholson 2005). Related to that, its practitioners usually identify themselves and their work in the field as 'applied' and readily engage with questions of ethical practice, frequently in circumstances of inequity. The implication of much of the scholarship is that the positioning of applied theatre practitioners and targeted participants usually differ (Thompson 2003). The practitioner is often, although not always, an outsider to the community or target group with whom (s)he works: the presence of the practitioner partly prompted or justified by their 'heterophily' with the target group (Mda 1993:85-7).

This distinction between practitioner and target participants does not apply to theatre groups in Cape Town's townships. In spite of the fact that re-imagining the social is a core motivator for undertaking the work that I shall discuss hereinafter, township practitioners make theatre because they want to, in their home communities with their peers. Although their work has local application to social development and education, they deem themselves theatre practitioners, not applied theatre practitioners. The difference is a fine one, particularly since in the first place African conceptions of theatre and performance do not conceptualise theatre aesthetically but rather as educational or socially facilitative (Harding 2002). But after several initial attempts I have desisted from considering theatre in Cape Town's townships under the lens of applied or community theatre for a number of reasons. This study seeks to elucidate a

[3] Page Laws (1998) surveys South Africa's entire theatre output under this rubric.
[4] Between them, PhilipTaylor (2003), James Thompson (2003) and Helen Nicholson (2005) examine the terminology, ambit and aesthetic questions in the field of applied theatre quite comprehensively. I will not revisit those debates here.

situated practice of theatre by crafting conceptual lenses engendered by study of the work in situ as I shall discuss below. In the local context, township theatre-makers deem themselves to be practising theatre. They do not distinguish between theatre and applied theatre. A division between applied and other theatre practitioners or participants does not pertain in the township context. Therefore, in spite of contemporary township theatre's underlying impulse to revision a far from perfect present moment, I have abandoned the attempt to conceptualise the work as 'applied'. Such a conceptualisation would distort my analysis in favour of teleology rather than illuminating the practise-driven local culture of theatre-making, performing and audiencing that I perceive.

The South African theatre field

Within South Africa, theatre scholarship has followed two broad trajectories. The first has been (mainly) pre-1980 studies of colonial, mainly Eurocentric (and largely white) theatrical activity in the cities and urban playhouses.[5] The second is post-1980s scholarship's intense engagement with theatre as resistance to colonial / imperialist / apartheid / racist / capitalist hegemony in one form or another.[6] Within the latter conceptualisation of theatre as resistance or contestation, some writers have analysed the work of practitioners, engaging with the contexts, practices, intentions and aesthetics of particular playhouses, companies or directors / dramaturges / playwrights. Some of these have covered specific instances of practice, poetics or contextual predicament, usually located in the Witwatersrand or Natal, at considerable depth. On the other hand, accounts of theatrical practices and rehearsal techniques have sometimes prefaced play collections originating from a specific playwright, company or theatre. Inevitably most of the attention in these studies has been devoted to printed plays or extant play scripts and hence to mainstream theatre or at least to work arising from well-known, albeit contestatory playhouses or practitioners.

All in all, theatre scholarship has devoted much more attention to the analysis of play texts than to performance, until in very recent years when considerable interest has developed in researching performances and theatre practices in situ rather than researching texts. My intentions are cognate with many of these latter studies, but will be distinctive in the ways outlined below.

A preoccupation with the local

This study is centrally preoccupied with the local. In research terms, as Clifford Geertz points out, the challenge is thus that we 'turn away from trying to explain social phenomena by weaving them into grand textures of cause and effect, to trying to explain them by placing them in local frames of awareness ….' By choosing the local, we 'exchange a set of well-charted

[5] The focus of this study does not lie with theatre historiography and theatre history. See Hauptfleisch (1997) pp 13-21 for a good introduction to studies in Southern African theatre history that extends to the early 1990s.
[6] These debates will be revisited and referenced in the literature review in Chapter 2.

difficulties for a set of largely uncharted ones' (1983:6). Such 'uncharted' practices demand the development of a new language of description. Kathleen Berry argues that the 'discourse generated by personal and local knowledge positions subjects differently' (2000:62). Drawing on Benhabib (1992:9) she argues that the 'dramatic arts provide an excellent forum to value and rehearse the *petit récit*. 'Voices of the oppressed, marginalised, abused, threatened, and the oppositional become empowered through the privilege and political power of the *petit récits'* (2000:63).

Alan Read also advocates local study but he warns of the ethical and political implications of choosing local over global. For both practitioners and researchers it is a loaded choice:

> The local and particular are as demanding of consideration now as the cosmopolitan. They are closest to the everyday, are less easy to extrapolate from their context and less easy to bring 'home' to be studied. This difficulty does not make them more interesting but demands considerable investment …. "Being there" and "being here" are no longer so easy to define. Being here and critical is as urgent a project as looking elsewhere, though does not deny those who are elsewhere. Obviously "being here" depends on where "here" is. If it is a place where cultural capital accumulates it provides a departure point for "being there". (1993:7-8)

Whatever position researchers find themselves in or adopt, whether as insiders or outsiders, whether subscribing to the bigger picture or the local one, the strengths and weaknesses of their position is relative to how they perceive themselves and are perceived. In this study the reader is expected, metaphorically speaking, to spend some time visiting theatre and theatre groups in the townships and engaging with this text in light of that very specific context. Precisely by understanding both the locality of this theatre and its local character, its general significance as theatre form and practice is best appreciated. Consequently the theatre in this study is located in a few black townships in Cape Town. Theatre-makers, theatre activities and audiences that take centre stage in the study are all located in, or originate from, these townships, and relations between the township context and the theatre it generates are thus important to investigate.

Theatre activity of the youth

Within the townships, theatre activity is largely a preoccupation of the youth. This study focuses upon the activities of adolescent school-goers, out of school youth and the young adults who lead theatre-making in the townships, rather than examining theatre-makers of the 1980s generation whose formative theatre education occurred in the apartheid years, and many of whom no longer live or work in the townships. For today's young people, reconfiguring their world by means of theatre affords an unusual opportunity to engage epistemologically with their troubled and challenging context. Zakes Mda supports this notion, observing that the young 'are able to plug into the energies of a new South Africa with ease, and to address new themes, while exploring new creative forms' (2002:283).

David Coplan has interrogated the youth's contribution to township music, foregrounding the complexity and variety of the youth's contribution that goes beyond popular culture and engages with the polity:

> Nor is it simply the impenetrability of an unstable, emphemeral youthful cultural *gestalt* that confounds academic researchers: how to understand the native who is causing all the trouble. It is the surprisingly protean possible forms of politics to which popular performance contributes that make interpretation both so contested and so fascinatingly productive. (2005:17)

To juxtapose for a moment contemporary youth's cultural struggle in the 'post-new South Africa' against Belinda Bozzoli's (2004) account of the Alexandra rebellion in 1986 is instructive by metaphoric comparison. Bozzoli traces how the Alexandran youth, inspired by utopian ideals, confronted not only the most infamous arm of apartheid oppression, the police, but also their peers and elders, trying, convicting and punishing both those who betrayed the cause of liberation and those guilty of domestic infringements.[7] Bozzoli analyses how the revolution ran into lawlessness and gratuitous violence because, while these young leaders were clear about what they were resisting under the present conditions, they were uncertain about what they were trying to achieve for the future. Bozzoli analyses 'the youth' as trope and she explicates how their role was downplayed during the criminal trials following the rebellion and later rendered negligible in the course of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC] hearings. Her account juxtaposes youthful activism against the silence and near obscurity the youth have received in the grand narrative of South Africa, both pre and post-apartheid. This silence is a key motivator of this study.

Currently, the public rhetoric of official state policy continuously pays court to the needs of the youth. But actually their living circumstances and opportunities post-apartheid have, if anything, worsened. Nevertheless the youth making theatre in Cape Town's townships are mostly not confronting their society in a politically head-on manner. Rather through their own efforts they are generating the artistic and cultural space to reflect upon and about their lived experiences as well as their visions - utopian, dystopian and everything in between. I conjecture that this is exactly as Ndebele (1991) would have it.

Re-imagining the world through theatre

In a paper written before the unbanning of the African National Congress [ANC] in 1990, Ndebele warns of the problem which it will be to the 'social imagination' of South Africa to conceive of a future after apartheid is gone and South Africa is free (2000). What will that freedom mean? What reconstructions and developments will have to take place, not only on the macro political level but also within the minds and hearts of each citizen and community who have been oppressed for a host of diverse reasons? These could include oppression by

[7] Interestingly, Bozzoli pursues a theatrical metaphor throughout this social history (2004), harnessing terms such as narrative, dramaturgy, scripting, actors, staging, crowd scenes, performance and audiences.

segregationist legislation, or by alienation from the land in forced removals, or stultification of skills and talents through job reservation, or disintegration of the family by prolonged absences due to the migrant labour system, or health problems induced by years of inadequate food, or physical and mental abuse not only from police but also perhaps from their own neighbours whose views and actions with regard to the struggle differed from their own.

As extensive as the nature of the state's oppressions in South Africa is, so extensive must be the conceptualization, not only of a different world but of the challenges and possibilities on the journey to attain that world. Only by those means, Ndebele suggests, can we work towards a completely different society. The initiative must be seized by the oppressed to envision a new world. This is the particular task of artists Ndebele argued (1991a).

Throughout the essays collected in *Rediscovery of the Ordinary* (1991) Ndebele is addressing the vital task of imagining beyond the apartheid paradigm. In spite of the fact that his focus is on South African writers and *writing*, Ndebele's analysis and provocations are pertinent to all cultural producers, including theatre makers. This re-imagining is no easy task which is why Ndebele's call is still entirely relevant twenty years later. The South African stage is littered with the presentation of powerful binaries: black against white, good against evil, freedom against enslavement. Zakes Mda graphically sums up the extent of the problem: '…one needs to recognise the fact that apartheid as a system was so absurd that it was possible to take a slice of real-life and put it on the stage or on the page without doctoring it and have a great piece of theatre of the absurd' (2002:282). Whereas, as Pechey observes, Ndebele 'reminds us that the condition we call 'post-colonial' is untotalisable, centreless: a strategic field of autonomies and singularities, without punctual transitions, and where there are no world-historical missions awaiting accomplishments' (1994:1)

So, for Ndebele, the first task is to uncover the key ways in which the apartheid regime moulded our thinking and our artistic imaginations. Thereafter, Ndebele raises many useful strategies for revisioning a new world. He recommends that we recoup our homegrown stories, especially those which fell between the cracks of the powerful binaries engendered under apartheid ideology. We must forsake the power of spectacle and melodrama and rediscover the political from *within culture as it is lived everyday*, within the *ordinary.* The arena of ordinary citizens coping with everyday challenges allows authors of cultural production the spaces to explore subtlety, irony and reflection (1991b). Ndebele cites township music and theatre as examples of this process well achieved although there are some within the theatre field who would disagree with him (1991a).[8]

But watching theatre groups during the past five years performing in the townships and at festivals, their commitment to revisioning, to 'performing South Africa into a better future', is always apparent. It is the single common thread that ties together all of the plays and interviews

[8] See, for example, Peterson (1995), Davis and Fuch's interview with Maishe Maponya (1996) and David Coplan's additional chapter 'Out of the townships tonight: emerging South African Theatre' in his second edition of *In Township Tonight* (2007).

in this study, and it is the mission of the youth in particular. Therefore understanding why the youth in some townships are driven to do this, the ways in which they go about their work, the resources upon which they draw, the stories they attempt to tell and the causes of their aesthetic choices, are central to this study.

A study of a socio-cultural gestalt

The decision to study theatre within the circumstances of its making is a decision to study the 'gestalt', the whole. The experience of theatre in the townships is conceptualised holistically in this study. The several processes of joining a group of like-minded, interested performers, finding somewhere to practise, generating theatre works, finding occasions to perform, appreciating the work of other groups, are all part of practising theatre in the townships. These are processes that happen over time and due to their particular location. Hence this study will interrogate and theorise township theatre not simply as a theatrical phenomenon or as a stand-alone performance, but as part of the social life and culture of its context.

I am resistant to theatre's terms being all its own. Rather I am interested in how theatre draws from its context and intersects with social life, experiences and culture. At the same time it is vital to unpack the poetics of this theatre in order to move beyond the othering which currently frequently happens. Therefore my approach, following Karin Barber, will combine a sociological epistemology with the poetics of township theatre (1989:1).

A study of that which occurs - a practice.

In different times and contexts 'theatre' has been characterised by its buildings (Wiles 2003, Beacham 1991, Schwartz, 1988), performance aesthetics (Breitinger 1994) and/or politics (Edmondson 2007, Gunner 1994) or even its play texts (Sierz 2001, Gray 1986), that is, essentially as a 'thing'. It has however also been studied as something that occurs. Van Maanen writes: 'When Beckerman rightly argues that theatre is not something that exists but something that occurs, this means that a theatrical event creates a temporary new situation from and within reality, and that the study of the theatrical event encompasses an examination of the artistic-social process, including the preconditions and the results' (2004:239). Viewing theatre as an event draws attention to its active, lived nature as a set of related activities and practices that happen over time, peopled and driven by agents with specific agendas conditioned by specific circumstances. This study therefore draws on practice theory and will view theatre as a practice that utilises practices, tactics and strategies in pursuit of its ends. It is both the particularity of its tactical devices as well as their overarching significance that interest me.

In short, this study is located within theories of practice. It embraces the gestalt rather than focussing on a single aspect. It studies a particular set of theatre practices within their own neighbourhood and takes account of that neighbourhood's influence on the young people engaged in making the theatre. Having characterised the approach to be followed, I shall now pinpoint the questions that drive this enquiry.

Research Question

Given that theatre in Cape Town's townships is practically invisible to the academy and to town theatre-goers; and given that this study is located in those 'invisible' communities; this study takes both those communities as well as their situation within the wider society into account. This generates two major aspects to the enquiry. On the one hand there are questions pertaining to the relations between the township and the theatre generated within it. On the other there are questions that investigate the influences of township on town and vice versa, and on their respective theatre practices. These two areas of investigation are related. Both are concerned with the interaction between context and cultural practices. The first set of questions focus on the specifics of the township context and its effects on theatre generated from thence. The second set of questions considers the townships' marginal relations with the city of Cape Town and the city's theatre system and the nature of the interactions between town and township practitioners and practices. More precisely, my questions are as follows.

- What kind of influence does the socio-economic and built environment of the township exert on township theatre practices and how significant is this influence?
- What social and cultural forces in the township exert determining influences on the poetics of local theatre making, performing and audiencing?
- What is the poetics of township theatre-making, performing and audiencing and in what ways is this poetics notably different from town practices?
- What are the relations between the townships and the city of Cape Town and in what ways do these relations colour relations between township and town theatre?
- How do the relations between town and township theatre affect the distribution, prevalence and visibility of township theatre?
- What distinctive contribution do township theatrical events make to Cape Town's theatre repertoire?

Contribution

The intention of this study is firstly to augment the body of extant evidence of theatre originating in townships. It is hard for the academy to penetrate an area of performance practice which is so obscure. This study will endeavour to clarify and exemplify why the obscurity of a practice is no accurate measure of its significance. On the contrary, it is precisely the fact that this prolific, variegated and highly developed cultural practice is occurring in the most poor and marginal communities, driven by the least advantaged and in many cases least formally educated youth in the city of Cape Town with virtually no infrastructural or material resource provision, that impels consideration of why and how the practice should inform our contemporary understanding of South African theatre in respect of material theatre systems, ideological concerns, and aesthetic forms.

Sixteen years after the seismic change that occurred in 1994, South Africa still labours under the after-effects of apartheid, colonialism and imperialism. Like the rest of Africa today, we also wrestle with challenges arising from neo-colonialism, globalisation, as well as internal human resource and systemic shortcomings. All these struggles are reflected in our creative and performing arts, not least in theatre where old practices die hard. Power and symbolic capital entrenched under colonialism / apartheid fail to notice what is new or 'underground' or simply ignore it. Public arts bodies too often flail ineffectually. In this context theatre researchers can prise open territories previously uncharted and so alter the terrain of academic debate.

Consequently this study sets out to develop a conceptual vocabulary with which to elucidate township theatre and reveal at least something of its particular character to those who are outsiders to the township and its theatre. This language seeks to communicate the vision, dreams, perceptions, pain and insights of township youth, by means of which they make theatre and communicate to their audiences. It draws 'them' closer to 'us' so that ultimately 'we' share the space afforded by the arts, the space of play, creativity, criticism or prophecy. Such a language allows us metaphorically to 'be in the same place', and so must be intelligible to all theatre scholars, on the one hand. On the other hand the language must serve the subject of this study, the particular, 'own-made' character of township theatre and its relations with township cultural practices as a whole. The voices of township theatre-makers must be heard and their perspectives on the practice of theatre considered. This has been a central endeavour of this study. The language has been developed to illuminate the ways in which theatre from the township is particular to its context and notable on its own terms as a form of theatre practice, nevertheless this conceptual language promises broader applicability and the possibility of using it to analyse theatre beyond the townships.

Thirdly the intention is to develop a materialist description of a local theatrical phenomenon which uncovers and examines the connections between place, people and practices. The performing arts are not only significant as semiotic signs. They are also, in their processes of making, significant as forms of play, as cultural practices and even as rituals. Consequently this study does not only attend to theatrical performance or theatrical event as a product, but also and more significantly as processes: living, mutating practices by means of which people make theatre, make meaning of their lives, and have fun.

Fourthly, I intend to achieve an analysis that foregrounds relationships. Such an analysis goes beyond generalisations about 'black experience', 'oral traditions', 'energetic and emotive performances' to an understanding of the material relations between place, people, culture, activities and theatre forms to which the townships on the margins of the city of Cape Town give rise. In effect such an analysis will foreground the working relationships between agents, actions and meaning.

In sum, generating the conceptual lens that brings into visibility elements of our South African theatre field that presently are invisible and silent, and arguing the inextricable

centrality of theatre from the township margins to the field of South African theatre as a whole is what this thesis sets out to achieve.

Touchy subjects and terms dealt with in this thesis

In South African scholarship there are topics and terminology that are open to multiple interpretations. Hopefully, by clarifying my particular usages of such terms right at the start, confusions arising due to a wide array of interpretations might be reduced.

Township theatre and town theatre

When the term 'township theatre' designates a genre, it primarily denotes theatre developed by Gibson Kente, Rev. Maquina and others in the 1960s and 1970s or later adherents to a similar mode of theatre. Located in the townships, with township concerns, these plays employed song, dance, stock characters and (melo)dramatic situations to depict the problems and challenges of township living. This theatre was enormously popular and commercially successful. To date, Kente is South Africa's most famous and influential black theatre entrepreneur (Kruger 1999, Coplan 1985, Kavanagh 1985)[9].

Whilst theatre made currently in Cape Town's townships shares common features with this theatre, it also is unlike it. Although the plays all deal with township concerns, usually they depict 'slices of township life' extremely selectively and are seldom built in the model of the 'well-made play'. They employ expressionist or Brechtian or physical theatre forms as often as melodrama or Realism.[10] Contemporary theatre from the Cape Town townships is seldom authored by a single playwright/manager/director/composer/choreographer as Kente claimed to do (Schauffer 2006). In this study 'township theatre' merely identifies the theatre as made in the townships or according to a poetics developed in township theatre-making practices. The term distinguishes it from 'town theatre' that similarly denotes theatre made in town. In neither case are inferences of genre, style or status intended.

Black, Coloured, Indian and White

According to our constitution, South Africa is a non-racist democracy. However the effects of earlier racist policies and practices of exclusion continue to affect the majority of citizens today, in part at least because earlier racial policies had a spatial dimension. The construction of 'the township' is itself partly a racial construct. Race determined educational, political, economic and work opportunities, as well as where you were allowed to live, for so long in this country that issues of race and the naming of race can not be ignored now.

[9] Whilst Mbongeni Ngema has probably attracted larger audiences than Kente since he first appeared in *Woza Albert* in 1980, the extent of his influence on black theatre makers and performers has not outdone Kente

[10] There are several local television soaps and drama series, such as *Muvhango* and *Zone 14* that have more in common with Kente's plays than most of the contemporary theatre.

Therefore with regard to terminology, in this study 'black' designates the African population. In the Western Cape the blacks are mainly *isiXhosa* speakers who have migrated to Cape Town from the Eastern Cape. However today, persons from all the other African language groupings found in South Africa as well as immigrants from north of South Africa's borders comprise part of Cape Town's 'black' African population.

'Whites' are usually those of European or Caucasian descent. Locally the white population comprises English and Afrikaans mother tongue speakers and also many immigrants from abroad.

The 'Indian' / 'Asian' population are largely descendents of indentured labourers originally imported to work on the sugar plantations of Kwazulu-Natal. They comprise a very small portion of the population in Cape Town.[11]

Widespread use of the term 'Coloured' is ubiquitous in South Africa. Nowadays it is mostly not deemed to be derogatory beyond its historically racialised associations. It denotes those who do not appear to be black Africans or Caucasians. Usually its use includes reference to descendents of the indigenous /Xam and San populations, slaves imported from Indonesia, Malaysia and other countries in the Far East as well as the historical descendants of unions across 'the colour bar'.[12]

In what follows the terms black, coloured, white and Indian are used because race remains a partial determinant of circumstances, opportunities, language, culture and creed for the population of South Africa.

Singling out black townships

This study is vested in contextualising the study of theatrical events and practices. Different contexts give rise to distinct theatrical forms and practices and this is certainly the case in Cape Town. In a study of this size I could not realistically do justice to more than one type of context and I have thus singled out the townships as the local focus of this study, and within that, I have opted for black townships. There are a number of reasons for this choice.

The 2001 census recorded that in Cape Town 48% of the population are coloured, 32% are black, 19% are white and 1% are Indian. This is unlike the demographic nationally in which blacks are by far the largest grouping (Statistics South Africa). However in Cape Town the coloured population predominates and both blacks and coloureds inhabit a number of townships constructed during the apartheid years. The theatrical languages and styles of coloured and black theatre are nurtured in distinctly different townships, arise out of different cultural origins and manifest very differently. The legal, economic, political, historic and social factors shaping coloured people and coloured townships (and consequently coloured theatre) are quite different from those affecting local theatre in black townships. This is not to say that there are not many

[11] However in South African censuses, 'Indians' are identified as a designated 'race'.
[12] The 'colour bar' was a term developed during the apartheid years that refers to the separation of race groups by law in every sphere of life, including intimate relations.

cognate aesthetic markers which are then developed along different stylistic lines, but if I attempted to tackle both I would have to abandon the 'local' orientation of this study. I could not do justice to both.

Apart from the local, spatialised nature of this study and issues of scale, there are other reasons why I opted to study theatre from black townships. Relatively speaking, professional theatre originating from the coloured communities is well established in Cape Town and is currently developing apace, drawing good support mainly from the coloured population. However there is not the same intensity of theatrical activity amongst those in Cape Town's coloured communities who make theatre for the love of it, whereas the situation of black theatre is almost exactly the opposite. The number of groups making theatre in the black townships is prodigious. Making and attending theatre generates agency amongst the young people in black townships, but it is their work that is the most 'invisible', even to local theatre academics. That theatre in black townships is such a vibrant and common phenomenon in spite of the fact that support for black enterprises is not a political priority in the Cape, makes the proliferation of theatre in black townships particularly intriguing.

It must be noted that that the demography of *all* townships in Cape Town is changing as a result of continued migration to the cities, as well as immigration from the rest of Africa. New inhabitants of townships find places to live wherever they can and increasingly, traditionally 'black' or 'coloured' townships are developing populations that are mixed. This brings its own challenges. For example this is an ongoing cause of dissension in Delft – Cape Town's newest and most mixed township. I have not attempted to address these questions. In the first instance, the theatre that I have encountered has been peopled by a racially homogenous group in 90% of cases. There are definitely many instances of mixed theatre, but I have not encountered such theatre pieces or groups that have arisen in a township context.

At the same time my research has repeatedly demonstrated that black theatre-makers do not see their own theatrical activity as necessarily the most worthwhile. They are concerned with theatre arising in other communities as well as their own (Symposium, 2008). Many times they raised questions around my selected focus: the very questions I have attempted to address here.

Prelude

This is a doctoral thesis so the need for scholarly interrogation and rigorous research methods, coupled with constraints of length, are in danger of thrusting the subject of this study - theatre from the townships - into the background; ironically enacting the very thing that the study seeks to counter. By means of a brief description this prelude will attempt to address that danger. Some of the practices, processes and practitioners from the townships who feature centrally in this study will be introduced here and the relationship of the writer to the work explained.

At the University of Cape Town where I teach in the Drama department, undergraduate students undertake research assignments for which they select their own topics. About seven years ago, some students elected to research their own theatre groups in the townships that had spurred them on to audition and enter university theatre training. Their research revealed a prolific practice of theatre in black townships. Their essays were challenging. They did not shy away from examining the problematics of infrastructural and resource paucity within these theatre groups nor the differences between the township theatrical culture, form and ethos and that which they experienced at the university.

Around the same time Mandla Mbothwe returned to the university to teach and undertake graduate study. In theatre theory classes he continually critiqued received notions of what constituted the theatrical event, theatricality and performance in the Southern African context. His was a different vision engendered a few dozen kilometres away in a Cape Town township. In 2005 Mbothwe invited me to attend the Magnet Theatre Community Groups Intervention Showcase in the Community Hall in Site B, Khayelitsha (Appendix A). Attendance at that event confirmed that I was conclusively 'hooked'.

With hindsight it is clear that that initial experience of theatre in the townships provided many of the hooks on which in due course this research would hang. The relative youth of the perhaps 300 people present, the air of excited playfulness and enjoyment amongst all those present, the easy inclusivity of audience and performers who mingled together - and in many cases were one and the same - and the investment in the morning's theatrical event, not only from the Magnet Theatre team of leaders and fieldworkers but from all who were present, brought to light community engagement, participation and playing through a theatrical event. And yet all those present took the work seriously. The performers were not 'showing off'. They were communicating through performance on subject matter in which they were personally invested because they had chosen it. They had made the plays in self-selected theatrical forms, and in many cases demonstrated levels of skill, creativity and particularly team coherence that was thrilling and which in large part prompts the investigation of performative culture undertaken in Chapters 5 and 6.

The plays spoke to their audience and occasioned a diverse array of responses. After the performances the audience and performers applauded the role that theatre-making plays, both in 'keeping the youth off the streets' and in demonstrating the many capabilities of the youthful performers. How had this happened? Why were there so many interested young people? Why was the work so 'up front'? What was their provocation? Who had guided the work? Were there other groups in Khayelitsha who were not present? Such questions begged investigation.

Theatre is practised prolifically in the townships. Groups of school learners and out of school youth, usually led by a particularly inspired or skilled peer theatre-maker, gather as often as they choose - sometimes every weekday - and practise their work. They discuss, learn songs and dances, improvise, tell stories and devise works for performances as and when they can find

opportunities for the latter. Theatre groups are rarely initiated by school or institutional officers and theatre is seldom practised in such contexts. In the townships access to public premises is mostly disallowed after hours for security reasons. The groups are variously constituted, some more formally than others, but their orally-based interactions and people-driven infrastructure is ubiquitous. Some of these issues are investigated in Chapter 6.

And yet in spite of the informality of the 'institution' of theatre in Cape Town's townships, the practice is not without its system, its leaders, champions, funders and stars. Parastatal and university theatres in Cape Town support the work by housing festivals. Non-governmental organisations, individuals and private trusts offer non-formal theatre training courses. Veterans of the 1980s 'struggle-theatre', who currently are theatre professionals, usually liase between the township practitioners and the production houses. Sometimes organisations stage the occasional festival at a community hall in the townships, as was the case with Magnet Theatre mentioned earlier. Their five-year intervention (2002-2007) was conceptualised by Mandla Mbothwe and the founders of Magnet Theatre, Mark Fleishman and Jennie Reznek (2005). Sometimes regional or local government, public trusts or corporate social responsibility bodies become involved in the work with respect to funding, which inevitably means that the latter exercise power over decisions such as when, for what purpose and under what circumstances the work will be undertaken. These issues are investigated in Chapter 8.

Although there is almost no infrastructural support for the training and theatre-making activities themselves, 'on the ground' in the streets of the townships, the practice is sustained and prolific. Groups collect together, work for weeks, months or even years, with members joining and leaving. But the sheer quantity of groups means in fact that individuals often leave one group and join or start another. In this way the practice reproduces itself and those who 'stick around' gain considerable experience and expertise. One of the most intriguing features of attending the Magnet Intervention in Khayelitsha and the Ikhwezi Festival at the Baxter Theatre is the number and variety of permutations undergone by performers and groups between one festival and the next. Where Pumeze Rashe performed in 2006 and 2007 in *Beneath silent waters*, in 2008 she is the conceptualiser, director and solo performer in *The red winter* (2008). Where Unaathi Speelman appeared in Thami Mbongo's *Ubizo - voices of elok'shini* in an AMAC and akambongo joint production for the Ikhwezi Festival in 2006, in 2007 he returns to his original affiliation with Themba Baleni and performs in *Red Song* for its return season to the festival (Appendix A). And word in the foyer has it that 'so and so' was specifically approached because they are such 'a catch'. Similarly, some plays or groups shrink or expand notably from year to year, and others present plays whose ideologies are notably distinct from that of the previous year. Sometimes the mood of the moment sees many plays on a single theme appear at a festival - such as issues of women abuse which dominated the Ikhwezi Festival in 2007.

Sometimes the mentoring body suggests a theme for the plays, such as crime, which was the identified focus of the Khayelitsha Theatre Forum in 2009.[13]

And while many individual theatre-makers may seldom leave the township to perform for many years on end, those who remain in the practice in most cases harbour professional aspirations and are willing to travel between town and township theatre. The divide between town and township is something township theatre practitioners accommodate because they have to. Township theatre practitioners understand, even if they do not choose or approve of it, that the current reality demands that if they want professional contracts they frequently have to travel to town, along with the majority of the township employed. This is not to say that many do not in some measure harbour activist agendas to bring the theatrical spotlight to the townships. But the sad reality is that in the townships there are no theatres, nor any material performing arts infrastructure, which is further discussed in Chapter 8. The townships are also inadequately lit, policed and serviced with no night-time transport. This makes evening performances or entertainments, beyond the most private or domestic, almost impossible to produce successfully. The only feasible alternative is to move beyond the townships and engage with theatre in town and therefore many practitioners do.

Whether the practitioners are activist supporters of township theatre or seek to work beyond the townships when necessary, almost all are engaged with interrogating the character, style, intentions, strengths and weaknesses of the theatre they make. In my experience township practitioners continually seek to improve and critique their own and the work of peers. They are deeply engaged with questions about theatre's connections and interactions with society at large - locally and in the region. This discourse is sustained in a hundred conversations in a multitude of rehearsals, street corners or social occasions. It is only occasionally formally engaged by training institutions or initiatives in which township practitioners are keen to participate, as will be shown in Chapters 6-8 (Symposium 2008).

Township theatre-makers are also keen to undertake training and initially most look to institutions that began life as non-governmental arts education organisations in the years of apartheid resistance. Community Arts Project (CAP), founded in 1977 (1998), which became Arts and Media Access Centre (AMAC) in 2003 and closed in 2007 (2004), and New Africa Theatre Association which was founded in 1987, specifically seek applicants from 'disadvantaged' communities (2010). Sometimes these training programmes prompt graduates to seek further education at university.

University education does not mean that township practitioners cease their association with theatre in the townships. Mandla Mbothwe was inducted into theatre in Crossroads

[13] The email publicizing this event speaks to the interaction of township theatre with potential sponsors: 'We are hosting Crime prevention and Awareness raising through Drama on the 27 and 28 of March 2009. This festival is in collaboration with the department of Cultural Affairs and Sport, South African Police (Khayelitsha Site-B District), Mr Gama and Supt Booyson from Metro Police. We are using Theatre and Drama to highlight situations about Crime and during the events security is very tight and therefore your utmost respect would be your ticket' (Sam 2009)

township whilst still at school. Having graduated from the University of Cape Town in 1996, he divided his time for the next seven years between his own township-based theatre company and applied and professional theatre 'gigs'. He acted, directed, facilitated others, created work and then in 2004 returned to the university to teach and study further. In his years at the university he has spearheaded the Community Theatre stream and fostered the bilingual acting stream in *Nguni* languages. Although Mbothwe is now an award-winning mainstream theatre director, with Magnet Theatre productions performing at the National Arts Festival Main Festival programme, the Baxter and Artscape theatres in Cape Town in 2010, he remains committed to township theatre and township experience. His was the vision that initiated the Magnet Theatre Community Groups Intervention and he has been a key driver of the Magnet Theatre Training programme instituted in 2009. Similarly Thami Mbongo has run his own theatre groups, originally in the Paarl township of Mbekweni. He studied at the Community Arts Project in 1998 and then at the University of Cape Town from 1999 to 2001. Mbongo has regularly created 'township theatre' works for the Ikhwezi Festival, but he also is a popular actor in a local television drama series and has won the Brett Goldin Bursary to study acting in the UK.

By contrast, leaders like Mfundo Hashe, Sam Faleni and Zimasa May have never been to university. Mfundo Hashe, one of the most vociferous contributors to the Symposium (2008), has been associated with Manyanani Entertainers in Khayelitsha for many years. He performed in Mbongo's production of *Things are bad - ijumpile lendaba* in 2006/7 and in 2009 was elected Chair of the Khayelitsha Theatre Forum. At the same time, Hashe regularly works for Jungle Theatre Company which is a not-for-profit theatre company, based in the seaside suburb of Muizenberg, working on environmental and children's theatre and drama workshops. There are correspondences between his story and that of Sam Faleni and Zimasa May whose affiliation with their group(s) Ikhwezi and Iselwa Le Sizwe, working methods and play, *Old Brown Joe*, are investigated in Chapter 7.

These leaders of township theatre-making inspire, cajole, hector and advise countless less experienced group members in a variety of contexts. One of my research assistants, Cindy Mkaza, was one of the students whose undergraduate essay prompted my initial interest. Mkaza features in Chapter 7 as a founding member, along with Faleni and May, of the Ikhwezi group from Khayelitsha. Today Mkaza runs Active Puppets for UNIMA, the International Union of Puppetry, South Africa. Under her leadership, Active Puppets has developed a year-round training programme and employment opportunities for theatre groups from the townships and more broadly (UNIMA 2010). Although she no longer performs for Ikhwezi in Khayelitsha, Mkaza remains a core member.

During the fieldwork for this study my research assistants and I captured the voices, opinions and dreams about theatre of countless young actors and audience members that we encountered in foyer and auditorium interactions, between performances and rehearsals and during the focus group audience interviews. The enthusiasm for theatre of this sector was

embodied in their ready responses, their commitment to the symbolic language of theatre, and their finely tuned sensibility for performance as a language. Their degree of aptitude for performance and communication in poetry, mime, dance, physical theatre and song prompted the need to understand what had generated this broadly evident skill set. This is the enquiry that is pursued in Chapter 5 under the rubric of playing culture.

There are sections of this study which revisit individual theatre-makers and groups in conversation in rehearsal, formal debate and performance. On each occasion I have tried to allow the voice of township theatre-makers and audiences, or a sense of the occasion and setting, to come through. All of these - people, places, events - are interdependent and mutually influential. Theatre in the townships is primarily a social, playful, educationally enriching, aesthetically engaging and ideologically challenging practice. Enjoy the show.

Structure of the study

Chapter 2 first presents a review of the literature on South African and African theatre that has influenced this study. Thereafter I develop the conceptual framework for the study, drawing upon the theories of selected scholars.

Chapter 3 is devoted to explicating my research approach, and my methods of collecting and analysing empirical data according to the conceptual focus of the study.

Chapter 4 investigates the townships as the social and cultural context that shapes theatre making concerns and practices.

Chapter 5 deals with township playing culture. This term is probably most easily understood by comparison with working culture or eating culture. Having developed a concept description of playing culture in Chapter 2, it provides the lens through which this chapter analyses the contribution of the performatic repertoire to theatre-making practices.

Chapter 6 investigates the practices of theatre-making that this study asserts fall within the ambit of township playing culture. Taking account of the influence and circumstances of the townships and that of the playing culture, firstly it looks at how groups organise themselves. Then a conceptualised account of the core practices involved in theatre-making, which are improvisation, structuring and skills burnishing, is developed.

This model is used as a means to enquire into two specific instances of playmaking that are compared in Chapter 7. First the processes of their making are discussed and thereafter they are analysed as dramatic texts.

Finally, Chapter 8 deals with how distribution of township theatre works largely through performances at festivals, and examines the troubled interaction of town and township theatre practices that occur in the process.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The review of literature in Part I scrutinizes conceptual lenses that scholars have developed through which to examine South African theatre. It does not attempt to cover all the literature on the subject. Rather it is selective in including particularly instructive approaches and theorized accounts of sectors, aspects or periods of South African theatre. In subsequent chapters 'mini-literature reviews' are sometimes included that inform the analytic framework specific to the purpose of the chapter. Such specific concerns will not be addressed here.

In Part II of the chapter the conceptual lens, through which I scrutinize township theatre in this study, is explicated.

Part 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the literature review

The purpose of this review is to analyse how theatre scholars have conceptualised phenomena within the South African theatre landscape, drawing particularly on David Coplan (1985, 2007), Isabel Hofmeyr (1993), Temple Hauptfleisch (1997), Christopher Balme (1999), Loren Kruger (1999), Bhekisizwe Peterson (2000) and Ari Sitas (2004). These scholars in particular have informed my understanding of research approaches and designs as well as ideologies and arguments; concerns that have determined the focus of this review.

There are paradigmatic ways in which studies in South African theatre have been approached. These include interrogating theatre as a political weapon, and as involving struggles over space, styles, cultural mixtures, and the spoken versus the written word. They also include considering where the borders of theatre and performance studies lie and traversing the liminal spaces on the margins of theatre studies. And finally they include considering theatre as systems of production, making, performance or power play, in which those within the field strive to make art and achieve recognition.

Between them, these approaches map the landscape of this review. They also call attention to the blank spaces where little or no mapping has taken place. In the following paragraphs I attempt a summary of these paradigms and interstices.

Theatre as a weapon of political struggle

Since the 1980s, scholarship in South(ern) African theatre studies has been dominated by political concerns. During the apartheid years the central task was to combat, resist or negotiate against the apartheid grain. Ian Steadman (1999, 1998, 1990a, 1990b, 1985, 1981), Martin

Orkin (1991) Robert Mshengu Kavanagh (1985), Hauptfleisch and Steadman (1984), Keyan Tomaselli (1981, 1981) and Kelwyn Sole (1987, 1984, 1983), to name just a few of the key scholars, engaged debates around conceptualizations of theatre's role in political struggle and resistance proposed by thinkers such as HIE Dhlomo, Mafika Gwala, Sipho Sepamla, Steve Biko, Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, and Frantz Fanon. Peterson's 1995 article is a particularly succinct survey and well argued appraisal of what was and was not achieved in this era of scholarship prior to South Africa's democratisation.

In the late nineties, following the inauguration of a democratic government, theatre scholars as well as theatre artists were faced with re-imagining theatre for a completely overhauled present (Jamal 2005, Gevisser 1994). Since the 'struggle' was purportedly over, resistance could no longer serve as the integer of validity for subsequent studies in theatre, as Albie Sachs pointed out in his watershed address to the ANC in Lusaka in 1989 'Preparing ourselves for freedom' (1990). In light of Sach's injunction, Loren Kruger's notion of theatre's 'impure autonomy' was a timely suggestion.

> The impure autonomy of theatre means that it can only approximate the status of an artistic work but also that its incomplete approximation is its distinguishing feature. In this peculiar way both more and less than art, theatre straddles the border country between the aesthetic state and the political, and provides the stage on which the contradictions between them can be enacted. (Kruger 1999:18)

Kruger generates elbow room around conceptualizing theatre because she maintains that while theatre is not pure art, it is also not simply social action or politics or even arts industry, because theatre embraces aspects of all these things.

Kruger's view invites an account of theatre in the contemporary townships situated in this 'border country between the aesthetic state and the political' (1999:18). Kruger proposes that theatre studies are not satisfactorily confined to what happens inside theatre buildings that is easily ignored except by the small enclave who pay homage to 'art'. Rather, accounts of theatre should implicate political, social, economic and cultural as well as 'theatrical' factors. According to Kruger's argument it is imperative to engage with the contemporary context of Cape Town's social life and culture rather than to place township theatre against a uniform background of either theatre studies or political struggle, which were the favoured devices of the pre-nineties era.

For the most part, active engagement with politics, culture and social issues characterize recent studies of South African theatre and performance, but the forms this engagement takes are more nuanced than that of eighties scholarship and their emphases broadly diverse. They consider theatre and performance in a number of quite distinctive ways that I investigate in what follows.

Places as spaces of activism

Post 1990, when race somewhat released its grasp on the South African imaginary, specific situations and places have emerged as important sites of contention and performance-based creativity (Kerr 2007). Coplan anticipated this trend in his 1985 study. He traces the evolution of syncretic forms of music and performance during the 19th and 20th centuries as a result of the migration of fortune and work seekers to the mines in Kimberly and on the Witwatersrand, and the new patterns of social mixing established in those contexts.

Petersen also explores the significance of certain places in the early 20th century such as the Marianhill Mission in Natal and the Bantu Men's Social Centre on the Witwatersrand. Nevertheless his study locates predominantly in an ideological space 'within the interstices of the dichotomizing systems of colonialism and their false binaries' (2000: 11).

Kruger analyses how specific sites - places such as the Union Buildings in Pretoria - bear the imprint of the events that are staged there and become infused with symbolic significance (1999).[14]

Implicit in Hofmeyr's *"We spend our years as a tale that is told"* (1993) is an account of the ways in which agents employ geographical terrain to contain, conserve, dissipate or subvert power. The study is located in rural Valtyn (Makopane), a Ndebele-Sotho chiefdom that underwent a series of spatial mut(il)ations caused by local political forces. In 1890 the chiefdom was diminished into a rural location by order of the South African Republic Location Commission. In the mid-1930s the Native Affairs Department haphazardly implemented a 'betterment' policy. In the 1960s the Nationalist government declared a 'betterment area' in terms of which the entire Potgietersrus township was relocated a few kilometers down the road and resettled within the already crowded area of Valtyn. In the course of investigating oral historical narrative Hofmeyr traces the impact that these (de)formations of the region as well as the encounter with literacy had upon local storytelling.[15]

Just as space was a source of power for the local government presiding over the Valtyn location that affected cultural practices, so the spatial context of the townships near Cape Town is shaped by power relations that mark the work of local theatre makers in particular ways. For a start space is the single resource *most lacking* for theatre. Contestations over space are central to the struggle of township theatre makers for resources and recognition. The conjoined concerns of space and power demand to be addressed in my account.

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[14] In *Theatres of struggle* (2004) Bozzoli too conceptualizes activism in terms of space. She analyses the impact and potential for power that physical spaces exercised. Describing Alexandra at the time of the Alexandra rebellion, she writes: 'Spaces were used to construct public spectacles and events …. Space became a multi-faceted feature of the rebellion. It was a means of control by the authorities, a 'target' for attack by rebels, and also a 'resource' to be used to establish 'alternative' ways of doing things as the rebellion advanced. (2004: 10)

[15] Similar concerns have been beautifully addressed by Nadia Davids in her recently completed doctoral thesis (2007). Her locus of study is District Six in Cape Town that Davids maintains is no longer so much a place as a space for memory and memorializing; thereby addressing the dislocation engendered by forced removal.

The Poetics of Activism: questions of style, syncretism and orality

While Hofmeyr and others trace the impact of spatialised power relations on cultural forms, David Coplan traces the genesis of these forms in diverse social traditions. When Coplan originally published *In township tonight!* (1985), along with social and economic migrations, he was centrally concerned with 'the organisation of expressive features [of performance] in styles, labelled and recognised by their participants' (1985: 4). Coplan set out to analyse how forms of stylistic expression are both ways toward identity formation and social action. Much of the book is taken up with how artists and performers adopted, adapted and transformed received forms of musical and theatrical expression to make them their own.

> Urban performing arts … represent not the disintegration but *the creation of a culture*: part of a search for autonomy in an environment in which black people have little control over anything except a culturally guided sense of collective humanity and individual self [emphasis added]. (1984:3)

Cultural slippages and hybridity

By the time of the publication of the second edition of *In township tonight!* (2007) Coplan had moved away from a central concern with annotating styles. Discussing his first edition in light of the second, he foregrounds the constant fluidity and slippery nature of cultural influences. He writes:

> In the original work, the social history of South Africa's black performing arts is therefore recounted as the emergence, development, associations, and relationships of styles. Since then, twenty-five years on, the wealth of changes and changed understanding of South Africa and its landscape of creative processes has made the danger of this blunt and oversimplified calculus clangingly evident. (2007: 7)

Rather than syncretism, Temple Hauptfleish opts for a discussion couched in terms of 'hybridity' in *Theatre and society in South Africa: reflections in a fractured mirror* (1997). Although he raises many intriguing instances of 'hybridity' in his analysis of the multifarious forms of South African theatre, Hauptfleisch seems unwilling to legitimate the hybrid forms. They remain ever oppositional proposals *against* the canon rather than creating a new and more appropriate 'canon' for our age and location. Hauptfleisch is ruefully aware of this problem and writes from within it:

> The problem is of course that, while it may be true that we are all still very much caught up in a specific 'Eurocentric', academic and colonial mode of thinking about culture and art, there are also very specific ways in which the differences which are suggested by the categories are in fact real. (1997: 6)

The assumption that 'all' valid debate in theatre emanates from Eurocentric orientations among practitioners and researchers is part of the very inheritance which Hauptfleisch chips away at throughout his work. But in doing so, Hauptfleisch attempts to categorize theatrical activity as 'indigenous, traditional communal' or 'indigenous, hybrid' in a way that becomes tautological rather than illuminative. As Kruger points out, theatre is constantly borrowing from social and

cultural life. That *is* its nature. Attempts to categorise these borrowings are like so many attempts to trace the paths that a mountain stream takes down a hillside in a rainstorm.

Written twelve years earlier, Coplan's (1985) engagement with borrowings and slippages was uncommon: accounts from that time set store on cultural differences and distinctiveness, whether in opposition to or support of apartheid. But Coplan anticipated what later scholars have confidently espoused as the entanglement of cultures (Mbembe 2001).

Cultural syncretism as activism

In *The drama of South Africa* (1999) Kruger does not make the mistake of engaging with simplistic categorizations of race, class or even gender. As many as possible of the multifarious influences on South African theatre are accounted for. Traversing time, politics, nationhoods and spaces, Kruger argues for the complexity and diversity of influences, impulses and aesthetic devices that enmesh experiences in theatrical acts of expression and render South African theatre thoroughly syncretic.[16]

Peterson contributes to conceptualizing syncretism by invoking Mary Louis Pratt's notion of 'contact zones' that suggest 'the intricate web of interaction and contestation, patronage and circumscription between unequal, disparate cultures, all trying ultimately to explain, contain and redress African experiences of subordination' (2000: 11).

Possibly the most exhaustive and illuminating study of syncretism is Christopher Balme's *Decolonising the stage* (1999) which situates itself within two major conceptual terrains: interculturalism and post-colonialism. Drawing examples from Australian and Maori Aboriginal theatre, Native Canadian, Nigerian and what Balme terms South African township theatre [i.e. the work of Ngema and Mtwa], Balme analyses syncretism as a strategy to negotiate around and against othering. He begins by investigating 'mixing' in Western humanistic discourse and the perjorative connotations attached to syncretism by religious studies. He then develops his argument by analyzing the formal processes at work in syncretic theatre through the lens of theatre semiotics. Throughout the study he analyses interactions between political, social and cultural power in post-colonial third world theatre. He focuses on how the struggle for cultural identity as an antidote to imperialism is embodied in rituals, language, oral performance aesthetics, dance, space and spectatorship – to each of which he devotes a chapter that includes performance analysis. He clarifies how a study of the syncretic attempts to address the problem of categorisation:

> In order to read the signs and to appraise the theatrical codes of syncretic theatre, it is necessary to engage in a kind of bicultural receptive strategy in order to assess these works according to their culturally determined dominant structures. Only by a recognition of these dominant structures, … will outmoded Eurocentric critical methods be able to be overcome and replaced by culturally and aesthetically appropriate strategies. (1999: 145)

[16] In a number of articles Kruger examines moments during the 20th century when economic and social changes precipitated changes in the identity formation of sectors of the South African population (2002, 1997, 1994).

Balme makes an excellent point. However, in selecting semiotics for his approach, Balme vests his study primarily in signification rather than in the agency performers generate by playing with the means of signification and moulding it to suit their purposes.

Orality and activism

Isabel Hofmeyr (1993) and Ari Sitas (2004), on the other hand, investigate oral performance as a form of social engagement or resistance, thereby addressing issues of agency and 'playing' at the same time as they provide evidence of Balme's thesis on syncretism.

In *"We spend our years as a tale that is told"* Hofmeyr investigates only one instance of intercultural syncretism, namely the interactions between 'fictional' oral storytelling, oral historical narrative, and literacy, as the latter was introduced to a Ndebele-Sotho chiefdom in Makopane by missionaries and civil servants. What her analysis reveals is that literacy never entirely supplanted orality. Rather oral strategies infused literary traditions of religious worship and government administrative practices, to the extent that Hofmeyr writes: 'If there is one principle that this discussion of orality and literacy establishes, it is that the two areas can never be neatly separated' (1993: 12). What makes Hofmeyr's study so intriguing is that it is not a study in victimhood but rather reveals the tactics utilized by the illiterate to subvert and circumvent literacy.

This is a terrain that Ari Sitas explores through employing imagination in the manner that Ndebele calls for, as I have conjectured in Chapter 1 (1991). Using the form of parables in *Voices that reason* (2004), Sitas sets out to explore active agency and the meaning of agency through the concept of 'cultural formation'. Given the gap between the system and subjectivity, cultural formations 'constitute attempts to recoil from and refract the pressures of modernity: pressures that tend to devalue, to degender, to disoralise and to alienate. If, therefore, modernity's institutions tend towards "anomie" cultural formations are so many contranomic instances of sociality' (2004: ix). Ndebele suggests some interesting instances of alienation. I shall quote one:

> Firstly, for a highly industrialized society such as South Africa, there is a tragic paucity of imaginative re-creations of the confrontations between the oppressed and the tools of science. Supposing a character wants to study science, what goes on in his mind when he makes that decision? (2000: 33)

Sitas urges academia to counter cultural alienation by making attempts to bridge cultural divides such as class and education. He proposes a kind of academic syncretism:

> Is there a way then of revising our assumptions to allow for a sociology that extends from the perspective of those whose 'development' has to be seen as a form of external coercion? Can one develop theoretical constellations that are in common, are held in common, and hold proximate, reliable claims, whilst developing them from multiple positionings and standpoints? (2004: 58)

Sitas' advocacy of a scholarly syncretism is more fully comprehended by reading from his selection of 'parables'. In one an oral poet who was also a worker and political activist, unfolds the story of his politicized consciousness metaphorically:

> There on my forklift, most of the time isolated from the world, I would spend my working hours composing songs about our situation. I suppose this was my little resistance struggle in my head, zooming up to the base stores and back. When the tunes rolled fast, I would work like a maniac, driving my co-workers insane because the materials would pile up in front of them. When the songs were slower then I suppose life improved for them. (Qabula in Sitas, 2004: 6-7)

Sitas's creative, interventionist approach to cultural analysis is fundamentally syncretic. He demonstrates both in his parables and transcripts of oral poetry that these forms are able to encompass performance, political activism *and* academic analysis.[17]

Performance of / in the polity

When conceptions of performance are permitted to expand, as suggested by the ideas of Ari Sitas, JL Austin (1962) and Richard Schechner (2002), one enters the liminal realm of subjunctive performance (Turner 1982, Kruger 1999), in which performance foreshadows, anticipates or bodies forth actions or changes in the real world. In these conceptualisations, the interplay between conceptions of the state and the theatre are coloured by a different order of lens, of the kind utilised by cultural studies, and we gain a different kind of insight into the interchanges between theatre or culture and society.

The emergence of cultural and performance studies has placed the contingencies of lived processes in actual situations under the spotlight (both inside and outside of theatre buildings), where previous studies pushed actual contexts into the background to foreground ideological or dramatic depictions. Today scholars are increasingly at pains to emphasise that theatre is not merely the constructed art work on the stage but that anything may become theatre if it is so perceived. Theatre, performance and social theorists who conceptualise aspects of everyday life as performance have extended the ways in which we analyse social movements *and* theatre. This terrain is explored by, for instance, Irving Goffman (1971), Christopher Balme (1999), Michel De Certeau (1984), Richard Schechner (2002), Davis & Postlewait (2003) and Willmar Sauter (2007, 2006, 2004, 2000). These scholars deliberately exploit slippages between conceptions of theatre, performance and social or cultural events, so that the lens of the theatrical or performative is applied to everyday life situations or events with a view to illuminating what such contexts communicate.[18]

[17] Where Sitas exemplifies a sociological approach to performance that provides a model for my project, Mark Fleishman exemplifies a treatment of orality in the making of performance. See Fleishman 2005, & Davids 2007, Francis 2006 and Skotnes & Fleishman 2002.

[18] Scholars differ in their approaches and preferred applications but the point is that performance, performativity, Taylor's 'performatic' action (2003), and theatricality are all applied as conceptual lenses. This is important for study of a practice such as township theatre that happens far more outside of formal theatres than it does within them and yet claims to be theatre.

Loren Kruger examines the enactment of South Africa's nationhood between 1910 and 1999 through a theatrical lens. Her endeavour is to 'trace the ties and ruptures among plays, pageants, and their publics, and the social, political, and historical conditions that these performances have inhabited and animated' (1999: 4) and then to theorise them in terms of syncretism and heterogeneity in cultural practice. Employing Raymond William's (1968) notion of using theatre to look both ways: at itself and the world as depicted in it, Kruger takes up questions of the postcolonial era, performing nationhood, staging places and moments, and the power of the virtual public sphere.

Also drawing on the work of Raymond Williams (1977, 1961), Bhekizizwe Peterson gives a slightly different turn to theatrical metaphor by focusing sharply on *representation* and employing it in a number of ways in *Monarchs, missionaries and African intellectuals: African theatre and the unmaking of colonial marginality* (2000). By employing representation at the hub of his conceptualization, he makes the point that what is depicted on the stage in the theatre is not all that is represented through theatre. The larger socio-political, economic and cultural context, the institutional context and the organizational context of theatre and the theatrical system, are on a different level all representations of political or social predicaments as much as the dramatic depiction on the stage. Again employing representation as his conceptual organizer, Peterson also addresses the overarching task of developing an African epistemology in order to resist colonialism and the sheer theatricality of imperialism through symbolic resistance.

In this study, tales from the field - the stories, viewpoints, perceptions and comments of township theatre-makers - are not only about theatre, but also enact encounters in the field even though they are not theatrical constructions. At the same time, examining the uses to which township theatre-makers put their theatrical practices and performances, as well as what they represent through theatre, offers enactments of township experience of the polity.

The field of theatre as system

While Peterson and others relate theatre to society by exploring how each infuses the other, Coplan, Hauptfleisch, and others examine the systemic ways in which theatre is embedded in social structures and processes. In the revised edition of *In township tonight!* (2007), Coplan points to the importance of who wields power within the field of theatre because it is a contested terrain. At the same time he draws attention to the system by which theatre reaches its public:

> The production and reproduction of performances must be located within the set of political, economic, social, and cultural relations between performers and the total context in which they perform. These relationships depend on the distribution of power in the environment, economic and other returns derived from various performance alternatives, the demands of sponsors and participants, available stylistic resources and performance training, and co-operation and competition amongst performers. (2007: 406)

Temple Hauptfleisch develops an account of theatre 'as a complex and dynamic structure of interlinked processes, to generate a particular theatre event within the wider systemic context of a specific community or society' (1997: 3). The strength of Hauptfleisch's study is that he continually draws attention to the intersections of many agents and diverse areas of endeavour within the field of cultural production, including not only theatre artists but also administrators, funders, lobbyists, media and audiences of all kinds; so we are cautioned against oversimplifying an analysis of the performing arts (2007). Kruger analyses the system of theatre in similar manner but she invokes Bourdieu's notion of field as the site of contestations of value, or capital, that accrue power. Kruger writes:

> Theatrical forms, I would argue, can be properly evaluated … only through the investigation of the ownership, contestation, and appropriation of institutions, understood as organizations located in social and economic structures (and sometimes in actual buildings) and as the prevailing conventions that determine … the legitimation of certain practices as "theatre", certain people as audiences …. Legitimate definitions of theatre … do not rest on invariable formal features or aesthetic value, but rather, as Pierre Bourdieu notes, take their shape as capital in response to the pressure of legitimation and contestation in the social and economic as well as the cultural field (Bourdieu, 1993). (1999:12)

Peterson's account of the theatrical activities at Marianhill and the Bantu Men's Social Centre in Johannesburg focuses on the struggle of certain cultural activists against the odds (2000). Whilst he engages in theorized debates about resistance to colonialism and imperialism within the macro socio-political, economic and cultural context between 1910 and 1940, at the same time he investigates the institutions, and the agents who actually wrestled with the theatre system and its institutional and organizational contexts as well as with what they were allowed to depict on the stage. He explains his approach:

> The ideas and performance initiatives of the central figures are best understood in relation to the various projects in which they participated, the various subject positions that they occupied, the many social and political changes that their work had to respond to, and lastly, their awareness of each other's work and their frequent interactions. (2000: 5)

Both Kruger and Peterson foreshadow but do not organize their account of the contexts in the structural manner of Theatrical Event theory that I will draw upon to construct my conceptual framework in Part II. What their analysis of theatre as system brings to light is how the activities and struggles by artists, leaders and administrators for power and agency can be perceived as a field of systemic struggle. This is a very far cry from studying theatre as a dramatic text. Considering how, why and when a theatre system functions, and in whose interests, also requires a scrutiny of the practices and pursuits of artists. Peterson sheds intriguing light on the use of formal features of dramatic structure such as narrative, allegory and melodrama in his analysis of early play texts and speculates informatively about the influence of *isiZulu* oral traditions. Kruger (1999) and Mda (2002, 1996) also analyse performances with enormous perspicacity, and point to those kinds of theatre, such as theatre

for development and community theatre, that make their own theatre rather than using texts.[19] They do not really interrogate the practices of making and producing theatre, which is the area in which the most interesting recent scholarship on South African theatre studies is focused and to which I now turn.

Practising South African theatre

Whilst my concerns are with the post-apartheid era, this is not to undervalue the contribution of South African artists active before the millennium. Black actors, directors and playmakers instrumental in making the theatre of resistance and protest such as John Kani (Solberg 1999), Gibson Kente (Shauffer 2006, Solberg 1999, Kavanagh 1985), Matsemela Manaka (1997, Schauffer 2003, Solberg 1999), Maishe Maponya (Solberg 1999, Davis & Fuchs 1996), Gcina Mhlophe (1996, August 1994), Mbongeni Ngema (2005, 1995, Lindfors 1999), and Percy Mtwa (Fuchs 1990) are all on frequent record.[20] Whilst their writings and recorded interviews refer to the intersections of politics, ideology, contexts and performance approaches, much of the material is documentary evidence and the bulk of it was generated before 2000. Scholarly analysis has been the task of academics such as Ian Steadman (1999, 1990a & b, 1985) David Kerr (1995) Laura Jones (1994), Bhekisizwe Peterson (1994), Martin Orkin (1991), Peter Larlham (1985) and Robert Kavanagh (1985), and most of that is devoted to work created before 1990.

Closer to my concerns in terms of being township and working class orientated has been the documentation of the processes of making worker theatre. In this regard Ari Sitas (2001, 1996, 1990) and Astrid von Kotze (1988, 1987) are at the forefront, dealing with practices amongst Natal's workers up until the 1990s.

The work and philosophies of Barney Simon (1932-1995) who, together with Mannie Manim, started The Company and founded and artistically led the Market Theatre, have been relatively well documented, in particular by Stephanou and Henriques whose *The world in an orange* (2005) is undoubtedly the most comprehensive extant account of the perceptions of actors working with a South African director / dramaturg / writer / co-creator. However a lot of Simon's work was not centrally concerned with township spaces, culture or preoccupations. That which was so concerned – in particular his collaboration with Mbongeni Ngema and Percy Mtwa in developing *Woza Albert* – has been exhaustively analysed, most informatively perhaps, by Christopher Balme (1999, 1996).

Malcolm Purkey and Carol Steinberg have explicated the processes of Junction Avenue Theatre Company with which they are centrally involved with respect to ideologies, politics, contexts, directorial and acting approaches, styles and genres, and their work has received many

[19] See also Spitczok von Brisinski (2003)

[20] There is no attempt here to provide a comprehensive reference list, but simply to indicate some of the resources. The reader might puzzle at no mention of Fugard. In so far as he employed workshop methods and devising, his work is represented here, but not his prodigous output as South Africa's leading playwright since written plays are not the subject of this study.

critical appraisals (Purkey 2006, Fuchs 1999). However the circumstances of this company differ in so many respects from township groups that homologies in terms of practices are hard to find.

As I mentioned in the introduction, much of the most informative work about theatre practices is to be found in play anthologies. Such 'introductions' or 'forewords' explicate the methods, motivations and stylistic motifs of writers and actors involved in the processes (Farber 2008, Fourie 2006, Graver 1999,Gray 1993, Ndlovu 1986, Kavanagh 1981). But because these plays finally are distilled into texts on the page, the analyses are of limited applicability to devised performance.[21]

By and large the most significant contributions on theatre-making practices have emerged in the last two decades. The predicament of the post-apartheid moment has been addressed by many, amongst which are Steadman (1990a, b) Kruger (1992), Purkey (1996) and Jamal (2003, 2004, 2005), who open the spaces beyond protest and resistance to allow a range of ideological and practice-orientated concerns into the scholarly discourse. Kruger's notion of theatre's 'impure autonomy' is particularly useful in facilitating a range of preoccupations beyond political resistance that include issues of identity, Africa, dislocation, trauma, memory, space, landscape and place, time, storytelling and orality into the academy. In providing theatrical and scholarly models for a new poetics and sociology, the work of Fleishman has been exemplary (2005, 2001, 1996, 1991).[22] Brett Bailey's work with Third World Bunfight (2003, 1998) has also catalysed debates around practices, forms and functions of South African theatre.[23] But there are many other studies of making, performing and producing processes which illuminate local strategies and themes.[24]

One area that South African scholarship has examined repeatedly is that of image development a**s** a core device of (oral) storytelling and poetry (Hofmeyr 1993, Sitas 2004). Invoking image as a structural feature of South African theatre is an established practice (Irobi 2005, Bailey 2003, Hauptfleisch 1997, Fleishman 1996), and drawing on Harold Scheub, I develop conceptualizations of image and storytelling in township theatre in Chapters 5 and 6.

From the perspective of this study there is one resounding lacuna. Beyond the pitifully few articles to which I alluded in the introduction, there are no studies of theatre-making and performing in the townships after 1994. This blank space spurs this research on. It also begs the question of the ways in which theatre originating in the townships is most suitably mapped. In Part 2, drawing upon the understandings of the field of South African theatre studies outlined here, the conceptual framework for this study will be developed.

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[21] This issue is explored by Nadia Davids in her PhD thesis (2007).
[22] See also Davids (2007), Halligey (2005) Banning (1999, 1997).
[23] See Rudakoff (2004b), Jamal (2004), Flockemann et al (2005), Krueger (2006).
[24] See Moyo (2008), Kabwe (2007), McMurtry (2006) Baxter & Aitchison (2006) (Barnes, 2005, 2000), Liu (2004), Jamal (2003), and Banning (2002).

Part 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction to part 2

Since this study is focused on a particular practice of theatre of the past six years, in selected Cape Town townships, it demands a conceptual framework which elucidates a contextually embedded form of theatre that needs to be considered on its own terms. The study seeks to examine the purposes and practices of township theatre-makers, performers and audiences, and the nature of the influence that the township exerts on these practices: why things are done in the particular way that they are, and whether and how local culture affects the practices. Moreover, because theatre in the townships is a distinctive part of Cape Town theatre and yet marginalised in the Cape Town theatre 'scene', this calls for an examination of the interactions between township and town theatre. Because the overarching orientation of this study is towards people's practices, orientations derived from Pierre Bourdieu's reflexive sociology as well as some of his key conceptual tools, underlie and infuse the conceptual framework (1992).[25]

In line with Kruger's concept of theatre's 'impure autonomy', this conceptual framework takes account of the several orders of context affecting township theatre. The study of theatre as a gestalt, of context, culture, practices and performances, is well served by Theatrical Event theory. Pierre Bourdieu's interlocking conceptual tools of field, capital and habitus expand and sharpen Theatrical Event theory with an orientation to practice theory and to the politics of culture (1977, 1990). This second part of chapter 2 introduces the reader to the main conceptual organisers that will be employed to elucidate this study.

[25] Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), the son of a postman, was brought up in a small village in south-western France. He attended an elite Paris high school on scholarship and thereafter the École normale supérieure of the Rue d'Ulm, where he studied philosophy. In the fifties he was conscripted into the French army to serve in Algeria, the experience of which prompted him to turn from philosophy towards anthropology and later sociology, and cemented his leftist 'anti-institutional disposition' (Wacquant 2005:12). Wacquant writes:

> Seeing the destruction and suffering wrought by the dual cataclysm of capitalist imperialism and military confrontation touched him to his core and determined him to engage in *empirical research intended as a form of "political pedagogy,"* as he put it in his self-socioanalysis: "I would try to tell the French, and especially to people on the Left, what was really going on in a country about which they often knew next to nothing …." … But once he tried his hand at social inquiry, he never stopped. (2005:12)

When Bourdieu was appointed to the Chair at the *Collège de France* in 1981, his leading position as a French intellectual was consecrated. For more than four decades he researched and published prolifically in and across a broad array of disciplines including anthropology, sociology, education, philosophy, history, cultural studies and politics, chiefly using empirical research on French society and culture as his starting point. The use of Bourdieu (1930-2202) as underlying theorist in this study does not imply a wholesale adoption of his political (in the broad sense) philosophies, many of them generated in Europe decades ago in circumstances different to Southern Africa. Nonetheless, both his ideas and his methodological approach have been important.

Theatrical Event theory

The Theatrical Event Working Group (TEWG) of the International Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR) has evolved Theatrical Event theory over the past thirteen years.[26]

The hallmark of the theory is that theatre is not a thing, a product, a text, an inanimate, immutable object but rather something that occurs. Theatrical events involve people who perform, enjoy and manage the event that happens over time in a particular location or locations. Viewed through a theatrical event lens, theatre is a localized occurrence, taking place within a specific period of time and physical space and carrying the marks of its social, political, economic and cultural location, in addition to its aesthetic and material properties. To study theatre and performance therefore implies the study of a phenomenon of social life and culture rather than simply a work of art. This orientation serves a study of township theatre because it focuses the researcher's attention on the activities and enactments of theatre-making, performing and audiencing, rather than on any object or detritus, such as a playscript, which remains after the event is over.

Event, eventification and 'eventness'

Duration and location are essential features of an event, and most include action. Viewing theatre through this lens emphasizes its active, unfolding nature, rather than seeing it as, for example, a 'work' of art.

Now a train arriving at a railway station as per the timetable is also an event, but not in the sense that its arrival is made much of. In the sense suggested by TEWG, a theatrical event is one that is lifted out of its surrounding context so that it is noticeable. Sauter points out that not all theatrical events start or end life as such (2006). Possibly only the researcher may identify a theatrical event with the benefit of hindsight, as does Loren Kruger with Nelson Mandela's inauguration as president of South Africa in 1994 at the Union Buildings in Pretoria (1999).

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[26] The International Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR) was founded in 1957 to foster theatre and performance research internationally. The IFTR hosts an annual international conference, as well as regional conferences and working group meetings on an ad hoc basis. The journal *Theatre Research International* is owned and hosted by the IFTR and it also publishes two book series in collaboration with Palgrave MacMillan and Rodopi. Currently, the IFTR has membership on four continents. A key component of the IFTR is the working groups. There are currently over twenty of these that meet at least annually at the conference.
The Theatrical Event Working Group was sparked by a paper presented by Willmar Sauter in Japan in 1995 entitled 'Approaching the Theatrical Event'. The Working Group, convened by Willmar Sauter, was formalized in 1997 at the conference in Puebla Mexico, resulting from a convergence between two previous groups, one on audience and reception research and the other on theatre systems. The group identifies particular themes within Theatrical Event theory and works on these towards publication. To date the group has published two books in the IFTR/Rodopi series 'Themes in Theatre – Collective Approaches to Theatre and Performance'. The books are Theatrical Events: Borders, Dynamics, Frames (2004) edited by Vicki Ann Cremona, Peter Eversmann, Hans Van Maanen, Willmar Sauter and John Tulloch; and Festivalising! Theatrical Events, Politics, Culture (2007) edited by Temple Hauptfleisch, Shulamith Lev-Aladgem, Jacqueline Martin, Willmar Sauter and Henri Schoenmakers. Currently the group is working on a third book on Playing Culture. http://www.firt-iftr.org/ (accessed 5 November 2009). Sauter has published two further monographs on the subject: *Eventness: A Concept of the Theatrical Event* (2006) and *The Theatrical Event: Dynamics of Performance and Perception* (2000). The writer joined the working group in 2006 at the Helsinki Conference.

An event becomes a theatrical event when it is 'eventified' as such. The word 'event' has been dynamised by the working group. To 'eventify' something is to bring it to prominence, to foreground the 'eventness' of the occasion (Hauptfleisch, 2004). On such occasions there is a deliberate intention amongst those involved to draw attention to their actions (and enactment), so that for a certain length of time in a certain place those present will mutually create an event.

The phenomenon of 'eventification', Hauptfleish and others in the group argue, is part of our contemporary experience. A 2008 film advertisement for *Coca-Cola* springs to mind, in which a bottle of *Coke*, existing in a fantasy realm of flying men and marvelous machines, issues forth from a most Heath Robinson-like machine, with cog wheels, sprung levers, spouting drawers and hobgoblins. As we watch, the *Coke* spirals in the air, traverses space, is conveyed by means of pulleys and levers from one tower of phantasmagorical contraption to the next, and slowly comes closer and closer to the watching audience: arriving as it were, by superhuman effort and invention, in the foreground for our delectation. Thus is the creation of *Coke* eventified.

More than theatre conventions, or theatre's utilization of symbolization and metaphor, or theatre buildings, or aspects of stage *mise en scene*, theatrical event theory singles out eventness as characteristic of theatre. Eventification dilates certain happenings within a situation so that they stand out in terms of their impact from their surroundings. For spectators they become distinguishable from the status quo. This distinctiveness is crucial to 'eventness', so when performers and spectators are not conscious that an event is theatrical, then it may be deemed not to be so.[27] Therefore the concept of the Theatrical Event views theatre primarily as a practice of 'eventification'. The concept illuminates the practices of township theatre in which the capacity to eventify is what most distinguishes theatre from the ordinary run of everyday life, and many conventions of Western theatre referred to above are not frequently utilized.

According to the theory, eventification and theatrical events are realized within four domains - context, culture, playing and theatricality - that are distinguished from each other for the purpose of conceptual clarity but in reality are all contained within the space of the event (Sauter, Hauptfleisch, 2004). TEWG has conceptualized the domains suggested by the four words which, in varied combinations, comprise the titles of the four domains, namely playing culture, cultural context, contextual theatricality and theatrical playing. The terms suggest how contingent and intermingled are the character of the four domains.

Applied to the study of theatre in the townships, the concepts of eventification and eventness and the domains of Playing Culture, Cultural Context, Contextual Theatricality and Theatrical Playing render the poetics of theatre made in the townships intelligible. They

[27] Augusto Boal's Invisible Theatre is a good (reverse) case in point. In this kind of theatre, events are enacted in public settings such as a restaurant or train by actors, but only the actors are aware that the enactment is 'simulated' / not real, hence 'invisible' theatre. For the spectators the events are real and they respond as such until, at a certain point, they are informed of the simulated nature of the event (1992:6-16).

illuminate the social, cultural, aesthetic, economic and political drivers of township theatre-making, performing and audiencing, and characterize the relations between township theatre and its local and metropolitan contexts (Sauter 2004, 2006).

It becomes clear that a 'theatrical event' approach to theatre studies suggests that theatre is best understood as sets of activities and systems of practice, situated within the field of cultural production, which in turn are shaped by context. Whilst theatre might be understood as a process of representation (Peterson 2000) or semiotic signification (Balme 1999), or inhabiting a liminal realm (Fleishman 2005), or fulfilling the purposes of subjunctive enactment (Kruger 1999) that were introduced in the literature review, Sauter proposes that playing is theatre's most inherent characteristic. The nature of that playing is shaped by local cultural practices.

There are parallels between Theatrical Event theory and Pierre Bourdieu's broader practice theory. An introductory overview of Bourdieu's theory follows before proceeding with Theatrical Event theory.

Practice theory

In order to conduct research Bourdieu firstly proposes that one has to forsake the view that knowledge is merely recorded 'out there' and focus upon knowledge as practices located within people's daily activities and embodied in their ways of doing things. Bourdieu recommends that:

> one has to situate oneself *within* 'real activity as such' that is, in the practical relation to the world, the preoccupied, active presence in the world through which the world imposes its presence , with its urgencies, its things to be done and said, ... To do this, one has to return to practice, the site of dialectic of the *opus operatum* and the *modus operandi; ....* (1990:52)[28]

Bourdieu is my entry point to practice theory whose proponents include Michel de Certeau (1984) and Theodore Schatzki (2002, 1996). These scholars have many differences but, as Reckwitz points out, they all appear to be inheritors of a tradition of theories of action founded by Max Weber, and they share an interest in the 'everyday' (2002). Schatzki succinctly sums up the common orientation in practice theories:

> In social theory, consequently, practice approaches promulgate a distinct social ontology: the social is a field of embodied, materially interwoven practices centrally organised around shared practical understandings. This conception contrasts with accounts that privilege individuals, (inter)actions, language, signifying systems, the life world, institutions / roles, structures, or systems in defining the social. These phenomena, say practice theorists, can only be analysed via the field of practices. Actions, for instance, are embedded in practices, just as individuals are constituted within them. Language, moreover, is a type of activity (discursive) and hence a practice phenomenon, whereas institutions and structures are effects of them. (2001:3)

[28] A simple translation for *opus operatum* would be 'finished product' and for *modus operandi* would be empirical methods.

Why I have quoted Schatzki at some length is because he sets forth the possibilities and challenges that harnessing practice theory to this study generate. It encompasses activities within the theoretical bracket of practices. It privileges accounts of the social which foreground activity, activities and everyday practical understandings over individuals and material or symbolic systems. In the township context, in which institutions, infrastructures and all manner of material constructions are often fragile and have little foothold in the built environment, foregrounding what people actually do, the patterns of activity that they establish and the orientations of their actions, reveals a system at work which would be invisible were it not approached via practice theory. At the same time an orientation towards practice theory makes clear that 'understanding specific practices always involves apprehending material configurations' (Schatzki 2001:3). People undertake actions within concrete situations: the two have to be understood together.

Warde elaborates on some of the conceptual opportunities which Bourdieu's theory of practice offers. 'Practice can account for aspects of everyday life and the conduct of a full range of activities, can delineate activity as a co-ordinated entity which is temporarily unfolding and spatially dispersed, can encompass a wide range of motives, goals and values, and can appreciate diversity of competence' (2004:21). Unless the practices of township theatre-makers, who are not formally part of institutions or organisations and do not frequently utilize formal education, are studied through the kinds of lenses Warde suggests, patterns of activity, meaning and organisation, however informal and fluctuating, become extremely hard to discern. Swartz makes the point that it is through practice that Bourdieu can explore the social dimension of the most subjective experiences of individuals, so that the individual – societal dichotomy is at least traversed if not overcome (1997). In line with Bourdieu, examining the approaches to and considerations of the work of particular theatre-makers and of theatre groups is studying theatre as a social and cultural practice.

Warde maintains that Bourdieu employed the notion of 'practice' in three distinct ways (2004). Firstly, throughout his entire career Bourdieu contrasts theoretical or scholarly thinking with the practical sense we apply to everyday life that he maintains is embodied in the habitus of agents. Bourdieu called this the 'logic of practice' (1990:80-99). In this sense practices denote our usual way of doing things of which we are largely unconscious. Secondly, 'practice' is used in the sense of sets of practices which cluster around a particular, recognisable activity (such as cooking or baptism) and which practices might develop symbolic significance. Thus we might talk of story-telling practices in Africa. Finally he uses 'practice' in its loosest sense in reference to the performance of some or other action such as the practice of busking or farming. Warde (2004) maintains that Bourdieu failed satisfactorily to link his three understandings of practice, namely habitus, sets of practices, and activities termed practices. Notwithstanding Warde's reservations, in what follows I shall employ practice in all of these

senses, taking the view that the links between them are implicit within the activities and discernible within the analysis.

In *The logic of practice* (1990) and *An outline of a theory of practice* (1977) Bourdieu theorises characteristics of practice which assist this study. He continually emphasises practice's relationship with the contingent present and the presence of those who are present. He suggests that practice always only unfolds in time and that its temporality and directionality are 'constitutive of its meaning' (1990:81). He maintains that practical mastery is 'a mode of practical knowledge not comprising knowledge of its own principles' (1977:19). He unpacks the 'economy of logic' of ritual practices and argues that , rather than obeying an 'internal logic of symbolism', such practices serve logical and practical ends for the communities which practice them (1977:109-24). By developing a theory of practice what Bourdieu achieves is to move beyond a structural analysis of ideas or ideologies and to study social life for empirical evidence of lived practices that not only embody choices but actually, in themselves, over and beyond words or symbolic concepts, are the choices.

In Bourdieu's view culture is not merely a symbolic system reflecting the always already realised meanings and intentions of a social group. Rather, culture is an arena of practices in which individuals, groups or whole communities struggle to affirm their identity and status by the ways in which they do things, the tastes they cultivate, the ceremonies they practise (1977).

Within Bourdieu's theory of practice reside three of his most crucial concepts, which are habitus, field and capital. All three inform my study of township theatre and are introduced later, within my exposition of Theatrical Event theory. I fold Bourdieu's concepts into Theatrical Event's four domains, because Bourdieu's theories sharpen the political edge of event theory's domains, to which I now return.

Of what does Theatrical Event theory chiefly consist?

In the brief introduction above, the parallels between practice theory and theatrical event theory have been introduced. Studying theatre and performance through the event theory lens implies studying practices of social life and culture rather than simply studying a 'work of art'. In this approach TEWG concur with Bourdieu who is at pains to interrogate the 'art for art's sake' position (1996, 1984). As does Bourdieu, TEWG emphasise the interplay between society and cultural production.

TEWG has organized its understandings of the words context, theatricality, playing and culture, into conceptual clusters that suggest the material and ideological situatedness of theatre, its communicative dimension, playful orientation, and its infusion by local cultural practices. TEWG has gathered these into four domains under the rubrics: 'cultural context', 'contextual theatricality', 'theatrical playing' and 'playing culture' (Sauter 2004, 1-14). TEWG sets these out diagrammatically thus:

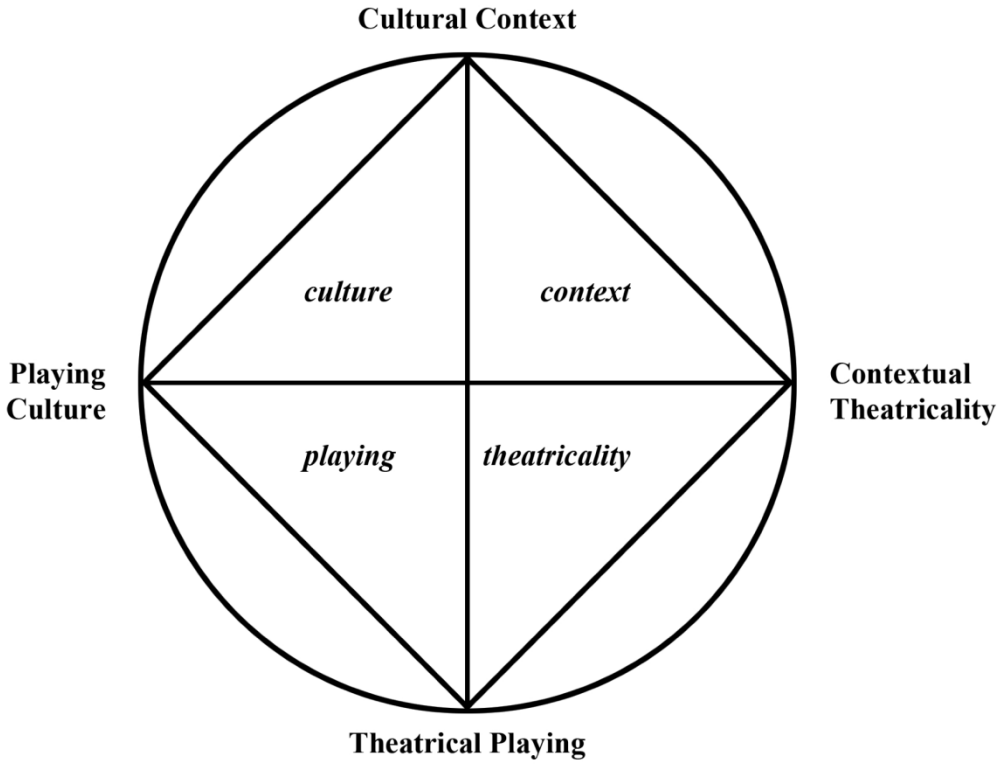

Figure 1. **The four domains of Theatrical Event theory** (Cremona et al 2004:14) Note that this writer has added the *italicized* words within the circle

Notice that each of the rubrics couples the words. This suggests that the domains are infused with each other, are interdependent, and contingent. They draw attention to contexts and practices that exist and occur in and through time. Since they are situated equidistant from each other on the circumference of a circle there is no hierarchy of importance implied between the four domains. They are also joined by lines between and intersecting each other which reinforce the interdependence of the domains. But for the purposes of conceptual organization the four quadrants distinguish four domains.

TEWG research has identified the preoccupations of these domains, introduced below. The degree of emphasis afforded the aspects in what follows is partly accounted for by their conceptual complexity but also the degree to which their use is important for this study.[29] I have found the order in which they are introduced most illuminating, which is not to say that it is the 'correct' one, there being no hierarchy assigned to the terms.

Cultural Context

'Cultural Context' is a catch-all descriptor for all the forces within society that affect and mould cultural and theatrical production; and in the case of this study, theatre in the townships. By

[29] Along with the practices of the working group, at certain times parts of this study will traverse simultaneously through several of the domains (Cremona et al 2004). Nonetheless, understanding the distinct emphases and orientations of all four domains has assisted conceptual clarity and focus in the data analysis for this study, so the domains are first introduced discretely before they are conjoined.

implication, in its broadest understanding the cultural context includes the 'field' of South African theatre which is termed its 'Contextual Theatricality'; the cultural practices immanent in the field which comprise its 'Playing Culture', and finally the experience of theatrical communication and reception within a theatrical event itself which is called 'Theatrical Playing'. However the scope of the cultural context is not confined to cultural influences alone, still less to matters of 'art' and 'literature' (Williams 1977:11-20). Rather, as Sauter so concisely puts it:

> [T]he cultural context includes not only high art and folk traditions, but also politics and economic enterprises, public discourses and local as well as global discourses. Within the cultural context we also find social hierarchies, gender and class restrictions, religious communities, as well as all the mental and physical foundations, on which society builds its public life. (2006: 9)[30]

Contexts shaped by economic, political and ideological forces

Sauter suggests that the cultural context be analysed by subscribing to 'the classical Marxist division between the three main forces in society: economy, politics and ideology' (2006: 85). Considering the interactions between these forces is most apt in this study because by far the most influential factor shaping theatre in the townships are the political, economic and ideological forces at work within townships themselves in all their material reality. Illegitimate offspring of South Africa's colonial and segregationist history, and sustained today virtually unchanged and mostly unimproved by a neo-liberal vision for Cape Town as a global city (McDonald 2008), the townships are formidable progenitors of township youth.

Rather than depicting the cultural context conceptualized through the lens of colonialism, imperialism or representation in the manner of Kruger (1999) or Peterson (2000), in this study examining the cultural context will be located materially in place and time in the manner pursued by Bozzoli (2004) and Hofmeyr (1993). The time frame is truncated to the current decade and the space to that of selected townships in the vicinity of Cape Town. The task is then to understand how the township's demography, built environment, infrastructure (or lack of it), economic and other activities, educational, religious and cultural practices as well as socializing culture, shape the playmaking practices of the youth. This is where Bourdieu's concept of habitus is so helpful (1977). While event theory asserts that the social context infuses theatre, Bourdieu's notion of habitus provides a more precise conceptualization of how this occurs.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus

Bourdieu's concept of habitus refers to the actions and the doings of agents. The concept is one of Bourdieu's major attempts to bridge the conceptual divide between cognitive choice and bodily inclination, between desire and habit, between individual intention and social training.

[30] In the South African context particularly, the racial divisions upon which our society for so long was built are obviously also crucially important.

Habitus 'is the result of a long process of inculcation, beginning in early childhood, which becomes a "second sense" …. and lasts throughout a lifetime' (Johnson 1993:5). The habitus of agents - persons who are involved within a field - are those 'generative practical understandings deposited in the body, inculcated by activities' (Schatzky 2007). Thus we understand that the habitus is located in the body and formed by life experiences and dispositions inherited by being born in specific social circumstances, which include class, status, educational opportunities, living arrangements and lived cultural practices.

Habitus is largely a tacit and practical 'know-how' at work in the bodies of agents, adapted to the agents' circumstances and facilitating the passage of agents through their life-world. It is 'a strategy generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations by integrating past experiences' and anticipating future experiences (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992:18). Bourdieu defines habitus over and over again in his writings, Lizardo (2004:378) maintains that his 'last and most definitive statement' is in *the Logic of Practice:*

> The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus* [sic], *s*ystems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of an organizing action of a conductor. (Bourdieu 1990:53)

Bourdieu suggests that the habitus of an individual or class or social sector is inculcated into the bodily *hexis* by life experiences and socialisation.[31] Family relations, living arrangements, cultural practices and educational opportunities are both a product of, and contribute to, the ongoing generation of habitus. The habitus, Bourdieu argues, consists of 'structuring structures' which are '"transposable" in that they may generate practices in … diverse fields of activity, and they are "structured structures" in that they … incorporate the objective social conditions of their inculcation', which 'accounts for the similarity in habitus of agents from the same social class' (Johnson 1993:5). When social and cultural life are continuously shape-shifting in response to the play of economic, political and other forces, and yet social life remains relatively unchanged, Bourdieu attributes this to habitus (1992). Habitus provides, however imperfectly, a conceptual tool with which to examine the influences of tacit knowledge and practices, residing at least as much in the body as in mental processes, which shape theatrical performing and dramatic play amongst other things.

Living in the townships shapes the habitus of township youth. Examining the context of the townships in effect implies examining the effects of that context on township youth in so far

[31] 'Bodily *hexis* is a political mythology realized, *em-bodied*, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable manner of standing, speaking, and thereby of *feeling* and *thinking'* (Bourdieu 1977: 93-4)

as it shapes their theatre-making practices. But there is no simple equation of calculable influences. Habitus becomes a conceptual lens through which I can begin to speculate on the extent of the formative influence of the townships on the predelictions, proclivities, attitudes and concerns of township youth as revealed in their theatre-making practices.

Since theatre-making practices also fall within the domain of Playing Culture, it is to that concept that I shall now turn.

Playing Culture

I pointed out at the beginning of this explication that TEWG has identified playing, rather than pretending, or impersonation, or 'twice-behaved behaviour' (Schechner 2002:22), as a fundamental characteristic of theatrical endeavour. 'The theatrical event as a concept builds on the assumption that theatrical activities are a form of playing, shared with many other forms of playing and functioning within this particular framework. In a way, it is the most general aspect of theatrical events' writes Sauter (2006:13). Sauter in particular has published work on playing culture, traversing it as a terrain equivalent to but quite distinct from working culture or eating culture (2000a, 2006).[32]

For the purposes of this study on theatre in the townships of Cape Town, it has to be determined what looking through the lens of playing culture will contribute. This involves exploring the concepts of play and of culture and the implications of combining them in the term 'playing culture'. Thereafter it becomes important to determine the space that theatrical events or performances occupy within the concept of playing culture and so finally to conceptualise theatrical playing culture and then its localised manifestation in Cape Town's townships. My argument will be that township playing culture exerts a profound influence on local theatre-making practices that are unpacked in the latter half of the thesis. To do this, developing a concept description of playing culture within my conceptual framework is essential. The relationship between playing culture and the domain of theatrical playing will also be referred to.

What is play?

Theatre theorists, particularly members of TEWG, draw heavily upon Hans-Georg Gadamer (1979), Roger Callois (2001), Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and Johan Huizinga (1970), in order to understand play.[33] For this study, I have found that I can not espouse the arguments of

[32] The TEWG is currently working on a collaborative book project on Playing Culture that hopefully will be published in 2011.

[33] Performance Studies theorist Richard Schechner also takes ideas from Clifford Geertz (1973), Brian Sutton-Smith (1997) and the Indian philosophical concept of *Maya-Lila* amongst many others (Schechner, 2002:102). My own conceptualisation of play was initially influenced by educational drama theorists, in particular Peter Slade (1954, 1968), Richard Courtney (1989) and Gavin Bolton (1979) who in turn draw upon developmental psychologists Lev Vygotsky (1985) and Jean Piaget (1985, 1962). Drama and the creative arts therapies have also developed extensive theories of play and role play. Particularly influential have been J. L. Moreno (1959), Sue Jennings (1997, 1992, 1987), Renée Emunah (1994) and Ann Cattanach (2008, 1996).

just one theorist, but have drawn most heavily from the debates of TEWG, particularly of Sauter, as well as the philosophies of Gadamer and Caillois, in order to distil what I consider to be the essentials of play.

I concur with Sauter in espousing Gadamer's fundamentally ontological approach to play. 'Gadamer opens his argument with a basic distinction between the player and playing. His point of departure is not the consciousness of the subject who is playing, but playing as such, which exists prior to the players' entering the arena' (Sauter, 2006:13). In play, the player gives herself over to the activity of playing, irrespective if that playing involves skipping in a dance or running to the goal line in a game of touch rugby. Gadamer points out:

> the nature of play is reflected in an attitude of play: all playing is a being-played. The attraction of a game, the fascination it exerts, consists precisely in the fact that the game tends to master the players. … The game is what holds the player in its spell, draws him into play, and keeps him there. (1979:95-6)

Thus play is a practice of a particular kind. I posit that there are four 'bottom lines' by which play can be identified. First, play is active and playing is an activity, such as a baby playing peekaboo with Mommy or friends telling jokes at the shebeen.[34] Secondly, play has no purpose beyond itself. Although play, paradoxically might serve a myriad of different functions in a diverse array of contexts, it is nevertheless an end in itself.[35] Thirdly, play has rules; whether these are rules of what 'offside' signifies on the soccer field or that a joke has a punchline.[36] Fourthly, in addition to being an activity, the players are entranced by playing, in part because of the meaning or 'point', it holds for the players while they are playing.[37] In other words, there is an emotional or cognitive dimension to playing over and beyond the activity that characterises the play.

How do we understand 'culture'?

As Garuba and Raditlhalo affirm, culture 'has become a ubiquitous category invoked in both everyday speech and intellectual analysis…. Culture is suddenly present everywhere – from the smallest event of everyday life to the most rarefied levels of academic analysis' (2008: 35). Raymond Williams (1976) delineates five alternative meanings or usages which Garuba and Raditlhalo succinctly summarise - drawing on Robert Bocock (1992:234).

1. Culture = cultivating the land, crops, animals.
2. Culture = the cultivating of the mind; the arts; civilisation.

[34] In South Africa, shebeens are unlicensed drinking taverns.
[35] Sauter references Gadamer who references Huizinga on this point.
[36] As Caillois puts it: 'The game has no other but an intrinsic meaning. That is why its rules are imperative and absolute, beyond discussion' (2001: 7). Schechner maintains that there are forms of play which do not have rules and he includes fantasy (2002). I am unconvinced that fantasizing is always play and that there is play without rules. I agree with Schechner that the rules of play can be broken but (along with Caillois) I would maintain that such actions in themselves are a means by which the rules are changed rather than negated as essential to play. From a baby playing with its parents' house keys (tossing, dropping, retrieving, sucking the keys) to spending an evening flirting in the local tavern, play has rules that focus the activity and provide much of its delight.
[37] This point is endorsed by Gadamer and Caillois as well as many other theorists.

3. Culture = a general process of social development; …
4. Culture = the meanings, values, ways of life (cultures) shared by particular nations, groups, classes, periods (following Herder).
5. Culture = the practices which produce meanings; signifying practices. (2008:38)

However as Williams writes,

> in general it is the range and overlap of meanings that is significant. The complex of senses indicates a complex argument about the relations between general human development and a particular way of life, and between both and the works and practices of art and intelligence. (1983:91)

Bourdieu's view of culture aligns closely with Williams', but there are two ways in which he adds to our understanding. The first is that he emphatically resists the 'reification' of the concept of culture. Rather, utilising the concept of habitus, he focuses upon culture as practices: practical ways in which we get along in the world. Swartz, pointing to Bourdieu's discontent with the word 'culture' itself, as being almost too inclusive to be useful – as bemoaned by Garuba and Raditlhalo - suggests that 'habitus can be understood as Bourdieu's attempt to write a theory of culture as practice' (1997:114). The second is that Bourdieu was constantly alert to the ways in which culture embodies power relations and that many of the contestations over culture and cultural production are struggles for power. Garuba and Raditlhalo in effect take up this issue in the South African context.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to engage too deeply with this debate. In developing a concept description of playing culture, I go with the connotations of culture covered in Williams' fourth and fifth categories, preferring, for its focus on practice, a notion of culture as denoting shared ways of doing. The way things get done becomes common custom within a community. This implies that we might draw upon past experiences and customs but we also mediate them by means of our present preferences and understandings - as Bourdieu explains in his theorisation of habitus. Hence within these ideas of culture there is an important communicative dimension (Sauter 2000:95-113).

What is playing culture?

What is implied in the more specific nomenclature 'playing culture' that is not already implied in the term 'culture'? Firstly, Sauter suggests that we bear in mind the '*hic et nunc'* aspect of playing that distinguishes playing culture from written culture. In other words, Playing culture demands presence, particularly of those who are enjoying the event – undertaking the playing if you like.

Secondly, Playing culture conceptualises the social sphere in which the playful aspect is commonly shared or understood and which comprises both an activity and a form of social intercourse. Examples of playing culture include recreational activities, social interactions that are not for work purposes, childrens' play, adult sports, entertainments, performing arts, gambling, festivals, the social aspects of religious, secular or cultural ceremonies (termed

'cultural performances' by Milton Singer (1959)) as well as rituals. It includes singing, dancing, storytelling, joking and generally having fun.

Thirdly, the modality of actions within this sphere are playful. Whilst there are those who make a livelihood from pursuing these types of activities, in and of themselves the *activities* are not instrumental for survival.

Fourthly, the rules or constraints which pertain in this sphere, and which Raymond Williams has developed for theatre as the ontology of 'conventions' (1977:173-9) are, on the whole, accepted and upheld by participants. For example, the protagonists in operas ordinarily sing to communicate with one another and that pleases (rather than perplexes) the audience.[38]

Finally, events in playing culture tend to hold meaning, significance or interest beyond the activity-in-itself of participating. For example, whilst I am a keen cyclist, I might enter and ride the annual Argus cycle race, not *only* because I enjoy cycling but also because I want to be part of such a massively popular event. I have a 'scenario' of meanings which cluster around the activity and add to its attraction.

In sum then, the concept of playing culture suggests a range of activities, which frequently but not always have a playful orientation, are largely voluntary, have identifiable boundaries of time and space, are generally social and communicative in nature, and which rest upon commonly held rules / customs / conventions and in which those participating or spectating are invested through interest, belief or imaginative engagement.

The reach of a playing culture

From the description which I have built thus far, it can be deduced that whilst playing cultures might be homologous globally, in terms of core characteristics, each community or grouping will have its own playing culture. So the playing culture of an educare centre, the international Olympic Games and the Theatre du Soleil are homologous but profoundly distinct. It therefore also follows that the more heterogeneous the society, the more diverse the manifestations of the playing culture are likely to be, to the extent that even people living in the same city can not necessarily recognise the playful within the practices of their neighbours. Cape Town is like this and misrecognition is part of what prompts the focus in this study on the playing culture of township theatre. The form of playing culture in each context will be shaped by that context and will be evident in its social interactions, cultural, religious, arts and sports practices.

When are events, which are part of playing culture, theatrical events?

Gadamer argues that play only represents itself. Thus it can be considered a wholly representational mode of being. He writes:

> One can say that to perform a task successfully "represents it". One can say this all the more when it is a question of a game, for here the fulfilment of the task does not point to any purposive context. Play is really limited to representing itself. (1979:97)

[38] In her article 'The theatricality of the Verona Opera Festival', Linda Streit beautifully unpacks the multiple layers of convention, custom and cultural distinction at play during this festival (2007).

Gavin Bolton cites an intriguing instance to which Vygotsky refers in which a seven-year old girl was overheard saying to her sister 'Let's play sisters' (in Bolton 1979:22). Since they are sisters, the inclination to 'play sisters' implies that they are opting to represent (in Gadamer's terms) their 'sisterliness' over whatever it is that they habitually do together (1979:22).

Gadamer explicates that the playful sphere includes the players who might be playing for their own satisfaction alone. As he writes: 'All representation is potentially representative for someone. That this possibility is intended is the characteristic feature of the playful nature of art' (1979:97). But if the play includes playing for others, then, as he puts it, 'openness towards the spectator is part of the closedness of the play' (1979:98). Thus, in Gadamer's reasoning, the question of spectatoring, or audiencing, becomes part of his conceptualisation of the arts as playful. He cites the instance of chamber musicians who play as a quartet to make music in the first instance simply for themselves, but they are then both players and audience – whether or not they have other listeners. 'Artistic presentation, by its nature, exists for someone, even if there is no one there who listens or watches only' (1979:99). We see thus, how the notion of (re)presenting or performing for an audience, whether officially so designated or not, is central to Gadamer's understanding of play.

This is the point at which this study focuses upon the relations between concepts of performance: theatrical events and playing culture. With the possibility of being watched, which is a common but not an essential feature of playing culture, a theatrical or performance orientation is foregrounded within playing culture. Indeed most, if not all, activities encompassed by the concept of playing culture contain possibilities for spectatoring.

Are all events which involve spectators theatrical events?

Not all events within playing culture that involve spectators are theatrical events. In order to be a theatrical event - indeed in order even to be a performance - the event must be so construed by all of those present, or at least by the spectators: it must be 'eventified' as such. Therefore, while theatrical events lie within the ambit of playing culture, they can only be deemed theatrical events if those present at such events deem them to be so. Sauter maintains that the spectators' 'buy-in' is integral to changing performative actions into theatrical events. This is vividly illustrated by reference to performance in oral cultures to which I shall turn in due course. If we accept that theatrical events fall within the domain of playing culture, it is nonetheless important to justify examining township theatre through the lens of playing culture.

What does the lens of playing culture contribute to this study?

All theatre draws on its local playing culture. Township theatre draws on a distinctive playing culture that infuses the townships and is readily discernible via this lens. The lens of playing culture thrusts the prolific performance-based repertoire within the theatrical playing culture to the forefront of our attention, not merely as a spectacle or novelty, which it might indeed be, but as a set of honed cultural practices which are part of township playing culture.

The inhabitants of Cape Town's townships are generally accustomed to communication by and through performance. Given the pervasive performatic repertoire available to them, and an environment which is characterised more by storytelling than by print, people readily draw on the performatic repertoire in social, religious or cultural contexts. They both enjoy its practice and it serves many useful purposes. For many families, the archive of material evidence of lineage, achievements and culture may be sparse. Possessing few photos, certificates of birth, marriage or family lineage, letters from deceased generations or written prescription for ways of going about certain important rites of passage, families rely upon non-archival methods of recall and transmission, such as performance. The social, philosophical, political and artistic usefulness of these performance-based practices have been extensively explored by scholars of South African oral literature and culture such as David Coplan (1994), Isabel Hofmeyr (1993), Harold Scheub (1996, 1977) and Ari Sitas (2004, 1990). I will make a detour into the field of studies in oral traditions and literatures. How questions of orality are understood affects our understanding of playing culture, particular in the context of Cape Town's townships.

Tiptoeing through the problematics of studies in oral traditions and literature

Studies in the field of oral literature and traditions in Africa, if nowhere near as prolific as those of written literature, are vibrant**,** in some instances making prodigious contributions to our understanding of oral performance and its contemporary socio-political and cultural location.[39] I have of necessity paid attention to this field of scholarship because theatre in the townships draws upon the poetics of orality and from local oral traditions. This last statement is easy enough to make but it is much harder to unpack for the sake of analyzing township theatre. Because the complexities of emphases and approaches and the challenge of orthodoxies in the academic field of orality studies surface in this enquiry, I shall outline the issues here.

Coming from a theatre studies orientation, I have several problems with scholarship in oral literature. In the first place, some (although not all) of the scholars succumb to the primacy of the written. They view oral literature from the point of view of conventional literary paradigms – albeit unselfconsciously - and thus contribute to reification or othering of 'the tradition'. Scheub (1977), Finnegan (1991), Okpewho (1992) and Hofmeyr (1993) all raise this problem.

Secondly, scholarship in African oral literature tends to be attracted to identifiable genres such as praise poetry and oral stories, perhaps because the latter's characteristics have already been documented. This points to a potential danger in recording performances and so rendering them similarly immutable. Rather performance can be continuously reinvented as Diana Taylor makes clear:

[39] Hofmeyr (1999, 1993), Scheub (1996), Gunner (1994) and Coplan (1994) have contributed most to my understanding.

> Performances always replicate themselves through their own structures and codes. …The process of selection, memorization, and transmission takes place within (and in turn helps constitute) specific systems of re-presentation. Multiple forms of embodied acts are always present, though in a constant state of againness. They reconstitute themselves, transmitting communal memories, histories, and values from one group / generation to the next. Embodied and performed acts generate, record and transmit knowledge. (2003:20-21)

Thirdly, with the notable exception of Hofmeyr, Scheub, Coplan and Sitas, oral literature analysis has tended to separate instances of oral performance and transmission from their performers and audiences and thus to diminish the reader's understanding of agency. Whereas traditions do not subsist without a community of participants. As Finnegan observes:

> In these recent approaches then, there is a turning away from a preoccupation with oral traditions / texts as 'things' to an interest in *the people* who produce, *record* and use these traditions, and in the circumstances in which they engage in these processes [emphasis in original]. (1991:2).

Finally, whilst a theatrical / performance vocabulary of description is continuously employed in the discourses of these scholars, in particular by Scheub; with the exception of Coplan (1985, 2007), their academic focus is not theatre but rather their interests are literary, mythological, historical, sociological, political, anthropological and psychological.

Whilst I too am interested in the sociological and political aspects of theatre, and am inspired by and considerably informed by the analysis of oral traditions of performance that have been pursued throughout the 20th century – in particular those of Scheub (to which I shall return in Chapter 5) - I will not study theatre in the townships within this intellectual paradigm. I prefer to draw upon Diana Taylor's notion of *archive and repertoire* (2003). Taylor addresses the question of orality and oral traditions but includes them within a broader compass more appropriate for theatre studies.

Taylor developed propositions about two key ways in which cultures and knowledge about cultures are transmitted, preserved, understood and practised. These are by means of archive and repertoire. In the archive, Taylor clusters all those records and artifacts (things) that endure, including testamentary documents, all forms of written record including literature, letters, poetry, court records, videos, maps, archeological remains and so on. The point about (and power within) the archive is that it sustains over time and space, and it divides knowledge from its authors. For these reasons (and others) Taylor argues, writing becomes legitimated as the ultimate source of knowledge. Writing comes to denote meaning itself to the extent that, only if something is written down does it take on meaning.

The repertoire on the other hand, are all those embodied, practice-based processes whereby we express ourselves, transmit knowledge, perceptions, ideas and memories by means of storytelling (including oral historical narrative), poetry speaking, praising, singing, dancing, in fact all manner of performances, discussion, improvisation and so forth. Because the repertoire always involves agents in its transmission, it is in continual renewal and reformation

and is therefore unstable. It involves a social, communicative process in the here and now – it therefore does not sustain over time and space *unchanged*, but can be transmitted across time and space in ever-revised performances in a syncretic process of continual becoming.

Taylor maintains that it is invalid to assume that the repertoire is 'primordial' and 'comes before' the archive, or that the former is 'false' and the latter 'true'. Arising out of her own experience of identifying with a cultural minority - Latinas in the USA - Taylor further warns against the dangers of 'hegemonic spectatorship' in which the written and archival become conflated with the hegemonic, over against the anti-hegemonic influence of the repertoire (2003:234). The ineptness of postulating such a binary is examined by Hofmeyr as she explores the interface between orality and literacy in Makopeng (1993). Taylor points to the many ways in which:

> [t]he archive and the repertoire have always been important sources of information, both exceeding the limitations of the other, in literate and semi-literate societies. They usually work in tandem and they work alongside other systems of transmission – the digital and the visual, to name two. (2003:21)

In Cape Town's townships the performatic practices of the repertoire comprise an indispensable aspect of the local playing culture, enacted in homes, schools, churches, social gatherings, family celebrations, mourning and a variety of other social interactions. In this context then, Taylor's conceptual categorization of archive and repertoire illuminates our understanding of the playing culture of the townships and informs this study for several reasons.

In the first place it earmarks embodied performance – in the totality of its aspects – as the *a priori* feature of the repertoire rather than narrowing the focus down to the oral / aural. In the second place it allows this study the freedom to appreciate the distinctive contributions of, as well as the combinations and interplay between, archive and repertoire in performance practices. In the context of a theatre which does not vest in written text, the threat of the hegemony of writing must be seriously considered but that does not make the positing of a binary between the oral and the literate, as suggested by Walter Ong (1988), necessarily fruitful or appropriate. Rather, as Taylor points out, the visual and digital also need to be taken into account. Therefore, whilst drawing on scholars of African orality and literature, this study will adopt Taylor's lens of repertoire and archive within which to couch the divergence between embodied, social practices and archival remains.

In a nutshell, the intersection of oral and literary traditions has been formative for all South African performing arts, not least theatre. This interaction has been a site of ideological struggle, creative exploration and formation that in large part has generated the particular character of South African theatre.[40] My study assumes *a priori* that the theatre arts draw upon,

[40] Tensions between orality and literacy have been addressed in the scholarship dealing with the apartheid era theatre, perhaps most crucially in explicating the Worker's Theatre movement in Natal in the 1980s, the work of Junction Avenue Theatre Company and in Fleishman's dissertation on Workshop Theatre and his later articles on Phyisical Theatre. In part I of this review I chose to focus on Balme's 1999

contest and refashion oral, social, cultural, educational and theatrical practices so that the forms of theatre are continuously evolving and changing. Taking the view that there are no immutable traditions, only mutating practices shaped by the contexts of their enactment, I invoke Diana Taylor's notion of archive and repertoire as the means whereby to cluster sources of influence.

Playing culture and the performatic repertoire in the townships

Returning therefore to the domain of playing culture and applying the lens of playing culture to the township, one discerns that the practices of the performatic repertoire infuse social intercourse. Township residents not only relax by means of playing and performing, they utilise the performatic repertoire to evolve ways to embody history, ethical standpoints and social mores. By this means they memorise, communicate, rejuvenate and live their social codes of behaviour. In chapter 5 the material effects of a sophisticated and lively playing culture on township theatre will be examined. Part of playing culture is theatrical playing itself, so that is where we shall go at this point.

Theatrical Playing

TEWG conceptualises theatrical playing as the nucleus of the theatrical event. Performers and audience engage together in a playful relationship during which they generate and invest themselves in a symbolic or meta-world, at least for the duration of the performance. The performers are not only playing the play before the audience. Both parties are playing. Eversmann reminds us: 'it is important to realize that performers and spectators are in fact both doing things, that they are both contributing to the event in an active way – playing it in to existence as it were' (2004:134).

Within the aspect of theatrical playing, TEWG attempts to examine theatrical communication in order to analyse and elucidate the interaction between performance and audience. Sauter writes: 'The relationship between performers and spectators is mutual, both parties being aware of and being involved in the process of playing (2006:35). So Theatrical Event theory rejects communication models which posit an active transmitter - the actor - and a passive, powerless consumer - the audience - of an already packaged product - the message. It takes into consideration that performance analysis has paid exhaustive attention to the semiotics of actions on stage, communication studies has traced the transmission of 'messages' of all kinds, and reception studies has made strong, if sporadic, attempts to notice, document and understand audiences' responses (Eversmann 2004a). TEWG suggests that the nucleus of the theatrical event is theatrical communication between performance and spectators: what they communicate and receive from one another.

Whilst studies of theatrical communication between actor / performer, audience and character / 'figure' are important to theatre and performance studies in general, they do not

examination of syncretism and Hofmeyr's 1993 study because of its located nature, rather than revisit the apartheid era material.

comprise an essential part of my localized, sociologically and aesthetically orientated study. I therefore have elected not to engage with the domain of Theatrical Playing in this study. However TEWG has done considerable research within this domain on theories of reception and audiences. Following their lead, at this juncture I shall engage with questions about audiences, because audiences participate in playing culture. Audiences are also essential to performance and reception that I do examine within the domain of contextual theatricality.

Conceptualising audiences

What part do audiences play in theatrical events? This question can only be answered by determining what an audience is and how we understand what they are doing, in other words what practices they are participating in. Karin Barber (1997) maintains that they are not necessarily doing the same things in diverse contexts. In 'Preliminary Notes on Audiences in Africa', she argues that audiences are created by their time and context. She advocates looking beyond the most apparent categories to the particulars of the case. 'How people come together; how they relate to each other and to the spectacle or utterance they are attending to; what they consider themselves to be part of in doing so; how the spectacle/utterance addresses them: all these are historically and culturally specific and need to be empirically investigated' (1997:349).

Taking a historical view, Barber traces how the development of industrialization and a print culture in Europe fostered the notion of human interchangeability and the principle of equivalence. But Barber argues that colonisation only partially achieved massification of the audience in Africa.

> The disciplines of equivalence were imported in the forms of church, school, army and organized sport, but they did not function as the imaginary of a population whose labour rendered them in principle equivalent to each other. Rather, they were overlaid upon a deeply heterogeneous mass, united and divided by religion, occupation, language, family, place of origin and degree of education, and often by popular philosophies of irreducible human difference (1997:350)

So Barber cites many instances where local performers or audiences adapt imported or imposed forms to serve their particular needs and make meanings in ways which suit their agendas. Performances 'in the act of addressing audiences, constitute those audiences as a particular form of collectivity' (1997:353-4). But at the same time, audiences shape the meaning of a performance. By various acts of interpretation, by reading what is before them in diverse ways, they constitute a variety of processes of meaning-making and should not be deemed to be merely passive consumers.

John Fiske takes up this cause on behalf of cultural studies, whose task it is to imagine beyond the totalizing tendencies of political economy and ideology theory. He maintains that cultural studies 'does not assume that what is statistically most normal is therefore most significant' (1998:374). He conceives of 'audiencing' as the practice of actively engaging with spectating and, like Barber, argues that meaning is constructed by audience members in the act of audiencing. He writes:

> Audiencing is a concept that can exist only in a critical theory aimed exclusively at exposing the structural working of capitalism. Audiencing understands consumption, … to be *an act of micro-level clandestine production, not of reproduction.* This clandestine production is a practice: It produces meanings not objects (whether a commodity or a text); *it exists as a process rather than a product,* and can thus escape our notice. Its low visibility, however, should not be translated into low significance [emphasis added]. (1998:377)

Meaning is not made by the director and actors alone. It is only fully achieved by means of the audience's perceptions. In Bourdieu's thinking, meaning is socially, culturally and structurally derived. Meaning is relative to the frames of knowledge, understanding and experience of all of those involved. Meaning is not absolute or intrinsic.

The audience's role in the production of meaning has been taken up repeatedly by TEWG. See Shani, Eversmann, Tulloch, Jackson & Lev-Aladgem, and Van Maanen, in Cremona et al (2004). Some members have espoused a Cultural Studies approach (Schoenmakers & Tulloch, 2004). Eversmann suggests that the interpretive activity of audience and performers is *playing.* He writes:

> [I]n perceiving, understanding and liking or disliking characters the audience has to imagine what it is like to confront or to be such a fictive person. In other words, one has to 'play along' with what happens on stage. And the same playfulness holds true for the relation between actor and audience. This is not only attested by such phrases as "the performer who is *playing* the audience" but also emerges in the fact that theatergoing in itself is a kind of social play with well-defined roles and behavioural norms. (2004a:133-4)

The domain of theatrical playing is only drawn into this study in so far as theatrical playing, and particularly audiencing, are important components of township playing culture and the field of theatre in the townships. To that extent the perceptions and experiences of audiences are dealt with within the domain of contextual theatricality that follows.

Contextual Theatricality

The term contextual theatricality conjoins 'context' and the 'theatrical' symbiotically and suggestively. The ways in which the term can be interpreted are many, a few of which are noted here. Contextual theatricality suggests that the specifics of actual contexts have a formative influence on the nature of theatre and on understandings of the theatrical within any specific context. The term also points to the ethos created by prevailing theatrical conventions, codes and practices – such as cultural policies, theatre buildings, theatrical traditions, educational institutions and infrastructural arrangements that shape activities within the field of theatre. Overall, contextual theatricality embraces a myriad of research areas at different removes from the actual act of performance, which is treated within the domain of theatrical playing as I explained above. Contextual theatricality could include aspects such as cultural legislation, educational resourcing, and media coverage. It could also deal with cultural and ideological

predispositions and how these are infused in the habitus of administrators, artists, technicians, and audience members that I shall be touching upon later in this study.

Perhaps the key achievement of the descriptor 'contextual theatricality' is that it points to the influence of the context on any and all forms of theatrical engagement. No essentialist understandings of theatre suffice. Studying theatre requires the interrogation of situations on the ground, rather than assuming that their logic of practice is inevitable or immutable.

Van Maanen's theatrical frames and systems

This project is a situated study, fundamentally taking place and time into the account, rather than a study vesting conceptually in 'post-*anti*-apartheid' (Kruger 1999:191) or post-colonial syncretism (Balme 1999). I am therefore very concerned with how things actually happen in the field of theatre in Cape Town, particularly for township practitioners and audiences. So I have opted for an account of local theatre as a working (or not) system as developed by Hans Van Maanen (2004) of TEWG. However the way things happen is not only systemic, it is also dependent upon who holds sway and whose artworks are deemed worthy of support, so I also conceptualise the way things happen as a *field* in Bourdieuan terms, in which agents dispute over various kinds of capital (with Wacquant 1992). In other words, my conceptual lens infuses the empirical with critical theory to take account of both the material and symbolic influences on how theatre 'works' in Cape Town. Initially I shall distinguish between these two types of accounts for the purposes of clarity and then fuse them together. I shall begin with Van Maanen.

Van Maanen pictures the theatrical event as being located within a series of frames 'defined as contexts' which encompass one another. Firstly, the performance itself, Van Maanen suggests, takes place in the *communicative frame* (2004a:243).[41] Then secondly the *organisational frame* organises when the event will happen in space and time – in other words where and when the performance takes place (2004a:244). Thirdly, the *institutional frame* refers to 'the theatre world as a whole, understood as a historically developed system of production, distribution and reception in a certain cultural entity, that frames all sorts of theatrical events' (2004a:245). Fourth and finally, we need to consider the *societal frame*: 'the constellation of different, but mutually-linked societal subsystems: the social, educational, aesthetic and media worlds, the world of law and the political, economic and technological worlds' that I have already introduced under cultural context (2004a:246). All three of these outer frames: (ii) how venue hosts organise performers and audiences into theatrical events, (iii) how the theatre system works in its particular context and (iv) the national dispensation for the arts: materially affect (i) performances.[42]

But, as Sauter puts it: 'The field [of theatre] has, however, both its virtual and its concrete aspects. Virtual it is in the sense that much of the competition is a relatively abstract power struggle. A managing director possibly holds real power – to hire actors, to produce plays

[41] TEWG denotes this frame as the domain of theatrical playing.
[42] See also Sauter, 2006:59-83.

– whereas a theatre critic only can write in a newspaper' (2006:71-2). And Van Maanen alludes to field struggles between agents in the system, invoking Bourdieu, whose concepts of *field* and *capital* are a lens through which the struggles for power and influence in the field of theatre come into focus. While 'field' can be loosely equated with the full set of Van Maanen's frames, the notion of capital opens up disputation within the field. Field displays structure, while capital signals agency (and its constraints).

Bourdieu's concepts of field and capital

In *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) Bourdieu analyses how institutions and ideologies have as much to do with legitimating art as the works themselves. In making this argument, he harnesses the notions of field and capital. Bourdieu delineates field thus:

> Much like the intellectual, economic, political and aesthetic "life-orders" into which social life partitions itself under modern capitalism, each field prescribes its particular values and possesses its own regulative principles. These principles delimit a socially structured space in which agents struggle, depending on the position they occupy in that space, either to change or preserve its boundaries and form. (1992:17)

Sauter describes field somewhat more tersely: 'A field is a virtual arena, a social precinct, occupied by agents, who have some important aspect of their lives in common, fighting each other and competing for dominant positions' (2006:70).

Each field possesses its own network of attractive and repelling forces, – like a magnet – its own 'structure of probabilities – of rewards, gains, profits or sanctions' (Bourdieu 1992:18), which are in continual contestation to establish the capital relevant to a particular field. Indeed the purpose of denoting a field is precisely in order to identify a space in which the customary markers of productivity and capital are replaced by that which is deemed valuable in the field in question. If one considers the field of theatre in Cape Town for a moment, the 'structure of probabilities' would determine the likelihood of having your play staged in a theatre or of being employed as an actor. A sanction would be having the incorrect mother tongue or skin colour for the needs of a particular production or director. The rewards (apart from financial rewards) might include having your play or performance viewed by more theatre producers and receiving offers to have your work staged in a much larger theatre or to perform in another show; or receiving positive reviews in newspapers so that your work is talked about and your name spread.

Bourdieu proposes that in any field, agents are engaged in struggles to accrue *capital*. Browitt explains. 'Bourdieu expands Marx's idea of "economic capital" to encompass all forms of power that enable individuals, groups or classes to cement or reproduce their position in the social hierarchy' (2004:2). The different kinds of capital are 'classificatory categories of understanding and social differentiation at the service of legitimation, which represent forms of power and domination' (Browitt 2004:2). There are many kinds of capital. There is cultural capital which, in the case of theatre would refer to your theatrical skills, knowledge or talents.

Social capital has to do with the extent of one's network of social influence because, as the saying goes, 'it is not *what* you know but *who* you know'. Economic capital can be understood as financial resources or the influence to access resources. Symbolic capital has to do with recognition by others and the prestige, power and influence possibly accruing from thence. All forms of capital are imbued with some form of power or imply a closer or more distant relationship with the meta-field of power that subsumes and overarches all other fields. With 'field', Bourdieu has developed a conceptual metaphor that allows us to analyse and understand the interplay of forces in pursuit of capital within the practices and institutions governing cultural production, and in my case, theatrical production in South Africa.[43]

Going into slightly greater detail, according to Bourdieu fields are characterized in three crucial ways that are all evident in the field of theatre in Cape Town. First, there is always a struggle for dominance over the field. Secondly, the hierarchies of power and influence within the field are particular to the field which is thus differentiated from the society within which it is located. Thirdly, whilst the field interacts with its surroundings, it follows its own laws and is somewhat autonomous.

One further important point that Bourdieu makes is that although fields strive for autonomy, the field of cultural production is generally located in a dominated position *within the dominant field of power,* by which he infers state power and financial influence (1993). Explicating the interdependence of fields, Sauter writes:

> A field needs to be autonomous, i.e. it must operate independently from other fields, although it is possible to function as a 'sub-field' within another field. The cultural field, itself a part of public life, consists of a number of autonomous fields such as theatre, literature, arts and museums …. Together, the arts compete with non-artistic fields of culture and culture competes with other areas of public life such as the military, educational, juridical, economic etc. fields. Although Bourdieu underlines the autonomy of a field, it seems obvious that a number of dependencies to surrounding, superior as well as subordinate fields, must be accounted for. (2006:71)

To sum up this proposition: the arts in general, and for our purposes here theatre, carry significant cultural and symbolic capital within the broader field of political and economic power, but are in a *dominated* position in those fields.[44] Because the value of the field is largely measured by its autonomy, the field of theatre, for example, despite its location within the dominant field of power, must define the terms of its own value. Indeed it may even accrue capital or notoriety by upsetting or interrogating the values of the dominant culture. An excellent example of this principle at work in actuality is South Africa's theatre of resistance and protest during the apartheid era.

[43] This is not to say that Bourdieu applies field only to the concept of cultural production. On the contrary, he has applied it to education, marriage, law, cooking and of course sports.
[44] The sponsorship of the National Festival of the Arts and other arts initiatives by the country's major financial institutions is a case in point. Financial institutions, wielding considerable economic power nationally, want to be associated with the arts which they patronize.

Applying the concept of field to theatre

Shevtsova applies Bourdieu's concept of field specifically to theatre practice, and so succinctly summarises the way he couples symbolic and material influences that I shall take the liberty of quoting her at some length.

> Readers of Bourdieu will remember how, in order to destroy the binary opposition between art and society, he uses his theory of fields of production, arguing that artists are not fired by creative impulses *sui generis*, but owe what makes their art to the concrete possibilities available to them in their artistic field; and a given artistic field is defined by the competition between its players in conditions fraught not with high-flying imaginings about 'art' but with mundane obstacles. Among these are financial constraints and the demands of the marketplace as well as the imperative to be seen, distributed, accepted, and legitimated by the mechanisms of the field.
>
> Bourdieu's selected fields of study are painting, photography, and literature, and he virtually ignores theatre; but these mechanisms for the theatre would include the grants you manage to get, where you perform – venue as a measure of success – the number and kind of spectators attending, the length of your run, the reviews you receive, the spin-off effects for future jobs, renewed or new sponsorship, and so on: all of it socializing your work whether you will or no (2003:5).

Implicit in Shevtsova's delineation of the field of theatre is its competitive nature, as players in the field vie for cultural, economic and most especially for symbolic capital at all levels of the system. They may openly compete but more frequently they may quietly align themselves with those entities and ideologies which will procure them the gains they most desire such as access to state funding, or rent reduction on a playhouse, or media adulation.

In Bourdieu's analysis, symbolic capital is associated with prestige and recognition in the field of cultural production. At the end of the day such symbolic capital can be transformed into economic power or political leverage. Johnson identifies cultural capital as concerning 'forms of cultural knowledge, competences or dispositions…. a cognitive acquisition which equips the social agent with … competence in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artefacts' (1993:7). What is significant is that all these various forms of capital, as with economic capital, are not equally distributed across the different classes or sectors of society, not least in the field of cultural production. Moreover, some of the contestations in the field arise from disequilibriums arising out of differences in the habitus of players who have been schooled or nurtured in different theatrical traditions and circumstances that I shall deal with in Chapter 8.

Applying Van Maanen's system to the field of theatre in the townships

Van Maanen suggests that the institutional context of theatre essentially comprises a triad of processes, namely production, distribution and reception. First, *production* has to do with the making of works of theatre, which in the case of township theatre is initiated privately rather than by professional managements or production houses. Secondly, *distribution* has to do with bringing theatre productions to their audiences and eventifying them by means of the processes of hosting, programming and marketing. This is where township practitioners who seek

performance opportunities are dependent upon larger institutions, outside funding and the local festival circuit. Thirdly, *reception* is when the production is actually enjoyed by the audience, transforming it into a theatrical event. The way in which a play is received by its audience will be greatly affected by the local playing culture which somewhat shapes the audience's expectations and reasons that they attend the performance in the first place.

Inspite of the fact that strategies for eventification straddle all three aspects of the system, conceptualising the theatrical system of the townships within this tripartite scheme is apt in this study because the three phases are quite distinct. Having different purposes, embracing distinctive sets of practices and organised along different lines, they are also committed to different stakes, require and pursue different capitals with divergent strategic and competitive orientations, and demand different resources and dispositions from agents.

The focus within contextual theatricality of this enquiry

Within the domain of contextual theatricality I shall consider theatre in Cape Town as a field, within which theatre in the townships is a distinct sub-field. Drawing upon Van Maanen's notion of frames as well as the domains identified by theatrical event theory, I shall begin my study with the assumption that the field of theatre in Cape Town is affected by national and provincial cultural policies and infrastructure. The institutional context is the locus of interlocking practices of production, distribution and reception which are at the mercy of public and private interests, abilities and resources, to be found within or sourced from without the field. I shall deal with the production practices of township theatre groups as a discrete area for investigation in Chapter 6. Drawing upon understandings of township experience and habitus, township playing culture, and township play-making practices already analysed, selected plays are examined in Chapter 7. Relations between the plays that are made and the practices and circumstances of their making will focus the account. Finally questions of eventification, of distribution and reception, are taken up in Chapter 8 that investigates the institutional and organizational frames affecting theatre from the townships.

Conclusion

Noting the overarching influence which the apartheid / colonial / imperial experience of subjection has had on South African theatre, Part I of this chapter surveyed literature on Southern African theatre studies with particular reference to accounts located *post* 1990. The primary task was to identify and evaluate the epistemological approaches and methods used by scholars making sustained studies of aspects of South African theatre relevant to this one, so as to locate this study in relation to prior conversations. The secondary task was to trace the work of more recent scholarship that focuses on practices as research and practices of performance, so as to locate the selected focus on practices in this study within cognate studies. The final task was to attend to the deafening silence with respect to theatre emerging from the townships post 1990.

In Part II of this chapter a conceptual framework for this enquiry has been developed, drawing on Theatrical Event theory and Bourdieu's theory of practice. I have elucidated the four domains embraced by Theatrical Event theory and Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital. These are the key conceptual tools that will facilitate an examination of the intersection of contexts, culture, theatricality, play and power.

The next question to be addressed is how I have undertaken this research enquiry, which is dealt with in the following chapter on research design.

Figure 2. DIAGRAM OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN, DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL DOMAINS one	CULTURAL CONTEXT	PLAYING CULTURE	CONTEXTUAL THEATRICALITY View this domain as a **system,** at levels of cultural policies, institutions, and organisations, of **production,** reception and **distribution.** There are FOUR foci:				THEATR-ICAL PLAYING
EMPIRICAL FOCUS: two	Townships	Local Playing culture	Production: organisation of groups *(A)*	Production: play-making practices *(B)*	Production: two specific examples *(C)*	Distribution *(D)*	Theatrical Communication *This domain examines communica-tion between performers. play characters & audiences. This is too close a focus for this study.*
EMPIRICAL PURPOSES To determine: three	Influence of the townships on the theatre-makers.	Effects of the performatic repertoire of local playing culture on theatre-making practices	Organising principles of township theatre groups	Character of these practices	Interplay between leadership style of group and their of play-making practices *(A & B)*	Effects of cultural policies & institutional context on distribution for township groups	
CONCEPTUAL PURPOSE four	Examine and elucidate the **relations between** all of the above empirical foci. Find a way of describing **the gestalt** which makes meaning of the whole and informs the constituent parts.						
EMPIRICAL INCIDENCES – As evident in: five	Performances, Interviews with theatre-makers, Focus group audience interviews, Symposium, Experience of Townships.	Performances, Focus group audience interviews, Symposium, Interviews with theatre-makers.	Symposium, Interviews with theatre-makers, Focus group audience interviews.	Interviews with theatre-makers, Symposium, Focus group audience interviews, Performances.	Performances, Interviews with theatre-makers, Focus group audience interviews.	Interviews with Festival personnel, Symposium, Interviews with theatre-makers, Performances & foyer interactions, Focus group audience interviews.	
The empirical becomes DATA ie TEXTS: six	Video recordings and/or notes of performances. ----------→ Audio recordings, transcribed & translated of focus group audience interviews ----------→ Audio recordings, transcribed & where necessary translated of the symposium ----------→ Audio / video recording or / & notes of interviews with Theatre-makers ----------→ Notes of own & informer observations of townships.					Notes of interviews with festival personnel & of foyer interactions.	

Continued on next page

Figure 2 *continued from previous page*

ANALYTIC FRAMEWORKS seven	Construct the analytic framework by means of two key processes, used iteratively over and over. • Asserting relevances. • Immersion in the data, noticing both recurrences and gaps / absences.						
LANGUAGE OF DESCRIPTION eight	Township environment. Township habitus disposed to value collectives, order over disorder, accommodate change.	Playing culture fosters dispositions to: Immediacy, Patterning, Storytelling.	Entanglement of : Theatre experience, Drive to re-imagine, Informal theatre education, Leading & following, Teaching & learning.	3 aspects to theatre-making practices: Improvisation, Structuring, Skills Burnishing.		Dominant sub-field of CT theatre, Dominated sub-field of township theatre. Cultural, symbolic capital, Township theatre & town theatre habitus. Distribution by means of festivals	
TESTING THE ANALYTIC FRAME EXAMPLE ANALYSES nine		Reading the context in the text: Examining influence of township habitus and dispositions of playing culture in '*Mzantsi'.*			Reading the context in the text: Finding township habitus, and dispositions of playing culture & *A* & *B (above)* in *C.*		

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

How to read this chapter

A study that attempts to investigate the sociology as well as the poetics of theatre in the township and relate each to the other is attempting a lot. There is a degree of complexity to my research design which perhaps makes it hard to grasp and retain a clear picture of, in one's mind. For this reason, on the previous page is a diagram of the design: Figure 2. It might assist the reader to follow the steps of my design. In what follows, I shall signal reference to the diagram *[figure 2]* by putting notes to the reader *[in italics]* like stage directions.

Motivation and intentions for the study.

Chapter 1 iterates the problems that motivated this study. Theatre from Cape Town's townships is prolifically practised in a very distinctive manner. Yet it is either deemed to be, or actually is, invisible and / or unintelligible to the academy. I wanted to render it intelligible and visible to the academic community.

I decided that township theatre needs to be considered in relation to the environment in which it is generated, so I resolved to undertake a study that considered the whole – the gestalt. But because it is in fact a practice dispersed in time and space - over many townships and producing theatre festivals - I selected a 'local', located orientation.

My purpose was to elucidate township theatre's connections to its locality and local culture, its particular organizational and aesthetic character, its idiosyncrasies and performatic strengths, its concerns, and its struggle for distinction within the field of theatre in Cape Town. So my concerns are sociological, aesthetic and political, in so far as my intention is to shed light on a practice which is too often marginalized or ignored.

Conceptualisation

I selected Theatrical Event theory as my overarching conceptual framework because of its integration of sociology, cultural studies, theatre and performance studies. This facilitates examining theatre not only in theatrical or ideological terms, but also in material and sociological terms.

Impelled by my political intention to interrogate the outsider status of theatre from the townships, I resolved to infuse Theatrical Event theory with the practice theory of Pierre Bourdieu. His concepts of field, capital and habitus facilitate conceptual engagement with struggles over power and status which pervade the field of theatre in Cape Town. The concept of habitus is also an extraordinarily adept conceptual tool with which to interrogate questions of theatrical style, thematic and cultural proclivities and issues of taste on the one hand, and the

multiple activities of township youth who make, manage, produce and perform their works of theatre on the other.

Theatrical Event theory favours examining theatre as it occurs – in theatrical events – rather than by means of reified records such as play texts. Practice theory is obviously orientated to that which occurs – to practices – so these two theoretical approaches support and inform each other. This is not to say that they always congruent. For instance they conceive of time and duration differently. In theatrical events, time is manipulated to achieve eventification. During a theatrical event the performance itself is eventified by operating at a different pace and according to different determinants than everyday life. The rhythms and dispositions of everyday practices are propelled into high gear for the purposes of performing and audiencing. On the other hand Bourdieu's theory of practice emphasizes the ongoing, recurrent rhythm of oft-repeated actions, sayings and customs, located in the rhythms of everyday life and living. Differences notwithstanding, there are far more reasons to inform Theatrical Event theory with Bourdieu's theory of practice than not to do so.

Conceptual organisation

The focus of my study locates in three out of four of the Theatrical Event theories domains. *[See the top line of figure 2: line 1.]* The fourth domain, theatrical playing, is largely concerned with investigating theatrical communication between actor, character and audience within the theatrical event. It is too refined a focus for this study. In so far as I was interested in the practice of township audiencing, it falls within my investigation of township playing culture.

I identified that my empirical foci were as follows. *[See figure 2, line two]*

- Within the domain of cultural context the township itself is the overridingly important determinant.
- Within playing culture my empirical focus is on the local theatrical playing culture.
- Within the domain of contextual theatricality, I determined to examine the system of production, reception and distribution as it pertains to township theatre-makers. For analytic purposes, this generated four empirical foci: *(A)* the organisation of township theatre groups, *(B)* their theatre-making practices, *(C)* specific examples of plays, made by specific groupings, and *(D)* how township theatre reaches an audience; i.e. the process of distribution.

Purposes

My empirical purposes *[Figure 2, line three]* are to determine:

- The nature and extent of the influence that living in the townships exerts on the theatre-makers.
- The effects of the performatic repertoire of the local playing culture on theatre making practices.
- The organising principles of township theatre groups.

- The character of theatre-making practices.
- Correlations between leadership, directorial approaches and the playmaking practices evident in two specific examples of theatre-making.
- The effects of cultural policies and institutional arrangements of theatre in Cape Town on the distribution of plays emerging from township theatre groups.

Beyond these empirical purposes, the intention is to develop not only a series of 'snapshots' but an elucidatory account of *the relations between* the township environment, the local playing culture and the range of practices of production, distribution and reception engaged by township theatre-makers *[figure 2, line four]*. Such an account demands careful conceptualisation.

Conceptual framework *[Figure 2, line one]*.

Theatrical event theory, infused by Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and habitus, provide the means to investigate and describe the 'bundles of relations' (Wacquant 1992:16) which pertain in township theatre.

In the attempt to explain reflexive sociology Bourdieu wrote: *'... the real is the relational*: what exist in the social world are relations – not interactions between agents or intersubjective ties between individuals, but objective relations which "exist independently of individual consciousness and will" as Marx said' (1992:97).

Drawing on Van Maanen's notion of the several contexts which frame any theatrical event (explained in chapter 2), my study conceptualizes the fields of power and theatre as set out in the diagram overleaf.

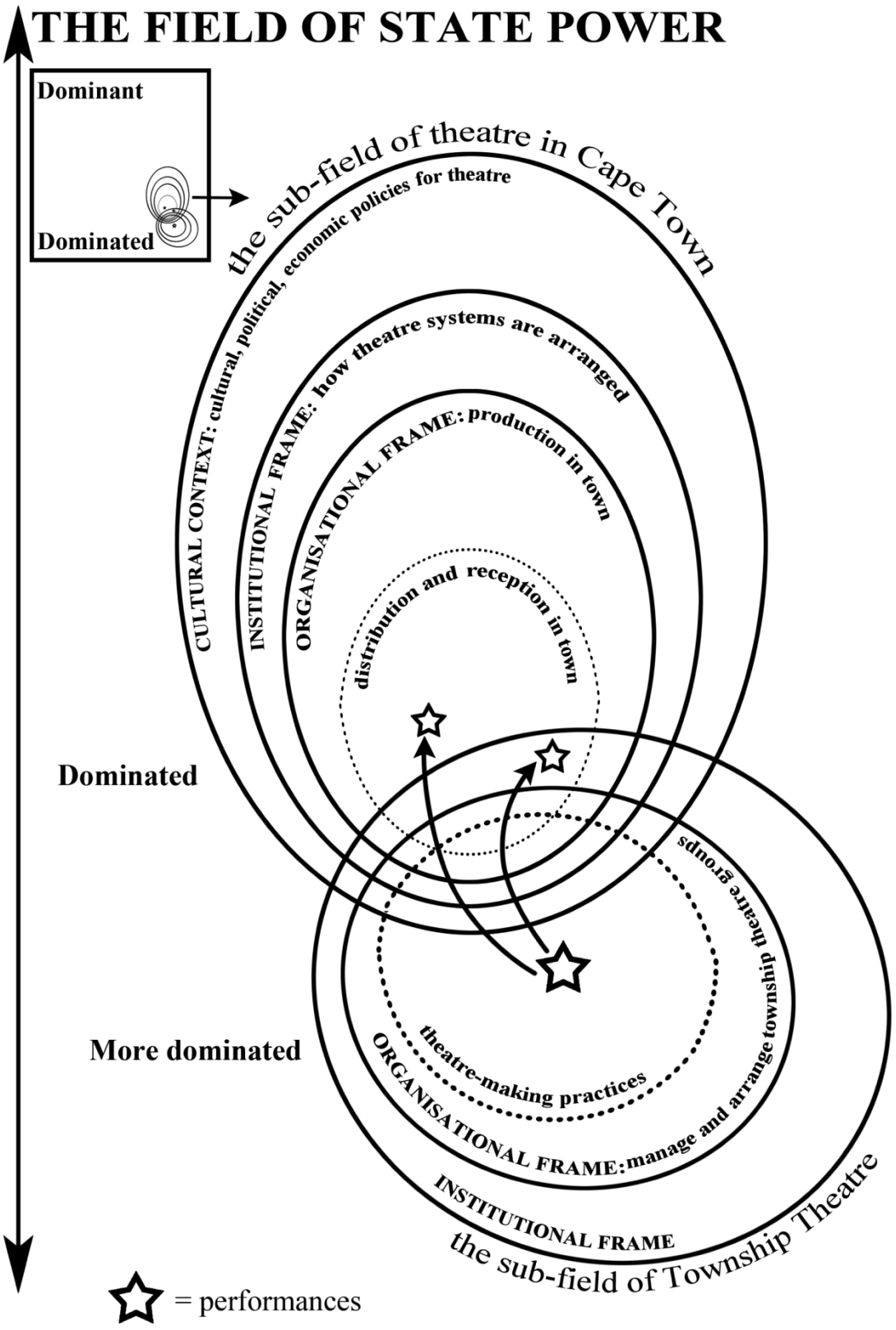

Figure 3. The sub-field of township theatre, positioned in the fields of theatre and power

Explanation of Figure 3

As Bourdieu suggests, I propose that the field of theatre in Cape Town is located in a dominated position within the dominant field of state legal and fiscal authority, in other words, of power. Cultural and economic policies and opportunities for theatre are the overarching cultural context in which the theatre system functions. Within that, the institutional frame determines overall how the system of production, distribution and reception for theatre is managed. Within this institutional framework, the organizational frame determines who, how, where and when performances will take place: how production houses and theatre managements arrange performances. This, overall, is how the field of theatre in Cape Town is set up: in a series of nested frames, or contexts.

In my conceptualization, theatre from the townships does not fall neatly within this system. Township theatre rather comprises its own sub-field of theatre in Cape Town, only partially falling within the dominant field of power, and only occasionally a player in the cultural context of the city as a whole and its institutional frameworks for theatre, as I argue in chapter 8. Township theatre groups largely determine their own, particularized organisational strategies and tactics, determining their own, quite distinct organizational frame, explained in Chapter 6. But when distribution (the opportunity to perform plays for an audience) is not managed in the townships, then it happens in town. At this point the dominated sub-field of township theatre attempts to gain access to the dominant sub-field of town theatre, and the attempts are by no means easily achieved.

Figure 3 shows the series of partially-nested, and partially interacting contexts. It suggests 'bundles of relations' which *both occlude and necessitate* interaction between town and township. Designating these relationship bundles located in the various fields in which power is always the main stake, in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, makes it possible to unpack interactions between agents, organisations, activities and sometimes material entitities, enmeshed in the particular relationship bundles.

In order to understand how the theatre system works in actuality, I needed to bring the following empirical phenomena into view:

- aspects of township life that influence theatre,
- elements of township playing culture,
- organisational strategies within township theatre groups,
- elements of playmaking,
- elements of distribution for township productions,
- organisation and management styles of theatre festivals serving township plays.

Fieldwork & data gathering

At the beginning of this process I constrained the scope of the study by identifying selected townships in the vicinity of Cape Town, as I explained in Chapter 1. Between 2005 and 2009 I

set out to investigate the system of production, distribution and reception (as well as play themes) for theatre groups located chiefly in Khayelitsha, but also in Langa, Nyanga and Gugulethu. The theatre groups that are active in these townships comprise secondary school learners and out of school youth who join groups to learn about and make theatre, perform and watch others. Some of the more experienced and older practitioners also occasionally work outside the townships or within the townships in applied or income-producing theatre. The data which I gathered were records of:

- Performances
- Individual interviews with theatre-makers, performers and festival personnel
- Interviews with theatre groups
- Focus-group audience interviews with audience members who attended township performances
- A day-long symposium on township theatre conducted with township theatre-makers
- My observations and descriptions pertaining to all of the above contained in my notebooks.

All of this data is catalogued in Appendix A and apart from my notebooks is discussed below.[45]

Performances *[Figure 2, line five]*

All of the plays to which I refer in this study – forty odd - were initially viewed in performance at a festival – either in Khayelitsha or in a town theatre.[46] Attending the performance involved viewing the play, sometimes recording it on video, making notes and having an interpreter translate for me where necessary. It was also an opportunity to study the audience and audiencing practices. Each occasion of performance is layered in many ways. Distinctive in its eventification as well as in play content, the performance also produces 'social vibrations or oscillations within a specific community' that continue to reverberate thereafter (Hauptfleish 2007:259). So how was the occasion of performance handled by performers, audiences and host management? What characterised the atmosphere? How did the venue lend itself to performance? What comments came to my ears inadvertently? If my research assistants were with me, what was their experience? Sometimes I had the opportunity to talk with audience members at the event, performers from the play, performers in other groups who were in the audience, as well as to festival personnel.

Cataloguing performances *[Figure 2, line six]*

The performances are catalogued in Appendix A. This elucidates which groups developed plays for performances where and when. Sometimes titles are not attributed to plays that are identified

[45] My 23 notebooks have been an indispensable source of contextual information and cross reference when revisiting video or audio recordings of performances and interviews. Frequently what I selected to record in my notebooks is different from what was recorded on video.

[46] I write 'forty odd' because the number depends upon what you count. I saw a lot more than forty performances, but not all were works from the townships I had selected for this study, and I saw some plays more than once. The relevant plays are all listed in Appendix A.

by the groups which made them, and following the performance I have been unable to ascertain their titles. But in this study, simply citing a play by reference to the group and the year gives the reader no inkling of what the play was about. So I have taken the liberty of ascribing titles that indicate the subject matter of such plays. Such 'Titles' are not italicized, but are in inverted commas, whereas all titled plays are in italics.

In Appendix A festivals in Khayelitsha and Cape Town are separately listed. By perusing the list of Festivals and noting the producing groups at each, it is possible to track the performances offered by any particular group over several years. My citations in Appendix A vary in style according to how Festival organisations have chosen to present the plays in their programmes. Sometimes the plays are named and not the group. Sometimes I have information about groups that were producing, which was distributed by the festival management to the media but not included on the official programme. I have included this information in Appendix A because of my interest in theatre-making as a group pursuit.

Interviews *[Figure 2, line five]*

Interviewing festival personnel, directors or performers in one-on-one interviews, some theatre groups as well as audiences at the Ikhwezi Festival in focus group interviews, served a range of purposes.

Interviews with theatre-makers and festival personnel elicited information. When the interviews ventured into the tricky business of probing motivations, beliefs and theatre-making ideologies, the interviewees were precisely informed of my purposes. They gave their permission to be quoted. The interviews were carefully structured and sufficient time was spent in the interview process so that the interviewee was able to 'get into her/his stride' and not merely tell me what s/he might imagine I wished to hear.

Bourdieu's comments about the difficulties of harnessing 'tales from the field' are excellent guidelines to follow in this regard. He warns that interview subjects logically leave out everything which, in their view, literally 'goes without saying' (1977:18). He warns that 'learned questioning' may draw attention to 'the most remarkable moves' rather than to the 'principle from which these moves are generated' (1977:19). He warns that developing rubrics to account for practices might conceal rather than reveal the logic of practical mastery actually at work because 'practical mastery' is 'a mode of practical knowledge *not* comprising knowledge of its own principles' (1977:19).

Focus group audience interviews *[Figure 2, line five]*

The theatrical event comes into being because there are performers and audience present who together conjure the event into existence. The more I saw plays and observed audiences, the more I wanted to probe audience perceptions of the theatrical events of which they were a part, the terms in which they understood and appreciated the play, and how they perceived the

organisation of the performance and the venue in which it was housed. So at the 2007 Ikhwezi Festival I undertook research into audience responses.

Inspired by Sauter's model for focus group audience interviews that he dubbed 'theatre talks' (2000, 2006), twenty-one audience interviews were conducted. These were recorded, translated and transcribed and have provided evidence of their responses to plays, the themes explored therein, their participation in playing culture and theatrical communication and the institutional and organisational contexts of theatrical production *[Figure 2, line six]*.

The process worked as follows. After performances of plays my research assistants corralled between two and ten audience members, obtained their permission to interview, and then generated discussion around the play the focus group had just seen.

The number of focus group interviews we could conduct was confined to occasions when a township audience watched a play made in the townships.[47] The lead time to set up group interviews is only available in an institutional context such as the annual Ikhwezi Festival, because it is almost impossible to anticipate when performances will occur in the townships. Even at the Ikhwezi Festival it was still a case of striking while the iron is hot because there were practical impediments to conducting interviews. The Ikhwezi Festival stages between two and five shows per day for two weeks. The schedule changes regularly (usually daily during the festival) as theatre groups / performances are shuffled, schools arrive late (or not at all), and performances start early or late and / or extend beyond their allotted time or are cancelled. Not all the audiences (including school groups) are from the townships. My research assistants and I also had limited availability. When audiences involve school groupings, permission to interview is first obtained from the teacher in charge, then a group of willing learners identified and taken to a quieter corner of the theatre foyer. Their consent to be interviewed is recorded on audiotape. Only then can the 'conversation' begin. The situation for our interviews was thus unstable, precarious and easily interrupted by festival or teaching personnel, or by the arrival of the school bus which took the learners away. During weekend and evening performances we had to rely on the good will of the extant audience to engage in conversation and could only sustain as long as those participating were willing to linger. This combination of circumstances meant that it was inadvisable to earmark certain productions for interviewing and avoid others. Rather we engaged with a group whenever my research assistants, an audience, time and a quiet enough space were available.[48]

[47] From my fieldwork experience, approximately 80% of audiences who view township theatre are from the townships. However at the Ikhwezi Festival it was pleasing to see that occasionally schools not from the townships booked to visit the festival. Since the focus of my study was township theatre and its 'own' audience, the latter were the audiences with which I wished to conduct focus group interviews.

[48] Apart from Ikhezi Festival 2007, we also interviewed at the Cape Town Festival performance of *Old Brown Joe* in 2007 and at the Magnet Theatre Community Groups Intervention in Khayelitsha in November 2007. At the *Old Brown Joe* performance we achieved a thirty-six minute group interview which was most helpful. At the Magnet Showcase the music over the loudspeakers made anything but the shortest interchanges between performances impossible.

Furthermore, in a precarious situation where the interviewees may be standing, the interviewer has to arouse a response from the interviewees as swiftly as possible. The intention is that open-ended questions should foster a wide range of responses and in many cases it worked just like this and the discussion was lively and engaged. However when the interviewer and group failed to achieve rapport, study of the transcripts would suggest that in such cases the interview questions were leading.

Nineteen focus group interviews were conducted by three research assistants who also translated and transcribed the interviews of each other.[49] In all, the focus group interviews were a flawed and 'blunt' instrument. Nevertheless they provide crucial evidence of audience reception and perceptions.

Symposium on theatre in the townships *[Figure 2, line five]*

In June 2008 my fieldwork was all but done but a crucial lacuna became evident. Until that point I had not really consulted the available cultural capital in the sub-field of township theatre. I was conscious of the shortcomings of one-on-one interviews and there were no written sources to consult. The best solution appeared to be to convene an occasion at which those leading the sub-field of township theatre could discuss with other players in their sub-field their motivations, challenges, problems and practices.

So we met for a whole day of talking, with tea and lunch to loosen our tongues. The symposium afforded me the opportunity to interrogate relations between the circumstances of township living, theatre-making practices and the vision of theatre-makers for their work. I chaired the debate but the discussion was largely amongst the theatre-makers themselves who vied with one another for the chance to speak. We discussed connections and interfaces between cultural practices, social mores and theatre-making. We discussed the purposes, values and benefits of theatre education and the challenges of leading groups. We interrogated resource constraints, the relations between town and township theatre and the challenges of getting works staged. The symposium was recorded and transcribed *[Figure 2, line six]*. Hereinafter all references to the transcription are cited as 'Symposium 2008'.

Editing and transcribing from audio and video recordings *[Figure 2, line six]*

In citing from transcripts, I have been guided by Isabel Hofmeyr. Citing Bauman (1986: ix), she writes:

> If one's concern is with the spoken word, then … one has to exercise great caution in the way these words are represented in writing. However, in undertaking this task, one is drawn in two directions: either to facilitate reading or to reproduce the interview as accurately as possible, something that often involves, as Bauman says, "loading down the printed text with so much formal furniture that it is inaccessible to the reader". (1993: xi)

[49] Occasionally I had two assistants translate-transcribe the same interview and, since I don't speak Xhosa, comparing two transcriptions reassured me that the translations and transcriptions were accurate to the recording taken of the interview in situ.

I have unashamedly opted for presenting the thoughts of speakers as clearly as possible and so I have assumed the right to edit the interviews and the symposium so that readers may devote themselves to the argument and not get side-tracked into trying to comprehend the text before them.[50] The substantive points made by the speakers are what are most significant, so I have edited slippages of grammar and intrusive aspects of second language English. I have been as careful as possible with observing the sense intended as it is communicated in words as well as by inflection, gestures (on video) and as determined by the context in which remarks were made.

When quoting, I have extracted what is pertinent, not indicating by means of ellipsis dots where I have cut. Where I have needed to explicate the sense intended by the speaker, which was clear enough for those present and familiar with all the circumstances of the situation, I have occasionally put additional words or commentary in square brackets.

In using material from Focus Group Interviews, most of it is translated as well as transcribed. I have not indicated this in the text. The interviewer is identified as 'Q:' and primary school learners as 'C1, C2' etc, secondary learners as S1, S2 etc and young adults / theatre participants as T1, T2 etc. Adults who are only audience members (and not theatre trainees or practitioners) are identified as A1, A2 etc. Where the transcriber was unable to pinpoint the diverse voices of the respondents, they are not numbered, which does not mean to say that only a single person responded.

In transcribing the symposium, it is not always possible to identify the speaker. Whilst all the symposium attendees gave permission to be quoted and are acknowledged in Appendix A, I have elected to number the speakers as S1, S2 etc to preserve a degree of privacy.

Practical challenges encountered in the fieldwork *[lines five & six]*

In the absence of available data for research on theatre in Cape Town's townships, I have had to gather my own. This was a challenging and exciting task. I shall take a moment to itemise the challenges not already mentioned.

Language questions proved a significant challenge and, practicalities apart, are pressing as I point out in Chapter 2. Because I do not speak *isiXhosa* and face constraints of length, I have desisted from engaging with questions around the choice of language in performance and with finer analyses of register, dialects and so forth.

Poor acoustics in township venues sometimes make audibility, even for those who understand *isiXhosa* and English accented with *isiXhosa*, very problematic. For this reason

[50] I was repeatedly alerted to the dangers of the problem to which Hofmeyer alludes by my supervisors. In their attempts to assist me they kept noting verbatim grammatical inaccuracies in my cited extracts of text and enquiring from me whether I was in error. In effect grammatical idiosyncrasies drew their attention away from the sense intended by the original speaker on record.

some of the performances and my video records are extremely difficult to follow, whilst others are clearly intelligible. This limited the plays that I was able to analyse in any depth.

I selected my research assistants from among *isiXhosa*-speaking past students of our department whom I knew were committed to the study of theatre in the townships. We shared a common interest and theatre vocabulary and they readily engaged with the preparation and conduct of the focus group audience interviews. They translated and transcribed the interview material, filmed productions and interpreted for me during performances.

These assistants worked for me ad hoc between other acting or management jobs and were not freely available. So, sometimes when an earmarked play was showing and I was available, I was unable to have an interpreter with me and conduct a focus group interview in *isiXhosa*. At other times when we were all lined up, the performance would be cancelled. With time I realized that the contingencies of the process spoke eloquently to the practices and location of township theatre within the field of Cape Town theatre.

Constructing the analytic framework *[Figure 2, line seven]*

Having rendered my empirical experiences and observation into data sets, organised by type, context or chronology, as appropriate (see Appendix A), and having conceptualised the study as set out above, the task was to analyse and then distil significant findings. Below is a schematic template of how I went about this process.

(i) I elected the data that would most illuminate each of my empirical foci and related purposes. *[Figure 2, line five, listed in order of priority]*

(ii) I determined the parameters of investigation according to my conceptual foci. This identified the relations between the spheres covered by my empirical foci. It also declared what was relevant to the examination.

(iii) Armed with a tentative schematic design of my intentions in the area under examination, I would immerse myself in my primary data set, drifting and sifting through it over and over again. Gradually and regularly I would begin to notice recurrences. What recurred, what predominated, demanded consideration. Factors were not only noticeable by their predominance. Sometimes gaps / lacunae / absences became extremely evident and therefore significant. So I would adjust my initial hypothetical schematic design in light of what I noticed.

(iv) I would turn to a second (and often third or fourth) data set *[as listed in line five]*. Armed with the same hypothesised taxonomy of relevances, I would sift through the second (or third) set in order to see whether there were similarities to my primary data set with respect to what I noticed. This is a form of triangulation.

(v) I would attempt to refine my conceptualisation of the area of focus *[figure 2, line seven]*. Then I would apply it to selected empirical test cases to see whether my conceptualisation and the data appeared to concur.

(vi) I would attempt to make a written account of what I had found. Here, my own initial lapses in logic, mis-matched comparisons and inadequately-founded assumptions, all tested the validity and helped to refine my penultimate account *[figure 2, lines seven and eight]*.

Essentially the process became a to and fro oscillation between conceptualising in light of increasingly detailed examination of the data sets. And my scrutinisation of the data was rendered more searching, the more sharply I focussed my analytic framework. Gradually I arrived at a language of description *[figure 2, line eight]* for the empirical focus of each chapter *[line two]*.

(vii) The chapters also had to be scrutinised to determine the connections between them *[read along line eight]* and my overarching intention to elucidate township theatre. In actuality, this was an aspect of the distillation process throughout.

(viii) I decided to include discussions or descriptive analyses of specific plays *[figure 2, line nine]* to serve as elucidating examples of the character of township theatre that I was developing in the study. The final sections of chapters 5 and 8 and the second half of chapter 7 are devoted to this end. The constraints of length within which I have designed this study made it impossible for these play examinations to go any deeper – particularly in terms of investigating the meaning dimension of the plays in question. This is a great pity but it was unavoidable.

Ultimately, the focus of this study rests with developing a language of description for theatre from the townships *[line eight]*. Anything further is intended by way of illustration and example, not by way of a searching performance analysis.

A single instance of analysis

Without discussing the language of description generated for each empirical focus, it is difficult to demonstrate the connections between them: how the language developed for the townships affects the language developed for playing culture and so on. I shall therefore attempt a single instance of analysis by way of example.

My example begins in the data analysis for chapter 4, that set out to examine the effects of township living on the theatre-makers. As I have already said, scrutinizing the plays revealed virtually no physical entities or institutionalized formal systems at work in the township environment. At the same time as I grew aware of this lacuna, I was being bombarded by examples in the plays of patterned informal arrangements at work in township social life. From vocal and physical gestural patterning, to floor patterning, to uniforms, to small design elements, to social arrangements such as clan rituals or church burial societies, patterned procedures, sequences of actions, icons and speech forms, proliferated all over the plays. As I went over the data and my observations again and again I became conscious of the ideological orientation underlying this patterning. The patterning distinguishes between order and disorder in community and individual actions. Permanence is valued over that which is unstable, flighty

or transient. Bourdieu theorises such homologous opposition sets in his *Outline of a theory of practice* (1977) and *The logic of practice* (1990).

When sifting and sorting through the data once more in order to develop the language of description for the performatic repertoire of township playing culture (chapter 5), I kept noticing how predominantly *aesthetic* patterning featured in the performatic repertoire of storytelling, dance, song, and rites of passage ceremonies. And so aesthetic patterning became a core feature of my language of description for township theatrical playing culture.

Then, in the endeavour to understand the structure of theatre-making for chapter 6, the more I sifted through the plays and viewed and reviewed them on video, the more I not only noticed patterning but discerned connections between the ideological orientations of patterning found in the township habitus, and the aesthetic patterning discerned in the performatic repertoire of the playing culture. In the plays, patterning is used to distinguish the play world from the everyday world. It sorts, orders and harmonises the impressions presented in the plays, creating, as Scheub has pointed out, a metaphorical realm that is different from reality although it is concerned with reality. The playmakers not only draw from the performatic repertoire – a wedding song for example – they also deliberately pattern the action of the play to increase its charm, to render it more memorable, to contain the pain and violence with which so many of the plays deal without obscuring it. Bearing within themselves the township habitus, the playmakers also pattern oppositional forces or characters in the plays. In many of the plays there are ongoing struggles between order and disorder, evident in the psychological motivations and behaviour of characters, their actions, and in the community portrayed on the stage.

The implications of tracing patterning as a core descriptor in the township environment, the performatic repertoire of the local playing culture and the playmaking practices of the theatre-makers is that, in this study of township theatre, patterning is simultaneously understood as an ideological inclination, an aesthetic disposition, a performatic skill and a structuring choice for playmakers.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explicated how my empirical purposes were deepened and interconnected by my conceptual lenses derived from Theatrical Event theory and the practice theory of Pierre Bourdieu. I have explained for what purposes and by what means I undertook the fieldwork and subsequent data collections. Constructing the analytic frameworks was driven by ‘conversations’ between theoretical insights and analysis of the data in an iterative process of sorting, immersion, sifting and noticing. I have proposed that the major contribution of the thesis lies in the development of a language of description for theatre in the townships and in just two places I have demonstrated the use of the language in the analysis of selected works of township theatre.

Designing this research has become somewhat like looking through a kaleidoscope. Depending upon the way in which I adjusted the analytic framework (the mirrors) within the scope of township, a different language of description emerged – those brightly coloured patterns visible by means of the kaleidoscope. The language was all composed within the same scope, out of the same bits of glass. Hopefully the account that follows reflects something of the brightness of township theatre.

4. THE TOWNSHIP AS CULTURAL CONTEXT

Introduction

Driven by the conviction that beings and their environments are aptly considered conjointly, I am compelled to notice how large the townships loom in plays by local theatre-makers. The plays engage with and enact perceptions, beliefs, stories, character types and situations that living in the townships produces. The plays are redolent with the social, cultural, ideological and economic preoccupations of township dwellers. The first and final impression the plays produce is how centrally, if not obsessively, the context preoccupies those who make theatre in the township.

Possibly, to a township inhabitant, it is merely living that preoccupies the theatre-makers. Whereas to the outsider, living in the townships carries a very specific set of perceptions around the townships themselves, with respect to people, activities and environmental circumstances.

How does the context of the township pervade locally made plays differently from the way the local context influences any other theatre? In order to answer this question, this chapter will first establish a taxonomy of ways in which the township enters the world of the plays. The data produced by this taxonomy will then be interrogated further by viewing it through a lens used by practice theorists in the social sciences. What does this scrutiny reveal about the theatre-makers' depiction of the townships? What themes, practices and preoccupations predominate? Why have these been selected? I will argue that the townships generate a habitus, a disposition to doing things in a way that allows the theatre-makers both to cope with the townships productively and which predisposes them to respond to their context in specific ways.

There is a danger that my examination might suggest that township inhabitants themselves are 'part of the problem' of the invidious circumstances within which they find themselves. But public officials and social scientists acknowledge that it is extremely difficult to improve the townships as built environments. My empirical experience also sheds light on the problematic of the townships around Cape Town, particularly Khayelitsha. Their socio-political history, built infrastructure, economic and social challenges, are all frequent subjects of research and public and private development programmes. Taken together, the information obtained from township plays, research and empirical experience, should develop a picture that allows the reader to understand the significance of the pervasive presence of the townships in the plays.

‘The forms people build’[51]

Mandla Mbothwe, facilitator of Magnet Theatre’s Community Groups Intervention in Khayelitsha, made the following remark to me about township theatre practice: ‘Everything that they do on stage comes from the streets’ (2006).

Anthropologist Tim Ingold suggests that human beings and their environments are of a piece. Human beings can not be considered over against their environments. This has implications for how we consider thought and action in the world. Ingold suggests that: ‘thinking and feeling, in Bourdieu’s account, do not go on in an interior subjective (or intersubjective) space of images and representations but in the space of peoples’ actual engagement in the settings of practical activity. … In other words the habitus is not expressed in practice, it rather *subsists* in it’ (2000:162). Ingold compares Bourdieu’s application of thought in the world with that of Jean Lave. ‘Cognition, in Lave’s view, is not a process that goes on ‘inside the head’… but rather a social activity that is situated in the nexus of ongoing relations between persons and the world, and that plays its part in their mutual constitution.’ (2000:162)

Based on my proposition that plays made by township practitioners construct their understanding of their current world even as they seek to comment upon or change it, examination of the plays can reveal how the world of the townships appears for theatre-makers themselves. How do the theatre-makers perceive the township environment?

If information pertaining to the township - as a living environment of people and their activities, their spaces and places, their times, their materials and responses - are sorted into cognate bundles, we begin to see what the theatre-makers have elected to represent and engage with, and what has been left out. Figure 4 below is merely an example of how a sampling of the information taken from the plays was sorted.

Figure 4. Sample taxonomy: features of township living and people represented in the plays (1st level)

Characters. **Who** are the people?	Comrades, choirs, members of the mothers’ union, families, street people. mother, son, schoolgoer, elder, priest, gang member, corrupt business person
Space. **Where** are they?	Street, domestic sphere, urban/rural, court, gaol
Time. Duration, pace, time-frame, season, time of day etc.	Now. in the past. wishes for the future. The past as experienced in the present.
Materials. What material objects do they use/	Table, chair, dustbin, Blanket, knapsack, hat, stick, cell phone, briefcase.
Responses. How do they feel? Emotional states?	Fear, mourning, lament. joy, exhaltation, pain.

[51] This quote is from Tim Ingold: ‘… the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their surroundings’ (2000:186)

Assuming one has 'sorted' the data in the manner illustrated above, how does one begin to understand it? Practice theorists have engaged in diverse ways with trying to understand the significance of human activity, subjectivity and embodiment, as well as 'the organization, reproduction, and transformation of social life' within 'a field of practices' (Schatzki, 2001: 1, 2). Understanding fields of practices includes the involvement of both individuals and social organizations with things and material configurations. Practice theorists try to account for social order, whose prominent 'features are regularity or pattern, interdependent functioning,.. stability and orderliness' (Schatzki, 2001: 4). Accordingly, I have opted to examine the data provided by the plays according to three conceptual dimensions utilised by practice theorists. Firstly, there are the activities: the doings, agencies at work in the environment by means of which agents subsist in and attempt to control their environment. Secondly there are the meanings that are made, which determine understanding, and thirdly there are the entities, structures or material arrangements found in the context that generally embed structures of power within their order.

These three categories: Doings, Meanings, and Material Arrangements (or Entities), when used as a lens through which to examine the representational features referred to in figure 4 above, offer an interpretation of the data according to *orientations towards* the categories of Doings, Meanings and Material Arrangements (Entities). If the data is clustered in line with these three orientations, then it generates a conceptualisation of the township in which the *relations between* doings, meanings and environment becomes more apparent. It might look bit like the example diagram below.

Figure 5. Sample taxonomy: features of township living and people, parsed into orientations towards doings, meanings and material arrangements (2nd level)

Taxonomy	**Doings**	**Meanings**	**Material arrangements**
Characters **Who** are the people?	Persuading earning a living, cleaning house. trading, Hustling, bullying, robbing.	Archetypes & stereotypes. Status Collective groupings hold value.	People-driven infrastructure, People-driven collectives: choirs, gangs, family clans.
Where are the people? Space?	Activities undertaken mainly on the street, occasionally in the domestic space.	Indoor / outdoor blend. Very little inviolate privacy. 'The public sphere'.	Outdoors. Doors, thresholds important. No evident permanent fixtures, even houses fragile. Exceptions: gaol, police station & school perimeter.
What time is it? **When**?	Now. Reflect and recall and retell the past. Anticipate, hope for the future. Past present and future actions jumbled together, experienced now.	Consequences of actions evident later or understood later. You reap what you sow.	Extend the present moment by ritualizing it. Make time for feelings.

What **material objects** do the people use?	Furniture is multi-purpose. People enact doors, cupboards and chairs.	Clothing demonstrates status and position. Clothing performs identity. You are what you look like.	Chairs. Table. Dustbin. Traditional garb, cellphone, briefcase, sunglasses, gun,
How do the people feel? Emotional states?	Expressing, lamenting, sharing, remembering, mourning.	Rituals and ceremonies invest feelings with status, dignity and importance.	Rituals solemnize life stages and states. Ceremonies allow for the expression of emotions.

In the paragraphs that follow I elaborate on the analysis which this sorting process achieved, beginning with the space of the townships as a place or places. The order in which I deal with the aspects has been determined by the understanding of the township that categories suggested, rather than following the order in figure 5 above.

Where: space and place in the townships

The overarching feature of the environment glimpsed through the plays is its transience: its instability, its improvisational style. The horizontal plane predominates, depth and breadth are malleable and boundaries permeable.

Almost every play locates action in the township and not in the city centre or the suburbs.[52] And the space of the townships is of a particular kind. It is a vibrant, active, restless, usually public sphere; the locus of social, economic or political transactions. The street, or sometimes an interior meeting place, is where people trade, sleep, hustle, court affection or respect, and in which the power of the social collective is the touchstone of validity and meaning.

The private domestic sphere, in which refuge is sometimes sought but seldom achieved, is fragilely private. It is easily penetrated by friendly neighbours or just as frequently by less benevolent forces such as gangsters, police or vigilantes.

Is this space clearly demarcated or defined? Outlines are sometimes clearly demarcated on stage by bodily contour, and positions earmarked by a bold use of colourful flag or cloth or table. Other than that, delineation of the theatrical space is achieved by means of the activities which take place therein. But indoors and outdoors are frequently interchangeable: watching a play we may infer that the action is happening in an interior but just then a vehicle is enacted and we are transported away. Briefly the action may locate a hospital, court, gaol or church, but the next moment neighbours or enemies are confronting each other in the street. We can infer this because other folk, not directly involved in the action, appear on the scene.

Sometimes the action takes place in the rural areas and from there returns to Cape Town. We know it is the rural areas because women are hoeing fields, grinding maize or elders are walking long distances with their possessions on their heads. The rural ‘home’ is an

[52] Thirty five out of forty different plays locate in the townships. The five that do not, locate variously mythologically: ‘at a national level’, in the past, in hospital and in gaol.

important referent in that it is different from life here and now in the townships. Although it is often located in a recollected past, from which protagonists return to the present in the city, the impression gained is that the past is important to the protagonists' current understanding of themselves.

Space is defined by the people and their actions rather than space determining the actions suitable to undertake within it. There is little, or only a metonymic attempt, to represent the built environment. Since the focus of the plays rests upon people and their transactions this is appropriate; but perhaps it is also because concrete depiction of the environment – apart from the cost of so doing – would not add meaning to the world of the characters. The absence of significance accorded to the built environment in township plays is in marked contrast with South African plays and musicals *not* originating from the townships. In the latter, the built environment, particularly interiors, are frequently extremely important within the drama. Such are *Try for white* (1959), *People are living there* (1968) *Karnaval* (1976), *A lesson from aloes* (1978), *District 6 the musical* (1987), *Meet Joe Barber* (1999) and *Happy natives* (2002).[53] This absence of emphasis on the built environment will be further investigated later on in this chapter.

As represented in the action of the plays, the environment is as full of surprises, changeability, social pressures, insecurities, opportunities and pitfalls, as are the inhabitants. In essence it is not material arrangements of the space at all, but rather the people and their activities that consume the focus stage.

Who: peopling the township of the stage

Gender and power

The plays paint a readily discernible picture of masculine dominance of social and economic power – including criminality. Males hold most if not all symbolic capital and assume agency in general. In the plays, rather than being depicted as agents in their own right, women are objectified by their male counterparts, often for the purposes of social capital or sexual satisfaction. Sometimes women entrench their own subordination by means of symbolic violence such as we see in *Girl child from the ghetto* (2006).[54]. Although many of the plays

[53] In this study, whether from the townships or town, plays are identified by their titles and date of first performance, and they are cited thus in the Reference list. This is because, where a 'non-township play' from the South African repertoire as a whole is mentioned, the title, date and place of first performance is more significant to the discussion than the authorship. It is also because most of the plays *from the township* are authored by groups and are unpublished. As pointed out in chapter 3, identifying a township play by the name of the group and first performance (since there is no publication date) gives no indication of the content of the play, whereas sometimes the title does. As much as is known about township plays is captured in full in Appendix A.

[54] In *Outline of a theory of practice* pp190-7 Bourdieu (1977) explicates the reasons for and ways of exercising symbolic violence. In situations, such as relations between the sexes, where power is not entrenched in an objective economic exchange or juridically, power over someone is exercised by tying them into relations of obligation or loyalty by the patronage bestowed on the them. As Bourdieu points out, because the relationship is not explicitly contractual, there is no clear beginning or end to the obligation. Finally the dependent party becomes complicit in their own domination.

have female protagonists, women nevertheless fulfill mainly servile or nurturing functions: bearing children, sustaining the home and undertaking sales or services in order to ensure survival of the family.[55]

Taking an excursion behind the scenes for a moment, it is readily apparent that males dominate leadership positions in township theatre groups and are far more numerous in the field in a ratio of at least two to one. There are a few groups in which women might share leadership for a particular purpose (such as choreographing a particular sequence) and in which women comprise the majority of members, as for example in Masimbambisane of Khayelitsha, or in which women's issues are foregrounded in the plays. However these excursions into women-orientated work do not contest and certainly do not unseat their profoundly dominated position in the field of theatre-making in the townships.

Class

I make a caveat here. I have resisted analyzing the plays with respect to class for two reasons. First, as Seekings and Natrass (2005) make clear, both the means and purpose of assigning a class position will depend upon the criteria you harness to make the assessment and how you interpret the data you collect. They provide a series of examples of class analyses undertaken in South African contexts, which employ a range of different criteria and unsurprisingly come to differing conclusions. Secondly, I am not willing or in a position to make knowledgeable claims about the class of township inhabitants or of those portrayed on the stage. This is not to say that class interests may or may not be immanent in the plays but it is beyond the scope of my research project to unpack issues of class because I am not in a position legitimately to posit the criteria upon which I could base my judgements.

Race

In the plays analysed for this study 'races' other than black Africans do not really feature and neither does racism as a theme. Stigmatisation as a result of race or nationality is occasionally represented and a few plays have dealt with xenophobia and so-called *amakwerekwere* who live in the townships.[56] The presence or influence of a white character (not presented on stage) is very occasionally referred to in the plays, for example as a difficult 'madam' in *Aunt Doris* (2008), or a bullying superior officer in the police force in *Red song* (2006, 2007). The occasional play such as *Things are bad* (2007) has inferred that a particular gang member or policeman might be coloured rather than black by the use of accent or body language. But by and large in the plays the racial spectrum of Cape Town is neither present nor represented. I

[55] In the 2006 Ikhwezi Festival, of the seven plays emerging from Cape Town's townships, in five of them women fulfil key roles as nurturers of children (*Thabo, Beneath silent waters),* the sick (*The miracle begins)* and as home-makers (*Ubizo, Red song).* In five of these plays women mourn the loss of family members and in three of the plays girl children are raped.

[56] A *makwerekwere* is a foreigner. Mostly the term is used perjoratively, usually to refer to immigrants to South Africa from the rest of Africa. Within the townships foreigners are frequently deemed to be in competition with locals for housing and jobs and become a target for prejudice. This scenario is depicted in *The last breath* (2007), *Township talks* (2008) and 'Xenophobia provokes crime' (2009).

attribute this firstly to the fact that the racial spectrum is not present in the townships selected for this study but perhaps more significantly it goes to the point that the township theatre makers are largely inward looking. Their world is circumscribed by the townships and not the city of Cape Town as a whole.[57]

Who then, are the people in the plays and what actions do they undertake? The overarching impression of the plays is the vitality and energy of the players engaged in a world alive with possibility, promise and danger. The various sorts of characters depicted in the plays are discussed in relation to the activites they undertake.

Surviving and thriving

Actions can be viewed from the perspective of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Huitt 2007), the first level of which is satisfying the need for food and shelter. Making a living in the world and sustaining the home are regularly part of a play's storyline. Single characters engage in washing, cleaning and cooking, petty trading, building, hawking or occasionally office work. But characters who are sustaining honest livelihoods are often juxtaposed with characters who are hustling, lying, bullying, blackmailing or peddling drugs or sex, as depicted in a series of scenes in *To whom it may concern* that ends with the chorus: 'Lets work together and destroy crime!' (2005).[58]

Secondly, recreational pastimes such as playing games, 'hanging out', sports, dancing or singing in the choir are frequently portrayed and testify to the lively local playing culture that I shall investigate in Chapter 5.

Accruing capital and the consequences of actions

Thirdly, there are those characters intent on making social capital: seeking a wife, consulting a sangoma, flirting, getting married, having sex and making a baby. At the same time there are many more accounts of the abuses of agency and power through gambling, drunkenness, emotional and physical exploitation, domestic or public violence, shootings, street brawls, rape and murder. The plays are filled with the many fatal consequences of actions that range from stigma and taboo, to loss of innocence, exile, rape, HIV/AIDS, disability and death. Positive consequences depicted in the plays are few, although many include characters who learn lessons the hard way. However, 'Traditions vs Christianity' (2007) focuses on coming of age and *Things are bad (2007)* on gaining new insight.

[57] If I had selected Delft township for focus in this study the case might have been different because Delft is one of the few townships in which the population comprises broadly comparable numbers of black and coloured inhabitants. However as I pointed out in the introduction, theatre amongst coloured township inhabitants is beyond the scope of this research.

[58] The reader will note the century gothic type-face used above that indicates quotations from the plays themselves.

Collective and individual power

Activities through which single characters seek to exercise legitimate power and control are juxtaposed both with individuals intending to access power illegitimately, and with the greater power, influence and status of social collectives. In *Ukuzingisa eGugulethu* (2007) the mothers union institutes a funeral policy which will cover all its members. At the same time they establish a cultural centre to induct young people into the cultural activities and traditions that the members perceive are being neglected in the township. In **'**The drunk priest' (2006) a choir and other church officials support their priest even when he goes seriously off the rails. In 'Professor *Mzantsi'* (2006) a chain gang works hard to build the country through its joint efforts.[59] In *The naked truth* (2008) school children seek to do well in exams. In 'Crime destroys the family' (2009) the family attempts to curb their own erring young. In 'Traditions vs Christianity' (2007) the clan supports coming of age rituals for its nubile adolescents. In *Old Brown Joe* (2007) citizens honour those who died in the struggle, or make their votes count as we see in '144 months into the new SA' (2006). In *Red song* (2006) the comrades join forces in civil disobedience as political protest.

On the other hand young women are coerced into obedience to collective norms as we see in *Udaba bafazi* (2007) when a girl is 'captured' by a stranger whom the family has arranged she should marry. A child is exiled by the pressure of family elders in **'**Thobeka dreams too much' (2006). In 'Murder in the family' (2007) the court of public opinion convicts local perpetrators on the basis of rumour and accusation. In 'Church council scams' (2009) executives engage corporately in money laundering and other scams. In *The red winter* (2008) necklacing is carried out on the streets.[60] In *Ubizo – voices of elok'shini* (2006) gangs intimidate and perpetrate violent crimes against whoever takes their ire, and in *Township talks* (2008) many die.

What: furniture and stage properties

The fragility of sustained social order in the townships is mirrored by little attention paid to moveable objects. Litter and general disorderliness of material arrangements represented on stage (usually mimed) is a frequent motif of a state of abandonment or destruction, whilst wielding guns and knives (mostly embodied in simulacrums but also occasionally mimed) represents a lot of power. Tables, chairs and dustbins serve a multitude of purposes beyond their everyday uses, such as shelter in **'**Street peoples' stories' (2006), seating, barricades or physical obstacles in 'Professor *Mzantsi'* (2006) and transport in *The naked truth* (2008). Actual cups,

[59] The reader is reminded that where plays were untitled, I have 'Titled' them in inverted commas, not italics.

[60] The practice of 'necklacing' developed in the 1980s at the height of the people's resistance to apartheid. The victim of necklacing was usually accused of being a traitor to the cause of liberation. The victim would have a motorcar tyre filled with petrol forced over the head, chest and arms and then set alight, causing the victim to burn to death.

basins, brooms and bottles are sometimes used for the purposes for which they are intended, but as often they are simply mimed by the characters.

This explanation has unavoidably veered between what objects are represented and how they (and people) are deployed on stage to do the representing. In comparable style to the depiction of the material world on stage, what is foregrounded is not the objects themselves at all, but rather how people use the few that they have. This point will be discussed further with respect to the township environment as people-driven. In contrast with properties or furniture, considerable care is expended on costuming.

What: costuming and personal properties

The widespread use of costume as a semiotic system points to its relevance for the township community. Appearance is a key signifier of identity. In the higgledy-piggledy precarious world of the township alleyways, because clothing is portable and can be kept to hand with relative ease, it is used to delineate social identity and status, and this is the case in the plays as well. Selected items of apparel, adornment or headgear may indicate attitude, style or status of characters who wear their social status on their bodies, whereas complete costuming, or indicating your class or status by means of the set up on stage, is seldom used.

Traditional affiliation is indicated by headdress, the iconic clothing of the traditional healer that we see in *The new king* (2007) or the status of an initiate that will be marked by the adoption of a particular necklace or blanket such as we see in 'Traditions vs Christianity' (2007). High economic status is represented by selective use of fashionable clothing, such as high heels and jewellery amongst women, and business suits, briefcases or cell phones amongst men. Elders and mature characters tend to be costumed 'traditionally'. An older women's head gear is frequently traditional and her skirts longer, whilst an older man almost inevitably wears a homburg hat and carries a stick. In a word, many of the characters in plays tend to 'bear their house on their heads'.

The systematizing effect of costuming, especially uniforms, is the first instance of patterning that I raise. Uniforms and clearly delineating affiliation or familial bonds allows a sense of order and significance in a world with little structure. Uniforms are a key signifier of belonging and group solidarity amongst rural clan members, church members, school children and police. Gangsters have another kind of 'uniform' comprising posture, bodily movement and gesture. Overall, the semiotic significance of costuming is appreciated and employed, both on stage and off.

How: emotions portrayed in the plays

Drama and theatre sets out to express and evoke emotional engagement from the audience by means of the expression of emotions and predicaments on stage as well as by means of music, movement, sounds and rhythms. In this regard theatre from the townships is no different. But

the predominance afforded emotional expression is notable in relation to what it signifies about township living. This is dealt with more fully below and in chapters 5 and 6.

When is it happening? Time

I have left until last the discussion of time, perhaps because it is the dimension with the least concrete evidence in and of itself, but rather issues of time on stage (and in life) inhere in activities. In a world which is not systemized according to formalised spatial delimitations, there is no immutable logic of material arrangements which could invoke adherence to ordered, chronological time. So in the plays what is important about time is *now*, whether or not now is concerned with the present moment or with memory of a distant past. Therefore scenes, which the audience can infer happened over many years, are presented with equal importance alongside and perhaps interpolating each other. The enactments of different agents at various times will sit cheek by jowl on the stage, swelling the immanence of the present and compelling it into significance. For instance, in *Udaba bafazi* (2007), the audience gradually begins to perceive that the depicted events, far from all happening recently, have taken place days ago, in the last year and in the last twenty years.

Furthermore the pace at which events take place on stage varies. The multiple times, coexisting alongside one another on stage, may be portrayed at different paces or in different rhythms. One of the considerable advantages of dance and song are that the present is slowed down and expanded to allow time for the experience and expression of intense fear, sexual arousal, outrage, aggression or repentance. Rituals also significantly slow down the action, allowing audiences and actors to dwell in the experience of invoking the help of deities, healing, or divining. In Michael de Certeau's terms, the tactics of dance and song intervene in the habitual use of time and challenge the power of those who determine how it shall be used (1984).

In the plays the present is the horizontal plane on which life is lived, the length, extent and elasticity of which varies amongst agents. In *Take another look at ubomi* (2005) some scenes peacefully enact the passage of days whilst others seem to squeeze out every last drop of the juice of the present as swiftly as possible lest it disappear. In the plays there is little foreshadowing. In *Old Brown Joe* (2005) the past is part of the present and has equal validity in dramatic action in the manner described above. The future is unknown – only revealed by present longings and aspirations. However when memories of the past are invoked by means of storytelling, monologue or confession, then a formal chronology orders events and reveals causal links, such as we see in *The red winter* (2008). Recall allows agents to take power over the past and not only recoup it - which is not difficult, intruding as it continuously does on the present – but to *make sense* of the past by positing causation or intent such as is depicted in *Beneath silent waters* (2007). Recall also makes space for a much needed opportunity to acknowledge the extent of a loss and to grieve as revealed in *Thabo* (2006) and *Udaba bafazi*

(2007). Thus recall or retelling is a patterning device, instilling order and sometimes revealing significance that adds value to the experience of agents.

But what do the patterning devices and the questions of time described above infer about life in the townships? First, they testify to the prevalence of storytelling, ritualisations, dance and song not only in the theatre but also in everyday life in the family home, in cultural ceremonies, church, social grouping, and amongst young people that will be discussed in chapter 5. Secondly, I think it is evident that the important time for township inhabitants is now: what de Certeau calls an 'everyday historicity' by means of which agents make the present as rich and worthwhile as possible in light of the uncertainty and precariousness of the future and shadows haunting the past (1984:20-21).

Finally, the plays frequently couple the rural areas with 'time past', and the township with present time. Given that many migrants to the townships left the rural areas a year or two or ten years ago, this is hardly surprising. Paradoxically however, relegating memories of a rural past to 'then' the present experience of the township to 'now' does not necessarily mean that these realms of time are not co-existing and jointly influencing contemporary thought and behaviour. On the contrary coterminous experiences are frequently portrayed.

The absence of institutional entities and material arrangements

Reading the consciousness of township theatre-makers from the performances generates one enormous lacuna. The plays do not attest to, or vest in, entities, material arrangements or structures other than the church and - very occasionally – the state (as a whole). It could be argued that this is because the young people who create these works of theatre have little exposure to structures. But on the other hand it could be argued that they could make plays about the institutions of schooling, public clinics or labour bureaux, or by drawing on secondary experience through television viewing, about the police, the hospitals, the corporate sector, the judiciary and so on. But the fact is that they do not. The closest the plays come to organizing systems is a women's burial society or choir affiliated to church, or corporate level, organized white collar crime. The gaol, the court house, and the police station as locales have metaphorical significance and are indicated mainly metonymically but are not presented as punitive, legal or policing *systems*. The plays simply do not take their subject matter or ideas from formal systems or material arrangements. The deduction that I make is that the world of the townships that the playmakers know is largely outside of institutional structures and material arrangements.

People as infrastructure

Writing about the inner city of Johannesburg that is overtaken by a host of informal traders and precarious arrangements, Simone suggests that we look much more closely at how urban agents (in our case township agents) negotiate a system of constant uncertainty and incompleteness. If we extend Lefebvre's notion of social space as a practice of works and conceive of '*people as*

infrastructure' [italics in the original] (2004:411), then, Simone maintains,'[r]egularities … ensue from a process of incessant convertibility – turning commodities, found objects, resources, and bodies into uses previously unimaginable or constrained' (2004:410).

He suggests that possibly people, rather than built entities, constitute an 'economy of perception and collaborative practice' (2004:408), as people learn to negotiate and navigate between the exigencies of shifting and impermanent structures and sites. He reminds us of 'the capacity of individual actors to circulate across and become familiar with a broad range of spatial, residential, economic, and transactional positions' (2004:408).

Simone recommends that we revise our conception of infrastructure, which, he writes 'is commonly understood in physical terms, as reticulated systems of highways, pipes, wires or cables ….' that make the city 'productive, reproducing it, and positioning its residents, territories, and resources in specific ensembles where the energies of individuals can be most effectively deployed and accounted for' (2004:407). In such a conception, 'urban spaces are imagined to be functional destinations. There are to be few surprises, few chances for unregulated encounters, as the city is turned into an object'…. (2004:408).

So if material arrangements in the township are inadequate and haphazard, how does a people-driven infrastructure function effectively? Simone's critique of material infrastructures and arrangements resonates with Jennifer Robinson's reluctance to use African cities as a contemporary vision of 'dystopia' (2009). Rather it is more productive to consider townships as possessing an infrastructure of a different kind, a 'peopled' infrastructure, without fixed material form but systematized through patternings, collectives and cultural practices. The townships serve as loved home, fascinating playground and provocative environment for so many, particularly the youth who make theatre and are the subject of this study. What practices and orientations make this possible?

A township habitus

Bourdieu's answer to the above question would surely be that our habitus is what predisposes us to adapt productively to our everyday circumstances. He explains that habitus is a direct result of the unconscious, everyday experience of accommodating change in a pre-disposed reality, in which positions become embodied in the practices and dispositions of agents so that some modus operandi seem inevitable whilst others are unthinkable and appear to be undoable (1977: 78-87). Thus a township habitus is the first source of cultural capital for township theatre practitioners. Wacquant explicates how habitus is both individual and shared. This explains why one can talk of 'a township habitus'. He explains:

> Habitus supplies at once a principle of sociation and individuation: sociation because our categories of judgement and action, coming from society, are shared by all those who were subjected to similar social conditions and conditionings (thus one can speak of a masculine habitus, a national habitus, a bourgeois habitus, etc.): individuation because each person, by having a unique trajectory and location in the world, internalizes a matchless combination of schemata. Because it is both structured (by past

> social milieus) and structuring (of present representations and actions), habitus operates as "the unchosen principle of all choices" guiding actions that assume the systematic character of strategies even as they are not the result of strategic intention and are objectively "orchestrated without being the product of the organizing activity of a conductor" [underlining in the original] (Bourdieu, [1980] 1990: 256). (2004:316)

Delineating completely the nature of township habitus is beyond the scope of this study, but in so far as the township habitus structures theatre and performance practices of township inhabitants, it is crucial. In this study it is maintained that habitus is an essential means whereby township dwellers accommodate the chance and uncertainties of township life.

In what follows below and in subsequent chapters it will be argued that there are certain dispositions, 'structuring structures', arising out of the experience of living in the townships, that mould theatre-making and performing in the townships in identifiable ways and in fact facilitate adopting theatre-making as a viable and productive pursuit. These dispositions are attributable to the township habitus as well as being fostered in the local playing culture and are introduced below.

A disposition to vest power in groups

If we conjoin AbdouMaliq Simone's conception of people as infrastructure with Bourdieu's conception of habitus, and we consider the centrality and importance of pressure groups, clans, choruses and neighbourhood groupings represented in the plays, the disposition to vest power in groups, or the collective, comes to the forefront of our attention. We begin to perceive a new and different way of examining the social order of townships other than that vested in material arrangements commonly found in town.

In the plays, groups or collectives are depicted as acquiring their power because of their irreducible role within township infrastructure. In as much as things work at all, that is how things 'work'. Groups and collectives allow the makeshift, piecemeal organizational arrangements to be economically viable and materially functional. People rely on the grapevine, their neighbours and other contacts, and they vest in these people-driven arrangements because that is what is most effective.

An ordering disposition: patterning

The plays also suggest a disposition to order a disordered environment by means of performatic and communicative social practices and customs. Patterning, which I understand as an ordering and repetitious form of activity, emerges as a much utilised device by means of which to regularise and stabilise contingent, everyday experience. This includes patterning the home environment and clothing, the use of patterning in social, verbal and physical exchanges, as well as in more elaborate cultural practices such as dances, praise poetry, song, riddles and proverbs. By means of patterning, the muddled, confusing, even dangerous present is respected, honoured and given significance in the rhythms, repetitions and refrains of synchronized gesture, melodies and harmonies of dance and song and the ordering process of speaking proverbs and

of storytelling. Patterning implies repetition as well as regulated, or ordered, change. It frequently but not always includes symmetry or a balancing of attributes and clarity of delineation. It separates one thing from another and accords each aspect its space and time.

Respecting and honouring feelings by means of patterning their expression in rituals, ceremonies and rites of passage induces at least a temporary sense of order and dignity. Rites of passage from adolescence into adulthood, marriage or death are dignified and their feeling dimensions consecrated by means of ritual processes of praising, sermonizing, praying, grieving and mourning. This is nowhere more powerfully achieved than in *The miracle begins* (2006). The struggle for the country's liberation in *Red song* (2006), for women's dignity in *Ukuzingisa eGugulethu* (2007), against wrong doing of whatever kind (*Udaba bafazi*, 2007), is honoured by the same means. Performance and social practices that use patterning give imaginative shape and make emotional space for the feelings of a community continuously at risk of change, chance occurrences and misfortune.[61]

The presentation of characters in the plays is also patterned, ordered along lines of archetypes and stereotypes. Firstly there are insiders who may be earmarked by their age or place in the family, such as an elder or *gogo (*grandmother), mother, would-be-lover or innocent child. Secondly there are those identified with their social position such as the priest, sophisticate, policeman, comrade, drunk, gangster or prisoner. Finally there are those outsiders who are stigmatized by the community as a '*makwerekwere' (*foreigner) or 'sell-out' who betrayed the struggle.

While it is possible to argue that the disposition to order and maintain life is endemic in all communities, what makes this disposition particular to a township habitus is the practices to which it gives rise. Performative, behavioural practices affect every aspect of everyday life, patterning familial behaviour, methods of address, ways of homemaking and arranging the household. Thus it is not so much the disposition to order, but rather the way it is played out in the logic of practice of the township habitus that makes it particular to its context.

A disposition to embrace opposites

The third disposition discussed here is the disposition to embrace opposites. Accepting that switches between polarized social or moral positions frequently occur due to the sheer unexpectedness of people's choices, establishes a sense of permanence or continuity. Viewed metaphorically, opposites can be perceived to 'neutralise' each other. Extreme positions may be fleeting and transient, but the swing between these alternatives is what remains permanently.

With reference to the character groups mentioned in Figure 4above, in the first two categories the character of father or priest (for example) may be represented as well-intentioned or seemingly well-intentioned, but turn out actually to be devious and destructive, or vice-versa. Even as the priest hearing confession and providing counsel is regularly portrayed, so is his

[61] I am indebted to Bourdieu's description of social customs and practices among the Kabylia of Algeria that encouraged me to look beneath township social practices to their inherent 'logic' (1977)

drunkenness, debauchery or hypocrisy, sometimes within the same play. The notion that people are changeable, deceptive or even evil is more bearable if it is part of a pattern of meaning. The patterning affirms stability and continuity even as the stories reiterate changeability, changes of state and lament a lack of constancy.

The stories rehearse the pros and cons of issues with which township inhabitants continually deal: the difference between rural traditions and practices and urban ways of doing things (*The miracle begins* 2006), the 'old' and the 'new' (*Ubizo*, 2006), traditional religion and Christian beliefs, innocence and knowing too much, or wisdom (*The red winter*, 2008). Violence, crime and the power of guns, the power of money and the trappings of wealth provoke changing allegiances, forsaking loyalties, abandoning respect (*Township talks* 2008). But what the stories inevitably affirm is that actions have consequences and you may reap what you sow.

Considering what we have learnt about the townships, from the plays

I have tried to demonstrate that what the plays present is evidence of a particular structure of feeling: perception of living and conducting life. The plays portray a disordered, lively community maintaining a sense of order, dignity and joy in spite of invidious material circumstances.

Should we suspect that dignifying poverty might imply that poverty is a choice, Zakes Mda sweeps away any such suspicion. He maintains that it is common practice to blame the poor for their problems: they are poor because they can not manage anything else (1993). Mda ties issues of power, economics and politics together with that of the poor (peasantry) in rural Lesotho, critiquing relations between state power and capital, its 'development agents' and its most deprived citizens.[62] A strategy of 'blaming the victim' may colour our perceptions of township dwellers so that we wonder why 'they' ('who are so very different from ourselves …') should put up with such circumstances when they have all the abilities that their theatre productions seem to suggest? But if township dwellers are not to blame, then why are the townships so lacking in formal organizing systems, particularly of physical infrastructure?[63]

Using the evidence presented in the plays to serve as the agenda for an investigation, the second half of this chapter is devoted to studying both the actual, contingent experience of Cape Town's townships in the present moment and the reasons they have developed in the ways have

[62] Mda is not the first or last thinker to discuss this problem but his discussion is located in the field of theatre. Richard Pithouse's article 'Shifting the ground of reason' (2009) is a recent article along similar lines. It addresses the stance of university academics with respect to state policies and hegemony.

[63] I am aware that the townships (variously) have a considerable number of public bodies and civil society organizations; but these are largely people-orientated. Whilst I am sure there are civil or governmental structures which carry considerable power, that power is clearly not part of the experience of theatre-makers and it vests more in people than in organizing systems as far as I have been able to ascertain. This accords with the paucity of records of townships development which was a constant problem identified in the ODA research scheme R6266 undertaken by the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and the University of Cape Town and led by Adenrele Awotona, entitled: The Integration and Urbanisation of Existing Townships in the Republic of South Africa, 1995.

have, as explored and argued by a range of scholars. This will serve firstly to introduce the context of CT's townships to readers unfamiliar with the city. Secondly it is to prevent a conflation between conceptions of material and economic hardship and social or cultural impoverishment. Thirdly it allows an examination of the extent to which the plays mirror the townships or reimagine them, which might suggest that theatre-makers achieve agency through their activity. Finally it is to understand from a sociological perspective why the townships are influential for their young artists.

I must admit to some hesitation about 'entering the townships'. Robinson warns that our viewpoints and orientations shape our perceptions of both the problems and possibilities that townships present (2008). It is beyond the scope of this study to explore the complexity of arguments that are explored so well in, for example, Van Donk et al (2008) and McDonald (2008), but these works endorse the proposition that a veritable rainbow of interpretations may derive out of a single set of statistics. I resist reinforcing visions of dystopia (Robinson 2009) or narratives of loss (Thompson 2003) simply by associating shack dwelling or inadequate material infrastructure with social disadvantage. Social or cultural impoverishment is not the inevitable consequence of infrastructural disadvantage or economic deprivation.

In what follows, my selection of lenses through which to form a picture of Cape Town's townships has been determined by my theatre data. This study is attempting to identify the tactics used by the youth to develop agency, accrue cultural and symbolic capital and communicate their vision through theatre within, in spite, and possibly because of, the circumstances of township living.

The development of Cape Town along divergent spatial and economic trajectories

Contemporary Cape Town is an exemplary instance of what Turok and Watson call 'divergent development' and it is not a new thing (2001). Historically, urban material development in the Cape has happened in spatially distinct ways along two axes. First, development has occurred along the mountain chain that runs from Table Bay in the north where the city of Cape Town lies, right down the Cape Peninsula to Cape Point in the south. Secondly, from the 1970s onwards, development has accelerated along the major arterial route to the inland North through Paarl. Along these two axes there is enormous ongoing investment in civic infrastructure and amenities of all kinds as well as a many attractive housing developments. But wealthy (read 'old money') and foreign buyers in search of shoreline or safe housing near world-class amenities is rendering accommodation in these desirable areas beyond the reach of most of the petit bourgeoisie.

Whereas the townships, conceived from the beginning of the twentieth century to house the so-called 'natives', (ie Africans) who happened to remain in the Cape, were and still are

specifically sited far away and *between* these two legs of development in the inhospitable, wind-swept reaches of the Cape Flats to the South East. McDonald describes the area:

> These are enormously unappealing locations aesthetically as well. Defined by highways, railway tracks, industrial zones, sewage treatment plants, refuse dumps and the like, the vast majority of new [as well as old] housing developments in Cape Town are on the Cape Flats, a low-lying sandy area prone to stifling heat in summer and cold and floods in winter, with the highest incidence of tuberculosis in the country. (2008: 148)

In the map below, the area of the Cape Flats, housing the major bulk of the townships, is indicated in grey.

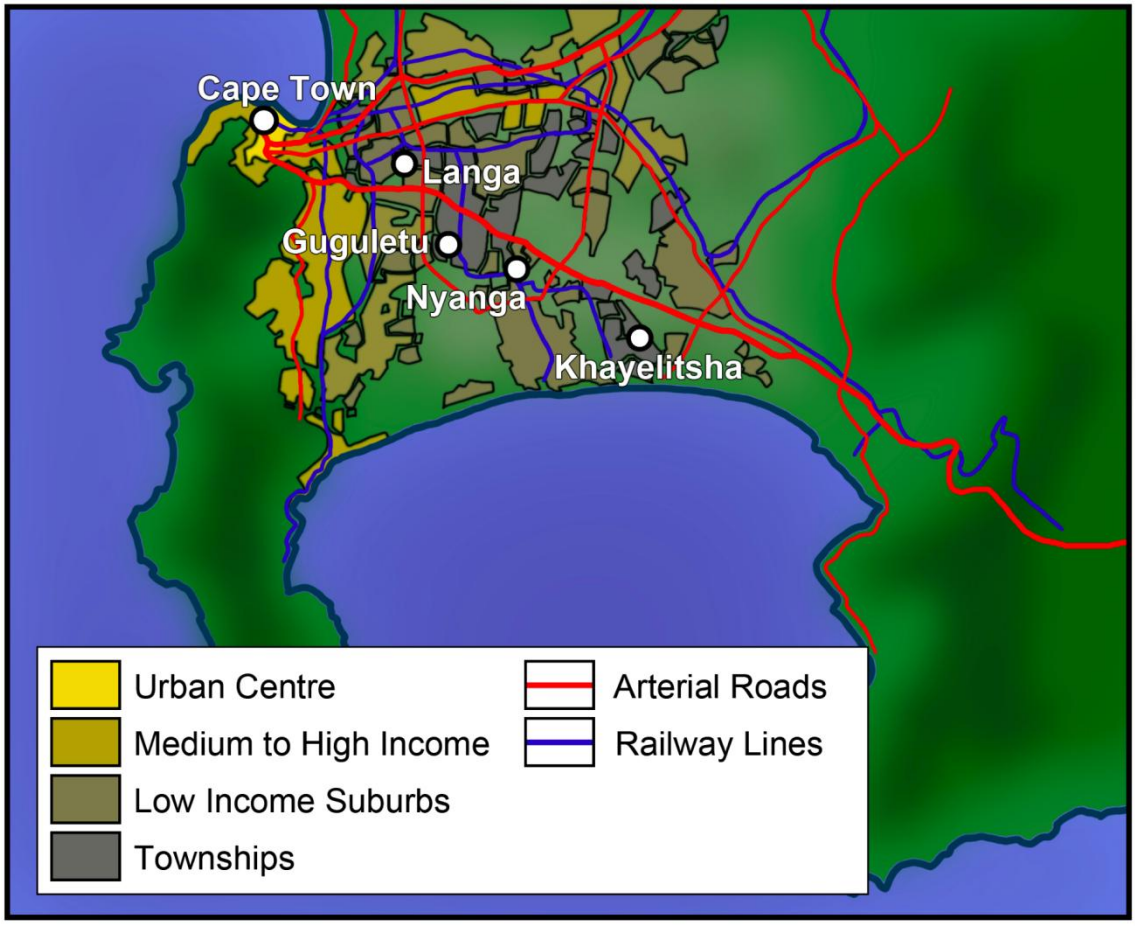

Figure 6. The invidious positioning of Cape Town's townships

Turok and Watson itemize major areas of stress which 'divergent development' causes to a city such as Cape Town that straddles a divide between rich and poor, resourced and unresourced (2001). These economic factors negatively affect the extent to which the spatially marginalized townships of Cape Town can be drawn into the city's economic development and therefore the ability of township dwellers to break the cycle of poverty.

First, servicing dispersed development raises infrastructural and operating costs as much as fourfold. It also raises the costs of maintaining public open spaces – which in turn affects parks, sports and schools' grounds.

Secondly, the public transport to move commuters from the townships to the central business district and affluent suburbs is both insufficient and under-resourced and yet extremely costly, both in terms of subsidies and for the commuters themselves. According to Clark and Crous the cost of commuting amounts to as much as 15% of the average annual household income (2000, in Turok & Watson).

At the same time, long travelling distances increase the time commuters spend away from home, which impacts on their efficiency, their time for family life and on absenteeism in the work place. Families anxious to augment their wage income have almost no alternative but to make extra money locally in the informal sector. But Turok and Watson maintain that nodes for informal trading are harder to find in dispersed environments.

At the same time all this commuting puts pressure on the few access roads to and from the townships. This precipitates struggles between subsidized buses and the taxi industry that as often as not turn violent and inevitably put ordinary citizens at risk. The divided city is likely to be further divided by political allegiances that function, at least partly, along territorial lines. The fragility and dubious nature of local leadership structures within townships is compounded by the threat that government policies and administration present to local power cliques, who therefore exploit divisions and uncertainties in the communities to retain their own power bases. (Turok & Watson, 2001).

All in all, divergent development favours the wealthy at the cost of the poor. This is problematic on many levels, succinctly summed up by Pillay:

> As a result of its geography and political history, South Africa's major cities are today faced with managing the problems of spatial fragmentation and displaced urbanization, lack of social cohesion, heavy reliance on subsidized urban transport, poorly functioning land and housing markets, urban sprawl and uneven land use development, and environmental degradation. These structural flaws have a number of consequences, especially for the urban poor. (Pillay 2004: 352)

Exploring some of Cape Town's townships

But what are the townships actually like? One way to satisfactorily answer this question is to go there. Following the advice of my colleagues who come from the townships and who are concerned for my safety, when I visit the townships I select my destination, drive directly to it and fairly rapidly go inside. When it is time to leave I return to my car and set off back to the leafy suburbs on the slopes of Table Mountain. So the perceptions I have of the townships are largely from the windows of a car. Nevertheless, time spent on the road can prove extremely informative.

Langa

Eight am on a weekday morning finds me travelling to Lagunya College in Langa. Langa is Cape Town's oldest township that was initially developed by the council to accommodate 'the natives' in the 1940s and further enlarged in the 1950s.

Gum, palm or poplar trees line many of the streets in which the small bungalows appear to have dug themselves into the dust of the Cape Flats: squat, solidly built red-brick dwellings, each in their own yard, set well back from the road. The air in Langa is rather sleepy: the distance to rail and Cape Town's central business district not a problem; and buildings other than homes are plentiful: schools, many churches, a library, clinic, educare, community centre, civic hall, art centre, old age home and the college, interspersed with tall gum trees spreading shade and something of an air of restfulness to the surround. Spare lots and bill boards advertising safe sex or hair styling provide colour and interest to passers-by.

Approaching the College grounds there is an air of festive and frenzied activity. It is pension day and on pension day the College hall is the pay-out point for all the Langa elderly. Many drums for cooking are alight and smoking opposite the College and the grounds are swarming with cars and pedestrians. Since the hall is occupied, we squeeze our way through the security turnstile into the school courtyard to conduct the drama lessons in an empty classroom.

Nyanga

A sunny mid-day in March finds me slowly driving into the heart of Nyanga for a meeting with the Ingqayi Educational Theatre Project. Nyanga is a township overloaded by population density. It was developed after 1946 to accommodate migrant labourers who could not fit into Langa. The dwellings vary between freestanding or semi-detached or dual-occupancy council houses, having outside toilets and frequent backyard shacks, four-family row houses, as well as state and employer-built hostels; which at periods in their history and in spite of their initial purpose, were housing 'one family per *bed*' [emphasis added] (Sikwebu, 1984, in Awetona et al 1995:2-6). From 1986 'temporary' camps sprang up in previously vacant land inside Nyanga, when refugees from conflict beween 'illegal' squatters claimed a space. They have remained there ever since.[64]

Today Nyanga is crammed with dwellings, population, transport and economic enterprise all converging in its overcrowded, under-resourced few hectares. The old hostels are now family flats and a shebeen has been converted into a police station. Every spare inch of space has its use: either for a house, a small business, a kiosk or a gathering of people (Awetona et al, 1995b).

Driving along, the road is crammed with vehicular and people traffic: industrial lorries, taxis, police vans and zooped-up cars. The Zolani Centre is located at the taxi rank which is a major commercial hub for street traders. My arrival with camera and tripod is surveyed with considerable interest by many of the vendors. Some are cooking meat over open fires, others

[64] Shack settlements are a permanent if problematic feature of Cape Town housing. Sometimes precipitating internecine wars and battles between inhabitants as well as with authorities, settlements have entrenched themselves in Crossroads, Nyanga, KTC, Browns Farm, and in Site C and B in Khayelitsha. Over time they have been serviced for water, sewage and in some instances electricity (Awetona et al 1995b)

supervise drums for brewing beer. Some have fruit and vegetable stalls and others trade in small retail items, sunglasses, belts, creams or cigarettes. The air is heavy with smoke and cooking smells. Music and voices are raised to do business. Quite a discussion ensues about where I should park my car and many enquiries (both implicit and articulated) proffered as to what (on earth) I might be doing there; after which the relative quiet and cool of the Zolani hall is a marked contrast.

Khayelitsha

8.30am on a wintry Thursday morning. At the crossroads a large, square building squats like a giant industrial beehive, all smooth white surfaces, steel and glass: the Oliver Thambo Sports and Recreation Centre. On the opposite side of Lansdowne Road, a confused jumble of corrugated iron, wood and industrial plastic shacks, clawed into the dune sand only a meter from the road, mark your entry into Khayelitsha.

Khayelitsha was established in 1984 in a reactive political decision to address a dire need, rather than being a proactive positive approach to urban development as a whole in the Cape. Originally planned as four sections that were to house 30,000 small, but expansible concrete dwelling units surrounded by arterial roads to Cape Town or further afield, formal housing in Khayelitsha has never managed to accommodate all who come to settle there (Awetona et al 1995b). After the apartheid government dismantled the Coloured Labour Preference policy, relaxed and finally abolished the pass laws in 1985, immigration from the Eastern Cape to Cape Town swelled the black (African) population eightfold to nearly a third of Cape Town's total population by 2000 (Ndegwa, Horner & Esau, 2007). So the spare spaces in Khayelitsha between formal accommodation and the national road rapidly filled with 'site and service' shacks and shanties that house this influx. (Awetona et al 1995b). In a survey in 2000, Ndegwa, Horner & Esau found that 79.5% of the Africans in the Khayelitsha / Mitchell's Plain district were born in the Eastern Cape. 73% arrived in Cape Town between 1985 and 2000. But Awotona et al make the point that infrastructural development of roads, drainage, refuse removal and electrification as well as the establishment of schools, clinics, libraries and other community facilities has lagged hopelessly behind population growth (Awotona, A et al. 1995b:3.1-20).

A continuous hum and roar of vehicle engines, taxi hooters and ghetto blasters accompany the line of vehicles – mostly crammed with passengers or goods – in which I ride down Mew Way. All along the sides of the road, street vendor stalls are already open for business even if it is slow at this hour. Furniture is for sale. Full lounge suites line the road, interspersed with first and second hand building materials. Haircuts and hairstyling, spaza shops, some housed in containers, sell anything from sweets to cabbages and cigarettes. Several mechanical repair shops promise to fix your car right there on the pavement. Large signposts alert you to the few tarred roads that venture deep into the township and that are intersected by a myriad of pot-holed, dusty, rubbish-strewn alleys and lanes. Every so often an electricity pylon

sprouts like a snake above the roofs of the dwellings, sporting a streetlight like a large sun-hat from its end. From it run a plethora of wires to each of the shacks and houses in the surround. Open space is likely to be inhabited by goats that are part of the informal economy.

Then there is a change when you enter a large section of 'core housing' and again a change when developer-built houses sport diverse indicators of relative economic stability. Facebrick additional walls, tiled roofs, an array of security gates and lock up garages signal individualised ownership. The properties are larger. The houses sometimes nurture shrubs or flowers and have a view not only of Table Mountain but also a green belt to the East and the Khayelitsha Look Out to the South which is a tentative infrastructural beginning to tourist facilities for the area. The lookout marks the turning into the security patrolled gates of the False Bay College where Khayelitsha school pupils, identified as promising, are completing their further education and training in maths and science.

Returning down Mew Way at midday the road is bustling with trade as well as pedestrians, hustlers and vehicles. Women carrying buckets of washing near the communal taps thread their way between the traffic to throw dirty water onto the middle of the road so that it will flow away with the road's slant. At midday the winter sunlight will dry their washing. There is always a lot going on because overcrowding and making do with what is to hand is a necessity of survival.

If we go with Simone's argument for viewing people as infrastructure, in as much as the *physical* infrastructure of the townships is sparse, by contrast, regularities and patterns in the actions of agents generates a workable, if imperfect, system. If you drive along Spine Road in Macassar, 'instant shacks' are on sale in large numbers along the road. The person in need of a house buys the entire shack which is then assembled at the selected site. The roof, windows and doors are knocked into place for the flat fee of R3,000. In Enkanini, the most recently established and largest shack settlement in Khayelitsha, not all residents have access to electricity. So you drive over numerous electric cables that lie across the road. More cables are slung loosely on the flimsiest of poles over the road. Houses on one side of the road, provided with electricity, 'share' the resource with those not having access on the other side. They divide the cost between them and plug their partner's supply line into their own electrical access (Sidwangube 2009).

Inhabitants of shack settlements such as Enkanini have come mainly from the poorest areas of Ciskei and Transkei – only to settle in the poorest district of the Cape metropolitan area: Khayelitsha. 'It is nevertheless richer than every single district of the 28 in the Transkei and richer than all but 1 of the 10 districts in the Ciskei' (Ndegwa, Horner and Esau, 2007: 231). Khayelitsha also has the highest level in Cape Town of HIV prevalence among its clinic attendees (Jelsma, Mkoka and Awosun, 2008).

Quality of life in the townships

Poor servicing and housing impact upon township residents. In 2004 Jelsma, Mkoka and Awosun researched Khayelitsha residents' perceptions of their health-related quality of life. They report:

> Despite being asked specifically to answer questions in relation to their health status, the participants apparently did not differentiate between general quality of life (QoL) and specific [health related quality of life] HRQoL. It appears that members of an underresourced community regard socio economic and service delivery aspects of their lives as integral to their perceived state of health. (2008: 347).

Their survey sample of 703 Khayelitsha residents (whose collective average age was 33.8 years) established that 'environmental' factors were perceived to be much more important than the other two categories of 'bodily functions' and 'activity and participation' in society when asked questions about their health-related quality of life. So, of the fifty-seven categories developed through 'group discussions with *isiXhosa* speaking people' to evaluate health-related quality of life; the results of the survey showed that eight of the top ten most favoured domains were environmental. In the following order, these were:

(i) 'having food for eating at home',
(ii) 'owning a brick house with electricity, water and sanitation';
(iii) having access to medical services such as hospitals and day clinics for self and family;
(iv) protection of family and friends from violence, crime and killings;
(v) ability to raise your children by yourself;
(vi) living in a peaceful neighbourhood;
(vii) having access to electricity; and
(ix) being able to spend time with your family (2008: 351).[65]

Easter Sunday evening in Khayelitsha. The sky has that soft-toned autumn glow over the tops of the billboards and closed up commercial stalls that line the parking lot outside Site B Community Hall. In the distance hunches the blue outline of Table Mountain. We are here to participate in a site-specific performance created by Mandla Mbothwe, in association with Magnet Theatre Community Groups Intervention and many of the theatre groups active in Khayelitsha and Macassar, as well as Yomalela Primary school and Jazzart Dance Theatre – some three hundred participants in all. The piece, called 'The revival of the spirit of Ubuntu in an urban contemporary village' is to begin with a procession through the streets of Khayelitsha as the sun is going down, carrying cane and paper candle-lit lanterns to the performance arena at

[65] The other two in the top ten were activity related, viz. eighth: 'being able to walk about' and tenth: 'being able to use toilet independently' (2008: 351).]

'Green Point' in Lansdowne, Khayelitsha.[66] The plan is that we will park our cars at the Site B community hall enclosure. However, contrary to plans, the police have not arrived to guard the cars and they can not be left without police protection.

Correlations between poverty and high incidences of criminal activity

Turok and Watson refer to international and local research that links social conglomerations of the poor with high levels of crime, insecurity and deprivation. Drawing on Moosa (1998) they argue:

> [H]igh unemployment and poverty generate intense competition for limited resources such as land, shelter and fuel. The pressures are intensified by the inflow of new rural migrants with even fewer resources and formal skills. Local gatekeepers (or 'warlords') take advantage of people's insecurity and the weak governance of the area. They allocate sites and other scarce resources in return for financial payments, loyalty and favours. Rivalry between them means an ongoing struggle for territory and power, which periodically breaks out into conflict and violence. This causes injury, trauma and social dislocation among innocent bystanders. The police are far too stretched to cope, leading to their demoralization and implication in crime. (2001: 127)

Crime is an unavoidable element of everyday life in Khayelitsha. It crops up regularly in the plays and is an element of daily life for the theatre-makers. On Easter Sunday evening the lack of police presence meant that those of us who came by car had to follow the lantern procession in our cars to the performance site, but it didn't diminish the excitement of the occasion. Risk is a factor of everyday existence in Khayelitsha.

It seems as if every resident of Khayelitsha is on the street on Easter Sunday evening; strolling, cooking for customers or for own family, washing hair, or just plain socialising. Each tiny shanty or solidly built house is lit and lived in and as the streets grows darker, through the windows one observes a hundred intimate details of life going forward in a thousand small rooms as well as in the shadows beyond the doorway where the performance is about to begin on the netball court. Grandmothers, matriarchs of the community, young men, school children and even the odd white theatre enthusiast gather around the hundreds of lanterns that demarcate the space of performance, chatting, jostling for a good view, wondering whether to sit or stand for the best view. All the spectators are excited and anticipatory as to what will happen next. Behind us the small houses hunker down into the sand of the Cape Flats.[67]

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[66] This square was named Green Point after the green tents that housed the first settlement camp on that site. Possibly the name is also a deliberate appropriation of the name of an affluent suburb adjoining Cape Town city centre that today holds the World Cup soccer stadium.

[67] Post the event, Magnet Theatre held a day-long reflection at Hiddingh Campus UCT that included representatives from the theatre groups Manyanani, Iselwa le Sizwe, Mathew Goniwe, Iqhude, Masimbambisane and Imbehyu. The visual arts, dance, theatre and music facilitators, Yomalela Primary School staff and students, members of the Magnet Theatre executive and even members of the audience contributed as distinct groupings in the reflection. This project was undertaken to revive the spirit of *ubuntu* in the face of HIV / AIDS and had the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and SANCO as partners. The reflective process makes clear that those involved valued a 'first time' outdoor *safe* event happening in Khayelitsha. Their concerns went around the lack of police presence, the difficulties of walking so far (eg from Macassar) to rehearsals and the challenges of discipline within the groups. On the plus side they felt that everybody learnt new skills, had a new aesthetic experience which included the

Reconceptualising the townships

I have tried to indicate in the descriptions of townships above that in spite of severe shortcomings in the built environment as a whole and extremely high levels of crime, a picture of unmitigated doom and gloom is inappropriate because it sidelines the people. Jacob Dlamini writes:

> In a sense, to define townships in terms of their problems is to reduce township residents themselves to problems – instead of seeing them as people *with* problems, some of which are personal and others collective: just like every human being on earth, in fact. (2009:118)

Earlier I pointed out that the townships are not a recent phenomenon. Segregation began with imperialist and colonialist invasions of the Cape of Good Hope in the 17th century. Successive colonial administrations and governments sought to separate indigenous peoples from the ruling classes and colonial elites. In the 20th century and particularly during the years of apartheid, nationalism and racism obscured issues of class and economy whilst spatialised and racialised segregation ensured who had what land, resources, opportunity and education. Legislation entrenched race as the ultimate arbiter of privilege. It legalized job reservation - including labour preference policies in favour of whites over coloureds and of coloureds over blacks, designated so-called 'group areas' for particular 'race groups', and instituted so-called 'homelands' – each with its corresponding pass laws - to restrict places of residence, work and legal ownership by race.[68]

Spatialised segregation served to restrict the movement of blacks between provinces, rural areas and towns. It fostered the migrant labour system, the development of dormitory accommodation in township hostels for 'migrant workers', the prevalence of 'illegal' squatting and the concomitant process of forced removals. Spatialised racism coupled with racialised job reservation precipitated the breaking up of families and family life, as parents worked away from home and lived in locations or at the homes of employees. It precipitated the development of resettlement camps in the rural areas on the one hand and of large townships with their concomitant informal shanty towns and back yard dwellings near towns on the other. Awetona et al explain how the 'township project' precipitated such low levels of infrastructural development:

> Since until the mid 1980s the primary purpose of African presence in the cities was defined as serving white-owned commerce and industry, physical and social linkages

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lantern parade, working with fire, drumming and dancing, and developed confidence and community cohesion. Parents from Khayelitsha expressed delight and pride at the achievement and capabilities of their children. (Morris: notes)

[68] In 'The pillars of apartheid' Michael Stent (1994:54) succinctly coagulates the key acts of the Nationalist government which effected racialised and spacialised segregation of land, jobs, amenities, education and opportunities. In short, these were the Prohibition of mixed marriages act (1949), the Population registration act (1950), the Group areas act (1950), Natives (Abolition [sic!] of passes and co-ordination of documents) act (1952), the Separate amenities act (1953), the Bantu education act (1953), the Extension of university education act (1959), the Promotion of bantu self-government act (1959) and the Bantu homelands act (1970).

> between African townships and the rest of the city were considered only in the crudest possible terms. These areas were never intended to sustain a rich and diverse internal life, and most are underserved in the context of an urban structure that distributes urban opportunity of every kind unequally. (Awotona et al 1995a:11)

Gordon Pirie sums up the baggage that townships have had to carry from apartheid as an 'inefficient, iniquitous, degrading and detested urban legacy' (2005: 338).

But after the institution of democratic governance in 1994, only with the greatest difficulty are townships managing *not* to get worse.[69] Purportedly it is no longer race that keeps townships down. However, as I have pointed about above, space (and who owns and manages what spaces) still plays a critical role. And race has been supplanted by money.

In *World City Syndrome: Neoliberalism and Inequality in Cape Town* (2008) David McDonald argues that the ANC government has espoused capitalism as the golden road to achieving 'a better life for all'. In spite of resistance from the trade unions, market-orientated policies are pursued on the grounds that economic growth effected by the rich is the best means to rescue the poor from poverty. Economic growth and infrastructural development of commercial environments is supposed to effect a 'trickle down' to the working classes and translate into jobs and infrastructural development.

Apart from having problems with capitalism in general, McDonald argues that globalization is pressuring third world cities to aspire to be 'world cities'. It is presumed that the latter will attract world-wide economic activity by serving the needs of global economic giants and that in time this will improve the lot of the entire city population. McDonald argues that Cape Town's development as a world city is heavily skewed in favour of those areas of Cape Town attractive to international and local capital. The poor remain exactly where they were or indeed might become worse off, as costs rise and development passes them by because it does not take place in the vicinity of the townships.

Contributors to *Consolidating developmental local government: lessons from the South African experience* (Van Donk et al 2008) engage with the challenge of investigating ways to turn around the depressed areas of Cape Town. They make the point in many different ways that financial resourcing is not all that is needed to create a different Cape Town. Picking up this theme in *Native nostalgia,* Dlamini emphasizes 'the role that townships must play in the constitution of the public sphere, the evolution of nationhood, citizenship and identity in post-apartheid South Africa' (2009:112). A conception of the townships as intrinsically part of the mother city, as a key resource rather than an unfortunate detritus whose acquiescence to political and social change can be 'bought' by the injection of sufficient capital, foregrounds a view of the townships as sites of possibility and change.

[69] In a study of this nature it is impossible to engage with the complexity of the challenges, amongst which political struggles at local, regional and national level, and rapid population growth due to ongoing immigration from country to city, would feature very large. The point is that even with the best will in the world the townships of Cape Town - Khayelitsha in particular - are extremely hard to turn around.

It was the detection of the agency of township residents, as depicted in township plays, that allowed me to perceive this conception. Township theatre-makers are always already busy with the overarching project of interrogating the present and conceiving of the townships as intrinsic to the future of the city.

Conclusion

The endeavour of this chapter has been to understand how the townships are centrally formative for township theatre-makers, to the extent that I have proposed that the space of the township itself is the cultural context most responsible for shaping its theatre.

Classifying features of township representation (evident in the plays) according to the practice theory dimensions of entities, activities and meanings, allows a picture of the townships to emerge. In many instances it is a dark picture of economic and infrastructural instability and deprivation; of townships riddled with social problems from women abuse to gangsterism and murder. I have sketched the development of Cape Town's economic and human settlements, drawing attention to the constant interplay between political and economic forces. These have divided, and continue to divide, the city's physical and natural resources between the haves and the have-nots to the detriment of the latter. Sixteen years of democratic rule have only ameliorated and not fundamentally altered the economic and material inferiorities of the townships.

On the other hand, empirical experience of township environments and the plays' analysis, also allows a brighter side of the picture to emerge. Whilst studying the plays produced in this apparently disorderly world, I came across multiple devices used by township theatre-makers and citizens to circumvent, overcome or even endure their difficulties. The process prompted me to reconceive of the townships as people-driven spaces in which agents employ multiple creative strategies and tactics to accommodate constant change and retain faith in their communities. These people-driven systems are generated by and in the township habitus.

The plays show that township circumstances predispose residents to concede to the power of the collective over the individual, to order their world as and when they are able, and to accommodate change when it is unavoidable. These tactics are life sustaining. They are important examples of the ways in which the circumstances of township living predispose residents to function therein effectively. They also have positive spin-offs in the field of theatre.

Chapter 5 will explore how the township playing culture generates other creative possibilities and skills that also influence township theatre. Playing culture goes some of the way to explaining the high levels of performatic skill and participation that township youth bring to their theatre-making activities.

5. PLAYING CULTURE: PERFORMATIC REPERTOIRE IN THE TOWNSHIPS

Introduction

In chapter 4 I argued that the makeshift township environment nurtures a habitus which predisposes people to rely on people-driven, rather than material, systems, groups or collectives. The apparently disorderly everyday is tackled by a disposition to order behaviour and the environment by means of all kinds of patterning, and to accommodate the unexpected by 'expecting' it. These elements of township habitus infuse the local playing culture that is the focus of this chapter.

In chapter 2 I developed a concept description of theatrical playing culture. Having identified the intrinsic attributes of playing, culture, and the theatrical, I posited that theatrical playing culture is embodied in both participants and spectators and is therefore tethered to human activity and the here and now. It is activity that is playful, communicative and eventified.

The analytic approach for this chapter is theoretically driven, but again it was recurrences and lacunae in the data that informed interpretation as I generated a language of description. To give a relatively obvious example: a striking characteristic of the plays is the prolific and elaborated use of dance and song. Was this because 'township theatre' - as developed by Gibson Kente and later created by Mbongeni Ngema - had somehow filtered across thirty-five years and several regions of South Africa to theatre groups in Cape Town? This did not appear practically feasible. Was it because local education in theatre, to which township practitioners are sometimes exposed, focused on dance and song? I knew this not to be the case. Or, was it because township theatre group members have everyday exposure to the use of dance and song in the context of church worship and the practice of cultural ceremonies – both of which sets of everyday practices were born out by my play records?

Through recurrent perusal of the data in light of Sauter (2000) and TEWG's investigations into playing culture, Ingold's notion of embedded learning (2000), Diana Taylor's notion of archive and repertoire (2003), and Scheub's scrutiny of Nguni storytelling (2002, 1998, 1975), I identified the formative influence of the performatic repertoire within township playing culture. This repertoire inculcates certain dispositions in township dwellers, including the youth who practise theatre.

This chapter is largely devoted to conceptualising these dispositions, which I have clustered together under the rubrics 'immediacy', 'patterning' and 'storytelling'. Thereafter a performance of a township play is examined in order to demonstrate 'the context within the text', in other words the influence of the performatic dispositions and the inclinations of township habitus, as they emerge in the theatrical event.

Embedded learning

Ingold maintains that humans are not set apart from their environment but rather are inextricably part of it. They grow, develop and change within it as it changes around them. He writes of Siberian hunters who operate with 'sentient ecology' which he describes thus:

> It is knowledge not of a formal, authorised kind, transmissible in contexts outside those of its practical application. On the contrary, it is based in feeling, consisting in the skills, sensitivities and orientations that have developed through long experience of conducting one's life in a particular environment. (2000: 25)

Ingold posits that we learn via a 'poetics of dwelling' (2000: 26). We learn as we go and grow in the world. We learn with our bodily being in the world. We learn through the examples and through the admonishments and encouragement of others.

Similarly Diana Taylor argues that performance in itself is a way of knowing and transmitting knowledge (2003). Practising is the sine qua non of performatic knowing, skill and communication. The repertoire is imbued in each participant by everyday usage, by means of mimicry, repeated attempts, improvisation, oral instruction and imaginative (re)interpretations. It is a knowing which inheres in the bodies of the performers and is mostly tacit, unable to be expressed verbally, written down, or learnt from a manual. The transmission of this performatic repertoire by means of practising, repeating, imitating, improvising and performing, from parents to children, storyteller to audience, elders to youthful initiates, friends to friends, choir master to choristers, grandparents to grandchildren, fosters the style, imbues performatic conventions, refines skills, and thus generates performatic dispositions in township youth. This shared repertoire in everyday life is recruited when the youth make theatre and it is recognised and taken up by the audience as well.

Both Taylor (2003) and Ingold (2000) invoke the role of habitus, because acquiring the skills of the local performatic repertoire is a process of observation and practice embedded in the processes of everyday life; so that the child becomes familiar with the structures and skills without such knowledge becoming conscious: it is part of the '*modus operandi'* which:

> is transmitted in practice, in its practical state, without attaining the level of discourse. The child imitates not "models" but other people's actions. Body *hexis* speaks directly to the motor function, in the form of a pattern of postures that is both individual and systematic, because linked to a whole system of techniques involving the body and tools, and charged with a host of social meanings and values …. (Bourdieu, 1977:87)

Bourdieu and Ingold are not mystifying the acquisition of skill. Ingold identifies three characteristics of skill which testify to the intrinsic embeddedness of skills within activities in the world. First, skills must not be separated out as instrumental to culture or art, rather they are 'properties of the whole system of relations constituted by the presence of the practitioner in his or her environment'. Secondly, skilled practice is always relational: finding the best fit between materials and practitioner which takes the context into account as well. This point is extensively developed in the work of Scheub (2002, 1998, 1975) on storytelling. Thirdly, skills can not be

objectively systematised and codified, but are learnt rather through 'a mixture of improvisation and imitation in the settings of practice' (2000:401).

What Ingold's poetics of dwelling suggests to me with reference to the skilling of township performers is that individual giftedness and formal theatre training apart, in their everyday rehearsals and practices, performers sustain and further develop the performatic repertoire with which they have grown up.

Transmission via the repertoire

One of the plays in the Ikhwezi Festival, *Ziph' Inkomo?* [Where are the cows?] generated responses in our focus group audience interview that reveal how the performatic repertoire transmits knowledge and skills. The audience identify with this style of teaching and learning, as represented in the play. They are at home with the performatic forms, which recall conventions of traditional storytelling. Harold Scheub makes the case for the *Nguni* storyteller as entertainer, artist, teacher and archivist (2002, 2000, 1998, 1996, 1977, 1975 & Zenani,1992). Scheub argues that the storyteller is the one who transmits and reinforces the culture and performatic practices of the community. Audience reponses to this play endorse his argument and Taylor's related point that the repertoire rehearses, recalls and reinvents oral history, folklore, social practices, arts and crafts, behavioural and economic practices as well as performance-based practices such as singing (2003).

The play is about the feelings and perceptions of two young men who are herding the family cattle in the country. Beyond two sticks, no props are used (*Ziph' Inkomo* 2007a)[70]. Audience responses reveal that the rural way of life depicted in the play is familiar to them. They relate to the subject matter with a sense of affectionate ownership, deeming it important.

> T1: I felt included throughout the whole play. *I loved the part* when they changed themselves into cows – it was very subtle.
> T2: The theme, what it was about, was reality. I have experienced it. If you are from the rural areas you would know what they are talking about.
> T3: That play was close to us; or let me say it was close to me - as someone who grew up in the Eastern Cape. They spoke about cows, and everything they were doing … I was once in that situation.

Audience comments reveal that the repertoire transmits and teaches traditions of the clan or community within performatic forms that are aesthetically pleasing and fun to do:

> T3: I liked that they brought back our cultural dances and games. Some people do not understand that 'stick-fighting' is a dance-movement. So their show had dance, some people would say, 'That show did not have a dance' [but] there *was* a dance!

The inextricability of content (the importance of the cow in *Nguni* culture) and dramatic form is revealed in the comment below.

[70] *Ziph' Nkomo* was developed by Ukhamba Theatre Productions from Mpumalanga. Since this play was not created in Cape Town, it has not been used for the purposes of analysis in this study. However the Ikhwezi Festival audience that responded to the play is of course a local one and for the most part are likely to have been nurtured in the *Nguni* culture.

> T3: They taught us the importance of a cow, throughout the play. Most people do not know that a cow is important. Some of them just know that a cow can be milked and get meat. But now when we look at that play we understand: '*Wow,* the cow-dung can make fire!' For example, [referring to mimed enactment within the play] that guy first felt the cow-dung, felt that it is wet, and then moved on to get a dry one. So this teaches us that fire also comes from the cow - everything is about the importance of a cow.[71]

Taylor's point that the repertoire is not only performatic, but also visual arts, is evident:

> T3: What I also liked is that their art was not only acting and dance but also sculpting of cow-dung. They brought all kinds of the *arts* into one play.
> Q: So there were lots of genres of art?
> T3: Yes, they showed that they are not only actors but they are also good with their hands. They showed us everything in one play: music, singing, dance and crafting.

The response below demonstrates how the repertoire transmits culture as shared ways of doing things, whilst simultaneously engaging the audience ideologically and emotionally:

> T4: To me, personally, it was a learning thing. I hear about boys being taken to initiation school but I do not know what happens there. They gave me a clear version of things that happen there. And secondly, as you have said, the title is 'Where are the cows' but it was not only about cows. It was about culture. It was about boys growing up. They were showing their naughtiness, the games of boys and the songs of boys. It was all to do with *boys* growing up. [The speaker uses the term for 'boys' which denotes that they are not yet deemed to be adults; ie they are uninitiated.]

Here we see how history is transmitted by such a play:

> T1: I liked the way they showed how *Amahlubi* came about [a *isiXhosa*-speaking clan] because I know that there are people speaking funny Xhosa but I do not understand where they come from. So I liked the part when they reveal that there was a fight between the *Swatis* and *Zulus* and that is how *Amahlubi* came about. I am a *Hlubi* and *that was the first time* I heard this. They taught me ….

The following respondent reflects wistfully on a rural childhood versus the reality of growing up in the townships. Notice how the rural is cast as 'the past', whilst the townships are 'the present' reality. The comment goes to the value of cultural practices, possibly particularly for township children, because of the problematic nature of their surroundings:

> T3: It also shows that as kids grow up [in the country] they could have their own games. Especially, for example, long ago …For my part, I wish kids from the location could come and watch it [this play]. Because for them I do not see much fun anymore: now they are learning how to stab and so on. But then they had games for children, they would have fun. It shows how close the friends are. And when they were sent to take the cows to the fields it was not a punishment but an opportunity for them to have fun. They had time to get to know one another. (2007b)

Dispositions generated by the performatic repertoire

Having established in the above example how useful and prevalent the performatic repertoire is to township youth, the issue is to identify the skills and dispositions it fosters that assist township theatre-makers. Sifting through my data sets, noticing what repeatedly and

[71] Poland's novel, *Recessional for Grace* (2003), as well as *The Abundant Herds: a celebration of the cattle of the Zulu people* that Poland co-authored with Hammonde-Tooke (2003) both explicate the importance of the cattle to the *Nguni.* As pointed out in Chapter 4, there are township residents who keep cattle that graze on the verges of the roads and in vacant lots adjacent to the townships.

prominently recurred, brought to light three dispositions that underpin and partially define the character of theatre making in the township. These dispositions, which I call immediacy, patterning and storytelling, predispose township performers towards a certain kind of playmaking, performing and audiencing; the character of which is revealed in the course of this study.

But before going to the concept descriptions of the dispositions, the effects of their generation in the playing culture of the township must be considered. There are significant congruences between the township habitus, discussed in chapter 4, and the dispositions of the playing culture that will be discussed below, that arise out of the same environment. The distinctions between them help to distinguish conceptually between playing culture and the cultural context of the township as a whole. All dispositions have an ideological underpinning that is realized in practice, as Bourdieu points out. Distinguishing between dispositions generated by the cultural context of the township and its playing culture, is achieved by noticing differences of emphasis.

The township habitus, although possessing a performative dimension, is powerfully ideological in orientation. This is evident in the dispositions to order, to accommodate change by accepting switches between opposing moral positions, and to situate the power to make decisions in collective rather than individual will.[72] In other words, these dispositions are tactics for living.

Whereas the dispositions of playing culture are largely performatic. They nurture a range of performance skills in township youth and performatic orientations – to patterning and storytelling in particular. These dispositions are tactics for playing.

So, for example, where the performatic disposition of patterning is evident in the playing culture's prolific engagement with ritual, dance and song, the township habitus employs patterning of, for instance, the ways of greeting different sectors of people within the community, or in life stage rituals such as coming to womanhood in *mbeleco* ceremonies.

Another example of congruencies between the habitus of township and playing culture is to be found in the disposition to immediacy (within playing culture) that I call sustained precariousness, and the disposition to accommodate change in the township habitus. The former is evident in the to and fro oscillation between two possible courses of action in storytelling. The latter predisposes township residents to accommodate change by accepting that people switch between 'good' and 'bad' behaviour. This example suggests that the habitus of the township and of playing culture predispose residents to similar ontological ends using different tactics.

When analysing the dispositions to which the performatic repertoire gives rise, it is important to note that in actual lived experience, these three dispositions are not distinct but are

[72] As pointed out earlier, the reader is once again reminded that this study does not presume to offer a comprehensive account of the township habitus. It deals with the latter only in so far as it has been able to determine by data analysis the effects of the township habitus on theatre-making practices.

embedded within each other. Teasing them out as 'stand alone' dispositions with distinctive attributes is hypothetical, undertaken for the purposes of analytic clarity. I hope that conceptualising them distinctly is helpful to understanding in material terms the influence on township performers of involvement with a performatic repertoire. Finally our discussion turns to the analysis of the three identified dispositions of the performatic repertoire which assist the theatre-makers.

Immediacy

An understanding of 'immediacy' starts ontologically, from the basic premise that performers and audience coming together at the same time in the same space is essential to the creation of a theatrical event. They have to be immediate to each other. But understood as a disposition within the performatic repertoire, immediacy has several features. I have termed these bodily engagement, pleasure, sustained precariousness and presence. Each will be analysed below, not forgetting the essential feature proposed by Gadamer, that activities within the performatic repertoire are undertaken for their own sake (1979). Therefore performers and audiences must derive satisfaction from being present, even as they pretend to be within the world of the play. The two worlds – the real, and the created world of performance, 'smudged' together generate pleasurable satisfaction.

Pleasure

Caillois says that people can not be forced to play (2001). They can be forced to go through the motions but this can hardly be deemed to be playing until they enter into the spirit of the game. Likewise, there is a willing subscription to activities within the performatic repertoire. And if an activity is undertaken for its own sake that is arguably because it is enjoyable, even entrancing, and at worst pleasurably tormenting. Within performance, players express and transmit a range of emotional states that are experienced vicariously by the audience as well. Scheub emphasizes that the emotions of both performer and audience members are part of the raw material and ultimate purpose of storytelling (1998).[73] In performances or storytelling, unhappy or negative emotional states are entered into or expressed, such as despair or sorrow. However these meta-emotions do not diminish the simultaneous pleasure of performing and spectating. On the contrary, paradoxically, they might increase it.[74] We have returned to Gadamer's proposition that 'the concept of aesthetic consciousness confronted with an object *does not correspond with the real situation*' [my emphasis] (1979: 91). Storytelling reflects on everyday reality by creating works which, paradoxically, are unlike reality. As Gadamer points out, the emotions that sustain the stories are meta-emotions: strong in their felt experience but unrelated to

[73] Diana Taylor makes the same point about the effects of working with the repertoire, particularly in semi-literate communities (2003).

[74] The point is further reinforced by Henri Schoenmakers who, on the basis of research conducted by Elly Konijn (1994, 2000) that investigates the relationships which pertain between the emotional state of the actor and that of the character that the actor portrays, argues that these emotional states are not necessarily found to coincide or even be related (2009).

everyday experiences. Audience members responded to *Beneath silent waters* at the Ikhwezi Festival (2007a):

> T1: From my side I took things personally. To me it is the way they live: they were expressing their feelings. I don't know how to explain it: it's like the real thing.
> Q: So it was like actors acting their own lives?
> T1: Yes
> Q: So you *bhuti* [brother], what did you think of the play?
> T4: I was chatting to this lady next to me and I was saying that the way they have written today's play [makes it] a community theatre play. The stories these ladies [the actors] were expressing are so expressive, so beautiful, so much so that I can relate to everything that they were talking about! There were such beautiful moments that I was changing from position to position on my chair you know! And their storyline, you know, it's like things that happened in the townships while I was growing up, you see.
> Q: For example?
> T4: Like the political situations the lady was talking about from the 1980's - she took me there because I grew up in that era you know. Children that are being raped in communities and things like that, which are happening now. Church things, spirituality, things like that. It's like they've taken the community to Baxter. [2007b]

Notice what pleasure respondent 'T4' takes in recalling plays that deal with things such as rape and political struggle. So pleasure is enhanced because the activity is only partially real. It is actually a playing activity. The pleasure is further enhanced by other characteristics discussed below.

Bodily engagement

The activities of the repertoire such as improvisation, mimicry, audiencing, oral instruction and memorisation all involve bodily engagement in gesturing, posturing, reciting etc. Bodily engagement does not imply that consciousness is not involved. On the contrary, the engagement harnesses will, senses, thoughts, imagination and feelings. Note that respondent 'T4' above, testified to the extent of his engagement in the play by alluding to how he squirmed around in his seat. Young people in the townships are predisposed towards bodily engagement in theatrical performance. They enjoy and explore the expressive capacities of the body that they manipulate with humour and delicacy because the disposition to do this has been inculcated in them by the habitus of the local playing culture.

Sustained precariousness

Playing is a self-selected activity, undertaken willingly, so there is always the option that it can be deselected. Since the activities that fall within performatic playing culture take their purpose from within their own activity, loss of player or spectator or participant interest or investment in the activity will precipitate its collapse. In this sense activities within the ambit of playing culture are fragile, or evanescent, which state paradoxically increases the activity's allure because it may soon be over. This characteristic is aptly summed up in the descriptor: 'sustained precariousness'.[75] In the *'Mzantsi'* play discussed below, much of the overall rhythm derives

[75] I derived this term from the discussion at a meeting of the Theatrical Event Working Group (April 2009, Amsterdam) in which Vicky Anne Cremona and Loren Kruger came up with the term 'sustained

from impulses that are pursued energetically at first and then lose their charm and become too hard to follow through.

Presence

Presence has been much theorized by theatre practitioners (See Barba & Savarese 1991 and Chaikin 1991). But these theorists do not attribute presence to involvement with a local performatic repertoire as is asserted here. Because activities within the performatic repertoire are undertaken volitionally there is a sense in which players and spectators surrender to the game and become fully absorbed. This 'present presence' communicates its own intensity of being that is (paradoxically) enhanced by being witnessed as you bear witness.

In summary bodily engagement, pleasure, sustained precariousness and presence are so many facets of immediacy: being present in the moment of engagement with the repertoire. Immediacy generates its own energy and allure. It attracts and demands attention, and if it does not achieve attention then the activity, or the enthusiasm for the activity, usually peters out. It accounts for a good deal of our enjoyment.

In light of this understanding of immediacy it is quite apparent that all the aspects identified above are generic characteristics of theatrical communication, and therefore broadly applicable. What is distinctive in the context of township theatre however, is their predominating character. There are a few reasons for that, which I have already mentioned, but possibly are worth recalling. Firstly, because township theatre on the whole has precious little recourse to sophisticated theatre technology, the key (and sometimes only) medium which it uses is actors. This is nothing new to township performers because of their inculcation in the repertoire, but it frequently makes them extremely adept at using the body and all its resources for theatrical communication. Secondly, theatre in the township comprises part of the local active playing culture. Few people in the township make a living out of practising theatre and yet many participate. Part of the reason they do so is that it is fun. In a certain sense they are playing. Township theatre evinces a widespread orientation to the playful, to sustained precariousness and to pleasure, which generates much of its legendary 'energy' that I mentioned in the introduction. All of these characteristics generate presence in the actors which, in my experience of town theatre, I do not perceive so frequently or so intensely amongst 'town' actors of equivalent age and experience.

Now I make a caveat. In this study I have elected not to focus on theatrical playing and so I do not interrogate theatrical communication in and of itself. Because I have de-selected this domain for my analysis of theatre in the townships, immediacy is not foregrounded. This is not to say that immediacy is not important and where it colours other aspects of theatre-making it is drawn into the discussion, but unlike, for example, patterning, it does not predominate in this

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precarity'. Caillois too focuses upon this characteristic with respect to play which he calls 'unpredictable', an 'uncertain activity' (2001: 7).

account. On the other hand, in order to enjoy and appreciate the theatre that is the focus of this study, it is helpful to bear immediacy in mind, particularly when reading the plays in the appendices. Immediacy is a major part of their allure.

Patterning

In this study, patterning refers to all manner of patterned actions, rather than pattern as an inert 'thing'. Singing, dancing, sequences of gestures, repeating designs of (and on) clothing or on the walls of houses, patterning is understood in terms of its repetitive, sequencing or ordering orientations, rather than in the sense of suggesting a template or model. Nevertheless it is apparent that these various meanings somewhat overlap.

The disposition to create order and balance by means of patterning was introduced as part of the township habitus in Chapter 4. The argument here is that patterning is also a kinaesthetic disposition, elaborated in and by the performatic repertoire. It is difficult to map the extent or borders of patterning in the repertoire and this is a task which has been undertaken by many scholars of oral literature and storytelling, including Harold Scheub and Isidore Okpewho. Consequently the ensuing remarks merely introduce the pervasive reach of patterning within the township performatic repertoire.

As I pointed out in Chapter 4, patterning is a means of ordering an activity so that it becomes increasingly pleasing, intelligible and coherent, both to those practising and watching. Because it sorts and repeats, patterning facilitates recall. I shall focus upon the aspect of repetition for a moment.

Repetition

Repetition and variation are the two constant ordering devices within patterning. As an activity, repetition is the way to mastery through practice, and also to remembering. It is a key means to embed the process, the routine, the steps, the words, the tune, in memory, assisted by a whole collection of oral mnemonic devices such as verbal cues, core clichés and images, proverbs, sayings, and customary methods of address (Okpewho, 1992:71-8). Repetition always requires return to the same proposition, which assists remembering. Tunes may be described as 'catchy' because their oft-repeated melodic lines latch on to memory, and it is easier to remember a rhyming couplet than two lines of unrhymed verse.

Repetition is not only a mnemonic and a core component of patterning but also serves to emphasise or develop dramatic tension in performance. Combined within rhyme or rhythm, repetition becomes enthralling, even hypnotic, and can serve to deepen emotional states in players and audience. Repetition is nearly always used in ritual. All of these uses will be examined in the discussion of *'Mzantsi'* below.

Patterning and rhythm

It is important to note overall that patterning clarifies. So it is 'soothing'. It therefore heightens the aesthetic appeal of an activity and enhances the emotional satisfaction derived out of it by means of a number of devices which include (most significantly) rhythm, dance, music and narrative structure.

Rhythm is perhaps the most important device of patterning because it plays between repetition and change, so it is not boring but it is seductive. Rhythm of speech, song, or dance involves manipulations of *time*, such as pace, pause or duration, *energy*, such as changes of weight, degree of attack, volume or resonance, and *space*, such as variations of pitch, intensity, direction, area or floor pattern (Laban 1971). Rhythm is essential to theatre that is pleasing because it is invigorating, emotionally appealing and relaxing at the same time. The overall rhythm of an entire performance is often the key driver of the emotional tone and may determine the success or failure of the play in maintaining its hold over the attention of the audience. The most sophisticated uses of rhythm are of course found within dance and music.

The influence of church and traditional singing and dancing is pervasive throughout the repertoire in terms of melodic lines, drumming rhythms, part singing and harmonies, dance movements, floor patterns and arrangements of bodies in space. Dance utilises patterning not only within its rhythmic structure but also in steps, sequences and gesture, employing such devices as symmetry and the repetition and development of movement phrases and motifs. Music is actually the patterning of sound. In the context of theatre in the townships, apart from recorded music, the musical landscape is developed chiefly by means of drumming and song, with variations and modalities developed by melody, harmony and counterpoint.

Repetition and change: switching

As I have already point out, patterning doesn't only consists of repetition. Change is essential, which brings us to the device that I call switching. Stepping back from notions of switching as an aesthetic attribute, let us consider it ontologically for a moment.

Overall playing and performing are spaces of chance and uncertainty in which ideas, tactics, roles, attitudes and arguments may be tried out. Gadamer points out that: 'In order for there to be a game, there always has to be, not necessarily literally another player, but something else with which the player plays and which automatically responds to his move with a counter-move' (1979: 95). Switching – from good to bad, this opinion to that, this loyalty to that, provokes surprise and jeopardises the endeavour's continuity, returning us to the notion of sustained precariousness discussed above. Gadamer describes play in both literal and metaphoric terms as being characterised by a to and fro oscillation:

> If we examine how the word 'play' is used and concentrate on its so-called transferred meanings we find talk of the play of light, the play of the waves, the play of a component in a bearing case, the inter-play of limbs, the play of forces, the play of gnats, even a play on words. In each case what is intended is the to-and-fro movement which is not tied to any goal which would bring it to an end. (1979:93)

Metaphorically speaking, in considering the validity of a proposition, a party might 'play around with several scenarios'. My fiancé may be accused of 'playing with my feelings': in other words of not maintaining a constant loyalty or positive attitude towards me, which suggests that his feelings 'run hot and cold' between positive and negative poles. This back and forth motion suggests that we go over the same ground again and again in play, albeit with slight variations each time.

In the townships where very little is reliably regular or sustained, chance and uncertainty are as certain as anything else. In such a context, employing the device of switching in the performatic repertoire, embeds the certainty of change within the sphere of meaning, as I proposed in Chapter 4. Switching posits the possibility that there may be a return to the previous position from which change was made. Within performance, naming a problem, be it apathy, self-interest, ignorance, drunkenness or aggression, by enacting it in performance may not solve the problem but it is the first step towards envisaging its opposite, as Paulo Freire makes clear (1976). When the problem is enacted before participants and audience they can begin to comprehend the after-effects and implications. Seeing one proposition clearly, paradoxically, facilitates conceiving of its opposite. This too is a kind of patterning, inculcated in the township habitus and practised performatively in the repertoire.

In summary, the disposition to patterning sets up a pleasing interplay in the performatic repertoire between, for example, the calm certainty of the known and the exciting uncertainty of the unknown; or the reassurance of telling the truth against the dreaded unknown of lying. There is both conceptual excitement and aesthetic enchantment in this interplay which has much to do with the beauty of many works of township theatre.

Storytelling

In proposing that storytelling is a core disposition of the performatic repertoire I have been influenced both by what I have seen in plays from the townships and by Scheub. Scheub sets forth an argument for storytelling which refuses, as does Diana Taylor, to separate story from the teller and the telling of it. The presence of the teller and the images the teller creates are inextricably linked together, because the story is not only its narrative, it is also its revelatory unfolding in embodied performance. He writes:

> It was during my research trip to South Africa, when I was working among the Zulu in 1968, that I received this epiphany. After a particularly complex story had been performed one evening, the members of the audience were discussing its implications. Feeling somewhat certain of myself, I launched into a symbolic analysis of the story, waxing heroic about internal meanings and the like. Midway through my peroration, the Zulu performer who had created the story stopped me: "If I am to tell you what my story means," she said, "I must tell it again." For her, it was not possible to come to the end of the story, and then, Aesop's fable-like, find a neat philosophical statement to summarize it. Stories are performances, she said, and can only be understood in their fullness. (1996: xviii)

The disposition to embody and reveal a progression of imagery, actions and ideas by means of telling, singing, movement, gesture, characterisation and ideophone,[76] within the encompassing rhythm of a performance, is the disposition that I call storytelling.

Scheub's analysis of the storytelling repertoire of half a century ago in the Eastern Cape and Kwazulu-Natal illuminates our understanding of the storytelling disposition alive in today's townships.[77] Most theatre-makers in Cape Town's townships are *Nguni*-speaking and have had some contact with the tradition that Scheub explicates in their lives – as the comments of the audience members to *Ziph' Nkomo* demonstrated above. But that does not mean that storytelling or indeed any other attributes of the repertoire have remained unchanged since the 1970s. Developments are inevitable, particularly when many of South Africa's citizens have been so regularly uprooted and moved around as a result of the apartheid policies that I outlined in chapter 4. Nevertheless, although Scheub is working with fieldwork material collected a long time ago, his explication of the centrality of image applies just as much today, as my study of township plays bears out.

Image and metaphor

An image is a depiction of something by means of words, or mime, or enactment. The image does not necessarily depict a physical phenomenon. It may be metaphorical or metynomical. Within storytelling, images become core units of meaning. Because they are physically and vocally presented, images appeal through the senses to the imagination and therefore easily evoke emotions. Scheub explicates the role of images in storytelling:

> Story begins with the emotion-evocative image. Contemplate this scene in South Africa – on a frieze of paintings preserved on a rock wall in the Drakensberg Mountains, cloaked human figures can be seen beneath and overlying paintings of elands. In ancient San societies in this region, images were carved into rocks, just as in dance they were sculpted with human bodies, as in myth they were shaped by the words of the mythmaker. Rock painting, this most venerable of art forms, reveals significant relationships with storytelling. In painting, as in dance and myth, patterned image becomes trope, the substance of storytelling. Each of these art forms moves rhythmically, in the process creating deliberately concealed strata of meaning, establishing a complex interaction between the surface layer and underlying layers, and so giving rise to metaphor. (1998: 9-10)

[76] An ideophone is a soundword, the spoken sound of which corresponds to the action it describes. In *isiXhosa* ideophones are frequently used in common parlance (Scheub 1975:62)

[77] Canonici (1996, 1993) White & Cousins (1984) , Gough (1986), and Opland (1983) all augment Scheub's work in illuminating modes of composition, transmission and performance contexts with respect to the story telling and praise poetry of the *isiXhosa* and *IsiZulu* speaking peoples in Kwazulu-Natal (formerly Zululand), the Eastern Cape (formerly Ciskei and Transkei) and the Western Cape. With due respect to their work, without Scheub's textured analyses and enormous volume of stories taped, transcribed and translated, the other works offer only glimpses into the stories and poetry of the repertoire.

As the storyteller builds metaphor out of image and narrative, her enactment brings an imaginary world into the shared space of performance. That world is further coloured by the responses and emotions which the story arouses in the listeners. It surfaces memories of past tellings or similar images that crowd into the space. Here is another of Scheub's explanations that is impossible to express as aptly as he:

> Story is a blurring, a coming together of signifier and signified. The word, rhythmically cradled, creates a view of the signified that is not a reproduction but an accepted and acceptable artistic rendering, an image: not reality, not even an imitation of reality, but a new, novel world composed of images *derived* from and *partaking* in images in reality but *not* reality: this is fantasy. We know the stories; we know their endings, the metaphors, metonymies, all. It is the exhilaration of experiencing something new at the same time it is a recognition of what we know already. What is inventive, what is singular, is what the storyteller does with what is familiar. The essence of storytelling is rhythm: the patterning of distinct categories of imagery in a linear movement that takes members of the audience into an experience of metaphor. (1998:14)

The organization of the images (incidents of action or key motifs or characters in the story) into a sequence which leads from problem to resolution that is narrative - is not as important for Scheub as the metaphors that the imagery suggests. Within the repertoire of the peoples of Southern Africa (mainly but not exclusively that of the *isiXhosa* and *isiZulu* speaking peoples in *Scheub's* collections) the imagery is of two kinds. Firstly, usually inherited, fantastical motifs elicit strong emotional responses from audiences, and secondly the storytellers use contemporary, mostly realistic images. The storyteller must interweave these two kinds of images, of nightmares and of everyday realities, into a single strand as the story progresses. Thus the story becomes fantasy, not in the sense that it is divorced from reality but in the sense that it is an imaginative reworking of the everyday. Then it is impelled forward by means of rhythmic patterning, which Scheub argues, is 'the means whereby images and narrative movement are worked into meaning' (1998: 15). As the everyday and fantasy elements intertwine by means of an enticing playfulness inhering in the storytelling style, so metaphor evolves in the performance and the inner world of the story expands and resounds in the consciousness of the audience members. The evolution of image into metaphor is exactly what happens in the *'Mzantsi'* play.

Images and the ineffable

Since this study is concerned with the performatic repertoire of Cape Town's townships almost fifty years later – and in a different, urban space - than Scheub's materials, there have been shifts in the repertoire. Nevertheless, the impulse to bring together the numinous, the ineffable, sometimes even the fantastical, and juxtapose them with the everyday, is discernable in the plays of the youthful theatre makers and my guess is that this impulse is still nurtured by the performatic repertoire of the townships in which the wondrous holds an important place. In the course of my fieldwork I repeatedly encountered instances of subscription to the power of

traditional healers, dreams, intervention in the lives of the living by deceased ancestors, cultural rituals as well as fantasy figures.

It is intriguing to note how Alan Read's explication of image fits with Scheub's insistence on the fusion of the ineffable with the everyday, although Read is writing about theatre in a specific community in the UK:

> the image between the performer and the audience adds up to more than the sum of its various parts. A materialist criticism that does not recognise these 'metaphysical' qualities of theatre is lacking critical force. For the 'beyond physical', the numinous, the spirit, the aura of art, however it is described is a material response to art not just ideological or 'imagined'. … And to ignore it, as though it will go away, and leave us with the quantified, the material and the manipulable, … is to impoverish the terms on which theatre might be most valuably and pleasurably thought and practised. This metaphysics of theatre is what is not seen, beyond the mind's eye it remains unwritten. … This 'something more' of the image does not disconnect the experience of theatre from its place of performance, nor from the everyday. Theatre remains bound by its context precisely through the unique relationships images create between audience, performer and everyday life. (1993: 59)

The core of Scheub's thesis is that storytelling fuses bodily engagement, image, patterning and rhythm within performance. Therefore performance has intellectual, kinaesthetic, aesthetic and emotional properties. Of course this is nearly always the case in all kinds of theatre but what is particular to the performatic repertoire of the townships is the disposition to employ storytelling to fuse image, rhythm and patterning so strongly. This disposition is specifically demonstrated in the response of audience member 'T4' below. Drawing another audience-member into his account to emphasizes its collective importance, he couches his response to the play *Beneath silent waters* by means of the metaphor of a train journey between Khayelitsha and Cape Town. Using the rhythmic stopping and starting of the train at the stations, he embeds the episodic nature of the play within the pattern of a train journey that exerts a push-pull effect both on the listeners and himself as 'storyteller' for these few minutes. By means of this use of patterning, rhythm and image, not only does he turn his response into a small instance of storytelling, he also generates a metaphor through the use of imagery, and so he stirs emotion in his listeners – myself included.

> T4: I'm from Langa and I grew up there. But all the [township] communities are the same, whether you are from Nyanga, Soweto, New Brighton or where ever. And [when I watched the play] it was like I was in the train from Khayelitsha to town, [travelling] from station to station you know. Like when they are moving from scene to scene it was like getting off at Phillipi station and getting on at Nyanga station; then Heideveld. And we then got to town: seeing the direction, seeing the communities and seeing the stories. That's what I'm trying to say. That's why this lady is saying some of these things are personal. She felt like she was in that train and me too. I felt like I was in that train moving with it, laughing, crying, and the music was beautiful and the choreography. I could go on and on! [2007b]

Skills development by means of the performatic repertoire

Apart from the effects of the dispositions to immediacy, patterning and storytelling on the practice of theatre-making discussed above, and in the absence of live performance with which

to exemplify, it is vital to remain aware of the ongoing skills building and development which participation in the performatic repertoire develops in township performers. Learning to harmonise in singing, to move in complete unison, or synchronously in a dance, implies a considerable degree of aural, oral and kinaesthetic skills development. The elaboration and degree of excellence of such skills contributes enormously to the quality of theatre in the townships. It accounts for the intensity of bodily engagement, the pleasure in performing emanating from the players, and the intense impact the presence of many of the performers has on the audience. A technical analysis of these skills is beyond the scope of this study but they are nevertheless frequently central to the impact which theatre from the township makes.

The effect of dispositions of the performatic repertoire in '*Mzantsi'*

The dispositions of playing culture are active in the performers and hone their performance skills. They also affect the nature of a play in performance. The township habitus influences the construction of meaning within the play.

Before reading the examination of *'Mzantsi',* a play by Iqhude Theatre Group, below, readers may wish to peruse the complete description of the performance to be found in Appendix B[78], which not only fleshes out the analysis, but may make it more enjoyable.[79]

Attempting this analysis, once again I am acutely conscious that a witnessing audience member is simultaneously exposed to a large variety of experiences - visual, aural, kinaesthetic, social and cultural to name just a few. The written word does not allow for such complexity. But if Appendix B is read in conjunction with this discussion perhaps an impression of the total impact might be gained. The dispositions of patterning and storytelling – woven together - introduce the discussion. Thereafter the influence of the township habitus is unpacked before returning to a discussion of storytelling.

Plot summary

The dramatic action of the play builds from simple dramatization into the allegorical trope of 'Professor Mzantsi'. The presentation of self-interested government officials becomes the image of a dislocated nation at loggerheads with itself. The leader / king / clan chief, who can see beyond the national interest to the entire continent's need for renewal and self-review, bids his children go in search of ways to build the nation. But it is only a sudden onset of illness in the leader which compels the provinces to act. From out of the clouds, together with the country's provincial representatives, we descend in an aeroplane into the jungle and a dark night of the soul. And from the heart of darkness comes the admission of helplessness and self-interest and

[78] The Iqhude group's play was untitled. I have called it '*Mzantsi'.* This literally means 'south' but in the play *mzantsi* is used metonymically to denote our country, South Africa (2006)

[79] My analysis derives from studying the video which I made of the performance. I worked with interpreters to transcribe (and where necessary translate) the spoken words and songs in English and *IsiXhosa* that comprised parts of the play.

the beginnings of a cure for the leader by means of unified, coherent national action. After rituals of healing and redemption which restore the leader, the play ends with his praises that are a celebration of people's capacity to effect their own resurrection.

A disposition to pattern

The most prominent feature of this play is the way it is structured by its rhythmic pattern. Rhythm has elements of time or pace, space, and weight, intensity or power. Rhythm suggests a repetitive pattern which incrementally changes, so that it is not immutable or boring, but involves growth or development. Thus waves breaking and rolling toward the shore do so rhythmically, whereas the wavy form of a corrugated iron roof is merely repetitive, not rhythmic.

The pattern set up in *Mzantsi* is that a stimulus provokes action, which is pursued for a time, and then dies away. The waning action generates a further reaction which impels action once more, which then dies away again. Both the compulsion to act and the reasons for its fading away are ideologically motivated, whereas their physical enactment is effected kinaesthetically in a rhythmic pattern, generating emotional responses from both players and audiences. So the dramatic action is comprised of the characters' physically and vocally patterned interactions, and also through storying.

A disposition to storytelling

The term 'storying' is coined to describe the way in which the central character, the country's leader 'Professor *Mzantsi*', drives the action.[80] His vision for the country rhetorically delivered, his agonized coughing that presages further illness, his admonitions to each of the provinces that demonstrates his father-like insight and care of them, and his celebration of a task finally achieved at the end of the play, is the motivating driver of the play.

Like the rural storytellers Scheub describes (1975, with Zenani 1992), Professor *Mzantsi* embodies the themes and central action of the play and impels its forward motion. Physically and visually he is also at its heart, usually located centre or just off-centre-stage. Around him the provinces spread out, circle and weave, but his presence pulls them together and towards him again and again. When illness drives him to the margins of his life (and the periphery of the stage), his decentering is profoundly poignant. When he is struck down by illness the provinces become rudderless, leaderless and foolish, evident in their bickering and frenzied stabs at constructive activity.

The above description already suggests the means whereby the play is patterned like waves rolling to shore. Some impulses are short lived and pathetic. Others are stronger and longer sustained. This is captured, not only in the wheel-like patterning of the blocking surrounding Professor *Mzantsi,* which devolves into a hopeless entanglement when the provinces get lost in the heart of the jungle. It is also embodied in the soundscape of the play as

[80] Exactly the same technique is used in *Beneath Silent Waters* that I discuss in Chapter 7.

a whole. Each of the provinces represented in the play, Mpumalanga, Kwazulu-Natal and Limpopo (played by men), and Western and Eastern Cape (played by women), are vocally characterized distinctively. However, when they communicate and dilate their emotional states and attitudes in song and dance, the cast uses harmony and counterpoint to express their enthusiasm, optimism, awe, anxiety, near panic and surrender to powers beyond their own. It is their singing and dancing which gives the play much of its distinctive pattern, its communicative power and beauty.

The singing and dancing generate tension because, within each episode, opposites (and gradations in between) are embodied and enacted. For instance, the frantic searching for a cure for the sick leader is encapsulated in rapid scurrying and scrambling 'through the jungle', whilst simultaneously the actors sing an incredibly sweet and haunting lullaby in harmony.

A township habitus is disposed to order the disorderly

What I have described so far as rhythmic patterning, on the level of meaning is a struggle waged between disunity, self-interest (and sheer silliness), disorder and decay on the one hand, and coherence, long term vision, national development and growth on the other. This struggle resonates with the township habitus which is predisposed to seek order in disorder and permanence in the face of transience. In the townships the means whereby this is sometimes achieved is by means of patterning because the latter embodies order.

A township habitus values the collective

The reader may also have noticed that the play is built on the underlying assumption that nationhood is a collective and people-driven enterprise. The metaphor of a person representing a province, and a 'professor' metynomically representing the country, not only recalls Mandela, but also assumes that we audience accept that symbolizing nationhood as a collective – members of the same legislature, chain gang, corporation, sports team, business, or initiation rite– is consonant with a township habitus in which the group gives meaning to the individual.[81] During different episodes in the play all of the above groupings are suggested by the five actors playing the provinces.

A storytelling disposition generates metaphor

Mzantsi is built by layering. Images are created and then layered and textured by the actors' drumming, singing, dancing, miming, gesturing and speech. This returns us to Scheub's explanation that '[e]ach of these art forms moves rhythmically, in the process creating deliberately concealed strata of meaning, establishing a complex interaction between the surface

[81] Prior to the initiation of *isiXhosa* young men into adulthood, they spend a period in seclusion beyond the perimeters of their home community. Physically isolated for some weeks they remain at a distance from their homes, living in makeshift shelters. Initiation is always undertaken by young men in groups. In Cape Town, sometimes initiates can be spotted as you drive towards the townships, identifiable because of the white paint which covers their bodies and the domed, temporary shelters which you can see in the midst of an open tract of land which is usually uninhabited.

layer and underlying layers, and so giving rise to metaphor' (1998: 9-10). What each performer in the play *suggests* as well as the actions they actually undertake, generates a layered metaphor in the imaginations of the audience.

Switching and sustained precariousness

Whilst patterning achieves order, disrupting the pattern both creates dramatic tension and provides variation and interest. When switching - in other words reversal - occurs, what the audience considers valid becomes invalid. What they expect to work is sabotaged. Gradually the audience becomes increasingly conscious of just how precarious was the initial proposal. But the audience is nonetheless drawn into the progress of the action, entranced by its rhythmic seductiveness and its patterning. So they imagine things are going to succeed but in fact they do not. And then, when least expected, they do.

The disposition of immediacy: bodily engagement, presence and pleasure

In the play, as described in Appendix B, it is important to note that without the highly physicalised portrayal of characters and attitudes, rendered mostly through posture, gesture and whole body movement, the play would have lost not only energy but much of its point. The emotions of the protagonists were in all cases largely evinced in the focused energy of the actors. When the provinces do not find what they seek they reach the nadir of despair. Breathless, intensely panicked, staccato in speech and movement and discombobulated, paradoxically this is when the *actors'* energy is at its most intense, providing a rich contrast to the sweet, crooning lullaby and their soft, ineffectual movements.

Conclusion

The cumulative effect of township habitus and dispositions of the performatic repertoire characterize *'Mzantsi'* as a play from the townships. The collective action, the sudden changes of attitude and approach exhibited by characters, the rhythmic unfolding of the quasi-mythic action driven by the central character / storyteller, the blending of reality, fantasy, myth and the supernatural into an elaborate metaphor, the heightened performance styles, the extensive and multi-textured use of dance, song, mime and ritual, can all be attributed to the influence either of dispositions of the performatic repertoire or of township habitus.

Any one of these features might be evident in a town play, but taken together that would be highly unlikely, particularly if the work were developed by a theatre group with little formal theatre training. This play derives its highly stylized character from the township performatic repertoire and the influence of the township habitus. In performance in the township, its style does not present as particularly distinctive or heightened or aesthetically elaborate. But if the play were performed in town, it would immediately be notable for its particular performance aesthetics.

This chapter has conceptualised dispositions generated by the performatic repertoire in the townships, termed immediacy, patterning and storytelling. Their influence on theatre-making practice is exemplified by a discussion of a single instance: *'Mzantsi'*, created by Iqhude Theatre Group under the direction of Thembelihle Mananga. The influence of the dispositions generated by township living, namely to order through patterning, to accommodate oppositions through switching, and to favour collective over individual meaning making, also emerge in this play.

In the course of examining how township theatre groups make plays in the next chapter, the fundamental influence of these dispositions inhering in township theatre-makers will once more form an important component of the analysis.

6. THE PRACTICE OF TOWNSHIP THEATRE-MAKING

Introduction

From here on this study narrows its focus to theatre in the townships. Having elected to study township theatre systemically, because that approach takes account of infra-structural and material resources (including their deficiencies) as well as of theatre-specific processes and arrangements, the conceptual lens moves on from the cultural context and playing culture of the townships, to the domain of contextual theatricality where it will remain for the final three chapters. Creating and performing theatre is investigated as a system of production, distribution and reception. Chapter 6 is devoted to production and refers to reception, chapter 7 examines two plays as specific exemplifying instances, and chapter 8 deals with distribution, and reception in so far as it is affected by distribution.

Part 1 of Chapter 6 is located within an organizational frame: how groups manage themselves and their activities. Within that organizational frame, theatre groups pursue the practice of theatre-making, which is conceptualized in Part 2.

My conceptual approaches to the two halves of this chapter are different, even though group organization and theatre-making are both aspects of production. For the purposes of part 1, immersion in the field – talking to theatre-makers, listening to their debates and viewpoints on playmaking and leading groups, made it readily apparent that certain influences and experiences are formative with respect to how they organise themselves and go about their business. These aspects are discussed in Part 1. Having raised the question of gender inequity in township social life and structures in chapter 4, this chapter will reveal that the practice of theatre-making reflects similar inequities. Most theatre groups are led by men who also direct the plays. All the township practitioners attending the symposium (2008) were men and that fact should be born in mind when reading their comments in the ensuring discussion.[82]

Developing an organised account of the practice of playmaking itself for Part 2 could not so easily be sifted out of the same data, or even the performances. Whilst the data revealed the theatre-makers' 'logic of practice' (Bourdieu 1990), it did not produce a theory of their practice. Part 2 attempts to develop a theory of their practice.

Part 1: THE ORGANISATION AND ACTIVITIES OF THEATRE GROUPS

This is an account of the circumstances affecting the organisation and activities of theatre groups in the townships. It begins with how youngsters become interested and involved in

[82] Two women and fourteen men were invited to the Symposium but both women were unable to attend due to work commitments. Ten male practitioners attended (Symposium 2008)

theatre and what motivates the activity. It unpacks the distinctions between formal and non-formal theatre education available in the townships and their respective effects on theatre-making practices. Teaching and learning are intertwined with leading and following. These processes are also all infused with the performatic practices of the repertoire. This coagulate of practices is unbundled in order to understand their entanglement and tease out distinctive strands of influence. How groups deal with organising performances is introduced and will be further unpacked in Chapter 8. Resource constraints affecting the work of the groups are outlined.

A mission imbibed through watching theatre

> S6: I would like to perform that thing in the ghetto, yabona, where these people are living, where people can get something and walk out saying, 'Eish! Ja, but what I'm doing is wrong. I must change my life:' which is for me what the movement is about, you know, for a better life somehow. And that is why, when I say this township theatre is a movement, it's about that, liberating people who will come in [large] numbers [from] all over the place. [Symposium, 2008:100-101]

Township theatre makers are informed and inspired by prior theatre experience and education. Previous experience of watching and possibly participating in theatre has led them to believe that theatre is life-changing; that doing theatre is constructive, hopeful, forward looking, as well as enjoyable and sociable.

Doing or watching theatre is a common pursuit amongst township dwellers. Theatre is part of the playing culture and a significant part of the township repertoire. In the majority of the focus group interviews amongst audiences undertaken for this study, respondents referred to other plays or performances by way of comparison with what they had just watched. Over half of the learners under fourteen who were interviewed had seen or performed in theatre before, at school, church, or in township community events. Older audiences had watched or participated in the Stop Crime Festival for instance, the Artscape High Schools Drama Festival or at an Ikhwezi Festival.

Interviewees across the board were positive about the educational value of theatre and its social purpose. For example, the respondents to *Old Brown Joe* (*OBJ*) and *Beneath silent waters* (*BSW)* interrogate how these plays illuminate the present in light of the past or generate an impulse to activism:[83]

> Al: I really enjoyed the show. I learnt a lot. It shows the younger generation, who were not there, how we won this freedom – the way they struggled, and the people who were involved that we don't know as younger generation. It shows us people who were fighting for freedom and [those] who were not. Like Old-brown Joe believed in apartheid, but at the same time though, I don't clearly understand, but it seems like he was supporting the fact that people are struggling like when he says: *"My own community people are making useless noise and running."* It appears as if he wanted the struggle and the oppression to continue in South Africa? (*OBJ* 2007a)

[83] *Old Brown Joe* and *Beneath Silent Waters* are the two instances of playmaking discussed in Chapter 7.

A young man reflects on *Beneath silent waters:*

> A3: This play brought back a lot. Even though we are saying we are living in a democratic South Africa, so, yes the body of apartheid is gone but the footprint still exists. There are still woman that are being abused even today but no one talks about it because, they say, 'Apartheid is gone'. There are so many things that woman go through, like rape and so on, but now it's difficult to talk about it. So this play showed that there is a platform on which we can stand and show that these things are still happening. Instead of fighting through the law, there is another way of fighting these things.
>
> So it left me with the sense that, we should not take everything that is happening as a problem, instead we should take it as a challenge. Because now we are living in a democratic South Africa, it's our challenge to fight for the democracy that we wanted. (*BSW* 2007b)

The respondent below demonstrates her understanding that making theatre is a process of making meaning. As a craft, it requires skilled application.

> A3: I also enjoyed the show quite a lot, but besides enjoying it I looked beyond what we saw, at how the show is done, and who did it. This [play] is made by people from the township who didn't go to university, where they would get the professional education of how to make a play and how to write script. At this point they have ability, and the director is really an upcoming director. Even the actors have very good potential and you can tell that they are serious about what they are doing. Everything is organized, even in terms of music, there is no disorder of any kind. They all sing with confidence and they act; every thing is organized.
> But they still need assistance. Yes we can make negative comments, but we must understand that these people come from the townships so they need professional theatre practitioners to teach them play making. (*OBJ* 2007a)

Exposure to theatre informs, educates and recruits theatre enthusiasts who want to use theatre to 'speak truth to power'[84]. But exposure to theatre apart, how does theatre education happen for township performers and what is its effect on theatre-making processes?

Theatre education: leading, learning and teaching practices amongst township theatre groups

Education and training in theatre for township dwellers occurs in two complementary ways; firstly in formal or adult education training programmes and secondly by means of theatre makers who teach their groups. The distinct and interactive influences of these two kinds of theatre education are unpacked below.

Training programmes run by non-governmental adult education colleges such as the Arts Media Access Centre (AMAC) – formerly the Community Arts Project (CAP) - and New Africa Theatre Project (NATA) have provided a grounding for many of those most active in township theatre in Cape Town since the mid 1980s. In addition, short-courses, workshops and mentoring, offered periodically through the High Schools Drama Festival, the Ikhwezi Festival and the Magnet Theatre Community Groups Intervention amongst others, are other major

[84] The origin of this expression is claimed by a number of sources, including religious sources of Quaker, Muslim and Jewish orientation. Edward Said and Ariel Dorfman also appropriate the term.

sources of stimulation and skills development.[85]: The bulk of these training courses address the challenges faced by groups making plays and are therefore relevant. In the main they are carefully planned and systematically executed but the sector as a whole is not co-ordinated and there is no interlocking system of qualifications. Nevertheless the influence of this education on township theatre practices is clearly apparent in the plays and carries significant cultural capital for township theatre-makers. Its influence far outstrips Arts & Culture learnings gained at school and the influence of television.[86] The point about both short and year-long courses is that they not only open up vocabularies of theatre to the learners, but they are also couched within a pedagogic and theatrical discourse that in itself opens new doors to township theatre makers. I shall develop the latter point later.

The effects of these workshops and courses extends beyond what is transmitted to registered learners because such learnings are in turn re-transmitted informally from course attendees to the members of theatre groups to which they belong. Inculcated with the practices of the performatic repertoire, theatre-makers are predisposed to pass on newly acquired skills to their groups in rehearsals and workshops. So in effect, there are two distinct modes in which education occurs. Firstly, workshops, short and longer courses are offered by various NGOs and theatre-affiliated organisations. Secondly, whatever was taught in such courses is passed on by the original attendees to the groups with whom they work. These two forms of education are frequently blurred but sometimes have different, although cognate, outcomes as will become apparent in what follows.

> S8: We in the township, when we took to theatre, we didn't go to school to learn about it, we learnt it from one another. If I have my own group and I'm directing this group, what is likely to happen is that all of the people in this group of mine will learn my style of doing things. What is likely to happen after three months, is that they will go out and open their own groups but they are teaching the style that I was teaching them. Now that thing [learning] is going from link, to link, to link, from my actors. It started from those ten actors who now also have ten groups. Now we have eleven groups that are doing the same thing, which all comes down to my influence. Now that is what the system is now. That is where the influence comes from. Because you know we don't have books that say, okay, "Now Brecht said this … and that and that. This is happening then". No. We learn from one another. (Symposium 2008:19-20)]

In effect, archival knowledge is circulated, recycled and integrated into the repertoire of the theatre makers, generating new syncretic practices.

As revealed in the above comment at the symposium, most of the theatre groups operate under a practice of consensual participation. Cultural capital within the groups resides in what

[85] The Shell Road to Fame, the BP Showcase, Project Phakama, Soundtrack for Life, Artscape Audience & Development and Theatre Arts Admin Collective are just a few more examples of parastatals, trusts, commercial enterprises and private individuals who have offered or currently offer training to individuals or groups, including township aspirants, in aspects of acting, directing and playmaking.

[86] At the start of my research process I assumed that the influence of television would be pervasive. But in the plays I watched this proved not commonly the case. There are certainly works that smack of television borrowings, such as *Say no to child labour* (2006), *The naked truth* (2008) and *Shadows of love* (2008). but they are far more uncommon than those influenced by theatre-making practices pervasive in the township that this study intends to explicate.

one knows about theatre and how successfully one can inspire or guide others. Symbolic capital vests in what agents are known to have achieved and could yet achieve. Those who are willing and have the necessary symbolic capital – starting with the confidence of their peers – take charge.

The leaders are expected to initiate the creation of plays but not to provide all the stimuli. For the group leader the advantage lies in learning through teaching and from those you teach so that you are developing even as you try to develop others. Ingold illuminates this point by citing Jean Lave:

> Cognition … is … rather a *social activity* that is situated in the nexus of ongoing relations between persons and the world, and that plays its part in their *mutual constitution*. It is a process wherein both persons, as knowledgeable social agents, and the settings in which they act, continually come into being, each in relation to the other. [emphasis added] (2000: 162)

Leadership is a tactical practice comprised partly of teaching, partly of leading, and partly of strategising to exploit the strengths at hand and circumvent the weaknesses. The following is one of many similar comments made at the symposium:

> S8: You know we talk in terms of *wanting* to do this thing, because in township theatre people are not getting paid, people are volunteering to do the work. In most cases we give people roles because we don't want to leave them out when we do a production. We have to put everyone in the play. And then if a person comes to rehearsals and is always early, you can see that the person is very determined: he wants to do this thing! Although sometimes you may see that, *hayi,* it's not really in there [the talent is missing]. But you can see the person wants to do this thing, in those cases what you do is talk to that man. You rehearse more with him and then from that harder work you get a good result because you worked together. (Symposium 2008:12)

This is not to say that leadership is merely pragmatic: doing whatever it takes to improve the play. On the contrary the principle of enhancing participants' skills and abilities so that the work will sustain and prosper is so embedded that, as Bourdieu points out, it literally goes without saying. Bourdieu proposes that in societies where there is little codified differentiation by class or official position, '"customary rules" preserved by the group memory are themselves the product of a small batch of schemes enabling agents to generate an infinity of practices adapted to endlessly changing situations, without those schemes ever being constituted as explicit principles' (1977: 16). I would argue that those surrounded and circumscribed by township society and who belong to theatre groups are part of just such an undifferentiated society.[87]

As Bourdieu makes clear, practical mastery does not comprise knowledge of its own principles. So whilst the theatre makers are endlessly engaging a broad range of tactics in order to develop their work and their groups, to achieve performance and secure funds, in my fieldwork experience they mostly did not articulate the underlying principle but rather expatiate on countless tactics employed to achieve these ends. Underpinning the many tactics there is

[87] In chapter 4 I discussed at some length how state power has geographically and materially set the townships up to be isolated and excluded from the rest of Cape Town. My point here is that, within themselves, townships are formally undifferentiated, self-contained social units.

nevertheless the fundamental principle that the group members must be taken further by the work. Skills must be fostered and commitment to theatre engendered. The following comment illustrates how this is not a point which is open to debate; rather it is taken as read.

> S9: Ja, you know, when you are involved in township theatre, or community theatre as we call it, you know, each and every day is a learning process. First of all it is a challenge, because you deal with people who are not professional actors, who just want to get on, so you have the duty of moulding them and guiding them, you know. But at the end of the day you want a good production out of them, so you must be patient and also you must instil the system of team work among them as well, you know. (Symposium 2008:14)

It would seem that group leaders are those who have the foresight both to care for the needs of the group and to look beyond, to what in the world might foster the work. So the group leader, or leadership team, take upon themselves the need for organisation or at least forward planning.

Leaders will try to secure a rehearsal venue, be it in a community centre, school or local crèche after hours. They network amongst other groups to secure performance opportunities in theatrical events within the townships, and amongst those outside of the township for assistance and support. They also lead the drive for audience attendance. The group as a whole procures whatever properties and costumes they need, music, posters or technical assistance, for example someone to film the work.

In order to eventify the work, that is, secure performance opportunities, the group leader will communicate with outside mentors, such as fieldworkers of Magnet Theatre or the Ikhwezi or High Schools Drama Festival, as well as other external 'producers' such as the NGO *Médicins sans Frontières* or school principals needing arts input, festival organisers, and even occasionally with funders. Although this process of eventification that I address more fully in Chapter 8 is curtailed by the exigencies that face all theatre endeavours in the township, it is nevertheless an important collection of largely informal promotional and marketing activities whereby the group as a whole accrue cultural and social capital and the group leader may accrue symbolic capital. Doing this is an important and valuable part of belonging to or leading a group. Doing the necessary networking, 'go-for-ing', and following leads in the process of eventification, exposes theatre group members to the work and experiences of other groups beyond what they are currently engaged with, including the possibility of tertiary education in theatre which is a challenge of another sort altogether.

For township groups tertiary education is a double-edged sword.

> S5: You said that there are no, so-called, professional actors in our township groups. So what happens is all, or most of us, start from being taught theatre by someone who never went to [theatre] school. I remember I started in high school. The guy was also a student. But when I went to study theatre I already knew some of the things. I'd got them already from the guy – the first person who taught me theatre. But the problem is we start from these community groups, and then we go to school and study, but we don't come back.
> S: Why don't you come back?
> M5: We, I think we feel we are bigger than these community groups, but for me, it's just theatre: we are never bigger than theatre.
> S9: Ja, I think that, when you get to theatre training institutions, that's when you become

> aware that you can make a living out of what you have, you know. So now you follow what you've been exposed to. You must go to auditions, you must have an agent and all that. That's what makes us not go back and spend time with these groups that we're coming from, because now you want to make a living. So now maybe you are lucky, you get jobs and then you get exposed. You get more opportunities, you know. And now we don't have any more chance to work with the group and they are led by another person who doesn't know anything about theatre. You know, so it's an on-going thing now. The blind leading the blind, you know. Because when the blind one happens to see, he never comes back and leads the people, the blind that he was with. (Symposium 2008:22-3)

What emerges from this debate is that formal theatre education has the potential to open the field of Cape Town theatre to players from the township. However, just as formal industry and commerce do not contribute to the townships but rather siphon skills out of the townships into the town, in the process of opening access to town theatre for township players through tertiary education, township resources are diminished.

Formal theatre education is not simply about Brechtian staging techniques or physical theatre (for example) but may also render the formal and interlocking system of Cape Town theatre visible and intelligible to township players. However the reverse is not the case. So the township theatre system is not infiltrated by outside players except as development initiatives. Accordingly the divide between town and township theatre systems remains unbridgeable in the direction of the township, a point that will be unpacked in Chapter 8.

As I have argued above, the task of the leader is not only managerial but also that of teaching and guiding the group. Possibly it is sometimes a case of 'the blind leading the blind', since another *a priori* assumption is that leading a group inevitably involves teaching. Such training is inextricably bound up in playmaking that usually also involves skills transfer. In the course of discussing Nigerian practices, Isidore Okpewho characterises such an educational process as an apprenticeship (1992:25) The notion of apprenticeship intrinsically connects education or training with production itself. In an apprenticeship system, the apprentice is not distanced from the work of the master, rather they learn by imitating and imbibing what they can from the master at the site of cultural production. In this system, play making and training are intrinsically connected. Therefore the apprentice, whilst not necessarily receiving financial remuneration, is receiving cultural capital: knowledge of theatre making and skills development which the apprentice can use to facilitate a career or teach others in turn. The challenge to the master of teaching while you direct is delightfully captured in the following:

> S9: When we rehearse, then I will tell them, "Guys imagine your audience – maybe fifty people. There will be people from here right to the back". But because we are acting in a space like this [he indicates a small room with his hands] they don't really see what you are talking about, you know. Then when you get to the real stage and there are audience there, they end up surprising themselves and they drive the whole [play awry]: they shift totally from what you were rehearsing! And then you say: "You see now I told you, you must do this, because when you say that line obviously they're going to laugh!" And you end up losing everything.
> S10: Also these kind of actors, if you give them notes, they feel like you are discouraging them, you know, that you don't like what they are doing, even if you give them basic notes! Maybe they are upstaging the other actors. They want the attention so they change the whole play! But if you telling that person; who is maybe twelve, or thirteen, or

> fifteen – so he's new to this thing – and he wants to prove that he is good, and then you tell him, "No, can you go down a little bit..."
> Chorus: (laughter) "Go down a little bit! Go down a little bit...!" [Subdue your expression]
> S10: I think that person will take it that you don't like him. And then, on the point made by bra Mzi: You rehearse in a space like this [indicating a room] and then you go to the community hall. The community halls are big! They have never rehearsed in that space! They have never performed in that space! So they take your whole play in their own direction! [Laughter.] (Symposium 2008:13-14)

In the context of the townships the one certainty is change. Inevitably groups will have to adapt to changes in the work. Likewise, the power and influence of the leader/teacher can not be assumed. It too can be challenged or subverted at any time.

> S10: If you are directing a play in the township you have to do almost everything. [When] the actors are in the middle of rehearsals because they are performing tomorrow, one of the actors – her mum or his mum – can call him anytime! [Laughter] And then that's difficult, because we are performing tomorrow and this actor has been rehearsing for three weeks. And then, on the last day of rehearsals, the person is not available. Maybe tomorrow he is going to a funeral or he has gone to pay some funeral insurance. [Laughter] So that's…that's the biggest struggle that is affecting us. (Symposium 2008:17)

The 'biggest struggle' is in fact the hallmark of township theatre practice. An inalienable underlying assumption here is that conditions will change. The venue, the group, the time, the resources are all a fragile collection of intentions, persons and context, any aspect of which is likely to change without warning. So adaptability is highly prised. Multi-tasking and using what is to hand is essential. This is also the case in respect of resources which are scarce and easily lost as we shall see below.

The effect of resource constraints on the theatre-making groups

As I have made clear, by far the most important resources for township theatre are human resources. These include the intentions, vision and leadership skills of the theatre-makers, their degree of theatre education and experience, including those inculcated by living in the townships and participating in a rich performatic repertoire.

Nevertheless, the work is affected by physical and infrastructural resources and constraints inhering in the context, the most acute of these being space. Space is an extremely precious commodity for township theatre makers that affects the way groups work, when they work, how they work and whether they work at all. In answer to a question during the symposium as to what spaces groups use, the response was:

> S4: Various different spaces, dining rooms, garages, fields, reception, hospitals…
> S: Crèches.
> S: Schools.
> S2: Anything that's a space.
> S: Ja, just if you find a space, just if you find a space…
> S: Container. [Laughter]
> S: Funnily enough, some go there outside, to the backyard. (Symposium 2008:69)

I recall Ntokozo Madlala recounting to me that in the course of mentoring a theatre group in Khayelitsha for the Magnet Theatre Showcase, she and the group had spent two hours of their rehearsal time traipsing from one probable venue to another in search of space before they could begin to work.

In explicating the process of creating *The Miracle Begins,* Tiny Thagama from Ingqayi Educational Theatre Project in Nyanga had this to say:

> But the frustration we suffered arose from the space where we were working. Luwando [Tame] gave us a space where he was teaching kids. We worked there three weeks. Then we were out of that space because people started to get jealous. Then Thembile [Nazo] gave us a backyard belonging to his aunt. When we get an open space then we decide to work around that space [ie. In spite of its limitations] because we did not want to see a day pass in which we can not do anything. [*Agreement from others.*] Because we were very anxious to see this thing happening. And also our target during that time was to be part of the 1st of December [HIV / AIDS Day performances]. Then we met a friend of Thembile's; that is Gallon. Ganza brought us to this space [the Zolani Centre in Nyanga] and we tried to explain our story [to the centre management]. It is only when we reached this space that we could feel comfortable. (in Ingqayi 2006)[88]

Constraints of space exacerbate all the other resource constraints because storage and practice with elements such as lights or particular pieces of furniture is extremely hard to arrange.

And so theatre made in the townships is literally 'poor theatre'. It mostly uses only props and costumes that the actors can carry and only tables, chairs or other 'furniture' (such as dustbins) that are commonly found in the performance or rehearsal space. Lighting is mostly unavailable and when it is available plotting time is minimal. The only element which is extensively employed is live and recorded music because that is relatively accessible and there is considerable local competence.[89] Overall, moveable or immoveable resources including money, are hard to access. So the process of theatre-making uses what is to hand in order to create works. The negotiation between constrained and shifting circumstances and creative, adaptable, resourceful people characterizes the activities of theatre groups. But what are those activities more specifically? When groups meet every afternoon, what are they doing?

Part 2: THE PRACTICE OF THEATRE-MAKING

Introduction

Part 1 above explicates how teaching, learning, leading, managing and making do are key to the organisational practices of theatre groups in the township. Now the actual theatre-making itself demands conceptualisation, which is the purpose of this part 2.

A study of theatre-making can be organised according to its aesthetic characteristics, its ideological or political orientation, systemically or chronologically. With a view to developing a

[88] At the time Ingqayi was charged R340 per month for hire of the office and stage at the Zolani Centre. In the beginning they covered the costs by each donating R20 per month. Once they began to perform, the rent was paid out of their earnings or takings.

[89] Due to constraints of length, beyond the acting, I have chosen not to elaborate on issues around staging in this study. I do not analyse in any detail the uses (or not) of décor, lighting, costume, music and so forth, what is sometimes referred to as the '*mise-en-scène*' (Pavis, 1998: 363)

framework for township theatre-making here in Part 2, and guided by a general orientation to practice theory, I noticed a single recurrent feature as I sifted through the data. This is the fact that the theatre-makers work practically, actively, on the floor, trying things out and experimenting. Having posited that theatre-making is therefore most usefully understood as an activity, the subsequent task was to discern the logic of its practice.

In this regard, what sifting through the data and noticing brought to light was how repeatedly township theatre-making is affected by an inextricably enmeshed mixture of contextually specific influences. Apart from practices derived out of township theatre education opportunities, township theatre-makers take the dispositions engendered in them by the local performatic repertoire into their practice. They also take with them their concerns about life in the townships and their intent to revision the world through theatre. They are also of course imbued with the township habitus. This layer upon layer of inclination, predisposition, performatic skill, ideological concern and theatrical experience within theatre-makers is impossible to peel off discretely. They are inextricably interfused and can only be explicated theoretically, because they are all embedded within activities.

These activities are most usefully parsed according to the functions they serve that have, in effect, already been examined in part 1 – inspiring, teaching, learning, directing, planning and so forth. Now the relations between these functions and the practice of theatre making itself is elucidated as we construct our account. However the implicit danger is that the process of analytical dissection will so dilute our comprehension of the alchemical effects of one influence upon the next that we cease being able to see the significance of their infiltrations into township theatre-making practice. So I ask the reader continuously to bear in mind that bringing disposition to bear on ideology and education and all manner of other 'structuring structures', sparks reactions and mutations of the raw materials of theatre-making. In other words, the whole is far greater than the sum of its parts. With this in mind, the construction of a framework for analysis commences.

A theory of the practice of theatre-making

Township youth join theatre groups because they enjoy it and find it satisfying. Post the new South Africa there are literally scores of groups doing theatre. In answer to the question, 'Why do they do it?' Township theatre makers responded:

> S: They like it.
> S: It's a new form.
> S: The dedication, I think the dedication.
> S: I think [it is] dedication because every afternoon they go to rehearsals - stuff like that, we did that. Because it's like soccer, man. In the township we see the theatre like soccer. Every afternoon at four 'o clock you go to your 'gym'. It's your rehearsal. You go to the gym - go to the practice, each and every day. You can even rehearse for three months or four months without performing. But you [still] go to the rehearsal each and every day. Every day. The dedication: I can just say like that. (Symposium 2008:67)

So, in light of the fact that we know that participants do not only go when they are rehearsing for a performance, the question then becomes, what do they do when they meet every afternoon? I propose that within the groups, the activities which are not organisation or management-related on the one hand or social interaction on the other, comprise a set of practices that can be described in terms of three major, functional orientations. These might be pursued consecutively or concurrently and consist of the following. (a) Improvising: groups improvise. (b) Structuring: groups fit together bits of performance that they already have. (c) Skills burnishing: they skill or train group members. These practices are pursued irrespective of whether or not there is a performance forthcoming in the foreseeable future. Concept descriptions of these three processes are developed below. The processes are of course generic and widespread, what a theory of practice of township theatre-making attempts, is to bring to light how their township location colours them in specific ways.

(a) Improvisation

Improvisation is defined by Allain and Harvey as the 'spontaneous invention of performance' (2006: 161). In Western theatre improvisation was the basis for the creation of plays in Commedia Del Arte companies (Nicoll 1963, Gordon 1983). In those plays stock characters respond to 'local contexts and current issues, to produce topical satire' (Allain & Harvey 2006: 161). In the 1960s and 1970s, inspired by performance artists, jazz musicians and composers who refused to stick to well-tried artistic conventions and rules, improvisation in the theatre and in drama education became associated with play and spontaneity. It was espoused as the preferred modus operandi for experimental theatre groups who wanted to contest the constraints of the scripted play and simultaneously subvert or challenge the socio-political status-quo (Coult & Kershaw 1990). More recently, improvisation's potential for physical as well as verbal engagement, for fostering widespread participation that allows the voices of all to be heard, for promising empowerment or broad-based socio-political action has been wholeheartedly embraced by Applied and Community theatre practitioners on five continents (Prentki & Preston 2009). They exploit the potential of improvisation as a device towards playmaking, opinion polling, community development and group solidarity. Within oral cultures and those with a rich repertoire, improvisation has always been the means whereby new performances of stories, poetry or song are created afresh off old aesthetic devices and materials in a variety of social situations, for the enjoyment or enlightenment of the community, or to educate young people (Scheub 1975).

Improvisation has therefore much to offer township theatre groups. Improvisation makes it possible for everyone to contribute to making plays and for a range of different voices to be heard. In improvisations participants bring stories, characters, ideas or situations that they care about into the process (Boal 2006). Participants can also show off and enhance their particular talents of dancing, acting or praising, according to their preference.

Improvisation also has practical advantages. Township theatre groups encounter numerous practical constraints. Group members may fail to turn up for rehearsals or performances, the venue (its existence, location or size) might be changed without warning. Improvisation skills dispose participants to deal creatively with change and not simply cease their activities or stumble through performances when the conditions have changed. Thus when viewing a performance that for the groups concerned might be demanding extreme adjustments of, for example, scale - because the venue is even smaller than their customary rehearsal space: - as audience member you might well not detect anything untoward; whereas 'backstage' the groups may well be remarking vociferously about how 'impossible' the space is!

In summary, improvisation encourages creativity, playfulness, spontaneity, invention and adaptability. Improvisation games or exercises, gleaned both from formal and informal theatre education and from the practices of the performatic repertoire, allow groups to generate characters, scenarios, songs, dances, predicaments, poems: a host of creative fragments with which to piece together plays. Out of these fragments the plays must be structured.

(b) Structuring material and composing performances

Conceptual approaches

When there is no text to prescribe the development of meaning, a number of systems for devising have been created such as those outlined by Coult and Kershaw (1983), Jellicoe (1987), Fleishman (1991), Oddey (1994), Kavanagh (1997), Heddon and Milling (2006), Kuppers (2007) and Kuppers and Robertson (2007). The following synopsis of the 'RSVP Cycles' captures elements that are common to many of them.

> In devising theatre, the *resource* is a stimulus for the performance – an object, place, piece of music or memory. The *score* is the material that arises from research, discussion and improvisations – settings, characters, images and events. *Valuaction* [sic] is the process of evaluating, selecting and organising the collected material, and *performance* is the testing out in practice of the resulting performance draft. As the synonym "RSVP" suggests, the method aims to facilitate continuous feedback amongst participating makers and audiences. The designation 'Cycles' indicates that the creative process is ongoing, the performance always open to revision [emphasis added]. (Allain and Harvey, 2006: 51)

Variants of this and other systems are used by township theatre-makers. But a coherent theoretical model of how structuring takes place amongst township theatre groups must accommodate the fact that each playmaking instance will vary according to the composition of the group, their inclinations, the topic, and the resources upon which they draw as well as the contexts in which they perform. This can only be pursued on a case by case basis and will be taken further in Chapter 7.

There are two more important sources of influence on structuring in almost all cases of township theatre-making. The first is the influence that township habitus and the dispositions of the performatic repertoire exert on the theatre-makers. The second is the methods of devising

that are common practice among townships groups. As I pointed out in the introduction to Part 2, taken one by one, each of these influences is intelligible but does not catalyse our understanding of the practice of theatre-making. However what is discernable in the discussion that follows is that the influences fuse and generate particular effects. First I shall deal with the effects of the conjoint influences of the township, its habitus and its playing culture.

Dispositions that affect structuring

Arising out of the experience of township living, the youth seize on theatre as a vehicle with which they can conjure new visions of their world. They are disposed to work collectively, to adapt to change by embracing oppositions, and to create order and stability. Inculcated with the dispositions of the local performatic repertoire, they are also imbued with certain aesthetic dispositions – to immediacy, to pattern and to storytelling. What is evident in the plays is the way these dispositions / raw materials are combined and mould the processes of meaning making through theatre in very particular ways.

Creating meaning through images

An image is usually a metaphorical or metonymical depiction of something by means of words, mime, or enactment. Many of the plays employ images as core units of meaning and if important, these are likely to be developed throughout the play.

Images sometimes subsist in a character, an archetype or stereotype, such as an AIDS sufferer (*The Miracle Begins* 2006*)* or teacher (*OBJ* 2005*)*. Images may also be metaphorical, such as calling a voting paper box a 'dream box' ('144 months' 2006) or dubbing HIV/AIDS as three rats ('The three rats A.I. & D' 2007). Images may also be metonymical such as addressing the government by writing in the air and simultaneously chorusing: 'To whom it may concern …' (2005), or by comparing a telephone receiver dangling off its hook with an intemperate male rapist (*BSW* 2007). Images can also subsist in a theme or concept, such as the unbridgeable chasm between town and township (*Ubizo* 2006*)*, or corruption amongst church or business leaders ('Church council scams' 2009*)*. Images can subsist in an action such as surviving ('Poverty cripples' 2005), or seeking a new life (**'**Thobeka dreams to much' 2006).

The images created in the plays are seldom fixed. More often they are multi-valent. Because they are physically and vocally presented, they appeal through the senses to the imagination and therefore easily evoke emotions. If well realised in the dramatic action, images afford opportunities for the audience to dwell in the space of feeling, or reflect on the action (Scheub 2002) or unleash their imagination.

The order of meaning: the meaning of order

Lévi-Strauss posits that the impulse to order is essential to art. I have argued that it is active in the township habitus. Bourdieu explains:

> [I]n many of its operations, guided by a simple 'sense of the opposite', ordinary thought, like all 'pre-logical' (or practical) thought, proceeds by oppositions, an

> elementary form of specification that leads it, for example, to give to the same term as many opposites as there are practical relations it can entertain with what is not itself. (1990: 20)

The impulse to order by oppositions is evident in township plays that set order against disorder, and permanence against transience. Such oppositions are homologous and serve as an underlying principle at work in the structuring of plays. The theatre-makers establish oppositional forces in the plays by using contrasting elements to which they are already predisposed. For example, slowness and steadiness are mostly associated with order and permanence; reassuring in their fixity. Characters that are stable, steadfast and constant are contrasted with characters who are destructive, dishonest and unreliable ('Crime destroys the family' 2009). Alternatively, characters or crowds who were good quite suddenly switch to being bad, or occasionally vice versa (**'**The drunk priest' 2006, 'Murdering for body parts' 2007). A close-knit family suddenly ostracises the daughter when they discover she is HIV positive ('The three rats' 2007).

Things mostly change for the worse, so permanence is often associated with good and transience with evil. Situations which appeared safe and sure, suddenly lurch toward catastrophe, arising for example out of greed, illness, or revenge that turns the calm into the chaotic (*Ubizo* 2006).

Dramatic tension or dramatic irony is achieved by an elderly character whose creeping progress towards certain goals is steadfastly maintained by turning a deaf ear or blind eye to generally more impatient opposition in the manner of the tortoise and the hare (*Thabo,* 'The crimes of the youth' 2009*).* The church choir or mother's union sustain through all kinds of vicissitudes (*Ukuzingisa* 2007*),* whereas attractive, racy *tsotsis* seldom sustain for a whole play (*Thabo* 2006*, Things are bad* 2007*).*[90] Such juxtapositions not only depict a moral conflict, they also generate dramatic tension. This is the way the theatre-makers work: they are literally making meaning as they make plays.

A space and time for order

I pointed out in Chapter 4 that the physical world of the townships is relatively tenuous. Spatial control in the townships is very hard to achieve. Spatial privacy, indoors and out, a rarity and easily destroyed. As pointed out above, space for practising theatre-making in the townships is an extremely scarce commodity. So the theatre-makers do not rely on fixed spatial dimensions but rather they demarcate the space of performance by means of floor patterns and an extensive use of balanced visual composition and symmetry, by means of tableaux, grouping or furniture arrangement. Ironically, in both *Take another look* (2005) and *Township talks* (2008) a drug swop makes a particular impact of potential violence and high levels of risk because it is slowed

[90] That is not to say that *tsotsis* and other 'baddies' always receive their comeuppance. Sometimes they do not. In such cases they take what they want (money, a woman, a life) and disappear from the scene. Sometime they die.

down and patterned symmetrically on the stage. Such ordered physical arrangements present a balanced composition, even when performance venues change, or when it is only vaguely defined or not conducive to performance.

Time is something over which theatre-makers have more control, so controlling tempo, rhythm, and the use of pause, or a freeze, is often the chief means whereby 'space' is created for emotional or imaginative expansibility in the plays. Time can be held back, or dilated, to make space for personal feeling, for sharing and for communal sociality. For instance in *Udaba Bafazi* (2007) the four actors sing a wooing song, gesturing and moving in unison whilst the vocal harmonies are complex and exquisite. As they sing, hope in romance, in a future relationship, in the 'perfect partner' increases as the audience is carried along in the charm and beauty of the singing, only of course to have that hope quashed later in the play. The celebratory dance/songs in preparation for Xoliswa's wedding in *BSW* (2007) induce the audience to rejoice with the bride and her community and hence to lament the more deeply when her marriage sours into recurring instances of abuse. Nearly the whole journey from ostracism and self-loathing to redemption of the AIDS sufferer in *The miracle begins* (2006) is achieved through a broad array of dance forms and songs that has audiences alternately entranced by hope in human compassion or discomforted by the depiction of illness and stigmatisation.

Song, dance, chant, poetry, rituals and patterning, which employ repetition but also include the element of change that generates sustained precariousness, imbue the present moment with importance. The performers resist the everyday-life scramble for survival by investing the here and now of the performance with attention, focussed energy and concentrated emotion. These devices create a range of sensory experiences in sound and movement: a mythic permanence. Plays like *The miracle begins, Udaba bafazi, and 'Mzantsi'* are rhythmically layered with a sophistication most uncommon in mainstream theatre. Where town theatre employs lights, a constructed set, costuming, make-up, possibly multi-media, or an elaborate score amplified by surround-sound, theatre from the township relies much more on sustained chanting or harmonised singing, patterned movement or ritual, to enhance aesthetic impact.

Patterned aesthetic expression

Patterning takes many aesthetic forms apart from manipulating space and time. The *Nguni* performatic repertoire offers an enormous range of vocal and verbal expressive features, pitches, timbres and idiomatic expressions, all of which are means to clarify, emphasise and depict ideas in heightened, iconic ways that draw attention to felt experience.[91]

By visual means such as colour coding costumes or wearing 'uniforms', dramatic structuring devices such as juxtaposition or parallelism, or by means of layering, repetition and piling images upon each other, what would probably be an inextricably befuddled flow of

[91] As explained in the introduction, this study does not elaborate on language and linguistic features. So these are noted here as important forms of patterning repeatedly brought to my attention by translation but I am unable to undertake a deeper analysis here.

experiences, ideas, feelings, questions or impressions, becomes no less vivid, on the contrary probably carries a lot more impact, for being patterned.

One opinion may be contrasted with another by depicting the contrast in the stage picture or in the spoken tone. For example, the chorus of medical personnel in 'Medical Ethics' (2007) are all dressed alike and outface their opposition, moving simultaneously as a unified and uniform grouping.

Distinguishing between action and reaction, between reality and vision, may be achieved by distinctive changes of performance style such as moving from conversational speech into song or domestic movement into physical theatre. For example, when women from a burial society burst into song to herald the centre for arts and crafts they are starting (on stage right), then a traditional praise poet simultaneously commences with a praise poem in honour of the beginnings of the township Gugulethu (on stage left). Drawing on local history, the *imbongi* compares the women with those who have been pioneers in the past (*Ukuzingisa eGugulethu* 2007).[92]

Employing images as the core units of meaning, and characterised by the disposition to engage fully in performance with body, voice and imagination, as well as to pattern, township theatre-makers develop plays out of improvisations and discussions, bringing their fragments together in loosely or tightly woven narratives that are distinctive in two further ways.

Storytelling

Antjie Krog writes:

> It is said that we *tell* stories so that we do not die of truth. But we also tell stories to know who we are and to make sense of the world. We constitute our social identities through narrative and, although life is much more than stories, stories also try to create order in the chaos of our lives. Stories in their widest sense can be used to bring order, or tell about chaos.
>
> We *listen* to one another's stories so that we share carrying the truth. But we also listen to stories in order to become, for one brief moment, somebody else, to be somewhere we've not been before. We listen to stories in order to be changed. At the end of the story we do not want to be the same person as the one who started listening. (2009: 19)

Storytelling as a theatrical device has distinct advantages. It invests the teller(s) with the right to select what shall be told, when and how; to order the material in ways which reveal its deeper meanings. It satisfies the need to bring order, as Antjie Krog affirms. And yet it also offers the chance to be creative. Storytelling invests tellers with power over fate, with power to make meaning, to put things together in such a way that they reflect choices important to the storytellers. So telling stories becomes a site for review, reflection, moral evaluation, and sharing burdens or joys.

[92] An *imbongi* is a traditional praise poet who launchs into spontaneous praising as the mood takes him or occasion demands.

In the plays, the storyteller is usually located in the here and now presence of the audience. The story is framed as a 'story' by the teller. This is a distancing device. Frequently, the story to be told is situated in the past and is therefore further distanced. Distancing allows a degree of perspective on events which dramatic 'now time' does not afford.

Storytelling enables the teller to recoup the past and weave it into the present, enlarging and validating the present by the sense of its history. Sometimes the story is an attempt to reconcile the past with the present or to redress the present by recalling the past. Many of the township plays refer to the past: childhood or youth that is past, a rural past, a traumatic event in the past, a past of political struggle, and even a distant or mythical past in which South Africa's indigenous peoples are not yoked within imperialism. Scheub points out the usefulness of oral poetry in this regard: 'Our lives are never separated from tradition. Poetry is the means of connecting the two, the way we understand ourselves. We could never move forward without the past' (2002: 90). The majority of Khayelitsha's population has only recently arrived from the Eastern Cape. In so far as identity is related to place and the past, incorporating the past in the plays, even though they are created by young people, is part of the project of the performatic repertoire. In this way the spaces and places of memory are retained in community consciousness.

Layering, or bricolage

Within storytelling, much of the emotional impact is achieved by layering one thing upon the next, colouring up the image, adding a new simile or antiphonal song. When the theatre-makers bring stories, incidents, images, songs, words into the rehearsal space in response to a proposal for a theme or story, these fragments may be assembled according to the 'principle of chance' as much as by design. Then the play develops according to the materials, fragments of story, scenes, characters, songs, that come to hand, rather than because they are superbly apt in the view of the director. Claude Lévi-Strauss calls this piecemeal application of materials and tools "bricolage", and (s)he who operates thus, a "bricoleur". He explains:

> The 'bricoleur'is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks; but, unlike the engineer, he does not subordinate each of them to the availability of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project. … [T]he rules of his game are always to make do with 'whatever is at hand', that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project, or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions. The set of the 'bricoleur's means cannot therefore be defined in terms of a project. (1972: 17)

In many instances, what performers bring to the process of devising has more to do with images, ideas or melodies that are alive in their imaginations and bodies because they are part of the repertoire or of township experience, rather than because of their consonance with the thematic concerns of the play. In other words, what the performers or theatre-makers bring may not be neutral 'materials' but rather composite bits of perception and experience that are not

necessarily easily deconstructed and then reconstructed to make a new work. They are rather included in the plays as 'conglomerates'; having a relationship with the rest of the work whether or not that relationship is fully logical or specifically chosen. So, as Lévi-Strauss argues:

> [T]he bricoleur … derives his poetry from the fact that he does not confine himself to accomplishment and execution: he "speaks" not only *with* things, … but also through the medium of things: giving an account of his personality and life by the choices he makes between the limited possibilities. The 'bricoleur' may not even complete his purpose but he always puts something of himself into it [original emphasis]. (1972: 21)

Likewise, the performer in a township play who is faced with altered circumstances in performance is likely to add things to the performance which were not there in the previous rehearsal. In storytelling or performance this can be a strength. Firstly, it generates creativity and imagination as 'odd things' are juxtaposed, sometimes generating new ideas or points of view. Secondly, should the circumstances of performance demand it, the performer is able to adjust her performance and, bricoleur fashion, incorporate a new bit of mime, or call and response or character, if needs be. Therefore, the bricoleur is resourceful and flexible, weaving the performance as the occasion demands and making use of what is to hand.

However her/his choices can only be contingent to the extent that they are subdued to the cause of the whole. Once the properties that are to hand, or the situation which is to hand, take complete control, one is no longer dealing with art but simply with activity. As Lévi-Strauss argues, the impulse in the artist is intrinsically toward ordering and organisation of the parts. So, rather than understand the whole by analysing its parts as does the scientist, with art, we understand the parts only in terms of the whole. The materials brought to the rehearsal room by participants have been drawn from their imagination and experiences and they will become conjoined within the whole performance in ways which, at best, illuminate all the parts by the impact of the whole. At worst they will appear still contingent, additive rather than necessary.

Perhaps the distinction between collage and bricolage will shed light on the differences of emphasis that are possible. A collage assembles pieces, or shards of previous experiences, artefacts or artworks into a composite picture or performance in which the bits make sense only within the whole. Collage's site of meaning is only itself in the sense in which art makes sense on its own terms. However in bricolage, at least some of the bits probably make perfect sense outside the context of the work and then possibly take on different shades of meaning in the new work. In bricolage the materials may be second hand whereas in collage their recycling becomes reincarnation. Scheub argues that the presence of old, or reworked bits of stories, songs, images used in successive performances becomes a palimpsest which, rather than detracting from the work, deepens the experience of the work for the audience, particularly on an emotional level (2002). The techniques of the bricoleur which are prevalent amongst township theatre-makers are likely to produce such works, in which the smells of past experiences, memories and sayings collect within and are communicated through a new play, adding layers of feeling amongst audience members.

This section has examined how the township habitus and repertoire colours the practice of theatre-making. It has explored the effects of the dispositions to order and to aesthetic patterning. The uses of image, storytelling and bricolage and their effects have been examined. The frequent use of these devices, born out by the examples, would suggest that their usage goes without saying, it is part of the logic of local practice.

The practice is prolific and creative because it is based on the capacity to use whatever comes to hand and to incorporate or work around it. This does not result in incomprehensible or completely ad hoc works, because of the disposition to order. Whatever is at hand is incorporated and then composed according to homologous sets of oppositions. Aesthetic patterning achieves coherent, defined and distinctive performances. Performances are eventified by the particular ways in which time and space are managed in the plays. Performances are rendered beautiful, not by technical means, but by means of rhythm, dance, song, and ritual.

Entrenched theatre practices of township theatre-makers

Where township theatre-makers inevitably take the township habitus and dispositions generated by the performatic repertoire with them into the structuring aspects of their playmaking, there are other means of structuring the plays that are passed down through the practice of theatre-making itself. I have selected the uses of writing and physical theatre as particularly important, not because these are not techniques or approaches used elsewhere, but because of the particular way in which they are employed in township theatre-making.

Playwrighting or Play Writing

As stated earlier, there is no set 'text'.

> S3: In the township what we really do with the group is not write the script. We workshop the story and then write the story line - no lines for individuals. And then we sit down and discuss. We discuss how the story is going to play out. "Now, from point A to point B create your own dialogue." That is why sometimes there are a lot of changes on stage when we are performing for an audience. (Symposium 2008:15)

The similarity of this form of playmaking with the practices of commedia del arte troupes is striking (Nicoll 1963).

Although groups mostly use improvisation to make their plays, this does not mean that there are no scripts and no writing. What there almost never is, is a prescribed script with characters, situations and spoken words completely developed and immutable that only requires enactment to conjure a performance. Generally, writing is selectively employed. For instance, a 'storyline' might have been jotted down before the group began to work and it becomes a key point of reference, as was the case in the making of both *OBJ* and *BSW*. Or once launched into the creative process, individual actors write down monologues, poems, lyrics or even thoughts for scenes. There is no taboo against writing and reading, it is simply not as common as working orally. This is important to emphasise lest the assumption is made that writing and orally-based

work are in competition. They are not; rather as Ruth Finnegan says, they continually seep into each other (2007: xi).

However the kind of writing employed in the process of township theatre-making does not carry the mantle of authority afforded the play text in traditional Western theatre. The process of playmaking does not really lend itself to literary-orientated tinkerings with the text that, as Alan Read puts it, 'mean very little to a theatre which values the relationship it has with people's everyday lives and the vastly more complex panorama of the body and its practices that theatre of any worth has to command' (1995: 11)

However when a play has no 'final script', there are implications for its reproduction which are important. First, the performance is the text. The text does not foreground words or verbal language. In order to be remembered, the performance text must be assigned to memory by becoming embedded in gestures, actions as well as spoken word or song. Therefore speech, gesture, movement, pattern, song are all equally part of the text which resides in the bodies of the performers. Should the circumstances of performance radically alter, 'the text' is alterable with little discussion between the performers because they are generating the text for each performance and will make alterations demanded by the logic of the situation. Therefore this kind of theatre is flexible and adaptive to performance conditions and this is necessary and useful in township conditions of performance.

On the other hand, performers may inadvertently change things in performance. Without recourse to a 'prescribed text' it may be hard to explain to a performer why what they did in the second performance was 'not as good as what they did in the first performance'. In this sense an improvised play may be less accessible to analytic scrutiny and dissection by the group or the director post facto, and therefore may afford less possibility for tinkering, for adjustment.

> S 9: I think when it comes to writing a play, for me it helps as a point of reference. If there are changes that happen in the future of the production, you know, you have a point of reference if there are any developments you want to make to the play. So, what was it before? And how can we improve it for the next stage? (Symposium 2008:26)

What written records, if not written 'dialogue', then do afford, is that the scene on the floor is not only embedded within the performers' bodies but written notes allow the director access to the scene and to contemplate and if necessary adjust or develop certain aspects post reflection.

The prolific use of physical theatre

I have already explained that singing and dancing are intrinsic to the performatic repertoire of the townships and are also commonly used in the plays.[93] In Cape Town, physical theatre is increasingly employed, to the extent that audience members identify the trend.

> Q: Comparing this play with others you have seen, are there any similarities or differences in terms of structure or the way they are presented?

[93] This aspect of township theatre has been very well explored by Coplan in *In Township Tonight* (1985, 2007).

> A3: There is something they call physical theatre. I don't know what that means, but someone mentioned something about physical theatre. So I think if the play is physical, even if the story is different, the people are moving and telling the [story] physically. But that is just my assumption I don't know. (*OBJ,* 2007a)

Dymphna Callery encapsulates the core characteristics of this form:

> At its simplest, physical-theatre is theatre where the primary means of creation occurs through the body rather than through the mind. In other words, the somatic impulse is privileged over the cerebral in the making process. This is true whether the product is an original devised piece or an interpretation of a scripted text. This does not mean that the intellectual demands of the idea or script are jettisoned. The intellectual is grasped through the physical engagement of the body because, as Lecoq (2000:9) puts it, "the body knows things about which the mind is ignorant". (Callery, 2001:4)

Physical theatre is frequently used for a number of reasons. Firstly, the township habitus and performatic repertoire predispose the performers to bodily engagement, presence and initiating creation in the body. Callery's description above is in many respects an accurate account of the modus operandi of township theatre-making.

Secondly, since Magnet Theatre ran the Community Groups Intervention in Khayelitsha from 2002-2007, being a physical theatre company, much of their skills development and training workshops have had a physical theatre base and this has had a significant cumulative effect amongst many of the groups in Khayelitsha.[94]

Thirdly, as Callery points out, physical theatre is not tied into Realism and utilises the body rather than literal representations to depict events onstage. There is no attempt to hide the constructedness of the theatrical event, but rather the audience is invited to make of the experience what it may (2001:5). Thus physical theatre is popular in township theatre-making, at least in part because of its openness to audience perception. It presents images which are suggestive rather than clearly representative, and it uses costuming and properties creatively rather than literally.

Fourthly, physical theatre is a cheap and accessible resource. The human body is used for the purposes of scenery such as a cupboard, a television, a chair or an altar. It becomes part of a 'machine' such as a taxi or musical instrument or hospital heart machine. It is used for the purposes of visual patterning and hence of staging and scenic design. Performers mime props such as mugs, pens, papers and guns rather than having to have these properties to hand. They mime environments such as the street, the factory or roadside rather than depicting these through scenic constructions. They indicate by means of freezing, clapping, singing, or slow motion that there is a scene change or mood change or that time is passing. This capacity to transform is very important in circumstances in which performances must be adaptable and portable if they are to see an audience at all. 'Medical ethics' (2007) employs a particularly

[94] Mark Fleishman, of Magnet Theatre, has also frequently offered directors' workshops for the Ikhwezi Festival. Whilst not necessarily dealing directly with Physical Theatre in these workshops, Fleishman's approach to directing and theatre-making is predicated on the conviction that the actor's body is a fundamental site of theatre.

sophisticated transition effected by the actors. A young boy rushes out of the house, marked by a door frame, followed by his carer - his auntie - yelling after him. As she exits through the door frame she picks it up and carries it to the back of the stage under her sustained yell of his name. Putting down the door frame upstage, she continues running and calling his name, getting more and more distressed until she collapses stage centre. Singing and sick and drunk people falling all about the stage tell us that she is in casualty at a hospital.

In this section we have discussed two distinctive ways in which township theatre-making practice has adopted and adapted play writing / making and physical theatre to their needs. The logic of structuring practice among Cape Town's township theatre-makers is characterised by dispositions generated by the townships and the performatic repertoire on the one hand, and by practices commonly used by township theatre-makers on the other.

(c) Skills burnishing

Skills burnishing**,** or training, is the third order of activities within the practice of theatre-making in the townships. Two kinds of skills burnishing take place. At a cognitive and social level, this involves comprehending and managing your relationship with and responsibility towards the theatre group of which you are a member. Participants engage with the reasons and motivations behind undertaking the practice of theatre-making as well as with the practical tasks of stage management and organization that rehearsals and performances demand.

With regard to performing itself, skills burnishing involves increasing technical accomplishment, control and flexibility, of body, voice, imagination and emotional expression. Skills burnishing increases the ability not only to create something interesting, but to retain, sustain and recreate something with equal freshness after repeated attempts. I do not call these processes 'skilling' because in this study I maintain that township theatre-makers already have a degree of performatic skill because of their familiarity with, and practice in, the repertoire that is active in township playing culture.

> 'S9: The base of entertainment is from the churches you know. Most of the people, from their foundation [in church experiences] are sketch-orientated more than production. We grew up in that environment; until we go to the training you see' (Symposium 2008:11).

Coming of age ceremonies have identifiable features of costume and expressive gesture, as do marriages and funerals. Mixing socially through dance and song; expressing ideas and emotions by means of part-singing, harmonising, improvising on another's melody; playing with rhythms and counterpoint, picking up a dance step from the rest of the group, are all familiar devices of social communication for many of those participating in theatre-making. New recruits can slip relatively quickly into movement and voice warm-ups based, for example, on dancing and singing.

The performatic elements in township social exchanges are pronounced, partly because they are constantly practised as part of the township performatic repertoire. The employment of

bodily hexis: for example downcast eyes, or thrust chin and hip, or dragging feet, or suggestive movement of the breasts or hips, is an indispensable aspect of everyday social intercourse. As Bourdieu puts it:

> What is "learned by the body" is not something one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is. This is particularly clear in non-literate societies, where inherited knowledge can only survive in the incorporated state. (1990: 73)

Gestural vocabularies and modes of address particular to interchanges with elders, parents, peers or community members, are useful and everyday parts of the repertoire on which theatre-makers draw. The latter have at least a tacit understanding that communication is not only articulated in words, but also in how completely the body and voice, as well as words, are harnessed to the task.

The habitus engendered by the performatic repertoire initiates young people into theatre-making because they come prepared to engage in physical and vocal exercises that are not merely functional (such as sweeping the house) but also expressive (such as singing a lament or flirting); and their bodily hexis is predisposed to engagement, presence, and taking pleasure in physical and vocal expressivity. They are familiar with learning through trial and error, imitating the leader (of song or dance), becoming part of a chorus (or choir) and listening attentively for their chance to contribute to the harmony. All of the above practices of the performatic repertoire support the *theatrical* habitus of township theatre-makers and performers.

But theatre-makers and performers also further refine their performance skills through training in improvisation, physical theatre and performance. Since a township group leader / director can not easily refine 'the script' towards strengthening the play; and since (s)he seldom has the resources to do more than a rudimentary refinement of the staging, the leader will improve the play by refining the performances of cast members. This is where performers are most likely to increase their knowledge of and skills in acting and performing.

Performance training and play making are inseparable. The more skilled your performers are, the better your play is likely to be; both because of the performers' interpretive and compositional abilities. So, while warm-ups, games, and exercises might initiate new recruits and begin the work of every session, and while the catalytic abilities of the group leader(s) may be helpful to get the process going, developing and extending the play as it is created on the floor is what really improves the performance skills of the theatre group.

Conclusion

This focus of this chapter has been to conceptualise the production system pertaining to theatre groups in some of Cape Town's townships. Part 1 delineates the organisational context of the groups. It discussed the circumstances that affect the organisation and activities of township theatre groups, their previous experiences and motivations for making theatre. It examined how leading and following, teaching and learning are intertwined processes within the groups who

manage to sustain whatever circumstantial challenges come in their way. The most unavoidable of the latter are outlined.

Part 2 has developed a theory of the practice of theatre-making amongst township groups, organised under the rubrics of improvisation, structuring and skills burnishing. In each of these sections, on the one hand their generic nature as standard theatre processes has been outlined. On the other, the influence of the township, its habitus and the dispositions of its performatic repertoire on the logic of the theatre-makers' practice has been examined. The emphasis in the account has been in the way improvisation, structuring and skills burnishing are harnessed in particular and characteristic ways in township theatre-making.

Rather than the ways of teaching and learning, leading and following, improvisation, structuring and skills burnishing comprising an impenetrable thicket, a thorny hodge-podge of activities simply caught together like burrs on a thorn bush, they are more appropriately conceived of as an interweaving of strands of a practice that together generate a copious hold-all. Intricately interlaced, the many strands weave together a practice that is flexible, porous and adaptable.

Each strand is resilient and because it has been spun over time, drawing substance from the dispositions to distinguish order from disorder and permanence from transience generated by township living. Other strands draw their colour and texture from dispositions to storytelling and image creation, patterning and bodily engagement. All of these strands are intertwined with others woven out of theatre experience and education, creating together a flexible carrier with the capacity to generate and refine plays. Using storytelling, bricolage fashion, physical theatre, dance, song, dialogue, poetry, characterizations, and collective creation, strands that break have other strands to fall back on, which sustain the hold-all and carry the gift. The hold-all stretches or shrinks according to the needs of what it carries. Some of the collection may fall through the loose weave, or the hold-all may accrue new contents in the process of containing that which it already holds. The entire weave may collapse into something that can be held in the palm of a hand, or it can expand to allow for the containment of an elaborate and extensively developed piece of theatre.

The point is that whilst township theatre making depends upon its agents, its township location and repertoire, the shifting, transforming and variable circumstances of theatre making in and of themselves have generated a flexible, resilient, adaptive and successful practice. This is its most noticeable feature. It does not stop because it is not 'properly resourced'. It uses whatever comes to hand so it is always resourced. It weaves connections between young people and their audiences, between their life experience and their wishes for the future, between their social and cultural practices and their art-making. It survives and sustains because it adapts and contains.

In Chapter 7 this concept description of the process will be tested in two specific instances of theatre making.

7. A STUDY OF TWO PLAYS

Introduction

Chapter 6 generated a theory of the practice of township theatre groups. It developed a concept description in two parts. Part 1 analysed how theatre groups organize and manage themselves with a view to production. Part 2 dealt with the practice of theatre-making itself and proposed that the theatre-makers' adaptability, resourcefulness and ability to use whatever is to hand accounts for the proliferation and sustainability of theatre-making in the township.

This chapter will attempt to 'test' the proposition that the context shapes the 'text' - in other words - the plays are shaped by the circumstances of their making. Using the analytic framework developed in chapter 6, two instances of the practice of township theater-making are examined, drawing upon interviews conducted with some of the devisers, and videos of the plays in performance.

The two instances have been selected because they fall at opposite ends of the spectrum of theatre originating from selected Cape Town townships. The first example is a work entirely 'own-made' in Khayelitsha township. The second was made at the Baxter Theatre Centre in a Cape Town suburb, using some students and theatre professionals and directed by a theatre professional. Nevertheless the themes of both plays arise out of the experience of township living. The processes of theatre-making are coloured by dispositions inhering in casts and directors, generated by a township habitus, playing culture and theatre education. In the latter example, these influences are apparent alongside and intertwined with the influence of town theatre practice.

The first is the case of *Old Brown Joe* that was collectively devised by members of Iselwa Le Sizwe from Khayelitsha, under the direction of Sam Faleni and Zimasa May. It portrays the predicament of a township school teacher 'OBJ', a veteran of the freedom struggle, who tries to awaken his contemporary pupils to their proud history. The second is *Beneath silent waters*, conceived by Ntombesizwe Tena and directed by Itumeleng Wa-Lehulere. Together, this couple ran the Ikhwezi Festival at the Baxter Theatre until 2008. *Beneath silent waters* uses story telling, song and physical theatre to depict the encounters with abuse of young women from the townships.

An attempt has been made to systematically organize the accounts, but because township theatre-making weaves together multiple strands of technique and influence, as I argued in Chapter 6, the accounts inevitably take on something of that quality. In part 1, the focus is on the theatre-making practice followed by the two groups. In part 2, the focus is on examining the plays in light of how they were made, and with regard to their meaning, structure and aesthetic forms.

Part 1: *OLD BROWN JOE* AND *BENEATH SILENT WATERS* AS INSTANCES OF PRACTICE

Old Brown Joe

Sam Faleni and Zimasa May led the group Iselwa le Sizwe when they made *OBJ*.[95] For these two it has been a long road from their beginnings in township theatre to the start of making this play in 2005. In the account of their formative experiences that follows, the inextricability of happenstance, theatre experience and teaching theatre, of personal vision and serving the community, of needing a space to work and trying to fulfill their own dreams, emerges in almost everything that they discussed with me in the interview.

In 1993 Sam Faleni and Themba Baleni started a 'cultural group' at high school in Indwe in the Eastern Cape. Discouraged by the lack of opportunities after completing their schooling, in 1996 they moved to Cape Town where they met Zimasa May who was involved in a theatre project in Khayelitsha. The management 'felt that we were talented' and they joined May in that project 'which got the Site B Community Hall for free and we had no space'. But soon they felt blocked by that project and so they left it and started to work in an after-school care, arts development project funded by Rotary. In the after school classes they began imparting theatre education generated out of their own experiences. However 'we were blocked from funders' and so they decided to part company from that project as well. But that distressed some of the learners in the arts programme, who pleaded with them: "Don't leave us," and so in 1999 Faleni, Baleni and May formed their own project, Ikhwezi.[96] At the same time, feeling the need to augment their own skills, they enrolled for theatre training at the Community Arts Project (CAP) that became Arts Media Access Centre (AMAC). Two of the original group of school learners, Cindy Mkaza and Chuma Sopotela, worked with Ikhwezi for five years and then enrolled at UCT. So the members of Ikhwezi draw both on self-generated skills, those gained from teaching as well as from formal education to guide their practice.

Since 1999, Ikhwezi has developed two major orientations, firstly making theatre, and secondly teaching and facilitating the arts with young people, because combining the two is mutually productive. In 2000, after the success of their play on HIV/AIDS called *Death after death*, they were employed to work with the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) until 2003, and from 2003-5 with *Médicins Sans Frontières,* doing 'agit-prop' theatre for HIV/AIDS education

[95] I interviewed Sam Faleni and Zimasa May on May 3rd 2006, some time after I saw *OBJ* in the Ikhwezi Festival in 2006. I first saw the play at the Magnet Theatre Community Group's Intervention Showcase in 2005. The information and quotations in this discussion derive from that interview, a further interview with May on 6 June 2006, discussions with group members including Cindy Mkaza, Chuma Sopotela Themba Baleni, Abongile Krosa and Mandisi Shindo, as well as my study of the plays. A relatively complete description of the play is to found in Appendix C.

[96] They first called their group 'Khayelitsha Ikhwezi Youth' and later 'Ikwezi Youth Theatre Development'. 'Ikhwezi' means 'rising star'.Although this group shares a name with the festival at the Baxter theatre in which they have frequently performed, they are quite distinct initiatives and the common name is coincidental.

in Khayelitsha and further afield. As another part of teaching and training, from 2000 onwards they have assisted youth in schools with play creation for festivals such as the Stop Crime Festival and the Idibano Schools Festival at Artscape.

From 2001 Ikhwezi has regularly staged works in the festival circuit, including the Tygerberg Festival, the Stop Crime Festival, the Ikhwezi Festival and the Magnet Theatre Community Groups Intervention (CGI) Showcase, with Baleni, Faleni and May all leading at various stages.[97]

In 2004 school learners with whom May and Faleni worked expressed the desire for the work to continue beyond the school plays, hence re-creating the circumstances of 1999. In response, May and Faleni started Iselwa Le Sizwe under the Ikhwezi banner, consisting mainly of school learners, and then 'Young Iselwa' to accommodate primary school learners. *OBJ* was created with Iselwa le Sizwe, and first performed for the Magnet CGI showcase in 2005.

Working with Iselwa Le Sizwe

Zimasa May and Sam Faleni collaborate, leading and teaching the Iselwa Le Sizwe group, but they repeatedly stress how vital it is to allow group members to bring their ideas and inspirations to the work. They explain how they go about it. In the discussion of their working process that follows, the interstitial character of the processes of improvising, structuring and skills burnishing emerges.

> May: Before we make a play we do some exercises: games, as a means to get to know each other. We start from those exercises that the theatre itself gives. We take the exercises and use them in the way of making a play. We call it improvisation. We use improvisation in making a play. We use some exercises whereby "you grow up". We say, "[Imagine] there is a dog there. You can't go there!" Whereby [the dog] is some sort of obstacle. And [we work with] the message of the props, the characters and the space.

The exercise 'with the dog' cited by May is based upon one Fleishman used in a workshop on Stanislavsky which he offered some time earlier for township theatre-makers (note to the writer,

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[97] *Death after death* toured to Johannesburg for the AIDS conference in 2001 and thereafter to the Market Laboratory, as well as to France. In 2002 *Death after death* toured prisons in the Western Cape under the auspices of Catholic Welfare and Development. In 2005 Faleni directed May and others actors from Iselwa in *Tears of our ancestors in a calabash* for the Ikhwezi and Cape Town Festivals. Faleni also wrote and directed himself, May and Dina in *Dear Diary* for the Ikhwezi Festival, and Baleni directed *Journey of my struggle* for his company Emlanjeni Productions (that is also under their Ikhwezi banner) with some others of the original Ikhwezi members such as Unathi Speelman and Chuma Sopotela. Some of this information was taken from papers pertaining to the Ikhwezi Festival at the Baxter kept in the archive of the Baxter Theatre Centre

More recently, Baleni has gone on to study film and is currently working in that industry although he still does theatre productions. After graduating from UCT, Mkaza has worked in industrial theatre and also runs the outreach arts programme for UNIMA, the international puppetry organization. In 2009 she performed a one-person show *Inkosazana* for the Edinburgh Festival and in Cape Town. Sopotela is also acting professionally and in 2008/9 performed in *The tempest* and *Karoo moose* at the Baxter Theatre and in the UK. Sopotela won the 2007 Fleur du Cap award for best actress and the 2008 Naledi award for Best Performance by a newcomer. Sopotela is one of the performers in *Beneath silent waters* discussed below.

10/12/09). May is harnessing and passing on what he has been taught. In this explanation, May inextricably intertwines teaching / learning during improvising, structuring and skills development. He explains how, in the process of improvising, the performers learn to orientate themselves in space, imagine it as a specific environment, work with imagined obstacles and other actors, develop characterizations and imagine predicaments. Improvisation is therefore equally part of skills burnishing and of generating material. The material is then coalesced into the beginnings of a play.

> May: We do some research. We [therefore] have some information. We provide some stimuli, then after that we allow everybody to come up with their own ideas. And then we share the ideas around the play and discuss the whole issue.

His description parallels that of the RSVP cycles cited earlier. What is clear is that the leaders work with and off what the performers bring to the process.

> Faleni: We say, "Go and make your own character: the way he moves, the way he talks", so we give the cast the freedom so that everybody [contributes]. Then when they come back, we have to share by using movement and props.

They use what is nearest to hand. They are bricoleurs. Levi-Strauss compares bricolage with naïve art and recalls the extraordinary scene in Dicken's *Great Expectations* in which Pip visits Mr Wemmick's wee 'castle' in the suburbs, complete with 'miniature drawbridge, its cannon firing at nine o'clock, its bed of salad and cucumbers' (1972: 17).

> Faleni: We are working with children, … we usually give them the freedom so that the play comes out through the improv and the games.

The play carries the residue of those 'games' within it as it assumes the texture of the performers' experiences that they brought to the rehearsals.[98]

Then the directors plot the emotional graph of the play, adjusting what is proposed rather than reformulating it, so that appropriate levels of emotion are expressed at salient moments,

> Faleni: They want to 'take over', so we give them the freedom so that they can 'explode' and do what they want. And after the freedom we control the level and the spirit. But most of the time we give them the freedom to express themselves.

The play thus is developed in accordance not only with the theme, but also the feelings and perceptions of the players.

> Faleni: And after that we put dialogue in between. Once those things are done, it is easy for us to make the dialogue when we have all the [proposals].

[98] In the 2005 version, at one stage a 'school pupil' picked up a small clay doll from the teacher's desk and interrogated the doll as if it was the teacher OBJ, in a prolonged verbal harangue. In 2006 and 7, the verbal harangue was part of the play but the doll had gone. Its purpose as provocation had been internalized by the 'school pupil' in the course of the first performances and so the doll was no longer necessary.

Working with themes arising from township experience

The character OBJ was brought to rehearsals as a proposal by May, and draws upon his memories and experiences as a school learner in the eighties. He explains the central image:

> OBJ is a political activist in the school. As a teacher he wants to inspire the pupils about their heritage. We are trying to bring back these memories of the time when OBJ was being an activist. We are recalling his past experiences. We are highlighting how our comrades were being jailed at that time. Some people died but OBJ was lucky enough to return alive. The community don't appreciate what he has done, so there is a dilemma.

In the play the community blame OBJ. Those who lost children to the struggle accuse him because he 'encouraged a spirit of activism'. In desperate need of a scapegoat, the community accuses OBJ of having led the children of Gugulethu into exile or death for the freedom struggle whilst he himself survived. The play recalls the incident of the 'Gugulethu seven' from the mid-eighties when seven youths were shot by the police in Gugulethu. According to the police, the youths were members of the ANC's armed wing, Umkonto we Sizwe. According to others, the boys were 'set up' by Vlakplaas counter-espionage operatives and then cut down by the police. Still others accused community members of betraying the comrades (Krog, Mpolweni and Ratele 2009).[99].

Fear, need and impotence generate aggression and whilst the Iselwa members had scarcely been born in the struggle years, they have nevertheless had first hand experience of a community turning violence upon itself. On SABC TV2 on Sunday 29 November 2009 a documentary focussed upon poverty and lack of economic opportunity as part of the cause of the xenophobic violence which swept through Ramaphosaville, one of South Africa's poorest townships in May and June 2008. Nieftagodien (2008) of Wits History Workshop, writes in *The Star:*

> Places like Alexandra, Ramaphosaville and Khayelitsha have become the dumping grounds of the marginalised and alienated…. No-one should be surprised that hatred has spewed from these places. And, as distasteful as it might be, we should not be surprised when national and ethnic identities are mobilised to evict the 'other' or 'outsiders' in order to gain access to limited resources.

The play points to the tendency of a community with its back to the wall to seek scapegoats in their midst.

In spite of the fact that apartheid was legally abandoned by the time most of the Iselwa members entered school, they are just one of many groups who have returned to the theme of the freedom struggle. The combined efforts of May and Faleni together with the Iselwa performers produced a play that does not merely recall the freedom struggle but rather investigates the turmoil of pain and confusion that uncovering the past can generate. Iselwa

[99] *There was this goat: investigating the Truth Commission testimony of Notrose Nobomvu Konile* (2009) by Antjie Krog, Nosisi Mpolweni and Kopano Ratele, is an extraordinary explication of the testimony of a mother of one of the slain youths. It investigates how cultural and language differences impeded understanding and communication between the parties at the Truth Commission hearings.

members have gleaned perceptions and impressions of the freedom struggle from freedom songs, slogans and folk lore, the media, parliament and pulpit, as well as from parents, teachers and community leaders. The play portrays their suspicions of authentic testimony, personal integrity and the teacher's word as, enacting the school pupils in the play, they become increasingly fearful of OBJ and finally turn to scapegoating him.[100] This is an exemplary instance of how the particular perceptions and contributions of the group are brought into the play.

The theatre-maker as bricoleur

Near the beginning of *OBJ* the pupils have a major argument about whether or not to make a play about June 16th for their teacher. Having decided rather to make a play *about* their teacher, still the pupils argue vociferously about how to do that. I asked them why the school pupil characters argue so much. Faleni responded:

> We are trying to show the situation of making the plays. There are always fights when we are making plays! There are always differences of opinions. [For instance] 'this one' doesn't want his opinion to be in the play. It is a true story: something that is happening in the township when we are doing a play. There are always those fights when we make a play.

The process of theatre-making fundamentally has nothing to do with the presentation of an activist teacher, and yet for the leaders it was most important to show the discursive process of theatre-making. Thus they display Lévi-Stauss's argument that the bricoleur:

> "speaks" not only *with* things, … but also through the medium of things: giving an account of his personality and life by the choices he makes between the limited possibilities. The 'bricoleur' may not even complete his purpose but he always puts something of himself into it. (1972: 21)

> May: It shows the respect the kids do have in the class for skill. They are ready to detect poor work. If we want to make a play there are contentions, competition and jealousies between the participants. The audience doesn't see that, but for us that is very important: In theatre there is nothing less: everything is very important.

When considered from the point of view of theatre makers who are determined to open up the possibilities, even to 'remake' their world through theatre, May and Faleni's preoccupation with demonstrating through the play what happens in the process of theatre-making takes on a particular significance. It is evidence of the relations between theatre and everyday life and the 'subtle and interesting relation between their conditions of meaningfulness' as Read puts it (1993: 51).

Collective, collaborative theatre-making and bricolage

In her interview about the making of *BSW*, Sopotela attests to frequent arguments and discussions being crucial to making the play. Ingqayi Educational Theatre Trust emphatically emphasized the same point about the process of making *The miracle begins* (2006). Making a play is both a discursive and a collaborative project. Predisposed by their township habitus to

[100] *The crucible* (1953) and *Ipi zombi?* (1998) are two other landmark plays on this theme.

respect the power of the group, the playmakers work productively, if discursively, within that containing framework. The freedom to express individual and particular points of view paradoxically might account for the cohesive teamwork demonstrated by many casts, not least in '*Mzantsi'* (2006) and *OBJ* (2007). At the same time the performers are disposed to participate in aesthetic patterning from their experience of the local performatic repertoire. The latter induces a collaborative and collective performance discipline in participants. For all of these reasons there is a remarkable balance achieved between individual and group creation in the theatre-making process

In *OBJ* the fight over making a play is part of the dramatic action and shared with the audience. The extensive audition scene with its squabbles and humour only makes sense in the crudest plot terms. The school pupils argue about the best way to make a play. Beyond that, any intrinsic links between the activist teacher with a poor reputation and the would-be 'actor-learners' is unclear in the opening scenes of the play. Again I return to the notion of bricolage. The leaders are bricoleurs, not carpenters, and this is why the character of the play is 'knobbly' and idiosyncratic. Lévi-Strauss emphasises the delightful surprises evoked by employing one thing as another. Notwithstanding that, all the bits and pieces are unlikely to address the heart of the matter. So, because in bricolage the whole must make sense of the parts, if the whole is hard to grasp, the parts may become more so. I am reminded of a comment at the symposium which is apt here:

> S8: When we are doing our plays, in most cases our creativity is driven by the fact that we don't have resources, alright? And then that causes the play to be [presented] in a certain way. Because we don't have a certain thing: [for instance] we don't have lights that shake out [black out]. All right? [laughter] And then, [what you do is] each of you quickly run and tell them [the cast] to "be creative in terms of moving to the next scene!" [ie.indicate the next scene by means of a freeze or some other device]. (2008:82)

For an audience member, a movement sequence inserted to indicate a change of scene might appear to be coming from nowhere and can be very hard to interpret. For this reason bricolage can make for some combinations of events on stage as incongruous as Mr Wemmick's 'castle' is with the suburbs. As Faleni remarked:

> The dialogue needs to develop and the transitions need developing. We need to develop the movement because there are few people who can understand that movement. What is the meaning of the movement? Why are we doing the movement?

But like Mr Wemmick's castle, if you can allow your imagination to 'go with the flow' then the experience offered is 'rich and strange' as Ariel describes Prospero's magic.[101] No uniform conventions are employed to suggest changes of time, locality or even character. The audience has to distinguish for themselves between scene changes and dramatic action and it can be tricky – as our interviewee indicated (chapter 6). But when the audience is attuned to the inventiveness and literal playfulness of the interpretive devices, and appreciates the latters'

[101] Shakespeare, *The Tempest,* Act 1 Scene 2, ll 395-403.

frequent semiotic reference to worlds and situations beyond the play, then they are in a position to appreciate the richness that eclecticism adds to the substance of the play. This is the largely the case with a township audience who 'take it as it comes'. They do not need the entire experience to be fully intelligible. At home in the practices of the performatic repertoire, they engage more intensely with the present moment than with where the accumulated meaning might finally lie. May himself takes the view that the play should not be readily or easily intelligible. The audience must make of it what they want, a view corroborated by many audience members in the focus group interviews.

> May: I know some of the people don't understand what is happening in this play. Theatre is about provoking the audience: what is he trying to do? Why is he doing that?!

Postscript

I interviewed May and Faleni in 2006, nearly a year before they performed for the Cape Town Festival in 2007. At that stage, May confessed that: 'I would love to see the play being performed [more] but I don't know where we are going to get that [opportunity]'. And Faleni chimed in: 'All of the cast are school children and some of the children are in grade 12 and that is difficult'. Faleni explained their overall situation as theatre-makers thus:

> At the moment we are working as Ikhwezi facilitating, working with Iselwa [*his hand gesture indicates 'the young ones']* trying to build Iselwa. But we are hoping to do a play as Ikhwezi. But in order to do a big production we have to work more with Iselwa because we don't have the time for us to perform.

What they achieved with *OBJ* in 2007 was exactly that. The production was greatly refined from the 2006 performance in the Ikhwezi Festival. The cast comprised members of Iselwa and Zimasa May. *OBJ* played the matinee slot at the Intimate Theatre in the Gardens on three consecutive Saturdays. The timing is compatible both with transport from the townships and the school childrens' availability. In Chapter 8 we will see how large a role timing and transport play when you want your play to be performed at the Cape Town Festival.

This discussion has demonstrated that the making of *OBJ* appears to have been an inextricable combination of leading and following, teaching and learning, improvisation, structuring and skills burnishing. It has demonstrated that collaborative creation and bricolage are adept tools for making the most of what comes to hand with which to build a play. How the process is similar to, but distinct from that of, *BSW* is part of what will be interrogated below.

Beneath silent waters

Where *OBJ* was developed with a township theatre group who were learning as they made the play under more experienced township directors, *BSW* was developed by experienced directors who had secured funding, with a trained cast at the Baxter Theatre Centre. Nevertheless this play is a composite of township and town theatre, with many evident township influences, as I will demonstrate in what follows.

Ntombesizwe Tena is a graduate of New Africa Theatre Association. She has made plays and films, and until 2008 was the administrator of the Ikhwezi Festival at the Baxter Theatre Centre. Itumeleng Wa-Lehulere has been artistic director of the Ikhwezi Festival from the beginning. He trained at the Community Arts Project and established Buwa Theatre Company in 1994. He was part of the team who devised *Thina bantu* (1987) under the direction of Mavis Taylor for UCT at the Baxter Theatre Centre, and he has created *Down Adderley Street* (1995) and *Echoes of our footsteps* (2001) amongst many other plays.

Tena raised funds for and produced *BSW* for her own company Kwakhanya, and herself assembled the cast which included performers who had graduated from New Africa Theatre Association and AMAC. *BSW* was presented at the Ikhwezi Festival in 2006 and 2007, accorded a 'Best of the Ikhwezi Festival' revival run at the Baxter in May 2007, and thereafter at the National Festival of the Arts, Grahamstown.

Tena and Wa-Lehulere exercise considerable power in the sub-field of township theatre because they run the Ikhwezi Festival. They do not fall squarely within the chosen focus of this study which is on young theatre-makers currently active in the townships. Therefore I have chosen to interlocute the making of *BSW* from the perspective of one of the actresses. At the time of the interview Sopotela was in her second year at university after many years of working with May, Faleni and Baleni in Ikhwezi in Khayelitsha. Her theatre experience at the time straddled town and township.

The process of making *Beneath silent waters*

Sopotela's explicaton of the process highlights the differences and similarities between the production process for a conventional scripted play and for a devised 'township play'. Sopotela has experienced both and so draws upon a range of conventions of practice (2006). She explains:[102]

> The writer of the play was Ntombisizwe Tena, so that was the original script. We worked [with her] for three weeks, about five times a week for short times. She wanted us to understand more of what the script was about and she wanted us to reflect on it from [the point of view] of our own lives.
> …
> After we had workshopped with her, she took Itumeleng WaLehulere to help her and with him, he sort of took the whole script apart and put it into pieces and tried--. What he did was that he took each and every story and said: let's try and understand this woman deeply. Let's put more into what the story is all about – Realism.

The process is typical of township practices in the following respects. Tena's script set an agenda, but it was not regarded by her as the final work. Both she and Wa-Lehulere expected and desired the play to be further developed by the cast's capacities, not only to tell but also to create, stories. This play would use what the women brought to rehearsals in the same way as *OBJ* was developed.

[102] Unless otherwise stated, all the quotations are Sopotela in interview with the writer on 10 May 2006.

> The play was about the journey of four women sharing their experiences of womanhood and their experiences of men. … For me, that was what most of the process was: reflecting from my life what I find in common with these women. In order for us to be able to go into those womens' shoes and actually embrace what they are, and not be judgmental of what they were doing and what their lives were about.

Storytelling

As introduced in chapter 5, storytelling draws both on bits of story, or core images (Scheub 1975) taken from the performatic repertoire, and on the teller's powers of improvisation in the moment. In making this play, improvisation, sparked mainly by endless discussions and questioning, generated material which was then structured and burnished in rehearsal. But in this process, the director noticeably emphasized psychological realism in developing the stories, which is unusual in township plays.[103] Wa-Lehulere effected a conjunction of town and township making strategies which go together extremely well.

> The process was, we started with one story first. Who is this woman? Where does she come from?
>
> I will tell you about my story: He [Wa-Lehulere] asked questions. "Okay. We have the script. It says she is 18, but where does she come from?" and we started brainstorming around that. We first looked at what has happened. "Okay she has been raped, she was on the way to a phone booth … but … why does she stay with the grandmother? Where are the parents? What happened to her parents?"
>
> So we started brainstorming from that: creating the life of the character. And then we took specific moments of her life to represent [the whole] journey of her life. So, with her grandmother we have that her grandmother went to church and she [Nokwanda] goes to school. So we wanted to create the relationship of the grandmother with the granddaughter so that when the rape happens: what happens? What actually happens to the grandmother that kills the grandmother? She actually dies because her granddaughter was raped.
>
> So we went into more and more detail with each and every character, until the 'why' [was clear]. Not just telling the stories, but why are they telling them? Why do they decide to tell these stories now?
>
> I was playing a character called Nokwanda. Nokwanda lived with her grandmother so I played Nokwanda and my grandmother at the same time, so I kept on shifting from the grandmother to the granddaughter. We started the story when she was eight years old …

Note that a strict storytelling convention in which all the core characters are portrayed by the main storyteller is observed. Moreover, in spite of the fact that only one or two of the performers were living in the township at the time of devising, the group deliberately chose to embody a township habitus in the play. That is the world which is imbued in the consciousness of the performers, as Sopotela's reasoning makes clear below. The play is rooted in township experience both aesthetically and thematically.

> We wanted to portray our own society: mainly the society in the township, because most of the women were based in the township, Gugulethu. So we wanted to portray what society is grooming and what the effect is of men on women. We didn't want just to bring up traumatic situations and take it from the trauma of "this woman has killed her husband: what brings women to such positions?" What has society done to such woman that at the end they can actually kill someone because of not being treated well, or abuse, basically?

[103] Only *A good man* (2008) and *Things are bad – ijumpile lendaba* (2007) from my archive are comparable in this regard, but those two are not couched within a storytelling format, where this play is.

Wa-Lehulere was exploring the connections between the township context and personal motivation, which was the process to which he had been exposed in the making of *Thina bantu* under the direction of Mavis Taylor.[104] In accordance with township practice, he is passing on to his cast what he himself has learnt, but he is also interrogating motivation, which is more easily associated with town practices.

> Because Itumeleng was a male he kept on questioning us, like: "You say you want to tell these stories, but why aren't these women getting out of these relationships? Why do they feel they have to stay even though they are abused? What makes a woman stay?"
>
> And we brought up the questions of our culture: what we are taught from a young age as a woman. You are taught that you can not leave: if you are married you are married for life. You can not just leave.
>
> So what are those morals that are being taught to us as children? How do they affect us when we are older? So that is why we felt that the history of each and every character was so important. Because that is actually what the whole story is built on.

The collaborative, collective, discursive manner in which writer and director took the process forward is characteristic not only of township theatre-making. It also recalls other collaborations that have gone down in South African theatre history. Listening to Sopotela, apart from Mavis Taylor working with actors,[105] I was reminded of the approaches of Barney Simon (Stephanou & Henriques 2005) and Fugard (McMurtry 2006) in ways in which I was not reminded in the interviews with May and Faleni (2006) or Ingqayi Educational Theatre (2006). The difference lies in the emphasis on individual experience and motivation that recalls Stanislavsky's theories of theatre. Note Sopotela's reference to Realism at the start of the interview. So whilst the devising process is 'typically township' in using what the cast can bring into the process, this instance is distinctive because of the catalytic nature of Wa-Lehulere's engagement with the play and the cast, which concurs with the approaches of Taylor, Simon and Fugard. The transcript makes clear that he deliberately sought to provoke the cast into going beyond what they had previously offered in a manner quite unlike the approach of Faleni and May on *OBJ*. He was not content to simply use the materials that came to hand bricoleur-fashion, but rather to provoke the cast into sorting, discarding, reassembling precisely the right pieces of the puzzle from the fragments emerging from memory and imagination, which is powerfully reminiscent of Barney Simon's methods.

> We had endless arguments but then we always came to a certain meeting point. …He would give us homework to do and say: Imagine that … Create the world… do you understand the world?

[104] Professor Mavis Taylor brought students and past-students from her theatre NGO New Africa together with students from the Drama Dept at UCT to create this play in 1986 when such collaborations were unusual. The play was developed from the stimulus of a newspaper report of a racially-motivated murder. A young black woman was killed in front of her boyfriend, raped and then burnt in the boot of a car by two young white men who later were charged in court.

[105] As a student I was directed by Professor Taylor and later observed her work during the time in which we both were teaching in the Drama Department at UCT.

Writing / wrighting the play

The actual writing which Sopotela alone undertook in preparation for this play filled two folios. However there is no copy of the final play text, exemplifying the interaction of written and oral methods characteristic of township theatre. Where Fugard documented the 'final text' of *Sizwe Bansi is dead* (1972) and *The island* (1973) following collaborative creation with Kani and Ntshona, nobody did the same for *BSW*. In township theatre, writing is a means to create a performance text. Generating believeable characters in convincing and evocative situations is the point, as illustrated by Sopotela's testimony:

> [Itumeleng would say] "Create that relationship from when she was younger, that makes it …, that makes her grandmother *die* when her granddaughter is raped."
>
> So we take moments from when she was younger, of what the grandmother did when it was the granddaughter's birthday that created a bond between them.
>
> And he made us go away and he would give us 'homework,' to: "go out and think: imagine that" – (okay they having nothing in the house because the grandmother only has pension money so they are not well-off) so "create the world". And he would say: "do you understand the world?" And we would say: "Yes, we do."
>
> "Now go out: they have nothing at home. She can't buy her a present. Let's not do 'Happy Birthday To You'. Let's not do storytelling. But let's have something that is *so special* that she even remembers it – now."
>
> So we went home and we thought – we came up with all sorts of things but then at the end, it actually took a very long time for us. I think that made us to go deeper and deeper into the story. We struggled with it for days - with just that one thing.
>
> He said: "Do you have it?"
>
> We said: "No."
>
> He said: "Okay, let's work on something else! Go home and think about it."
>
> We'd come back with suggestions and he said "No! Singing, storytelling, that's too much! That has been done before! We want something that has never been done before! What is *so special*?"
>
> And finally I came up with the story…

Sopotela related the story of Nokwanda's birthday in the interview most beautifully.[106] There are many inferences to be drawn from her account. Firstly, it demonstrates that the process of playmaking, as experienced by Sopotela, is not only a means to an end. Playmaking is a practice that is worthy of spending time on for its own sake. What other conceptualization of playmaking would explain Sopotela relating a story that was not in the end used in the play?[107] The cast met with Wa-Lehulere and rehearsed / devised / discussed every day for approximately two months. When the play was staged in 2006, many of the women's stories were still incomplete and Sopotela does not consider that to be 'wrong' or 'inadequate'. Rather it promises further exploration.

> So that is where the stories are going to go now; because we didn't finish the stories at the time of the Ikhwezi Festival.

[106] It can be found at the end of Appendix D: Addendum: 'Nokwanda's birthday'.

[107] In 2010 I showed Sopotela this chapter in draft and asked her about the use of this story. She said that in the initial performances this story *was* sometimes included but that due to lack of time it was never fully 'worked' for performance. When I saw the play twice in 2007 the story was not included.

The implicit conceptualization of playmaking underlying Sopotela's statement is that the play as performed is open-ended. Perhaps because each performance is, in a certain sense, improvised, the play may always be deemed to be a work in progress. And the process of making the play is as important a part of the process as the performances.

Secondly, although she is describing how she developed Nokwanda's story, the frequency with which Sopotela slips into 'we' rather than 'I' demonstrates conclusively that although this process was kickstarted by Tena's script, finally the cast, director and writer collectively made the play together. Talking about another story developed in the play and *not* performed by Sopotela, she said:

> I gained insight into the story because I know the story: most of the script is the exact words from my own life. Each of us, amazingly enough, had a story in the play that was *so* close to us that we could give such insight into it.

Nonetheless the only other extant hard copy of the story that I recorded above is probably in Sopotela's folios. Collective and individual creation, oral and written practices continually seep into each other in the devising process.

Considering gender

The subject matter of *BSW* is abuse of women. Because of this and the working relations on *BSW* are reflective of the gender divide active in township society, I asked Sopotela why gender issues are so important in the context of township living. In response Sopotela offered her analysis:

> First of all [the township] is a community where people are put together [her gesture indicates 'thrust together']. There is poverty there that makes life different. It challenges every day of your life. Not only poverty - as in - you don't have food in the house, but poverty as in other peoples' poverty. They are trying to survive in different ways and that affects you.
>
> As a woman, because people are in such a struggle, I find that women fall victim of peoples' [needs]. You become, sort of, what people find comfort in. Because the township is so poverty stricken everyone is trying to survive and most women find themselves having to be other peoples' -- especially for men, they become the comfort zone for men. And they accept that. If men are frustrated by the world they take that out on the women. And because we are so aware of that, some women make that as part of their lives, their survival: that men are: they make women survive. Because they provide the money and because, I don't know, the only way that they can survive is by being with a man. And the rape issues are because women are sort of seen as weak. "We are a weak species and we can't fight for ourselves". We are easy victims for rape.

In conversation Tena was passionate about the need to speak out about abuse of women.[108] When asked why Wa-Lehulere directed the play, Sopotela replied:

> Ntombisizwe is the administrator of the Ikhwezi festival so she wouldn't have time to direct. And I think she felt that *iboetie* Itumeleng, because he has been in the field a long time, so I think she felt she wanted him to take over.

When I asked whether she had any particular thoughts about being directed by a man in a play about women and abuse, she replied:

[108] In the course of my attendance at the Ikhwezi Festival in 2006, 2007 and 2008, Tena and I ran into each other repeatedly in the foyer and struck up conversations about the plays.

> I questioned how he is going to understand, from a female perspective, the journey of the women. He is a man. How would he portray them? But because he has been educated and he's a very – I don't know how to say this – he looks on issues from both sides, male and female; and he judges himself as a man. "Because I am a man this is how I feel". We had endless arguments (with him) but then we always came to a certain meeting point at which we said: "Okay this is how we feel and this is what we [felt would] portray the society."
>
> And it was great to have a male in the process otherwise it would be all bashing on men!
>
> But he ended up saying, "Let's look into the issues deeper than that; where do the issues come from?" So we not only portrayed the victims but also the perpetrators.

I asked the question because, as mentioned in chapter 4, gender relations in theatre groups are reflective of similar relations in the township. Sopotela summarized her experience of gender relations in the theatre and working in mixed casts. She paints a picture of aspiring to equality of opportunity in the working environment, working very hard towards it and possibly achieving a measure of credibility, provided she does not rock the boat.

> For me, this is how I have balanced it. You work and you prove that you are worth listening to but you still have to maintain that level of 'having respect for men'. When we are working, you are very much part of the working process such that you have ideas and they will listen to you. And then afterwards you still have to maintain that: "I listen to you, I respect you, I am not above you ". It tends to be like that. After rehearsals you still have to respect him as a man, respect everyone as who they are, and leave the workspace …

At the end of this comment Sopotela seems to imply that when she leaves the workspace she also leaves behind notions of gender equality. She has learnt to maintain a fine balance between succeeding as a black woman actor and not being ostracized professionally or socially for rocking the gender boat. As she says, she has 'balanced it'. So she has 'adjusted' to the gender status quo in both town and township.

In this discussion of *Beneath silent waters* I have examined how a play made outside the townships can nonetheless be steeped in a township aesthetic and habitus. Although the performers and director draw on theatre experiences and education accessed in town as well as township theatre; the township world created in the play, the use of storytelling and the collective oral creation of the performance text, as well as the demeaned status of women explored in the play, mark it as theatre originating from the townships. The extensive use of song and physical theatre, which will become more evident in Part 2, accentuate this perception.

Conclusion to Part 1

Part 1 has investigated two instances of theatre-making and demonstrated that both, in different ways, draw upon a township habitus, and the experience of township living. Whereas *OBJ* draws heavily on an inextricable weave of teaching and learning, leading and following, collaborative creation and bricolage to make the most of every resource that comes to hand, the process of *BSW* drew not only on township concerns, habitus and collaborative creation, but also on critical selectivity on the part of the director, and an examination of human motivations

by the performers, which characterizes the play as a hybrid work, at least in part influenced by town, as well as township, practice.

Part 2: *OLD BROWN JOE* AND *BENEATH SILENT WATERS* AS 'TEXTS'

The same two works are interrogated and compared as 'texts' here in Part 2. A full description of *OBJ* is to be found in Appendix C. Further information on *BSW* is to be found in Appendix D. This chapter will be more enjoyable for better knowledge of the plays. *OBJ* and *BSW* are examined as plays, paying particular attention to their meanings, structure and aesthetic forms.[109] The ensuing discussion has unavoidably integrated structure, aesthetic forms and meanings because they are inextricably intertwined. The reader is asked to notice their interpolation and to attempt to imagine the effect that the structuring and use of heightened aesthetic forms has upon the experience and impact of these plays in performance. In the interests of brevity these can not be comprehensively unpacked in what follows, but a start can be made.

I agree with the caveat Graham Furniss makes when writing about rhetoric in oral texts: 'My use of "the text" as an entity is of course an image since the text exists only when articulated, read, passed on, taken up, countered, remembered, discussed and repeated by people' (1989: 32). I would further add when it is 'performed and audienced'. But analysing the structure and aesthetic forms used in the plays is facilitated when they are momentarily and hypothetically reified. Consequently I will not attempt a full appreciation of their impact in performance, but rather pursue an investigation of the plays's poetics as moulded by their township preoccupations and the circumstances and manner of their making.

Both *BSW* and *OBJ* employ storytelling, image and bricolage, as they layer story upon story and image upon image. *BSW* chiefly comprises three complete stories that are intertwined and told in bits and pieces. Two of the tellers start by reflecting in the present on the past. The third starts just after the story's climax. Then they return to begin at 'the beginning'. These stories not only interrupt each other but are interspersed with fragments of three other stories, in typical bricolage style. Periodically the stories share mood or subject matter in contingent episodes. Sometimes a completely different mood is struck or subject matter addressed. The transitions are mainly effected by lighting changes and singing. Both recorded music and live singing, or singing and dancing, accompany at least half of the play. All five of the storytellers use direct address to the audience. Two are notable for their use of singing and dancing, one for

[109] The reader is reminded that the extracts from the plays that appear in this chapter are the best 'texts' that I could generate from my notes, memories and performance videos in my unpublished archive. Where I have quoted extensively from my description, the text is indented. Where the original speech is in *isiXhosa* it is written in italics. The reader will notice slippages of English grammar in the description because the performed speech was grammatically incorrect. There were times when the confusion generated by the performance was not due to complexity of the ideas but simply to incorrect word or case usage arising from making a play largely in English that is not the mothertongue of the play makers.

her characterisation of all the characters in her story in dramatic, dialogic interactions. One is notable for her use of physical theatre that I shall deal with later.

OBJ is more obviously a drama. A group of school children have been commissioned by their teacher OBJ to make a play about June 16th. The children remain the key 'protagonist' throughout as they create 'the play' *about* OBJ rather than for 16th June. Using poetry, dramatic scenes, musical comedy, flashbacks to the struggle, song, lament, storytelling, melodrama, physical theatre and chant, the play zigzags back and forth in a manner similar to *BSW*, between the children in the classroom, the struggle in the townships, the 'peaceful and remote' rural areas and the contemporary township community. Past events are overlaid with present affect in the same scenes. Transitions are simply abruptly effected rather than smoothly achieved and the six actors, which is the same number as *BSW*, create 26 characters.

Both *BSW* and *OBJ* start and end with a prologue and epilogue that today in town theatre is relatively unusual. But in circumstances in which there are often no lights to be dimmed and an audience is animatedly interacting, a prologue can serve to draw the audience out of their present everyday world and into the world of imagination on the stage. Both prologues slow the pace below that of everyday communications, movements are ritualised – dilated and enlarged and patterned very carefully - emphasising their value and drawing the audience's attention.

In *BSW* a lone woman centre stage sings praises in honour of African women. Her *izibongo* is traditional to the performatic repertoire in construction and imagery (see Scheub 2002). The remaining actresses circle about her and gradually begin to pick up and take over her praises, shifting into English. The prologue invokes an image of African women, beautiful, vulnerable and capable. Mothers of children and the African nation, they are essential to society, but they bear a burden. They need to be heeded but they never really speak. So 'listen' the lead singer and group command the audience: Listen!

The prologue of *OBJ* is even more dreamlike because it is quiet. First a man enters and makes an enigmatic statement:

> Thank you very much for the intensive struggle of 1950s 1960s & 1970s. That shows that even the disorganized were helped by the struggle to be organised. My community, my own community hates me. It hates me because of the bloody student detentions. Thank you very much to the intensive struggle of 1950s 1960s & 1970s.

Second, two learners, a girl and boy, are seated centre stage facing each other across a desk. She picks up his book and begins to recite a lengthy poem in the contemporary 'spoken word' style that includes the following:

> I've got nothing
> I possess nothing in life.
> Come light, come shine so bright that the blinds were blind. Allow me.
> Allow me my gods, allow me my ancestors,
> Allow me not to forget you – my roots.
> Hunger & poverty do something to my mind

HIV AIDS
Crime
That I wake up in this cruel selfish universe.
Come light, come shine so bright that the blinds were blind.
If only my neighbour was not just that, a neighbour.
If only my neighbours could cry
were someone I could cry and share with.
I call upon you South Africa: get up, go out there,
Fly little bird, fly
Spread your wings
Find the courage to dream.

And in the next moment rowdy school pupils are bundling into their classroom in the first scene of the play.

As I have said, the prologue serves to draw the audience into the world of the play. Most of its effect is obtained through the slow, ritualised nature of the action. At this point I want to halt my examination of the 'texts' to raise an issue arising out of my own experience of the prologues in performance. I want to return briefly to the question of the status of groups, group work and collaborative creation, which has been raised in connection with the discussion of township habitus in chapter 4, as a skill generated by the performatic repertoire in chapter 5, and as part and parcel of the logic of the township practice of theatre-making in chapter 6. Since for township performers other performers are the only resource which is abundantly available, group work is a *sine qua non* and in this respect the *OBJ* cast excelled. Their ideological, performatic, kinaesthetic and oral teamwork was extraordinarily seamless. They created and recreated worlds on stage using one, two or all six actors apparently unconsciously and effortlessly. They were all part of one theatrical vision. But this was not the case with the cast of *BSW.* Although theatrically they were more accomplished performers who harmonised exquisitely in song, I was always aware of the relative and differentiated impact of the six performers and put this down to their accommodation to the mores of town theatre. Employed as individuals to comprise a cast, they worked collaboratively and discursively to build the play. But possibly both the process as well as its form, that relied heavily on the single storyteller, did not allow for a seamless group effort. In this way their individualistic orientation was characteristic of town, rather than township, theatre. Let us return now to the plays.

In both plays, the most crucial device is layering. Firstly, as Scheub explicates, contexts are layered upon each other. The story before us in this play is new to us but it recalls other similar plays, stories or incidents that we know of. The performance we see is also coloured by what the performers bring from their life experience, bricolage fashion. Then the play is absorbed into the perceptions of us, the audience, who bring our own 'baggage' and perceptions to the play, creating a 'palimpsest' as Scheub terms the layering (1998: 16).[110]

[110] For instance the issue of informers in the community in *OBJ* is layered by reference to the Gugulethu seven. In *BSW*, the storyteller Xoliswa tells of falling pregnant as an adolescent, confessing to her parents who accompany her to the house of her boyfriend. The latter denies that he knows her in front of their respective parents and friends. This story comprises the 'back story' of her tale in the play which is about

Secondly, the layering of one story incident or perception of a character or enactment over another forces us to view the one in light of the other. Characters' thoughts are juxtaposed with songs of joy or lament or triumph that the audience often know and respond to emotionally. Busy scenes of everyday life are therefore frequently a relief to the audience on the one hand, but on the other are coloured with the strains of the songs, feelings or thoughts which still hang in the air like the smoke from a fire, and which in turn curl around the dreams and nightmares also enacted in the play. So the play assumes its own place - an imaginative space – of theatrical play for both performers and audience. This is how such plays generate their power.

Comparatively speaking, the layering in *BSW* is relatively simple whilst in *OBJ* it is more complex. In *BSW* the tellers 'take turns' to tell bits of their stories. Resonances within the social circumstances of the characters in different stories, and their predicaments as females, percolate through all the stories with greater or lesser degrees of relevance.

The group of OBJ's pupils create all the play's core images that presage the play's themes, thereby colouring these themes with their own points of view. There is the image of the teacher, OBJ, caricatured by his pupils and also attacked in the 'play' by the pupils, community leaders and those who lost children in the struggle. So the image is largely developed 'secondhand'. OBJ himself only makes two brief appearances. The first in the prologue discussed above and the second at the end when fear of their teacher turns the pupils into a vindictive, chanting mob.

> Community, ghetto-stupid culture spread around!'
> Community, ghetto-stupid culture spread around!'
> *How many people has he killed?*
> *And we say for that reason, we say gowan to the ntsara!*
> *And we say for that reason, we say Gwaan ! to u'*Old Brown Joe!

As revealed above, the image of 'ghetto culture' is created by the learners in spoken-word poetry, chant or song. Sometimes they mourn or protest their own entrapment within the ghetto and sometimes they are defiant in the face of their teacher as we have just seen.

Using mime and physical theatre, dance and song, the pupils create the third image in the triad: the freedom struggle as experienced in the townships in the eighties and early nineties. Dramatic tension, generated by patterning these images in contrast and comparison with each other, provokes a debate in the audience's mind. We are prompted to compare the destitute and impoverished present with a 'noble' but oppressed past. We compare the passion with which contemporary pupils address making a play with their evidently groundless fear of the teacher and their confusions about 'who to blame' for the hopelessness of the present, and so on.

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her 'adorable' husband who turns abusive upon discovering that she has been pregnant prior to their marriage. *Ukuzingisa Egugulethu* (2007) starts with an adolescent girl in exactly the same predicament who is dealt with by her family in exactly the same way. Both plays are located in Gugulethu and both plays were performed at the Ikhwezi Festival in 2007. *BSW* was also performed at the festival in 2006.

After the prologue, in a lively classroom scene, by imitating OBJ, the pupils establish their feelings about their teacher (fear, grudging respect and adolescent scorn), providing the audience with a picture of their relationship to OBJ and their task. They also establish their argumentative liveliness animated by physical theatre. By means of a comic musical comedy scene they conduct 'auditions' for their play and after a rip-roaring song and dance number about OBJ and the ghetto they begin to enact 'the problem of OBJ'. One forward pupil begins:

> I have got a dialogue! Don't you want to hear me? …
> "Yes Old Brown Joe! Old owl at school! Tell us the truth! Is it you among the teachers of the school who encourage the spirit of activism among the students? Listen to the voices of the oppressed residents! Here, in this class, we are the voices in the ground condemned to repeat the past …"

The action of 'the play' within the play is taking us into the past but unless we grasp that the students are now enacting the historic freedom struggle, there is no indication in the staging that we are moving into 'the play' or into the past. Furthermore, the image of the freedom struggle within the enactment not only depicts comrades fighting the armed forces of apartheid but also depicts comrade attacking comrade, and a community which (we must assume) despair has driven to become 'a chanted chorus of slogans'. The allusion to the dying days of apartheid and the internecine squabbles which erupted at that time is hard to grasp as the play hurtles forward. The audience can be left with the impression that the view offered of the freedom struggle is a muddled one and you ask yourself whether the play intends to suggest that the struggle was hopeless or ineffectual.

Drawing on the demeaned status of blacks in the apartheid era, one of the learners remarks of a fallen comrade: 'If you are not born to be hanged then you will never be crowned'. And she attacks OBJ:

> We were so excited and honoured to have two highly trained soldiers from exile to come and help us, and you Old Brown Joe, you who came out of the blue, you ruined everything! You stupid, (she pauses, uncertain of the sense of her tirade) 'you stupid, son of a man…'
>
> (She ends weakly, then walks upstage and begins to sing a lament.)
> Who should we blame?
> Who should we blame?

As the bereaved families of the fallen cry softly, one community member picks her way between the corpses, trying to find her loved one. Speaking over the sung lament, in a style somewhere between praises and spoken word poetry she directly addresses the audience about *current* problems:

> We weep for the birthday of freedom
> Did we not sweep away the racism?
> Did we not sweep away the sexism?
> But why, why are we will still lying in ground of oppression,
> With the chains, the chains of depression?
> We knock on the doors of workplaces – no job! No job.
> What laws and restrictions apply to repeat the past?

Time in this scene is skittering between the past and the present in a manner not at all unusual in praise poetry and storytelling in the repertoire but very uncommon in town theatre.

Three further important impressions of OBJ are created for the 'play', and delivered in two cases through elderly, traditional but comic story-tellers, and in the other case through a melodramatic 'interrogation scene' lifted straight out of the Japanese 'war movie' genre. By these scenes we learn that OBJ was interrogated and tortured by the police, ending up in hospital. It is believed that he is responsible for the deaths or imprisonment of young people from Gugulethu, and that he fled to the rural areas for a time. The hodge-podge of impressions created is typical of bricolage and powerfully evokes the confusion of rumour-mongering, scapegoating, mischief-making and wishful thinking that the community indulged in to 'get back' at the target selected for their aggression and despair.

This leaves the pupils in the classroom wrestling with how to deal with the reality of OBJ. Should they perform the play for him? Should they rebel against him? In the first instance this is depicted in a physical theatre sequence intended to communicate the depth of the pupil's confusion and anxiety to the audience. But the choreography of this scene is much less effective than the physical theatre used in *BSW.*

In *BSW* the story of Nokwanda and her granny is told in a series of physical images. The first is of that of a young girl, perched on a table, her legs drawn to her chest in a state of shock, arching her toes away from the balls of her feet as if in fear of too hot ground. Sopotela moves swiftly off the table and puts her arms – old arms: angular elbows, shoulders and chin portraying a steely frailty -- around the 'seated girl'. She murmurs, '*Thula. Shshsh. Quietly my child. Shshsh. Don't cry*. Be at peace *mntwan'am.* Wipe those tears from your face *mntwan'am*' as you hear tears in the grandmother's voice.[111] 'And it shall all come to pass. Don't cry *mntwan'am*.' The grandmother struggles with herself, patting her hands into each other behind her back.

'Listen, *mntwan'am,* don't tell anyone about this. People are strange creatures. They will mock you. They will call you names *mntwan'am*. Hush …' Nokwanda leans her head softly onto her grandmother's chest.

> Listen *mntwan'am.* You will grow! You will grow and you will find happiness! You will graduate! And then the whole world will listen! Hush!
> Do not say anything about this. Shshsh. Don't say a word.
>
> There *are* good men; men who will come to you and propose! And when they do, you look at their shoes. His shoes can tell you a lot about a man's personality, eh? *Mntwan'am?*. The shoes are his mirror!'

The first image juxtaposes the older generation against the younger in an act of symbolic violence. The anguished grandmother exhorts Nokwanda to conceal the rape so as to protect her

[111] As with *OBJ* the differentiated typeface indicates a direct transcription / translation from the video.

marital prospects. But the grooming does not stop there. She tells her granddaughter to avoid the eyes of her suitors so that she will appear suitably 'docile' as a marriage prospect.

The second image is humorous. We hear granny's cracked and acerbic tones and see her bent but highly energised form, peremptorily summoning the naughty child. '*Nokwanda!'* Instantly Sopotela is the eight year old Nokwanda, playing hopscotch with her friends, who doesn't want to heed *Makhulu's* instruction to empty the piss buckets![112] She has to do that every day and it is so boring! '*Nokwanda!'* Her friends will laugh at her! Pitch, inflexion and speech rhythms contrast the elderly grandmother with the young child playing hopscotch.

Thirty-five minutes later in the play, the lights reveal a number of telephone receivers dangling from their cords, bobbing up and down centre stage, over a desultory patter of drums. This is the third image. A teenage Nokwanda listlessly drags a telephone receiver by its cord behind her as she circles the public phone booth. 'I came to you, I trusted you. I've seen you solve everybody's problems but when it was my turn you let me down terribly. I came to you innocent, not knowing, and you exposed me to strangers in public!'

Nokwanda tugs at the arm of a neighbour: 'Please help me! My grandmother …' But the arm lets go and Nokwanda falls onto her back in the low light, her legs spread, being choked, crying, being assaulted and raped, as the phones bob silently up and down and a booth door swings back and forth. As Nokwanda is crying in the semi-darkness we notice that the phone receivers are hanging limply on the ends of their cords, their desire spent.

The atmosphere's menace is achieved rhythmically, by the juxtaposition of the bouncing telephones (each held in the hands of an actor and bounced at its own speed and height from the ground), the nearly arhythmical drumming, the dragging of the telephone receiver, the swinging door (an actor's arm) suggesting a house or phone booth recently abandoned. All of these contrast with the intensity of Sopotela's stalking around the stage and then the 'attack' on her created by her heavy, fast fall onto her back and and her strangled cries.

Finally she gets up. 'These things happen in the township. You scream out for help and no one comes.' By commenting on her own story Sopotela challenges the audience to consider not only the rape but the community's responsibility in the face of rape. Nokwanda's story portrays both the fear of community censure and the enactment of it as Nokwanda confesses to her fellows on stage that the community marked her as a 'slut' after the rape.

'I staggered home and when I got home my grandmother was sitting, looking out of the window, waiting. '*Makhulu,* they have raped me. Six men on the side of the road.'

Baleka! Baleka, Sisi baleka! sung by a single voice then becomes a choral harmony, syncopating '*she is running, sister is running*' that comprises the fourth image. Under the singing Nokwando is running full tilt, first around the stage and then on top of a rostrum,

[112] Many township dwellings do not have a toilet indoors, but rather in the backyard. In many neighbourhoods it is unsafe to venture out after dark, so a bucket is used for ablutions at night.

running slowly on the spot, heaving chest and flying elbows, or poised motionless in mid-flight as she speaks: 'I ran out of our house. My grandmother had collapsed. She had asthma!' Phone receiver still in hand, Nokwanda relates breathlessly how she appealed to the nurse, but

> She is not opening! She must be working night shift! I turn around. It is misty. I ran back home. I took the phone card out of my bag and I ran to the public phone - My neighbour next door killing the lights – he has opened up the dogs! *Voetsek! Voetsek!*

She screams at the dogs in fear. Taking huge gulps of air she runs on, *Baleka! Baleka!* The lights fade to blackout.

Dilating the tale of the rape - segmenting it into four relatively brief, but highly concentrated images which are not performed in chronological sequence but lurch from the near end, back to Nokwanda's innocent childhood and forward to the rape itself, and then back a bit to her rushing towards the rape - forces the audience to stay with the emotional experience of the girl child in the township. Just as in *OBJ*, time skitters back and forth. Tiny fragments of the story are repeated over and over within the four images, sometimes with slight changes, as if the audience were literally able to see the same event 'from different perspectives'.

But whilst *time* is handled with disdain for chronology and the 'real time' of event, again like *OBJ*, *space* is symmetrically balanced. In both plays the orderly stage is a further means by which the 'reality' of the stories becomes the fantasy world of theatre and demarcates their differences, particularly if the play is performed in a less than resourced performance arena. In *BSW* a table centre, serves up the violated teenager to the audience. Her grandmother paces and fusses around it. The child skips over it playing with her friends and the adolescent wheels around it in terror and despair. Two black boxes upstage right and left are used for her flight to and return from the phone booths which at some stage replace the centred table.[113]

Within the theatrical playing, movement and sound create the core images of Nokwanda's violation and the implications for the community. The irresponsible, almost nonchalant, violence of the rapists is captured in the limply hanging receivers. The 'failure' of the telephone receivers to heed Nokwanda's appeal for help or humanity, and the silence and stillness around Nokwanda on stage, reinforces the casual disregard for her appeals. The impression of a community turning a blind eye and deaf ear reverberate in the silent, swinging door. At the same time as the physical images reveal this story of family love and social violence, the soundscape, comprising live sounds such as the dragged telephones, spoken words, singing, drumming and recorded music amplify core emotions such as horror, fear and desperation. In 'real life' we associate such emotions with swift and intense personal feelings, but in the play the soundscape affords the space for such feelings to be aesthetically realised and

[113] In *OBJ* there is also a table centre and four other chairs which mostly occupy the four 'corners' of the acting area. For the most part they indicate school desks, fixed to the floor of the classroom. The action ranges all around the table, on top of it and the chairs.

communicated in ways which do not reduce their impact but paradoxically allow the audience time to dwell in the feelings and contemplate them: to face the emotional impact of such an experience without being violated by it. This is achieved by the rhythmic quality of the stage action as a whole. From 'reality' it becomes theatrical playing.

In this chapter I have as yet hardly mentioned patterning, which has occupied such a prominent place in this study. This is not because patterning is not present in these two works. Rather it is completely embedded in the many media of performance, imbricated within their combinations, so that disentangling the patterning is perhaps not useful. Nonetheless I will make a few preliminary observations.

For instance, patterning is to be found in the spoken words of the play. The monologues and dialogues employ frequently repeated key words that 'accumulate' centrality in the sense of a scene. Contrasting similes or metaphors balance our impressions of a character or situation. Patterning the oral qualities of speech by means of inflexions, intonations, volume or rhythm affect its emotional impact on listeners. All these forms of linguistic patterning are even more evident in poetry, chant and song which are further patterned by means of rhyme, melodies or harmonies.

Patterning is also to be found in physical movement, gesture, dance step and staging of scenes in ways too numerous to usefully itemise here.[114] Perhaps more important is the patterning of whole 'bits' of the play: such as characters that are contrasted, scenes which are juxtaposed, themes which become interwoven as I tried to show with the imagery of OBJ himself and of the struggle in *OBJ.* As I argued in Chapters 4 & 5, patterning is a disposition at the heart of the performatic repertoire that accounts for much of the poetics of township theatre.

If patterning has such broad application, is it still possible to talk of it as particularly applicable to township theatre? My answer to this question is emphatically affirmative. Speaking epistemologically, where it is possible to talk of patterning as a generic attribute of aesthetics, in the sense used here, patterning is evident and structurally useful to play composition beyond that. Possibly one could discuss the verse plays of TS Eliot, some of the works of Harold Pinter or Eugène Ionesco in similar light.[115] Where these few plays notably employ patterning, township theatre on the whole uses patterning prolifically.

Likewise the disposition to bodily engagement is a fundamental building block of the practice of theatre-making. It is necessary to attend performances to fully appreciate the extent

[114] I can't resist mentioning Nokwanda's hopscotch game however. Under the dialogue with her granny, she and her friend hop through the same intricate pattern of the game but with utterly different characters because the two little girls are so different and their approach to the game is different, thus this is an instance of parallelism within patterning. At the same time Nokwanda's game of hopscotch recalled my own and our arguments about which version we would play each day. I admired the swift delicacy of Nokwanda's hopping. I wondered about who was winning her game and I sympathized with her grandmother who was exasperated that Nokwanda did not empty the piss buckets!

[115] Eliot's *The cocktail party* and *The family reunion* come to mind. Pinter's *The lover* and *The caretaker* and Ionesco's *Chairs* and *The lesson* are all good examples.

of these dispositions, whereas images and storytelling are much more easily and perhaps usefully captured in a written text such as this.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined two processes of theatre-making and the plays themselves as example instances of the practice of theatre-making conceptualised in Chapter 6. In undertaking this task, it has endeavoured to demonstrate how township experience and habitus influence the plays. It has also investigated how the township practice of theatre-making indelibly colours the meaning, structure and aesthetic forms found in the plays in diverse ways. In this regard the discussion has employed a measure of comparison, but it has hardly attempted an evaluative comparison of the two plays as works of theatre.

Part 2 has attempted to examine how storytelling, bricolage, image and physical theatre, as well as every kind of patterning and somatic engagement, combine to generate works of theatre that are layered, emotionally laden, indistinct in temporal and physical location but richly suggestive and allusive, able to traverse distance, minutes or years, and also to precisely denote sensations, smells and sounds of everyday life, even as the dramatic action goes beyond them and creates a different world: the world of the play.

With respect to meaning, both of these plays are stories of township communities or groupings who turn against their own. The focus on the power of the group and its potential for aggression or ostracism is not at all unusual in township plays. The power of the group is an ideology embedded in the township habitus. But this focus in these plays is probably also because theatre-makers are trying to tend local social wounds. Mda comments:

> even more than the necessary reconciliation between black and white South Africans, there is a need for reconciliation among blacks themselves. This is an area that has been neglected by the political establishment. Hence there has been no attempt to heal the deep wounds that the blacks have inflicted on one another, and on themselves, in response to even deeper wounds inflicted on them by the apartheid system. These wounds remain unattended today. Many of them are embedded very deeply in our psyche, while on the outside one may see scars that look quite healed. The damage manifests itself in our physical and sexual abuse of those we profess to love, who also happen to be those who are deemed less powerful than us: women and children. By 'us' here I am obviously referring to the black male, who wields the political power but is still grappling to retain some measure of economic power. (2002: 285)

Mda's analysis returns me to Ndebele's call to use the arts to re-imagine our world in order to nurse it to health. In this regard township theatre makers are in the vanguard. Some just name or identify the problem (Freire 1972), some articulate the nearly unspeakable and encroach on social taboos, some present alternative visions of the ways we might conduct gender or family relations, and some hark back to traditional ways. In all of these ways they attempt healing or education or provocation of their audiences. Apart from *BSW* there are many plays that explore gender relations and women abuse within the family (*Shadows of love* 2008, *Ukuzingisa* & *Udaba bafazi* 2007). Apart from *OBJ* and *BSW* there are plays that deal with unresolved

traumas inflicted by the political struggle (*Red song* 2006, *The red winter* 2008*).* There are plays testifying to violence inflicted upon loved ones (*Exploiting the cripple* 2007, *Girl child from the ghetto*. 2006*)* or that attempt to interrogate masculinity (*A good man* 2008, *Trapped* 2008*)* and that question who holds cultural and economic capital ('Church council scams' 2009, *Thabo 2006*, *To whom it may concern* 2005, *Township talks 2008)*.

The worlds within the plays are the worlds in which theatre-makers can exercise power. They can order events, make comments, suggest alternatives, lament loss and pain, in the time and manner that they themselves have chosen. Partially and somewhat shakily released for the duration of the practice from the hold the township has over them, theatre-makers create new worlds. As the poet is moved to declaim at the end of *OBJ*

> Lets hold hands together and lead,
> Let's embrace our victory.
> Let's honour those who fought and died,
> Let's honour those who fought and survived,
> Let's tell the sad story to our younger generation.
> But most importantly,
> Let's stand up tall and say:
> I'm black, I am an African, and I'm proud.

Whilst township theatre-makers manage to rise above difficult circumstances to create such plays, they have huge difficulties in getting them staged. In spite of purportedly advantageous policy changes, support for artistic initiatives in the townships remains unsystematic and minimal. These difficulties with distribution, with actually seeing their plays performed will be taken up in Chapter 8.

8. DISTRIBUTION: THE LONG WALK TO CITY THEATRES FROM TOWNSHIP HALLS

Introduction

This chapter examines the effects of cultural policies and provisioning on distribution and reception for theatre from the townships. Distribution is affected firstly by the cultural policies and economic provisioning mandated by the state at national and provincial levels - the overarching cultural frame in Van Maanen's terms. Secondly, distribution is affected by how the system of theatre as a whole works in any context, which Van Maanen refers to as the institutional framework. Thirdly distribution involves bringing together performance and audience, i.e. the processes of hosting, programming and marketing, which Van Maanen locates in the organizational frame (2004a:243-77).[116] However, as I pointed out in Chapter 2, the process of distribution is not a mechanical system. When theatre practitioners stage performances, questions of power and dominance inevitably arise, generating and generated by questions of taste, cultural affiliation, education and language. The situation of institutional disequilibrium of power and influence needs to be accounted for. Therefore Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and habitus are invoked in this examination.

The focus of this chapter lies with the problematic of the intersection of the sub-field of township theatre with the field of theatre. How this chapter works is firstly, the overarching cultural policy framework is outlined. Thereafter the institutional context is discussed, which finally brings us to the organizational context of how performances find their audiences at festivals. Theatre from the township experiences problems of exclusion, incomprehension and infrastructural breakdown at all three of these 'level's, which I shall investigate. Bourdieu's thesis as to how art is accorded symbolic capital is invoked to explain some of the disjunctures that arise between the sub-field of town and the sub-field of township theatre.

Arts and culture policy, post 1994

The overarching intention of state arts policies post 1994 was towards redressing past inequities, transforming the apartheid culture, and entrenching human rights, non-racism, non-sexism, religious and linguistic diversity, whilst at the same time making the arts accessible to all. (White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage 1996).[117] In order to spread resources more

[116] Readers may wish to refer back to figure 3 in Chapter 3 to remind themselves of how these frames are a series of nesting contexts affecting performance.

[117] From 1994 the Western Cape Arts and Culture Task Group formulated policy proposals for the Provincial Minister of Education, Training and Cultural Affairs which were presented to the minister, Mrs ME Olckers in August 1995. I led the Performing Arts Section and compiled the 'Policy for the Performing Arts in the Western Cape: Final Draft Report for Discussion Purposes' (July 1995). I was one of the compilers of the 'WESTAG Proposals for Arts Education, Final Discussion Document' (July 1995) and I edited the chapter on Administration, Funding and delivery mechanisms for Arts and Culture in the

equitably than had been the case during the apartheid era, state-funded dance, theatre and opera companies were unbundled from provincial, parastatal theatre complexes. The latter became performing arts receiving houses, available to anyone able to afford the rental. A national arts council was established to disburse arm's length funding to all deserving applicants regardless or race or institutional affiliation (White Paper 1996:Chapter 4**)**. Previously all the funds had gone towards a selected few parastatal theatres, performing and creative arts institutions and companies. A substantial portion of the national arts budget in 1997 was allocated to building local community centres in deprived areas.[118]

The 1996 White Paper also conceived of a policy of festival promotion as a national strategy to foster, promote and broaden access to the performing arts:

> The future of the arts and cultural expression lies in the development of new audiences and markets. Current audiences are largely determined by the location of infrastructure, the availability of disposable income, and the nature of the artistic forms on offer, all of which generally reflect the legacies of our apartheid past….
> …
> The Ministry is committed to … generally raising public awareness of the arts, especially through supporting the growth and sustainability of a range of arts festivals, which will both provide more work opportunities for artists and create greater audiences and markets for the arts' (Chapter 4).

Since festivals have porous boundaries that facilitate popular and 'high art' intersections, use generic marketing and publicity that is effective and cheaper, and can generate a sense of celebration to attract audiences, the policy has considerable merit.[119]

The 1990s was also a period of wholesale revision of the education sector including the curriculum. For the first time studying arts and culture became compulsory during the initial nine years of schooling (White Paper 1996:Chapter 4). School-based arts education has provided a focus on and some training in the arts in schools and communities where hitherto the arts were disallowed. Official policy has promulgated a coupling of the arts with tourism and job creation which, rightly or wrongly, has quickened attention and application to arts education amongst learners and educators.

In sum, by means of more built resources, arms-length funding, institutional restructuring, festivals and educational endeavours, the state intended to broaden access, enjoyment and possible profits arising out of the arts to all sectors of the population.

Western Cape (July 1995). All of these documents were changed after we had submitted the final draft to comply with the vision of the then Nationalist party Minister. I also participated in the national Arts and Culture Task Group (ACTAG) process that prepared the ground for the formulation of the 1996 white paper referred to in this chapter.

[118] 'February 1997, 8-14: The Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology: Mr L Mtshali announces that R50 million from the R[econstruction &] D[evelopment] P[rogramme] fund will be spent on building new and refurbishing old community arts centres throughout the country.' (Van Graan and Du Plessis, 1998: xxv.)

[119] As Hauptfleisch (1997) points out, at least some of the effects of Festivals on South African theatre have been recorded and analysed in the annual reports on the Grahamstown National Festival of the Arts and on the Klein Karoo Kunstefees, in the *South African Theatre Journal*. The latter has also featured the occasional article. See especially: Daneel (2008), Van der Vyfer and du Plooy-Cilliers (2006), Kitshoff (2004), Hauptfleisch (2003), Neethling (2000)

Policy implementation: the institutional framework of theatre in Cape Town

Overall, the reality of provisioning has not lived up to the policy vision, in spite of the expressed intention to serve previously disadvantaged areas and population sectors.[120] With respect to education, it is currently national news that our education system is one of the worst in the world.[121] Suitably qualified teachers for the performing arts are the exception rather than the rule, particularly in township schools where educational resource provisioning and teaching quality is at its lowest.

State arms-length funding for the arts, instituted nationally and provincially, as well as private funding that should support township theatre groups, is largely unattainable by the latter. Applications procedures for funding require accurate financial records, bank accounts and sometimes even registration as a not-for-profit organisation which is a lengthy and complicated procedure that is unattainable by many of the theatre groups.[122]

Infrastructural development for the performing arts in the townships is impeded for the same reasons that township development in general is hampered in Cape Town.[123] With respect to recently built community facilities, there are only two arts-orientated venues in Cape Town's townships, *Guga S'Thebe* Arts and Cultural Centre in Langa and the Zolani Centre in Nyanga. Both are hard to access because of high demand from all sectors of the performing, creative arts and craft industries as well as the centres' management styles. In the remainder of the townships' community centres, most of which have been built in response to the new policy, the reality is that theatre groups must compete for space with a variety of sports. Any rooms which might be available for rehearsals or classes are for extremely limited periods of time and levels of noise in adjacent spaces is frequently a problem.[124]

With respect to performing in Khayelitsha, in the absence of a theatre, community halls are the only substitute. Apart from the difficulty of obtaining a booking, community halls have only rudimentary audience seating and illumination, no back-stage spaces, dressing rooms,

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[120] See Meersman (2007) for a succinct account of some of the reasons. A more contentious viewpoint is offered by Bain and Hauptfleisch (2001).

[121] Graeme Bloch's analysis of the problems of South African education in *The Toxic Mix* launched in September 2009 has precipitated a frenzy of commentary in the media about the poor state of schools and education.

[122] In my interviews with Ingqayi Eductional Theatre (2006), Iselwa Le Sizwe (Faleni & May 2006), and Mananga for Iqhude Theatre (2007), it was established that these groups were in the process of applying for NPO status but the outcome was deemed to be a matter of years away. I am aware of other township practitioners undergoing the same process. Without NPO status it is hard for groups to open a bank account.

[123] In 2007-8 I developed 'A Structural Model for Genre Development' for the Western Cape Department of Cultural Affairs & Sport, Arts & Culture component, in order to assist implementation and delivery of effective provincial support for Arts & Culture in the province, particularly to previously disadvantaged groups and communities. In summary the initiative arose out of previous failures to implement policy (2008a).

[124] The scarcity of space for rehearsals and performing was discussed in Chapter 6.

wings, curtaining or sound systems. Overall, as we learnt in Chapter 6, custom-built spaces for theatre are as good as non-existent in the townships.

In terms of a communication infrastructure for theatre publicity and marketing, which in the city is a *sine qua non* and includes media access, engagement with local newspapers and radio stations, marketing companies and booking facilities, internet access, photocopying and printing facilities, all of these are unavailable or inaccessible for groups in the townships.[125]

In effect, as explained in Chapter 4, in the townships infrastructure is people-driven. Networks of influence and communication via word of mouth and text messaging are the only accessible marketing strategies. The gaps in the theatre system as a whole for township practitioners is captured in the following testimony offered at the symposium:

> S10: I'm from Kuyasa in Khayelitsha. I started township theatre at an early age, but the production which we did, I like it still, even now, was *Hearts on fire.* We did it with a dude from Gugulethu, Kosmos. We were performing at school and doing some theatre stuff and then we moved it further and further.
>
> It's so interesting but it's so difficult to do [theatre]. You have to have that ego to do it, because there's no stuff. There is no equipment. There is no funding. There is nothing. So you have to take money from your pocket, and you share the money, and then you make something. Even if you want to do a festival it's very difficult to find the money in township theatre, so if you decide to do a thing, you just do it.
>
> But there is lots of talent and stuff. There is a lot of energy for township theatre. But we are like pushing and pushing and pushing. Because most of us, if we are not going to a school for drama, then we don't know anything about the funding and stuff like that. Even if we go to the municipality they won't give you the funding. Government has a budget for certain areas of arts and culture, but when we go to those committees they won't give you that money. Sometimes if you are lucky enough to think about it [anticipate the funding deadlines] they might give you, but on our side we are [mostly] unaware. There are some dudes who have that ego to go and pressurise them and so sometimes they get money, but not all of township theatre.
>
> You always want to start some group and then the group's goes [from strength to strength] and then [the speaker makes an 'imploding' sound effect], because there is nothing that is encouraging you some way, somehow. It's even difficult to use children because [there are no resources for] performing in the township, so we have to go outside [ie to town] for [performance]. (2008:3-4)

The development of festivals has provided the main if not sole source of performance opportunities for township theatre since 1994. Many festivals have targeted theatre and audiences in disadvantaged communities and have attempted to increase job opportunities in the arts sector.[126] However, because of the lack of venues, these festivals are seldom located in the townships.

[125] The effects of publicity and marketing (or the lack thereof) have been analysed by Terblanche (2004, 2003) and referred to in Hauptfleisch (2007). Artscape Audience Development and Education in the city centre attempts to address this need by providing a walk-in computer and internet facility at Artscape for the use of 'community arts' practitioners. However you have to visit the city centre –as much as thirty or fifty kms away from the townships - to use this facility.

[126] There is no attempt in this thesis to survey all the festivals in Cape Town which have, in some way or another, targeted theatre from the townships. Apart from those discussed here, there are many others, such as the Stop Crime festivals, the Artscape High Schools Drama Festival, the Tygerberg Festival. Some are instituted and then disappear after a few years. Others remain regular annual events for a decade or more.

Festivals: the organizational framework of distribution for township theatre

In *Festivalising! Theatrical events, politics and culture,* Schoenmakers makes the point that a festival is a 'meta-event' in that it is an event consisting of a number of single events, loosely or closely cohered, according to some organising principle (2007). Sauter maintains that the key principle of a festival is its identity as part of the local playing culture (2007). Cremona (2007) and Hauptfleisch (2007a) both emphasise the influence of politics and ideology upon festival themes, pre-occupations and experience in any particular context. Cremona (2007) and Lev Aladgem (2007) analyse the importance of location, local community and / or targeted audience, as well as the key role played by an artistic director – should there be one – and the organisers who, in most instances, see to hosting, programming and marketing. These three latter functions are crucial to organising performances.

Aspects of festival hosting raised above, such as questions of identity, local politics, ideology, location, artistic direction and management, all emerge as important in the festivals discussed hereinafter. The discussion will address questions around hosting, including venue and front of house management. Programming performances and scheduling will be discussed. Marketing and publicity, both prior to production and in the foyer will be dealt with. These aspects are examined in light of the audience experience they generate and the audience's reception and responses to the occasion.[127]

Cape Town festivals serving theatre from the townships have all responded to the political and ideological imperative to provide showcases for theatre groups that have no playhouses. However a comparative survey of just three festivals quickly surfaces the problematic of organizational units peopled by agents who are variously motivated and possess a diversity of cultural capital and habitus.[128]. First, I shall briefly enumerate the festivals to be discussed in order of their creation. Thereafter I shall unpack each in terms of its provisioning for township practitioners and its organizational aspects that affect the experience of audience and performers alike, invoking Bourdieu's critical theory as appropriate.

[127] Although the focus of this study is not on festivals per se, understanding the experience of township theatre-makers and audiences of festivals required that I develop a rudimentary understanding of how the relevant festivals are conducted and managed. To this end I had many conversations with my colleagues who run the Magnet Theatre Community Groups Intervention, and interviewed personnel involved with the Ikhwezi Festival, the Cape Town Festival and the Artscape High Schools Drama Festival. In each case I also collected available archival data that sheds light on the procedures utilized for hosting, programming and marketing, as well as some understanding of the budgetary issues involved in running these festivals and what economic or cultural capital they hold for performing groups. In the end I chose not to include the Artscape' High Schools Drama Festival in this study, but it nevertheless served as a valuable comparative reference point because many of the groups who performed at the Ikhwezi Festival or in the Magnet Theatre CGI Showcase have also been involved with the High Schools Drama Festival. Discussions with the personnel driving the Festival, Sticks Mdidimba, Margie Pankhurst and Mark Hoeben as well as with adjudicators Ntokozo Madlala and Thoko Ntshinga provides further insight into the experiences of eventification and reception that the High Schools Drama Festival facilitate.

[128] See Walsh (2006, pp 67-70) for further discussion of this issue.

The Ikhwezi Festival of Community Theatre was initiated by Buwa Theatre Company under the leadership of Itumeleng Wa-Lehulere, and first held at the Baxter Theatre Centre in Rondebosch, the university suburb of Cape Town, from 4 to 7 February 1998. The Festival re-occurred in 1999, 2002, 2003, and annually since 2005.[129]

In 1999, Ryland Fisher, editor of the *Cape Times* newspaper, launched the 'One City Festival' as an off-shoot of the *Cape Times* newspaper's 'One City, Many Cultures' campaign. The festival, now an annual event, has always focused on 'the promotion of cultural understanding through the diversity of the arts' and over the years has developed an increasing 'community orientation', with performances spread throughout the city in theatres, school and community halls (Cape Town Festival 2007).[130]

In 2002 the Magnet Theatre Educational Trust developed its Community Groups Intervention in Khayelitsha township outside Cape Town and, in accordance with its five-year plan, has hosted an annual showcase in a Khayelitsha community hall from that year until 2007 (2007).[131] Both the Ikhwezi Festival and Magnet Theatre's Community Groups' Intervention were initiated by theatre practitioners dedicated to promoting participation in the arts amongst township inhabitants. But only the Magnet showcase has been held in the townships – at a different community hall in Khayelitsha each November from 2002 until 2007.

The discussion of the three festivals that follows will first address the Magnet showcase and then move to the city of Cape Town to investigate the Ikhwezi and Cape Town Festivals. The terms of this investigation not only deal with the systems of distribution employed by these festivals. They also deal with the relations of dominance and subordination between the sub-fields of town and township theatre, the struggles over capital and resources in which they engage, and how habitus is recruited in these situations.

Magnet Theatre's Community Groups Intervention Showcase

Fired by Mandla Mbothwe's vision to support and develop theatre in the townships, Magnet resolved that:

> [I]instead of offering one-off (hit and run) workshops, The Trust would identify several groups that were already functional in their communities and offer an intervention that would cater to their specific needs and projects. The Trust would follow the groups through their development towards performance. [In 2002] [w]e identified groups in the township of Khayelitsha and selected four to participate in a three month adoption…. At the end of these 3 months the groups would come together to share their work with each other in an evening of performance. This would enable the groups to make contact with

[129] Information on the Ikhwezi Festival was obtained from study of the festival archive, Baxter Theatre Centre in February 2007; attendance at the festival 2006-8, and interviews with Artistic Director Itumeleng Wa-Lehulere 22 March 2006 and Administrator, Ntombesizwe Tena on 30 February and 9 March 2007.

[130] Information on the Cape Town Festival, of 2007 in particular, was obtained from my interview with Bradley Van Sitters, all of the archival data with which he furnished me, as well as the website – which is in continual flux.

[131] Further information and insights on the Magnet Theatre Community Groups Intervention was obtained from conversations with Mandla Mbothwe who, together with Jennie Reznek, ran the Community Groups Intervention from 2002-7, assisted by fieldworkers that notably include Mluleki Sam.

> each other in a non-competitive environment, giving feedback and appreciation to each other, sharing their programmes, plans and means of survival. On the day of the presentation relevant community-based organisation were invited as potential supporters for the future performances of these groups…. The project was so successful that in 2003 we extended it to cover six months of intervention. (2005)

I attended these showcases between 2005 and 2007 and the concordance between funder/organizer/host intentions and performer/spectator expectations were everywhere apparent. Audience and performers shared a common habitus arising out of the township playing culture and they freely shared their interests in theatre and in the 'burning issues' that were dealt with in the plays. Advertised by word of mouth and a handful of posters, the showcases have been held on a Saturday morning to avoid any clash with funerals which are customarily held in the afternoon. They take place in a local community hall, hired for the day, to avoid transport difficulties. The showcase is attended by the six or so participating groups, their friends, families and local residents as well as a smattering of interested outsiders to the township. The audience arrives in leisurely groups to loud and lively kwaito music playing on the specially installed sound system which accompanies a slide show of pictures of the participating theatre groups in rehearsal, projected onto the back wall of the stage to coax the audience and performers into the mood as they take their seats on the plastic chairs filling the body of the hall.[132] Around 10 am the Magnet facilitator gathers all the participants from six theatre groups onto the stage in full view of the expectant audience for a last-minute team talk. Excitement and the 'eventness' of this event is powerfully in the air as the audience waits for performances to begin. The team talk being over, the Magnet facilitator announces the name of the group who will perform first over the public address system, whilst the succeeding groups find their seats with friends and family in the audience.

After all the groups of have shown their plays, each appropriately introduced by the Magnet facilitator at the microphone, and there has been much cheering and call and response with the audience, including a spontaneous performance from the midst of the audience by Mandisile Maseti, a local *imbongi* (praise singer), the freestanding plastic chairs are re-arranged in a huge circle in the body of the hall. A beast having been slaughtered in celebration the previous night, a delicious hot lunch with a cold drink is served to the seated audience and performers alike. Food is a conventional part of township celebrations and it heightens the value of the event in the eyes of all those who participate. Then a general 'feedback' takes place in which all who are present are welcome to participate.

The feedback mainly consists of expressions of appreciation. The showcase affords all those present an opportunity to enjoy the talents of the performers, reflect on the ideas presented

[132] This description arises particularly out of the 2005 Showcase, but all of the showcases occur in similar fashion. Since 2005 Magnet has used a different hall, in a different area of Khayelitsha each year for the showcase. This is so that no particular area and performance groups are privileged in terms of the convenience of the selected venue. The hall is hired for the day by the Trust from the local authorities. The responses from Showcase attendees recorded here were gathered at the 2007 showcase.

in the plays and generate a shared experience. This, in turn, fosters a sense of agency in both the performers and spectators. Thoughts along these lines were repeatedly voiced in the feedback session - conducted as we ate our piping hot stew and bread. One audience member pointed out that it is valuable for young people to show this work to other young people and for women to find a voice. In the words of the struggle song quoted by audience member, when *'you strike the women, you strike the rock'*. Others expressed their appreciation for young people who managed to create in such difficult conditions, and the power and spirit that young people bring to the work. Members of Kasi Youth Group who had recently suffered the loss of their member Masixole Gaqavu, who was shot en route home from rehearsal, explicitly expressed their appreciation for Magnet's work in Khayelitsha.[133] Others wished that the work could be shown more broadly, to 'other parents and children' – implying those who do not yet have an association with this event (Morris, Notes, 2005).

A crucial feature of this festival is that it demonstrates how, in spite of the most rudimentary facilities for theatrical performance, the local playing culture lubricates and eventifies the occasion. The vast majority of those attending, whether spectators, Magnet Theatre facilitators who work with the theatre groups, or group members themselves, are local township inhabitants whose language of communication (*isiXhosa)*, expectations and understandings of this community event are consonant. My research assistants, enquiring from attendees at the 2007 showcase, received the following kinds of responses:

> T3: My name is Thabo Tshayiva from Maccassar [Khayelitsha]. I am in Iqhude Theatre Productions. We are here to perform in this forum organised by Magnet Theatre. But I, as Thabo, I come as a supporter. All the groups are showcasing their work: I think there are seven plays showcased today. So that is why we have this day and it is called 'Showcase 2007'.
>
> T4: Oh we are here to celebrate the beauty of arts and the cooperation we have had with Magnet Theatre for the last five years. So we are here to showcase all the things we have learnt from Magnet.
>
> Q: How did you hear about this event?
> T2: From a friend.
> Q: So what do you think is the point of this showcase?
> T1: Obviously to showcase raw talent from the township and to help talented young stars to actually realise that they *have* talent, that they *can do* things, such as acting and being involved in theatre making.
> T2: I think it is more about educating the youth and empowering them: [convincing them] that there is more to life than sitting on the corner of the street doing drugs, crime and teenage pregnancy.
> Q: So what is your involvement in theatre?
> T1: My involvement is in drama, I watch drama all the time.
> Q: So you involvement is more of a supporter.
> T1: Yes
> Q: And you?
> T2: I would also say support is my involvement.

[133] In his opening speech Mbothwe dedicated the showcase to Gaqavu who had died. In spite of this, Gaqavu's theatre group, Kasi Youth Group, performed sections from their play, *Sibuya nomkhwezeli*, which included a poetry motif: 'Death be not proud / To smile when young people like us die! / Death, who are you? / Where do you come from? / Why do you take our loved ones? / Death, be not proud. / Death, be not proud'. (Morris, Notes, 2005).

> T6: We have been to other festivals. But this one is different in that, this one is for groups from disadvantaged communities to meet and to share skills. In other festivals you find that there is only one group from Khayelitsha, but here *only* groups from Khayelitsha meet to show each other what we are made of.
> T7: Yes, this showcase is different because we don't just come to perform. Here we are given a chance to participate in other things. They give us a duty to be at the door, or catering, or to tell the audience to keep quiet. But when we are at the High Schools Drama Festival we only perform. [2007]

Cremona's insight is apt:

> The processes at work in this type of event …where not only certain sectors, but the whole community participating in the festival, identify themselves as a single homogenous group, and by this process is … transformed into a temporary 'communitas'. This type of festival goes far beyond purely commercial aims, and often seeks … to 'eventify' salient aspects of the life of a particular society, or to celebrate the culture, beliefs or value system which distinguish it from other societies. (2007:11)

Bearing in mind that township plays on the whole are not published, eventification *is* their publication and this type of occasion does exactly that. The play does not merely belong to its makers and performers, but becomes a shared, mutually satisfactory process, for performers and audience alike. As a practice therefore, this is theatre in the township at its most effective and satisfying.

Festivals in town

The following paragraphs survey some aspects of organization that the Ikhwezi and Cape Town Festivals have in common. Thereafter, the differences between them are unpacked.

Since 1999 the Ikhwezi Festival has been held in the 172-seat studio theatre at the Baxter Theatre Centre,[134] whereas in 2007 the Cape Town Festival used both the 75-seat Intimate Theatre belonging to the University of Cape Town and the 140-seat Arena Theatre at Artscape. All these venues are at least fifteen and as much as sixty kilometers from the townships. Thus it is unavoidably costly and difficult, not only to transport the performers to the venue, but also to expect their families and friends to attend.

Both festivals largely consist of plays specifically created for the festival and approved for showcasing by the management. Many performances are packed closely together in an allocated venue, three or four shows a day (or evening) being fairly standard. This allows performers and sometimes audiences to see a second or third show in the course of a single trip to the festival, which is valued by those able to do so. Both public and private transport from township to town is costly, unavailable at night or specifically commissioned, so audience attendance at festivals has to be engineered if it is to be substantial. From the outside it can be difficult to identify wherein lies a 'festival quality' in the performance occasions or venues,

[134] In 1998 the whole of the Baxter Centre except the Concert Hall was taken over for the Ikhwezi Festival, but that practice was not sustained thereafter. The duration of the festival has increased but its locus is confined to the studio theatre.

particularly since in many performances there is no playing culture shared between performers and audience. This is partly because of the difficulty of attracting an audience sufficiently large to feel empowered to own such theatrical events in the manner achieved by the Magnet Showcase described above.

With respect to influencing perception (or reception), any publicity is of a generic nature in press or on radio and no detailed programme is published in the newspapers or on the web daily. So independent festival-goers unconnected to the performers have no easy way of knowing – beyond the name of the festival and the dates and venue(s) – what exactly they will see at any given performance. This point was made very strongly at the symposium:

> S6: When I come to the Arena theatre, or Artscape, there are programmes there. In the programme it will tell you what the play is about, and that it's being portrayed like this--- and so on.
>
> But if you go to our theatres you won't find anything explaining. So when I [as audience] come in I am unaware of the world of the director, or the world of the whole production, or where it's happening. I come in and I'm like: 'No! That's not what I know about the *tokoloshe*!' and I come out and ask you questions and we end up fighting possibly. But had I read a programme that has all the sponsors, and everything about what Mannie Manim thought--- or why he decided to direct this play like this---.[135] Then I would have very few questions because I look at the play according to how he did it. However in our society [i.e. within township theatre] you won't get that information and then I think that's where most of this breakdown between audience and playwright and actors, you know, comes in. (2008:41)

Speaker 6 has a good point. If visitors do make it to the venue, unless they are invited to an opening ceremony for the festival as whole, they are unlikely to engage with the notion of 'festival', or with the play, since there may be little apparent playfulness or specialness attached to the occasion and little or no information about the production. On the other hand, for township spectators there is great novelty value in visiting a city theatre, particularly if you are amongst a large grouping organized to attend or participate.

Having briefly surveyed some of the way in which these two festivals are hosted, programmed and marketed, a closer scrutiny at their visions, management styles, and the experiences of their audiences, begins to develop a picture of their place in the sub-field of township theatre in Cape Town.

The Ikhwezi Festival of Community Theatre

This festival was initiated and is led by Itumeleng Wa-Lehulere. Initially supported by First National Bank, the City of Cape Town and Business Arts South Africa, the range of sponsors has grown. In 2008 it was supported by the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund, Media24, Distell, Bush Radio and a range of private foundations. The professed aims are:

[135] Mannie Manim is widely regarded as one of the 'greats' of South African theatre. He was co-founder, along with Barney Simon of the Market Theatre in Johannesburg and for many years Chairperson of the National Festival of the Arts in Grahamstown and recently from 2000 to 2009 director of the Baxter Theatre Centre in Cape Town. Renowned as a lighting designer and producer, Manim does not direct plays. However the point that Speaker 6 is making is that if a programme draws support from those with lots of symbolic capital by publishing their opinions, then audience members are likely to view the play through the lens suggested in the programme notes.

> To develop, through the arts, critical thinking among audiences and theatre practitioners
> To promote non-racism, non-sexism and democracy in South Africa
> To popularize and raise awareness of social programmes such as health, environment, education, tourism and human rights
> To expose new and up-coming theatre practitioners in the theatre mainstream
> To use the arts to stimulate community initiatives
> To reflect the culture of all people of the Western Cape and South Africa
> To develop new playwrights in the Western Cape
> (Ikhwezi Festival programme, 2007).[136]

By 2007 the Baxter theatre had become the official host to the festival which implies their in-kind support, thus relieving part of the Director's financial and management burden. The festival organizers seek entrants to the festival, mentor groups in rehearsal in the run-up to the festival and offer some skills training to interested directors and groups. There is thus a compatability of interests and intentions between the festival organizers and the township theatre groups. The Baxter Theatre staff market the festival and co-ordinate transport for audiences and performing groups.

The Ikhwezi Festival draws its dozen or so participating productions from application and 'audition' processes which take place amongst community groups country-wide over the preceding months. Although not specifically targeted at black township communities, during the past few years the festival has attracted an overwhelming majority of productions from local townships as well as from townships in, for example the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Gauteng. There have been plays from communities in white and coloured areas but they are unusual. The plays perform in repertory in the single studio theatre venue for just over a fortnight, each production being assured at least a couple of performances: in the morning, early afternoon and perhaps once in the evening.

As pointed out above, once a theatre festival is no longer located near the homes of the participants, transport provision (whether financially underwritten, or donated by a transport company, or commissioned and paid for by the participants and spectators) is essential and very costly. This affects attendance.

> Q: How much does it cost you to get to the Baxter to watch a show where you come from?
> T1: You see, the night shows, especially at night, are the ones we cannot afford to pay for; because there is no transport at night. And a taxi from here to Khayelitsha [during the day] is R8,50 so that is a big obstacle for us. otherwise we would like to watch more shows; but it is the time; and it is far.
> Q: Is it the same for everyone here?
> T3: Yes my brother. (*The Last Breath* 2007a)

Because casual patronage of the festival by suburbanites is almost non-existent, block bookings from schools (together with the necessary bus transportation) are pursued by the Festival organizers with dogged persistence. The morning performances are the easiest to fill and primary schools the easiest to book – whether or not the plays are particularly suited to an

[136] While there are no substantial changes to the goals, I have used the 2007 wording because it is clearer than that of 1998.

audience of children or teenagers. Upon arrival at the theatre the learners are led into the foyer and spend much time gazing around them at the very distinctive Baxter architecture.

> S3: It is big,
> S1: It is expensive.
> S2: It is beautiful.
> S4: It is not like at school where you can find a sweet for 10c. Here a sweet is R10.
> S2: There are mixed people.
> S1: There are people from overseas.
> S2: There are white people… [giggles]
> (*Motherly Weapon* 2007)

Then they enter the auditorium where they are shown to comfortable seats, the lights are lowered, and where a play is performed under stage lighting which brings out the colour of costumes and the expressions in the eyes of performers.[137]

> C1: I enjoy the play a lot but at the beginning I was scared because it was dark in the theatre.
> C2: I was looking at my friends but I couldn't see them because of the darkness inside.
> C: I jumped off my seat at one point!
> C: I was not scared I enjoyed every thing that was happening there. (*Red Song* 2007)
>
> Q: So have you seen that it gets dark sometimes here - the lights and all that. Do you have those things when you watch plays at your school?
> C: No. We stand on our feet there.
> C1: Or sit on the floor.
> C2: Sometimes we don't even see what we are watching.
> C3: And the older ones beat us up sometimes while we watching, and the teachers shouts at us, saying that we are making noise.
> C: We also get dirty there. (*Behind the Bars* 2007)

Overall, whilst the Ikhwezi festival may not wholeheartedly exploit the opportunity for a 'festivalised' interaction amongst all involved, the enthusiasm of the young audiences for an exciting production on stage is sometimes irrepressible and they clap, stamp feet, call out or sing along in unison.[138] Then the learners are led out into the Baxter's tree-shaded gardens to eat lunch and relax and await the arrival of their bus. In all, I too would relish such an outing, whether or not the play appealed.

The fervent approval of young adults who attend the Ikhwezi festival on their own initiative points to the cultural and symbolic capital the Festival provides for township performers and audiences:

> Q: What do you think about the festival?
> T1: I am not performing, but what I like about the festival is that it takes shows from the community and brings them to the theatre. We learn more about the theatre. We see different stories from the township. So it helps us a lot. We, as groups from the township, we are given a chance to come to the theatre and see how different 'the theatre' is from community halls.
> Q: So what difference do you [understand] between a theatre and a community hall?

[137] In the Ikhwezi Festival almost no use is made of scenic devices and stage properties, perhaps partly because the turnaround time between shows may be as little as fifteen minutes if a performance runs late, which does occur.

[138] The township performatic habitus is not much encouraged in the Baxter's Studio Theatre. I observed the festival administrator, Tena, instructing the audience of learners to listen carefully and not to laugh too raucously lest they miss something of the play before *Red Song* commenced on 13 March 2007.

> T1: For one thing, the theatre is technically different [to the hall] in the township. Community halls usually have echoes that cause you not to hear properly. Then, what I have learnt here in the festival, is that our audiences try by all means to be 'in the theatre' whereas if you see people in community halls: they talk all the time during the show. But if they are in the theatre they respect the theatre, they listen and behave well.
> Q: Why? Is it because the theatre is in a surbuban area or in town?
> T1: I think they respect the play.
> Q: The place.
> T1: The play. It is not about the place. The play is in town and they respect the play.
> T2: I would love it if the plays could go to the township.
> T3: I agree. Yes, plays to the township! (*The Last Breath* 2007a)

The paradox of the town venue both endorsing and challenging township themes and methods is beautifully captured above. Township theatre makers and audiences believe that they accrue cultural and social capital through festival participation. This theme is developed below:

> Q: So what is the point of Ikhwezi Festival?
> T1: It gives you a platform. The first time I stepped into a theatre was because of Ikhwezi. At first acting was a hobby of mine but now I want to do it career-wise. Ikhwezi is very important to us as the youth. Most youths are 'on the streets' and they are being influenced by bad things. So for me, when I am on stage or sitting in the theatre watching, by those means I miss out on the bad things. So Ikwezi is important to me in this way. I see its point.
> T2: I think Ikhwezi is grooming young actors and upcoming directors which is good. There are people in the location sitting with their talent but every time they see a poster of 'Ikhwezi Festival' they say, 'I would like to be there. I want to show what I can do'. (*Ziphi Nkomo* 2007b)

> Q: If I may ask, wena ke buti, where are you from?
> T4: I am from the former Transkei, which is now known as the Eastern Cape. Currently I am based in Delft [township].
> Q: Did you pay to come and see this show?
> T4: I am a product of the Ikhwezi Festival. So I came because the festival can't go by without me witnessing it. Not coming would place a huge guilt on me – not supporting the work of a place that made me.
> Q: What does Ikhwezi mean to you?
> T4: It means a lot to me, because that is where we get our platform. 'We' - being young black actors coming from disadvantaged areas where we get no support from the community or from our families. They have the mentality that 'Actors will die poor' entrenched in their minds. The festival helps in changing these views because performing at the Baxter is advantageous since it is a well-known theatre. (*Beneath silent waters* 2007b)

Respondent T4 is aware of the fact that festivals such as Ikhwezi raise the cultural and symbolic capital of theatre in the eyes of township communities. Others see the possibility to achieve economic capital.

> T: I think the person who came up with Ikhwezi Festival wanted a strategy to grow the industry because you never know who is in the audience. And it seems like everyone comes to the Baxter.You never know who is watching you - maybe a producer or whatever! So maybe he wanted to create an opportunity for up and coming artists like us. (*Udaba Bafazi* 2007a)

As indicated above, some are loyal because of how they have already benefitted from the festival. The director of *Ubizo - Voices of E'lokshini,* Thami Mbongo responded in interview: 'I'm the child of this festival. This festival groomed me because I have been involved since 1998 when it started, up until now, so every year I come' (*Beneath silent waters* 2007a). Mbongo is an

activist for the development of theatre in the townships. He is also aware that association with the festival could be a double-edge sword and might diminish the status of the artist in certain sectors of the field. In interview he reflected:

> The term 'community theatre' has been misused and become equivalent to 'cheap theatre' for 'disadvantaged communities'. But there are communities in Observatory and Constantia as well as in Khayelitsha. Nowadays community theatre has become a cheap label, solely associated with *black* community theatre. Changing the name 'community theatre' to 'township theatre' makes no difference because they all come down to one thing which is *South African* theatre. I have often asked myself: if I were to do a play with Nceba Mpiliswana, Andile Nebulane, Mbulelo Grootboom and Thembinkosi Njokweni – that are all university graduated theatre makers – will it still be labelled 'community theatre'? (2006)

Possibly Mbongo has put his finger on why the Ikhwezi festival dropped the word 'community' from its name in 2007 (Appendix A). He is aware of the problems of accruing capital that township theatre experiences in the field. Not only theatre managements but also urban audiences are chary and usually noticeable by their absence at the Ikhwezi Festival

Although township plays are mostly newly minted works of South African theatre highly valued by township practitioners and audiences for educational, artistic and social reasons, upon entering the field of city theatre township theatre is profoundly dominated. Distinction, conferred by the field of theatre in town, fails to accord township plays value.

In city theatre the most popular plays or musicals tend to be dependent on and heteronymous with the political and economic status quo. They attract economic capital and, lavishly produced, marketed and publicized, they raise their status within social and political circles of power, even though these works may lose cultural and symbolic capital within the field of theatre itself (Bourdieu 1993). Whereas plays newly created in the city, acquire (or not) their prestige largely within the field of theatre itself, rather than within the dominant field of power, on the basis of their strengths as 'works of art'. This is more easily achieved when the artists involved have already accrued a store of cultural or symbolic capital (reputation) within the field of theatre. In such cases their distance from the centres of state power and economic capital may even add to their distinction.[139] Later on, when such productions are invited to tour to other national locations and even abroad, their cultural capital may well transform into symbolic or economic capital.

But when township plays come to perform in the city they leave their cultural capital and dominant status in the social and political field of the township behind. Discontented with dominance in their own sub-field of township theatre, township artists aspire to contest the values of the South African field and to perform their works in city theatres, which

[139] Pieter-Dirk Uys exemplifies this process. Since the height of the apartheid era Uys has directed the full force of his satirical armoury at government. Utilising his favourite stage persona developed over many years – 'Mrs Evita Bezuidenhout' - Uys has continued to critique government until today. Nevertheless 'Evita Bezuidenhout' has been publicly acknowledged by luminaries such as Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu. Part of Uys's symbolic capital vests in his autonomy from state power which nonetheless accords him distinction.

simultaneously raises their status in the townships. But once in the city they barely engage with the dominating sub-field of town theatre, nor with the dominant field of social and political power. Rather they are caught precariously between the esteem, i.e. the symbolic capital, which their work generates on home ground and the profoundly dominated position their work occupies within Cape Town theatre as a whole.[140]

Cape Town Festival

If this is the case at the Ikhwezi Festival, it is even more the case at the Cape Town festival, which is an event on a much larger scale, supported by the field of state power, but having negligible status in the field of theatre for reasons that will be explained below. The Cape Town Festival exemplifies the problematic, discussed in *Festivalising!* (Hauptfleisch et al 2007) that may arise when festivals are conceived, or build in, or generate, competing agendas that are not easily rendered compatible.

Since inception, the mission of the Cape Town Festival has *not* been arts related. Supported by national, provincial and metropolitan public funding, business, the media and associated suppliers, and in kind by theatre venues, the festival has been conceived by journalists, local government and leading citizens who are *not* players in the field of theatre, but perceive the advantages of using the arts for the development of social cohesion, tourism and arts-related industries. The Cape Town festival is therefore an applied arts festival with a range of intentions beyond the arts, in spite of Ganief's brave words 'from the desk of the CEO': 'As a relatively young 8 year old festival I sincerely believe that we will reach our vision of establishing the "Gateway to African Arts and Culture" within the next 5 years' (2007). The 2007 festival report captures the wide-ranging scope of the social development agenda:

> [The] Cape Town International Performing Arts Festival for 2007 was scheduled to run for 3 weeks from 5 - 24 March. …The mission was to develop audiences, fill the theatres and provide as many income opportunities for all the artists, to allow disadvantaged communities the opportunities to see theatrical productions in venues close to their areas and with professional technical assistance. (Fortune, Magi and van Sitters, 2007)

These are sprawling intentions that were somewhat fulfilled in practice. In the 2007 festival over 1300 performers were showcased in 116 shows and many children performed in regular theatres for the first time. However, in spite of Ganief's published intentions, by management's own admission, no performances were held in the townships (Fortune, Magi and van Sitters, 2007) and the festival failed to attract audiences in large numbers or generate social and cultural capital for its performers.

The 2007 festival was led by a large staff who were mostly not arts professionals or related to venue managements. Festival staff included a 'Performing Arts Manager' and others devoted to community initiatives, but their focus was inclusivity rather than festivalising the arts

[140] This questions of contestations over power and distinction in the field were raised in Chapter 3. Readers may wish to refer once more to Figure 3.

and creating theatrical events. Possibly the performance venues with which they partnered were engaged in co-operating with the centres of power rather than with achieving a festivalised vision. In effect, the Cape Town Festival in 2007 was initiated by those near the centres of power, administered by business managers, and hosted by venue managers. There was no artistic director and no arts-related agenda driving the event. So after eight consecutive years of running the festival, the 2007 report confesses that there was '[n]o major buzz around the festival and [v]enue owners and artists still did not view the festival as theirs instead of the city's. The report admits: 'getting artists to take responsibility for marketing their own productions' and finding 'marketing that will attract a paying audience' have yet to be achieved (Fortune, Magi and van Sitters, 2007). Essentially, the festival achieved little or no status within the field of theatre. In fact it did not strive to do so. But attempting to achieve social or cultural capital from outside of the relevant field is virtually impossible. The Cape Town Festival management did not play the game according to field-specific rules and were therefore disqualified.[141]

The dislocation between festival executives, venue managers and participating artists is unsurprising. Over the years theatre complexes in Cape Town have developed their own logic of practice that probably has little in common both with the socially inclusive aims of the Cape Town Festival or with theatre practices in the communities for which the festival was intended. The performing artists have little or no opportunity to interact with, or intervene, in the running of the festival, and all three parties have no playing culture or theatre habitus in common.

In 2007 I attended performances by two township theatre groups held under the auspices of the Cape Town Festival. On both occasions the audiences were very small, comprising a handful of loyal supporters who had travelled from the township to support their own, and an even smaller handful of urban festival goers. My research assistant interviewed a group of black audience members at the performance of *Old Brown Joe* at the Intimate Theatre in the Gardens:

> Q: I would like to know, because I'm sure we came here for different reasons, why are we here?
> A1: I am part of this group who just performed but I am not in this play so I was forced to come and support but I also wanted to come.
> Q: and you *bhuti* [brother]?
> A2: The guys who just performed: they spoke about it last week and I decided to come and check it out, see what they have to show, because we stay in the same township, so it is important to support each other, to see that what they are doing is going somewhere.
> A4: I was invited to come and see the play. I mean these guys come from our township so we have to come and support, even though we are a small group of people from the township. But I believe if one person sees a show, that person will tell somebody else. Who knows? Next week maybe we might have a bigger audience than we had today? So yes, I'm here to support. (*Old Brown Joe* 2007a)

[141] It is unsurprising but regrettable that from 2008 the Cape Town Festival abandoned staging theatre productions altogether and focused largely on day-long music festivals in areas such as the Compary Gardens in Cape Town. The professed intentions remain celebrating diversity and generating tourism (Cape Town Festival 2009).

Whilst appreciating the loyalty of their neighbours, I believe that such a small audience must be very disappointing for the theatre group. It is also a far cry from the enthusiastic reception that they probably would have received in a township festival. Belief in the work has little to do with the inherent value of the work but rather has to do with those in the field who have the power to consecrate the work (Bourdieu 1993:36). In our case this would be managers of theatre venues, theatre reviewers, cognoscenti, and those in the inner circles of power and influence with respect to producing theatre. Their 'belief' in due course transforms into symbolic or economic capital. But for township plays this does not happen because the necessary belief from the field of theatre in the city is mostly unforthcoming.

This is partly because of massive differences in habitus. The subject matter, language, cultural signifiers, social customs and aesthetic choices performed in plays that are consecrated by township audiences because they share the same structures of feeling, playing culture and habitus, no longer pertain in the city. Lacking a common township or theatre habitus, the creativity and resourcefulness of the theatre groups alone is not enough to generate belief in township theatre amongst city theatre managers, producers and audiences. So at the same time as township plays are divested of the cultural and symbolic capital accrued in township performances, they also fail to accrue economic or cultural capital in the city. This scenario is illustrated by the instance in which Iqhude Theatre performed during the Cape Town Festival.

Iqhude Theatre Group performs in Artscape Arena

The second performance by a group from the township that I attended as part of the Cape Town Festival was that of Iqhude Theatre. This is an exemplary instance of the disjunctures in practices, habitus, structures of feeling and expectations discussed above, so I shall describe the event in some detail.

Iqhude Theatre Group (who also created the play discussed in Chapter 5) was formed in 2001 by residents of Macassar, Khayelitsha and between 2004 and 2007 was mentored by the fieldworkers of Magnet Theatre.[142] They participated in the festival on the initiative of their group leader Thembelihle Mananga (2007).[143] In 2006 Mananga was enrolled for a year's course in performing arts at the Arts & Media Access Centre (AMAC). Mananga's teachers informed all the trainees that they could apply to the Cape Town Festival to contribute performances to the forthcoming festival. So before the due date Mananga completed the necessary forms at the festival offices and Iqhude Theatre Group was admitted to do one sponsored performance in the Artscape Arena. Mananga confessed that the group were hoping to perform three times but 'because it is our first time to perform' at Artscape, they accepted the

[142] The work of this group, which I viewed at the Magnet showcases 2005-2007 and at the Khayelitsha Theatre forum in 2009, is continuously interesting. An outline scenario of *My last journey by limousine* is to be found in Appendix E

[143] In the discussion of Iqhude Theatre Groups visit to Artscape Arena theatre that ensues, all reportage of Mananga's input, perceptions and viewpoints was obtained in the interviews I had with him in 2006 and 2007 and upon the occasion of the performance at Artscape, 10 March 2007.

single performance. They were contracted for a flat fee of R1500 up front, plus a small percentage of the box office, provided an identified sub-minimum of seats were sold.

My last journey by limousine was scheduled for performance in the Artscape Arena on Saturday 10 March 2007 at 2pm. In advance Mananga was provided with the name and cell phone details of the Technical Director of the Artscape Arena Theatre and, as arranged, Iqhude turned up at 9am for their (only) 10am technical rehearsal on the day of the performance. Due to the pressure of groups using the venue, they were allocated from 10 until 11.30am for their rehearsal. In that time it was not possible to run the whole play which was 65 minutes long. All Iqhude and Mananga could undertake was property placement on stage and storage offstage, identifying significant acting areas for the cast and lighting technician on duty that day, and ensuring those were well-lit. Then they could plot key lighting cues as well as run through certain scenes to familiarise the technician with the play and the actors with the stage. It was the first time that this cast had performed this play in a formal theatre. When the technical rehearsal time was over at 11.30am, Mananga went with a second technician to transfer the five songs he had on five different compact discs onto one disc for sound operating by the lighting technician during the performance.

I first saw *My last journey by limousine* in November 2005 when it comprised part of the Magnet Theatre Community Groups Intervention Showcase. There, it was one of six plays presented by different theatre groups. Sixteen months later the play had cast changes and had been considerably re-worked but was instantly recognisable as a new 'version' of what I had seen more than a year previously. *My last journey by limousine* investigates the many ways in which the funeral business entices its market and the lengths to which corruption can go, at the same time as trying to find out what a dignified funeral might be, through physical theatre, satire and dramatic irony.

The performance at Artscape was due to begin at 2pm. I arrived in good time because I had received Mananga's permission to video the play and wished to set up. I asked the stage manager how long the play was so that I could plan my recording. Although he had run the technical rehearsal that morning, he replied: 'I don't know: I have never seen the production'. Mananga came to greet me and then took his place next to the stage manager to call the lighting and sound cues and do live drumming. Later, it appeared as if lighting and sound levels had not been set. Perhaps the technician felt that that was the task of the touring manager. But since Mananga had no previous experience in that venue with the in-house lighting and sound equipment, he was poorly placed to initiate such a process. Clearly the resident technician and Mananga were failing to find a modus operandum in common. Both theatre practitioners, one a town stage technician, the other a township director, broad discrepancies in their theatre habitus arise out of many influences, as Bourdieu makes clear.

There were two sectors within the audience present that afternoon: a handful of city playgoers scattered about the auditorium and about ten school learners seated in a row –

identifiable by their uniform although it was the weekend - who had come as a group from Macassar township. Two o'clock arrived and I observed Artscape's front of house manager arrive in a heated state in the entrance to the auditorium, wanting to know why the play had not begun. Mananga asked that the performance begin at 2.15pm because a second taxi-load of school learners had not yet arrived from the townships. But the Front of House manager explained that this show needed to begin on time because of the next show that needed access to the venue.

Mananga explained to me that the Festival organisers had encouraged him to find an audience for his show. So, because there are schools in Macassar in which he regularly works informally assisting them with theatre performances, he wrote a letter inviting the pupils to attend the Artscape performance. He took the letters to the teachers and requested their compliance in advertising the performance among the learners. Artscape charged R40 per ticket for his play. Mananga explained to me: 'the way I sold it to them was: R20 for the ticket and R20 for the taxi'. He found quite a number of students willing to make the investment of seeing a group they knew well for the first time in the context of a 'real' city theatre, and on the *promise* of their support – many could not pay upfront – Mananga organised two taxis to collect the students at the Desmond Tutu hall in Macassar at 12 noon on the Saturday to allow plenty of time to make the 2pm performance at Artscape. One taxi turned up. The other never arrived. Mananga told me the driver told him that he 'could not make it'. The students waited for an hour while the first taxi delivered half the student party to Artscape and then made another trip to collect the second half of the learners. Small wonder they were late, since Macassar is 50kms from the city centre. In the event the show began shortly after 2pm – without half the student audience.

Mananga was however still accountable for the cost of the double taxi trip. All the learners' ticket money had to go to Artscape because the requisite minimum audience numbers had not been achieved. So out of the contract fee paid upfront by the Cape Town Festival to Iqhude, the group actually saw less than half, and that only once all the learners had paid for their tickets in full. Meanwhile Iqhude 'sponsored' the learners' tickets and paid the full amount to Artscape on the day of performance, pending complete payment by the learners. I learnt in interview that all the learners did pay in the end - as Iqhude had trusted. With their final takings Iqhude purchased two drums for their group.

At the commencement of the performance the actors entered the stage in a complete blackout. I could hear that they were struggling to find their way. Mananga called out several times into the darkness, from the side of the auditorium where the technicians operate a show in the Artscape Arena theatre: '*Are you ready*?'

There was no reply. Finally the Artscape lighting technician brought up a very low light and the actors could find their positions. Later Mananga explained to me that during the technical rehearsal the group had rehearsed the opening of the show but at the start of the actual

performance the technician forgot to afford the actors a faint blue light with which to enter the stage, and my guess is that Mananga did not feel empowered to cue him.

The Iqhude actors would not be familiar with a complete blackout since community halls do not have lighting facilities and night-time performances are the exception rather than the rule. The Artscape technician is probably used to a 'call sheet' with all lighting and sound cues pre-plotted. However in this case there is no written script. The play is devised on the rehearsal floor and is embedded in the bodies of the actors. For the most part, they *are* the text. For his part, Mananga had never worked independently with access to such equipment before. From my observation I would guess that in township circumstances he has had no need of a cue sheet because he cues the action with music and drums himself. I doubt that lighting has previously come into the picture in circumstances in which Mananga himself has been responsible.

Thereafter the play moved without a hitch, except that to my ear the music levels were rather intrusive and sometimes the lighting was possibly too dim. The actors were not, in all cases, successful in 'finding the light'. I heard Mananga whispering urgently to the technician to lower the music's volume, and the lights became brighter, so I assume that levels were adjusted as the performance progressed.

The missing audience of learners arrived twenty minutes after the start and filed as quietly as possible into their seats. Their arrival did not disturb the progress of the performance because the auditorium was largely in darkness and the present audience largely silent. The learners who had travelled fifty kilometres to see this 65 minute play and been delayed, saw 45 minutes of the performance. And how different was this performer-spectator interaction from how it would have transpired in the township! Here the communicative interaction between performers and audience was sharply reduced. The auditorium was largely characterised by its darkness and silence.

After the play was over and the small audience had deferentially shown their appreciation with a polite round of applause, Mananga came onto the stage and announced to the audience in general that 'it is the fault of audience members who arrive late: it is not my fault'. I think he was anxious to make clear to his party of learners who had come so far that he was powerless to change the 2pm deadline. Moreover the practice in a city theatre is to start on time and not await the readiness of an audience.

Since there appeared to be no need for haste in vacating the venue inspite of Front of House's earlier explanation to the contrary, Mananga came to talk to me and remarked: 'I thought we would have more audience from the city. We would not have had an audience if I did not organise a school'. Mananga is correct. For all the reasons which I have provided above, local, urbanite Capetonians are reluctant to view theatre from the townships that generates social and cultural capital alien to their interests and therefore is not deemed to be capital at all.

Whereas township school pupils paid a relatively large sum and travelled 100km to support their own because they were performing in a *city* theatre.

In *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,* Bourdieu argues that the arts are a chief means whereby society stratifies itself (1984). Referring to the situation in France where he undertook his research, Bourdieu proposes that the upper middle classes have annexed the arts by 'consecrating' only their aesthetic functions and repudiating their utilitarian functions (for example, a portrait should instantly be recognisable as a likeness of the subject).

In Africa, many theatre scholars evaluate theatre primarily on the basis of its perceived utility (in Salhi 1998). In many African contexts, having an educational objective does not diminish the perceived status of theatre. On the contrary, community leaders will become patrons of the theatre precisely because of theatre's service to the community (Kerr 1995).

In the field in Cape Town however, tension between theatre that is 'pure theatre' on the one hand and 'applied' on the other is very much alive, and symbolic capital mainly accrues to those who are deemed to achieve *artistic* excellence, whether or not there is another agenda at work.[144] Augusto Boal argues that *all* theatre, for whatever purpose it is made, should be the best and most delightful it can be (1992). However that does not imply that all theatre must be in the public or commercial domain. But to accrue capital in the field in Cape Town, the theatre must not only be of a high artistic standard, it must also be acknowledged as such by those players in the field of significant standing. In adopting this stance, the field of South African theatre as a whole is not in line with African practice. Rather it leans to its British colonial heritage.

In order for a township play to achieve symbolic or cultural capital in the sub-field of Cape Town theatre, it usually needs to be performed in one of the city's recognised theatre venues.[145] This returns us to Bourdieu's concept of belief. Artistic approbation is dependent upon the work being exposed to those whose opinion counts in the field and who accord the work the necessary stamp of approval. But in order to appreciate the aesthetic aspects of the art in question, because, as Bourdieu argues, art has carved out a niche for itself by being purely self-referential, the viewer needs the necessary arts education and experience.[146] Those with little regular access to 'high art' are unlikely to subscribe to views cultivated by such exposure.

[144] The term 'applied theatre' currently enjoys widespread usage to denote all those forms of theatre or drama-related activities in which, as Bilbrough sums it up, 'theatre or drama techniques are *applied* to a non-theatrical problem' in 'another distinct field or discipline or area of social activity' in order to catalyse some kind of shift. In such contexts theatre usually comprises the key means of engagement, usually with a specifically targeted audience or community (Bilbrough 2009:25-6).

[145] This problematic plays itself out in Cape Town's Fleur du Cap theatre awards funded by Distell. By and large until the present these awards have almost exclusively recognised productions playing in mainstream venues. The awards are therefore viewed by some theatre artists to be a site of struggle over symbolic capital and they boycott the awards for this reason. It should be noted that Distell is a significant funder of the Ikhwezi Festival of Community Theatre.

[146] This is part of Bourdieu's conceptualization of field, in which the laws pertaining in the field differ from those outside of its boundaries.

Thus ‘appreciating art’ in effect becomes an integer of cultural and social capital that confers distinction and status. It effectively distinguishes between people on the basis of their ‘tastes’.

Accordingly, it doesn’t raise your stakes in the Cape Town theatre field if your play simply reflects the current realities of contemporary issues, such as poverty, violence or crime, without putting a sufficiently artistic ‘spin’ on it. Then the play might be deemed primarily educational or socially effective, and that does not attract symbolic capital as I have pointed out. Similarly you do not gain distinction if you, as spectator, express too much approval of such a work. Such an association might suggest that you are not as artistically acute as you might be. So as Bourdieu argues, if a mark of art for the ascendant classes is freedom from economic need or functionalism, then township theatre, which is deeply invested in crucial social issues and educational processes, as outlined in Chapters 6 and 7, is hardly likely to find interest, let alone committed espousal from urban theatre goers, even scholars.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the overall dispensation for theatre within state and local government provisioning in Cape Town. Considered in light of recent cultural policies, the material arrangements for the theatre system and the organisational context of local festivals, distribution for township theatre has been examined, as so has the struggle for distinction.

Issues of venue provision and location, programming, hosting, marketing and publicity at three local festivals have been examined to determine the effects of these processes on audience and performers from the townships, drawing on Bourdieu’s concepts of field, capital and habitus. Issues of taste, cultural affiliation and class have been raised in light of Bourdieu’s theories around distinction (1984).

Three festivals have been compared in order to examine how occupying different positions in the larger field of state power and in the dominated field of Cape Town theatre, as well as differences in cultural capital and habitus, generate field struggles for power and distinction among Cape Town theatre practitioners.

Held in Khayelitsha, the Magnet Theatre CGI Showcase brings together performers and audience in an occasion of performance at which the intentions and playing culture of the festival organisers, the performers and audience coincide and agreement is easily achieved over the conferring of cultural and symbolic capital.

With regard to city festivals, what festival managers, venue managers, publicists, performing groups and spectators share, with regard to playing culture, cultural capital and habitus active in the field, in large part determines the overall effectiveness of the distribution system, and consequently the success or failure of the festival.

Held at the Baxter Theatre Centre in Rondebosch since its inception, the Ikhwezi Festival achieves consonance of interests between performers and township audience members.

But the struggle for broader audience attendance and for status in the field of theatre in Cape Town is engaged, not always successfully, throughout the festival.

Ironically, whilst the Cape Town Festival in 2007 was driven by a valid political mandate to support social diversity and inclusiveness, it failed in exactly these respects within the field of theatre. Possibly the executive's close alliances with state and economic powers set them up as oppositional to the dominated sub-field of township theatre, which understandably contests 'grand narratives' in the endeavour to produce 'ordinary' stories of township dwellers (Ndebele 1991b).

With respect to how distribution functions in festivals, it is clear that, during a festival, theatrical time should intersect with festival time and become heightened time, demarcated by the 'eventness' of the event. But when theatrical time is demarcated largely by a venue timetable it can be drained of its intensity and become routinely and mundanely everyday.

When publicity material does not reach those who are most likely to enjoy what is offered, is unsupported by endorsements from those with capital in the field of city theatre, when venues are far from those who might want to attend, or when what is offered is about a different world, couched in an aesthetic language unfamiliar to city spectators, then the mismatch of conceptions about what constitutes theatre and who it is for and how it should be staged, can produce unhappy results. Rather than finding a welcoming full theatre, enthusiastic and dedicated theatre groups may land up with a small audience, partly comprising a handful of their own followers and partly a motley assortment of rather puzzled outsiders to township playing culture.

So there is a danger that festivals catering to theatre from the townships share a dominated and marginalised status in the field of theatre along with the very productions they intend to serve. In spite of all the new policies and opportunities of the last decade, for township practitioners little has improved. City theatre dominates and township theatre is on the margins. But this is not the case within the townships themselves. Nor does it excuse the current situation.

9. CONCLUSION

This study investigates, documents, describes and conceptualises theatre originating in selected townships in the vicinity of Cape Town. Using three domains derived from theatrical event theory as conceptual organisers, my account examines theatre in the townships as inextricably part of, and influenced by, a series of 'nested contexts'. Township circumstances are profoundly influential. Within that, the performatic repertoire of township playing culture nurtures dispositions which feed the practice of playmaking. From these conjoint fundamentals, township theatre-makers organise and manage themselves into functional and effective theatre groupings who make plays. The playmaking process itself is nurtured by all three of these nested contexts. When it comes to performance, however, township theatre groups perforce have to leave the safety of this 'nest' and try their luck in city theatres.

Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of practice, theatrical event theory is sharpened to illuminate the struggle for power and capital waged between the dominant sub-field of theatre in Cape Town and the dominated sub-field of township theatre. An understanding of this struggle in the field of theatre is informed by David McDonald's (2008) insights into Cape Town's struggle in the field of global capitalism, when it aspires to 'global city' status. He argues that 'succumbing' to global capitalism will leave Cape Town's poor – including those in the townships referred to in this study – worse, rather than better off. Considering theatre as a microcosm of the city macrocosm, through the Bourdieuan lens of field, McDonald's argument becomes persuasive. This is what I have attempted to demonstrate with the example of Iqhude Theatre's efforts to perform in the Cape Town Festival.

What the development of a theory of 'nested contexts' achieves is to locate township theatre on the same map as town theatre - albeit in a profoundly dominated position - in relation to state power and influence. And what the map makes clear is that, whilst the township is outside of the city, it is its own centre (sub-field), very much alive, engaged and productive. Taking a township habitus seriously and taking a township modus operandum seriously is, as AbdouMaliq Simone (2004) and Jennifer Robinson (2009) suggest, an alternative way of revisioning the township's role in the future of Cape Town - and similarly township theatre's role in the future of Cape Town theatre.

The study produces a conceptually driven account of township theatre that describes each of the domains in particular ways. The cultural context is delineated in terms of the township environment and habitus. Township playing culture generates dispositions to immediacy, patterning and storytelling that are nurtured in the local performatic repertoire. Township theatre groups have particular ways of organising themselves generated by township circumstances. Motivating, managing, leading, teaching, learning and following are all inextricably intertwined activities and tactics that together generate a practice of theatre-making in which improvisation, structuring and skills burnishing are inextricably intertwined processes. When it comes to

distribution, township theatre-groups struggle for performance opportunities, cultural capital and distinction in the field of Cape Town theatre.

Documenting and explicating the practice of theatre-making in certain townships in Cape Town has brought to light both how similar to mainstream and how particular to township is the latter's practice of theatre-making. Driven by the same concerns for relevance, quality, provisioning, resourcing and capital, township theatre is part of the field of theatre in Cape Town, even if it has generated its own sub-field and is dominated. It will always strive for capital and distinction in the dominant sub-field in Cape Town, and possibly in South Africa as a whole.

But township theatre is distinctive, and charting its distinctiveness has been a central concern in this study. Sifted from this study as a whole, I will briefly review its most prominent features. As previously explained, there is no claim that these attributes are exclusive to township theatre; but by and large they are surely much more prominent in township theatre than in town theatre, because they are generated not only by theatre activities but more generally by the context of their origin – in township living and playing culture.

The power and sheer usefulness of the group is the first attribute of the practice to which attention must be drawn. In forming, leading, following, teaching, learning and directing, groups enable the practice of theatre-making in the townships. In the absence of venues, play texts, costumes and theatre equipment, township performers and directors use each other. They are each other's resource and they make do with that. Township practitioners negotiate, argue, persuade and in many other ways make their only resource work for them to undertake the practice of theatre-making. Their abilities to work off each other's ideas, to give and take, copy and innovate, work in unison and individually, have been fostered by involvement with the local performatic repertoire. Township experience has embedded in the local habitus a consciousness that the collective is more powerful than the individual; so the ways in which performers work together in performance is subtle, sensitive and sustained.

The power of storytelling to create and develop meaning, to make sense of our experiences, and to imagine a brighter future, generates agency and cultural capital in township theatre-makers. The complex paradoxes of everyday life can be interrogated, examined, reflected upon and challenged through the process of making stories. And they are used for precisely these purposes. By means of theatre-making, township youth take charge, for a time, of their world and imagine it afresh.

The extent and intricacy with which patterning is used, both to structure meaning and enactment in the plays, is the second fundamental way in which township theatre is distinctive. Patterning is a fundamental means to achieve beauty and generate dramatic tension, and township practitioners juxtapose these two aspects of theatre-making expertly. When the performance space has no enchantment or charm, when the *mise en scene* is in no way assisted by lights or use of different levels on stage, patterning achieves heightened expression and

enchantment, lifting the time of performance out of everyday time and into the world of the play. Township performers, imbued with the dispositions of the performatic repertoire, are able to sustain harmonies, tableaux, complex footwork in a dance, moving in unison, opposition or symmetrically, all means that separate the world of the play from the world of the everyday.

Underpinning these three prominent features of township theatre-making, as well as other attributes identified in the course of this study, such as immediacy and the methods of teaching and learning from each other, is the capacity of township theatre-makers to use what comes to hand and make it work. Possessing almost no materials or infrastructure, the theatre-makers made do with what they have and, like bricoleurs, they fashion it into fascinating and knobbly works of theatre. The dustbin used as the only piece of furniture in '*Mzantsi*' (2006) comes to mind. Painted in the primary colours of the South African flag, the upturned dustbin served to represent the seat of national government, the 'throne' of the leader among leaders, the heavy burden the leader had to shoulder or drag, the mountainous obstacles that impede progress to national unity, the resting place for the weary. Finally, when their leader is restored to health, white handprints of all the provinces are impressed upon the colours of the South African flag on the dustbin – recalling, myth-like, the many hands painted on a cliff face in ancient San rock paintings.

Drawing on people-driven infrastructure, township theatre-makers have evolved flexible, contingent and creative ways of organising their groups and making theatre that use whatever materials, stories, skills and artistic tools come to hand to fashion works of theatre that speak back to and about their world. In this way the theatre-makers reflect upon and shed new light on their experiences. Embedded within the works are emotional, intellectual, aesthetic and philosophical responses to their experiences of the everyday. They have thoroughly taken up Ndebele's (1991) cause to re-vision their world.

The practice of township theatre-making emphasises that theatre is not a commodity: it is an event which occurs. Granted that events can be commodified, on the whole theatre is particularly successful at resisting commodification precisely because its nature is both lived and materialised at the same time. Wherein lies the 'true' experience of theatre? Does it lie in the performer or the audience in the moment of encounter, or does it lie with the memories that each performer and audience member carries with them into the next day, week or year? Township theatre performers remind us that artistic skill and creativity is all of our birthrights and cannot be provided by the best or worst institutions. Art, creativity and social action are what each of us can claim and not even the most disadvantaged circumstances reduce the capacity for that claim or its effective power.

At a time when globalising economic forces and strenuous marketing efforts threaten to persuade us that communities and social collectives do not exist and that we are actually undifferentiated, mindless and apparently powerless 'masses' (Barber 1997), township theatre reminds theatre practitioners and followers that we have choices. We have a language that can

not be taken over or away from us if we expend efforts on this social and cultural practice, rather than on accumulating 'works of art'.

Township practitioners have few material resources but their practice is distinctive, sophisticated, particular, textured and intensely communicative. In this way the theatre-makers and performers find their voices, find social agency and aesthetic form. This is a form of poor theatre from which there is much to learn. This study is an introduction and an invitation for many more detailed and discursive studies.

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APPENDIX A

ARCHIVE OF RESOURCES COLLECTED BY THE WRITER FOR THIS STUDY [unpublished]

Khayelitsha. Performances in chronological order. [videoed]

Magnet Theatre Community Groups Intervention Showcase. 12 Nov. 2005. Site B Community Hall, Khayelitsha.

(The showcase was dedicated to Masixole Gaqavu who was killed on his way home from rehearsals shortly before. He was a member of Kasi Youth Group.)

Sibuya nomkhwezeli (*What goes around comes around)* Kasi Youth Group.

My last journey by limousine. Iqhude Theatre.

Old Brown Joe. Iselwa.

To whom it may concern. Manyanani Entertainers.

Take another look at Ubomi. Masimbambisane

'Poverty cripples'. Mlanjeni Masiyile.[147]

Magnet Theatre Community Groups Intervention. Showcase. 25 Nov. 2006. Desmond Tutu Hall, Khayelitsha.[148]

'*Mzantsi'*. Iqhude Theatre*.*

'144 months into the new SA'. Manyanani Entertainers.

'The drunk priest'. Masimbambisane.

'Thobeka dreams too much'. Iselwa Le Sizwe*.*

'Street peoples' stories' Mathew Goniwe.

'Say no to child labour'. Young Iselwa.

Magnet Theatre Community Groups Intervention. Showcase. 10 Nov. 2007. Andile Msizi Hall, Site B, Khayelitsha.

'Exploiting the cripple'. Manyanani.

'Murder in the family'**.** Isibane.

'Working for water'. Ubuhlanti.

'Medical ethics'. Iqhude.

'Murdering for body parts'. Thandolwethu.

'Traditions vs Christianity'. Masimbambisane.

'The three rats A.I. & D'. Iselwa Le Sizwe.

[147] This group originated with Themba Baleni and is therefore part of the original Ikhwezi Group started by Baleni, Sam Faleni and Zimasa May.

[148] Because these productions were untitled, I have 'titled' the plays for identification purposes. These 'titles' are not italicized.

Khayelitsha Theatre Forum, Theatre Festival. Friday 26 March 2009. Site B Community Hall, Khayelitsha.

'Crime destroys the family'. Thandolwethu.

'Poverty, rape and crime'. Uthando Drama Group.

'Church council scams'. Ubuhlante.

'Xenophobia provokes crime' Iqhude Theatre Productions.

'The crimes of the youth threatens the parents'. Group unknown.

Cape Town. Theatre performances

Ikhwezi Community Theatre Festival 2006. March 2006, Studio Theatre, Baxter Theatre Centre, Rondebosch.[149] [notes]

The miracle begins. Ingqayi Educational Theatre Project, Nyanga East. Workshopped and directed by the cast.

Thabo. K wa L Productions, Khayelitsha. Written and directed by Keith Wa-Lehulere.

Ubizo – voices of elok'shini. AMAC [Cape Town] and Akambongo Productions, Paarl. Written and directed by Thami aka Mbongo.

Red song. Emlanjeni Productions, Khayelitsha. Written and directed by Themba Baleni.

Old Brown Joe. Iselwa Le Sizwe, Khayelitsha. Written by Zimasa May and directed by Samson Faleni.

Girl child from the ghetto. Ilintlanganiso Group, Khayelitsha. Written and directed by Thembinkosi Njokweni, with assistance from Itumeleng Wa-Lehulere.

Beneath silent waters. Kwakhanya Productions, Gugulethu. Written by Ntombesizwe Tena and directed by Itumeleng Wa-Lehulere.[150]

Ikhwezi Theatre Festival 2007. March 2007, Sanlam Studio, Baxter Theatre Centre, Rondebosch.[151] [videoed]

Beneath silent waters originally conceived by Ntombesizwe Tena, workshopped by the cast and directed by Itumeleng Wa-Lehulere. Kwakhanya Productions, Gugulethu.

Behind the bars by Themba Baleni. Ikhwezi Theatre Development, Khayelitsha.[152]

The new king written by Joyful Ntsele and directed by Mzwandile Dekeda. Ingqayi Educational Theatre Project, Nyanga East.

Red song written and directed by Themba Baleni. Emlanjeni Productions, Khayelitsha.

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[149] In the published programme, these productions first acknowledged the producing theatre group and only thereafter the 'writers' and directors. That is how I cite the plays here.

[150] This production is included here. However, in spite of repeated attempts, I did not actually see the production at Ikhwezi in 2006. Several of the performances that I wished to attend were cancelled.

[151] The 2007 Ikhwezi Festival Programme cited the writers and directors. The producing groups and companies were not listed. These details were however obtainable from the Ikhwezi office on a handout for administrative purposes. I have included the groups / companies after the official material. The plays are listed in order of the performances that I saw. My research assistants or myself also videoed the productions – not necessarily at the same performance as I watched.

[152] For this production, Baleni worked with some prisoners, not with longstanding Ikhwezi members.

Things are bad - ijumpile lendaba written and directed by Thami Mbongo. AMAC, CT & Akambongo Productions, Paarl**.**

Ukuzingisa eGugulethu written and directed by Thulani Cekiso. Sokuphumlela Drama Group, Gugulethu.

Udaba bafazi conceived by the cast. Iliso Theatre Company, Langa.

Girl child from the ghetto originally conceived by Thembinkosi Njokweni, workshopped by the cast, directed by Itumeleng Wa-Lehulere. Kwakhanya Productions, Gugulethu.

The last breath written by Chileshe Nelson and directed by Chileshe Nelson and Katy Streek. AMAC, Cape Town.[153]

Ziph' inkomo? [Where are the cows?] written and directed by Lucky Madlala. Ukhamba Theatre Productions, Mpumalanga.[154]

Cape Town Festival. March 2007. [videoed]

Old Brown Joe. Iselwa Le Sizwe. Gardens, Cape Town: Intimate Theatre, 17 March.

My last journey by limousine. Iqhude Theatre. Foreshore, Cape Town: Artscape Theatre Centre, Artscape Arena. 10 March.

10th Anniversary Ikhwezi Theatre Festival 2008. Sanlam Studio, Baxter Theatre Centre, Rondebosch.[155] [videoed]

A good man. Gugu and Fundi Productions, Newlands. Written and directed by Gugu Zuma and Fundi Zwane.

The red winter. Sizisa Ukhanyo Company- Observatory, conceived and directed by the company.

The naked truth Emlanjeni Productions- Khayelitsha. Written by Wanga Ngcwayi and directed by Lucky Dibela.

Township talks, Akambongo Productions, Woodstock. Written and directed by Thami Mbongo.

Trapped. Pulpit Youth Theatre, Rondebosch. Written and directed by Thembile Pepeteka.

Aunt Doris. African Seed Productions, Khayelitsha. Conceived and directed by the cast.

Shadows of love. Afrocentric Productions- Khayelitsha. Written by Themba Baleni & Mise Gulubela and directed by Themba Baleni.

Interviews with the writer, G Morris.

Township theatre-makers

Faleni, Sam & May, Zimasa. 3 May 2006. [notes & video]

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[153] *The Last Breath* was conceived and directed by a Zambian student at AMAC and co-directed by an AMAC tutor from The Netherlands. The play deals with the experience of refugees and illegal immigrants in South Africa. I have included it in the archive because the performers, all AMAC students, are all from local townships and the depiction of local circumstances is theirs.

[154] Only audience responses to *Ziph' inkomo* were used in this study, since the production is not a product of Cape Town's townships.

[155] The productions are cited as per the programme of the 2008 festival. All were videoed by my research assistants and I watched all in performance except *The red winter* and *Aunt Doris.*

Ingqayi Educational Theatre Project. 4 May 2006. [notes & video]

May, Zimasa. 6 June 06. [notes]

Mananga, Lihle. 10 March 2007, 5 June 2007, 6 March 2009. [notes]

Mbongo, Thami 5 April 2006 [notes]

Mkaza, Cindy 8 June 07. [notes]

Sopotela, Chuma 10 May 2006. [notes & video] January 2010 [personal communication]

Magnet Theatre CGI facilitators

Madlala, Ntokozo. no date 2006. [notes]

Mbothwe, Mandla 19 July 06. 10 April 08. [notes]

Festival personnel

Pankhurst, Margie & Hoeben, Mark 25 June 2007 Artscape High Schools Drama Festival; Soundtrack for Life. [notes]

Mdidimba, Sticks 25 June 07. Artscape High Schools Drama Festival; [notes]

Tena, Ntombesizwe 30 Feb 2007, 9 March 2007. Ikhwezi Festival of Theatre. [notes]

Van Sitters, Bradley 25 June 07. Cape Town Festival. [notes]

Wa Lehulere, Itumeleng 22 March 2006. Ikhwezi Festival of Theatre. [notes]

Other

Purkey, Malcolm & Taub, Myer 18 May 2007 On Taub's production of *Fantastical history of a useless man.* [notes]

Sidwangube, Joyce, 12 May 2009. Khayelitsha resident. [notes]

Focus Group Interviews.

The play which precipitated the interview is mentioned, followed by the date of performance and then the nature of the group of interviewees. Unless otherwise indicated the interviews were undertaken by my research assistants, Andile Nebulane, Cindy Mkaza or Anele Situlweni. All were audiotaped, transcribed and where necessary translated.

Focus Group Interviews at the Ikhwezi Theatre Festival 2007, Baxter Theatre Centre

Andizi khetalanga. 21 March 07. Students from New Africa Theatre Association and Khayelitsha.

Behind the bars. 12 March 2007. Grade 4 boys and girls, Macassar.

Beneath silent waters. 16 March 07. Grades 8, 9, 10, 11, Lower Crossroads.

21 March 07. Adults, townships & tertiary theatre makers.

22 March 07. Grades 5-7, Luzuko Primary, Gugulethu.

5 May 07. Evening performance, adults.

7 May 07. Evening performance, Adults.

Ijumpile lendaba. 13 March 07. Grade 7, 5 boys 1 girl, Khayelitsha Site C.

Ijumpile lendaba. 22 March 07. Adults, mainly Delft & Mandalay.

Motherley weapon. 20 March 07. Evening performance, 3 Adults in tertiary education.

22 March 07. Grades 8 & 9, 5 boys, 4 girls, Thembelihle High School.

Red song. 13 March 07. Grade 5, Nkazimlo. Macassar.

22 March 07. Adults, Gugulethu & cast members, *Motherly Weapon*

Last breath. 20 March 07. NATA students and Gugulethu person, 2 from Mpumulanga.

21 March 07. Participants in Ikhwezi Festival, interviewed by G Morris.

Udaba bafazi. 19 March 07. Students and participants of Festival.

22 March 07. Grade 7, Simpiwo Primary Khayelitsha & participants from Ikhwezi Festival.

Ziphi'nkomo. 15 March 07. Grade R to 4, 8 girls 1 boy, Vuyani Primary Gugulethu

21 March 07. Participants in Ikhwezi Festival.

Focus Group Interviews at the Cape Town Festival 2007.

Intimate Theatre, Gardens, Cape Town.

Old Brown Joe. 17 March 2007. 5 Adults. [audiotape]

Focus Group Interviews at Magnet Theatre Community Groups Intervention. 10 November 2007.

Andile Msizi Hall, Site B, Khayelitsha.

Audience members interviewed in the course of the morning by Situlweni, Mkaza and Morris. [audiotape]

Symposium on Township Theatre. 7 June 2008. Department of Drama, University of Cape Town, Hiddingh Campus, Cape Town. [audiotape]

Two audio recordings were taken of this event. From these a transcription, and in places a translation, was made by Diana Featherstone. Revisions to the *isiXhosa* sections were undertaken by Peggy Tyuniswa. A pdf file of this transcription has been generated and it is this version that is cited in the thesis as 'Symposium 2008'.

Township Theatre Participants: Thando Doni, Mfundo Hashe, Xola Honono, Zimasa May, Mandla Mbothwe, Thembile Nazo, Andile Nebulane, Mzimasi Nongwe, Khaya Sihamba, Mfundo Tshazibane.

Chair: Gay Morris

Observer / participant: Heather Jacklin.

Notebook Numbers 1 to 23 of the writer's.

These notebooks record my impressions in the lead-up to performances, notes taken during performances, interviews, foyer conversations, comments by members of the public or my research assistants.

APPENDIX B

[This description of a performance of '*Mzantsi'* was developed by the writer of this thesis. The play was untitled. I have called it '*Mzantsi'*. This literally means 'south' but in the play *mzantsi* is used metonymically to denote our country, South Africa (2006).

I have used my notes, translators, and the video recording towards achieving a 'helpful' description. All errors of interpretation or transcription are mine. But lapses in English grammar are direct transcriptions. Parenthetical marks or indentation of text indicates that an actor is speaking. Where audible the words are transcribed and sometimes translated directly from the video of the production. *Italics* indicates words originally spoken in *isiXhosa.*

'MZANTSI'

'*Mzantsi'* by Iqhude Theatre Group was the first of six plays shown on a Saturday morning in November 2006, as part of Magnet Theatre's Community Groups Intervention annual Showcase in the Macassar Community Hall, Khayelitsha.[156] All six plays in the showcase were devised by young people between the ages of about 11 and 25 years. None of the works has a script. They are improvised afresh in each performance.

In this performance, the Iqhude company consists of six actors, two women and four men. The director / group leader is Thembelihle Mananga. At the time of making the play all but one of the actors, who are between the ages of 17 and 22, attended Senior Secondary Schools in Macassar, Khayalitsha. One actor was 'full time' with Iqhude.

The ideas for the action and play are Mananga's. The play was originally developed for a performance in September 2006 for the Western Cape High Schools Drama Festival. At that stage the play was 45 minutes long. For this performance, two months later, the play has been cut to 25 minutes and the number of performers from 7 to 6 (Mananga 2009). During the performance Mananga drums from offstage.

The occasion of performance of *'Mzantsi'*

It is a fresh, sunny but windy day in Khayelitsha. Children, young people and adults arrive at the hall in groups. Two young people greet us at the entrance with broad smiles. Inside, the excitement and anticipation is evident. The Macassar community hall is light-filled, with large windows spread along the walls of the main body of the hall that

[156] Magnet Theatre is a Cape Town based Educational Trust that has run an intervention for theatre in Khayelitsha from 2002 until 2007, during which period a showcase was held annually. In 2009 Magnet Theatre initiated an intensive training programme for the most promising young performers from townships. In April 2010 Magnet had its first 'graduation ceremony' (which I attended) for those who have completed the first training programme and hopefully are now empowered to find professional theatre work in the city.

is filled with red plastic chairs. The stage at the far end is elevated a metre, enclosed by white walls and curtainless. Actors leaving the stage have to do so by the one door on stage left. The audience of family, friends and theatre enthusiasts drift in throughout the morning. Once arrived, few spectators leave until after the festival lunch has been served.

Costuming consists of contemporary clothing representing the provinces: a leopard skin vest for Kwazulu-Natal, a rural skirt for Eastern Cape, a natty trouser suit for Western Cape and a solar topi for game park haven Mpumalanga. The props are laid along the back of the stage: bits of bushy shrub, a stretch of elastic, a plate of white face paint, handbag, compact, lipstick, and a toy aeroplane. Except for a South African flag embellished with a portrait of Mandela and car number plates representing the provinces stuck to the rear wall of the stage, and the upturned dustbin painted in vertical stripes reminiscent of the national flag at centre, the stage is bare at the start of this piece.

1. Opening

A number of still figures line the back of the stage. Drumming, they turn and form tableaux of a woman hoeing a field, a man with arms uplifted in preparation for coming down in the heavy stamp of Zulu traditional dance, another viewing game through binoculars, an urban sophisticate touching up her lipstick. (Later we learn that the figures represent some of South Africa's provinces.)

Urged along by drumming, in slow motion the five work their way toward a general assembly. As the figures seat themselves around the 'throne' centre stage, they flick dust off its seat. Clearly it suffers from neglect. With intense effort a formally clad figure topped by a chieftain's fur headdress propels his way to the back of the clustered group, stands on his head and circles his legs very slowly in the air. The chief catalyses the delegates into action by driving the engine of state with his own legs. The sense of being in a myth suggests itself.

2. The new parliament commences

Limpopo gets things going. He declares that the provinces will work together and together they will conquer! Kwazulu-Natal calls on the youth in the townships of Kwazulu-Natal, Umlazi and Kwa-mashu. 'For surely the youth will contribute to the production of our future?'[157] His style is oratorical. Finally, Western Cape, so natty in her white suit and shocking pink jacket, introduces the father, the leader of them all, 'Professor Mzantsi'. The weight of national office evident in his tone and bearing, Mzantsi addresses the gathering. His language (English) is formal, his vocal tone sonorous:

[157] The reader is reminded that the lines in parenthetical marks are lines transcribed from the video recording. Italics indicate words spoken in *isiXhosa.*

> 'My children, I am here today to bring smiles to all of you, as you know that the United Nations has implemented a new rule … they have sent to all the provinces of all the countries a research assignment about how each country can heal the bad things in their country - which you are part of …'

At the heart of this piece is the oft-repeated legend of a king (King Lear, Shaka Zulu come to mind) whose successors can not work together, so all are charged to set off on the archetypal hero's journey ('research assignment') to find a cure for the country's ills. A bell tolls, with which the provinces break into a jolly work song.[158] Then 'BANG!'

3. The first signs of trouble

Professor Mzantsi staggers. Another drum beat and he falls.

'Do you hear that?' asks Limpopo.

'What?' responds Kwazulu-Natal.

Frantic drumming as all five provinces begin to panic. Before we know it Mzantsi has been sidelined and the provinces are caught behind a barrier (the elastic stretched across the stage) which metaphorically divides them from their leader. Coughing, Professor Mzantsi struggles for their support. Kwazulu-Natal hurls himself at the barrier but Princess Eastern Cape points out to him that his 'voice is not strong enough'. Panicked and confused the provinces bump and jostle against each other, unable to take concerted action to breach the barrier and assist their leader/country.[159]

The youthful actors in the Iqhude company are performing in wickedly satirical style which captivates their audience and keeps them glued to the unfolding narrative. Their movements are both bold and cleancut, employing the expressive possibilities of the entire body from head to foot. Backs arch, feet shuffle vigorously, gestures extend from chin to shoulder, down the length of the arm to the tip of the index finger. The lack of visual focus which a bare, unlit proscenium stage could easily induce, is countered by the rhythmic and energized performance style. The actors are their own 'lighting'.

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[158] The director, Mananga, said that 'even at school, the bell signifies a new beginning' (2009); whilst the bell called the commencement of Christian worship and the start of the Eucharist to my mind.

[159] In interview Mananga stressed that the play is 'symbolic. It is suggesting that unity of purpose is all-important to South Africa' (2009). His view is not unusual. At the moment our national and regional newspapers sustain a continual critique on the degree of self interest and corruption amongst public servants. Southern Africa remains a troubled and dislocated region four years after this play was created. Since 2006 we have witnessed Zimbabwe spiral into lawlessness, economic ruin and imploding infrastructure. Now its 'unity government' is hard put to take joint action. Waves of xenophobic violence, particularly powerful in 2008, continue to affect all African immigrants who have sought refuge in South Africa. This country's general election in April 2009 was preceded by a split in the ruling ANC and the formation of a new party: the Congress of the People. More than a hundred parties originally stood for parliamentary representation and only agreements between party leaders in certain provinces seemed to curb election violence between rival factions. So the image of in-fighting presented in the finger-pointing episode above is fair comment.

4. We are meant to work together

Then the actors burst into song. It is a worker's struggle song which calls for unity, with which the leader manages to struggle to his feet and raises a fist in the black power salute. Princess Western Cape declares: 'We are going to work for Prof Mzantsi. I will fight for my land!' Everybody has their own thoughts and voices them in a cacophony of opinions, however when Western Cape begins singing, they do pitch in. Work songs have long been used by chain gangs and migrant workers (Coplan 1985). Amongst the isiXhosa, most songs are introduced by a lead singer and then the rest follow in a two-part or three-part harmonic chorus. This is the style used throughout this play:

> *Amazwe*
> *Nations are nations.*
> *What seems to be the problem friend?*
> *Let's work together friend.*
> *We are going to work together and we are going to win.'*

Briefly the provinces create a dance of beautifully synchronized labour in a chain gang. The to and fro movement of the chain gang suggests a restful rhythm in hard labour, reinforcing worker unity and diminishing inherent drudgery. The provinces become so energized and unified that even Professor Mzantsi revives to join them. For Western Cape however it all becomes a bit much and she listlessly moves away from the chain gang.

'Queen Western Cape, come back!' Calls Kwazulu-Natal. Professor Mzantsi tries to reason with Queen Western Cape as she unhurriedly applies her lipstick:

'You have got the discipline for this job and now you are throwing that away, even as you symbolize hope to the nation.'

'If you want liberation, come to Table Mountain!' quips Western Cape.

So the Professor laments: 'This vanity of yours makes us blind to see the beauty of our society. This beauty of yours makes us deaf to listen to the views of other people'.[160]

As he laments, *Mzantsi* is overcome with weakness again, but he perseveres with the national project and informs the provinces:

> The United Nations has implemented new rules of working together towards unity. There is a big research assembly that is looking at reviews of all the countries. Their concerns are …. Each state will receive a document. Each document contains nine guidelines …. The importance of our unity is going to be the order of the day in order to survive this research assignment!

[160] The satire is not lost on the audience. The Western Cape province of South Africa is generally agreed to be the most beautiful in the country and draws the most tourists. It is also the province most 'distanced' from a conception of South Africa as an 'African' country. The question here is how the Western Cape can shut its eyes to the greater needs of the country by, Narcissus-like, constantly focusing attention on her own beauty?

Here repetition is used both for emphasis and mnemonically. In all, Mzantsi will set the quest four times during the play.

5. The commission

Impelled by the Professor's intensity, the provinces must accept the leader's mission. The drums rumble imperatively and the provinces take up the tableaux of actions assumed at the start – hoeing, dancing, titivating etc. Repeating this motif embeds the notion of individual diversity inside group solidarity and it impels the play forward by patterning, which is 'the means whereby images and narrative movement are worked into meaning' (Scheub: 1998: 15).

In a series of instructions Mzantsi charges each province to contribute their strongest resources. Princess Eastern Cape must look to the importance of food on the journey. The princess, however, is not very pleased. (I wondered how the Eastern Cape can make progress if her leaders are trying to till the soil with winklepickers – which the actress wears on her hands – not her feet.[161]) Then Mzantsi reaches out to Western Cape but she retreats in embarrassment from his gesture.

'You are a blessed child to me. You will be hosting the 2010 Soccer World Cup. You will be responsible!' With which an actor places a (mimed) soccer ball and takes the kick off. With their backs to the audience, all the cast become crowds at a football match and synchronously watch the progress of the (mimed) ball flying over their heads as echoes of sports commentary fill the hall. (It is the actor playing the Professor who is commentating in *isiXhosa* at high speed.) The actors crane to watch the ball arcing above them until they freeze on a pitch of tension as the commentator yells: 'There it goes … it's a goal!'

After that brief respite into the world of sport which all in the audience greatly appreciate, clapping, laughing and cheering loudly, the Professor charges the provinces again: 'You will need to get all the doors open in order to survive. If you accomplish all of this, the South Africa we have today will be the biggest South Africa!'

Once more the juxtaposition of the mythic with the everyday is odd: it jolts us into another space: the space of play. Mzantsi continues to brief them until the call to begin comes in the miners'song, '*Tshosholoza!*'.[162] The actors sing and dance gently in a group as they wave farewell to their leader. Slowly their singing fades into a recording of the national anthem.

[161] Winklepickers are extremely high heeled court shoes with markedly sharp, pointed toes.

[162] *Tshosholoza!* was originally sung by miners in South Africa's gold mines. In 1995 it accrued huge popularity when it became a signature tune at World Cup Rugby, from which South Africa emerged as winners. Sports-mad South Africans still sing it to boost morale and patriotism and Mananga told me that is exactly why he chose it. Then he explained that the national anthem is played - just as it would be for a football international. So the anthem plays through loudspeakers and the airport comes into focus.

6. The quest

At the back of the stage, we make out the silhouette of Table Mountain made by three actors in tableau, or is it a large aeroplane shimmering on the tarmac like a mirage? Down front, a 30 cm toy aeroplane taxies down the runway and then takes off on the arm of an actor flying high, whilst centre stage a large aeroplane is made from the bodies of four actors. We make out the pilot, and one of the Provinces peering through a porthole with binoculars, searching the land far below. This enactment in moving tableaux is both picturesque and quite literal, much like children would imitate aeroplanes in a playground. Its naivety contributes to the fantasy-like language of the play.[163] In the traditional folktale, the *intsomi,* reality almost always meets fantasy on the journey. The young girl meets *izim,* just as Red Riding Hood meets the big bad wolf in the guise of her granny.[164]

As the toy aeroplane comes in to land the provinces can be seen seated in the larger aeroplane taxiing down the runway. Still strapped into their seats (mimed), the actors look around them in fear. Softly, a song starts: '*Thula mntanam, sakhal'isizwe'* [Hush my baby, the nation is crying. Whatever happens, don't cry my child, we are building the nation]. And yet we can't help noticing that on stage left the leader is still struggling with his office (dragging his dustbin).[165]

The quest for a cure for the country fuses with the search for Mzantsi's healing and takes the searchers deep into the forest. Clearly Limpopo doesn't know where he is. He leaps boldly over a large obstacle (the dustbin again) and cries out as he injures his foot. He appeals to the others and Western Cape cries out in fear: 'This is a huge forest!' Clearly they don't know where to begin searching so they argue some more.

Again, Professor Mzantsi cries out in utter agony. Now all the provinces are galvanized out of the security of the landrover and volunteer to investigate, each going their separate ways. The ensuing sequence is all mimed. The drums are urgent and frightening, the actions of the provinces unco-ordinated – 'every person for themselves'. Some hide in the bushes, others sample healing shrubs, birds call here and there, and in between it all the cries of Prof Mzantsi's agony reaches the seekers, provoking them to yet more strenuous efforts. The forest is maddening them and they succeed in confusing each other as well. They are directionless but trying terribly hard to find a bark, a leaf, roots of a tree, which might hold the cure to heal the land.[166] The

[163] My initial impression was of an elephant carrying passengers on its back through the jungle. Repeated viewing persuaded me that it was an aeroplane, but both images suggest a journey 'into the interior'.
[164] *Izim* are the wicked goblin-like creatures pervasive in the *isiXhosa iintsomi* (folktales). They sometimes have one leg, eat human flesh and shape shift, transforming themselves into grannies, young girls or animals as the need dictates. They are characterized by their all-devouring greed (Scheub, 1975).
[165] I asked Mananga about the choice of the dustbin. 'To be honest,' he said, 'it was all we had' (2009). Using a dustbin as the main seat of office and car number plates to signify provincial representation is typical both to devised theatre created in the townships but also to the traditional storyteller – who works with her surroundings to create the world of story (Scheub 1975).
[166] The Xhosa people broadly subscribe to traditional medicines that use herbs, shoots and roots, commonly found on street vending stalls in South African cities.

wave-like motion of the play is increasingly evident from here until the end, partly because the soft singing or chanting hardly ceases and yet the action on stage varies between being highly energized, swift and startling to being small, delicate and slow.

The cries of Prof Mzantsi are confused with the cries of baboons in the forest. Large trees and roots invade the path. Nevertheless there is a desperate attempt to 'make progress' by fruitlessly plucking at shrubs, peering through trees and climbing under low-hanging branches, as Prof Mzantsi struggles to stay in government (i.e. to seat himself once more on the dustbin, which at the moment he can not manage to do). Now they begin to scratch at the soil using their bare hands or a branch, always searching. Western Cape loses her handbag and lipstick in the mess. Now there is a copse of particularly dense shrubs. With difficulty Eastern Cape forces her way out of the copse, then runs around until she finds a perch on a branch which affords her a lookout (made by the other actors: she gets a leg-up and emerges in the middle of their cluster). She calls out in a high small voice: 'My brothers and sisters, I have been searching the forests but I can't find anything!' Despair and apathy take over the searchers. Their efforts grow dispirited even as Prof Mzantsi continues to agonize.

In the folktale tradition of the *Nguni* people, birds usually indicate help to humans and in this piece, the calls of the birds (made live by the actors even as they scurry around in quite a different rhythm to the birdcalls) seems clear, sweet and filled with promise. In the tradition, baboons are often fairly laughable and not very bright – grotesquely aping man's endeavours (Scheub 1975). At one stage in this 'forest' two of the actors transform from searchers into baboons, thrusting up against each other in a clownish attempt at male dominance, a fine parody of the provinces' best efforts. Likewise, the search in the forest is standard stuff within the tradition. Digging the clay, finding the herb – the elixir of life – such images are inevitably haunted by the ghosts of many other stories on similar themes that heighten our anticipation for this journey whilst the actors look out over an endless sea of treetops and despair.

7. The healing

Then very small, very distant, begins the wail of the ancient healer's song of cleansing and preparation. (The actress playing Western Cape is leading the singing.) Softly, gently, the provinces begin to absorb the experience of the journey into their hands from all over their bodies as they join in the sung lament. As Scheub explained, the metaphor is embodied in performance, in this case mimed actions under the harmonized crooning. The provinces' light, soft searching gestures indicate openness and vulnerability. Western Cape speaks for them: 'The mission has not been successful. There is no medicine for *ubaba* (father). But if we can all agree, then … If we can just all agree …', implying at some level her understanding that it is their own self-interest which is undermining the country.

As the provinces revisit their experiences of the quest (moving apparenty weightlessly, like seaweed in water), they find they have indeed learnt something new – from the gut, the shoulder, deep in the heart, under the arm. (The actors' movements suggest the motif of pulling rabbits out of a hat – from different points on their bodies.) And even as Western Cape is appealing to them, under their own sustained plaintive singing the provinces slowly make their way to the bedside of Professor Mzantsi who now lies near the centre of the stage. From their cupped hands, some sprinkle and some gently wipe their experiences onto his inert body, smearing the (mimed) healing balm evenly on his limbs. Not a drop must go to waste. As the provinces cohere their efforts and apply the healing, so their spirits lift and the singing becomes fuller and braver. They come upright around the sick man and start to circle the body with small, intricate footsteps of a dance whilst their arms pump in unison – sending the impulse from province to province.[167] Finally the provinces are co-operating completely.

The performers dance away from the lying figure and collect all the pitfalls that the country has been through. They take away the debris, restore the national flag, set up the seat of governance singing all the while. Finally they come to rest in a circle around the father. Irresistibly, hands rise and gather the healing in their cupped palms, and then offer it to the father. As in libation, they allow the contents of their collective, upraised palms to spill from their hands onto the body of their leader. The energy from their hands vibrates over the body, drawing him up from the ground. Their intention is so powerful that when the Professor subsides, the hands redouble their efforts to raise him and they do, until he is standing erect in their midst. This ritual of healing and reincarnation of the leader, created ad hoc from movement exercises as the Iqhude group rehearsed, has its own character, which is youthful and unified. But it also invokes the palimpsest of other, traditional healer sessions and *sangoma* ceremonies, so the impact on audience and actors is all the stronger for those ghosts.[168]

8. Praises

The provinces are quietly elated and moving sinuously to a plaintive chant of joy. They individually greet the professor and one another, with which Professor Mzantsi bursts into praising:

> *Now I am seeing the sunshine behind the dark clouds, which must not come back again.*
>
> *This is the dawning of a new era.*
>
> *This is the start of new beginnings, for what is about to happen, for new hope in tomorrow.*

[167] *IsiXhosa* dance is rhythmically, intricately patterned. The feet make light and complex rhythmic contact with the floor as the arms move sinuously in a cross rhythm, lending a swaying motion to the torsos that appear to undulate in a ring around the sick leader.

[168] Mananga explained that the actors developed the ritual which was then further refined by Mandla Mbothwe, their Magnet Theatre mentor. He pointed out to the group that the ritual should recall 'proper healing ceremonies' in the audiences' minds (2009).

As the leader praises he sits and the provinces kneel on the floor around him, listening carefully, while they croon softly under his praises.[169]

The morning star is beginning to gleam.
The girls must be prepared, they must make ready for the dance with the buffalo and small calves.
I shall dance until the sun comes up.
I have seen nations and nations,
I have seen peoples and peoples.
The Italians have said: 'Ex unitate vires'
I have been to the Zulus of Zuma and they have said: 'Siyonqoba Simunye'
I have been to the Xhosas and they have said: 'Umanyano ngamandla'
I have been to the English and they said: 'Unity is Strength'
I have said it before, so that is why I am saying, do not let it fade away.

The audience roars its approval. Limpopo holds out a white dish. Whilst the praising continues each of the provinces places their hand in the dish and imprints a white handprint on the ruler's chair, creating their own ritual and imprinting themselves upon the history of the new South Africa. Then they leave the stage, as the leader continues:

The women of this country must have courage.
I am reminded of the courage of Diana and Elizabeth,
They are not scared of any man,
They are beasts themselves.

The praises become increasingly poetic and abstruse, the praiser playing with words, phrases and allusions quite freely. Finally he rounds off:

That is why I am saying 'umph'again, as if I am eating an apple!

The audiences claps, whistles and cheers as the full cast come on to take a bow. The leader climbs off the seat and joins them as the anthem is once again played over the loudspeakers.

END

[169] On more than one occasion I have witnessed Mandasile Maseti, who plays Professor Mzantsi, stand up in an audience in the township and offer praises after some particularly impressive theatrical work. He is appreciated for his special ability. It was interesting to see him performing in a play, twice framed as it were. Mananga pointed out to me that Iqhude membership includes a 'real' praise poet – an older man. About Maseti, Mananga added: 'But he is also very good!' (2009). Geoff Opland (1983) provides a very good introduction to praise poetry. Scheub provides a detailed examination in *The Poem in the Story* (2002).

APPENDIX C

[This is a description of a performance of *Old Brown Joe* developed by the writer of this thesis. I have used my notes, translators and the video recording towards achieving a 'helpful' description. All errors of interpretation or transcription are mine. But lapses in English grammar are direct transcriptions. Parenthetical marks or indentation of text indicates that an actor is speaking. Where audible the words are transcribed and sometimes translated directly from the video of the production. *Italics* indicates words originally spoken in *isiXhosa*.

OLD BROWN JOE

by Iselwa Le Sizwe for the Cape Town Festival, at the Intimate Theatre, Gardens, Cape Town, on Saturday 17 March 2007 at 2.30pm.

There are six actors, Zimasa May, Abongile Kroza, Mandisi Sindo, Zoleka Mpotshe, Andiswa Duleni, Nosiphiwo Mkalali. They all wear a basic 'school uniform' of shorts, white shirt and tie, to which they occasionally add other pieces of clothing.

Prologue

1st image: the teacher pays tribute

The teacher comes into a spotlight.

> Thank you very much for the intensive struggle of 1950s 1960s & 1970s. What a therapeutic effect of the 1950s and 1960s had on the downtrodden masses, who are made not to believe, but to live. Thank you very much to the struggle. That shows that even the disorganized were helped by the struggle to be organised. Thank you very much to the intensive struggle of 1950s 1960s & 1970s.
>
> My community, my own community hates me. It hates me because of the bloody student detentions. Thank you very much to the intensive struggle of 1950s 1960s & 1970s.

[exit]

2nd image: students of 'ghetto culture'

Two pupils sit studying on opposite sides of a desk centre, in silence.

There are four other chairs in the four corners of the stage.

She is thoughtful. He is delighted and intent on his work. He is drafting / drawing with a degree of naïve hopefulness. Giving him her book, she asks to see his work which he

duly passes to her as if to say: 'now, what do you think?' She picks up the paper and begins to recite:

> Dark dark dark no light, the sun, the stars or the moon; just dark.
> Hopeless helpless hopeless
> *I am in a place of nothingness*
> I've got nothing
> I possess nothing in life.
> Come light, come shine so bright that the blinds were blind. Allow me.
> Allow me my gods, allow me my ancestors,
> Allow me not to forget you – my roots.
> Hunger & poverty do something to my mind
> HIV AIDS
> Crime
> That I wake up in this cruel selfish universe.
> Come light, come shine so bright that the blinds were blind.
> If only, if only I was not I
> If only I were we, were one country, the most beautiful country the earth could possess.
> If only my neighbour was not just that, a neighbour.
> If only my neighbours could cry
> were someone I could cry and share with.
> The light will come and will shine so bright that the blinds will get to see and be blind
> I call upon you South Africa: get up, go out there,
> Fly little bird, fly
> Spread your wings
> Find the courage to dream.
> Dream yes! Show me the beauty of my mind,
> Take action,
> Do something …
> And I tell you the light will come up on this world and will shine so bright that the blinds will get to see and be blind.

He: Fly little birds, fly! (waving his arms) – Fly little birds … this is wonderful! Wonderful! I hope Mr Old Brown Joe will just like it!

Rowdy school pupils argue hotly off stage. '*We not going to do something for June 16th!*' '*We are!*' '*We are not!*' The poet, gesturing toward the arguing learners, comments:

And the blind will remain blind.

1. Arguing the homework assignment

The noisy girls march in, take up opposite chairs (as if at fixed desks in the classroom) and continue the dispute: *'We are' 'We are not going to make a play about* June 16th!' They throw the blackboard dusting cloth at each other to reinforce the strength of their opinions.

Humming is heard off stage: Two schoolboys jive onto stage making a tune with heavy knee and elbow accentuation. It is not a sweet sound although rousing and jolly. They are very pleased with themselves and end on a sort of a harmony: 'Ladies & Gentlemen welcome the best comedians being *~Obile and Stigile!'*

The lads point to each other and then roar with laughter at their own joke and continue to chorus. As they settle down in class the one lad tries on three occasions to borrow money from his fellow pupils without success.

Suddenly one of the boys leaps off the desk and rushes to listen at a door, a window, and all in the class are immediately alert, listening. To and fro he darts in search of what he fears. Suddenly all the children pull themselves to attention in their desks. The (same) boy enters, posing as their teacher. Finally he speaks: 'Good morning class. Class, I am a brainchild of struggle. My parents are ghetto intellect who believe not in communism, socialism but in patriotism'

He takes his specs out of his pocket, wipes a speck of dust off them and puts them on his nose. 'Therefore I am a patriot! My vision, my leadership – its holistic - based upon the principles of non-violence just like Martin Luther King, the power of his message.'

He writes on the black board. 'Class, go to the library and research about the book by Todd Matshikiza. *Do you follow?'*

'Yes teacher!' The learners chorus at attention at their desks.

'Oh! *Chocolates for my wife* – page 30 to 31. Class I want you to read the writers of Xhosa literature and criticize all the writers of Xhosa literature. *Do you follow?'*

'Yes teacher!' The learners chorus at attention at their desks; with which they fall about laughing – the one playing Old Brown Joe as well.

Now a solidly built young actress stands up. [I shall call her 'Bossy boots'.] 'Okay guys, I hope the rehearsals are coming right?'

'Ja!' chorus the others.

'And we need Ntombazana to give us the way forward.'

So 'Ntombazanaa' struts forward. 'Ok class, Old Brown Joe said to me we have to make a play about June 16th. This play must have a motivation and this play must take fifteen minutes to stage.'

The class as a whole are very upset – perhaps by the size of the task. They confer together loudly, but Bossy boots claims attention: 'We are not going to make a play about June 16th! A general chorus of agreements with her.

'Guys, how about we make a play about this "man" at school?'
Ntombazanaa: 'Guys, if we think carefully: Mandela, Steve Biko, Chris Hani: *the teacher said those old heroes didn't have* the education that we have today. They had to do history in Afrikaans, Geography in Afrikaans & even Xhosa in Afrikaans!'

Everyone heartily agrees with her but Bossy boots is not happy: '*If you all remember* I have been chosen as president. I am prefect in the class *so listen to me, not to this new girl* Ntombazanaa!'

The latter rises to the bait and the two face off against each other, with their fellows getting increasingly excited. So a bell, sounding the start of a boxing match resounds (made by another two actors). Round number One! The bell continues to 'Kring!' as the seconds prepare their respective contestants – each in their own corner. Whilst Ntombazanaa takes the advice of her second, in the opposite corner Bossyboots is thoroughly irritated by her second's fussing and pushes him away in irritiation. Ntombazanaa aims a quick sharp blow at Bossy boots who gets it smack in the face and falls into the arms of her second. Then she realizes what weakness she has shown and pushes him off! Regaining her composure Bossyboots spits a venomous insult directly at Ntombazanaa, catching her in the eye. The latter's second brave blow does not flatten Bossy boots, supported as she is by her second and she readies herself to give Ntombazanaa another terrific kick that sends her flying out of the ring and into her second's arms. With triumph Bossy boots points out: 'Okay guys, it is quite obvious that NoNtombazana was defeated and it's quite obvious that we are making a play about this man at school! Okay guys, Audition time!'

2. The Audition

In a frenzy of excitement the learners ready themselves to audition. One by one they mount the table in the centre to render their version of 'Down in the ghetto'; each being more horrendous than the last: too loud, off key, out of tune, excruciating in fact, whilst Bossy boots is quick to cut the pain short – which she does with remarkable tact, the racket being horrendous. Finally she can't stop herself and mounts the table to sing for them but they quickly pull her down – each one being more certain than the last that they have the correct approach. Six chiefs and no Indians. Now they try it in teams – adding fancy footwork to their tuneless renderings. This does not impress. Finally Bossy boots' trio launches into the tune – in harmony this time - and commence their dance step as well, to which the other trio quickly adapt and contribute further harmonies until the stage is jumping with a song and dance number:

Down in the ghetto where we are living
Down in the ghetto where we are living

Down, down, down from the upper town
Where we are living, in the upper town
There is a man, goes by the name
Old Brown Joe, do you see him now?
Is he a brute, wearing a suit? Trying to be cute?
Is he a brute, wearing a suit? Trying to be cute?
Down in the ghetto where we are living.

Call: There is a man, by the name, Old Brown Joe, living by my next door, door door!
Response: Yeah?
Call: There is a man, by the name, Old Brown Joe, living by my next door, door door
Response: Yeah?
Call: There is a man, by the name, Old Brown Joe, living by my next door, door door
Everybody: Tingaling aling aling aling aling …

Suddenly they fear interruption and they peer with fear through the door – but it's a false alarm! Sobered up, Bossy boots seizes her chance to press her advantage for making the play. 'Okay guys, as you all know, Nontombazanaa was defeated and it's quite obvious that we are making a play about this man at school! I have got a dialogue: don't you want to hear me?'

Like it or not, she goes up stage right, turns and speaks: 'Yes Old Brown Joe; old owl at school – tell us the truth – is it you among the teachers of the school who encourage the spirit of activism among the students? Listen to the voices of the oppressed residents. Here, in this class, we are the voices in the ground condemned to repeat the past …'

A flashback

The entire cast picks up a song of the struggle, calling upon '*uPoqo'* [the armed wing of the Pan African Congress] as they gather in the street facing the police. They throw stones as they dodge rubber bullets, singing all the while…

We don't care about them at all!
Umkonto [the armed wing of the ANC] *is there for us.*
We don't care about them at all!
Upoqo is there for us.
Our comrades are there …

One boy aims carefully and hurls his stone: it finds its mark and another is hit – slowly collapsing on the table behind the rabble. The comrades notice that he is fallen and the striker looks for reassurance to his comrades. Then he leads them in a militant dance to the song, as if affirming that might in right. They affirm with fierce singing - the two parties, '*u Poqo and Umkonto* we sizwe are there for us! They point to the fallen before them and exclaim, '*We got you! Good!*'

One learner, as if in commentary speaks from the side.

We are the voices in the valley,
a drumbeat
a chanted chorus of slogans.

All the learners take up the black power salute and in slow motion cry, loud and long, '*Amandla!' Amandla!*' With which some among them fall, hit by bullets or rocks. Bossy boots comes out from her hiding place and examines the fallen figure on the table, and then, walking among the wounded, she says to the fallen figure on the table, 'If you are not born to be hanged then you will never be crowned.' To the audience she confesses: 'We were so excited and honoured to have two highly trained soldiers from exile to come and help us, and you Old Brown Joe, you who came out of the blue, you ruined everything! You stupid, (she pauses, uncertain of the sense of her tirade) 'you stupid, son of a man…'

She ends weakly, then walks upstage and begins to sing a lament, 'Who should we blame?' The lament is picked up by the rest of the cast.

'Who should we blame?'

Softly the other actors harmonise with her from their positions in the tableaux of fallen comrades, but the figure on the table is in pain and cries softly for '*Magx'entshontsho'*.

Far upstage one of the cast, photo in hand, picks her way through the fallen comrades, perhaps in search of her own loved ones. She turns over a body and gasps in horror. Apprehensively she makes her way to another body and turns the face towards hers. She gulps back the tears. She moves to a third figure and very slowly lifts the head to see the face and even more slowly straightens up, staring at the fallen. Over the sung lament and the calls for *Magx'entshontsho'*. she speaks:

We weep, we weep,
For our brother's lost land,
We weep, we weep
For our sister's lost hand
We weep, we weep
For the birthday of freedom
Did we not sweep away the racism?
Did we not sweep away the sexism?

Did we not sweep away the indifferences?
But why, why are we will still lying in ground of oppression,
With the chains, the chains of depression?

We knock on the doors of education with the same language that we used to.
We knock on the doors of workplaces – no job! No job.
What laws and restrictions apply to repeat the past?
We weep, we weep.
What laws and restrictions apply to repeat the past?
We weep, we weep.

Now the other actors run to form a group downstage left and appeal to the audience: 'What laws and restrictions apply to repeat the past? You weep and weep!' and in disgust for such sentiments they turn on their heels with a dismissive gesture: '*Ai suka* man!!'

Delighted with their first efforts at making the play, the learners discuss and argue about the 'flashback' they have just created as they return to their desks. At which, one schoolboy leaps onto the table centre.

3. *Kwathi ke kaloku ngantsomi*

In the style of the traditional folktale [*ntsomi],* he starts.

'Kwathi ke kaloku ngantsomi …
Okay my friends, I have a story to tell my friends. By the time, my friends, before they took …'

and the learners chorus from their chairs: 'Old Brown Joe!'

'By the time they took Old Brown Joe to gaol, my friends, Boyoto's mother was watching from the window.'

The storyteller picks up a scarf and puts it over her head, picks up a chair and peers through its back as if through a small window, and changing his voice to that of an old woman, 'she' cries in a quavering voice:

Yeah, Oldie Brownee Joe,
Yeah, Oldie Brown Joe, *where are our children?*
Where is my other son? What have you done to my child Boyoto, Oldie Brown Joe?
Where are my children Oldie Brown Joe?
Where is Jabu my other son?
Oldie Brown Joe, *What have you done to my son?* ('she' is weeping now in full spate)
What have you done to my son? Oldie Brown Joe? *WHERE?!*

All the other learners lunge for the front of the stage and clustering tightly together, observing the storytelling convention as if this was a story for young learners, they call in the voices of the very young: '*But where is Boyoto's Dada as well?!*'

The storyteller on the table, picking up a pipe that he sucks to represent the father of Boyoto replies, '*I wonder if he is not dead?* Old Brown Joe*, is he not dead?*'

With which he picks up scarf and chair and again becomes Boyoto's old mother: '*This is a miracle! This is a miracle, but if I ever see that* Old Brown Joe *I will kill him. I have hot water ready for that Oldie Brown Joe do you hear me?* (Suddenly she notices the listening young children.) '*Heavens! Go away you silly brats!*'

And they scatter back to their desks giggling delightedly. The storyteller concludes the old woman and turns to the learners as if to say: was that not well done? And they clap in approval, but he prompts them and they enquire in chorus: '*I wonder what happened to* Old Brown Joe?'

Another flashback to the struggle years

In extremely slow motion the actors make the sound of police sirens approaching. Two learners become officious police officers. The other three actors – centre front, as well as back left and right - become those who are being interrogated; their arms suspended from the ceiling of 'the cell'. Old Brown Joe is being interrogated. One of the officers salutes the other, stands to attention and then laughs in a ghoulish fashion as he looks at Old Brown Joe strung up centre front. In a deep voice he declaims:

Dirty brown suit, brown shoes, brown socks, brown trousers, even a brown dirty Ellis coffee!

FONG SAYOONG!

This 'Chinese' word is the signal for the other policeman to apply the electric current, and the three strung up prisoners scream in pain. The policeman laughs ghoulishly amidst the gasps of the prisoners and gloats,

My boy, you will never be a karate master, and you will never be a gang master!

FONG SAYOONG! (and the prisoners scream once more)

These are your comrades. Comrade Satwetwe, comrade Manqina, and comrade Sidudla

FONG SAYOONG!

The two policemen stand to attention and salute twice more. Then the learners return to their desks, except for the one playing Old Brown Joe who is left hanging.

'*So, what happened?*' ask the chorus of young listeners.

The story teller explains: 'Oldie Brown Joe, *they took him from the gaol to* Woodstock *hospital. His body was green and bleeding, bleeding! It was bleeding really bad!*

4. How do we understand this? Do we persevere?

A song of the struggle is sung strongly from the shadows, the cast taking up the harmonies and beating in time to the rhythm. Slowly they rise up and two face each other head on.

Kubi, kubi!
It's bad, it's bad, it's horrible.
It doesn't matter how bad it is now, we will go forward
We have our people training for us in Lusaka.
Even if they shoot us, hit us,
We have support from Lusaka,
We have support from China
We will be carrying out bazookas from Lusaka
We fight on.

Under the song, two of the young men square up to each other and then clasp arms, leaning their bodies into the clinch to make a supportive bridge. She of the opening poem walks slowly forward bearing 'a baby' in her arms. The song goes softer as she kneels and begins to speak.

I black in my journal
So many stories are there to be told, wrong as they are
It means no one should die without my concern,
The itching of my palm
My insanity is stirring up my deeper insides
This is no time spent
Need is forcing me to give birth to this incredible reality, this soul,
to nurture it.
And we have to let it flow:
To dig deep and dance with feet to this song
As it flows and spreads to the tip of the top,
Having a everlasting eye for the modern gremlins;
Vows, 'cos whereas the 'a's and the 'b's I scribble,
Given my black definition of poetry: not even a blessing for my xhosa king;
*Langalibalele [*the sky grows darker] Bright colouring of Africanism.
I ink I flow
I hear my fellow poets as they pierce the sparks of consciousnesses
As they strip the … from the bible
As they outcall from their extremely social burdens

I respect my true African leader!

Socialism- call it their policy reform
Call me black, call me idiot
I hail the ideas of Marcus Garvey
I mourn the silence of Steve Biko
Don't get me wrong
I am just black staining in my journal

The strains of the struggle ballad continue and then swell as the students disperse around the stage, some moving quite strongly to the lilt of the music. Three settle centre front –as if awaiting the next piece of the story. Two make a frame at the table.

5. Kwathi ke kaloku ngantsomi

Enter an old woman in the rural areas with shawl and stick.

'*Stop it!* (she bangs her cane on the floor for emphasis)
Are you going crazy? Rha!
You fools! Must I listen to you brats!
Things are very bad, very bad.
This man who darkens the sky - uLangalibalele,
the man who is known as Old Brown Joe,
the man who sacrificed himself to be a slaughtered butcher near Caledon Square, where his body has been taken to be checked out.
That struggle of Cape Town

The listening children enquire in chorus: '*Oh! Did he not die Makhulu? Oh no!'*

And she replies: '*I wish you could ask me that again. Mz'ontsundu* [our black nation] is back at home. *Reports from Cape Town say* he is the most wanted. *Now that Mz'ontsundu is back he just walks around like a sow that has just given birth looking for food.'*

The listening children laugh and repeat her words in delight. The old woman continues, '*Oh if there is anything I hate it is pension day*…' At which the listening children ask for money from *Makhulu to 'buy shorts'* … *'just* five rand' … because she is on her way to collect her pension. She tells the audience,

You know one of the problems on pay day, I buy Orocrush *and call Mz'ontsundu to drink it – Mz'ontsundu! And he just drinks the* Orocrush *first and then drinks the water after, and he says it doesn't matter - it will mix itself in his stomach anyway! Oh our children!'*

She exclaims in exasperation and withdraws.

6. How do we understand this? What do we believe?

Recorded [Ismail Lo] music plays in the semi-darkness. To this haunting music the cast make a circle with their seated bodies around the table. Softly they tap their feet on the floor in unison. Then they stretch their limbs away from their bodies in unison, keeping the shadows at bay; sensing in the gloom who might be watching, who might be listening … Softly they tap their feet on the floor, craning to see and understand, this way, then that. The music stops but their anxiety grows. Short of breath they cluster in a symmetrical pattern around the table. Bossy Boots crawls through the table legs in the centre of the tableau, but now her bravado is at a very low ebb. 'Class, here he comes, Old Brown Joe: old owl at school, brown shoes, brown shirt, brown tie, brown trouser, brown Ellis coffee, even brown history lessons!'

In spite of her disdain Bossy boots is panting with anxiety. Nontombazanaa takes up the theme: 'Old Xhosa stories, BB Mdledle, KS Bongela, HH Java!'

The rest of the class laugh with a mixture of exasperation and fear. Nontombazanaa continues, 'Very entertaining Xhosa stories: Steve here, Steve there, Steve everywhere!'

The children stretch and strain here and there to find the truth of Steve Biko as their imagined teacher implies they ought. Bossy boots can no longer endure the tension and in a small voice she cries out, 'Lets make a plan!'

'What plan?' the others cry.

Recalling the lessons of her dreaded teacher, in spite of herself Bossy boots slams down her fist, and reminds them: 'Guys, each one teach one: an injury to one is an injury to all!'

The group are extremely impressed with her thinking and march forward with confidence, point at the audience and repeat: 'An injury to one is an injury to all!'

But they quickly huddle back into their hiding places around the table. Nevertheless the young one says: 'Yeah sus, I hate such an old primary fashion!'

The others giggle although Bossy boots shuts them up hastily. Enter Old Brown Joe of the prologue.

> I love everything that is old. Old community struggle, old, old, very old Ellis Brown coffee. I love-- (and he laughs). 'I believe that this community here is in a state of misunderstanding and I would like to change that (he laughs uncertainly again) but how? How am I going to change that? The school is vandalized, the school is destroyed. How am I going to change that? (Laughs softly as he retreats upstage.) 'I love everything that is old, old community struggle, I love it. I love …

And he is gone.

Softly the children come out of hiding and peer after his disappearing back. They are extremely anxious. Now they feel they simply must hide from him and a to and fro of hiding behind this chair and that ensues. Nowhere seems safe. Everyone has advice but no secure position. They fight for the best hiding place, shoving one another out of the way, hiding for a moment and then as quickly changing their minds. But even in this dance of anxiety the action is patterned symmetrically. Now three gather again at the table. Slowly their heads appear above the table, peep over, look around. Another fellow has his head stuck through a chair and can't remove it. He is in a quiet state of panic.

'Guys, what do we do?' And they decide to make a run for it – leaving their compatriot with his head stuck through the chair. '*Help help!*' he calls after them in a frenzy of anxiety. Finally he releases his head and staggers around as if he had lost it altogether, and then makes off after the others as the audience giggle softly.

7. The reckoning

Shhh sh!

Shhh sh!

Clapping and swaying from side to side in time to the shushing, the cast enter the stage again in two lines. In time to the clapping, Bossy Boots declares: 'Guys, I think today is the day. Let us put the play on stage!'

'*Ja!*' chorus the rest as they freeze.

Then we hear the poet again:

And the blinds were blind. (She comes down stage centre)

Come light,

Come shine so the blind shall see.

She breaks from the poetry and dumps the parcel she is carrying onto the table.

Okay guys, here are the costumes!

The cast spring upon the bag enthusiastically, selecting, arguing and sharing out the clothes. One lad is left with nothing and exclaims in irritation, then picks up a book on the table to read. As soon as Bossy Boots is ready she declares that she will be '*the mother of Boyoto*'. Another, with a single line in character and a gesture, takes '*the father's role*'. In this fashion the others assume roles until all on stage are frozen in character.

At this point Old Brown Joe enters once more. He wanders through the frozen characters and wonders aloud: 'What is happening in this classroom? Class, are you the statues?'

But there is a sustained silence and Old Brown Joe looks around uncertainly, with which an old man, seated at the table, wielding a pipe in one hand, retorts: 'Old Brown Joe, *We, as the school's* governing body*, don't you hear us with your little, little ears?*

(He coughs with too much pipe smoke, and then he addresses the teacher once more.)

What are our children doing in Gugulethu meetings hm? Our children say you sent them to Vlakplaas*, hm?. You took them and sent them to these 'history things', where they become* Number 28! *They joined a gang called 'Fela' hm?. You see my boy* (coughing once again) *I wish that grandmother next to you can grab you and squeeze your balls with* a pliers *and make you mashed potatoes!'*

Bossy boots as Boyoto's mother chimes in.

Yeah Old Brown Joe, *you are so brown with sins.* (She points an accusing finger.) *You taught my children sins. I wish those boers can beat you up with their batons until your jaw is broken. Rha! Boy who doesn't want to be circumcised and be a man! Rha!* (She throws down her apron.) *You take discipline and use it for left overs!'* [*isiXhosa* idiom]

Another parent:

To me you are apparent as the sound *'nkqo nkqo nkqo'*. It is as clear as the colour white that you are a dog. You took my child and you said you were going to rehearsals. Rehearsals! You took my child! Where is my child? The man breaks down and weeps, throwing off his waistcoat in despair.

The school principal turns on him:

Old Brown Joe: what is happening here heh? I thought you were a man but you are a dog! I would like to see you in my office. (And with emphasis she throws off her jacket)

But another mother steps forward in her shawl and roundly berates the others:

How can you go on like this?
This is someone's child!
Someone gave birth to him!
*No man you can't treat him like this. Rha! (*As she berates them she too throws off her shawl, picks up the other costume pieces and stows them away.)
He teaches your children and this is how you treat him!

Finally Old Brown Joe speaks.

My community, my own community; they are making a useless noise about my struggle.

I have made it very clear to the meeting, which was held with these people who are spitting in my face, that we have a group of boys in this school; (he moves in restless agitation). We have a group of boys who are known as *Ntsaras,* (very clever gang)
amafela, number 26 and number 27.
This group of boys is responsible for taking the lives of our own community leaders.
You see I have made it clear that i'Vlakplaas has been deployed to each and every police station in SouthAfrica!'

He walks off in frustrated indignation and despair. But the children swiftly intercept him. They won't let him go and they jostle him once more downstage, chorusing and clapping for emphasis as they move:

Baphi!
Where are they? Where is o'Rasta? Where is o'Tthsepo,
Where are they these people? We are asking you Old Brown Joe*!*

They thrust the teacher onto the table and skip around him in a circle, clapping and chanting.

Where is o'Rasta? Where is o'Ttsepo, Where are they these people?
We are asking you Old Brown Joe*!*

Where is o'Rasta? Where is o'Ttsepo, Where are they these people?
We are asking you Old Brown Joe*!*

Then, standing and still clapping, they change the chant:

Community, ghetto-stupid culture spread around!
Community, ghetto-stupid culture spread around!

With this chant (echoing the thoughts of their scapegoat) they return to their chairs and stand on them, clapping and chanting, working up fellow feeling and passion:

We in this area, we say: "Gowan with the iintsara*!*"
We in this area, we say: "Gowan with the iintsara*!*"
[Get out of this community Old Brown Joe: go with the gangsters to whom you are akin!]
We in this area, we say: "Gowan with the iintsara*!*"
We in this area, we say: "*Gowan with the uNongoloza!*"
We in this area, we say: "Gowan with the iintsara*!*"
We in this area, we say: "*Gowan with the uNongoloza!*"

Call: *I am sure everyone knows about?*

Response: *Ntsara!*

Call: *I am sure everyone knows about?*

Response: Old Brown Joe!

Call: *I am sure everyone knows about?*

Response: *Ntsara!*

Call: *I am sure everyone knows about?*

Response: Old Brown Joe!

Community, ghetto-stupid culture spread around!'

Community, ghetto-stupid culture spread around!'

Call: *Hey, hey, Ag sies!*

Response: *Yes, we know an Ntsara!*

Call: *O, Ag sies!*

Response: *Yes, we know an Ntsara!*

Call: *He is the murderer of a robber*

Response: *He is the murderer of a robber*

Call: *How many dead bodies lie there?*

Response: *How many people has he killed?*

And we say for that reason, we say gowan to the ntsara!

*And we say for that reason, we say Gwaan ! to u'*Old Brown Joe!

AND WE SAY FOR THAT REASON, WE SAY GOWAN TO THE NTSARA!

[Blackout]

Epilogue

We hear the voice of the poet:

To all my beautiful people of South Africa,

To all the descendants of *Qamata* [God of the Xhosas and sometimes of the Christians]

My colourful rainbow nation

To all those who are black and proud, dark and lovely

Forgiving but not forgetting you

Who were treated badly but came up mindfully

To all those who share the same love for Africa

Who possess the need to recognize

Who take the black pride wherever they go

Who can say, I can and I will

Because a black person died for my black consciousness

'I say you are the true heroes yes you are the true heroes
To all those black people forced to dance to white man's tune
Forced to carry a dompas forced to change their perception
To all those who scrutinize or realize they maybe recognized
because of their colour by the white government
I say they will never want, try and cry – never
How can I forget those great ones
Denied the right to education
Forced to share their suppressed action
Concede the rightness of limitation
Who took part in the revolution
Who fought against the opposition
Who only wanted resolution
I say it is all over now.
Lets hold hands together and lead
Let's embrace our victory
Let's honour those who fought and died
Let's honour those who fought and survived
Let's tell the sad story to our younger generation
Let's share the experiences of the ..
But most importantly,
Let's stand up tall and say
I'm black, I am an African, and I'm proud

Behind her, the chorus on chairs say to Old Brown Joe:
Answer teacher: we are tired of this
Everything that happened in apartheid was 'the terror' [inkohlakalo]

[Blackout]

APPENDIX D

BENEATH SILENT WATERS

[This is a summary of the play's action by the writer of this thesis.]

This play was originally conceived by Ntombesizwe Tena and workshopped by the cast. It was directed by Itumeleng Wa-Lehulere and produced by Kwakhanya Productions, Gugulethu, at the Ikhwezi Festival, Baxter Theatre Centre in 2006 and 2007.

The 2006 cast were: Nomzamo Matodlana, Pumeza Rashe, Chuma Sopotela, Sindiswa George and Andiswa Makai.

The 2007 cast were: Nomzamo Matodlana, Pumeza Rashe, Chuma Sopotela, Nobuhle Ketelo, Bukiwe Menziwa, Lumka Ndlela.

Summary

The pre-text of this play is that all the young women are jointly appearing at a song/poetry recital, suggested by the opening of the play when they move around in patterned sequences as one, seated centre, sings of Africa and its women. The rest support her with spoken praises. After this, the scene moves 'backstage' to the dressing room where the women are gossiping excitedly after their 'poetry recital'. They compare stories about the audience, and laugh about how the men responded to them and their performances. But this excitement doesn't drown out their memories of past pain which intrude on the fun. The body of the play is devoted to the women's stories in which they confess to the abuse they have undergone at the hands of their menfolk or the community.

The women are elegantly clothed in black evening gowns of a single design. The staging comprises a few black boxes, a table, a handful of props, some recorded music and a few lighting changes. The performers enact all the changes of scene using group scenes, physical theatre, mime and song. Three complete stories and some fragments comprise the remainder of the play until the epilogue when we see the women again gathered in the dressing room. The stories are not told in a single telling but are interspersed with each other for the purposes of contrast and comparison. Here are the 'kernels' of the stories that are told.

'Zoleka' tells the story of what happened when she was eight years old. Her mother was a nurse, political activist and community leader. During the political struggle of the 1980s Zoleka's mother was a committed freedom fighter, greatly in demand from the comrades and the community for her nursing skills and political connections. Often she had to leave Zoleka, who greatly admired her, in the care of her father. Because his wife would not tell him about her activities in order to protect

her compatriots, Zoleka's father has grown increasingly jealous and suspicious of his wife's nocturnal wanderings. Finally it all comes to a head. In a frenzy of anger and jealousy he kills his wife and is sent to prison. Zoleka is sent to live with her uncle in Johannesburg.

Playing all three characters and highlighting their different points of view as perceived through the eyes of a child, Pumeza Rashe portrays Zoleka's increasing anxiety about the escalating confrontations between her parents. The child feels abandoned by her caring and loving father when he is taken to gaol. She is angry with her mother for being strong-willed, wrong-headed and 'provoking' her father. As an adult Zoleka tells of when she finished school and returned to Cape Town to find her father.

Xoliswa (Nobuhle Ketelo) is a member of the Princess Six Singers when she meets the handsome Thamsanqa at choir practice. Her first person narrative is heightened by the singing at her happy wedding. However when she falls pregnant and experiences discomfort, she answers the doctor's question truthfully. For the first time she admits to the doctor and Thamsanqa that she has been pregnant before. Thamsanqa turns on her, accusing her of deceiving him and questioning her capacity for fidelity. The birth of their child smoothes tensions between them but does not allay Thamsanqa's rampant suspicions. He beats Xoliswa on an increasingly regular basis for less and less reason. One night when she is pregnant for the second time he attacks Xoliswa so badly that she loses the foetus. Unable to bear the abuse, Xoliswa is driven to kill her 'beloved' Thamsanqa.

Now in prison, Xoliswa has lost her husband and is unable to see or care for her daughter. Then she tells the audience of the pregnancy when she was fifteen and had her first love affair. Not knowing what to do, Xoliswa had confessed the pregnancy to her parents and as a family they had gone to the home of the boy to confront him and his parents. The boy had denied knowing Xoliswa and nobody had believed or supported her, least of all her own parents. She had been silenced and humiliated. Shortly thereafter she had miscarried.

Nokwanda (Chuma Sopotela) lives with her granny who one night collapses and faints. Nokwanda goes next door to seek help from the nurse but nobody answers the door. Then she runs to the public phone booths. On route she is seized by six men and raped and left by the side of the road. Her grandmother is so upset by the rape that she becomes obsessed with Nokwanda's safety, accompanying her to school each day and barring all the windows of her house and finally worrying herself to an early grave.

Conveyed largely through song, (led by Bukiwe Menziwa), we learn of a girl from the country whose father is a pastor in the church and she a choir leader. Her memories of the security and happiness of her church-filled childhood in the rural areas

contrast sharply with the story of her journey to Cape Town when her father and a stable, ordered social environment can no longer protect her.

Finally a capable young university student (Nomzamo Matodlana) is elected to the SRC. She demonstrates such promise as a student leader that she attracts the attention of the most charismatic and good looking among the established student leaders. Too late she discovers that he has made her his girlfriend so that he could 'control' her progress. He diminishes her status in leadership circles by belittling her and downplaying her capacities.

The play's epilogue finds the young women in the dressing room post-performance once more. They share with each other the effects of these events in their respective lives and so reflect upon their pasts.

Addendum

Nokwanda's Birthday

[*This is a transcript of an extract of my interview with Sopetela, 10 May 2006. In this section Sopotela tells the story of Nokwanda's 8th birthday*]

Nokwanda woke up and the grandmother was sleeping. And the grandmother would always wake up - before she does - to prepare her for school. But on her birthday the grandmother was sleeping and in fact she was snoring! More than she had ever snored before! And she tried to wake the Grandmother up.

First of all she was disappointed that the grandmother was not up, and she was not singing her "Happy Birthday" or anything! She thought the grandmother had forgotten.

She prepared herself to go to school. She put on her uniform: but then, her uniform was all of a sudden *short!* And she didn't know what was happening. So, because she has been taught the morals of, "Your school uniform has to be longer, must go below your knees", she felt this is unacceptable - that she can't wear the uniform today. So she put on her red dress for church - that's the only dress she had, the nice one – and she tried to put on her shoes but her shoes also were too small. She couldn't fit them in! What was happening?

She didn't understand. So she had to wear her red shoes (for church). Those are her only nice things. And she was so embarrassed because she loved school so much and she was regarded as the cleanest child ever – she was smart! So when she got to school, everyone was in uniform and she was the only one – she was not wearing uniform – in a red dress *and* she was late because she had to make these changes.

She gets to school and it was assembly because they have assembly every day. She was standing at the back of the line and the principal saw her – obviously – in her red dress he couldn't miss her. And everyone looked at her and the school principal called her to the front of the assembly. And as she went up there she thought she was going to pee in her panties! She goes up. And all of a sudden the principal looks at her, and looks at the assembly, and he starts [conducting] and everyone sings "Happy Birthday"!

The grandmother had planned the whole thing.

APPENDIX E

MY LAST JOURNEY BY LIMOUSINE

[This is a summary of the play's action by the writer of this thesis. The 2007 version elaborated and slightly adjusted the plot and action of the 2005 version that I had found cleaner and stronger. The summary below focuses upon those aspects of the play which are most pertinent to its concerns with investigating the concept of the funeral for township dwellers. This summary is derived from my notes on the performances, and videos made of the 2005 and 2007 versions]

This play was conceived and directed by Lihle Mananga. I first saw the play performed at the Magnet Theatre Community Groups Intervention Showcase on 12 November 2005 in the Site B Community Hall in Khayelitsha. For that performance the play was choreographed by Pumzile Mangali. Mananga performed in the play along with Yandisa, Mabuti, Aphiwe, Lusanda and Nonkwenke. (CGI programme, 12 November 2005)
I next saw the play on 10 March 2007 at 2pm in the Artscape Arena Theatre as part of the Cape Town Festival. The single page handout I received at the performance records Lihle Mananga as writer and director. The performers were Athenkosi Dyantyi, Lusanda Dayimani, Seyiso Qhola, Aphiwe LIvi, Sonwabile Nhanhe and Siyawandisa Mbande.

Introduction

My last journey by limousine investigates the concept of a dignified funeral through physical theatre, song, melodrama, satire and dramatic irony. Mandla Mbothwe, the Magnet Theatre CGI co-ordinator who mentored the Iqhude Group on this play, asserted that the question of a decent burial has become a burning issue in the townships since traditional, neighbourly involvement and support is no longer deemed to be good enough (19 July 2006). Capitalism has sold all the trappings of a 'white', showy funeral to township dwellers, which places pressure on families to have a grand coffin, a large marquee and tasty food for the guests and mourners and a 'last journey by limousine'. The play investigates the many ways in which the funeral business entices its market and the lengths to which corruption in this business can go, at the same time as trying to find out what a dignified funeral might be.

Summary

The pretext for the play is well captured in this note on the 2007 'programme'.

> 10 years ago, the father of Vuyani and mother of Ntombi were in love. However, one day Ntombi's mother discovered she had been infected with

> HIV by Vuyani's father. She reacted vehemently, which led to a chaotic double killing [of both her and Vuyani's father]. Vuyani and Ntombi, previously living under this combined parentage, were left to fend for themselves. Dependence on each other soon blossomed into their own love and marriage.
> Vuyani's strongest wish was to resurrect his pride and heritage by implementing a dignified reburial of his father.

The play opens with the young man addressing his long dead father in his makeshift grave. He tells of his efforts to get his father's place of work, Bokomo cereal manufacturers, to contribute to the funeral costs but:

> There was one disappointing answer I could never have dreamt of from your bitch of a job, because the only thing they could offer me was the product that they sold, because their income had decreased!
>
> Three days later a truck from Bokomo came with a delivery. Jesus Baba! [Father]! Eight boxes of Wheatbix and sixteen boxes of Jungle Oats was the only contribution Bokomo could offer on that day. [Father] I'm so sorry! You must know that one day I will renew your grave with dignified ceremony. I may not be rich but as long as I am alive, one day I will wipe all the mud and dust from your grave. I love you 'old timer'. After what you have done, you deserve your dignity, *esteema!*

But what does this son understand by a dignified funeral? Variations on the following advertisement are several times presented in the course of the play to tantalize the characters depicted on stage, marking transitions from one scene to the next, as well as addressing their appeals to the audience. Clustered in a neat chorus line, most of the cast of five solemnly recite, with suitably mournful facial expressions and gestures:

> When pain is in your heart
> When sadness is burning your brain,
> When your tears are falling to the soil
> When hope is losing your heart cells
> when the weather climate has changed
> *WOZA!* [Come!] *WOZA! WOZA!*
> Wongalethu Funeral Policy Plan has all the answers …
> Join Wongelethu: a dignity dream on your last day …
> *WOZA!*
> Wongalethu Funeral Policy Plan of all services!

With warm bright smiles and encouraging gestures the marketing team call the unsuspecting into their 'lasting dignity plan' where you pay 'only one rand a day, or five rand a week or even thirty rand a month *before* your time has come!' So the play

illuminates the power of the media to influence the perceptions of the susceptible; especially in the townships where death is an ever-present possibility.

Finally, after sixteen years, Bokomo cereal manufacturers actually pay out the father's long-delayed death-in-service benefit of R50,000 (approx $6,000). The boy's girlfriend Ntombi, with an eye to her percentage encourages his desire for an elaborate and dignified funeral for his father that will, in effect, eat up the entire benefit in expenses. Wongalethu's boss, whom the audience has just witnessed complaining bitterly to staff that business is slow because people are not dying fast enough, with oily solicitousness, offers the boy a glass coffin for R65,000 - less a discount of R35,000 because of his girlfriend's loyal service to the firm *and* they will include the services of a preacher!

The 'funeral with dignity' afforded the boy's father after waiting sixteen years, is filled with dramatized emotion. All the cast including the boy as chief mourner with his girlfriend at his side sing a lament and rock with the emotion of the occasion. In the fashion of preacher-praise singer, the Wongalethu boss loudly and stirringly laments the death of the boy's father. As the preacher commits the elaborately coffined body to the ground with the familiar 'Ashes to ashes, dust to dust', unseen by the mourners but clearly visible to the audience, Wongalethu's undertaker-assistant tabulates the rising profits from this funeral on a calculator hanging around the preacher's neck like a crucifix.

Before the boy's father is buried, the undertaker colludes with the boy's girlfriend Ntombi to steal the coffin back from the grave. And when that theft is undertaken, the only uncorrupted employee in Wongalethu tries to prevent the theft of the coffin from the grave in the middle of the night but he ends up dead in the attempt.

The 2007 programme ends appropriately: 'Once [the boy] Vuyani uncovers evidence of the plot against him, a fate similar to their parents unravels …'
