

**Shifting identities: An exploration of the possibilities for a syncretic Afrikaans theatre
by means of three case studies – *Hex* (2003), *Lady Anne* (2007), *Ekspedisies* (2008).**

by

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Dedicated to my parents, Erwin and Martina Gehring (née Gerber).

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the possibilities for syncretic Afrikaans language theatre within a post-1994 South African society. The research sets out to explore in what manner theatre can be language-specific, while at the same time being able to cross language contexts. This exploration is driven by the wish to develop strategies for creating Afrikaans theatre that is able to reflect on a society “united in diversity”. In this regard it is argued that for theatre to be able to both retain and cross language barriers, processes of bonding and bridging are necessary. The thesis sets out first to explain why these processes are required and then to suggest ways in which such processes can be implemented in practice.

A triangular approach is used, in which conceptual and theoretical frameworks are developed to reflect on actual theatre practices. Three of my own productions are used as case studies, namely *Hex* (2000; 2003), *Lady Anne* (2007) and *Ekspedisies* (2008). These productions can be understood to be “boundary objects” in Henk Borgdorff’s (2012: 177) sense of the word, in that they fulfil a dual function: they are artistic productions that can also be reconstituted to serve a research purpose beyond the productions themselves. All three works were first created for public consumption before becoming cases for this thesis. Many of the strategies that were developed and tested in creating these productions are examples of ways in which bonding and bridging in Afrikaans language theatre can be understood.

Chapter One of the thesis contextualises the political currents and events that necessitated the impulse towards “bonding and bridging”. In this case the political and ethical impetus behind the practical explorations has been related predominantly to the democratisation of South African society, in which a paradigm shift happened from viewing the Afrikaans language as *one over many* to *one amongst many*. Within a multilingual South Africa, concerns are raised about ways in which to create theatre in South African languages other than English (often understood to be the only possible bridging language) that are able to cross language divides.

Following this introduction to language-related concerns, Chapter Two explains how the shift from apartheid to democracy made space for shifts in identity – on personal as well as institutional levels: a progression from essentialised notions of culture to the celebration of plurality. This progression is then related to theatre, with an explanation of how the post-1994 theatre landscape demanded a reimagining of the form and function of theatre. In this re-imagination the notion of a “third space” is important; something that is introduced in this chapter as an alternative to polarised identity constructions. The function of the “third space”

as an in-between space and a meeting point for diverse people and entities is a strong underlying theme of this thesis and it serves as a reoccurring touchstone to the ideas put forward.

Chapter Three discusses the South African arts festival culture and its contribution to the South African theatre landscape. Particular focus is placed on the Klein Karoo National Arts festival (KKNK) as a platform for the development of the Afrikaans language within a post-1994 context. What is emphasized in particular is the attempt by the KKNK festival to be linguistically and culturally exploratory and inclusive in the face of language protectionism.

After the contextual background of the first three chapters, the thesis shifts to an analysis of theories related to “hybridity” and “syncretism”. In Chapter Four the argument is put forward that of the various inclusive performance and theatre models that represent a multicultural society, the most responsive forms are those that are syncretic and hybrid. Principles that can contribute to the unification and merging of diverse and polarized societal groups are described, and suggestions are made for possible ways to bring about bonding and bridging within cultural practices. Having introduced these principles, examples are offered of how these theories might be understood in other disciplines, namely, religious studies, anthropology, history and a range of cultural practices.

Following this broad discussion, Chapter Five describes syncretism and hybridity more specifically in theatre by means of relevant examples. Taking the discussion further into the realm of application, Chapter Six offers an overview of “workshop theatre”, “translation” and “collage making” as strategies for putting theories of hybridity and syncretism into practice. This is followed (in Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine) by a discussion of the three productions (*Hex*, *Lady Anne* and *Ekspedisies*) as case studies that demonstrate how these theories can be understood in practice. Practical strategies for bridging language divides are foregrounded, such as code switching as an approach for enabling a “co-habitation” of languages; physical theatre as a means for crossing language divides; and the creation of more than one language version of a production as a tactic to accommodate shifting contexts. Following on from the discoveries made in the foregoing chapters, I conclude that theories and practices related to notions of “third space”, “hybridity” and “syncretism” are ideal for creating theatre forms (in the Afrikaans language in particular) that can truly reflect a South African society which is “united in diversity”. The thesis ends by offering suggestions for ways in which new, future identities, can be developed.

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Preface

This is a thesis about in-betweenness: a thesis written in an attempt to mediate worlds; worlds that are often seen to be incommensurable. This is a thesis about transitions and transformations. It is about crossing borders and the consequent effects of such border-crossings – at times resulting in *bonding*, at times necessitating, or bringing about, *bridging*. It is a thesis about holding on and letting go. It is about shifting; about identities – about shedding and re-imagining identities as required by a world constantly in flux.

This is a thesis in response to national and political shifts; and the search for theatre that is able to respond to such shifts in an attempt to contribute to paradigms that are not fully formed yet; paradigms and identities in stages of becoming. It is a thesis that reflects on the past in the hope of bringing about future developments: a thesis about “looking back and looking forward” – to borrow the title from Fazal Rizvi’s (2003) chapter in the book *Complex Entanglements* (Papastergiadis, 2003: 229). It is a thesis in motion that forms part of an ongoing exploration – a work in progress; a thesis that wishes to give impetus to future research projects following Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s (1982) notion that “[w]e must ... rediscover, after the natural world, the social world, not as an object or sum of objects, but as a permanent field or dimension of existence” (203).

This thesis was born from the practice of theatre making and, more specifically, from my own work as a theatre practitioner and teacher of theatre in South Africa. Despite arising from personal engagement and, hence, partially written in the first person, my hope is that the realizations will transcend the personal and have relevance to the political. As an extension of the ideological “personal in the political” this thesis rests on the belief that theatre has a very important role to play in guiding societies towards new possibilities. Theatre is also vital in connecting people with one another and with the world around them, following Homi Bhabha’s (2003a) claims that “the aspirational role and the interpretational power of the arts and the humanities ... have the creative potential to transform human relations and historical disasters” (3). This connecting capacity is mainly due to the fact that theatre is able to highlight daily realities, offering a concentrated view of the world in which we exist. Theatre also has the capacity to offer relief or respite from daily existence; in fact to such an extent that it can be a form of emotional and spiritual shelter. Theatre can thus be a place where people are challenged as well as comforted. As theatre-maker John McGrath (1981) says:

... theatre is, or it can be, the most public, the most clearly political of the art forms. Theatre is the place where the life of a society is shown in public to that society, where that society's assumptions are exhibited and tested, its values are scrutinised, its myths are validated and its traumas become emblems of its reality. Theatre is ... a public event, and it is about matters of public concern (83).

If one concurs with McGrath's observations about theatre's public and hence political function, then it becomes clear that, in the case of a shifting society, the theatre of such a society needs to adapt and re-position itself accordingly. This also pertains to theatre in South Africa, particularly if one considers the drastic shifts that have been experienced in a post-1994 South African context. It is this very public nature of theatre, as described by McGrath, that is one of the main considerations of this thesis: namely, in what manner theatre can reflect on and bring about shifts within South African society.

In a similar vein to McGrath, Loren Kruger (1992) sees theatre as the ideal art form by means of which social practices and the formation of cultural hegemonies can be questioned and interrogated, explaining:

The intersection of political, economic, and aesthetic spheres in the institution of theatre as well as the ambiguity of these relationships makes theatre an exemplary site for investigating the complex and contradictory relationships among the discourses and practices sustaining cultural hegemony (13).

Kruger's notion of theatre as a site for intersections resonates with Michael Foucault's (trans. 1986) notion of a *heterotopia* which he explains is a space (or context) that is "capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (98). For Foucault, theatre can be regarded as a *heterotopia*, bringing "onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another" (ibid). Theatre can thus be a way in which disparate realms can be brought together and, in turn, by means of such bringing together, become a site of possibility; a site that can signal the coming together of seemingly incompatible worlds. Even in the convergence of the most basic elements of theatre – such as movement, music and dialogue – a bringing together of diverse elements is enabled, so that one could argue that theatre is in its very nature a *heterotopia*. For this reason theatre can facilitate the confluence of seemingly incommensurable ideas and worldviews; thus functioning as a site of multiplicity. Such exposure of multiplicity can in turn have profoundly transformative effects on audiences and theatre makers alike, contributing to the development of the societies from which they spring. In this sense, theatre can be understood to be "a means of cultural expression which ... could

pave the way towards an emancipatory aesthetics and politics” (Gunner, quoted in Jamal, 2005: 124).

This belief in the emancipatory power of theatre was one of the driving forces behind this thesis, particularly in the quest for ways in which theatre can reflect on a multicultural South African context – allowing for the intersection and meeting points of diverse cultural entities. Such intersections also offer possibilities for the formation of complex productions, representative of a South African socio-political milieu, following the argument that “a complex subject requires complex treatment and [gives] rise to a complex text” (Fleishman, 1996: 174). This search for complex and intersecting theatre was framed by two social and cultural contexts. The one was the shift that occurred in 1994 when South Africa changed from an apartheid state to a democracy and the subsequent and ongoing shifts that this brought about in theatre. The other was the post-1994, emerging Afrikaans festival landscape, particularly the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival (KKNK) – the first in a series of Afrikaans arts festivals that arose as a result of the political shifts. In response to these major changes, the research has been conducted in the spirit of Bertolt Brecht (1938):

Methods become exhausted; stimuli no longer work. New problems appear and demand new methods. Reality changes; in order to represent it, modes of representation must also change (492).

PART ONE: IN CONTEXT

Chapter One: Towards Bonding and Bridging

Always and ever differently the bridge escorts the lingering and hastening ways of men to and fro, so that they may get to other banks ... The bridge *gathers* as a passage that crosses.

- Martin Heidegger, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, 1971

1.1 Introduction

In this thesis I argue that in a post-1994 South African context, in order for Afrikaans language theatre to be an effective mirror, such theatre must be able to allow for both bonding as well as bridging. In other words, it needs to be able to be language specific on the one hand, while on the other hand it needs to be able to cross language contexts in a spirit of inclusivity – and as a means towards sustainability.

The concepts of “bonding and bridging” as used in this thesis, originated from Robert Putnam’s use of these terms in his book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000). Putnam contextualises these concepts in terms of social capital and makes the distinction between “bridging (or inclusive) and bonding (or exclusive)” (22) social networks.¹ He describes “bonding social capital” (ibid) as indicative of groups and organisations that are mainly homogenous, bound together through a common religion, ethnicity, gender or class. In contrast, “bridging social capital” implies the coming together of people from diverse social, economic, religious or ethnic backgrounds, such as “civil rights movement[s], many youth service groups, and ecumenical religious organisations” (ibid). Putnam explains that “[b]onding social capital is good for mobilising solidarity ... [while] [b]ridging networks, by contrast, are better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion” (ibid: 23). Simply put, in the words of Vidal and Gittel (1998), bonding “brings closer together people who already know each other” (15) and bridging “brings together people or groups who previously did not know each other” (ibid).

It can thus be argued, as Putnam (2000) has done, that social capital derived from bonding can give people a stronger sense of identity “[bolstering] our narrower selves” (23) and that “bridging social capital can generate broader identities” (ibid) and thereby open people up to experiences and existences other than their own.

¹ According to Vidal and Gittel (1998) social capital can be understood to refer to “networks and norms that enable participants to act together effectively to pursue shared objectives” (15).

In this thesis, the concepts of bonding and bridging are applied to a South African, Afrikaans language context. The focus will be on investigating in what manner theatre can allow for simultaneous bonding and bridging. In the context of the thesis such bonding and bridging can be understood in terms of “third space” theory, which can be put into practice by means of hybrid and syncretic cultural forms. I support this claim with reference to three productions as case studies; namely *Hex* (2000), *Lady Anne* (2007) and *Ekspedisies* (2008). At the heart of creating these three productions were a number of considerations to do with language and culture, which are investigated below.

1.2 The dilemma of language and theatre

Commenting on the relationship between language and theatre, Marvin Carlson (2006) says:

one can surely assume that the first dramatic productions to use language, whatever and wherever they may have been, used their audience’s common tongue or at least a tongue whose general features could be understood by all or most of that audience (17).

Elaborating on this comment Carlson states that “the theatre has often, consciously or less consciously, been seen and employed as an instrument of cultural and linguistic solidification” (ibid). From such an understanding of the role of theatre, one can safely assume that in the past theatre was typically language specific and thus local. It therefore makes sense when Carlson states that “although a society may possess considerable cultural diversity, the audiences that have attended particular theatres have generally been distinctly less heterogeneous than the society that surrounds them” (ibid).

1.3 The rainbow nation ideal

Language specificity and the possible divides or exclusions that it can create can be problematic within South Africa’s “rainbow nation” ideal. Among the important changes that happened post-1994 was the granting of equal status to eleven South African languages in the 1996 Constitution. This was regarded as a way to counter a segregationist apartheid ideology in line with South Africa’s democratic ideal of equalising different languages and cultures. From just two official national languages, namely Afrikaans and English, there are now eleven (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: 4). In effect this means that the African National Congress (ANC) government has committed itself to equal financial support of cultural practices in all eleven languages (<http://www.gov.za/about-sa/arts-culture>). Despite

the positive ideological associations with constitutionalising multilingualism, which in many ways is regarded as one of South Africa's strengths, in practice it presents many challenges, one of the major ones being cultural bridging. During South Africa's apartheid dispensation, people were mainly grouped together along essentialist linguistic and cultural lines, thereby arguably strengthening or preserving cultures, but also creating massive divides, so that people remained strangers to one another. Within such segregationist ideologies, languages and cultures were protected in purist terms. For example, when singer, Johnny Clegg (also nicknamed the white Zulu) submitted his song "Woza Friday" (1976) to Radio Zulu, it was declined on the grounds that it contained English words. He tells the story during one of his concerts (2013) and says that the woman who was the director of Radio Zulu at the time asked him how he would feel if, twenty years into the future, the Zulu language no longer existed because people like him had mixed the language and inserted English into it.

English has indeed become the South African lingua franca to the extent that, despite the ideals of inclusivity inherent in constitutionalising multilingualism, one language has become the dominant public language and, more than ever before, other local languages have been marginalised or have fallen into disuse as public languages (Chimbga, 2014: 1427). English predominates in all spheres, including theatre. This is a matter on which South African playwright and arts activist, Mike van Graan (2009), speaks eloquently, when he says:

The nature of arts funding has ... ironically polarised theatre-makers in post-apartheid South Africa with Afrikaans theatre generally sustained through the extensive circuit of Afrikaans festivals, with only a limited number of the annual harvest of Afrikaans plays being seen in the country's premier theatres. Theatre in other indigenous languages is often the preserve of "community theatre" ghettos that prevent them from eligibility for professional theatre awards, while theatre in English – irrespective of the home language of the theatre makers – is the primary vehicle to access the markets of the national arts festival (with its roots in celebrating the English language), the major theatres of the country and the international markets still interested in South African theatre (n.p.).

Such an emphasis on English makes sense from a practical perspective, seeing that it can serve a bridging function as one of the internationally dominant languages. Nonetheless, the privileging of one language over all the others, especially in the face of the constitutional provisions, is problematic. Former Constitutional Court judge, Albie Sachs (1994), expressed concern about the potential effects, saying "[t]he omnipresence of English can be inconvenient and suffocating and induce a sense of disempowerment and exclusion" (1).

1.4 Language struggles

The sidelining of other languages in favour of English has caused a reaction in support of equal status for all languages. Vivian de Klerk (1996) explains: “[i]n South Africa language has now become a terrain of struggle, a struggle over the basic human right to express oneself in one’s mother tongue” (70). Such a language struggle, also perceived as a struggle for identity, in the sense that language can be regarded as a “tonguing of identity”, has also taken place in relation to Afrikaans. As Hauptfleisch (2007) observes:

... the Afrikaans-speaking population (like the English in the 1970s) began to fear the extinction of their language and culture under the ANC-led “new South Africa” and its expressed preference of English as a lingua franca (84).²

One needs to bear in mind that, post-1994, Afrikaans lost its status as co-national language and shifted from a central language of power to a peripheral language.³ This diminished status had drastic implications for the development of the Afrikaans literary and media industries, which, under the previous regime, were generously supported by the National Party government and produced works of a high quality leaving a rich legacy of literary works. Inevitably, within such a shifting context, Afrikaans theatre also shifted and changed identity from being part of the mainstream to being peripheral. Partly in response to this fear of being sidelined, privately funded Afrikaans language arts festivals emerged. These festivals have begun to serve as platforms for staging and developing Afrikaans theatre, and also as spaces in which people can communicate in Afrikaans – thus bonding by means of language.⁴ While bonding of this sort is understandable, there is a danger that it, too, becomes exclusionary. This brings one back to the dilemma of how in the world of theatre, language divides can be bridged, particularly if

² In this statement Hauptfleisch refers to two previous language struggles. The one was the 1905 struggle for Afrikaans to become a language of instruction that was independent from Dutch. The other was a struggle for English in the face of a perceived threat to the language in the 1970s. Hauptfleisch (2007) states that the original aim of the 1820 Settlers’ Foundation, who founded South Africa’s National Arts Festival, was to “celebrate, (re) establish, empower and maintain the cultural heritage of English-speaking South Africans in the face of the triple threat of Americanisation, Afrikanerisation and Africanisation” (83). Although such preservation of the English language is not an aim of the festival anymore, this was indeed its original purpose.

³ Afrikaans became one of the official languages of South Africa in 1925 and shared the status of co-national language with English until 1994. The Advanced Dictionary of the Afrikaans Language [Verklarende Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal] (2005) defines Afrikaans as a “language with Dutch as basis, but which developed into an independent language in South Africa under the influence of changing circumstances but also different indigenous and international languages (26; trans. H. Gehring).

⁴ These festivals offered an opportunity for Afrikaans to be re-imagined as so-called “language of the oppressor” (a term that has been associated with the language, mainly due to the National Party’s attempts at enforcing the use of Afrikaans as medium of instruction in all black schools, giving rise to the Soweto uprisings in 1976) and to be acknowledged as a language spoken by people from many racial and cultural backgrounds.

one considers Marvin Carlson's (2006) claim that "matters of locality and specificity [are] clearly more central than they are in a more abstract art like dance [due to theatre's] close relationship with language" (17). Clearly, the dilemmas facing South African policy makers and theatre practitioners are complex. The dominance of one language over others is constitutionally unsound and at the same time producing theatre in marginalised languages – which can mean segregation of audiences along language lines – is yet another transgression of the rainbow nation ideal. This situation has brought me to the research question of the study, namely, how, through language-specific theatre, can one allow for simultaneous bonding and bridging?

1.5 Mobile theatre/shifting contexts

Within a South African theatre landscape in which, more often than not, performers and theatre makers have to travel from one event, festival or space to another in order to make their work sustainable, making a production in a language other than English becomes difficult. While people want to make productions that are language specific, they also want the work to be sustainable, which means productions need to be able to cross language divides.

Due to the formation of language specific arts festivals, but also due to other factors related to funding structures and a general ethos of decentralisation and denationalisation of theatre in South Africa, theatre has become increasingly dependent on festivals and short-term cultural events. The extent of this is such that "festivals play a dominant role in the theatre culture of the country" (Cremona, 2007: 6). This means that ideally productions must be able to shift contexts, in the sense that they need to be able to move from one event to another. When we did the production *Hex*, for example, it was performed in varied cultural contexts, of which only some had an Afrikaans focus. Given the economic necessities and the consequent need to have mobile theatre productions that respond to a variety of cultural contexts it is tempting to just simplify matters by making theatre in English, or alternatively to eliminate the spoken word altogether by making theatre that is not dependent on language. But this is not the course that some adventurous theatre makers have opted for; instead they have sought ways to enrich theatre culture by embracing the challenges of multilingualism in a variety of ways. Examples of such attempts are mentioned in the following section.

1.6 Attempts at bridging language divides

In order to cross language divides in a multilingual society, people use various strategies. One such strategy is to simultaneously work on two versions of the same production, each in a different language. For example, the director Lara Bye and her cast did this when they were rehearsing the play *'night Mother* (1983) by Marsha Norman. This play was originally written in English, but then translated into Afrikaans as *Nag Ma* (2011) by Antoinette Louw, one of the actresses who performed in it. The rehearsals for the Afrikaans and English versions were conducted simultaneously (one language in the morning and the other in the afternoon). The result was two language versions of the same play which catered for a broader range of audiences. The production could be featured on the Main Programme of the predominantly English National Arts Festival, but could also tour the Afrikaans festival circuit. Another production in which a similar approach was followed, was *Undone* (2014), recently nominated for multiple awards. This production was originally created in Afrikaans under the title *Ont* (2013) and was then translated into English for performance at the South African National Arts Festival and subsequently performed internationally.⁵

Two language versions were also created of my own production, *Mina Nawe* (2005–2007) – one version in English (with some isiXhosa interjections) and another in isiXhosa.⁶ The English version was made first followed by an isiXhosa translation to be performed at schools and community halls where the audiences were predominantly isiXhosa speaking. In creating this play, the translation of the text not only allowed audiences to make a more immediate connection with the work, but also contributed to the creation of a strong group dynamic. Unlike *Nag Ma* and *Undone*, in which the cast members were Afrikaans mother-tongue speakers who could effortlessly perform the works in Afrikaans, the group that performed *Mina Nawe* was comprised of English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa mother-tongue speakers. People who could not speak one of the languages, in this case it was isiXhosa, had to be taught the meaning and pronunciation of the dialogue. This created an interesting dynamic in which the role of translation was not simply functional, but also became a means towards cultural exchange, thereby deepening the relationship between the performers.

⁵ Both these two productions had small casts (*Ont* was a solo production and *'night Mother* was a two hander), so that the switch from one language to the other was manageable. If it was a bigger cast it might have been more difficult to manage the two language versions of the same play.

⁶ This production was made in collaboration with Ubom! Eastern Cape Theatre Company. I was the dramaturge and director.

Another approach to translation is to translate source texts into visual, sonic or kinetic representations. In this manner multiple layers of text can be created, translating the *mono* medium of writing into the multimedia of performance. Such translation from literary and spoken texts into visual representations (whether graphic or embodied), or other forms of representation, is one manner in which attempts can be made at crossing language divides, thus opening up the text into what Mark Fleishman (2005) calls “multiple planes of meaning” (46).

Many other strategies can be used for transcending language theatre. The South African theatre director Mandla Mbothwe, for example, used filmed projections of English writing as a way to translate and make accessible his isiXhosa productions *Ingcwaba Lendoda Lise Cankwe Lendoda* [The grave of the man is next to the road] (2009) and *Inxeba Lomphilisi* [Wound of a Healer] (2010). In these works, moving text of English translations of the isiXhosa spoken text was projected onto screens, which formed part of the backdrop to the stage setting. The need to create bridges across languages is not specific to South Africa; in fact, escalating globalisation means that it is increasingly becoming a need internationally. To give an example, at *Die Schaubühne* – the Berlin theatre performance stage – particular evenings are reserved for either English or French patrons.⁷ The spoken German text is then translated into one of the two other languages and displayed as surtitles, following a principle commonly used in opera.⁸ The disadvantage of this approach is the disconnection that audiences may experience in having to negotiate between the surtitles and the action on stage. This situation can also bring about a certain amount of rigidity because the actors need to be line perfect in order to allow for the synchronicity between the spoken and the written texts. The result is that there is very little space for improvisation and spontaneity. Another disadvantage is that the surtitles can only be set up in theatres that have the correct equipment. In a shifting South African theatre context, predominantly defined by festivals, productions are often performed in makeshift venues, making a high-tech approach, such as the use of surtitles, difficult.

⁷ Both the French and English programmes are advertised on their website <<http://www.schaubuehne.de/en/pages/programme-surtitles.html>> last accessed on 16 March 2016.

⁸ Surtitles are also known as supertitles. They are translated or transcribed lyrics or dialogue projected above a stage or displayed on a screen, commonly used in opera or other musical performances. They are different from subtitles as used in film and television in the sense that they are projected above the action. The reader of the texts constantly has to negotiate where to look, as it is not always possible to take in the full action on stage whilst reading the surtitles.

1.7 The Klein Karoo National Arts Festival

The search for ways in which language borders can be bridged resonates with some of the aims of the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival (KKNK), the first of a series of Afrikaans arts festivals that came about as a post-1994 South African phenomenon, as mentioned earlier. One of the main aims of the KKNK is “the promotion, encouragement or protection of art, culture or habits, predominantly by means of Afrikaans” (*Kunste Onbeperk Handves*).⁹ It was after all created as a way in which Afrikaans could be protected and further developed within a post-1994, multilingual South African context, and yet the festival has also been called a “bridge builder” and endorsed as such by the late President Nelson Mandela (*Company Profile*, 2012). If one then wants to create theatre for an Afrikaans language festival that wishes to develop and foster the Afrikaans language, yet also wants to build bridges and be “an example of cultural restructuring within a post-apartheid society” (Pyper, 2007: 11)¹⁰, the question emerges: what would such a theatre look and be like? What approaches or strategies would be needed to create such theatre? What would the nature of such theatre be?

1.8 Third space as possibilities machine

In response to the above mentioned questions and through the theatre making processes, I came to the insight that concepts related to the terms “third space”, “hybridity” and “syncretism” offered valuable information in relation to approaches and strategies that could be followed to achieve the desired bonding and bridging in Afrikaans language theatre, with the eventual aim of bringing about a shift in shape or in the identity of such theatre. For this reason, I am arguing that in a post-1994 South African context, for Afrikaans theatre to foster and develop the Afrikaans language and, simultaneously, build bridges by including and crossing diverse cultural contexts, it needs to be hybrid and syncretic.¹¹ This means making space for cultural translation that is able to bring about “bridging and bonding” as concepts intrinsic to notions of a “third space” – understood to be a cultural meeting point and post-colonial “possibilities machine”.¹²

⁹ “Die bevordering, aanmoediging of bewaring van kuns, kultuur of gewoontes, hoofsaaklik deur middel van Afrikaans; of enige ander verbandhoudende openbare weldaadaktiwiteit” (*Kunste Onbeperk Handves*, trans. H. Gehring).

¹⁰ “... kulturele herstrukturering in ’n post-apartheid samelewing” (Pyper, 2007: 11, trans. H. Gehring).

¹¹ These terms will be explained in more detail in Chapter Four of this thesis.

¹² This term was used by Henri Lefebvre with reference to the city as “possibilities machine” (Soja, 1996: 81). It will be used repeatedly in this thesis in relation to “third space” theory.

In many respects such an aim is utopian, following Fleishman's (2006) notion that "[w]e need to strive towards a kind of utopia or a better society, through action, through doing. And doing theatre is one of those ways" (quoted in Francis, 2006: 104). Elaborating on such utopian ideals Thulani Davis (2002) offers a useful insight:

The challenge is to make theatre a public space where many private worlds can be seen and heard; to make a public space where the fictional boundaries of the past can be our metaphors, rather than our prisons ... [It] is the natural public for a society no longer able to keep its fictional fences standing. It is a space of creative energy that is a shelter where people try to understand a world in which we are all materially, spiritually, elbow-to-elbow, interdependent (23).

It is from sentiments similar to those expressed by Davis that I wanted to make theatre that could explore and then metaphorically reflect the material and spiritual interdependence of people in South African society. In doing so my hope was that the resulting productions might invite people (both cast and audience) to appreciate our interdependence and thereby increase inter-cultural understanding. It was and still is my belief that this deepened understanding can open up new possibilities for creative growth, both within the medium of theatre itself and within the broader society.

1.9 Boundary objects

The three productions that form the case studies for the research, namely *Hex*, *Lady Anne* and *Ekspedisies*, were all created for public performance, but they also served as research vehicles. Due to this dual function, these productions are examples of "boundary objects" in Henk Borgdorff's (2012) sense of the term. Borgdorff explains that artistic productions which can be redefined and reconstituted to serve a research purpose beyond the production itself can be regarded as "boundary objects". From this perspective, the boundary objects occupy a space between art production and academic production. Borgdorff (2012) points to the mutable purpose and nature of works that occupy such an interstitial space:

... art works that propose to be research projects are "boundary objects" that [change their] ontological and epistemological nature – depending on the context in which [they are] used ... artistic research places itself on the border between academia and the art world (177).

The notion of "boundary objects" as described above is an important entry point to this thesis because it suggests possibilities for shifts in identity; the crossing of borders; a bridging of divides; and being in states of in-betweenness – all key concepts in this thesis. Here these concepts are applied to and understood from many perspectives but, essentially, they offer ways

to resist or counteract divisive forms of thinking. As such they open up worlds that are traditionally regarded as separate, segregated or locked into binary opposition. As Chela Sandoval (2000) claims, in order “to manifest resistance to an academic apartheid [one needs] [t]he crossing of borders of differing knowledge systems” (71). In this sense, then, concepts tied to border crossings can be understood to be acts of resistance against separatist ideologies and practices, ideals that are intrinsic to this thesis.

Ultimately, then, in making these productions, the following questions were asked: What strategies could be used to a) create theatre in which the Afrikaans language could be retained, fostered and developed, but could also be b) bridged, opening it up for inclusion of non-Afrikaans expression and making it accessible within non-Afrikaans contexts. From this perspective one could argue that strategies were explored for both bonding and bridging. On the one hand the productions needed to provide for bonding through language, but on the other hand, they had to allow for bridging, so that the productions could be understood across diverse cultural contexts. One could thus say that the aims in creating the productions were as follows:

- to create theatre in the Afrikaans language;
- to find strategies for opening up the language for the inclusion of non-Afrikaans languages and cultural contexts in order to avoid a laager mentality within an Afrikaans cultural context; and
- to transcend the Afrikaans language in order to
 - make the productions accessible to non-Afrikaans speaking audiences, and
 - bring Afrikaans into relationship and in conversation with non-Afrikaans cultural contexts.

1.10 Further considerations

Apart from the above-mentioned, further considerations that underpin this thesis are a) personal, b) political and c) methodological.

1.10.1 Personal

I am an Afrikaans speaking South African, however, due to my position as lecturer and theatre director at Rhodes University, I predominantly work in English. Rhodes University is situated in Grahamstown, South Africa, which is where I live. This is a town that is historically linked to many wars between the British, amaXhosa and the so-called Boers (Afrikaans speaking settlers of Dutch descent) and forms part of what is called the “Frontier Country”, a place known as an historical and political melting pot, marked by contact between diverse cultures, resulting in amalgamations as well as collisions (Legassick, 2010). The majority of people in Grahamstown are isiXhosa speaking although the town is generally regarded as English (South African Census, 2011).

Grahamstown is also known as home of South Africa’s National Arts Festival; a festival that prides itself on the manner in which it celebrates and endorses multiple cultural activities and diverse languages in an attempt to make space for theatrical and cultural activities in all eleven South African languages. This means that the festival attracts people from a diverse range of cultural, ethnic and language backgrounds, although the productions are predominantly in English (Kruger, 1999: 122). At the same time, the post-1994 escalation of Afrikaans language festivals has been considerable – as mentioned earlier in this chapter – playing a prominent role in supporting and developing theatre and arts in South Africa. This means that despite the fact that I live in the town where the National Arts Festival is hosted, I also produce and create theatre for festivals elsewhere, predominantly for the Afrikaans festival circuit. Apart from the fact that I receive financial support from the Afrikaans festivals – particularly the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival – creating productions in Afrikaans gives me an opportunity to find expression and to make work in my mother tongue.

If language can be described as constructing a world in which one operates (Fowler, 1991: 3), then Afrikaans can be said to inform my private world. As part of such a private world, I feel most confident to express my thoughts and create art in Afrikaans. I would also argue that when I work with Afrikaans literary texts, I have a much deeper understanding of the entire world that is communicated by these texts and therefore, as a theatre maker, find it much easier to access multiple layers or to deconstruct these texts. Afrikaans is also the

language in which I philosophise. Despite this, my public world is mainly informed by English. It is marked by a much more functional, far less emotional and personal way of being – more contained and also more “borrowed”.

The two worlds in which I predominantly operate are not necessarily neatly packaged with clear dividing lines. They can sometimes collide or interrupt each other, leading to a conundrum of mediation and constant entering and exiting of the worlds that make up the different parts of my life. This is a constant state in which I operate and can often be the cause of much agitation and tension. In my public world I have no choice – I have to operate in English as it forms part of my work. In my creative world, to a certain degree, I do have a choice. However, when working in Afrikaans, I am often plagued by the concern that in fostering the local or the private – arguably speaking in a more authentic, strong and creative voice – I might be cutting myself off, or reducing the possibility of sharing such work on a bigger national or global scale where work in English can be better understood and has more capital value.

This dilemma is not unique to me: it is part of a South African intercultural condition in which most people have to mediate and translate themselves through languages other than their own. At Rhodes University, for example, sixty per cent of the students who have to study and express themselves in English are non-mother tongue speakers. This means that sixty per cent of these students are in a constant state of mediation and arguably in a constant state of in-betweenness – in a liminal space. One could, however, argue that such a position is not one of inferiority, but rather one of strength, due to the ability to be linguistically flexible. While being typical of the South African condition, this state of in-betweenness, and the constant mediation between languages and cultures that it demands, is increasingly becoming part of a global condition.

To return to my personal dilemma about creating theatre in my mother tongue, Afrikaans theatre, as noted earlier, is predominantly dependent on a festival circuit, in which the number of Afrikaans festivals is distinctly limited. The question then is: if one does decide to make work in Afrikaans, does one only target the language-based segment of the market that supports such works, or does one perform it in other cultural contexts too? Certainly for me it would be strange to ignore the National Arts Festival seeing that I am well situated to produce work for this festival. Does one then make separate works for separate contexts and, if so, can these works be economically viable and sustainable? Furthermore, if one creates theatre aimed at a particular target market that has specific language attributes and abilities, how does one remain true to the South African identity of people being “united in diversity”; how does one

represent South African-ness? Does catering for very specific language and cultural markets take us back to an apartheid ideology of equal but separate development, of honouring and preserving cultures while neglecting an overall culture of inclusivity; a culture of seeing oneself through the eyes of others; a culture of understanding?

These questions, which are at the core of this thesis, have informed the way I have grappled with creating theatre. My main aim has been to create theatre that can retain the Afrikaans language but, also, to transcend language barriers and be reflective of a multicultural and multilingual South African society: how far I have progressed in this will become apparent in the discussion of the three case studies that exemplify these questions on a practical level. In an attempt to transcend language barriers, I was drawn to physical theatre and visual communication as a possibility to transcend language.¹³ In this respect I had access to the resources of the First Physical Theatre Company, a professional theatre company affiliated to the Rhodes University Drama department and founded by choreographer Gary Gordon. The company's approach to generating material and creating performances through movement and dance has made a significant impact on me, leading to multiple collaborations in which the performers were co-creators in a process where they took on the role of translators of the literary text into a physical text.¹⁴ In this manner I could use non-dramatic texts in a performance context and give them a wider currency by exposing them to a broad range of audiences. The process also lent itself to an interpretation of the content that went beyond the particular language being used – in this case Afrikaans. The resultant increased accessibility of the content meant that the performances could be staged in widely diverse cultural contexts.

The three literary texts that I chose as sources for these collaborations were all three texts that were not originally written for performance: in other words, they were not play scripts. Given to the multiple themes that generally exist in prose and poetry, the use of non-theatre texts broadened the thematic scope, allowing me to address multiple concerns and ideas within a single production. In turn, the multiplicity of themes allowed me the freedom to create productions that could take on a form other than that of mimetic drama, thus moving beyond realist representation. This departure from realist depictions was part of an attempt to move

¹³ More will be said about physical theatre and the First Physical Theatre Company's approach to theatre-making in Chapter Two.

¹⁴ These collaborations included productions such as *The Unspeakable Story* (2004), choreographed by Gary Gordon, in which I was a performer; *Vrypas* (2006), which was created in collaboration with the First Physical Theatre Company for the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival and *Ekspedisies* (2008), directed by myself and choreographed by Alan Parker.

beyond fixed representation as usually seen through character representations. It was yet another attempt to enact fluid states, representative of liminal ways of being.

My own studies gave me a specific perspective of in-betweenness. I started in 1992 as a student of drama and theatre studies in the so-called old South Africa and finished in 1995 in the New South Africa. This radical transition had a very particular significance in theatre (or at least the part of theatre that I was exposed to). The main objective of most of our training had been to get a placement or job at one of the regional arts councils or at the South African Broadcasting Cooperation (SABC) – either in radio or television. This meant that a lot of our studies were preparing us for audition programmes in both the official languages of the time, namely Afrikaans and English. In terms of stylistic preference, we were trained in commercial theatre – hence trained to master realism and to perform in comedies. In the year in which I graduated the regional arts councils were dissolved. This means that overnight, theatre makers – instead of standing in line for auditions in order to get a job which catered for commercial and popular needs – had to become entrepreneurs and producers of their own work. Some left the country to do their auditioning elsewhere; others, who could afford it, financed and started their own companies. Most people either turned to teaching or pursued new careers hoping to use their Drama knowledge as complementary to other professions, such as psychology or law. A few continued to experiment; looking for ways in which they could both re-imagine themselves and the form of theatre which they were practicing. Through this transition period I developed an acute awareness of the way in which theatre can switch in form and nature. I also discovered the close relationship between form and ideology and the ongoing transformations that must happen for any art form to be relevant.

1.10.2 Political

This thesis, as an investigation into South African theatrical forms, is located within a multicultural society. Within this framework it is my conviction that theatre not only has to reflect on its community but that it also has a responsibility to contribute to the healthy development of such a community. The term “multiculturalism” can take on multiple meanings and it is therefore important to elaborate on how it is understood in the context of this thesis. Regarding “multiculturalism” in the South African context, Jay Pather (2010) explains:

South Africa is often, in contemporary dialogue, referred to as a multicultural society. Indeed, South Africa has been coined a “rainbow nation” on the basis and adoption of multicultural politics and policies and the rise of so-called democracy in post-apartheid society. The idea of a multicultural society and a developing democracy are influential in post-apartheid South Africa insofar as they promote

the notion of tolerance in a context that for so long had dismissed it altogether. With the abolition of apartheid governance in South Africa and the adoption of democratic policies, multiculturalism has been constructed as “the” social ideal. In this light, multiculturalism and multicultural politics tend to infuse all aspects of social life, including spheres of art and performance – in essence – modes of “cultural” production (quoted in Craighead, 2010: 260).

Despite the fact that multiculturalism has been used in relation to the somewhat utopian “rainbow nation ideal”, Pather warns that the term is frequently used in an uncritical and, at times, overly celebratory fashion. Rather than pay careful consideration to the implications of this term, Pather argues that it may be used to pay lip service to ideals of unification, while overlooking the fact that multiculturalism can also be associated with difference as often used in apartheid terminology. Pather warns that despite accentuating the “coming together of various cultural forms ... these are undercritically situated alongside one another, usually promoting practice, racially (and culturally) ‘owned’ by various segregated groupings” (ibid). The danger may therefore arise that “multiculturalism can be seen as an ideology that underscores separate development of cultures, similar to the apartheid ideology” (ibid). For this reason, Pather proposes the term “interculturalism”, which, he argues, more aptly describes a “‘cultural in-betweenness’ a place where cultures meet, dialogue and often clash” (ibid: 262). It is from such an inter-cultural perspective that “multiculturalism” needs to be understood in the context of this thesis.¹⁵ With regard to such an “intercultural multiculturalism”, Ben Dorfman (2008) explains:

Multiculturalism implies plurality of cultures and polyphone of voices; it speaks of difference, transgression, and transculturalism, but above all, it enforces questions and produces dilemmas which have the potential to destabilise meticulously drawn borders that separate “us” from “them”, often disrupts the coherency of what has been taken for granted too promptly and even more often puts us in a position of disrupting the notion of cultural authenticity (9).

In relation to the main aims of the thesis, the notions of “transculturalism” and “polyphone of voices” are particularly significant. Both terms imply a merging of, or a co-existence of diverse cultures/forms/languages/opinions/ways of being, allowing for the diffusion or destabilisation of “meticulously drawn borders” and ultimately implying a crossing of cultural borders. By means of such border crossing, the goal is ultimately to counteract a mentality of us versus them; an intention that forms one of the central goals of this thesis. The meaning, or the nature,

¹⁵ Throughout the thesis, both the terms “intercultural” and “multicultural” are used. When “multicultural” is used, it is from the wish to bring about an “intercultural” approach within a “multicultural” society.

of these “borders” will be augmented as the thesis progresses, but the term will be used primarily to describe the defining features, attributes and aspects of language, culture and cultural aesthetics. This will be examined against the backdrop of a multicultural society as understood and explained above. To shed further light on the concept of multiculturalism as understood in the context of this thesis, I would like to share the following explanation by Trinh T. Minh-Ha (1989):

To make a claim for multiculturalism is not ... to suggest a juxtaposition of several cultures whose frontiers remain intact, nor is it to subscribe to a bland “melting-pot” type of attitude that would level all differences. It lies instead, in the intercultural acceptance of risks, unexpected detours, and complexities of relation between break and closure (232).

Furthermore, the ways in which multicultural expressions of art forms can be used to cause disruptions between borders and, by implication, disruptions between hegemonies, can also be a way in which languages and cultures can be decolonised – as is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. Such decolonisation can then in turn be used to counteract stagnation and exclusive attitudes in theatre formation. In this way, decolonisation, brought about in various ways, can counter the possibility of cultures being “caught in that margin of non-movement within an economy of movement” (Clifford, 1997: 43).

By means of this thesis, I want to suggest ways in which an economy of movement can be brought about within an Afrikaans theatre context. It examines the ways in which Afrikaans theatre can be practised within a multicultural society, adhering to principles of an intercultural approach as explained by Minh-Ha and Dorfman. Within this context, language-based theatre poses an interesting and complex dilemma: one in which theatre needs to be language specific on the one hand, but which also needs to allow for intercultural expressions and communication, making space for languages and forms of expression that fall outside the borders of a specific language. This is not only in order to better reflect on a multicultural community but also to make space for cultural influences and, by implication, cultural growth. The following viewpoint of Henry Giroux (1994) underscores the above aims:

If multiculturalism is to be linked to renewed interests in expanding the principles of democracy to wider spheres of application, it must be defined in pedagogical and political terms that embrace it as referent and practice for civic courage, critical citizenship, and democratic struggle (337).

From Giroux’s argument one can conclude that truly democratic societies ultimately have no choice but to be multicultural, such that they can develop critical citizenship and the struggle

for democracy. Lastly, as yet another way in which “multiculturalism” can be understood in the context of this thesis, the following summary by Bhikhu Parekh (1989) is useful:

Multiculturalism doesn't simply mean numerical plurality of different cultures, but rather a community which is creating, guaranteeing, and encouraging spaces within which different communities are able to grow at their own pace. At the same time it means creating a public space in which these communities are able to interact, enrich the existing culture and create a new consensual culture in which they recognise reflections of their own identity (4).

Although such a public space can be brought about in the form of theatre, the bringing about of the interaction of communities remains challenging – mainly due to the issue of language.

Marvin Carlson (2006) explains:

The great majority of the world's drama has been created by dramatists who were working with a specific audience in mind, and not uncommonly dramatists and audience shared not only a common language, but often a highly specialised language unique to theatrical communication (3).

One therefore needs to ask: what approaches can be followed to create theatre that is able to reflect on and bring about a community of cultural interaction?

1.10.3 Methodology

As a theatre practitioner and a teacher of that practice, it is vital that my research is done by means of:

- research *into* arts practice, thereby seeking for ways to develop the practice itself;
- research *through* arts practice, thereby implementing practice as a means to research something other than the practice itself; and
- research *for* arts practice, thereby researching that which is needed for making the product.

Furthermore, such research *into*, *through* and *for* arts practice is significant within this thesis and points to the various stages of the research. The project started by means of research *into* theatre practice. The productions that emerged from this research were then framed by means of theory and *through* the practice attempts were made to come to a better understanding of the theory.

Lastly, the thesis is intended to make a contribution to future theatre endeavours and for this reason it became a research project *for* arts practice. In this manner the past, present and future are indicated by means of these three approaches to arts research, used to create the productions that became the case studies for this thesis. Once created, they were revisited by means of theory with the intention of making discoveries that can be applied to future

productions. All of this was done as practice-based research, understood from various perspectives. About practice-based research, Prof Robin Nelson (2013), Director of Research at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, says the following:

Among the arts, literature, music and the visual arts have historically been nominated as figuring more in respect of academies, whereas conservatory schools for dance or theatre have been more typically associated with vocational training and entertainment (15).

I believe it is this focus on entertainment and emotional response that has given creative outcomes in theatre and performance a marginalized position within many universities, as opposed to music, which is often linked to scientific research, or art which is linked to intellectual pursuits due to its often abstract nature. Furthermore, the ephemeral nature of theatre and particularly dance has marginalized it even more within the academic realm where theatre cannot be commodified in the same manner as art or written publications and can therefore not be owned nor easily distributed. Theatre and performance thus has limited capital agency within universities. And yet, Robin Nelson (2013), following Jon McKenzie, explains that the concept of “performance” has contributed to new ways of thinking and knowing within the academy to such an extent that “performance will be to the twentieth and twenty-first century what discipline was to the eighteenth and nineteenth” (McKenzie, 2001: 18).

Despite such comments, much debate remains on how and why creative outputs in theatre can be regarded as research; a debate which I will not address in depth, but will respond to briefly. I am a theatre practitioner who does research through and in theatre by searching for innovative theatre and performance forms and means of communicating through theatre and performance. I also research certain human behaviour through theatre. In this manner I concur with Peter Dallow (2003) who claims:

Research by creative practitioners through their own arts practice, then, is where the process of making, producing or creating cultural presentations, and the exploration and transformation which occurs in the process, is taken as an act of research itself, where knowledge is gained in the creative act, and can be directly attributable to the creative process (49).

In this context, one can refer to Michel de Certeau’s (1984) notion of the “voyeur” and the “walker” where the voyeur is “one who observes from above” and the walker is the one who actively engages in experiences (in this case of the city) by “walking through its streets” (14). In a research context, one can compare the voyeur to scholars or academic researchers and the walker to researchers through practice. Without the walker there can be no voyeur, where both contribute to knowledge construction. This is particularly pertinent in a South African context

where there is no conservatory culture and where university Drama departments are spaces for both the development of practice as well as for scholarly research. From this context, a practice-based research approach can be understood from the perspective offered by Linda Candy (2006):

An original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice [where] claims of originality and contribution to knowledge may be demonstrated through creative outcomes in the form of designs, music, digital media, performances and exhibitions. Whilst the significance and context of the claims are described in words, a full understanding can only be obtained with direct reference to the outcomes (1).

Within this practice-based context, I create productions primarily in the role of director, but also as a performer, where the performer plays a part in contributing to the creative material during collective creative processes.

To return to the role of the director in creating original performances, I need to explain that in a South African context, many directors are also the creators or so-called makers of the productions as well as the producers. As such they need to raise funds to enable the performances and set up infrastructures for the generation of the creative work. In addition they often serve as production managers, responsible for the technical aspects of the productions. This multiple role situation is mainly due to a lack of funding; in countries with better funded arts the positions of director, producer, dramaturge and production manager are generally fulfilled by separate individuals. In this country, the director – who is traditionally regarded as an interpreter of existing texts – becomes the generator of the entire project, fulfilling a managerial as well as a creative function, but also fulfilling the function of what would typically be done by the writer or dramaturge.

When creating productions, I also fall into the categories of producer, theatre maker and manager where I predominantly produce and create original work. In the instances where I direct existing plays, I generally deconstruct such plays in an attempt to find original ways of re-imagining the text, thus, in effect, creating new knowledge about it. In this manner my role as director is crucial to the creation of the final product, as it is too when working collaboratively. It is from this perspective that the three case studies, namely *Hex*, *Lady Anne* and *Ekspedisies*, have been created.

Chapter Two: Shifting Identities – From Monoculture to Multiculture

Since identity can very well speak its plurality without suppressing its singularity, heterologies of knowledge give all practices of the self a festively vertiginous dimension. It is hardly surprising then that when identity is doubled, tripled, multiplied across time (generations) and space (cultures), when differences keep on blooming within despite the rejections from without, she dares – by necessity. She dares to mix; she dares to cross the borders to introduce into language (verbal, visual, musical) everything monologism has repressed.

- Trinh T. Minh-ha: *When the moon waxes red*, 1991

2.1 Introduction: From politics to aesthetics

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate how the shift from apartheid to democracy affected South Africa's cultural identity, which in turn shaped its theatre identity. The reason for foregrounding political shifts as an introduction to research in theatre can be explained in the words of Erika Fischer-Lichte (2014), who claims that “any theory dealing with performance [has to take into consideration that] the aesthetic, the political, and the ethical are inextricably linked to each other” (10). Following on from this argument, it is my contention that the political and ethical impetus behind the practical explorations that have taken place in this thesis has been related predominantly to the democratisation of the South African society; one of the effects of which has been a striving towards heterogeneity (Woolman, 2013: 385) in contrast to the ethnic and cultural silos that characterised apartheid South Africa. This could be described as a paradigm shift from *one over many* to *one amongst many*.

2.2 From apartheid to democracy: From singularity to plurality

The country's transition from a minority regime to an inclusive democracy was a transformation so radical that it has been described as “one of the most dramatic stories of the late twentieth century” (*Apartheid to Democracy: 20 Years of Transition in South Africa*). This political shift brought about an ideological shift. From keeping up and preserving strong cultural borders between people of different races, languages, religions and cultures, the boundaries were re-imagined, crossed and opened up in a celebration and acceptance of difference. This opening up was prompted in many ways by what had already been happening globally with the end of the Cold War, which was marked, literally, by the 1989 fall of the

Berlin Wall (Taylor, 2008). The result was the demise of an era informed by a “good fences make good neighbours” attitude.¹⁶

South Africa’s change to an inclusive nationhood was epitomised by the term “rainbow nation” – a description that was taken up enthusiastically after being used by human rights proponent, Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Gish, 2004: xi). One could say that in this political transition, the apartheid state’s motto of “unity is strength” (with its belief in oneness through sameness) had been transmogrified, becoming instead “united in diversity”.

2.3 Re-departures

This drastic shift affected all aspects of the South African socio-political landscape, leading to a re-evaluation of the manner in which identities had been constructed and imposed upon people (Meylahn, 2015: 101).¹⁷ This, in turn, led to a questioning and deconstruction of individual identity in relation to collective identity.¹⁸ It is not surprising, therefore, that the post-1994 era was characterised by a pre-occupation with identity.¹⁹ This makes sense given the extent to which an obsession with classification by race and culture had been part of South Africa’s history both during the period of British colonisation and under apartheid (Griffith & Zuberi, 2015). The privileging of certain races had far reaching effects. Some people, in an attempt to avoid the disadvantages of their imposed racial classification, used the rules of racial distinction to have themselves reclassified based on attributes such as skin tone or straightness of hair. Thus some “black” people had themselves reclassified as “coloured” and some “coloured” people reclassified themselves as “white” in order to secure a better future. Such reclassification even led to literal name changing, so that, for example, the surname Mbotya

¹⁶ In a South African context this phrase is commonly associated with Hendrik Verwoerd, who was South Africa’s Prime Minister between 1958 and 1966 and is often referred to as “the architect of apartheid” (Harrison, 1981: 169).

¹⁷ Notions of identity have become a prominent topic since the second half of the twentieth century, replacing the emphasis on nationalities, which had been foregrounded during the first half of the twentieth century. It was particularly in the late 1960’s that a pre-occupation with identity politics gained prominence.

¹⁸ One could say that, in a South African context, shifts in identity are familiar terrain and are inextricably linked to the country’s national and international image, marked by a legacy of multiple colonisations, scrambles for the equal recognition of languages and cultural practices as well as many other struggles for human rights. Although shifts in the identity of nation states and of countries are happening worldwide, South Africa, as a country, has certainly been exceptional in the manner in which it has undergone change, particularly with reference to its 1994 shift from an apartheid state to a democracy.

¹⁹ Although any identity formation entails elements of fabrication and the appropriation of so-called foreign identities, notions of identity construction and so-called ownership of identity carry a particular weight in societies where colonisation forms part of recent histories.

became Botha; Barnisu became Barnes; Boesakwe became Boesak; and Mtinkulu [meaning big tree in isiZulu] became Grootboom [big tree in Afrikaans] (Maykuth, 1998: n.p.).

The havoc that such practices of classification wrought on people's self-esteem became the subject of many plays, such as *The Blood Knot* (1961) by Athol Fugard, *Cheaper than Roses* (1994) by Ismail Mahomed and *Living in Strange Lands* (2001) by Anton Krueger. Given the severity of these imposed identity constructions it makes sense that people in a post-apartheid context wanted to discard them. But throwing out an old identity and forming a new one does not happen automatically, nor does it happen overnight, especially after centuries of entrenched prejudice and discrimination. Writing in 1998, Antjie Krog, in her book *Country of my Skull*, said, "South Africans are struggling to find an identity for themselves, individually and collectively, within the shadows still cast by their country's brutal history" (viii). Just over a decade later, Louise Viljoen (2009) sees an urgency in the need to re-form identity, not only because of the negative effects of racism but also because South Africans are now living in a new world of globalism:

Reconstruction of identity ... is of particular importance in circumstances such as those of post-apartheid South Africa in which changed circumstances and the pressure of globalisation in fact demands that people negotiate their personal and group identities from scratch (99, trans. H. Gehring).²⁰

South Africans have thus been almost compelled to "re-depart", in the sense of Trinh T. Minh-ha's (1991) use of the word, in which a dual intention is implied. Minh-ha suggests that there is both a departure, in the sense of a moving away from a current identity, and a return: a return to something that was hidden or lost or of which one was deprived. She explains: "the return to a denied heritage allows one to start again with different re-departures, different pauses, different arrivals" (ibid: 14). In this sense, then, one could say that the idea of a re-departure suggests being in an in-between state, a going back and forth, exemplifying Patricia González's (2002) notion of "life on the hyphen" (quoted in Zatlin, 2005: 105), highlighted by the fact that the word is itself hyphenated. In relation to the notion of re-departure, Karen Hermine Jankowsky (1997) points to the positive effects of forming a new identity: "New knowledge about one's heritage – heretofore denied or repressed – opens new dimensions of the self, crossing boundaries, claiming languages, affirming difference" (238).

²⁰ "Rekonstruksie van identiteit is van besondere belang in omstandighede soos dié van postapartheid Suid-Afrika waarin veranderde omstandighede en die druk van globalisering dit as't ware van mense eis om opnuut hulle persoonlike en groepsidentiteite te onderhandel" (Viljoen, 2009: 99).

In a post-apartheid society, identity formation by means of such re-departures played a seminal role in imagining new, future, identities, allowing for plural ways of being, but also revealing that which had been hidden. From this perspective of identity (re)formation, it is evident that there was scope, in the post-1994 South African context, for identities to be in states of becoming, as opposed to being fixed. The heuristic nature of identity formation is articulated by Stuart Hall (1996):

Though they seem to invoke an origin in a historical past with which they continue to correspond, actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not “who we are” or “where we came from”, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves (4).

A process of “becoming” rather than of “being” thus implies a departure from the notion of identity as fixed. Identities are understood as having the capacity to shift and be mobile, following Simon Frith’s (1996) notion that “identity is a process not a thing, a becoming not a being ... self-in-process” (109). This logic of constantly evolving and thus mobile identities has played itself out in artistic contexts in which shifting identities were not only depicted, but also engendered.

2.4 A change of tongue

Such shifts in identity and the confusion and dilemmas that this has brought about are captured in great detail in the book *A Change of Tongue* (2003), written by South African writer, Antjie Krog, in which she grapples extensively with the shifts that occurred in 1994.²¹ The image of the tongue in the book’s title has many meanings, of which two are particularly significant for this thesis. On the one hand, the change of tongue is meant in a literal manner, referring to a change of language and by implication a change of identity and ideology – since language and ideology are bound inextricably. About such a change of tongue, Krog not only asks questions about her own role and position as an Afrikaans speaking writer in the light of shifting language and cultural contexts, but also explores, according to Claire Scott (2009), “the changing national milieu in which South Africans are continually confronted with questions of identity and belonging” (40). What is particularly significant is that Krog highlights the need for

²¹ Krog also wrote an Afrikaans version of this book, called *’n Ander Tongval* (2005). The reason for paying attention to this book is that it offers insight into some of the main themes related to the thesis.

translation within shifting cultural contexts and goes as far as to say that we need translation for living together.²² For example, in a chapter called “A Translation” Krog (2003: 265) cites a conversation between herself and a Swedish translator called Christina. In this conversation, the point of translation as cultural exchange is raised. Christina highlights the value of translation as contributing towards cultural exchange, but also as a way in which cultures can be compared.²³ This comparison, according to Christina, is a way in which otherness is defined, but also a way in which otherness can be understood. She argues that translation is essential for co-existence. The conversation is as follows:

[Krog] Are you saying then that translation is a cultural exchange?

[Christina] More than that. It is a comparing with cultures. Translators interpret source-culture phenomena in the light of their own culture-specific knowledge of that culture.

[Krog] Give me an example.

[Christina] Take the word “forefather”. Or would you use the word “ancestor”? Does it carry the same content? A foreign culture can only be perceived by means of comparison with one’s own culture, the culture of primary enculturation. There can be no neutral standpoint for comparison. Everything we observe as being different from our own culture is, for us, specific to the other culture. The concepts of our own culture will thus be the touchstones for the perception of otherness ... Translation is essential if we are to learn to live together on this planet. We have to begin to translate one another (ibid: 271).

Apart from the reference to language, the “tongue” in Krog’s book also refers to the tonguefish as a symbol of transformation. The tonguefish (also known as tongue sole) is a species belonging to a larger group known as flatfish (Branch *et al*, 2007: 282). Although they are born with the symmetrical features of most pelagic fish (fish occurring in water zones near the bottom of the ocean), tonguefish undergo a metamorphic stage during which the right eye migrates to the left side of the head in preparation for the fishes’ eventual descent to the bottom

²² In the realm of translation studies, Krog is an authority due to her extensive work as a translator within a South African context, fulfilling multiple translation roles, such as being a translator of indigenous poetry and stories into Afrikaans, a translator of her own writing from Afrikaans to English and as interpreter during South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, where she was the project leader of the translations that were done for the South African Broadcasting Corporation’s Afrikaans radio station, *Radio Sonder Grense* (Radio Without Borders). She also translated Nelson Mandela’s book, *Long Walk to Freedom* (1995), into Afrikaans. Apart from being involved as a translator, she has written about the value and place of translation activities in a multicultural context such as that of South Africa, with particular reference to the translation of Afrikaans texts into other languages, and other indigenous languages into Afrikaans.

²³ The function of translation will be explained extensively in Part Three, particularly with reference to the production *Lady Anne*.

of the sea or river. This transformation allows the fish to wait motionless for prey at the bottom. The fish swims with its blind side facing the ocean floor, while both eyes look upwards. The evolutionary transformation allows the fish to remain camouflaged on the ocean floor while making use of both its eyes. Krog uses the tonguefish's radical physical transformation (a crevice needs to form in order to allow for the migrating eyes to reappear elsewhere in the fish's body), as a symbol for the change that happened in South Africa. The physical radicalness of this transformation in many ways captures the extremity with which the change in South Africa was felt by some. Krog's metaphorical depiction points not only to the need for transformation within the post-1994 South African dispensation but also gives an indication of the depth of transformation that is required.

2.5 The dilemma of representation

In the hybridity of its form Krog's book enacts its own message. Lieskounig (2011) describes the book as "a diversified conglomerate of different genres and parts" (133).²⁴ In a mixture of poetry, storytelling, interviews, debates and quotations of herself and other authors, Krog uses "reportage and autobiography to investigate how present-day South Africans are coping with political and social change" (Garman, 2009: 9). Such an assortment of texts, styles and genres within one book emulates the manner in which diverse groups or factions from the South African society have been brought together. One could go as far as to say that in its form the book pays homage to and acknowledges possibilities of difference as an alternative to the homogenous attitudes so strongly dictated during the apartheid era. Claire Scott (2009) explains:

Through the inconsistencies and irregularities of the style, genre, and perspective of the text, Krog highlights the themes of transition, displacement and transformation and suggests how the individual might claim a sense of national belonging within a changing society (40).

The unusual combination of literary forms makes it difficult to define the genre of the book: one could say that it is a way in which Krog has made concrete a resistance to classification.²⁵ Referring to herself in the third person Krog (2003) summarises her personal identity struggle

²⁴ The Afrikaans version of this book, *'n Ander Tongval*, was used as source for a theatre production with the same title. The production was described as a way in which a "literary milestone could become flesh and blood" [*'n Literêre mylpaal vlees en bloed*] (AbsakKNK Feesgids, 2007: 36).

²⁵ The use of different genres as a strategy to defy classification is something to which I will return in the discussion of my own work in Part Three.

by asking: “[W]hat exactly in her [Krog’s] history of fabricated and reconciled identities is her own?” (293). Once again, this personal question is representative of the bigger question of what it means to be South African. Krog’s question emerged from her participation in a poetry “caravan” to Timbuktu in Mali at which she was the South African representative. This representative position placed Krog in a dilemma: she had to ask herself how she – as an Afrikaans-speaking poet – could represent South Africa as a whole. The dilemma was heightened during an event at which every poet had to present their poems. Most of the poets at the gathering rendered their work following conventions associated with oral literacy. This oral-performance aspect was foreign to the traditional Afrikaans literary context in which Krog had been working, with poems written to be read rather than performed. This situation forced Krog to grapple with what the Afrikaans or South African “equivalent [might be] of what [was] being sung [by the other poets representing other countries]? ‘Shosholozza’? ‘Sarie Marais’? Mimi Coertse’s ‘Heimwee’? ‘Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika’? A waltz?” (ibid). In short, Krog was grappling with the dilemma of what it meant to be South African and how South Africanness could be expressed. Was there one language or one cultural expression that could be iconic of a South African identity? But I will set aside that particular question for the moment and turn to the related question of the reflective role of theatre, which in turn may throw up some answers to the question posed by Krog.

2.6 Theatre as mirror

In response to a shifting political landscape, South Africa’s theatre landscape also had to shift – an obvious development if one holds the opinion that art, and by implication theatre, should “mirror ... the development of the society to which it belongs” (Dorfles, 1977: 6). Within such mirroring, theatre may adapt to the society it represents, but can also pave the way for the formation of a new, re-imagined, society. Loren Kruger (1992) explains:

At once more and less than art, theatre straddles the disputed border country between the aesthetic state and the political and provides the stage on which the contradiction in theatrical autonomy enables the construction of theatrical nationhood as at once a cultural monument to legitimate hegemony and the site on which the excavation and perhaps the toppling of that monument might be performed (187).

Following on from the idea that theatre can function as solidifier of national identities as well as be the reason for the fall of those very identities, one can safely say that in a South African context, whether theatre solidifies or topples what is, such mirroring will be political. As Athol

Fugard (2010) has put it: “when it comes to the question of telling stories about other people's lives in a situation as political as South Africa, you get to be political” (quoted in Richards, 2010: n.p.). In relation to this mirroring function, Fugard (1990) adds an obligation: “[t]he moral responsibility of the artist is to keep alive a total awareness of the realities of [their] time” (quoted in *Saved by Shame*, 2011). In a similar vein, Afrikaans playwright, Charles Fourie (1994a), says the following:

The artist is part of his society, inasmuch as that his society is part of him ...
When ... time reveals new truths to us ... we have to be ready with the pen,
mouth, body, paintbrush and whatever else to give expression to what we see and
feel (1, trans. H. Gehring).²⁶

Fourie's comment was made in response to the shifting South African political milieu of 1994. As a mirror of the ideological shift from ultimate truth to multiple truths, a post-1994 South African theatre mirror needed to focus on multiplicity and plurality (in content and in form). Despite the fact that this shift was necessary, in the interregnum period during which South Africa was trying to find its feet as a democracy it was not easy to bring about, nor was it apparent what the content or form of such theatre would be. For this reason, many South African theatre practitioners remained at a loss and without inspiration during the early years of the new democracy. As Afrikaans playwright, Pieter Fourie, explains: “everything was in an overwhelming disarray in the country. There was just no urge to write” (quoted in Luwes, 2012).²⁷ Borrowing the words of Saul Bellow (1986), one could thus say that it was a situation in which “[t]he old forms of existence have worn out, so to speak, and the new ones have not yet appeared and people [were] prospecting as it were in the desert for new forms” (quoted in Cronen & Siegel, 1994: 226).

One of the main reasons for this confusion was related to the fact that most apartheid era productions were based on dualistic thinking – an “us versus them” attitude that was evident in both content and form. Even a world renowned theatre figure such as Fugard (who had produced plays about the injustices of the racist system) thought that he was going to be “South Africa's first literary redundancy” (quoted in Hattenstone, 2002). He felt that his old plays were

²⁶ “Die kunstenaar is deel van sy samelewing, net soveel as wat sy samelewing deel van hom is ... Wanneer ... tyd nuwe waarhede aan ons sal openbaar ... moet ons regstaan met die pen, mond, lyf, kwas en wat nog om uiting te gee aan wat ons sien en voel” (Fourie, 1994a: 1).

²⁷ “Alles was oorweldigend deurmekaar in die land. Daar was net nie n behoefte om te skryf nie” (Fourie, quoted in Luwes, 2012: 481, trans. H. Gehring).

not suitable for a new South African context. Commenting in 2002 on the shock of having to adapt, he said:

All of my life had been spent in the shadow of apartheid. And when South Africa went through its extraordinary change in 1994, it was like having spent a lifetime in a boxing ring with an opponent and suddenly finding yourself in that boxing ring with nobody else and realising you've to take the gloves off and get out, and reinvent yourself (ibid).

The depiction of theatre as a form of protest or a fight against something was ingrained in many theatre practitioners' minds, influencing them to think in polarised terms. The limitation of this perspective is graphically described by Fourie (1994a) as follows:

Suddenly there is nothing specific [as in the 1980s] against which one can protest, because ... the focus [has shifted] from political values to social values and it [is] as if everyone is caught unexpectedly with the dry blood of the eighties on their hands (1, trans. H. Gehring).²⁸

One could therefore safely say that the dismantling of apartheid demanded a shift in content and form, since the focus of the democratised nation was on celebration of difference rather than fighting opponents. Such an ideology could not necessarily be reflected in traditional dramatic forms. One could thus agree with Liz Gunner (1994) that South African theatre had shifted from "the crisis of legitimacy" to a "crisis of identity" (1).

2.7 In pursuit of a mirror able to reflect on diversity

Once the initial confusion and dry period – marked by a lack of new productions – subsided, many theatre practitioners started to address identity politics, mainly in relation to race, language and gender. Yvonne Banning (1999) summarised the new approach as follows:

Questions about identity [became] a major post-apartheid preoccupation. And South African theatre is ... playing its part in this drive to construct images of a new South African identity in which difference can be celebrated, rather than used (as in the past) to promote division, separation, isolation and oppression (41).

In fact, the shifts in a new South African theatre identity, both in content and form, were so strong that Adrienne Sichel, one of South Africa's leading dance and theatre critics, announced in 1996: "Drama as we've known it, has died. It's a whole new era" (quoted in Prigge, 1996:

²⁸ "Die vraag wat veral in die kunste al duideliker word ... is: waarheen nou? Skielik is daar nie meer [soos in die tagtigerjare] iets definitiefs om teen te protesteer nie, want ... die klem [het verskuif] van politieke waardes na sosiale waardes en dit [is] asof almal onverwags betrap word met die droë bloed van die tagtigs aan hul hande" (Fourie 1994a: 1).

5). In this regard South African theatre indeed started to mirror the country's rainbow identity, placing a strong emphasis on diversity. Such diversity also implied and mirrored a world that was fractured, confused and uncertain, so that one could have said, in the words of Vera Frankel (1981), that we were "standing in the ruins of a fragmented culture" (39).

It therefore became clear that a "theatre mirror" was not going to be a smooth, uniform mirror, but rather a fragmented one, as the title of Temple Hauptfleisch's book *Theatre and Society in South Africa: Reflections in a fractured mirror* (1997) so aptly puts it. Along similar lines to Harold Pinter's (2005) description of theatre as mirror, it was as if a "new South African" theatre mirror had "smashed" the old one. The infinite complexity of reflecting a society and the need at times to discard previous perspectives is summed up in Pinter's 2005 Nobel Prize for Literature lecture:

When we look into a mirror we think the image that confronts us is accurate. But move one millimetre and the image changes. We are actually looking at a never-ending range of reflections. But sometimes a writer has to smash the mirror – for it is on the other side of that mirror that the truth stares at us.

The image of a fractured or even shattered mirror, coincides with journalist Alex Sudheim's (1999) depiction of South Africa's history as a "shattered mirror, [in which] finding the true reflections of reality is practically an impossible task" (1). This imagining of a fractured theatre mirror as applied to the South African context is similar to the way Erika Fischer-Lichte (1997) describes post-modern theatre. She explains that a postmodern theatre mirror

... consists of numerous disparate elements which, even as a whole, render no meaningful unit, can reveal no unifying image. The image reflected by post-modern theatre is one of many "Others" (58).

Such an image and a coming together of "many 'Others'" can certainly pertain to a South African context. As South African writer Mike van Graan (2009) stated in his acceptance speech after winning the 2009 Fleur du Cap theatre award for the best new South African play: "Ours is a country full of contradictions, of irony, of complexity" (n.p.). From such a fragmented society full of contradictions, I contend that in order to effectively mirror a democratic South African society, its theatre had to be equally diverse, contrasting and multifaceted.

2.7.1 Dissolution of the performing arts councils

Apart from shifts related to content and form, as experienced within a post-1994 South African theatre, significant changes also came about in infrastructure in attempts to represent democratic ideals. The former regional arts councils were dismantled: representing a bureaucratic “shattering of the mirror”. This was a major disruption since these councils had been in existence for thirty years (1964–1994) and had offered a basis for the ongoing development of the performing arts. The disruptive effect on professional theatre practice in South Africa was profound.²⁹ Not only was the infrastructure for the development of the arts in jeopardy, but the permanent employment that artists in every region of the country had enjoyed was no more. The theatre companies had offered opportunities for people in remote areas of the country to access touring performances and schools’ programmes. Despite the fact that this system had many problems, the councils had provided an infrastructure for the development of the arts. There were major consequences for the many actors and other theatre practitioners who had been employed by the councils. Physical spaces that had been set aside for rehearsals and performances were no longer solely used for that purpose, which meant that artists had to find new ones. The disbanding of the regional arts councils thus left significant gaps – particularly with regard to infrastructure – which needed to be re-imagined.

The regional arts councils were replaced by a single National Arts Council whose aim was to provide companies and individuals with financial support on an *ad hoc* basis. One of the reasons for this decision was to offer more opportunities for a greater number of artists and thus to be more democratic and inclusive.³⁰ In this manner, the celebration of diversity and an “arts for the people” approach was foregrounded. Two major developments came about as ways of re-imagining the South African performing arts infrastructure: the formation of private

²⁹ During the Apartheid era the arts councils were the predominant means in which the arts were supported. Although it was a system that supported the arts extensively, it was designed predominantly for white artists, generally excluding people who were not white. Although this changed in the late 1980s so that black artists were actually included in the arts councils during the 1990s, the stigma of exclusivity remained, resulting in the notion that the arts councils were non-democratic and non-representative of all in the country. This was one of the reasons why the new South African government wanted to implement a more inclusive approach to the support of the arts, thereby following a system in which any individual or independent company could apply for arts and culture funding.

³⁰ Whether or not this centralised funding system is sustainable or even suited to its purpose is another matter and one which will not be taken up within the parameters of this thesis.

companies and groups that were committed to the ideal of democracy, and the emergence of a strong festival culture.³¹

2.7.2 The emergence of theatre companies to mirror democratic ideals

The decentralisation of the regional arts councils offered opportunities for new, independent companies to be funded and to make diverse contributions to the South African arts scene.³² These companies offered the necessary basis for training and the development of new art pieces and forms and made a contribution to a rainbow nation ideology, mainly due to an emphasis on diversity. Two companies that stand out in this respect are the First Physical Theatre Company, founded in 1993 by Gary Gordon, and the Magnet Theatre Company, which had existed since 1987, but which emerged as a significant company in 1994.³³ Both the Magnet and First Physical theatre companies responded to the need for a new South African theatre in that they suggested ways for the implementation of democratic ideals in practice. One can argue that these two companies were exemplary in the manner in which they captured democratic ideals on an aesthetic level as well as in their theatre making approaches.³⁴

Furthermore, in terms of the theme of shifting identities as central to this thesis, these companies offered ways in which this concept could be understood in practical terms. Not only did they initiate shifts in South Africa's theatre identity, in many ways offering answers during the interregnum period of South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy, but they also placed a concerted emphasis on enacting "shifting identities" as related to gender, race, language, disciplines, style and genre.

One of the most noticeable characteristics of these companies was the manner in which they blended physical theatre, dance and mime with vocal performance – speech and sometimes live singing. They also incorporated other art forms in an interdisciplinary approach, ultimately bringing together a diversity of disciplines, genres, performance signs and codes.

³¹ Although private companies as well as festivals did exist before 1994, they gained in prominence after 1994 and played an important role in shaping a post-1994 South African theatre landscape.

³² Independent companies existed during the Apartheid era too, especially so-called alternative theatre companies, such as The Space in Cape Town and the Market Theatre in Johannesburg which were funded by private donors. The difference is that in the era post-1994, independent companies played a more central (as opposed to oppositional) role in the new South African theatre milieu.

³³ In this regard, it is interesting to note that both the founder members of these companies were affiliated to prominent universities, which could provide the necessary infrastructure in the form of rehearsal and performance spaces, offices and personnel.

³⁴ Adrienne Sichel (2005) went as far as to say that the First Physical Theatre Company were a "living South African artistic heritage in the truest sense" (n.p.).

Their work enabled, for example, a merger between popular performance – such as clowning or acrobatics as found in the circus – and performance forms more traditionally associated with theatre. Various components were woven or stitched together so that one could say that there was no hierarchy or dominance of one code, style or genre over another, following Fleishman’s (1997) claim:

Theatre is no essential hierarchy where one mode of expression, one process of making meaning can be seen as more important than another. All that exists is their confrontation” (2).

According to Fleishman, such confrontation is brought about from the fact that “the written word, the spoken word, and the transformative material body, amongst others, are in a constant state of dynamic dialogue” (ibid). Such a dynamic dialogue can in turn be said to be indicative of principles that accord with those of a radical democracy. In a similar manner, Gary Gordon (2010a) stated:

All the elements of theatre work together and are equally recognised. Dance does not exist separate from theatre; design does not exist separate from theatre, all elements contribute to the formation and process of creation (n.p.).

In the Magnet Theatre Company’s production *Medea* (1994), for example, a wide range of dance forms (including religious dance, cultural dance and contemporary dance) were used in combination with realist acting. About such cultural blending, Jay Pather, who performed in this production, explains:

Medea was very cross-culture. We were not dealing with an homogenous country, we were dealing with praise poets and religious references which go back to my childhoodYou switch into these cultural forms which would collapse in an environment that is not switched on (unpublished interview with Anton Krueger, 2013).

By means of such merging, tightly drawn boundaries that existed between performance and theatre practices and between various cultural practices could be blurred or extended. It is for this reason that Pather highlights the fact that the choice of cultural forms could “collapse in an environment that is not switched on” (ibid) and, arguably, during South Africa’s transition period, many audience members were not necessarily “switched on” to cultural practices other than those ones to which they were accustomed. Furthermore, within a post-apartheid context, the use of cross-cultural references was significant and offered possibilities for meeting points between the cultures of colonisers and colonised, opening up the space for a re-imagining of future identities that could depart from tightly constructed dualisms. One could thus argue that

such cross-cultural blending as used in *Medea*, was symbolic of the creation of a new South African mode of and attitude to performance due to the manner in which it made use of a diverse range of performance forms and in the manner in which it constructed images by means of design and physical expressions. Fleishman (1991) explains that theatre should ideally be a “site of a plurality of power struggles between various interest groups reflecting the struggles in society and reflected in the meaning and form of the finished product” (68). He is of the opinion that such a site of struggle not only represents a form of dialogue and interaction, but is also in accordance with democratic ideals in which space can be made for a range of voices. Fleishman’s sentiment is echoed in Gordon’s (2010a) view on collaboration, in which he states:

Collaboration is a difficult process in the sense that it is dependent on negotiation, criticism and argument – from such discourse, it is possible to forge fresh and novel approaches to the making of theatre (n.p.).

Despite being a difficult process, this focus on collaboration was the very reason why both these companies managed to forge a uniquely democratic South African theatre aesthetic, in which they specifically focused on crossing disciplines and crossing cultures.

Within this context of cross-cultural theatre, both companies extensively used and contributed to physical theatre so that, in the words of Christopher Balme (1996), they “[privileged] kinesic codes” (80). This shift to kinesic codes marked a very important development of South African theatre and gradually became intrinsic to a new theatre identity. It has been argued that such a focus on kinesic expression is one of the ways in which audiences could be reached across language divides. With regard to choosing kinesic expression as a dominant form in contemporary South African theatre, Fleishman (1997) explains:

Life in South Africa filled as it has been with desperate struggles for change, for power and for simple survival, has a physically dynamic nature which feeds physically dynamic images on the stage (3).

Through the use of physical theatre the two companies paved the way for transformation, whether this transformation pertained to the identity of the arts, or the identity of a society. In relation to such transformation and the role of physical theatre as a means to enable such transformation, Gordon (2010b) states:

There might not always be the same political agenda amongst various exponents of physical theatre, but there is always a clear commitment to transformation – transformation of ideology and to the notions of theatre, drama and dance (69).

In this context, physical theatre is an umbrella term which generally encompasses a range of movement-related performance forms, such as dance or mime or physical storytelling (Murray

& Keefe, 2007: 203-204). It offers ways in which language barriers and cultural divides can be bridged and serves as an agent in the formation of a new cultural identity in South Africa. Despite the fact that physical theatre is often associated with the Western avant-garde, it is also intrinsic to oral performance forms such as traditional storytelling or praise poetry as widely practiced in Africa. Murray and Keefe (2007) offer the following observation:

Physical theatre is a construction of forms, beliefs and dispositions which takes its place alongside other and continuing suspicions of the word as the embodiment of Enlightenment reason (7).

In traditional storytelling, physical theatre – in the form of mime, gesture or dance – is often used as an extension of words or as a way in which gaps can be filled to heighten a particular emotion or experience. Apart from offering ways in which spoken language can be extended or bridged, physical theatre can also serve a political function. Gordon (2010b) explains:

... the body is mobilised as a source of power to question conventional views on race, gender, sexual stereotyping and sexuality. This new physicality should not be viewed as a negation of the word, the text or the rational, but should be seen as an integration of the physical with the vocal, mental and emotional resources of the performer (69).

In a South African context, physical theatre is of particular significance and can be used effectively to address shifts in identity, especially if one considers that physical movement is a form of fluidity, which is able to reflect on the transforming nature of a South African society. In using physical theatre and blending diverse signs, codes and genres, the companies did not only address matters of race, language, culture and gender identity, but also the identity of theatre and performance itself. Juanita Finestone-Praeg (2010) summarises this function of physical theatre as follows:

Physical theatre's insistence on experimenting with traditional narrative structures and deconstructing known dance and theatrical codes and languages continues to question conventional perceptions of what dance or theatre might be. In this sense, physical theatre is continually rehearsing its freedom from the conceptual politics of traditional theatrical representations (30).

The new South African preoccupation with identity, stated earlier, was evident in the choices made by the above mentioned theatre companies, highlighted by their respective watershed productions *Shattered Windows* (First Physical Theatre Company) and *Medea* (Magnet Theatre Company) – both first presented in 1994. *Medea* was designed to celebrate the diversity of a new South Africa and addressed identity politics as related to race, culture and gender as well as to theatre and performance. It was clear that the creators of the productions were in search

of a new theatre identity, where traditionally held notions of theatre and cultural practice were questioned and disrupted. Gordon explains:

I think that, historically in this country, we have a sense of arts with a capital A and that there are only certain kinds of ways that you can perform or make works. I think that physical theatre really challenges that. I think that it alters people's perceptions. To be political you don't always have to be screaming and shouting. In fact, it can often be the hidden agenda (quoted in Frege, 1995: 99).

This movement away from art with a capital A is certainly something that became part of a new South African theatre identity. To a certain degree this was to be expected if one considers that the regional arts councils had been dissolved. The notion of arts as practiced in an ivory tower changed after 1994 in a process through which the arts "came down to earth" so to speak. In the new democracy, art was perceived as the right of everybody and in the spirit of such democratisation of the arts, purist notions were questioned and even deliberately destabilised.

Following Gordon's notion of a *quiet protest*, the First Physical Theatre Company not only challenged societal norms but also consistently experimented with bringing about unusual forms of performance, particularly in attempts at foregrounding an "integrated approach to the idea of theatre" (Gordon, quoted in Finestone-Praeg, 2010: 35). The company was also political in other ways, particularly with regard to the manner in which concerns related to gender and gender stereotypes were addressed and problematized. In conversation with Patricia Handley (1995), Gordon explains:

... we are trying to communicate what concerns us here and now. We are making a connection, an image construction between what people experience in their lives and what they see on stage (55).

What is clear from Gordon's comment is his emphasis on visual communication when he speaks about "an image construction". Although most theatre incorporates a visual element, this pertinent reference highlights the emphasis placed on visual communication, something that can also be linked to physical theatre, where non-verbal communication by means of the body is a form of image construction and thus visual communication. The emphasis on the construction of images became noticeable in the post-1994 South African theatre context, where the reasoning often was that the image could communicate in a more "universal" manner than spoken language.

With regard to such "visual" communication, Tamantha Hammerschlag (2011), in an article on the role of the designer in creating theatre, explains: "In a world of miscommunication and linguistic divergence objects [images] can provide a clearer grappling

point – a tangible connection beyond the sphere of language” (7).³⁵ Gordon’s attempt at constructing images of the “here and now” was what also inspired many other “new South African” companies, leading to productions which foregrounded experimentation in form and content, particularly the visual elements and design aspects, as ways in which communication could take place beyond language.

2.8 Third space as meeting point

2.8.1 Interweaving cultures – beyond first space/second space dualisms

Ideally, then, theatre in a post-1994 South Africa not only needed to mirror, but also to permit and encourage an ideal of being “united in diversity”. In order to effectively do this, it needed to be a site for difference; opening up space for the merging of diverse entities – whether people, styles, disciplines, genres, ideologies or approaches to making art and theatre. Within such bringing together, theatre can in turn be regarded as a mixer, able to bring about the intermingling of and translation across diverse cultures, leading to cultural exchange and the interweaving of cultures. Such interweaving can be understood in terms of Third Space Theory, in which the “third space” is understood to be a “meeting point” and “hybrid place” (Soja, 1996).

The concept of a third space was developed by Henri Lefebvre during a lifelong project in which he was grappling with notions of space, as lived space, and argued for a re-imagining of space: from space as a geographical construct to space as a social and cultural construct. According to the urban geographer Edward Soja (1996), Lefebvre was “probably the first to discover, describe, and insightfully explore Thirdspace [sic] as a radically different way of looking at, interpreting, and acting to change the embracing spatiality of human life” (29). It is especially in Lefebvre’s book *The Production of Space* (1975; 1991) that his notions of space became pronounced. Although his third space theories originated from urban contexts in the light of growing urbanisation in France, they have subsequently made an impact on many other philosophers and practitioners (particularly urban geographers and architects) beyond the context from which the theory originated. About Lefebvre’s aims, Soja (2009) says the following:

³⁵ With regard to this comment, Hammerschlag (2011) explains that “[t]his is not to deny the culturally specific weight and baggage that objects contain; indeed semiotic research suggests that perception and naming of objects is strongly culturally based, but theatrically objects can provide a tangible, non-verbal articulatory device” (7).

Lefebvre argued for ... the right to be different against the increasing forces of homogenization, fragmentation, and hierarchically organised power that defined the specific geography of capitalism. He located these struggles for the right to be different at many levels, beginning significantly with the body and sexuality and extending through built forms and architectural design to the spatiality of the household and monumental building, the urban neighbourhood, the city, the cultural region, and national liberation movements, to more global responses to geographically uneven development and underdevelopment (51).

Soja explains that this Thirdspace is “a third possibility [which] partakes of the original pairing” (ibid). He notes that it is “the first and most important step in transforming the categorical and closed logic of either/or to the dialectically open logic of both/and also” (ibid). An “either/or” logic clearly implies a bind – something that is closed – and generally leads to a situation in which there is a dominance of one over the other, following the logic of a single or ultimate truth. From such a bind there is little or no space for choice or growth. On the other hand, the logic of “both/and also”, opens up space for conversation, negotiation, change and arguably growth: it is dialectical and open. Soja explains that Lefebvre developed a “trialectic” approach in which possibilities for a shift from the locked binary logic could happen. He explains that a third Other “disrupts, disorders and begins to reconstitute the conventional binary opposition into an-Other that comprehends but is more than just the sum of two parts” (52).

2.8.2 Place of information exchange

In everyday life, the third space (also referred to as “third place”) is a physical space or place in which people can meet outside of their home space (usually regarded as first space) or their work space (regarded as second space). Typical third spaces or third places are coffee shops, pubs, barbershops, hair salons or other spaces that offer departures from home/work dualisms. In a coffee shop, for example, people can have business meetings, but may also meet with friends or family, thus treating it as a space for leisure. For this reason, third spaces are sometimes regarded as a home away from home or a second office. However, the point is it is not only the fact that third spaces offer an alternative to home or work, but that they serve a bridging function due to the fact that in the third space home- or work-related activities can be merged, and thus do not have to be regarded as being in polar opposition. Furthermore, these third spaces allow for socialisation outside of the home/work binaries so that they can be spaces for a merging of activities, allowing for the unexpected to happen. Consider, for example, how in some communities, barber shops or hair salons are more than just functional places for

having one's hair cut. Rather, they are spaces for communion, as so aptly captured in Robert Harling's play *Steel Magnolias* (1988) or in the South African play *Curl up and Dye* (1993) by Sue Pam Grant. In these plays the hair salon becomes a gathering place for members from the community; a place in which private and work related affairs are discussed and in which information is exchanged. Such a space thus becomes more than just a venue for cutting hair or drinking coffee: it becomes a space that is bigger than the sum of its parts.

American sociologist, Ray Oldenburg, explains in his book *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community* (1999) that "third places" are vital for the healthy development of communities and that a decline in third spaces points to a general fragmentation of societies. He explains that these spaces, are "informal public gathering places ... [serving] a community best to the extent that they are inclusive and local" (24). According to Oldenburg, "[t]he first and most important function of third places is that of uniting the neighbourhood" (ibid). He explains that the post office used to serve this function, as people could meet and engage in conversation and exchange information, even though sometimes briefly. Furthermore, Oldenburg clarifies:

Places such as these, which serve virtually everybody, soon create an environment in which everybody knows just about everybody. In most cases, it cannot be said that everyone, or even a majority, will like everybody else. It is, however, important to know everyone, to know how they variously add to and subtract from the general welfare; to know what they can contribute in the face of various problems or crises, and to learn to be at ease with everyone in the neighbourhood irrespective of how one feels about them (ibid).

From a similar standpoint, Robert Putnam (2000) points out that in American society bowling clubs fulfilled the role of a third space. He says bowling clubs used to fulfil very important functions in integrating the community and that more recently, even though there are now more people bowling than ever before, they do not bowl in clubs anymore: they are "bowling alone" as captured in his book title, *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community* (2000). To illustrate the community building aspect, Putnam uses the example of a bowling club member who made a kidney donation to a fellow member. He explains that it would otherwise have been very unlikely that these two people would have met in their respective home or work spaces, seeing that they were from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. They met only because they were bowling together. The bowling club was thus a third space which opened up possibilities for new social connections resulting in the profound lifesaving act of kidney donation.

One can thus say that the third space is a space of hope and possibility. Due to the fact that this space is not a confining space, it can offer possibilities for change and inspiration, thus becoming a “possibilities machine” in the same way that Lefebvre spoke about the city (Soja, 1996: 81). Such possibilities arise particularly from the fact that the third space allows for identity constructions that can surpass constructions based on binary opposites. In going beyond fixed binaries, the third space opens up a space for the coexistence of multiplicity. Rather than basing a worldview on notions of opposites, in which one party or side is usually perceived to be dominant, third space theory allows for possibilities that are open, flexible and subject to change. It allows for shifts, for dialogue, for negotiation and growth. The third space is thus not closed in the way that the home or work-related space may be: it is open; and not predefined; it is subject to change, and it allows for the re-imagination of that which is known: a “re-worlding”.

2.8.3 Space for reconciliation – recasting fixed identities

In Homi Bhabha’s (1990) terms, the third space is one in which the cultures of colonisers and colonised can come together, offering opportunities for the formation of new cultural forms in post-colonial contexts – forms that are neither representative of the one nor the other. According to Joel Kuortti and Jopi Nyman (2007), “[t]he liminal space between the cultures of the colonizer and colonized, migrants and other (post) colonial subjects go through a process that recasts their fixed sense of identity” (8). Such a departure from fixed identities is important within a post-colonial context if one agrees that “colonial discourse fixes identity and denies it any chance of change” (Huddart, 2006: 41). Pertaining to such fixed identities, both Bhabha and Fanon, as post-colonial theorists, claim that “although fixed identities may seem to offer stability and certainty, in fact they merely produce an idealization with which we can never be identical, and so, in fact they introduce alienation into our sense of self” (ibid: 29).

The third space, as a way to depart from fixed identities, thus gives people an opportunity to move towards more connected and authentic selves, allowing for fluidity and change. This does not mean that the shift from a fixed to a fluid identity has to be a completely radical departure from a tightly constructed identity. Kuortti and Nyman (2007) explain that “[t]o enter the Third Space [sic], while it shows the potentiality of constructing non-fixed identity, generates a new sense of identity that may resemble the old one but is not quite the same” (8). In a thesis that is intended to explore ways in which Afrikaans theatre can be re-imagined in order to be representative of a new South African identity, this understanding of

identity construction is useful, seeing that it does not necessarily imply an annihilation of the past, but rather a re-imagining. In a similar way to Lefebvre, Bhabha (1982), referring primarily to language, wishes to create a space that can escape dualisms. He claims:

What we need is a way of looking that restores a third dimension to hard-set profiles; a way of writing that makes black and white come alive in a shared text; a way of talking, a moving back and forth along the tongue, to bring language to a space of community and conversation that is never simply white and never simply black (24).

From Bhabha's perspective, as well as from that of Lefebvre, Soja, Oldenburg and Putnam, the drive towards the creation of a community is vital to the concept of a third space. However, it is important to understand that such a community is not a homogenous one, but much more importantly a community consisting of diverse and even seemingly incommensurable people, ideas, styles, disciplines, and worlds together – a heterogeneous community. One can thus say, in concurrence with Soja (1996), that “[a] Thirdspace [sic] consciousness is the precondition to building a community of resistance to all forms of hegemonic power” (56). Apart from the fact that the third space offers possibilities for identity and cultural construction beyond binary oppositions, it is also intrinsically linked to the formation of communities, so that one can agree with Soja's (1996) notion that “Thirdspace [sic] is a meeting point, a hybrid place, where one can move beyond the existing borders” (56). Due to such meeting or connections, Soja explains that it is a place “where old connections can be disturbed and new ones emerge” (ibid), something vital within a South African context where many connections and relationships are still based on a black/white apartheid mind-set, despite it being a democracy. The search for a third way, then, is an attempt to cross borders so as to transcend strict and well defined oppositions. This third way is often brought about by means of cultural mixing, which then stimulates creativity in an attempt to create future possibilities.

In a South African political context, a space that allowed for such coming together was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which sat between 1996 and 1998. This space was aimed at creating “a participatory process where everyone could come forward to talk about how they had acted in the years of turmoil with the goal of forgiveness and restoration of community” (Cohen-Cruz & Schutzman, 2006: 64). In these court hearings, perpetrators of injustice and those who had been subjected to injustice met face-to-face, so that the space offered opportunities for reconciliation with the aim of restitution and transformation. One can say that the TRC hearings were aimed at “displacing histories and setting up new structures” (Bhabha, 1990: 2011) following Bhabha's contention, in an interview with

Jonathan Rutherford about identity formation, that the third space “displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom” (ibid). Such displacement can thus interrupt trajectories based on linear developments. From such a perspective, the third space offers “an invitation to enter a space of extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange ... to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives” (Soja, 1994: 50) which is vital within a South African (still mostly) divided context.

2.8.4 Theatre as a third space

Lastly, in relation to theatre, I would argue that in many ways theatre as a performance space and as an art form is by its very nature a third space. Adela Licona (2012) explains that

Third space can be understood as a location and/or as a practice. As a location, a third space is a relational space of contestation – often in the form of discursive struggle – and can also be one of understanding and meaning making. As a practice it can reveal a differential consciousness capturing the movement that joins different networks of consciousness and revealing a potential for greater understanding (13).

This perception of the third space as an intersection for diverse awarenesses was also held by Foucault (1986) who argued (as mentioned in the preface) that theatre can be such a third space, referring to it as a *heterotopia*, bringing “onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another” (6). On the other hand, Lefebvre regarded the third space in theatre as the space between the audience and the performance space in which the performers serve as a bridge between the two spaces. John Stevenson (1995), from the Centre for Playback Theatre, argues that the third space in the context of his theatre company comprises of the following characteristics:

- It is a physical space
- The third space doesn't fully belong to anyone
- The third space calls for new understandings
- The third space is an acknowledgement of the here and now
- The third space survives the performance.

In all the above instances, it is clear that the term “third space” in the theatre context is being used in ways that are compatible with its theoretical use in sociology and political studies. A bridging is made possible between traditionally divided parties which can bring about change or new insights. Furthermore, it is a space in which different entities can be brought together.

From this perspective, the concept of cultural brokering, as “the act of bridging, linking or mediating between groups or persons of differing cultural systems for the purpose of reducing conflict or producing change” (Jezewski & Sotnik, 2005: 37) can be related to third space thinking. In South Africa, the late Barney Simon was regarded as such a “culture-broker”, “brokering both cultural exchange and awareness” (Hutchison, 2003: 8). Simon had a profound influence on South Africa’s theatre landscape as he brought about and influenced many forms of interculturalism and sharing.

Actively pursuing ways in which diverse voices could be brought together, Simon played an unmistakable role in shaping South Africa’s contemporary theatre aesthetic and in influencing the approach taken by many contemporary South African theatre practitioners, such as Mbongeni Ngema, Gcina Mhlope, Lara Foot-Newton, Mark Fleishman, Gys de Villiers, and many more. The inclusion of multiple voices was apparent in productions such as *Cincinnati* (1979) and *Born in the RSA* (1986), which consisted mainly of a series of monologues, offering an opportunity for the voicing of various points of view. Although the narrations were mainly in English, the English language was often interrupted by means of interjections of indigenous South African languages, so that the English ultimately took on the identity of the mother tongue of the speaker, whether isiZulu, Afrikaans, Sesotho or any other South African language. In this manner Simon was making space for and facilitating the processes of translation.

Driven by a similar need to bring about cultural translation and negotiation, Eugenio Barba developed his Third Theatre.³⁶ Barba’s Third Theatre, as an alternative to institutional theatre, is committed to finding connecting points between people on a transcultural level. He explains:

The discovery of a common substratum which we share with masters far removed in time and space; the awareness that our action through theatre springs from an attitude towards existence and has its roots in one transnational and transcultural country. For a long time, I thought of this country as an archipelago. And its islands as floating islands ... The floating island is that uncertain terrain which can disappear under your feet, but where personal limits can be overcome, and where a meeting is possible (Barba, 1986: 10-11).

From Barba’s claim one can see, once again, how notions of a third space, or Third Theatre, are related to a utopian ideal that aims to overcome or cross divides or limitations by creating

³⁶ Both Simon and Barba were strongly influenced by Jerzy Grotowski, who was committed to the re-imagination of theatre in its traditional form.

meeting points between people who are “othered” from one another. The third space can thus be viewed as an intersection, and, as Davis (2002) says, “[a]rtists at the intersection ... do not simply replicate and preserve ... declaring the end of ... [hegemonies]” (22).³⁷ Such an aim of resisting or breaking hegemonies also informed this thesis and the manner in which the three research productions were made. This purpose of breaking or destabilising hegemonies was to create theatre that was capable of being a meeting place for difference, so that one could simultaneously bring about bonding as well as bridging, with the ultimate goal of translation – of language and culture.

2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I explained how South Africa’s political shift from apartheid to democracy brought about shifts in its cultural identity, including its theatre identity. I argued that one of the major ideological shifts in this regard was one from keeping strict cultural borders in accordance with essentialist notions of culture to one of opening borders in an embrace of cultural plurality and mixing. In turn, I claimed that such an acceptance of plurality offered opportunities for a “re-departure” from fixed identities in that it was possible to move away from imposed identities as well as to return to that which has been hidden. Apart from the fact that personal identities can be redefined from the perspective of “re-departure”, the concept is transferrable to other contexts, such as theatre. Having established this, I argued that in theatre the intention of making space for plural ways of being necessitated new forms of representation. In this regard I claimed that a mixed form is ideal and used the example of Antjie Krog’s book *A Change of Tongue* (2003) in support of my claim. I argued that due to its assortment of diverse texts, styles and genres this book could reflect on a society made up of plural identities. I also used the same book to explain that in making space for the co-existence of plural entities, there is a need for translation as a means towards mutual understanding and tolerance. I then continued to explain that in pursuit of making space for diverse ways of being, and motivated by an intension to be inclusive, two major theatre-related shifts took place. The one shift was brought about by the fact that the pre-1994 regional arts councils were disbanded in order to allow for more people to participate in the arts. In a further attempt to encourage participation and inclusivity, a growing festival culture emerged. I then made the claim that in

³⁷ Although Davis made this comment about intersecting artists in America, the principle can also be applied to other contexts.

response to these changes, independent theatre companies were formed. I argued that the First Physical Theatre Company and the Magnet Theatre Company are examples of such companies, exemplary in the manner in which they put the ideals of democracy into practice, particularly with regard to an intercultural and interdisciplinary approach. Following on from such integrated approaches, I argued that it is especially from the manner in which they foreground physical theatre that a strategy for crossing cultural and language divides can be implemented. From this understanding of the companies' approach to making theatre, I claimed that they set the tone for the emergence of a post-1994 theatre aesthetic.

The discussion on the companies was followed by an introduction to the concept of "third space" theory as developed by Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja and Homi Bhabha. The reason for introducing this concept stems from my claim that notions related to "third space" suggest ways in which the ideal of being "united in diversity" can be made manifest. The manner in which the "third space" concept relates to the underpinnings of the thesis, can be summarised as follows:

- The "third space" is a meeting point for diverse people or entities;
- The "third space" offers opportunities for the interweaving of cultures;
- The "third space" departs from first space/second space dualisms;
- The "third space" is a space in which cultures can be translated;
- The "third space" allows for re-departures from fixed identities;
- The "third space" is a space for the co-existence of difference;
- The "third space" resists homogeneity;
- The "third space" is a place for sharing and exchanging information;
- The "third space" is a space for reconciliation;
- The "third space" does not entirely belong to anyone;
- The "third space" is an in-between space;
- The "third space" is a space for re-imagining;
- The "third space" calls for new understandings;
- The "third space" is an acknowledgement of the here and now.

Ultimately, then, these ideas, or definitions of what the "third space" represents, offer ways in which projects can be conducted in order to shift imaginings that are locked in silos of segregation, and to encourage diversity and cultural intermingling. For this reason, the ideas underpinning the "third space" concept form the undercurrent to discussions in the rest of the thesis, whether these are related to events, systems, theories or practices.

Chapter Three: Festivals as Post-1994 Platform for the Performing Arts

The time for the healing of the wounds has come.
The moment to bridge the chasms that divide us has come.
The time to build is upon us.

- Nelson Mandela, *Statement of Nelson Mandela at his Inauguration as President*, 1994

3.1 Introduction: Festivals for bonding and bridging

The purpose of this chapter is to give information about another context that was taken into consideration when developing this thesis, namely the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival (KKNK); already mentioned in Chapters One and Two. One of the reasons for describing aspects of this festival is that all three productions discussed in Part Three of this thesis were funded by and performed at this festival which means that, to an extent, the festival's socio-political climate had an impact on the works. The most obvious influence was the fact that the festival foregrounds the development of the Afrikaans language, which decided my choice of language for the productions *Hex*, *Lady Anne* and *Ekspedisies*.³⁸ Another consideration was to create theatre that could be representative of inclusive attitudes and could push boundaries and bridge divides within an Afrikaans context. This chapter serves to explain the aims and objectives of this festival and the subsequent challenges in pursuit of these aims. In doing this the chapter provides yet another layer of the political background that influenced the theoretical and practical choices as discussed in the rest of the thesis.

3.2 Shifts to a dominant festival culture

As mentioned in Chapter Two, one of the ways in which South Africans kept the performing arts alive after 1994 was through arts festivals. Not only did festivals provide the infrastructure for performance, but they also made financial contributions that enabled artists to develop productions.³⁹ In fact, artists have become increasingly dependent on festivals, to the extent that they even design their productions specifically to suit the needs of particular festivals. Temple Hauptfleisch (2007) suggests that one can refer to a “festival production” (85). It is

³⁸ Two of the productions, namely *Lady Anne* and *Ekspedisies*, were commissioned by this festival.

³⁹ Many festivals receive private sponsorship or are related to tourism events which can in turn be used, in part, to sponsor artistic projects such as theatre productions.

certainly noticeable that the growing festival culture has made a strong contribution in shaping the theatre landscape. One can even go as far as to say that festivals not only dominate the current South African theatre landscape but play an important part in shifting the nature of theatre. They compel practitioners to ensure that their productions are easily transportable and of the right length and entertainment value for consumption at a “poly-systemic” event where theatre is only one of the many activities on offer (ibid: 42).⁴⁰ Furthermore, festivals could be regarded as part of the South African democratic premise of what Hauptfleisch (2007) describes as

... art for the people, festivals for everybody – whatever their age, race, language, value systems, religion, sexual orientation, social and educational status, theatrical and cultural traditions, and so on (90).

This premise of “art for the people” could in turn be regarded as a way in which festivals can contribute to reconciliation between previously divided populations, offering activities for many people to enjoy across race, culture and language. Brett Pyper (2007) notes the inclusive role of festivals:

Cultural festivals are regarded by supporters to be a more diverse and decentralised alternative to traditional, inherited cultural institutions; as a possible way to give momentum to the socio-economic development outside of existing urban centres (11, trans. H. Gehring).⁴¹

Such decentralisation of cultural institutions – and of urban spaces as the main centres where cultural activities are hosted – is particularly important in South Africa where many people do not have access to such institutions. Offering access to cultural activities outside of urban areas broadens the range of people who can enjoy such activities. The variety and diversity of the offerings at arts festivals indicates an intention to encompass a wide audience range. In other words, by nature, festivals are usually symbolic of inclusivity as opposed to formal art galleries or theatres, which are generally perceived as more exclusive spaces.⁴²

⁴⁰ The term “polysystem” was coined by Itamar Even-Zohar (1979) “to refer to a mix of interlinked but distinctive (sub-) systems” (Hauptfleisch, 2007: 42).

⁴¹ “Kultuurfeeste word deur voorstanders beskou as ’n meer diverse en gedentraliseerde alternatief tot tradisionele, oorgeërfde kulturele instansies; as a moontlikheid om sosio-ekonomiese ontwikkeling buite bestaande stedelike sentra momentum te gee” (Pyper, 2007: 11).

⁴² Vicki-Ann Cremona (2007) explains that “[i]t is the possibility of selection that makes attendance at a festival different from going to a single performative experience, because even if persons decide to attend simply one event, they are aware of the variety of other possibilities that they deliberately choose to ignore” (5).

An indication of inclusivity is the fact the festivals generally offer some events free of charge, increasing the range of participants. Despite the ideals of inclusivity, most festivals are obliged to have a monetary goal not only to survive but because many are founded on the premise that they will offer a financial injection to the town or region where they take place. For this reason, some festivals, although they may seem inclusive to some people, might be perceived as inaccessible to others, especially those who cannot afford to travel.

Many South African festivals are designed around a particular cause or commodity, such as the “Kalfieees” [Baby whale Festival] in Onrus, which is linked to the whale-watching season in the adjacent upmarket resort of Hermanus, or the Biltong Festival in the Eastern Cape village of Somerset East, or the Cheese festival in the Western Cape wine route town of Franschhoek. While these festivals are officially open to all, for many of those who need to travel and pay for accommodation they remain out of reach.⁴³ However, what is important is that the festivals offer opportunities for local people to have access to festivities and to the arts. The money that is made at some festivals – especially arts festivals – is in turn used to take the arts to marginalised communities.⁴⁴

Despite their constraints, festivals, as sites for celebration and specifically the celebration of diversity, have become associated with possibilities for restitution and reconciliation. In the post-1994 context, festivals could therefore offer ways in which “the strands of difference may be bound together and shared in a larger, more encompassing and overarching South African cultural system” (Hauptfleisch, 2007: 93). Such binding together of difference has a significant role to play in South Africa, considering the disparate social, cultural and economic backgrounds of its citizens. In the following comment, Anton Krueger (2014) highlights these disparities:

South Africa could be described as a nation of strangers, an uneasy mishmash of heterogeneous economic groupings, cultures and languages; a nation of marginalised minorities awkwardly pasted together (1).

If Krueger’s “pasted together” image has validity, then a concerted effort is needed to bring such “strangers” together to forge an effective democracy. Festivals can play an important role in this, particularly given their community-building capacity. One must remember that after

⁴³ Festivals are a way of contributing to economic upliftment in remote areas of South Africa and are therefore often attempting to attract people with spending power.

⁴⁴ The Klein Karoo National Arts Festival, for example, has a side festival called *Die Voorbrandfees*, which is for free and takes certain productions to communities in the larger vicinity of Oudtshoorn.

1994 South Africa faced “an enormous task of reconstruction, reconciliation and self-realization” (Hauptfleisch, 2007: 79). In this regard, Hauptfleisch argues:

The arts in the very broadest sense have once more been invoked for a new “cultural struggle”, one in which not only the theatrical event, but the theatrical system as a whole is becoming increasingly important as a means of understanding and re-interpreting the past, coming to grips with the present and shaping the future, and thus in shifting perceptions across a wide spectrum and the many chasms that divide people and communities (ibid).

Hauptfleisch’s claim about the bridging potential of festivals could be linked to notions of “third space” in that festivals have the potential to bring together previously divided people. From this perspective, then, festivals have an important responsibility in making a contribution to the broader South African society. If this is the case about festivals, then the theatre performed at such festivals has a similar role to play. In turn, the festivals have not only contributed to nation building but are increasingly playing a prominent and active role in supporting and developing theatre. Arts activist and playwright, Mike van Graan (2006) is of the opinion that “the festivals have become the most important catalysts, producers and marketers of new South African theatre” (7).⁴⁵ Van Graan explains that “with theatres that do not have money, or that are seeking to produce new local theatre pieces, the big arts festivals offer the most important incentive to create new local works” (ibid: 6).⁴⁶ He continues by saying that “the festivals make provision for a wide variety of art forms, but usually spend at least half of their budget on theatre” (ibid).⁴⁷

Despite the fact that festivals do not necessarily provide a stable infrastructure for large numbers of artists – particularly considering their brief duration and the intense competition for audience attention – they do provide an important platform where theatre practitioners can showcase their work, to the extent that some performers and artists have been known to derive their entire annual income from moving from festival to festival.⁴⁸ Festivals have also become

⁴⁵ “Die feeste het die belangrikste katalisators, opvoeders en bemarkers van nuwe Suid-Afrikaanse toneel geword” (Van Graan, 2006: 7, trans. H. Gehring).

⁴⁶ “Met teaters wat nie geld het of soek om nuwe plaaslike stukke op te voer nie, bied die groot kunstefeeste die belangrikste aansporing om nuwe plaaslike werk op die planke te bring” (Van Graan, 2006: 6, trans. H. Gehring).

⁴⁷ “Die feeste maak voorsiening vir ’n wye verskeidenheid kunsvorms maar bestee gewoonlik minstens die helfte van hul begroting aan toneel” (Van Graan, 2006: 6, trans. H. Gehring).

⁴⁸ Former National Arts Festival director, Lynette Marais, emphasizes that festivals cannot be responsible for the income of artists but rather provide a platform on which they can showcase their work (unpublished interview, 2012) and yet, former KKNK director, Brett Pyper, (unpublished interview 2014) argues that unless other structures are provided, artists will inevitably be dependent on festivals for revenue. With regard to such

a platform for experimentation and for proposing future possibilities for the arts, so that one can concur with literary critic, Herman Wasserman (2000a), when he predicts that “arts festivals will lead future explorations further and further from the known and will be a point of departure on the way to discover a broader South Africanness” (5).⁴⁹

3.3 The Klein Karoo National Arts Festival

It is from this shifting theatre landscape that the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival emerged. It was part of a general “privatisation process of the Afrikaans cultural infrastructure that happened almost overnight” (Pyper, 2007: 11).⁵⁰ As explained in Chapter One, this privatisation was something that came about due to the fact that Afrikaans lost its status as a co-national language. After 1994 Afrikaans had to compete for recognition and national resources with the other ten official languages, and with English as the preferred *lingua franca* in the new dispensation. The language thus shifted from being a central language of power to a peripheral one. This change in status had drastic implications for the development of the Afrikaans literary and media industries, which, under the previous regime were generously supported by the National Party government and produced works of a high quality – something that has not been possible to the same extent, post-1994, with the diminished official budgets for the creation of Afrikaans television series and other Afrikaans events.

Motivated by fears of the extinction of Afrikaans and the impact it might have on Afrikaans media, Ton Vosloo, the director of what was then called *Nasionale Pers* (National Press), wanted to find strategies for mobilising Afrikaans (Kitshoff, 2004: 69).⁵¹ At the same time, an Oudtshoorn-based businessman, Nic Barrow, was looking for initiatives that could bring economic upliftment to the impoverished Oudtshoorn area.⁵² It was the convergence of these motivations that planted the seeds for the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival. In this

revenue, Mike van Graan (2006) explains that one week’s performance at a festival can provide artists with the same income as playing during a whole season in the city (6).

⁴⁹ “... kunstefeeste [sal] toekomstige verkennings al verder van die bekende af lei en 'n vertrekpunt ... word op 'n pad om 'n wyer Suid-Afrikaansheid te ontdek” (Wasserman, 2000a: 5, trans. H. Gehring).

⁵⁰ “... byna oornag privatisering van die Afrikaanse kulturele infrastruktuur” (Pyper, 2007: 11, trans. H. Gehring).

⁵¹ The manner in which such mobilisation was perceived to be part of a “language struggle” has already been highlighted in Chapter One with reference to Temple Hauptfleisch.

⁵² The Oudtshoorn region was once an economically strong area, known for its ostrich farming, but with the decline in ostrich farming, brought about by multiple factors, the town and surrounding areas had started to fall into financial decline.

manner, an economic need and the desire to preserve the language led to the idea of the festival. Andrew Marais (1996) encapsulated the coinciding interests as follows: “People go to Oudtshoorn to see caves and ostriches, but they come to the KKNK for Afrikaans” (13).⁵³

Another reason for festivals was to create work for the many artists who had previously been employed by the regional arts councils. With the demise of these councils, many playwrights, directors, designers, arts administrators and performers who had previously had permanent jobs, were in need of work. As mentioned in Chapter One, a large number of performing artists had changed careers or turned to television as a more lucrative income than theatre. The KKNK provided a platform for theatre makers to continue practising their art, even if only on an ad hoc basis. In the case of this particular festival it was primarily Afrikaans speaking artists that the festival creators had in mind. Support and enthusiasm for the language itself has been a feature of Afrikaans cultural identity for decades and remains so. It was primarily from such support and enthusiasm for the language that the KKNK was born. This can be seen in the mission statement, already mentioned in Chapter One, which describes the aim of the festival as “the promotion, encouragement or protection of art, culture or habits, predominantly by means of Afrikaans; or any other related public charitable activity” (*Kunste Onbeperk Handves*).⁵⁴ In this respect, Hauptfleisch (2007) makes the following observation about the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival:

The common denominator in Oudtshoorn is not culture, not even the rather conservative, wordy Afrikaans theatre – it is something more pervasive. It is Die Taal (The Language), it is the youngest language in the world, it is Afrikaans as she is spoken throughout the country, krom en skeef, as she comes by people from north and south, east and west. The topics of discussion may be politics, culture, plays, concerts, art, controversy, wine, food, the weather, sex, etc. it does not really matter (88).

This focus on the Afrikaans language at the KKNK is arguably one of the main reasons for the popularity of the festival. For one week in the year, speakers of Afrikaans can interact solely in their own language. It is also for this reason that so many of the activities at the festival – the theatre productions, the debates and even the slogans on t-shirts and other commodities – are focused on the language. For some people the link between language and identity is felt not only to be inextricable but total. Ampie Coetzee (2006) stated that “for Afrikaners, Afrikaans

⁵³ “Mense gaan na Oudtshoorn om grotte en volstruise te sien, maar hulle gaan na die KKNK vir Afrikaans” (Marais, 1996: 13, trans. H. Gehring).

⁵⁴ “Die bevordering, aanmoediging of bewaring van kuns, kultuur of gewoontes, hoofsaaklik deur middel van Afrikaans; of enige ander verbandhoudende openbare weldaadaktiwiteit” (*Kunste Onbeperk Handves*, trans. H. Gehring).

is more than a language, it's a 'tonguing' of identity ... if Afrikaners were to lose their language, they would become nothing" (23). With regard to the manner in which Afrikaans festivals contribute to the shaping of Afrikaans identity, theatre director, Saartjie Botha (2013), is of the following opinion:

Our Afrikaans identity is played out by festivals ... but we will have to look at affordability and sustainability. Many of the problems are still not addressed. It's a very difficult landscape because you cannot manage the festival in a uniform manner. Festivals should not be formulaic, but as long as people buy tickets, it will go well. I believe the festival should remain unashamedly Afrikaans and have its own identity. A festival cannot be everything to everyone (quoted in *KKNK20*, 2014: 249).⁵⁵

Unfortunately, an over-determined emphasis on Afrikaans has resulted in some fanatic attempts to protect the language, which has, at times, translated into behaviour that has been offensive to non-Afrikaans speakers. An example is the t-shirt slogan *Praat Afrikaans of Hou Jou Bek* [Speak Afrikaans or Shut Your Mouth].

Such aggressive attitudes towards preserving the language were hardly what the architects of the festival had in mind. Rather, it was conceived of as a space for sharing and cultural exchange. Speaking in 1994, the playwright Pieter Fourie, who was the first director of the KKNK, expressed his vision for the festival as follows:

Apart from cabaret and theatre, films, poetry and music and dance, I am currently thinking of something like a language market or a story market almost like in the middle ages, where storytellers from all the regions of the country can come sit and tell their own stories ... it must not be a planned, artificial business, but a lively meeting place for everybody that enjoys talking and who has a love for Afrikaans (quoted in *Die Burger*, 1994: n.p., trans. H. Gehring).⁵⁶

This statement by Fourie points to the festival's function as a place for people to get together; ideally offering opportunities for conversation and the sharing of ideas. The emphasis on conversation and talk was within the spirit of the time where a lot of emphasis was placed on

⁵⁵ "Ons Afrikaanse identiteit word deur feeste uitgespeel ... maar ons gaan moet kyk na die bekostigbaarheid en volhoubaarheid. Baie van die probleme word steeds nie aangespreek nie. Dis n baie moeilike landskap want jy kan dit nie eenvormig bestuur nie. Feeste moet nie resepmatig word nie, maar solank mense kaartjies koop, sal dit goed gaan. Ek glo ook die Absa KKNK moet onbeskaamd Afrikaans bly en sy eie identiteit hê. 'n Fees kan nie alles vir almal wees nie" (Botha, quoted in *KKNK20*, 2014: 249).

⁵⁶ "Afgesien van kabaret en toneel, rolprente, poësie en musiek en dans, dink ek op die oomblik aan iets soos 'n taalmark of 'n storiemark amper soos in die Middeleeue, waar vertellers uit al die land se streke hul eie stories kan kom sit en vertel Dit moenie 'n beplande, kunsmatige besigheid wees nie, maar 'n lewende bymeekaarkomplek van almal wat hou van gesels en lief is vir Afrikaans" (Fourie, quoted in *Die Burger*, 1994: n.p.).

dialogue as a means to understand and share ideas amongst diverse people. It is therefore not surprising that Fourie brings up the idea of a “story market”, especially if one takes heed of Lategan and Müller’s (1990) claim that

In a fragmented society [stories are] sometimes the only thing that people can share with one another ... stories assume a piece of shared humanity, even though experienced from “the other side”. Stories are an attempt to reach out to one another, a search for communality, an attempt to understand and make understandable (8, trans. H. Gehring).⁵⁷

As such, it makes sense that in a post-1994 context, stories were foregrounded as a form of sharing experiences and that storytelling was regarded as a priority. Furthermore, with regard to the KKNK’s purpose as well as a changed attitude towards the arts within this Karoo festival landscape, Fourie (1995) says

The sun has finally set on an esoteric landscape of ivory towers and elitism. It already rises over ant heaps and lizards: a landscape of serious teamwork, the ability to survive and consistently having one’s feet on the earth ... on African soil (quoted in *Rapport*, 1995: 1, trans. H. Gehring).⁵⁸

With this claim, Fourie is clearly referring to a decentralisation as well as a re-imagining of approaches to the arts. As with Gary Gordon’s reference to the demise of arts with a capital A, discussed in Chapter Two, Fourie critiques the ivory tower and elitist attitudes towards the arts. Although he does not state exactly who or which institutions held such attitudes, one can assume that he is referring to a pre-1994 attitude towards the arts. As an alternative to highbrow notions of the arts, Fourie’s post-1994 vision for the South African arts landscape, and particularly the contribution of the KKNK to such a landscape, is much more down to earth. In such a landscape it is practical approaches and teamwork that ensure survival and are seen as important. It is within this spirit of teamwork and survival, that the Klein Karoo festival was designed to be inclusive and ultimately be reflective of a multicultural South African milieu. On the one hand it was favouring Afrikaans, but on the other it wanted to offer an event where other languages were also welcome. This aim to be reflective of a multicultural social milieu was already made apparent by the fact that the festival was labelled as a “multicultural festival”

⁵⁷ “In ’n verbrokkelde samelewing is dit soms al wat mense met mekaar kan deel ... [s]tories veronderstel ’n stuk gedeelde menslikheid, al is dit van ‘die ander kant’ beleef. Stories is ’n uitreik na die ander, ’n soeke na gemeenskaplikheid, ’n poging om te verstaan en verstaanbaar te maak” (Lategan & Müller, 1990: 8).

⁵⁸ “Die son het finaal gesak oor ’n esoteriese kunslanskap van ivoortorings en elitisme. Hy kom reeds op oor miershope en akkedisse: ’n landskap van harde spanwerk, oorlewingsvermoë en deurentyd voete op die aarde ... op Afrika-grond” (Fourie, 1995: 1)

(*Beeld*, 1994: n.p.). This intention was also stated by co-founder of the festival, Nic Barrow (1994) when he said “there will be room for contributions in English and other indigenous languages, but the focus will be on Afrikaans” (quoted in *Beeld*, 1994: n.p.).⁵⁹ Fourie (1995), elaborated on this statement by saying that “[t]he KKNK is not an Afrikaans festival, but a festival for Afrikaans speaking people who are predominantly, but not exclusively, Afrikaans” (quoted in *Rapport* 1995).⁶⁰ This intention of creating “a festival of cross fertilization and reconciliation” was an opportunity for Afrikaans to re-imagine itself within a new South African context.⁶¹ In this respect, Hauptfleisch (2007) claims that

South Africa’s new political freedom ... freed the language from political stigma and ... Afrikaans festivals [were] trying to make space for the whole spectrum of Afrikaans cultural expression [so that] all speakers of Afrikaans could feel at home, to interact, laugh, argue, philosophise, eat, drink, be merry and argue with each other across their variety of social, cultural, ethnic and other differences (94).

Hauptfleisch is thus emphasising the fact that the festival was not only designed for one group of Afrikaans speakers, but wanted to offer opportunities for Afrikaans to shed the image of a language belonging only to white Afrikaners. These initial intentions were later reiterated by Brett Pyper (2008):

Our aim is to really be a festival for all speakers of and people who understand Afrikaans. This entails the challenge not only to mirror the diversity within Afrikaans mother tongue communities, but also to highlight the Afrikaans inflection in South African culture in general, including amongst second and third language speakers (7, trans. H. Gehring).⁶²

Elsewhere, Pyper (2007) claims that “*this* arts festival has become the unlikely example of cultural restructuring within a post-apartheid society” (11).⁶³ And yet, despite these intentions and the actions taken to open up the Afrikaans language, the KKNK is still open to criticism

⁵⁹ “Daar sal ruimte wees vir bydraes in Engels en ander inheemse tale, maar die klem sal op Afrikaans val” (Barrow, quoted in *Beeld*, 1994: n.p., trans. H. Gehring).

⁶⁰ “Die KKNK is nie ’n Afrikaanse fees nie, maar ’n fees vir Afrikaanses wat oorwegend, maar nie eksklusief, Afrikaans is” (Fourie quoted in *Rapport*, 12 November 1995: 20, trans. H. Gehring).

⁶¹ “... ’n fees van kruisbestuiwing en versoening” (Fourie quoted in *Rapport*, 12 November 1995: 20, trans. H. Gehring).

⁶² “Ons doelwit is om waarlik ’n fees vir alle praters en verstaners van Afrikaans te wees. Dit behels die uitdaging om nie net die diversiteit binne Afrikaanssprekende moedertaalgemeenskappe te weerspieel nie, maar ook om die Afrikaanse infleksie in Suid-Afrikaanse kultuur oor die algemeen, ook onder tweede en derdetaal sprekers, uit te lig” (Pyper, 2008: 7, trans. H. Gehring).

⁶³ “... dié kunstefees [het] die onwaarskynlike toonbeeld van kulturele herstrukturering in ’n post-apartheid samelewing geword” (Pyper, 2007: 11, trans. H. Gehring).

and is faced with many challenges related to transformation.⁶⁴ The celebration of Afrikaans puts the festival in a difficult position, given that the language is still often associated with Afrikaner nationalism; and the demographic reality is that attendance is still dominated by white people.⁶⁵ For this reason it has been subject to some derogatory labels, such as “boere bazaar” (Stadler, 2003: 1), and associated with Afrikaners “wat laer trek” [Afrikaners who form a laager] (*Die Burger*, 2009) – a label that has strong resonance with Afrikaner nationalism, an ideology associated with apartheid.

Attempts at racial and cultural integration have in some cases been hampered by racist incidents, such as one in 1998 when a small group of white audience members threw beer cans at well-known black singer Miriam Makeba while she was performing at Kaktus op die Vlakte, an open air music festival (Horn & Morgenrod, 1997: n.p.). Another incident occurred in 2007 when members of the *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging*, or ‘Movement for Afrikaner Resistance’, displayed posters at the festival, sporting the old South African Republic motto *Eendrag Maak Mag* [Unity is Strength] (Booyens, 2000: n.p.). These incidents created tension within the festival and perpetuated, yet again, the stigma of white Afrikaners as an ethnic group in search of separation from the rest of South Africa. Despite such incidents instigated by extremists using the festival as a platform for their own agenda, Mike van Graan (2007) reports that the audiences at the KKNK do not have any problem with mixed race productions.⁶⁶ One

⁶⁴ With regard to the perception that the KKNK is a “closed” space for predominantly white, Afrikaans speaking attendants, Cremona’s (2007) notion of “community spaces” is useful where she mentions that “[i]dentification and (re-)construction of a particular group can make it very difficult to attract and integrate persons who do not belong (or feel they belong) to a group” (11).

⁶⁵ The notion of “Afrikaans culture” is contentious and does not refer to a single identity. The language is shared by people across racial divides so that there are many debates about “ownership” of the language and about who is an Afrikaner. The Afrikaans language originated from Dutch, then developed along various lines, notably being spoken by the slaves of Dutch slave owners in the Cape of Good Hope. For this reason, the language became known as “kitchen Dutch”. According to the *Advanced Dictionary of the Afrikaans Language [Verklarende Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal]* (2005), an “Afrikaner is a person who is Afrikaans by birth or descent, especially somebody who has Afrikaans as mother tongue” (27; trans. H. Gehring). Despite this inclusive definition, the term “Afrikaner” has often been regarded as a means to define identity, referring to white speakers of Afrikaans. This term also has strong political undertones and has regularly been associated with Afrikaner nationalism. If used in this sense it excludes Afrikaans mother tongue speakers who are “coloured” or “black”. To overcome such associations with Afrikaner nationalism, the term “Afrikaanse” has been developed to refer to a speaker of Afrikaans in the broadest sense of the word. Some people simply refer to themselves as Afrikaans speaking South Africans, thereby distancing themselves from any political associations.

⁶⁶ This has also been my experience where I can testify that in all the interracial productions that I have produced for the KKNK, I have never had any negative feedback, either from the press or from the audience. Furthermore, I can say that the cast members from racial groups other than white in my productions have never had a problem in a social setting and have, in fact, been welcomed so that the impression was that diversity was valued amongst festival attendants.

can therefore not make a judgement about the KKNK based on such isolated racist incidents.⁶⁷ And yet, as already mentioned, it is true that the audiences are predominantly white and Afrikaans speaking. This is related to many factors, the most obvious ones being socioeconomic (only some can afford to attend the KKNK)⁶⁸ and cultural (the nature of the work on offer resonates with white Afrikaans speaking people).⁶⁹ With regard to the above mentioned associations, South African playwright Deon Opperman warns:

The republican attitude of Oudtshoorn and Potch will stand or fall on the extent to which they are successful in securing “open borders”. Close the borders and we are faced again with the radical recognition of difference (with cultural apartheid close on its heels); keep the borders open and Van Wyk Louw’s “free circulation of ideas” will continue, with the recognition of difference that will lead to a deeper reciprocal cultural understanding and respect (*Ras en diskriminasie by die drie nasionale kunstefeeste*, n.d., trans. H. Gehring).⁷⁰

In this comment Opperman refers to the manner in which the Afrikaners have historically been known for closing themselves off from the rest of South Africa, particularly in order to govern themselves independently from English rule. In this manner attempts were made in history to retain autonomy politically and in terms of their language and culture. Such a republican attitude usually goes hand in hand with the closing of borders in an attempt to keep outsiders at bay.

Opperman warns against such a closed attitude. Within a closed environment there is no chance for the further development of relationships and respect. How to manage this is a difficult and contentious issue, borne out of complex situations. And yet, with regard to the

⁶⁷ One can here refer to Deon Opperman’s (n.d.) comment when he states that “[d]ie goeie nuus is dat rassiste by al drie die feeste in die minderheid is; die slegte nuus is dat dit net een Hitler neem om die wêreld in ’n oorlog te sleep” [the good news is that racists at all three festivals are in the minority; the bad news is that it only takes one Hitler to drag the world into war] (*Ras en diskriminasie by die drie nasionale kunstefeeste*, trans. H. Gehring).

⁶⁸ As mentioned before, one of the reasons for starting the KKNK was to make an economic contribution to Oudtshoorn and surrounding areas. One also needs to bear in mind that the festival is dependent on private sponsorship as the government has completely withdrawn itself from this festival. The festival therefore needs to straddle a difficult tightrope of satisfying paying patrons in order to make the festival financially viable and of also trying to push boundaries.

⁶⁹ For the same reason that very few non-isiXhosa speakers, for example, will attend the isiXhosa festival in Langa, Cape Town, people who do not speak Afrikaans will not necessarily want to spend their money on attending a festival that centres on the Afrikaans language.

⁷⁰ “Die republikeinse ingesteldheid van Oudtshoorn en Potch sal staan of val in die mate waarin hulle daarin slaag om ’n ‘oop grens’ te bewaar. Sluit die grens en ons sit weer met die radikale erkenning van verskil (met kulturele apartheid kort op sy hakke); hou die grens oop en Van Wyk Louw se ‘vrye bloedsomloop van idees’ gaan aan, met die erkenning van verskil wat uitloop op ’n dieper wedersydse kulturele begrip en respek” (Opperman, *Ras en diskriminasie by die drie nasionale kunstefeeste*: n.d.).

KKNK and other Afrikaans festivals, such as *Aardklop* [throbbing earth] festival and *Die Woordfees* [the Stellenbosch based word festival], it cannot be denied that part of the agenda is to contribute to the development of Afrikaans and to foster support for the language. This means, as noted earlier in this chapter, that the majority of people who support the Afrikaans festivals attend due to their strong relationship with the language. Unfortunately, such attempts at protecting the language have at times resulted in aggressive moves to exclude anybody who is not white and Afrikaans speaking. This type of exclusivity is not unique to Afrikaners and has become increasingly evident in the Western world where strict control of national borders has become more common, so that one can assume that the more globalised the world becomes on the one hand, the tighter the borders become on the other. Within a South African context the perceived laager mentality of some Afrikaners – as a result of the yearning for autonomy of language and cultural practice – leaves a bad taste in the mouth and is often viewed in a negative manner, where it reeks of Afrikaner Nationalism. Such extremist attitudes are sometimes difficult to control, particularly in the light of real threats to the language.

Recently, for example, the Afrikaans singer Steve Hofmeyr, started singing the old South African anthem, *Die Stem van Suid-Afrika*, at one of his concerts (Sieberhagen, 2015: n.p.). This radical and displaced Afrikaner nationalism does not help to create a pro-Afrikaans sentiment and does not help to de-stigmatise Afrikaners as a group of people who regard themselves as separate from the rest of South Africa.⁷¹ Such behaviour also does not help to establish reciprocal understanding and respect. It is for this reason that Opperman suggests that the “borders need to be kept open” for a “free circulation of ideas”. Within the premise of “open borders”, difference can be acknowledged and also respected. Such engagement with difference can also lead to cultural enrichment.

To initiate the “free circulation of ideas”, Mike van Graan (2007) argues that the KKNK needs to face the issue of transformation head on. In his comment, made in a report about the KKNK, Van Graan makes comparisons to the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown and the successful manner in which that event has transformed itself. The main difference, however, is that there is a difference in the status of the English and Afrikaans languages. The fact that English is growing in status in South Africa and worldwide means that there is very little need at the National Arts Festival to protect the language, which means that matters related to the

⁷¹ Marlene van Niekerk goes as far as to say that “we live in a country without a democratic history or culture ... so much so that one can ask whether a communal culture is even possible ...” (quoted in De Vries, 2012: 17). Within this milieu she explains that she is concerned about clashing nationalisms – black nationalism against Afrikaner nationalism (ibid).

language are not really foregrounded. People do not go to the National Arts Festival to enjoy themselves in English; they go to enjoy the arts. At the KKNK, on the other hand, people attend predominantly to enjoy engaging in Afrikaans rather than to support the arts. It also needs to be stated that although the National Arts Festival offers a huge diversity of art forms and – although there is a much bigger diversity of race representation – the majority of the productions on offer use English. For this reason, despite its intention of offering diversity, it foregrounds English rather than representing the other South African languages. Furthermore, with regard to attempts at inclusivity at the National Arts Festival, theatre director Lara Foot (2014) claims: “I don’t see much integration at all. Things have become more polarised. There are certain audience that attend certain shows on the Fringe” (quoted in Govender, 2014: n.p.). From this comment one can assume that, despite the apparently successful transformation of the National Arts Festival, it still has not managed to integrate audiences entirely.

To return to Van Graan’s (2007) comments, the talk about transformation in relation to the KKNK causes anxiety in some people, as transformation could also be associated with radical shifts which could lead to a further diminishing of the power of Afrikaans. Once again it is important to point out that notions of transformation within a post-1994 Afrikaans context can be very complex. The challenges and difficulties that the KKNK faces are explained by Pyper (2007):

Within this radically changing cultural landscape, the ABSA KKNK has developed a Don Quixote mixture of self-critique and self-value by means of which it still challenges, ridicules and celebrates Afrikaans identity, while it simultaneously tries to shed the historical weight of racial discrimination and nationalism.⁷² Like other festivals that are striving to be of national significance, the ABSA KKNK tries to create a festival programme that is inclusive and representative, while its audiences are predominantly homogeneous. This is a very big challenge within a national context in which Afrikaans claims to cultural democracy are still, in complex ways, tied up with older and newer forms of cultural privileging and exclusivity (11, trans. H. Gehring).⁷³

⁷² The festival changed its name to ABSA KKNK in 1997 since ABSA Bank became the main sponsor after government funding was completely withdrawn from it.

⁷³ “Binne hierdie radikaal veranderende kultuurlandskap het die Absa KKNK ‘n Don Quichotiese mengsel van selfkritiek en selfgating ontwikkel waarmee dit steeds Afrikaanse identiteite uitdaag, tart en vier, terwyl dit tegelyk poog om van die geskiedkundige las van rassediskriminasie en nasionalisme ontslae te raak. Soos ander feeste wat daarna mik om nasionaal beduidend te wees, probeer die Absa KKNK ‘n feesprogram skep wat inklusief en verteenwoordigend is, terwyl sy gehore oorwegend homogeen is. Dit is ‘n groot uitdaging binne ‘n nasionale konteks waar Afrikaanse aansprake op kulturele demokrasie steeds op komplekse wyse met ouer en nuwer vorme van kulturele bevoorregting en eksklusiwiteit verstrengel is” (Pyper, 2007: 11).

It appears, from Pyper's use of the Don Quixote image, that the KKNK – despite its success – is caught up in a battle with itself and with the identity and future of the Afrikaans language. This tension between wanting to preserve and wanting to include can be seen as part the bigger and on-going debate around the future of Afrikaans, something which has been ongoing since 1994 and has recently flared up again, mainly due to the fact that the only two current Afrikaans medium universities – namely Stellenbosch University and the Potchefstroom campus of the North West University (previously the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education) – are under threat of losing Afrikaans as the medium of instruction.⁷⁴ The manner in which these proposed changes are perceived can be seen from newspaper headings such as “Afrikaans vat Houe” [Afrikaans takes punches] (*Rapport* 23, November 2014) and “Lui die klok vir Afrikaans?” [Does the bell toll for Afrikaans?] (*Die Burger*, 2014). The extent to which such threats to the language have caused strong emotional responses can be seen from the somewhat dramatic statement made by a senior professor from the University of North West: “You say that there is no reason to cry at the funeral of Afrikaans, but it depends who stands next to the grave: the murderer or the family of the deceased” (*Rapport*, 2014).⁷⁵

The reason for such strong outcries is that there is the perception that if the higher education institutions lose their status as Afrikaans universities it will be difficult for Afrikaans to keep its status as a modern language. Writer Fred de Vries (2012) points out that “the centre for the survival of Afrikaans lies with the universities and the writers”.⁷⁶ If one considers that “the modernisation of Afrikaners was put into action by means of the rise of higher education [and that] thanks to the rise of Afrikaans language universities in all the big cities, Afrikaners managed to work themselves up from a poor, lowly educated community to a well-educated, modern nation”, then it is understandable that the language's existence is linked to higher education.⁷⁷ In such a climate, of potentially losing the status of their mother tongue, many

⁷⁴ With regard to this language debate it is particularly the University of Stellenbosch which has come under duress as there is a perception that the Afrikaans language at this institute is used as a means towards exclusion. For this reason, the VC of the university, Prof Wim de Villiers, announced on 12 November 2015 that English will from now on be the medium of instruction at Stellenbosch University. This statement has subsequently been altered to state that the university will offer parallel medium instruction from the beginning of 2016, using both English and Afrikaans as mediums of instruction.

⁷⁵ “Jy sê daar is geen rede om te huil by die begrafnis van Afrikaans nie, maar dit hang af wie langs die graf staan: die moordenaar of die familie van die afgestorwene” (*Rapport*, 23 November 2014, trans. H. Gehring).

⁷⁶ “Die spilpunt vir die oorlewing van Afrikaans lê by die universiteite en die skrywers” (De Vries, 2012: 164, trans. H. Gehring).

⁷⁷ “Die modernisering van die Afrikaners is in die apartheidsjare deur hoër onderwys aan die gang gesit. Danksy die totstandkoming van Afrikaanstalige universiteite in al die groot stede het die Afrikaners dit reggekry om hulle

Afrikaans people will become more vehement about protecting the language and more defensive, potentially leading to sentiments in which they would want to exclude themselves from non-Afrikaans speakers or from potential threats to the language. It is within this climate of tension around the Afrikaans language and Afrikaans language related institutions that I am asking questions about the possibilities for retaining, yet also bridging, the language.

As already mentioned, one of the biggest struggles is that of inclusivity, so that one can ask how and in what manner Afrikaans festivals (and the KKNK in particular) need to be inclusive and representative of the broader South African community, given that most of the audience members are linguistically and culturally homogeneous. One can ask the question: should one change the product at the KKNK to attract more diverse audiences? Will this change the identity of the festival and if so will it alienate existing supporters of the festival? Will a more diverse offering at the festival have an impact on its Afrikaans nature? With regard to the responsibility of the festival, Pyper (2007) concludes by stating:

The challenge lies in stimulating sustainable cultural growth and development which does not come down to protectionism and self-deceit, but to making a contribution to all South African artists and cultures (11, trans. H. Gehring).⁷⁸

Although the protectionism to which Pyper refers might stem from real fears, Afrikaans festivals need be wary of the kind of self-deceit that could leave Afrikaners on a cultural island. Pyper's statement does not only pertain to an "island mentality", but is also suggesting that the KKNK should apply itself to making a contribution to all South African artists and to the development of the arts in South Africa. This task is particularly important in light of the fact that the KKNK has become financially successful and can make a financial contribution to artists, seeing that the arts industry in South Africa is increasingly waning. And yet, once again, one wonders whether the financial success of the festival is not due to the strong focus on Afrikaans. Is it not well supported precisely because patrons foreground Afrikaans? If this is changed, the festival might experience a change in financial success.

Capitalism only speaks the language of money and giving customers what they want remains the bottom line. This has become clear in the Steve Hofmeyr conundrum mentioned

op te werk van 'n arm, laaggeskoolde gemeenskap tot 'n goed opgeleide, moderne volk" (De Vries, 2012: 164, trans. H. Gehring).

⁷⁸ "Die uitdaging lê daarin om volgehoue Afrikaanse kulturele groei en ontwikkeling te stimuleer wat nie net op proteksionisme en selfbedrog neerkom nie, maar 'n bydrae tot die bevordering van alle Suid-Afrikaanse kunstenaars en kulture maak" (Pyper, 2007: 11).

earlier in this chapter: due to the fact that he had defended Afrikaner nationalism in what was perceived to be racist terms, two major Afrikaans festivals barred him from their 2015 programmes. In response, many regular festival goers threatened not to attend.

One thing that is certain is that an attitude of exclusion is not conducive to the integration of Afrikaans speaking people into the broader cultural landscape. It also does not foster the democratic ideals as stated in the South African Constitution. How such inclusivity is reached without compromising the development and protection of the Afrikaans language is a complex matter for which the answers are not always readily available. This thesis is not focused on suggestions for changing the demographics of the KKNK but, rather, it is investigating the models that have been applied in theatre to make it inclusive and representative of a multi-cultural society without losing the language. With regard to such an inclusive project, one can learn from Louise Viljoen's (2002) comment:

Renewal in Afrikaans literature [and by implication theatre] can take place if Afrikaans writers open themselves up to all the voices in the South African society and if they accept the challenge to incorporate even the most evasive and marginal voices in their work (n.p., trans. H. Gehring).⁷⁹

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I gave information about the Klein Karoo National Arts festival and its political climate. This was done so as to give further insight into political underpinnings of this thesis. To introduce the festival, I first gave information about the role of South African arts festivals in general in support of my claim that these festivals are contributors to a South African theatre identity. Apart from making this claim, I argued that they can also be representative of a democratic attitude in the spirit of "arts for the people". I also wanted to point out that festivals, as meeting places for diverse people, can serve a community building function. From this general introduction, I shifted my focus to the KKNK, describing its motivation, and highlighting the fact that it originated from the need to create a platform for the development and protection of the Afrikaans language in the light of fears that the language was going to become extinct within a multilingual, post-1994, South Africa. I also wanted to point out that, to a certain degree, an Afrikaans identity is played out at this festival, something which is taken to extreme measures by some people. Apart from explaining that the festival was meant as a

⁷⁹ "Vernuwing in die Afrikaanse letterkunde [en by implikasie toneel] kan plaasvind as Afrikaanse skrywers hulle oopstel vir al die stemme van die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing en die uitdaging aanvaar om selfs die ontwykende en afwykendste stemme in hulle werk op te neem" (Viljoen, 2002: n.p.).

platform for Afrikaans expression, I pointed out that it was conceived of as an inclusive event in which sharing and collaboration are valued. Finally, I wanted to highlight the challenges that can go hand-in-hand with this festival's ideals of bonding – by means of the Afrikaans language – but also of bridging the divides that can be caused by this language. It is in response to such a wish that suggestions for bonding and bridging will be made in the following chapters with reference to “syncretism” and “hybridity”. This chapter is the last of the contextual chapters that make up Part One of this thesis. The chapters that follow address theory and practice.

PART TWO: IN THEORY

Chapter Four: Towards Hybridity and Syncretism

To see ourselves as others see us can be eye-opening. To see others as sharing a nature with ourselves is the merest decency. But it is from the far more difficult achievement of seeing ourselves amongst others, as a local example of the forms human life has locally taken, a case among cases, a world among worlds, that the largeness of mind, without which objectivity is self-congratulation and tolerance a shame, comes.

- Clifford Geertz: *Local Knowledge*, 1983

4.1 Introduction: Elaborations on third space theory

This chapter highlights and discusses characteristics that go hand-in-hand with the terms “syncretism” and “hybridity”. It follows my contention that in search of inclusive performance and theatre models that represent a multicultural society, the most responsive forms are syncretic and hybrid. Principles that can contribute to the unification and merging of diverse and polarized groups are highlighted, and suggestions are made for possible ways to bring about bonding and bridging within cultural practices. The concepts of “hybridity” and “syncretism” can be related to “third space” theory, offering perspectives which will later be discussed with reference to practice. Key theoretical aspects related to hybridity and syncretism are highlighted and subsequently explained using examples from cultural practices that fall under the umbrella term of “performance”. This chapter’s focus on cultural studies is intended to offer a precursor to the concepts of “hybridity” and “syncretism” as they are applied in theatre. As such it provides navigational tools for the discussion of theatre productions which takes place in Chapters Five to Nine.

Before proceeding I would like to note that although the terms “hybridity” and “syncretism” are discussed separately in this chapter, they will be used more or less interchangeably in the rest of the thesis. The reason for an initial distinction is in order to give a clearer context, thus commenting on the origin of each of the terms and the manner in which each is associated with leading post-colonial theoreticians.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Homi Bhabha (1994) and Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) are predominantly associated with the term “hybridity”, whereas Christopher Balme (1999) uses the term “syncretism” as discussed in Chapter Five. Others, such as Gilbert and Tompkins (1996) and Ashraf Jamal (2006), use the terms “syncretism” and “hybridity” interchangeably. With regard to such an interchangeable use, Balme (1999) observes – in referencing the authors V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie and Michael Ondaatje – that the terms “syncreticity, hybridity, or creolization ... seem to be used interchangeably” (10). Balme also explains that Temple Hauptfleisch’s definition of “‘hybrid’ theatre corresponds roughly to [David] Coplan’s concept of syncretic performance” (ibid: 11). Shaw and Stewart (1996) also observe that in contemporary cultural contexts, the term “syncretic” is sometimes replaced by the term “hybrid” (2).

4.2. About Hybridity

4.2.1 A mixed union

The term “hybridity” originates from the Latin “hibrida”, which refers to the “offspring of a mixed union (human or animal)” (Dictionary.com).⁸¹ The term is common in biological studies and is closely aligned with studies of evolution. It generally refers to “a cross between genetically unlike individuals” (ibid). In the introduction to their book *Reconstructing Hybridity* (2007), Joel Kuortti and Jopi Nyman explain that in Rudyard Kipling’s the *Jungle Book* (1894) the character Mowgli can be seen as a hybrid in the sense that he lives between the animal and the human world, not fitting in anywhere and falling into a liminal space (5). Due to this association with the liminal, hybrid forms are often regarded as being in a state of becoming something else. Alternatively, they are regarded as forms that resist binary oppositions; that are not fixed and are thus in states of flux.

4.2.2 An (im)pure form

In Victorian usage the implication behind the term “hybrid” was of impurity or not as good as the original. The derogatory connotations were marked, particularly, with reference to racial, cultural or lingual intermixing. Such an attitude arguably arose from “supremacist Eurocentric accounts of racial origins and racial distinction, which were used to incite a fear of the dangers of interbreeding” (Smith, 2004: 250), particularly advocated during the nineteenth century. Some argue that this Victorian ideological spin is still imbedded in the term and that it therefore should be used with caution. Robert C. Young (1995) explains:

It was the increasing vigour with which the racial doctrine of polygenesis was asserted that led to the preoccupation with hybridity in the mid-nineteenth century ... because the claim that humans were one or several species (and thus equal and unequal, same or different) stood or fell over the question of hybridity, that is, intra-racial fertility (9).

In the Victorian perspective acculturation in any degree implied a threat, as opposed to enrichment or pragmatic adaption. This attitude is still evident today and, as John Hutnyk (2005) explains, “[t]he idea of borrowing is sometimes taken to imply a weakening of culture”

⁸¹ <<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/hybrid>> last accessed on 13 September 2014.

(81), leading to some people being suspicious of hybrid forms.⁸² And yet, it is from such so-called impurity that cultural growth can be brought about, due to the manner in which these forms can interrupt and potentially disrupt fixed cultural formations.

4.2.3 The translation and negotiation of difference

In a contemporary context, the term “hybridity” can be used to describe multiple and diverse concerns, so that one can concur with Néstor García Canclini’s argument (2005) that “moving from biology to sociocultural analysis [hybridity] gained new fields of application but lost univocal sense” (17). As a contemporary concept, “hybridity” is used to refer to a wide spectrum of social and cultural phenomena involving “mixing”: these include “processes of interethnic contact and de-colonisation ... globalizing processes ... travel and border crossing ... and artistic, literary, and mass communicational fusions ...” (ibid). The meaning and its associated connotations is, thus, highly dependent on the context. Within post-colonial theory, according to Paul Meredith (1998), Homi Bhabha “contends that a new hybrid identity or subject-position emerges from the interweaving of elements of the coloniser and colonised challenging the validity and authenticity of any essentialist cultural identity. Hybridity is positioned as antidote to essentialism” (2). From this perspective, hybrid forms offer opportunities for the intersection of diverse ideologies, in turn offering opportunities for the translation and negotiation of difference. Bhabha (1990) claims that “[h]ybridity is the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge” (211). Such emergence of alternative positions does not always happen in a harmonious manner, and in post-colonial terms can be interpreted as a struggle for identity in line with notions of a radical democracy. From this post-colonial perspective, Bhabha (1994) uses the Freudian term of the uncanny, *das Unheimliche* [literally “the unhomely”] to describe the new forms that inevitably must emerge. As Bhabha explains, culture has aspects of both the homely and the unhomely:

Culture is *heimlich*, with its disciplinary generalisations, its mimetic narratives, its homologous empty time, its seriality, its progress, its customs and coherence. But cultural authority is also *unheimlich*, for to be distinctive, signficatory, influential and identifiable, it has to be translated, disseminated, differentiated, interdisciplinary, intertextual, international, inter-racial (ibid: 136-137).

⁸² Hutnyk (2005) is of the opinion that understanding hybridity as a weakening “belongs to the essentialist nationalisms and chauvinisms that are arraigned against the hybrid, diasporic and the migrant” (81).

In Bhabha's terms the *unheimliche* attributes of culture are required for cultural growth: and in this respect hybrid cultural forms can make a contribution to the creation of ideals as related to third space theory. One could argue that hybrids can become sites for "third space theory": able to effect the formation of new cultural forms. Such cultural formations are necessary in order to mirror continuously morphing societies. Bhabha's notion of hybridity is thus applicable to post-colonial contexts, in which cultural forms and relationships need to be re-imagined by means of cultural translation and negotiation.

However, hybridity can also be understood as going beyond the coloniser/colonised paradigm, so that it refers to all kinds of cultural intermixing. In both global and local terms, Goldberg's (1994) description of the necessarily disruptive aspect of hybrid forms presents a challenge to the stasis of monolithic cultural forms:

Hybridities are the modalities in and through which multicultural conditions get lived out, and renewed. In this sense, incorporative undertakings are transgressive, engaged by definition in infringing and exceeding the norms of the monocultural status quo and transforming the values and representations that have held racist culture together (10).

The monoculturalism to which Goldberg refers is related to notions of essentialism, so, in this sense hybridity is a way in which essentialist notions can be challenged.

4.2.4 Challenging hierarchies

Apart from exposing essentialist notions of culture, hybrid forms can also challenge the formation of hierarchies in resistance to the domination of one ideology, discipline or form of expression over another. Canclini (2005) explains that "by reducing the conceptual hierarchy of identity and heterogeneity in favour of hybridization, we remove support from policies of fundamentalist homogenization or the limited (segregated) recognition of 'the plurality of cultures'" (xxix). Canclini elaborates by saying that no human cultures are in fact pure due to "continuous processes of transculturation (two-way borrowing and lending between cultures)" (ibid) so hybridity can be viewed as "an on-going condition of all human cultures" (ibid). From a similar viewpoint, Bhabha (1990) maintains that "all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity" (211). One could thus argue that hybridity is a natural part of acculturation and that ultimately all cultures are formed in this manner. As a deepening of this notion of the hybrid, Canclini (2005) points out that rather than focus on the term "hybridity" itself, it is better to focus on processes of "hybridization" (xxx). In response to this notion, Canclini (2005) explains that "hybridization" can be understood to refer to "[s]ocio-cultural processes

in which discrete structures or practices, previously existing in separate form, are combined to generate new structures, objects, and practices” (xxv).⁸³ Inglis (2005) defines such acts of hybridization as the “interweaving of hitherto separate – or relatively separate – cultural patterns, ideas, tastes, styles and attitudes” (87).

4.2.5 Interweaving cultures

Inglis’ use of the term “interweaving” can be understood further by means of Erika Fischer-Lichte’s (2014) comprehensive description of the multidimensional and multifaceted nature of the weaving analogy:

Interweaving functions on several levels: Many strands are plied into a thread; many such threads are then woven into a piece of cloth, which thus consists of diverse strands and threads ... They are dyed, plied and interwoven, forming particular patterns without allowing the viewer to trace each strand back to its origin. On the other hand, a process of interweaving does not necessarily result in the production of a whole. In it, mistakes, errors, failures, and even small disasters might occur when unintended knots appear in the cloth, when threads unravel or flow apart, when the proportion of the dyes is off, or the cloth woven becomes stained. The process of weaving is not necessarily smooth or straightforward (11).

What is particularly important is the *utopian* objective within such acts of interweaving, which, according to Fischer-Lichte, is “at the very core of the concept of interweaving performance cultures” (ibid). This assumption makes sense within the metaphor of “threads woven into cloth”, suggesting “interconnectedness” (ibid). Lichte’s description leads to many associations, mainly related to the bringing together or coming together of difference. Although the product is ultimately a single piece of woven cloth – a point of connection or entanglement – the different strands remain evident. Such a product, which can also be understood to be a text, does not shy away from difference. In fact, difference is embraced and incorporated: it is seen as a way to make the cloth both colourful and strong. It is what makes the product distinctive, unusual and ultimately unique. Furthermore, from Fischer-Lichte’s description, it is clear that the act of interweaving entails multiple activities, some of which – for example, plying and dyeing – are quite tangibly acts of transformation. One can thus say that in making such a cloth, different activities and entities are brought together in relation to one another. Hybridisation can thus be understood in terms of interweaving and one could say that hybrid art and

⁸³ Canclini (2005) explains that even so-called “discrete structures” were “a result of prior hybridizations and therefore cannot be considered pure points of origin” (xxv).

performance forms are constituted as texts consisting of multiple strands. Within such bringing together, Fischer-Lichte (2014), speaking about the transformative qualities of cultural hybridity in theatre, points to the future effect of a transitional experience:

... these performances can transfer their participants into states of in-betweenness, which allow them to anticipate a future wherein the journey itself, permanence of transition, and the state of liminality, is indeed constitutive of their experience. What is perceived as an aesthetic experience in these performances will be experienced as everyday life in the future (11–12).

Finally, then, in relation to the concepts of hybridization and interweaving as ways in which utopian ideals can be made manifest, Canclini (2005) speaks of the potential for increasing social cohesion:

Hybridization, as a process of intersection and transaction, is what makes it possible for multicultural reality to avoid tendencies toward segregation and to become cross-cultural reality. Policies of hybridization can serve to work democratically with differences, so that history is not reduced to wars between cultures We can choose to live in a state of war or in a state of hybridization (xxxix).

This understanding of the role of hybridization in preventing or countering conflict forms one of the main motivations underlying this thesis.

4.2.6 Summary

If one considers the above-mentioned points, then hybrid forms have the potential to undermine the formation of fixed polar opposites and can be used as a strategy to prevent cultural forms from being “corseted into false oppositions such as high or popular, urban or rural, modern or traditional” (Franco, quoted in Canclini, 2005: xxiv). However, the adoption of hybrid art forms does not simply imply an uncritical celebratory approach to culture; it is instead a way in which to interrogate cultural practices. In other words, hybrid formations not only symbolise a “fusion, cohesion, osmosis, but [also] confrontation and dialogue” (Laplantine & Nouss, 1997: 14). What is important for the purpose of this thesis is that hybridity refers to a mixing of diverse and previously distinct forms from which something new can emerge. This mixing is regarded by some as a way in which previously distinct systems are diluted, contaminated or even eradicated, causing a cultural weakening or a muddling of truths. Others regard this merging as a strengthening of cultures: a dynamic development, suggesting cultural growth and progress; a natural result of contact between diverse people. From this latter perspective, hybrid forms are regarded as a logical by-product of globalisation, stemming from the argument that “[a]s time and space compression has deepened [through globalization], so the

cultures of more and more places become ‘translated’” (Massey, 1995: 199). Furthermore, within the context of this thesis, the symbolic value of hybrid forms is that they offer possibilities for the reconciliation between previously divided people and present opportunities for highlighting multiple identities and diverse ideologies. About hybrid forms, Bhabha (2009) explains that they are “intercultural site[s] of enunciation, at the intersection of different languages, jousting for authority, a translational space of negotiation [that] opens up through the process of dialogue” (x). In Bhabha’s terms, hybrid forms thus have to be:

- Intercultural;
- intersections of different languages;
- translational spaces;
- spaces of negotiation; and
- spaces in which and from which dialogue is made possible.

4.3 About syncretism

4.3.1 Made up of differences

The word “syncretism” – which first appeared in the *Oxford Dictionary* in 1618 – is derived from the Latin *syncretismus*, which is in turn derived from the Greek *synkretismos*. Etymologically *synkretismos* is constructed from the ancient Greek prefix, *syn* (with) and the Greek word *krasis* (mixture) to refer to a mixing together or compound (Shaw & Stewart, 1994: 3). The first evidence of the use of the word “syncretism” in written form was during the first century CE when Plutarch used it in his essay “*On Brotherly Love*” which forms part of his collection of essays, called *Moralia*. In this essay he gives advice on attitudes to brotherly love by referring to the manner in which Cretans responded to outside threats. He explains:

Though they often quarrelled with and warred against each other, they made up their differences and united when outside enemies attacked; and this it was which they called “syncretism” (Plutarch, trans. Babbit, 1927: 30).⁸⁴

In Plutarch’s use of the word, he literally referred to a coming together or combination of Cretans, combining the prefix “*syn*” (with) and the word “*kretoi*” (Cretan) (Shaw & Stewart, 1994: 3). It is therefore not clear whether Plutarch was punning on the familiar word *syngkrasis*

⁸⁴ In a contemporary context, such coming together of diverse groups against a united enemy can be found during international sports events, where groups or subcultures who normally disagree in their own country will unite against another country. In a post-apartheid South Africa, sport events were indeed consciously employed as mechanisms for reconciliation. The two most prominent examples are the Rugby World Cup Game of 1995 and the FIFA Soccer World Cup of 2010. Both these events played a significant role in uniting a country that was and still is struggling to overcome racial and class divisions.

or using “a widespread folk etymology, reporting and reviving an attested earlier word” (ibid). Whichever way it is interpreted, Plutarch used the word “syncretism” to refer to the coming together of diverse people and, in doing this, he made a link between the word “syncretism” and notions related to negotiation and reconciliation between differing groups or parties. Following on from the context in which Plutarch used this word, one can say, along with Kenneth George (1992), that “the arena of syncretism is a deeply politicised site of differences, contact and reconciliation” (quoted in Shaw & Stewart, 1994: 3).

Other ways in which the term “syncretism” has been described are as follows: “an attempt to sink differences and effect union between sects or philosophical schools” (*Oxford Dictionary*, 1911); “the attempted reconciliation or union of different or opposing principles, practices or parties, as in philosophy or religion” (dictionary.com); “the fusion of two or more originally different inflectional forms” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/syncretism>); “a reconciliation of, or attempt to reconcile, different systems of belief” (Howard, 1964). Within the above mentioned aims of reconciliation, what is foregrounded are the “borrowing, affirmation, or integration of concepts, symbols, or practices by a process of selection and reconciliation” (Berlin, 1980: 9). In this manner, an “amalgamation of blending heterogeneous beliefs and practices” (Van der Veer, 1994: 208) can be brought about.⁸⁵ This, in turn, mostly leads to the merging of “previously distinct ... categories, and by extension, cultural formations, into a single new form” (Ashcroft *et al*, 1989: 14).

It should be noted that the entities that are combined through syncretic merging are not necessarily naturally compatible, so that syncretic forms are sometimes regarded as an “illogical compromise” (ibid) or an “ambiguous co-existence” (Pye, 1971: 93). Ironically, it is due to this very implausibility or ambiguity that syncretic forms can be a powerful means in undermining the construction of binary oppositions.

⁸⁵ Although both Berlin and Van der Veer’s comments refer to religious syncretism, the same principles can be applied to other areas of syncretic practice.

4.3.2 Unusual coalitions

Examples of such non-obvious combinations of diverse entities can often be seen in syncretic religions, in which the syncretic form is often proof of contact between diverse groups and cultures in contexts where such groups are often representative of indigenous people and colonisers or settlers.⁸⁶ One such religion is Zulu Zionism, in which one can find “the imposition of Christian meaning on historic African activities” (West, 1975: 188). In this manner two seemingly incompatible belief systems – namely Christianity and ancestor worship – are merged, as described in Jim Kiernan’s (1976) claim that “[a]t the heart of every Zionist meeting, a prayer and Bible service is followed by a healing rite” (357). In another source, Kiernan (1994) explains that “[t]he first of these [practices] is clearly Christian, while the second corresponds to rituals of affliction which have been part of the fabric of indigenous society” (71). In this way, a practical solution has been found that integrates Christian and indigenous systems and results in the formation of something altogether unique, which in certain respects departs from traditional belief systems and practices. In the sense that syncretic forms, by their nature, suggest ways for people to depart from their respective traditions, they create possibilities for gaining independence from received traditions.⁸⁷ In the case of Zulu Zionism the founder members were not only in search of independence from received traditions, but also from colonial imposition.

A formative feature of Zulu Zionism was a search for points of connection between religions, thus establishing cultural crossovers. These crossovers were between Western and African religious practices and, even more specifically, between Western and African healing practices. Bengt Sundkler (1976) explains that Zulu Zionism had its origins in the Dutch

⁸⁶ The term “syncretism” is inextricably linked to religious studies and is most commonly used in the field of religion. It is for this reason that a relatively lengthy explication is given of the manner in which the term can be understood in religious terms. Many of the key principles found in religious syncretism are applicable to non-religious practices, so that one can, to a certain degree, generalise about specific examples. Furthermore, the choice to start with examples from religion as an introduction to syncretism in cultural practices in general and in theatre in particular, was made from the understanding that theatre has its roots in religion, so that there are clear connecting points between principles as found in religion and as found in theatre.

⁸⁷ The reason for highlighting this particular religious form is that it offers a very good example of how a new religion emerged from the contact between indigenous people and settlers. Characteristics that stand out are the reciprocal nature of the process, the search for independence from received traditions and the points of connection between seemingly distinct religions. The fact that the ceremonies in Zulu Zionism are based on diverse cultural practices that have been amalgamated into something new is useful for understanding how syncretism can be understood within a performance realm. Ideally some of the approaches mentioned in relation to Zulu Zionism can be transferred to theatre practice.

Reformed Church's attempts at mission work within the borders of South Africa during the late nineteenth century. Inspired by the writings of Dutch Reformed Church minister, Andrew Murray jnr (1828 – 1917), as captured in his book called *Divine Healing: A series of Addresses* (1900), Dutch Reformed missionary Revd. P. L. le Roux, became interested in faith healing. Murray used, as examples, the Western faith healing practices as propagated by Drs Stockmeyer and Boardman. This in turn inspired Le Roux to search for faith healing in a South African context, ultimately bringing him into contact with Zulu faith healing. One can therefore say that, although there was a missionary agenda in Revd. Le Roux's actions, there was also an agenda of cultural exchange. Le Roux's original intention was to be a missionary to the Zulu as part of the Dutch Reformed Church's aim of setting up missionary projects within South Africa. However, by the same token, he wanted to learn more about faith healing.

Furthermore, the Zulus who took on the Zionist faith used it as a form of empowerment and bartering. Apart from being an unusual combination of African and European forms of worship, Zulu Zionism is significant because the coalition of religious forms offered Zulu worshippers independence from received or imposed traditions. I agree with Sundkler that "cutting [themselves] off from mainstream Christians and from adherents to African tradition ... has enabled them to assert a measure of social and economic independence" (ibid: 73). In this particular case the merging and the resulting adaptations came about as a result of both the close proximity in which the belief systems functioned during a particular time in history and the group's impulse to gain independence from established organisations.

Syncretism thus not only stands for a merging or coming together of diverse groups and for independence gained in attempts to depart from received traditions, but it also enables a reciprocal exchange of cultural practices or belief systems.

4.3.3 Re-imagining traditions – old/new; local/foreign

Reciprocal influencing is also evident in belief systems of the Hellenic age, during which various forms of worship were merged as a result of the conquests and subsequent colonisation by Alexander of Macedon.⁸⁸ According to Frederick Grant (1953) "[t]he main characteristic feature of Hellenistic religion was ... the tendency to identify the deities of various peoples and to combine their cults" (xiii). Extensive colonisation by the Greeks, after the death of Alexander, resulted in religious amalgamations. This is apparent in the manner in which the

⁸⁸ The age in Mediterranean and Near East history, which was inaugurated by the conquests of Alexander of Macedon – who died in 323 B.C. (Grant, 1953: xi) – was called the Hellenic (or Hellenistic) Age; also known as the "Age of Syncretism".

Greek gods were adopted and renamed by conquered cultures: an example offered by Grant is that the Greek Zeus became “Zeus-Amon-Re in Egypt, Zeus-Jupiter in Italy, Zeus-Hypsistos or Zeus-Baal-Shamayim in Syria” (ibid). What is interesting in the Hellenistic syncretic systems – such as Gnosticism – is that, despite the fact that the Greeks imposed their belief systems (which were also syncretic) onto their colonial subjects, the outcome was not simply socio-cultural annihilation, since the religious customs of the conquered groups remained and in turn influenced Greek customs.

From this cycle of influence, a circulation of belief systems occurred, which led to a plethora of cultural/religious manifestations on the side of the colonised as well as the coloniser. The Hellenic religions were thus comprised of many diverse and opposing practices in which remnants or traces of older religions existed within the new: enabling the co-existence of the *old* and the *new*; the *local* and the *foreign*.⁸⁹ The manner in which these diverse belief systems flowed into and influenced one another is captured in Grant’s (1953) use of water imagery, which depicts syncretism as something dynamic and fluid:

The religions of the Hellenistic age are like a large lake with many tributaries, uniting their waters into one; or, better, like a chain of lakes with many tributaries, for the old cults, the ancient deities, the primitive hero gods, the traditional beliefs and aspirations still survived (though modified) and while making their contribution to the common religious life, retained much of their old identity and many of their ancient peculiarities (1953: xiii).

4.3.4 Change and flow

Such water imagery emphasises the qualities of changeability and adaptability. By flowing into one another, seemingly incompatible or opposing religions can merge, leading to possibilities for new formations. These syncretic religions can thus be regarded as dynamic, suggesting a strengthening by means of a combination of two or more belief systems. Following on from Grant’s description, syncretism can be understood to be “a term ... which acknowledges the permeability and fluidity of social life” (Van der Veer, 1994: 209). Grant’s metaphor of tributaries or a chain or network of lakes can in turn be related to the image of pathways with links to actions of migration, which can in turn be linked to principles of dislocation (departure) and relocation (arrival). It is therefore not surprising that syncretic forms often emerge from contexts in which there is evidence of a high incidence of migration, whether on a local or global scale.

⁸⁹ Grant explains that “[s]ome of them [were] the recrudescence of beliefs and practices older than recorded history” (Grant, 1953: xviii).

4.3.5 Dis-location/re-location

Anthropologist John Hutnyk (2005) claims that in modern anthropology the term “syncretism” was used for the first time in a 1940s study of migrant communities along Zambia’s copper belt. He explains:

Anthropologists had previously only been interested, in a diminutive, salvage kind of way, with the “loss” of cultural forms under “contact” and acculturation. Salvage anthropology was concerned with documenting ‘disappearing worlds’ and lost customs, survivals and traditions, and it was only in belated recognition of the resilience of indigenous communities that they began to think in terms other than decline and fade (84).

The renewed interest in syncretic cultures and structures in the 1940s can thus be regarded as a turning point where syncretic forms, as in the time of Plutarch, were regarded as a way of bolstering cultures. Such a turn in thinking is significant within the context of this thesis which is in search of forms that can unify and reconcile a previously segregated multicultural society in which the fear of loss (of culture), or of cultural contamination, is still pervasive.

In Hutnyk’s reference, syncretism is used within the context of cultural strengthening and resilience so that one could argue that “[a]lthough dynamic and competitive interactions of cultures can lead to conflict, they can also offer solutions, fertile syncretisms and seminalities” (Kolig *et al*, 2009: 10). Often, then, in the case of migrating communities, syncretic forms are testimony of cultural survival: in which case survival can be regarded as the ability to adapt. Syncretic forms are also symbolic of ways in which groups or people can gain agency in relation to traditional cultures, such as in the case of the Zulu Zionists.

As in the Zambian copper belt, the formation of syncretic cultural forms in South Africa has had very strong associations with the mining industry. The discovery of gold and diamonds lead to the rapid expansion of urban areas, along with migration and, inevitably, the emergence of new cultural forms as a result of contact between people from diverse linguistic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. From such association with migration, it makes sense that syncretic forms are also associated with border crossing on both a literal and figurative level. In a literal sense, there is the crossing of geographical borders as a result of migration. Such literal border crossing can in turn be extended into a figurative border crossing of cultures. In turn, such cultural border crossing can be linked to the model of culture that Stuart Hall (1996) terms a

routes approach.⁹⁰ In this model, he explains, “meanings are not fixed, but are constantly being negotiated, contested and transformed” (199). In this manner, then, the concept of cultural formation by means of *routes* can be understood from the manner in which Hall (1994) explains it, following Paul Gilroy’s explanation of black music in his book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993):

If you wanted to tell the story of black music, you wouldn’t construct a story of how “authentic” black music started in Africa and became diluted with each subsequent transformation – the blues, reggae, Afro-Cuban, jazz, soul and rap – all representing “loss of tradition” the further the music gets dispersed from its roots. Instead, you would have to pay attention to the way black music has travelled across and around the diaspora by many, overlapping routes (274).⁹¹

By means of this *routes* approach to cultural formation, it can be said that cultural forms have the means to renewal and are able to be part of a changing world condition. The perspective of cultural *routes*, as opposed to *roots*, places the emphasis on the interconnectedness of diverse cultures and views culture in a circular manner. By this it is meant that while a culture can expand and connect outwards – thus moving away from its “source” – it is also able to return. One can regard many cultural formations as a series of interconnected manifestations, which are not trying to stay true to an “original” source, but which have traces that combine various elements.

This understanding of cultural *routes* can also be applied to the Afrikaans language, in that it is a language that, quite literally, makes evident the amalgamation of diverse cultures that came together at the southernmost point of Africa. Although the language was derived from Dutch, it also includes many Arabic and French words due to the influence of the Dutch slaves from Indonesia and the French Huguenots. As a way to express the syncretic nature of this language, the Afrikaans poet Breyten Breytenbach refers to Afrikaans as a *bastertaal*

⁹⁰ In South Africa the relocation and migration of diverse ethnic and cultural groups is not only a modern phenomenon but has been intrinsic to the country’s historical identity, particularly during the apartheid era during which forced removals were racially imposed, but also in pre-colonial ethnic conflict.

⁹¹ Apart from using the water and pathways image that is often used in relation to syncretic forms, the geographical feature of an archipelago is also used. Here, is it not only the cut up and fragmented nature of an archipelago that has significance in describing syncretic forms but, also, the notion that such an archipelago is exposed to wind and sea and is shaped by means of the forces of nature. In this context, the formation of syncretic modes can be seen to be open for or easily influenced by other elements. It is thus open to wind and weather and can be shaped by these factors over time. Poet Breyten Breytenbach (1998) speaks about a “figure-shaping archipelago” (trans. Viljoen, 1998: 25) in which “archipelagic thought ... [is] thought continually exposed to cultural and linguistic minds and seas ...” (ibid).

[bastard or, bastardised, language]. In his book, *Dog Heart* (1998), he gives poetic expression to this notion:

My language speaks of the loss of purity, I mix Europe and the East and Africa in my veins, my cousin is a Malagasy; my tongue speaks about moving away from the known, about overflowing into the unknown, about *making*; of dispossessing, plundering, enslavement, mixing; of the transmission under guise of a “new” language of that which refuses to be forgotten, of discovery but of agreement also (because comparison is as well a compromise), of the land and of light, of the art to survive (182).

From such a *routes* perspective there is, inevitably, a meeting of people from diverse cultural backgrounds, which in turn leads to acts of negotiation, cultural translation and cultural sharing. From such association with movement, Hermann Siller’s (1991) reference to syncretism as *Suchbewegungen* [search movements] makes sense. Syncretism as a “searching movement” thus refers to movements in search of something or movements resulting from the search for something. Within cultural formations, movement can thus be brought about by means of syncretic forms, or the arising of syncretic forms can be manifestations of movement.

4.3.6 Symbols of reconciliation/symbols of threat

Furthermore, due to their symbolic value, syncretic forms are often seen as symbols of reconciliation and used in projects that advocate or stand for tolerance of difference. In both the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for example, the term was used to encourage a reconciliation among Christians and “the sinking of theological differences” (Kamstra, 1970) in an attempt to promote harmony. Pertaining to this link between syncretism and attempts at fostering tolerance, Carsten Colpe (1987) explains that “a tolerant attitude to all that is of value in the world is ... a basic condition for the rise of any syncretism, as well as a basic virtue of the human being who is shaped by syncretism and supports it” (226-227).

As with any socio-cultural development there is potential for both gain and loss, so syncretic religions (or cultures) may be regarded as “a positive strategy to contain conflict and promote tolerance or ... at least dialogue” (Shaw & Stewart, 1994: 197), or they may be associated with “a loss of identity, an illicit contamination ... a sign of religious decadence” (Pye, 1971: 2). And it is exactly out of fear of losing their identity that so many cultural and religious groups do not believe in syncretism. This fear of contamination and eventual extinction often leads to strong resistance to cultural blending. Following on from this, the very fluidity that is intrinsic to syncretism is treated with scepticism by those that fear the dilution or extinction of their beliefs, cultures or languages. In Greek history for example, the syncretic

Hellenic religions – despite Grant’s positive water image – were commonly associated with a “‘failure of nerve’ which resulted in the total collapse of the earlier ‘Olympian’ religion” (Grant, 1953: xviii).⁹² In a more contemporary context, the former Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, expressed his scepticism about doctrinal syncretism. In an address called “How Far Can We Travel Together?” (2001) he said about those whom he called syncretists:

For them the key question to be answered and the goal to be achieved lie in the realms of personal satisfaction and self-fulfilment. Clearly those elements are present in each of our faiths, but they are much more pronounced, I would suggest, for the syncretists ... few here would adopt this position for we meet as members of our own faith communities (n.p.).

Such scepticism and fear of syncretism is further fuelled by a reluctance to give up “truths” as understood by particular religious or cultural groups, following anthropologist Peter van der Veer’s (1994) notion that “[s]yncretism as the union of different, supposedly equal, theological viewpoints can ... only come up when the idea of absolute Truth is abandoned” (186).⁹³ The unwillingness to give up notions of an absolute truth can spawn radical reactions as threatened groups attempt, by preserving their belief systems in an uncontaminated form, to survive the influences of other cultures. Shaw and Stewart (1994) explain that “[a]nti-syncretism is frequently bound up with the construction of ‘authenticity’, which is in turn often linked to notions of ‘purity’” (7). Van der Veer goes as far as to say that although syncretism was used in seventeenth century Europe to “create harmony ... it is by no means clear that syncretism in the sense of borrowing from one tradition into another would indeed create harmony and tolerance” (ibid: 192). He continues to explain that “[i]n some contexts one would almost be tempted to propose an inverse relation: growth of syncretism implies decline of tolerance” (ibid).

Syncretism can thus be a double-edged sword. On the positive side it suggests the fusion of cultures and ideologies to form unique, dynamic and new cultures, often symbolic of acts of co-operation and reconciliation, corresponding to societal changes and needs. In this regard the

⁹² This notion of a “failure of nerve” was not necessarily accurate seeing that “foreign cults had been known to exist in Athens in the days of Plato” (Grant, 1953: xix).

⁹³ Van der Veer (1994) explains that “syncretism” in societies with religious cultures can be understood in a similar way to “multiculturalism” in societies with secular cultures (196). He says that “multiculturalism and ‘assimilation’ in secular societies are discussed along lines very similar to the earlier Christian debates on syncretism and conversion” (ibid). Furthermore, “in societies in which secularism is a defining aspect of national culture, the debate shifts from religion to national culture, from syncretism to multiculturalism and from conversion to assimilation” (ibid: 198).

term “syncretism” can be replaced by words such as “symbiosis, acculturation, synthesis, evolution, harmonization, transformation, absorption” (Colpe, 1987: 220). On the other hand, it is associated with “inauthenticity” or “contamination”: the infiltration of a supposedly “pure” tradition by symbols and meanings seen as belonging to other, incompatible traditions (Shaw & Stewart, 1994: 1). The value of syncretism is thus dependent on the particular perspective from which it is being viewed: “[s]ome might consider the emergence of the syncretic a sign of hope, [while] others see it as a threat” (Krueger, 2008: 176). It can be considered a sign of hope due to its power to invoke new and potentially exciting and unique art forms and cultural practices; offering opportunities for connecting points and dialogue between diverse people. Likewise, it is a sign of hope due to its ability to create space for multiple views and opinions: for multiple voices to be heard, offering opportunities for the creation of *truth*, not based on a single truth but following Bakhtin’s notion of truth, which can be understood by means of an explanation by Andrew Robinson (2011):

Bakhtin criticises the view that disagreement means at least one of the people must be wrong. Because many standpoints exist, truth requires many incommensurable voices. Hence, it involves a world which is fundamentally irreducible to unity. It denies the possibility of transcendence of difference ... Separateness and simultaneity are permanently with us. There is no single meaning to be found in the world, but a vast multitude of contesting meanings (n.p.).

While acceptance of the reality of multiplicity makes sense it does not deny that syncretism can be a threat, as by its nature it means something needs to be given up; that some sacrifice needs to happen in order to create the new. Such relinquishment of something (usually rooted traditions) through merging with what might be regarded as “other”, thus bringing about cultural growth or change of direction, can be a very traumatic and alienating experience. And yet, even if this is the case, one needs to ask whether it is even possible, in the light of the increased effects of globalisation and migration, to avoid or resist syncretism. James Clifford (1988), in addressing the “predicament of culture” explains:

Twentieth century identities no longer presuppose continuous cultures or traditions. Everywhere individuals and groups improvise local performances from (re)collected pasts, drawing on foreign media, symbols and languages ... organic culture reconceived as inventive process or creolized ‘interculture’ (ibid: 14-15).

In this statement Clifford suggests that notions of improvisation, borrowing and recollection are intrinsic to the formation of twentieth century identity formation and that part of this is the notion of invention through intercultural practice. In this regard the then Archbishop of

Canterbury [Rowan Williams] agrees that “[i]ndeed we should be in no doubt that syncretism is flourishing at present” (ibid). Following on from the above statements, I would argue that syncretic forms are unavoidable and are ultimately a mirror of a current world view, following on from Kraemer’s (1956) comment that “syncretism ... cannot but happen, unless people live in entire isolation” (389).

4.3.7 Summary

Based on what has been discussed in this section of Chapter Four, it can be argued that the idea of bringing diverse people together is inherent to the meaning of syncretism. This is often done in an attempt to unify the community with the idea of strengthening smaller, diverse groups as could be seen in the case of the Cretans. Furthermore, embedded in this meaning is a mixing of sorts. This mixing can take many forms but, usually, it refers to a mixing of diverse truths, religions and cultural practices, often leading to the emergence of forms that might appear to be illogical compromises. Syncretic forms can also be regarded as testimony to the historical fact that cultural contact has taken place, often (but not always) between colonisers/settlers/explorers/missionaries and indigenous people, resulting in a blend between European and indigenous forms. Rather than being a one-sided imposition, syncretic forms are marked by cultural exchange or cultural blending. Fragments from various cultures are used to form something that is altogether new. For this reason, syncretism is often regarded as symbolic of acts of accommodation in which people have been willing to meet each other halfway, or of contexts of cultural exchange or the coming together of cultures, as in the case of Zulu Zionism and the Hellenic religions. Furthermore, due to their symbolic value, syncretic forms are often seen as symbols of reconciliation and used in projects that advocate or stand for tolerance of difference. Concepts related to “hybridity” and “syncretism” as understood in the context of this thesis can be summarised as follows:

- To bring about or establish mixed unions;
- To destabilize essentialist notions of identity;
- To translate and negotiate differences between cultures;
- To challenge hierarchies;
- To interweave cultures;
- To bring about unusual coalitions in order to reimagine traditions;
- To involve processes of dis-location and re-location;
- To bring about fusions;
- To bring about cultural exchange;
- To be intercultural;
- To create a space for cultural translation;
- To be a space for negotiation and in which dialogue is possible.

4.4 Hybrid and syncretic acculturation

There is no doubt that every aspect of cultural production – the clothes we wear, the food we eat, the music we listen to, the languages we speak, the values we propound – has been bastardised/hybridised/modernised through the mill of syncretism.

- Ashraf Jamal, *Predicaments of Culture in South Africa*, 2005

4.4.1 Introduction

This section highlights the manner in which hybrid and syncretic forms have played roles as both constructors and exponents of a South African cultural identity. This is done in order to explain how notions of hybridity and syncretism can be understood in everyday cultural practice outside of a theatre context. Although not from theatre, the examples used in this section refer to ritual and performance: hence related to theatre, albeit distantly.

4.4.2 To fuse

In South Africa syncretism has played a vital role in contributing to unique cultural formations in reflection of the country's mosaic-like nature. This makes sense if one considers the country's vast diversity of social interrelations and the many facets and cultural orientations and languages that form part of its make-up. As Krueger (2010) observes: “[s]ince the very first contact between Europeans and Africans, it has been impossible for either culture to remain completely detached from the other” (181). Such cultural contact is evident in all forms of cultural expression, from food, to clothing, to artefacts, to dance and music. Consider, for example, the fusion of foods which came about as a direct result of cultural exchanges taking place in the domestic sphere. A culinary example is the “koeksister”: a sweet made from dough dipped in syrup, which is now found in slightly different form in both South African Malay and Afrikaner cuisine. Other examples of food that testify to cultural interaction are “bobotie”, referred to by heritage activist, Mogamat “Kammie” Kamedien, as “a world on a plate” (quoted in Viviers, 2013), and “pap” [porridge], a staple food for many South Africans across racial divides. Cultural integration is not only evident in food, but can also be seen in artefacts and textiles. One such example is the fabric *shoeshoe* (pronounced and sometimes also spelled *shweshwe*) which was originally brought to South Africa by German missionaries and used as dress material mainly among amaXhosa people in the Eastern Cape missionary schools. Later a factory was opened in King William's Town for the fabrication of this cloth, which today is regarded as traditional Xhosa material, used in traditional garb. More recently *shoeshoe* has

been taken up in contemporary South African fashion designs, which in turn have caught the attention of the international fashion industry due to designs by people such as Nompumelelo Nkomo, a South African whose *shoeshoe* designs have become internationally popular (Joyce, 2013: n.p.). Ultimately, then, the cloth is testimony of a series of hybridisations, in that the design was originally European, although coloured with blue ink from India. This was in turn brought to Africa by missionaries and has now been appropriated to such an extent that it has become associated almost entirely with African clothing, arguably “emerging as the quintessential South African cloth” (Levin, 2002: 1). Due to the various cultural influences woven into this form of material, one can say, along with design scholar Shonisani Maphangwa (2013), that “cultural meanings embodied in Shweshwe [sic] fabric ... do not remain static, but continually transform within a post-colonial environment, even though their consumptive meanings might remain similar” (3). These objects and food types are thus embodiments of exchange and transformation as a result of intercultural contact, and they are things that shape and give way to re-imagining cultural definitions.

4.4.3 To exchange

As mentioned, cultural contact in South Africa escalated and intensified with urbanisation and the discovery of diamonds and gold, giving rise to a situation in which people from diverse cultural contexts were brought together and had to work together, but were ultimately displaced from their original communities or places of origin. In this manner, many people from diverse geographical locations had to form new communities. Within the formation of new contexts, fragment or remnants from previous existences remained, but were recombined or re-imagined within an urban context. In the creation of new communities, connections were established between diverse peoples and, in turn, by means of these points of connection, but also by means of their differences, something new came about: something suitable for the new environments, but also something that could serve as reminders of the past, albeit in new forms. One could say that, beyond being viewed as proof of cultural contact and exchange, the formations and artefacts that emerged enabled “new forms of embodiment and collectivity” (Coombes & Brah, 2000: 12). Furthermore, these fresh forms can be seen as having “[enabled] people to act in novel ways, and have novel relations imposed upon them” (ibid: 11). The following two subsections will describe two of the myriad syncretic cultural forms that have emerged in South Africa: gumboot dancing and the language Fanagalo.

4.4.4 To accommodate

Fanagalo (also termed Fanakalo) emerged as a hybrid language used for communication on the mines.⁹⁴ Described as a kind of Zulu pidgin, it is a conglomerate of African languages mixed with English and Afrikaans. As people worked together and influenced one another's way of speaking this form of communication emerged naturally as a practical solution for clearer communication within the mining context. Rather than allowing one language to dominate, an attempt was made by diverse groups of people to include multiple languages, thereby establishing a community. Fanagalo was thus a language in-between languages: "words across worlds" as stated in the title of Rajend Mesthrie's (1998) book on Fanagalo. One can thus say, following Ralph Adendorff (2002), that Fanagalo "[enabled] some people to express solidarity with one another and [reinforced] their interpersonal relationships" (179).

Although Fanagalo originated through a process of hybridisation and has been described as a pidgin language, it eventually crystallised to the extent that it became used in contexts beyond the mining sector. For example, when the Bantu Men's Society performed Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* (1937), Fanagalo was used alongside the predominantly English text: the Fanagalo sections replaced the American slang of the original. One can thus say that the American slang was translated into Fanagalo. Here, the language was used beyond its original context, and used as a means of dislocating and disarticulating the original English text by O'Neill.

In this context, Fanagalo was used for many reasons: it was the language that was known to many mineworkers who took part in this play. It thus helped the actors to take ownership of an otherwise foreign play, relocating it to within the South African urban context of the miners. Such an act of claiming through language in turn opened up the play so that it could be re-imagined or understood better within a South African context: offering a circulation between local and foreign cultures. One can thus see how a hybrid language can be used to bridge cultural divides, and as a way to circumvent a dominant language. Rather than using English as a bridging language (which is done nowadays and is part of the reason why Fanagalo has fallen into disuse) a hybrid was made of indigenous languages, of which Afrikaans was one. Rather than use a dominant language to enable better communication, a syncretic language was used in the spirit of cultural accommodation.

⁹⁴ Despite the fact that *Fanagalo* was associated with a *lingua franca* used on the mines, the language actually originated as a mixture between isiXhosa, Afrikaans and later English in the Eastern Cape from about the early 1800s (Mesthrie, 2006: 430).

4.4.5 To resist

Another cultural form that emerged from the fact that people were dislocated from original contexts and moved into new or foreign contexts was gumboot dancing. Here, there was a synchronisation between original African drumming and dance forms and the gumboots (Wellingtons) that were used on the harbour or in the mines. The rhythms and dance structures of traditional Zulu dancing are present in this dance, but the stamping and slapping of gumboots replaced the traditional role of drums. Through such repurposing of the footwear, there was the emergence of not only a new musical form but, also, a re-embodiment: in that the dancing and percussive music making had to be negotiated, leading to a new form of choreography. Whereas, at one time, the traditional drumming and dancing had been separate activities, they became merged in the new form of the gumboot dance. For the purpose of this thesis what is useful to note is that this new cultural form was both a means of resistance against the dominance of authorities – in that drumming was forbidden in the cities – and a creative solution to a problem: so that one can go as far as to say that it was an example of how syncretic forms can come about in defiance of strictly drawn borders. From such resistance, a syncretic dance form originated, in which traditional and urban forms could be fused.

Later on, gumboot dancing was regularly used in protest plays, such as in *The hungry earth* (1981), where it was used “as a mode of protest against pass laws” (Gilbert & Tompkins, 1996: 241). Through time this dance form has shifted in both significance and signification so that, in itself, it constitutes a form that is still in flux, shifting in meaning, depending on the context. One can thus say that gumboot dancing has redefined its socio-cultural function. And herein lies yet another significance of syncretic and hybrid forms: not only can they bring about new forms of embodiment, but they also contribute to shifts in the socio-cultural function of certain traditions. In this manner, then, as can be seen by means of the gumboot dance, the shift has often happened in function. Furthermore, this kind of shift can be ongoing and can be understood by means of Brian Stross’s (1999) concept of the “‘hybridity cycle’ in which a hybrid form transforms itself into a ‘pure’ form prior to helping generate another hybrid” (255). In the case of the gumboot dance, it began as hybrid form, then solidified into a homogeneous form, which was then used to disrupt the homogeneity of theatre, leading to yet another hybrid or syncretic form.

4.4.6 To mix

In the same manner that Fanagalo and gumboot dancing emerged, urbanisation spawned other unique cultural practices, some of which gained popular and commercial value, especially from the 1950s onwards. This was most noticeable in the music arena. David Coplan (1985) explains that such music came about as “an acculturative blending of performance materials and practices from two or more cultural traditions” (vii). New cultural formations were made possible by the “coming together of different ethnicities combined with a multitude of Western influences via education, church and the mass media” (ibid). An example is township jazz: a unique South African form of jazz that has gained international popularity, and can thus be said to offer a bridge between local and global cultural experiences. Formed under similar conditions to those that gave rise to American jazz, another example of an urban syncretic musical form is *Mbaqanga*, a style of music which, if translated literally from isiZulu, means “everyday cornmeal porridge” (Coplan, 2001: 109).⁹⁵ Already in the name the activity of mixing is referenced, suggesting the mixing or stirring of porridge. However, this reference to porridge also refers to the fact that *Mbaqanga* music, like porridge, was regarded as the staple food of some people. From understanding the term in this manner, one can see that there was a strong link between the form of music and people’s daily life experiences, so that making this music was part and parcel of people’s way of living.

Mbaqanga is constituted of a blend of Western and traditional Zulu music and dance forms that became very popular in the townships during the 1960s. In *Mbaqanga* music, the manner in which some Western instruments were played was re-imagined to suit African rhythms. The accordion and the classical guitar, for example, were restrung and played in such a way as to follow African harmonies and rhythms. From such creative re-imaginings of traditional Western approaches, musical performance styles emerged that were neither trying to preserve traditional African music nor trying to adopt Western music, but which were something unique and unusual. These forms came about despite the countervailing pressures of the state to maintain racial segregation. Jim Kiernan (1994) explains that the apartheid era attempts to prevent “cultural mixing and syncretism” were not successful in “eliminating interracial cooperation or in suppressing cultural cross-fertilization” (65). What is interesting about these syncretic musical and performance forms is that they were neither a “slavish

⁹⁵ As slight variation on Coplan’s definition, the Webster on-line dictionary explains that *Mbaqanga* was derived from the Zulu “*umbaqanga*”, which literally means “steamed cornmeal bread” (<<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mbaqanga>>, last accessed on 2 November 2015).

imitation nor a rejection of a subjugated but precious African heritage” (Coplan, 1985: 236). Rather, according to Coplan, these forms came about “in response to changing conditions, needs, self-images and aspirations” (ibid: 237).

South African anthropologist and singer Johnny Clegg explains that such changes and cultural mixing, of which *Mbaqanga* is an example, came about as a result of people’s search for a “third way” (Clegg during 2013 concert). Such a third way offered solutions for people who did not want to be part of their traditional rural lifestyle anymore but who, also, did not want to follow the ways of the white Westerners. In an attempt to find this third way they borrowed and combined cultural forms, fashions and artefacts, allowing for unexpected styles to emerge. Examples of clothing within this particular syncretic context are beaded belts, or combining t-shirts with suits or sandals made from bicycle tyres. It is through such unique artefacts that cultural contexts could be re-imagined to suit urban African lifestyles, defined by an eclectic mixture of fragments from established contexts. In this manner, an in-between way, as an alternative to opposing worlds – that of the rural communal African past and the Western urban, capitalist present – could be found. It is notable that the third way was neither the one nor the other but, rather, a unique blend, signalling the adaptation and appropriation of cultural forms. Apart from the fact that new forms emerged, such in-between solutions offered possibilities for cultural growth and the indication of future possibilities. Interestingly – as with *shoeshoe*, for example – *Mbaqanga* also morphed into and influenced all sorts of other forms. For example, veteran Afrikaans piano accordion player, Nico Carstens, produced a so-called *BoereQanga* hit called “Viva Madiba” (1995), in which he combined the music rhythms of *Mbaqanga* and *Boeremusiek* [Boer music], a type of Afrikaans folk music.⁹⁶

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter my intention was to explain, by means of reference to artefacts, food, dance and music, in what manner theories of hybridity and syncretism, as extensions of third space theory, could be understood in cultural practice. In a similar manner to Fischer-Lichte’s metaphor of weaving performance forms towards a utopian ideal, the examples offered are ways in which the interweaving of multiple strands can be understood. Although these examples are

⁹⁶ This unusual combination of Afrikaans folk music and African, urban, *Mbaqanga*, was labelled as “the music of national unity” by Smirnoff jazz festival organiser, Henry Shields. Due to the unusual merging of seemingly diverse music, Carsten’s composition was so inspiring that it was featured on the Smirnoff Jazz Festival at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown in 1995 during which guitarist Jimmy Dlodlu and accordionist Nico Carstens combined their talents in a unique synergy of music (<http://152.111.1.87/argief/berigte/dieburger/1995/05/19/13/3.html>).

predominantly from urban black cultures, the principles addressed here can be applied to multiple contexts. What is important is that the activities associated with the examples of hybrid forms signal a re-imagination of traditional cultural forms, mainly by means of bringing together or merging urban/traditional cultures, and/or African/European cultures. This sometimes leads to a re-embodiment or re-imagining of objects or forms of expression. Temple Hauptfleisch (1987) goes even further in his explanation of the effects of hybridization:

The mingling and borrowing ... created something not quite African, not quite Western, but somewhere in the middle. Church services utilizing African dance and music, traditional communal dancing utilising American jazz music and Western clothing. And part of the hybridization lies in the radically redefined socio-cultural functions of these new forms, which at times forcefully dictates not only the form but also the context of the performance (181).

Apart from the use of Fanagalo in theatre, the examples mentioned in this chapter are not from language-based theatre. This means the notion of strands, as can be understood in the context of textiles, dance or music can, in many ways, be more easily manipulated due to the absence of language, which is often constructed more logically and, for that reason, less pliable into new forms. Annie E. Coombes and Avtar Brah (2000) explain that “music is one of the most productive sites for hybrid interactions which could be described as both cultural exchange and commodification without being reduced to either one or the other” (1). In language theatre, such hybridity is arguably more difficult to achieve, due to the fact that language is often related to grammatical logic. The following chapter will investigate ways in which such language theatre can be understood in syncretic terms.

Chapter Five: Syncretism and Hybridity in Theatre

The challenge in theatre is to create new work which resonates with its populations so that as society changes theatre can reflect its hopes and fears in a style which is rich and accessible.

- John Martin, *The Intercultural Performance Handbook*, 2004

5.1 Introduction: Theatre for a South African democratic ideal

This chapter explores ways in which syncretism and hybridity in theatre can be implemented as a strategy for decolonising the stage in attempts to create cross-cultural theatre. It also discusses how syncretic and hybrid theatre can be used to reflect on and represent a South African democratic ideal as captured in the phrase “united in diversity”. First, it explains how the term “theatrical syncretism” can be understood with reference to Christopher Balme’s use of the term, as explicated in his seminal book, *Decolonising the Stage: Theatrical Syncretism and Post-Colonial Drama* (1999). This is in an attempt to highlight the significance and usefulness of this form of theatre, particularly within the project of searching for ways in which to create language-specific works that can be used for both bonding and bridging. This initial explication is followed first by examples of theatre productions that contributed to shaping a South African syncretic theatre aesthetic in the pre-1994 era, and then by a discussion of recent productions, suggesting ways in which syncretic theatre can be understood within a post-1994 context. Despite the fact that the theoretical focus is on syncretic theatre, the syncretic principles can also be understood in hybrid terms so that the terms hybridity and syncretism are used interchangeably in the second part of this chapter and in later chapters.

5.2 Syncretism in theatre

Balme (1999) provides a distinctive interpretation of the term “syncretism” as applied in a theatre context, saying that it refers to “[t]he process whereby culturally heterogeneous signs and codes are merged together” (1). He makes a distinction between syncretism as applied to the religious context (as explained in Chapter Four), where it generally involves a long-term temporal dimension and arises to a large extent organically within situations of prolonged cultural interface, and syncretism as applied in theatre, where it is “in most cases a conscious programmatic strategy to fashion a new form of theatre in the light of colonial and post-colonial experience” (ibid).

Balme's claim with regard to such colonial and post-colonial experiences is that syncretic theatre can be used to resist or contest colonial power. This is because this kind of theatre is able to undermine the formation of a dominant style, genre, narrative or ideology, due to the fact that it is made up of differing actants. It is within the deliberate mixture of modes of expression that such theatre can undo fixed forms and identities and, thus, challenge the notion of a singular or ultimate truth. By means of its innate "multiformity", syncretic theatre can thus simultaneously expose and negate uniformity. This negation is an alternative to a colonial perspective considering that, in general, "colonial discourse fixes identity and denies it any chance of change" (Huddart, 2006: 28) as mentioned in Chapter Two. As a way of speaking back to or gaining power over colonial fixation with identity, non-colonial (or indigenous) forms can be used to destabilise claims to colonial authority. This view is echoed by Helen Gilbert (1996) when she explains that "[t]he syncretic combination of indigenous and colonial forms in the post-colonial world ... contributes to the decentering of the European 'norm'" (294). What is meant by "European norm" can be understood with the help of Christopher Balme's (1999) explanation:

The semiotic system we know as Western theatre consists of a hierarchy of dominants which is organized principally according to genre and performance codes, i.e. a dialogic dominant for drama or a musical dominant for opera, or a kinesic one for ballet and dance (6).

Such a hierarchy of dominant modes can thus also be disrupted by combining and generally mixing up European and indigenous cultures. Balme suggests that, apart from being a form of reconciliation, syncretic theatre can be regarded as a way of debunking hegemonic systems in the act of decolonisation. The coming together of diverse and often polarised cultural signs and codes can thus serve as a critique of previously accepted truths as held in traditional performance forms, whether Western or indigenous.

Typically, in attempting to destabilise traditional notions of truth, this form of theatre utilizes "the performance forms of both European and indigenous cultures in a creative recombination of their respective elements" (Balme, 1999: 1). In this manner, it not only serves as a form of resistance to colonial power but, also, works to re-imagine new theatre identities. Such re-imagination often goes hand-in-hand with reclaiming indigenous cultural forms, given the fact that these have – to a large extent – been marginalised or treated as inferior in social and cultural environments where Western performance forms have been given a superior status. Among the many potentially positive, and also disruptive, effects of reclaiming indigenous

performance forms is that of a conscious interrogation of the domination of Western forms, particularly by means of a destabilisation of power.

However, it must be emphasised that the adoption of syncretic forms does not represent a return to pre-colonial times in an attempt to re-establish forms in a pure manner: the intention, rather, is to acknowledge a multiplicity of influences of which some are based on colonial and others on pre-colonial forms. As Balme (1999) explains, syncretic theatre is not a “slavish adherence to one tradition or the other” (2). Rather, it is a fusion from which new and unique forms can emerge, carrying traces of traditional practices but within new contexts. From this perspective, dialogue can be brought about between overtly diverse performance traditions: whether as clash or as agreement. Gilbert and Tompkins (2002) explain:

The often uneasy amalgamation of colonial and pre-contact traditions in post-colonial drama admits the uses of a variety of forms in the construction of relevant, politically astute theatre that privileges a multiplicity of views and power structures to avoid the entrenchment of any one approach or authority (294).

It is this very foregrounding of multiple perspectives that makes syncretic theatre an ideal means for the reflection of democratic world views. It is, therefore, not surprising that syncretic performance forms were used on 10 May 1994: the day on which South Africa’s inauguration as a democracy was “staged”. Aptly referred to by Mark Gevisser (1994) as “SA’s Reconciliation in Motion” (9), this event was predominantly celebrated by means of syncretic music, dance and performance forms. It epitomised the coming together of a nation comprised of many races, ethnic groups, classes, cultures and interest groups. Loren Kruger (1999) elaborates on the significance of this:

This amalgam of visual and aural diversity as well as the active responsiveness of participants, whether members of parliament or citizens on the lawn, to the words, images, and music mediated by screen and microphone, dramatized the act of union proffered by the official slogan, “many cultures, one nation” (2).

Following on from Kruger’s description, one could say that the amalgamation of diverse cultural and artistic forms is something that could be replicated in other ways, typically through acts of hybridisation and syncretisation.

5.3 Syncretic theatre in South Africa pre-1994

Similar to the manner in which processes of hybridisation and syncretisation gave a unique shape to South African arts and culture (artefacts, dance forms and music) in general, these processes have influenced theatre as part of a South African cultural identity. Yvette Hutchison (2004) notes that cultural hybridity has long been a feature of the South African theatre landscape:

Experimentation with form, mixing European texts and African performance styles, and working in multiple languages are strands that can be traced right through twentieth-century theatre in South Africa (346).

5.3.1 Re-articulating indigeneity

Such experimentation could be seen in the work of cultural organisations such as the Bantu Men's Social Centre (founded in 1924) and the Bantu People's Players (founded in 1930), where syncretic merging was brought about between African performance and Western theatre. To relieve workers from the harsh circumstances on the mines and to create communities away from home, these cultural centres offered opportunities for recreational activities, which included theatre. From these activities urban cultures started to emerge. These early urban theatre forms served an empowering function: both lifting people's morale and expressing resistance to the increasing suppression of black people and the growing hegemony of Western forms. It was the work done in these centres which laid the foundation for increasing "[e]xperimentation with form ... evident in the translation and performance of European classic texts" (Hutchison, 2004: 345).⁹⁷ Initially, Western plays were performed, some of which were re-interpreted to suit an African context. One could, therefore, say that the Bantu Men's Dramatic Society "performed many European plays, while consciously trying to define their own cultural context" (ibid). Such re-definition of urban cultural forms, by means of the appropriation of aspects from foreign cultures, was regarded as an important contributor to cultural growth by people such as HIE Dhlomo, who was a notable early exponent of syncretic theatre in South Africa. He believed that "African drama ... must borrow from, be inspired by, shoot from European dramatic art forms, and be tainted by exotic influences" (quoted in Barnett, 1983: 228). To elucidate the position from which Dhlomo made this claim, Carolyn Duggan (1999) explains:

⁹⁷ Hutchison (2004) points out that the reimagining and translation of Western plays for an African context happened as early as the 1920s, in missionary schools, seeing that "well-made' plays were being performed in schools in isiZulu and Sesotho" (345).

While he accepted that all modern drama has developed from similar disparate roots, he nevertheless decried a clinging to the past simply for the sake of the past, especially a xenophobic, inward-looking cultural expression. Dramatic expression, he maintained, benefits from outside influence and, paradoxically, we become better able to express our selfhood when there is an outside reference. More specifically, African drama should not be exclusively African (1).

From such a perspective of borrowing from European dramatic art forms, Dhlomo's play, *The Girl Who Killed to Save: Nongqawuse the Liberator* (1935; 1936), made an important contribution to urban modernisation, despite its historical theme. Of the significance and political function of the play, Dhlomo said the following:

Nongqawuse may reduce at a sweep what legislation and missionary endeavour have so far failed to fight against – the power and influence of the witchdoctor, the tyranny of custom and tradition, the isolation of the Xhosa nation ... Nongqawuse will give the AmaXhosa that independence which spells progress (quoted in Feinberg, 1996: 60).

What is important to recognise about Dhlomo's contribution is that his adoption of a syncretic approach offered possibilities for departing from strictly defined cultural identities. One could thus argue that the syncretic forms offered opportunities for developing a dramatic form that was reflective of a modern urban lifestyle. However, since the *Nongqawuse* play is based on an historical event, one could say that it made space for the co-existence of the old and the new and, in this sense, the production represented a state of in-betweenness.

5.3.2 Multi-lingual translations

A year after the *Nongqawuse* production, yet another work of the Bantu People's Players contributed to the shift and re-imagining of theatre and cultural identity: the multilingual production of Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* (1937). This production made an important contribution to syncretic theatre;

... insofar as it [began] the shift towards multi-lingual theatre in South Africa. The play was performed in Fanagalo, a hybrid of English and various languages used by miners, with Fanagalo replacing and representing American slang (Hutchison, 2004: 346).

In this respect, the language strategies used in this production were similar to what Kobena Mercer (1988) describes as a process of the “disarticulation” of signs in the “re-articulation” of their symbolic meaning.

She explains:

Across a whole range of cultural forms there is a “syncretic” dynamic which critically appropriates elements from the master-codes of the dominant culture and “creolizes” them, disarticulating given signs and re-articulating their symbolic meaning otherwise. The subversive force of this hybridizing tendency is most apparent at the level of language itself where creole, patois and Black English decentre, destabilise and carnivalise the linguistic domination of “English” – the nation language of master-discourse – through strategic inflections, reaccentuations and other performative moves in semantic, syntactic and lexical codes (57).

In this claim, Mercer highlights the power of language and linguistic codes as a force either for the perpetuation of a status quo, or, if appropriated and subverted, for the dismantling of a given status quo. In the Bakhtinian sense, syncretism in language can bring about a “co-existence between elite and popular languages” (Canclini, 1995: xxiii) and, in this manner, its use in theatre may be an acknowledgement of difference. This is significant if one acknowledges that a reflection of attitudes is inherent to language. A multilingual approach can thus be understood to be reflective of attitudes that embrace difference.

Although the above mentioned productions played a significant role in developing an urban syncretic theatre identity in South Africa, steps towards syncretism has already been taken almost a century prior to these developments by means of a theatrical sketch called *Kaatje Kekkelbek* [Katie Chatterbox]. This piece, co-written by Andrew Geddes Baines and Frederick Rex, premiered on 5 November 1838 in Grahamstown and was advertised in the *Graham’s Town Journal* (25 October 1838) as a “Characteristic Comic Song”. However, Jill Fletcher (1994) argues that the piece “was more than that; it was a sketch in verse and prose” (65). What makes the piece significant and worth mentioning in the context of this chapter is that it made use of a hybrid language construct; “a rough mixture of Afrikaans and English” (ibid: 66). The manner in which this was done can be seen in the following extract:

Mijnaam is Kaatje Kekkelbek,
I come from Kat River,
Daar is van water geen gebrek
But scarce of wine And beer ...
Mijn ABC in Ph’lip’s school I learnt a kleine beetje,
But left it just as great a fool
As gekke Tante Mietjie (Fletcher, 1994: 66).⁹⁸

⁹⁸ My name is Katie Chatterbox,
I come from Kat River,
There is no scarcity of water
But scarce of wine And beer ...
My ABC in Philippe’s school I learnt a little bit,

Although this hybrid device was mainly used for comic effect and evidently depicted the protagonist, a Khoi woman called Kaatje, as being foolish (a matter heightened by the use of the *patois* language), the mixing of languages proved to be highly popular with the audience (Fletcher, 1994: 66). The popularity was made evident by the fact that they gave an “unbounded applause” (Butler, 1968: IV). One of the reasons for this is that the performance, “spoke to the people about their own situation, in their own language” (ibid).⁹⁹ Interestingly, Fletcher refers to the audience as a “border audience” (ibid) and, in this choice of words, she summarises the nature of the audience that attended the work in Grahamstown, consisting of English and Afrikaans speakers living in the so-called Frontier Country of the Eastern Cape. From this perspective such a hybrid “border” language could be representative of borderlands conditions. Unfortunately, despite the fact that the use of the hybrid language was popular, it was mainly used as a way to give a degrading portrayal of a Khoi woman, as already mentioned, made worse by the fact that the character was played by a white male. In this case, the syncretic use of languages is not necessarily positive. However, this language strategy was certainly unique for its time and, for that reason, it did make a noteworthy contribution to the possibilities for using a hybrid language on stage. Although it was popular, the strategy was not often repeated in nineteenth century South African theatre. It was only at the beginning of the twentieth century that there was an upsurge in hybrid and syncretic theatre constructions as part of the search for urban identities.

5.3.3 Urban identities

Over time, the merging of language and performance genres in South African theatre led to productions that were adapted to fit an African urban lifestyle, offering possibilities for the interruption or extension of dramatic dialogue by non-dramatic forms, such as music or dance. An example of a theatre production inclusive of multiple performance strands is the musical *King Kong*, which premiered in 1958 and paved the way for a uniquely syncretic South African musical form. One of the factors that contributed to the popularity of this production was the fact that it was based on the real life story of heavyweight boxer King Kong Dlamini. Another

But left it just as great a fool
As crazy Aunt Mietjie (Fletcher, 1994: 66, trans. H. Gehring).

⁹⁹ This sketch was also important for Afrikaans in that it was the first time that the Afrikaans language (although mixed) was used in a theatrical performance. (Fletcher, 1994: 65).

example of verisimilitude was the incorporation of languages from the streets, such as *tsotsitaal* (tsotsi [gangster] lingo).¹⁰⁰ The production was authentically South African, much more so than the imported production of O'Neill, or the local but word heavy *The Girl Who Killed to Save*. Furthering an urban African aesthetic, the music in *King Kong* was in the style of the popular jazz music that was played in the townships at the time. This combination of popular music, social dance forms, everyday language, and depictions of actual events, made the production extremely popular. It demonstrated how syncretic theatre could be representative of urban African world views.

5.3.4 Protesting forms

From such urban forms, syncretic theatre was later implemented as a weapon in the struggle against apartheid and used, in both form and content, as a form of protest. This was mainly due the ability of syncretic theatre to resist homogeneity. Examples of such syncretic protest plays are *The sacrifice of Kreli* (1976), *The hungry earth* (1978; 1981), *Asinamali!* [We have no money!] (1980), *You strike the woman you strike the rock* (1986) and *Bopha* [Detain] (1986). These plays remonstrated against the apartheid system by means of their thematic content as expressed in dramatic dialogue and, also, through the choice of form and style.

Social and indigenous music and dance forms were often used to interrupt the dialogue and achieve a distancing effect from the content and the plot. Protest dance forms – such as the gumboot dance and the *toyitoyi* – were regularly incorporated so that a diverse range of expressions were used in one production.¹⁰¹ The songs were predominantly in vernacular languages. From a polyglot approach, the English dialogue was disrupted, once again allowing for a multiplicity of languages and by implication a multiplicity of voices and ideologies to be present. In this manner, the dominance of the Western theatre aesthetic on South Africa's apartheid stages was overturned in favour of forms that could, more effectively, depict a South African identity.

¹⁰⁰ *Tsotsitaal* is a hybrid language which consists of indigenous languages mixed with English and Afrikaans.

¹⁰¹ The *toyitoyi* is a form of protest dance with distinct steps, which was often used as part of anti-apartheid demonstrations, but which has continued to be used as a means of protest in democratic South Africa. Although it is said that this dance has its origins in Zimbabwe (despite currently banned in that country due to its associations with anti-government demonstrations), it has become intrinsic to a South African protest culture. The term is often used metaphorically to refer to protests, or as a replacement for the word "protest". In a blog on the *toyitoyi*, Blackstone (2008) describes it as follows: "Toyitoyi could begin as the stomping of feet and spontaneous chanting during protests that could include political slogans or songs, either improvised or previously created" (n.p.).

Furthermore, through the integration of diverse styles, forms of expression and languages, the protest pieces could be used to object to strict classifications of various kinds. This was particularly significant in apartheid South Africa, where racial classification underlay the legislative and practical application of a discriminatory ideology that had been entrenched in law. The deliberate disruption of this dominant and legally sanctioned means of classification was an obstacle, not only to the perpetuation of the prevailing theatre identity but, also, to the potential dominance of any narrowly-defined and exclusivist national theatre identity that might have arisen in reaction.

The decision to fuse indigenous performance forms with Western ones was, among other things, a political one: it served to enact a new national identity in which a spectrum of performance forms was included. The declassification and displacement of various performance disciplines arguably played an important role in interrogating racial and cultural classifications based on stereotyping.¹⁰² Such political theatre, therefore, made an important contribution to the destabilisation of political power during South Africa's apartheid era. As Loren Kruger (1999) explains:

In its juxtaposition of apparently alien languages and conventions culled from European, American, and African practices, this theatre has performed the syncretizing character of South African culture, even at historical moments when the ruling class and race insisted on racial purity and cultural separation (12-13).

5.3.5 A new South African identity

From the protest theatre trajectory, the iconic 1983 production *Woza Albert!* emerged and paved the way for a contemporary South African theatre aesthetic and approach.¹⁰³ Described by Ron Jenkins (2003) as “the quintessential South African comedy [due to the fact that it] captures the complexity of South African culture in a multifaceted collage” (254), *Woza Albert!* (1983) was particularly significant in the manner that it “sanctioned images of binarised alterity” (Gilbert, 1996: 212). Such imaginings beyond binary constructs were done in many ways, predominantly by incorporating and merging multiple styles and cultural codes. The production was informed by a range of influences, such as traditional African storytelling,

¹⁰² Some of the performance forms that were incorporated in these syncretic theatre productions, for example, are traditionally used in rituals practices during important cultural and social events. By incorporating these rituals into theatre, they were taken out of their original contexts and thus displaced. It was this very displacement that in turn allowed for the formation of interesting and socially relevant performance forms.

¹⁰³ The convention of translating titles in this thesis has not been used in the case of *Woza Albert!* because of the assumption that the reader will know this play. In the context of this work, the word “woza” can be understood to mean “come up/rise”, “come to us”, or “come on/hurry up”.

Grotowskian physical theatre and *commedia dell'arte*. Temple Hauptfleisch (1997) spells this out as follows:

Woza Albert! employs the *commedia dell'arte* style as frame, but emphasizes the narrative element in a way reminiscent of *ntsomi* usages – but utilizing two narrators and thus setting up dramatic interchanges in something like vaudeville fashion (61).

Such a range of physical performance approaches were, in turn, juxtaposed by non-dramatic performances such as funeral rites or sports (Zulu stick fighting). In this manner, by means of interweaving multiple performance forms, the formation of a dominant style was negated. Furthermore, what is important in the integration of multiple forms is the fact that “the generic borders between *commedia dell'arte*, *ntsomi*, and vaudeville criss-cross to such an extent that the individual components are difficult to discern” (Balme, 1999: 152). Apart from contributing to and generating interesting and exciting theatre, the process of hybridisation was therefore politically significant, in the sense that it destabilized any claims to authoritative narratives and, in doing so, could contribute to democratic imaginings. This, in turn, gave form to Percy Mtwa’s dream, which was “to contribute to a multi-racial theatre ... [able to] reflect the values and the viewpoints and the future” (quoted in Frank, 2004: 17).

From this double function, the play simultaneously offered critique and hope. Not only did it use shifts in character identity as a stylistic choice but, through that choice, it brought about shifts in both a political and a social realm. It planted the seeds for shifts in identity – both in social structures as well as in theatre – so that one can concur with Connie Rapoo (2008) when she states that it used a “critical aesthetic of hybridization to assert modern African agency” (28). At the time of its inception, *Woza Albert!* offered pointers for how a South African theatre identity could be re-imagined and offered the early beginnings of a “new South African” theatre aesthetic; an aesthetic that could capture and be true to the complexity and the multiplicity of a democratic South African society.¹⁰⁴

Another contribution made by the production *Woza Albert!* was that of “[privileging] kinesic codes” (Balme, 1996: 80), which could “range from sign language, to mime, to dance, to stylized, sculptured movement” (ibid).¹⁰⁵ Haike Frank (2004) explains that, in this regard, “Mtwa introduced an aesthetic of movement ... by adopting a new theatre method: the

¹⁰⁴ *Woza Albert!* has recently been re-imagined in the form of the Afrikaans play *Woza Andries?* (2010), a play which, according to Astrid Stark (2010), “deals with the current climate in South Africa after apartheid, and its youth who are left to struggle with the consequences of their predecessors’ action” (3).

¹⁰⁵ This foregrounding of “kinesic codes” was also mentioned in Chapter Two, in relation to the First Physical and Magnet theatre companies.

transformation of the body into the dominant sign signifier of the performance” (175). This was a very significant contribution towards re-imagining South African theatre. The transforming body ultimately offered possibilities for other types of transformation, pointing to possibilities for the shifting of “identity traps”. Such identity traps often form when a

... dominant group defines the identity of another (mostly oppressed) group in ways that are negative or unacceptable for the latter group, to such an extent that it becomes the impetus for a political struggle to be recognized or be legitimate (Viljoen, 2009: 99, trans. H. Gehring).¹⁰⁶

The manner in which shifts could take place from one character, place, or time to another, offered possibilities for bridging divides, and was ultimately able to “disturb the mimetic stability of the black/white dichotomy” (Kruger, 1999: 175). Politically as well as aesthetically, this shift to kinesic codes marked a very important development in South African theatre and gradually became intrinsic to a new South African theatre identity.

5.3.6 Inter-racial and multi-voiced theatre in Afrikaans

The syncretism, as described in the above section, did not feature in Afrikaans theatre in the pre-1994 phase, so that one could fairly accurately say that the style of Afrikaans theatre (across racial lines) was based on the Western model, in which there was a dialogical dominance in accordance with the genre of drama: written (mostly by a single playwright), logically constructed and character driven. As Hutchison (2004) explains about the early twentieth century developments to establish Afrikaans as official language, “[i]t is worth noting that the fight for an [Afrikaans] identity, culture and language was largely undertaken through theatre” (336). In such a protectionist climate – in which there was a drive for Afrikaans to become a self-standing modern language, independent from Dutch and strong enough to resist the threat of being usurped by English – there was hardly space or a desire for syncretic undertakings in early Afrikaans theatre. Despite this reality, some Afrikaans playwrights (mainly from the 1960s onwards) did make attempts at disruption, even if it was still within the paradigm of Realism and psychological drama. Most of these disruptions were achieved through foregrounding matters related to mixed race relationships. One could thus say that in Afrikaans

¹⁰⁶ “... wanneer ‘n dominante groep die identiteit van ‘n ander (dikwels onderdrukte) groep definieer op maniere wat negatief of onaanvaarbaar is vir laasgenoemde, in so ‘n mate dat dit die impetus word vir ‘n politieke stryd om erkenning en legitimiteit” (Viljoen, 2009: 99).

theatre productions during the pre-1994 period, mixing was related to themes about racial mixing, rather than the mixing of styles or languages.

For example, in Bartho Smit's play *Putsonderwater* [Well without water] (1962), a young white woman is pregnant and the father of her illegitimate child is a "coloured" man. For this reason, the play was denied performance in South Africa for many years despite the fact that it was written to be performed at the opening of the Johannesburg Civic Theatre.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, in Pieter Fourie's play, *Die Joiner* [The Traitor] (1976), the protagonist, Sarel, is marginalised by the other characters in the play. He is regarded as a traitor to Afrikaners for a number of reasons; one of which is that he is married to a black woman. This act is regarded as a betrayal by the other characters, mainly due to the feeling that he is contaminating the bloodline of Afrikaners, producing impure offspring who are not "*Boere-adel*" [Boer royalty], but "*Basters*" [Bastards] (Fourie, 1976: 37). By means of the character of Sarel, portrayed as an "Afrikaner-outsider" (Van der Merwe, 2003: 98), Fourie critiques the apartheid government's obsession with racial purity and essentialised identities. As a strategy to create an awareness of multiple identities in resistance to essentialism, Fourie uses the device of multiple characters with the same name: Sarel 1, Sarel 2 and Sarel 3. In this manner, he could show diverse "facets of one group, namely the Afrikaner" (ibid: 99). Although still situated within the dominant mode of dramatic dialogue as related to traditional Western theatre and, thus, still locked into logo-centrism, it is likely that to a certain degree Fourie was attempting to open up a closed logic (allowing for multiplicity) within an Afrikaans context. In this manner, multiple identities, in an acknowledgement of difference, were accentuated. The strategy of using multiple versions of the same character was also employed in Fourie's drama *Mooi Maria* [Beautiful Maria] (1980), in which there were two Mooi Marias (Maria 1 and Maria 2).

The theme of racial impurity was also addressed in other Fourie plays, namely *Die Koggelaar* [The Teaser] (1988) and *Post Mortem* (1993), in which issues related to the continuation of pure blood lines are addressed.¹⁰⁸ In both these plays there is a dilemma related to inheritance in the sense that the land owners begot children by the farm workers. Apart from

¹⁰⁷ The play later premiered at the Volksteater Vertikaal [Folk Theatre Vertical] in Ghent in 1968 and toured Belgium for a year. In South Africa it was performed at Rhodes University in 1968 and subsequently in other South African theatres.

¹⁰⁸ *Die Koggelaar* was regarded as so controversial that it was banned from being performed at PACOFS in Bloemfontein for two years due to the fact that the Dutch Reformed Church complained about its blasphemous nature.

the theme of racial mixing, Fourie also introduces elements of stylistic mixing as used in syncretic theatre in *Die Koggelaar*. This can be seen, for example, from the fact that the character Knaplat is wearing a mask made out of wire and in the shape of a ram's head. Although a contemporary mask rather than a traditional mask as used in many African performances, the use of this object suggested that ritualistic elements were incorporated into an otherwise literary text. This play therefore started to shift towards an interweaving of African and Western performance elements.¹⁰⁹

Playwright Reza De Wet also made a contribution to interracial theatre in her play *Diepe Grond* [Deep Earth] (1986).¹¹⁰ In this play, a black housekeeper takes on the role of parent to the characters Soekie and Frikkie in lieu of the absent parents and, thus, becomes the surrogate mother and father. From this reality, she takes on a central role despite the fact that, at that time in South Africa, housekeepers were traditionally regarded as marginal. This depiction shows a shift in power relations: a shift from the periphery to the centre. Such a shift is even more prominent in Charles Fourie's play *Vrygrond* [Freehold] (1994b), which premiered in the year in which South Africa became a democracy.¹¹¹ It is set in an informal settlement, where black as well as white squatters live, thus showing an equalisation of power relations in a mirroring of South Africa's democracy. In this context, the squatter camp as "symbol of othering and oppression" (Van der Merwe, 2003: 24), becomes a meeting point for marginalised people: a third space across racial divides.¹¹²

Other ways in which Afrikaans theatre registered protest was by incorporating multiple political opinions in one production, accentuated by means of multiple voices. This could be seen in both Deon Opperman's play *Stille Nag* [Silent Night] (1989;1990) and Corlia Fourie's plays *Moeders en Dogters* [Mothers and Daughters] (1985), *Leuens* [Lies] (1985), and *En die son skyn in Suid-Afrika* [And the sun shines in South Africa] (1985;1986) in which family

¹⁰⁹ The issue of inheritance is also addressed in *Ek, Anna van Wyk* [I, Anna van Wyk] (1986) but, in the case of *Anna van Wyk*, it is related to Anna's inability to have children and, thus, her inability to produce an heir to the farm. In all these cases, the idea of a continuation of a blood line is used as critique against the obsession in Afrikaans culture with purity, whether related to race, language, religion or culture.

¹¹⁰ The title *Diepe Grond* refers to an Afrikaans children's song in which the phrase "stille waters, diepe grond" [still waters, deep ground] appears. The first English translation of this play was called *Deep Ground*, but it was later translated into another version called *African Gothic* (2005).

¹¹¹ The title *Vrygrond* is used ironically in that it means "freehold", but also refers to an informal settlement, called Vrygrond, in the Western Cape.

¹¹² "Die plakkerskamp is 'n simbool van vreemdelingskap en onderdrukking" (Van der Merwe, 2003: 24, trans. H. Gehring).

members had radically different political views and thus voiced different truths. Leana Welgemoed (2013) is of the opinion that the role of resistance and a search for the truth cannot be overlooked in *Silent Night*. In her view “*Silent Night* offers no answers, but the receiver is forced to consider ‘the truth’ and whether the truth ‘only has one or perhaps two sides’” (4).¹¹³ Despite the fact that the above mentioned plays contributed to a critique of the apartheid system and made space for multiple opinions, they remained primarily in the mode of Realism and were predominantly in one language (with the exception of *En die son skyn in Suid-Afrika*, in which the protagonist switches between Afrikaans and English and thus unsettles the monolingual use of Afrikaans). Nonetheless, by means of a multi-voiced (although not necessarily a multi-lingual) strategy, these protest plays resisted the dominance of an ultimate truth. One can therefore say that these Afrikaans plays protested by means of their content rather than their form.

One company that went a step further in terms of stylistic disruption was the Afrikaans Breughel Theatre Group, a multi-racial, experimental performance group. They were founded in 1979 under the directorship of Ben Dehaeck. This company performed and devised productions in a multiplicity of genres and codes more in line with Balme’s notion of syncretic theatre. While they were not making overt protest theatre, in being multiracial and experimental in nature, one could say that there was a defiance of monoculturalism and through such defiance they were protesting against hierarchical constructions. Other attempts against monoculturalism came from cabaret, which is inherently political. For example, the cabaret *Piekniek by Dingaen* [Picnic at Dingaen] (1988), was collaboratively created by various Afrikaans singers, actors and writers, who labelled themselves as alternative Afrikaners. Although this production did not cross racial divides, it did cross genres and was political in its content (questioning the apartheid system) as well as in its refusal to be classified in traditional terms. One could say that *Piekniek by Dingaen* was positioned on the border between music and theatre, and literature and performance art.¹¹⁴ It was labelled “*alternatiewe kabaret*” [alternative cabaret] at the national arts festival and Nushin Elahi (1988) called it “anarchy

¹¹³ “Die rol van verset en ’n soeke na die waarheid kan nie in Stille nag misgekyk word nie. Stille nag bied geen antwoorde nie, maar die ontvanger word gedwing om te gaan dink oor ‘wat die waarheid’ is en of die waarheid ‘net een of dalk twee kante het’” (Welgemoed, 2013: 4).

¹¹⁴ Marthinus Basson highlights the potential clashes that can be brought about by means of such a mixing of genres as used in *Piekniek by Dingaen*: “Rock and theatre do not make an easy marriage. The one is about the group and the other about the individual” [Rock en die teater is nie ’n maklike huwelik nie. Die een gaan oor ’n groep en die ander oor die individu] (quoted in Pretorius, 2004: 50; trans. H. Gehring).

which was offered by the establishment” (n.p.). It not only brought about radical shifts within Afrikaans music and theatre but, also, contributed to the construction of a new Afrikaans social identity. About such an identity shift, theatre director Marthinus Basson (who performed in the production) says the following:

The English raved about us because it was their first time to learn about a new Afrikaner who did not fit into their stereotype. To them it was completely strange to see a group of modern Afrikaners who did not fit their caricature (quoted in Pretorius, trans. H. Gehring).¹¹⁵

Apart from cultural identity shifts, *Piekniek by Dingaan* provided a shift in approach from plays written by individual playwrights to one created by a collective, due to the fact that it was workshopped. It could thus be associated with the workshop theatre approaches that were characteristic of democratic theatre making.

5.3.7 Contiguous spaces and hybrid identities in Afrikaans theatre

A play that contributed to bringing about stylistic shifts in Afrikaans theatre is *'n Koffer in die Kas* [A Suitcase in the Cupboard] (1992), written by Jeanne Goosen. It was first performed in 1992 and then again in 1994 at the first Klein Karoo National Arts Festival, and can be regarded as an interregnum play in the sense that it captured the characteristic confusion found in theatre during South Africa's political transition. This confusion is expressed through the content in which a white, Afrikaans-speaking woman is trying to reach out to a black burglar who is locked up in a cupboard in her bedroom.¹¹⁶ In this somewhat absurd situation the woman is adamant about conversing with the burglar. Needless to say, he does not respond, so her intended dialogue ends up being a monologue. Despite the fact that the communication is one sided, it does not happen in one language: in her desperate attempts to get the man to respond, the woman switches from Afrikaans to three other languages: Northern Sesotho, isiZulu and English.

Although the switch from one language to another is psychologically driven – based on the fact that the woman wants to make a connection with the man in the cupboard – as a technique it makes an important contribution to multilingualism within Afrikaans theatre. The

¹¹⁵ “Die Engelse het oor ons gerave, want hulle het die eerste keer kennis geneem van ’n nuwe Afrikaner wat nie by hulle stereotipe ingepas het nie. Vir hulle was dit heeltemal vreemd om ’n groep moderne Afrikaners te sien wat nie in hulle spotpatroon ingepas het nie” (Basson, quoted in Pretorius, 2004: 47).

¹¹⁶ The explicit mentioning of the character's race is important in order to elucidate the political significance of the play.

woman's willingness to "change tongue" in order to get through indicates an opening up of her character, pointing the way to the construction of a more fluid identity. Furthermore, the shift in language suggests an intention or willingness to bridge divides. Christopher Balme (1999) explains that the use of multilingualism on stage "reflects in complex ways ... ideological issues" (5). One could say that the use of multiple languages in *'n Koffer in die Kas* reflects on a democratic ideology that recognises multiple languages. By interrupting the Afrikaans language, or by extending or complementing it with other languages, there was, thus, a shift towards re-imagining Afrikaans within an African language context, or a shift towards opening the language up to incorporate or allow for other indigenous languages. This pointed the way to possibilities for what Marie Noussi (2009) calls "an enriching cohabitation" of multiple languages as a way towards "linguistic and socio-political reconciliation" (291). Finally, with regard to the use of multiple languages within this play, one can agree with Balme (1999) in saying that "numerous linguistic shifts in [a] play are not just means of psychological or socio-cultural characterization. On a more abstract level they reflect a whole society in a state of cultural transition" (112).

Besides transitioning from one language to another, the production transcended language by using non-verbal forms of communication such as singing and, later, knocking. In this manner, the character tried to overcome the limitations of language. These strategies, while driven by the intentions of the character, also opened up possibilities within Afrikaans theatre for crossing language divides by means of non-verbal strategies. Among the songs that she sang were anthems (first the "old South African" national anthem *Die Stem* and then *Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika*, the "new South African" national anthem). The choice to sing these anthems was intensely political, signalling a shift from one paradigm to another during the interregnum year.¹¹⁷ However, despite the political function, the use of song also worked as performance strategy, showing ways in which language could be crossed.

In the play *Don Gxubane onner die Boere* [Don Gxubane amidst the Boers] (1994) by Charles Fourie, identities were shifted more radically than in *'n Koffer in die Kas*, mainly with reference to hybrid constructions. Such a hybrid construction can already be seen in the protagonist's name, Don Gxubane, in which the Spanish word "Don" (used as title of honour) and the Zulu surname Gxubane are combined. This hybridity in relation to names is also apparent in the name chosen for another character in the play, namely, Sangoma Sannie. Here, the Zulu word

¹¹⁷ Loren Kruger (1999) refers to these two anthems as "South Africa's competing anthems of modern nationhood" (1).

for traditional healer, *sangoma*, is linked to a name that is very common in Afrikaans, namely Sannie. Within this hybrid construct, intertextual reference is made to two generally unrelated entities and, in doing so, playwright Charles Fourie upsets traditional identity constructs and proposes a shift towards a “new South African” identity. One can also say that by means of the hybrid name constructions, Fourie proposes or shows the coming together of seemingly clashing cultures. He also refers to multiple play texts in the sense that *Don Gxubane onner die Boere* is based on another, earlier, Afrikaans play, namely *Don Juan onder die Boere* [Don Juan amidst the Boers] by Bartho Smit (1959), which was, in turn, based on Moliere’s 1665 play *Don Juan*. With reference to other performances based on the fictional character Don Juan, the name of *Don Gxubane* can be regarded as having echoes of the Mozart opera *Don Giovanni* (1787). We therefore find a multiplicity of intertextual references, making the hybrid production all the more symbolic of the bringing together of diverse worlds. In the same manner that code switching between Italian and German is used as a playful device in the opera *Don Giovanni*, Fourie uses hybrid constructions for humour and satire: hence being political and entertaining at the same time.

5.4 Syncretic theatre in South Africa post-1994

As mentioned in Chapter Two, once the initial dry period after 1994 subsided, a new South African theatre identity emerged, in which syncretism became the norm in many ways. Temple Hauptfleisch (1997) observes that this era forged “a new breed of cross-cultural writers, directors, and performers” (74); people who introduced many innovative approaches to a post-1994 theatre aesthetic. He also explains that the rise of a “festival culture” led to an increase in the creation of syncretic theatre in that “artists in the country seriously began to syncretize and hybridize various forms of performance ... to create ... distinctive South African theatre and performance forms” (ibid: 182).

5.4.1 Visual syncretism in Afrikaans theatre

In Afrikaans theatre, such syncretism could be seen in the plays and productions *Boklied* [Goat Song] (1998) and *Die Toneelstuk* [The Play] (2001), both written by the Afrikaans poet and painter, Breyten Breytenbach, and directed by Marthinus Basson. Communication by means of visual elements was foregrounded in these productions, which resembled surrealist constructions. With regard to the work of Breytenbach in general, Hein Viljoen (2009) is of the opinion that “much of the poet Breyten Breytenbach’s work has been concerned with

borders” and that the “poet stretches and deforms boundaries as part of his poetic project to concretize a dynamic freedom” (109). Such concerns with borders, as well as the crossing of them, was apparent in both *Boklied* and *Die Toneelstuk*. The impact of *Boklied* on Afrikaans theatre was significant, creating a strong shift in both theatre and cultural identity to such an extent that, in reaction to the play, some people exclaimed that “[t]he writing was on the wall” (quoted in *KKNK20*, 2014: 53), meaning that it was the end of Afrikaans drama as they knew it.¹¹⁸ Apart from the fact that the play created shifts in content and form, it also contributed to a questioning of and a departure from stereotypical constructions of Afrikaner identity. This was done in multiple ways but was, in particular, a critique of religion as a holy cow of Afrikaans culture. Journalist Gabriël Botma (1998) had the following to say about this:

Theatre history was made in the SANW Auditorium in Oudtshoorn last night! With Marthinus Basson’s powerful and shocking production of Breyten Breytenbach’s first theatre production, *Boklied*, Afrikaans made a quantum leap and changed the face of Afrikaans theatre forever Not only has the corset of Afrikaans finally been taken off, but completely cut up and anarchically burnt (quoted in *KKNK20*, 2014: 47, trans. H. Gehring).¹¹⁹

The dialogue of the play is written in the theatre of the absurd and surrealist style. For example, one of the characters in the play, called Farenj [“stranger” in Amharic] and described as being “’n Vreemde man” [a strange man] (Breytenbach, 1998: 9), speaks in Basque so that the chances of him being understood by a predominantly Afrikaans audience are slim. Breytenbach thus uses a strange language to depict the strangeness, or otherness, of the character. Apart from the fact that an “other” language is used as character depiction, one can also say that Breytenbach uses this tactic as a means to communicate the dilemma of communication through language, thereby revealing a postmodern scepticism about language and its limitations.

As an alternative to communication through language, the communication in the production of *Boklied* happened on a visual level. This makes sense considering that Breytenbach – both as writer and painter – is strongly influenced by surrealism. The visual elements, as well as the

¹¹⁸ “Die skrif is aan die muur” (quoted in *KKNK20*, 2014: 53, trans. H. Gehring).

¹¹⁹ “Teatergeskiedenis is gisteraand in die SANW Ouditorium op Oudtshoorn gemaak! Met Marthinus Basson se kragtige en skokkende produksie van Breyten Breytenbach se eerste toneelstuk, *Boklied* het Afrikaans ’n kwantumsprong geneem en is die gesig van Afrikaanse teater vir ewig verander ... Afrikaans se borstrok [is] nie net finaal uitgetrek nie, maar fyn en flenters gesny en anargisties verbrand” (Botma, quoted in *KKNK20*, 2014: 47).

text, were thus constructed in a manner that felt like a surrealist experience. Breytenbach explains:

I do not think that *Boklied* is something that one can follow easily, but one does not necessarily have to understand everything. It is more an exposure, an experience of image, sound and light. It is not necessarily the meaning that is foregrounded, but the experience (quoted in *KKNK20*, 2014: 48, trans. H. Gehring).¹²⁰

What is important, in terms of the contribution of this piece to Afrikaans theatre, is that it opened up possibilities for communicating in forms other than words. The visual compositions were departures from realist portrayals and could be regarded as the “creolisation of the boundary between word and image” (Viljoen, 2009: 110). In this manner, images took on the function of words, but the dialogue, in the form of poetry, could also be described as word images, as if painting a picture.

Die Toneelstuk [The Play] (2001), which was Breyten Breytenbach’s third and last play in his theatre trilogy (*Boklied*, *The Life and Times of Johnny Cockroach*, *Die Toneelstuk*), brought about yet another shift in Afrikaans theatre. Gabriël Botma (2001) explains:

Breytenbach is particularly outspoken and defiant in *Die Toneelstuk* in his approach to the Afrikaner’s holiest cow, the Christian dogma. But on the other hand, he also makes critical noises, such as commenting on the so-called political exiles that are now, as those in power, riding on the gravy train, the position of Afrikaners *after* apartheid and the controversy around the failed Home for All campaign, which should appeal to patrons who feel marginalized and threatened in the new South Africa (n.p., trans. H. Gehring).¹²¹

One strategy for disrupting logocentric approaches was to interrupt the Afrikaans language with other languages. This was done by means of the characters Baba Halfjan and Dostojevski. Baba Halfjan, who represented the writer, spoke gibberish. Dostojevski spoke isiXhosa (in the published text he speaks in Afrikaans, but in the performance he spoke in isiXhosa). The isiXhosa was translated by another character (the director) into English, switching into yet another language. Rather than a strategy for multilingualism, Breytenbach used this interruption of the Afrikaans language as an alienation technique. From this, it is possible to

¹²⁰ “Ek dink nie *Boklied* is iets wat ’n mens altyd maklik kan volg nie, maar ’n mens hoef nie noodwendig alles te verstaan nie. Dit is meer ’n blootstelling, ’n ervaring van beeld, klank en lig. Dit is nie noodwendig die betekenis wat voorop staan nie, maar die belewenis” (Breytenbach quoted in *KKNK20*, 2014: 48).

¹²¹ “Breytenbach is in *Die Toneelstuk* besonder uitgesproke en uitdagend in sy benadering tot die Afrikaner se heiligste koei, die Christelike dogma. Maar aan die ander kant maak hy ook in die stuk kritiese geluide, onder meer oor die sogenaamde politieke exiles wat nou as magshebbers op die soustrein ry, die posisie van Afrikaners in Suid-Afrika ná apartheid en die omstredeheid rondom die mislukte Tuiste vir Almal-veldtog, wat teatergangers wat gemarginaliseer en bedreig voel in die nuwe Suid-Afrika behoort aan te staan” (Botma, 2001: n.p.).

say that the Afrikaans language was destabilised. Breytenbach did not use the language as a way to show multilingual co-existence, which has been used in the previously mentioned examples as a form of bridging but, rather, as a postmodern strategy to highlight the failure of language to communicate. One can even go as far as to say that Breytenbach made a mockery of the multi-lingual “united in diversity” democracy in the sense that he was pointing towards the difficulty of communicating within a context of multiple languages. Louise Viljoen (2001) clarifies: “By casting Dostojefski as a black man and by letting him speak Xhosa, the problematics of both multiracialism and multilingualism in South Africa were foregrounded” (n.p).¹²²

Although the isiXhosa was translated into English, the translation used in this production was, in fact, incorrect, thus creating confusion rather than clarification. From such a miscommunication, one could say that Breytenbach wanted to highlight lingual disjuncture rather than vocal harmony. However, when the production was performed to audiences where isiXhosa speakers were present, the mistranslation was treated as comedy. isiXhosa audience members laughed at the translator’s apparent misunderstanding of the language. It is clear, therefore, that the interruption of the Afrikaans by means of the isiXhosa was interpreted and understood in various ways. Where predominantly Afrikaans (non-Xhosa) speakers were present, the use of isiXhosa was a device to create alienation. Where isiXhosa speakers were present, the strategy was perceived to be humorous. In both contexts the failure of language to communicate was highlighted. Even though used as critical strategy, rather than a strategy for the building of communities, the fact that more than one language was used in one production – Afrikaans, isiXhosa, English – was in itself significant within a democratic multilingual South African context. From such a use of multiple languages, a disruption of the Afrikaans language took place, following Marvin Carlson’s claim that “dialects, like foreign languages . . . provide a potential disruption of the normal assumption that a theatre will utilize the same language as its surrounding culture” (62).¹²³ It also offered an opportunity to place Afrikaans

¹²² “Deur Dostojefski deur ’n swart man te laat speel en hom in die opvoering Xhosa te laat praat, stel in een slag die problematiek van veelrassigheid en veeltaligheid in Suid-Afrika aan die orde” (Viljoen, 2001: n.p., trans. H. Gehring).

¹²³ Interestingly, it was during this time that Breytenbach disassociated himself from being an Afrikaner, due to the considerable criticism that his play evoked. In an English letter to the Afrikaans newspaper *Die Burger*, he explains that he is not part of the Afrikaner community and never wants to be (*KKNK20*, 2014: 88). This comment was ironic seeing that Breytenbach’s fiction writing is predominantly in Afrikaans. One can thus make the assumption that he was distancing himself from the Afrikaners as people, rather than from the language. As mentioned before, the term “Afrikaner” can be used to refer to a group of people who share political and

alongside another African language and, in doing so, one could say that a relationship was formed between the two languages, whether this was intended by the playwright or not. As Hein Viljoen (2013) explains: “Crossing boundaries entails entering into *dialogue* not only with the self but also with the mother tongue” (58). Furthermore, in a similar manner to *Boklied*, *Die Toneelstuk* relied on visual communication rather than sense from language. Because of this, it was a production that was better understood from a sensory perspective rather than logically. Antoinette Kellerman (who performed in it) explains:

I think people try to be too intellectual about *Die Toneelstuk* for the very reason that it is Breyten. Audiences should rather try to be in the moment and allow it to make an emotional impact on them. Let your subconscious mind allow you to do the work. Then the intellectual understanding will come through later (quoted in *KKNK20*, 2014: 92, trans. H. Gehring).¹²⁴

From this perspective, *Die Toneelstuk* made an important contribution to the foregrounding of visual communication as a form of “live” painting.

Another production which made a contribution towards a syncretic Afrikaans theatre identity – also directed by Marthinus Basson – is *Waarom is die wat voor toyi-toyi altyd so vet?* [Why are those that toyi-toyi in the front always so fat?] (1999), written by Antjie Krog. In this production, two mothers – one black, one white – are working on a school project. They have to decorate a wall for their children’s school. From this seemingly innocent setting, difficult topics are addressed, mainly related to South Africa’s apartheid past. Petronella van der Merwe (2003) explains:

In *Waarom is die wat voor toyi-toyi altyd vet?* [sic] (1999) boundaries are shifted to dissect the truth. The non-remembering of the past is rejected. Krog manages to put a particular stamp on the socio-political issues related to post-colonialism by putting her finger on the wound of apartheid and failed human relations (68, trans. H. Gehring).¹²⁵

religious ideologies. From this perspective it is possible to make a distinction between being an Afrikaner and being Afrikaans speaking as Breytenbach appears to have done.

¹²⁴ “Ek dink mense probeer om té intellektueel oor *Die Toneelstuk* te wees juis omdat dit Breyten is. Gehore moet eerder probeer om in die oomblik te wees en dit emosioneel op hulle te laat impak maak. Laat jou onderbewussyn toe om sy werk te doen. Dan kom die intellektuele verstaan later deur” (Kellerman quoted in *KKNK20*, 2014: 92).

¹²⁵ “In *Waarom is die wat voor toyi-toyi altyd vet?* [sic] (1999) is grense verskuif om die waarheid te dissekteer. Die nie-onthou van die verlede word verwerp. Krog slaag daarin om 'n spesifieke stempel op die sosiopolitieke kwessie rondom postkolonialisme te plaas, deur die vinger op die seerplek van apartheid en mislukte menseverhoudinge te lê” (Van der Merwe, 2003: 68).

Once again, as with other Afrikaans syncretic productions, the characters spoke in more than one language, this time Sesotho and Afrikaans. Instead of conversing only in Afrikaans, the Sesotho woman reclaims her own language, thereby breaking the expectation of a monolingual conversation. Interestingly, the use of Sesotho is as much an act of defiance as it is an act of restitution so that, in the use of the two languages, there is also a relationship that is set up between them.

This production also made use of visual communication but, other than in Breytenbach's productions in which the visuals functioned like abstract paintings and were therefore not grounded in an obvious logic, the visual communication in Krog's play emerged as complementary to naturalistic action. What we saw on-stage was a realistic setting in which two mothers are painting a wall as part of a school project. And yet this very painting offers metaphoric possibilities, capturing one of the key themes of the production by means of the images painted on the wall. The white mother paints all the faces white, while the black mother changes them to black faces. Through this visual image, the notion of binary opposites – in this case the idea of white versus black or *vice versa* – is represented. In this manner, the painting provides an action which can be construed as representative of diverse people coming together in the post-1994 South Africa but it also became a visual translation of themes as discussed in the dialogue. Although it would be far-fetched to say that the wall painting was a translation of the entire dialogue, it did offer ways in which some aspects of the dialogue could be captured in a visual form. Further steps towards syncretism were the insertion of poetry as an interruption of the naturalistic dialogue. This happened in-between dialogue so that yet another form of expression was inserted, interrupting the linear flow of the realist speech. Although still based in language, the poetry was indeed a glimpse into departures from realist texts towards a syncretic approach.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Both Breyten Breytenbach and Antjie Krog made their debuts as playwrights with the above-mentioned plays, so that one can say that yet another form of border crossing took place, in the sense that, as well-known Afrikaans poets, they crossed over to become playwrights.

5.4.2 Decolonising Western theatre classics

A syncretic production that recently received extensive national and international acclaim is *Mies Julie* [Madam Julie] (2012a) adapted by Yael Farber into a South African context from Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (1888). The accolades and international invitations that *Mies Julie* received are testimony of the manner in which a predominantly syncretic South African theatre identity resonates with international audiences.¹²⁷ The popularity of this production is, in my opinion, mainly due to the unusual manner in which diverse performance elements, rituals and ideologies were brought together in a “knot of inheritances and legacies that entangle lives” (Baxter Theatre Centre, 2012). This “knot” was made up of a complex fusion of performance forms. According to Farber (2012b), the play deals *inter alia* with “how we come to terms with what has formed our cultural identities and how they are inextricably bound in this red soil”, addressing not only “South Africa’s complexity – but the unaddressed ghosts of any nation waiting to be acknowledged” (ibid).

Farber achieved complexity in the production by interweaving and juxtaposing fragments from traditional and contemporary performance forms in a manner that sometimes clashed and sometimes set up a dialogue, reminiscent of how cultures and groups interact in South Africa. It can be seen as a microcosm of the South African macrocosm, making reference to local as well as global cultures and languages. Although Strindberg's original *Miss Julie* was written in the form of a debate in which traditional worldviews are at odds with contemporary ones, Farber's *Mies Julie* used not only dialogue to present the argument, but also the aesthetic of the play itself. In this way the tension and conflict were not only created by means of the dramatic plot structure as designed by Strindberg, but also through the manner in which seemingly irreconcilable and opposing worldviews, depicted in the stylistic choices, were set up against each other.

An example of this is the referencing of two religions in the play, namely that of ancestor worship and Christianity. The ancestral presence was represented in the production by a performer belonging to the Ngqoko Cultural Group based in the Eastern Cape.¹²⁸ The style

¹²⁷ In addition to being the winner of the coveted Best of the Fringe award at the 2012 Edinburgh festival, the play also won other international as well as local awards. In 2012, *The Guardian* rated *Mies Julie* as one of the top five productions in London and the *New York Times*' Ben Brantley named it amongst the top 10 of 2012 in New York (www.yfarber.com/mies-julie last accessed on 16 December 2014).

¹²⁸ “The Ngqoko Cultural Group is a body of men and women (six women and one man) committed to the indigenous music, songs and traditions of the rural Xhosa communities” (*The Ngqoko Cultural Group* from http://www.kennedy-center.org/explorer/artists/?entity_id=19620&source_type=B last accessed on 16 December 2014).

of singing, a kind of throat singing, and the instrument – a bow and resonator – are both part of an ancient form of traditional Xhosa music making, as practiced in some parts of the Eastern Cape, but which now is almost extinct in its original form. The performer was not an actress, but a musician belonging to a group that practices music as used in traditional Xhosa activities. Her incorporation was significant for a number of reasons. On the one hand her presence was a personification of the ancestors as a significant theme in the play. The character Christine is haunted by the ancestors, as indicated in the following dialogue (Farber, 2012):

Christine: Ndiyamva.¹²⁹ She is here again, son.
John: Who, ma?
Christine: When she's restless, I can smell her.
I can smell the damp.

On the other hand, the Ngqoko singer's contribution served a functional and aesthetic role, as her music accompanied some of the actions and contributed to the mood of the play.

Apart from mood setting, the music served as a reminder of cultural practices that are fast disappearing and are often marginalised. It therefore recalled a cultural heritage that is particular to South Africa, but which has lost its power in a modern urban society. Furthermore, this Ngqoko singer roamed in the liminal space between the stage and the auditorium, operating between the real world of the audience and the make believe world of the play. In this manner she functioned in an in-between space, linking the world of the audience and the performers. By the same token, due to the fact that she did not speak and only sang – or silently observed the action – she was rendered invisible to a certain degree. This invisibility, linked to her liminal position, gave the impression that she belonged to another world: as if she were a spectre from the past. She could therefore be seen as symbolic of a person functioning in the realm between the world of the living and the spirit world.

As a counterpoint to the representation of traditional Xhosa beliefs, Christianity was represented by the character of Christine. In this manner, two arguably incongruous worldviews were represented, where the one is sometimes associated with pagan belief systems and the other with beliefs counter to paganism, brought to Africa by white colonialists, missionaries and settlers.¹³⁰ In the production, the two potentially clashing world views could co-exist, with no preference for one over the other. By incorporating the Ngqoko singer, traditional modes of performance as found in Xhosa rituals were used to re-imagine a play text

¹²⁹ "I can hear" (trans. L. Skeyi).

¹³⁰ In Strindberg's original play, such so-called paganism was referenced by means of the Midsummer Night festivities.

originally written in a naturalistic style. This counteracted the potential hegemony of one particular style, namely, Naturalism. In this manner, Farber's *Mies Julie* disallowed the formation of a dominant mode. Apart from serving the play thematically, the incorporation of the traditional singer allowed for a diversity of performance forms. The original *Miss Julie* was thus disrupted as well as interrogated, allowing for a celebration of difference.

Apart from the Ngqoko singer's ritualistic presence, the naturalistic actions of the characters were contrasted or interrupted by means of repetitive, abstracted dance-like movements, which added a poetic as well as yet another ritualistic dimension to the work. More than one form of ritual was incorporated, of which some functioned as distancing devices. A broad array of movements, informed by various traditions, could thereby co-exist, contributing to the formation of a complex play. As with the physical movement forms, the soundscape was also informed by various influences, from the traditional Xhosa throat singing, to the use of contemporary electronic music, to live instrumental music that was used to create atmosphere, to the use of diegetic sounds, such as the sound of a spoon scraping food out of a pot and hitting an enamel plate, or the sound of the brushing of boots. In this manner, various worlds could co-exist and the production could contain different ideologies and worldviews, allowing for a debate or conversation to develop on stage without it becoming didactic. One can thus say that it was a case of "the written word, the spoken word, and the transformative material body [being in] a constant state of dynamic dialogue" following Mark Fleishman's (1997: 2) notion of a radical participatory, as mentioned in Chapter Two.

In this production, there was also a switch between languages in that all three of the characters with speaking parts, namely Christine, Mies Julie and John, used interjections in their mother tongue (isiXhosa and Afrikaans) in combination with the predominantly English dialogue. The playwright used English, rather than the indigenous languages, as a bridging language, but signalled the language background of each character with interjections of indigenous fragments. The following extracts are examples of how this was done (Farber, 2012):

Christine: This is Meneer's land.¹³¹ He decides. Finished and klaar.¹³²
Julie: Niemand sal aan my raak nie.¹³³ My pa will shoot ...
John: Ma, sukuthetha ngezizinto.¹³⁴

¹³¹ "This is the master's land" or "This is Mister's land" (trans. H. Gehring).

¹³² "And that's that" (trans. H. Gehring).

¹³³ "Nobody will touch me" (trans. H. Gehring).

¹³⁴ "Ma, do not talk of these things" (trans. L. Skeyi).

In these examples, the switch from one language to another not only provides information about the character's cultural background, but also creates a multi-textured vocal score. In this manner, the notion of multilingualism and, by implication, multiple voices as well as cultures can be heightened. The switch into the vernacular also provides a certain authenticity to the characters, rooting them within particular languages as well as sounds. This was done by not only making space for non-English expressions, but by also letting the performers speak in a vernacular accent. Furthermore, the use of indigenous language interjections made the play distinctly South African, but still made it possible for the production to travel internationally because English was the bridging language.

In this play, the combination of Afrikaans, isiXhosa and English also was of political significance in the sense that these are all local languages of the Eastern Cape region, which is where this play takes place. By situating these languages alongside one another, one could show the interconnectedness between cultures. By the same token, I would argue that the languages were also used to set one another off, in a kind of language contestation similar to the manner in which ownership of the land is contested in the play. The fact that Afrikaans and isiXhosa were used could thus be regarded, on the one hand, as symbolic of the type of interwoven existence that people lead in the Eastern Cape, especially on farms, but also as a way to create tension by means of placing these languages alongside one another.

Another language strategy was to reinforce a phrase in more than one language. This can be seen in the line "Hayi kaloku!¹³⁵ Taste first", spoken by Christine, in which she delivers a general warning in isiXhosa followed by a more specific instruction, which is also a form of warning, in English.

Yet another strategy is simply repetition as seen in the following extract in which the performers not only repeat lines in more than one language, but also repeat one another's lines.

John: Mosquito in my eye.
Julie: Laat ek sien.¹³⁶
John: I'm ok.
Julie: Let me see!
Christine: Kuqhubeka ntoni?¹³⁷
Julie: Mosquito in his eye, Christine.

¹³⁵ "Don't do that!" (trans. L. Skeyi).

¹³⁶ "Let me see" (trans. H. Gehring).

¹³⁷ "What's happening?" (trans. L. Skeyi).

Christine: Yithi ndibone.¹³⁸
John: Ndiright ma.¹³⁹
Christine: Let me see.

From the above mentioned quotation one can see how the voices become interwoven, arguably creating a web by means of the repetition. From this approach a similar effect is created to that used in contrapuntal musical composition. In such a contrapuntal approach, juxtaposition and connectivity are present at the same time.

Another South African company that has received international acclaim for the unique manner in which it combines diverse art forms reflective of a post-1994 South African theatre identity is the Handspring Puppet Company. An example of one of its productions is *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, which premiered in 1996 in response to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and was performed again in 2014 at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, South Africa. An example of syncretism in this production is the manner in which the puppets were used. In itself, the incorporation of puppets suggests a borrowing from another culture, since puppetry is not part of South Africa's indigenous cultures. In the case of *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, the style and manner in which the puppets were handled was based on the Bunraku puppet tradition. Despite this borrowing from a Japanese tradition, the construction of the puppets was based on wood carving methods as found in the making of crafts in South Africa. So the foreign influence of puppetry was combined with local South African woodcarving methods in the development of a unique art form: one in which neither tradition was followed in a pure manner but which, instead, provided the impetus for the creation of something new: something in-between. The play also featured mechanical puppets which were constructed in a syncretic manner. These puppets were made from found objects in a similar manner that bricolage objects, associated with syncretic forms, are created.

The puppets were collage-like, made from redundant objects put together to form mechanical constructions. The crocodile puppet's body, for example, was made from a briefcase belonging to Sydney Kentridge, the father of the play's director and animator, William Kentridge. Since Sydney Kentridge is an advocate who defended Nelson Mandela in the treason trial of 1958 to 1961, the briefcase had symbolic significance, carrying traces of South Africa's political history. In this choice of object, the puppet was already infused with political meaning even if the audience was not necessarily aware of it. In this manner, by using

¹³⁸ "Let me see" (trans. L. Skeyi).

¹³⁹ "I am ok mother" (trans. L. Skeyi).

everyday objects and constructing something else out of them, traces of the original remained present in the new formations, offering a broad intertextual landscape in which the audience could piece the fragments together based on their own associations.

In a similar vein, *Mies Julie* was a re-imagined South African version of a realist play written in the early twentieth century, and *Ubu and the Truth Commission* was a re-imagining of the French absurdist play, *Ubu Roi* (1896), by Alfred Jarry. Following Balme's claim that syncretic theatre is one of the most effective ways of decolonising the stage, both these productions bear testimony to how syncretic forms can have a decolonising or indigenising effect on Western theatre classics by means of the incorporation of multiple indigenous languages, performance forms and rituals. Both productions, rather than trying to stay true to essentialist origins or a purist rendition of particular traditions, placed the emphasis on diversity, using fragments from diverse traditions to re-organise material in unusual combinations. Although traces of the original were present, no attempt was made to adhere to a particular truth: instead, the works found various ways of using the past as a reference for creating something new. Both *Mies Julie* and *Ubu and the Truth Commission* make it clear that

Theatre in South Africa is not essentially European or African; rather it takes place between and within practices, forms and institutions variously and contentiously associated with Europe, Africa, America, and – to complicate the standard oppositions – African America (Kruger, 1999: 17).

The multiplicity of forms and styles that were merged in the two productions enabled “the emergence of an ‘interstitial’ agency that refuses the binary representation of social antagonism” (Bhabha, 1996: 58) in which one is usually seen as more important or superior to another. Bhabha (1996) argues that such an “interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains differences without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (4). Following Bhabha's argument, productions that are hybrid or syncretic make allowance for multiple and diverse ways of being, rather than for fixed identities that are posed against one another. In such plays, a “de-territorialisation of traditional values” (Jamal, 2005: 18) is made possible in which the recombining of fragments from existing traditions, languages and styles enables the formation of new cultural forms. It is in the context of this view of cultural formation that the merging or co-presence of cultural practices can contribute to the formation of new theatre forms that are fitted to reflect on and mirror the potential of formations that can be regarded as representative of a changing social composition. In South Africa, despite it being more than twenty years after the advent of democracy, such cultural formation is still vital in order to enable and orchestrate ongoing dialogue between

diverse groups. It is also vital, in the context of Afrikaans theatre and Afrikaans festivals, to ensure that cultural borders are kept open.

5.4.3 Physical theatre as form of/for transformation

A syncretic Afrikaans play that recently made a strong impact on both audiences and critics is *Die Vreemdeling* [The Stranger] (2010/2011) directed by Mark Fleishman for the Magnet Theatre Company. The work was performed at major Afrikaans festivals, such as the KKNK (2010) and the Aardklop National Arts Festival (2010), as well as at the Magnet Theatre in Observatory, Cape Town, and in various community centres and school halls.¹⁴⁰ For this reason, the production needed to be able to adapt to shifting contexts as a so-called “migration” play.¹⁴¹ Because it was designed as a touring production, one can assume that the notion of “shifting identities” was already part of the production; even on the rudimentary level of adapting to diverse venues and audience demographics. A further identity shift that shaped the nature of the production comes from the fact that *Die Vreemdeling* was originally written as short story and subsequently adapted for performance on stage, thereby constituting a genre shift from literature to performance. In this sense a translation or “cross-over” of sorts took place. Apart from shifts in context and form, the idea of “shifting identities” also formed a strong thematic component of *Die Vreemdeling*. As one of four plays in a collection called *Magnet Theatre ‘Migration’ Plays* (2012) the work is an example of ways in which the “Magnet Theatre deploys performance to explore the theme of migration and the experience of being ‘between’ and ‘on the move’ that characterises life for many people in Cape Town and Southern Africa today” (Magnet Theatre ‘Migration’ Plays).¹⁴²

The production is summarised as follows on the Magnet Theatre Company’s website:

’n Verlate dorp in die middel van nêrens
’n Gemeenskap wat hulle self met ’n heining beskerm
’n Vreemdeling verskyn in die verte; honger, dors en swak,
’n Jong dogertjie sien hom,
Sy besluit om die hek oop te maak.
A forgotten town in the middle of nowhere
A community that has built a fence against the world outside
A stranger appears in the distance; hungry, thirsty and burnt by the sun,

¹⁴⁰ In an interview, Mark Fleishman, who directed this play, explains that it was originally conceived of for predominantly Afrikaans speaking communities “along the N7 highway from Okiep to Citrusdal” (quoted in *Afrikaans play a first for Fleishman*, 2011).

¹⁴¹ This play is published in the collection *Magnet Theatre ‘Migration’ Plays* (Reznec et al, 2012).

¹⁴² <<http://www.loot.co.za/product/jennie-reznec-magnet-theatre-migration-plays/thrn-2921-g220>> last accessed on 16 January 2016.

A young woman sees him,
She decides to let him in.

From this description it becomes clear that notions of transgression and the crossing of borders form a thematic feature in the play. In fact, almost the entire plot is based on the young woman's decision to open the gate to a stranger and the consequences that follow as a result of this action. The story's focus on borders and gatekeeping (literally and figuratively) is explained as follows:

Die Vreemdeling is a story about fences and borders; the things we construct to keep out what we fear. And how sometimes it's important to find a gate in the fence and to see what would happen if you opened it. In the story there is not only a fence around the entire town, but also around the hearts of the people who live there (Marek *et al*, 2012: 95).

This focus on borders and border crossing is significant and makes the play topical, considering the fact that globally and in South Africa there appears to be increasing animosity against outsiders. The fear evoked in some by the presence of strangers is represented by the young women's initial reaction: "Who are you? What are you doing here? Go away, it's not safe here for you! ... The people of the town do not like strangers! They will kill you. Go away!" (Marek *et al*, 2012: 109).¹⁴³

Despite this premonition, the little girl decides to take the risk and open the gate for the stranger to enter the community. She is thus complicit in an act of border crossing, which eventually results in the death of the stranger. However, rather than critiquing the act of border crossing, *Die Vreemdeling* interrogates attitudes towards strangers and towards otherness, including linguistic otherness. The fact that the stranger did not speak the language of the town meant that the play could investigate reactions to "linguistic otherness" which contributed to the political significance of the play, especially within an Afrikaans speaking context in which there is a tendency to protect the language.

Not only were the themes of otherness, border crossing and in-betweenness communicated by means of content, but also in the performance style. Three actors played multiple roles in which they used physical theatre, ranging from physical storytelling to dance, to bring the story across. Shifts also happened in the music, which switched from guitar playing to drumming to the singing of an Afrikaans folk song to the sounds of the violin, so that a cross-cultural sound

¹⁴³ "Wie is jy? Wat soek jy hier? Gaan weg, dis nie veilig vir jou hier nie! ... die mense van die dorp hou nie van vreemdelinge nie! Hulle gaan jou mors doodmaak. Gaan weg!" (Marek *et al*, 2012: 109).

could be created. The fact that the storytellers were also the musicians signified a role shift, from the actors being characters in the play to the same people accompanying the action as musicians. Arts critic Marina Nel (2011) gives an impression of the eclectic and multifaceted nature of the production as follows:

With comedy, original music, physical acting, as well as clever décor and props, three actors brilliantly give life to all residents; as well as to a few animals and objects.
(n.p.).

In playing a variety of roles the performers signalled an attitude of inclusivity in which one person could be many. This could be seen most clearly from the fact that the person who played the role of the stranger also played the policeman; the very person responsible for spreading rumours about the stranger. By playing both these characters, two forms of the self could be made visible; showing that so-called strangers are often the other (unacknowledged) aspect of ourselves. Furthermore, due to the malleability of the actor's bodies, in which they had to make rapid switches from one character to the next, there was a resistance to fixedness and identity traps. Against the backdrop of a community's resistance to change and to being in contact with "the other", the constant switching – between characters, and between styles of performance and embodiment – was a manifestation that change is indeed possible.

Die Vreemdeling dealt with an array of topics related to otherness and attempts to keep otherness at bay. In this manner, the story of *Die Vreemdeling* became an allegory addressing a wide range of socio-political matters. Although the company was dealing with migration on a thematic level, the theme influenced the aesthetic and methodological decisions taken. In all four of the migration plays in the collection, matters related to translation play a strong role. Furthermore, all four plays use visual and other sensory modes of communication as ways to bridge language barriers. The four plays are undoubtedly syncretic, so – as mentioned in Chapter Four – there is a strong relationship between the act of migration and syncretic and hybrid forms.

Another deeply political play which has made a strong mark in its contribution to an intercultural and syncretic Afrikaans theatre identity is *Balbesit* [Being in possession of the ball] (2013). Performed at numerous Afrikaans festivals as well as at prominent theatres – such as the State Theatre in Pretoria and Artscape in Cape Town – the production received much acclaim and attention for its innovative combination of sport and theatre, its use of fragments from social media, and the manner in which it gave voice to social commentary made by

everyday South Africans.¹⁴⁴ Rather than use dialogue in the traditional sense of dramatic text, the dialogue was mostly composed of fragments from social media from which a collage could be formed. The text was therefore colloquial and made up from verbatim quotes, described by its author, Saartjie Botha (2013), as “an accumulation of commentary on topical issues and social situations” rather than character specific dialogue.¹⁴⁵ In this way, it was possible to simultaneously create a multi-voiced text, as well as offer insight into sentiments as held by some members of the South African public. The collection of social commentary was therefore one of the contributing factors to the text of *Balbesit*, creating a hybrid between fiction and documentary. Botha (2013) explains that the commentary was mainly by “ordinary middle class people – White, Black, Brown, Afrikaans or English” (quoted in *Vrouekeur*, 2013: n.p.) and that the content was not necessarily profound or ground-breaking, but still worth hearing.¹⁴⁶ She describes the commentary as follows:

It is sometimes thoughtless, sometimes incomprehensible, but they feel they have something to say and they say it. It does not necessarily contribute towards a larger conversation or discourse, but at least they feel heard. In the post democratic South Africa there is a large group of people who feel they are not heard and their needs are not taken into account, or they are regarded as unimportant or superfluous. I have been wondering for a long time how one can combine that group of voices in a piece of theatre (ibid, trans. H. Gehring).¹⁴⁷

The piece was thus an amalgamation of marginal voices; “a ‘State of the Nation’ from the mouths of the people” (ibid).¹⁴⁸ From this understanding of the production one can claim that it manifested the notion of a nation being “united in diversity”. Moreover, it was yet another manner in which Fleishman’s notion of a “radical participatory democracy” (1997: 2), as

¹⁴⁴ The fact that the production was not only performed within the Afrikaans festival circuit but also elsewhere is already testimony to the fact that it could transcend language and cultural barriers. Despite the excitement that the production invoked in some circles, it was also regarded as controversial and even offensive in others, resulting in some people walking out. One of the main reasons for this was arguably the fact that the spoken text in *Balbesit* gave voice to uncomfortable issues and frustrations that some South Africans feel, but do not say.

¹⁴⁵ “n Opstapeling van ... kommentaar op aktuele kwessies en sosiaal-maatskaplike situasies” (Botha quoted in *Vrouekeur*, 2013: n.p., trans. H. Gehring).

¹⁴⁶ “Dit is kommentaar van hoofsaaklik die middelklas gewone mense — Wit, Swart, Bruin, Afrikaans of Engels” (Botha in *Vrouekeur*, 2013: n.p., trans. H. Gehring).

¹⁴⁷ Dit is soms ondeurdag, soms onverstaanbaar maar hulle voel hulle het iets om te sê en hulle sê dit. Dit dra nie noodwendig by tot ’n groter gesprek of diskoers nie, maar hulle voel ten minste hulle word gehoor. In die post-demokratiese Suid-Afrika is daar ’n groot groep mense wat voel hulle word nie gehoor nie en hulle behoeftes word nie in ag geneem nie, of hulle is onbelangrik of hulle is oorbodig. Ek het baie lank gewonder hoe mens daardie groep stemme saam in 'n teaterstuk kan kombineer” (Botha in *Vrouekeur*, 2013).

¹⁴⁸ “Dié stuk is 'n *State of the Nation* van uit die mense se monde” (Botha in *Vrouekeur*, 2013).

mentioned earlier in this chapter, could be understood. As an extension of the notion of a participatory democracy, Coenraad Bezuidenhout (2013) refers to this production as “a living newspaper”, linking it to a kind of docudrama that had its origins in America as a way to bring news and information to people. Similar to a newspaper, which is made up of fragments of unrelated news, the dialogue was fragmented, giving the impression of a collection of diverse comments. Moreover, the manner in which the comments were put together did not necessarily form a coherent whole, nor was it a construction based on logic, so that at times the choice of comments appeared quite random, to such an extent that it appeared as if the order could be changed or rearranged if the author wished to do that. In this manner, the dialogue was relatively open ended but, by the same token, it enhanced the documentary aspect of the play in the sense that these seemingly random statements, arguably, reflected real life in a kind of hyper realism due to the fact that real life conversations also tend to appear random at times.

In this manner, then, a good overview could be given of opinions and viewpoints held by everyday South Africans, so that the performance functioned as a platform for multiplicity. Through such plurality an effective reflection could be given of the diverse nature of South African society, with its polyphony and multiculturalism. To describe the nature of *Balbesit* and the manner in which this play gives voice to multiple grievances and opinions, Bezuidenhout quotes Antjie Krog, who said that it is like “a hundred boats on a stormy sea ... and they are all going in different directions” (Krog quoted in Bezuidenhout, 2013).¹⁴⁹ In this manner, by means of the formation of a hybrid performance, due to the diverse nature of its components, one can agree with James Curren and David Morley that

While hybridity can in some cases indicate a rather less politically determined acculturation, it is also a highly useful strategy for decentering the agency of just one culture, language, or political system (2006: 201).

Certainly *Balbesit* was such a strategy for cultural decentering, which was implemented in a variety of ways such as the inclusion of multiple opinions to negate the formation of a singular truth, and the incorporation of more than one language to avoid language dominance. Such decentering also happened by creating a hybrid between sport and theatre, in the sense that one of the sources for the production was rugby, which was used as a metaphor to “touch on specific

¹⁴⁹ “’n Honderd bote op ’n stormagtige see ... en hulle vaar almal in verskillende rigtings” (Krog quoted in Bezuidenhout, 2013).

issues like the country's politics, the state of the nation and other themes" (Botha quoted in *Vrouekeur*, 2013).¹⁵⁰ Botha explains:

Rugby in all its facets - from the player, the spectator, even in the living room - is used as structure, and scenes are based on 25 formations of the game – maul, lineout, scrum, half time and so on (ibid, trans. H. Gehring).¹⁵¹

This meant that most of the choreography was either abstractions of rugby formations and exercises or used the game itself, in the sense that there were times when the performers played actual rugby on stage.

The decision to use rugby as metaphor and starting point for the stage action was significant for a number of reasons. Botha states that theatre can learn a lot from sport and uses the example of how the goal that football player, Siphwe Tshabalala, scored during the 2010 World Cup Soccer made the entire country happy (ibid). By using this example, Botha implies that sport has strong bridging abilities, bringing people together across racial, cultural and ideological divides. As already mentioned – in relation to the Cretans discussed in Chapter Four – this ability of sport to bring people together was indeed seen when South Africa took part in the 1995 World Cup Rugby. At that time, President Nelson Mandela saw the event as an opportunity to symbolise unification and, as a gesture of such unification, he wore the rugby shirt of Francois Pienaar, the team's captain at the time. Despite the fact that this sport was able to re-imagine itself in 1995, it still has political associations with whiteness and privileging, as expressed by one of the performers during the play: "Show me a white person that does not like rugby" [Wys my 'n whitey wat nie van rugby hou nie] (*Balbesit*, 2013). Moreover, apart from being regarded as a white sport, rugby is also commonly regarded as intrinsic to Afrikaner culture, despite the fact that it is a British imperial sport. For this reason, some people still associate rugby with apartheid politics, something that was criticised by some political factions just before the 2015 Rugby World Cup Game, highlighted by newspaper headlines such as the following: "Rugby World Cup 2015: The Springbok squad? A black and white issue" (Godwin, 2015); "Race debate clouds South Africa's Rugby World Cup preparations" (Roelf, 2015) or "Lack of black players in South Africa team puts race under spotlight before World Cup" (Smith, 2015).

¹⁵⁰ According to Bezuidenhout (2013), rugby was used to address issues related to the loss of power, ownership and violence.

¹⁵¹ "Rugby in al sy fasette, van die speler, die toeskouer tot in die sitkamer, word as struktuur gebruik, en tonele is geskoei op 25 formasies van die spel — losgemaal, lynstaan, skrum, rustyd en so meer" (Botha in *Vrouekeur*: n.p., 2013).

And yet, despite the tension imbedded in the sport, the use of rugby on stage inevitably demanded an ensemble piece due to the team sport nature of rugby. From such ensemble work, director Jaco Boucher (quoted in Smith, 2014) explains that “the audience senses that this group of guys, from different backgrounds, (are) working together as an ensemble. It’s a collective thing” (n.p.). In this manner, despite the fact that sensitive and, at times, contrasting or contradictory matters were raised on stage and, despite the political associations with rugby, ultimately what one saw was a group of people working together. In this sense the production could reveal how multiple individuals, from various backgrounds, are dealing with matters related to loss and marginalisation in diverse ways but, ultimately, grappling with the same thing. Lucinda Jolly (2013) explains:

The play parallels rugby with current South African issues such as the state of masculinity and the state of the nation particularly among younger men in South Africa across the colour, income and culture spectrum (n.p.).

It is my contention that by means of the incorporation of multiple voices, as well as creating a hybrid between sport and theatre, the production had the ability to interrogate or question identities, oscillating between the individual voice and the collective. While the ensemble performed most of the movements as a chorus and as a team, each team member also had a chance to express an individual voice. One could thus say that *Balbesit* was grappling with ways to develop

dialogic and open processes of reworking essentialised and fixed constructs that often stem from nationalist discourses whilst simultaneously engaging fluid and permeable aspects of identity aligned with cosmopolitan imaginings (Rajendran, 2009: 173).

Arguably, then, *Balbesit* became representative of the notion of a country being “united in diversity” and in that manner also managed to bring about bonding as well as bridging in a variety of ways.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explained how the term “theatrical syncretism” could be understood, particularly from Balme’s (1999) perspective, which is that it is a “process whereby culturally heterogeneous signs and codes are merged together” (1). This was done with reference to both Balme and Gilbert as authorities in the realm of syncretic and hybrid theatre. Following on from the initial theoretical explication, examples were offered of how syncretism has been implemented in South African theatre. This was done by making a distinction between pre-

1994 theatre and post-1994 theatre. While many more examples could have been discussed, the ones that are mentioned in this chapter can be regarded as seminal in that they exemplify a range of approaches to syncretic theatre. In the pre-1994 section the focus was predominantly on the development of urban black theatre with reference to the ways in which both HIE Dhlomo's play, *The Girl Who Killed to Save: Nongqawuse the Liberator* (1935), and the Bantu People's Players' rendition of Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* (1937), signalled early steps towards the development of a South African syncretic theatre identity.

Coupled with these examples, *Kaatje Kekkelbek* (1838) was also mentioned as yet another early contributor to the hybridisation of languages on stage. Such initial undertakings eventually lead to a truly South African syncretic theatre, as exemplified by the musical *King Kong* (1958). Examples of syncretic theatre as form of protest against the domination of Western forms were also given. From such protest plays, *Woza Albert!* (1982) emerged and was used as an example of how collage-like theatre can "disturb the mimetic stability of ... black/white dichotomy" (Kruger, 1999: 175). It was argued that *Woza Albert!* also set the tone for a post-1994, democratic approach to theatre, despite the fact that it premiered in the 1980s. The examples from black urban theatre were followed by examples from Afrikaans plays, which, although not fully syncretic, were steps towards the use of multiple points of view to disrupt monolithic stories.

In the section on post-1994 syncretic theatre, productions were mentioned which made a contribution to a syncretic approach in Afrikaans theatre. Two English examples were also included, namely *Mies Julie* (2012) and *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1996; 2014). These two productions represent ways in which Western classics were re-imagined for a South African context, as well as being examples of plays that incorporate a multitude of approaches towards syncretic theatre. Despite the fact that these two productions were in English, both incorporated Afrikaans as part of a multi-lingual approach. This chapter was a means towards giving a brief overview of some syncretic productions in South African theatre in order to place the earlier chapters on social and theoretical contexts within the realm of theatre.

Chapter Six: Workshop Theatre / Translation / Collage

To say that a concept or a thought becomes yours is to say that it becomes my thought; my concept; but it is never in my possession, it was never my property, because the thought is also yours – it belongs to you, too.

- Homi Bhabha, *In the Cave of Making: Thoughts on Third Space*, 2009

The moment of translation, the very movement to and fro, acquires primacy over the substance of the identities – the gap between whom the translator is supposed to bridge. In other words, we can begin to conceive of cultural translation – the process in between – not as a necessary inconvenience that needs to be made as invisible as possible but, on the contrary, as vitally constitutive of living together in a culturally pluralist globalised world. It is only in and through translation that we can recognise the ways in which we are both similar and different, simultaneously together and separate. The moment of translation establishes an intercultural borderzone in which two or more apparently separate cultural formations partially overlap. But these borderzones are everywhere; we all inhabit them in different ways, at different times, in different contexts.

- Ien Ang, *Together-in-difference: beyond diaspora, into hybridity*, 2003

6.1 Introduction: Ways in which to generate hybrid and syncretic forms

This chapter provides an explanation of the concepts “workshop theatre”, “translation” and “collage”. All three of these concepts were applied in the conceptualisation and implementation of the three productions (*Hex*, *Lady Anne* and *Ekspedisies*) that have been used as the primary illustrative material in Part Three of the thesis. The overall intention in using the approaches of “workshop theatre”, “translation” and “collage” is to generate a form of hybrid and syncretic theatre in the Afrikaans language and, thereby, to bring about bonding and bridging in relation to the “third space” as one of the main concepts in this thesis. This chapter discusses each of the approaches as a separate entity with the intention of setting the stage for the more complex task of the following chapters, which consider how the three approaches were applied in various ways within each of the case study productions.

6.2 Workshop theatre as means to create a third space

All three productions examined in Part Three were created by means of a workshop theatre approach. This approach was mainly followed from the perspective that, to create productions in which diversity can be foregrounded, the process ideally needs to be “collaborative”, “communally-oriented” and “human-centred”, following Antjie Krog’s (2009) claim:

In a country emerging from a divisive past, some narratives ... are likely to reproduce old cultural, racial and geographical divisions. To overcome that, as well as inevitable interpretation and transcription mistakes, there is almost no other way to proceed than by collaboratively working within a communally-orientated, human-centred methodology (46).

What is pertinent about Krog's appeal is the emphasis placed on *collaboration*, which in turn relates to a communal and human-centred approach. In theatre, such approaches can be introduced by means of workshop theatre. As an artist who has been extensively involved in workshop theatre, William Kentridge views this approach as:

... a practical and workable and successful strategy of overcoming one of the factors of apartheid, which was to make different people completely ignorant of the details of the lives of large sections of other groups in the country (quoted in Fuchs 1996: 145).¹⁵²

While the above observation was made primarily with reference to the use of workshop theatre in the era of apartheid, the usefulness of the approach in post-apartheid South Africa with its divisive social scars remains. This is simply because its collaborative mechanism has the effect of allowing people to experience the perspectives of others. As Kentridge explains, through workshop theatre:

Different parts of the world were able to come together [as] a basic information-sharing strategy ... you had different pieces of the world coming together, each one close to its own particular touchstones (ibid).

From such a perspective, workshop plays, or rehearsal processes, are meeting places for diverse people, enabling a confluence of ideas, languages, cultures and/or worldviews similar to Foucault's *heterotopia* which has been discussed in Chapter One.

By opening up a space to enable connecting points between all too often divided people, there is a possibility for bridging cultural and language divides. Such bridging can in turn be concomitant with the concept of "borderlands rhetorics", which, according to Adela Licona (2012), "can blur divisions and expose potentially fertile spaces/places for reinvention" (12). Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) explains that such a borderland "is in a constant state of transition" (25). In this manner, by means of the blurring of divisions, workshop theatre offers a powerful means towards the crossing of barriers, whether these are social, linguistic, artistic or ideological.

¹⁵² Kentridge was the first member of Workshop '71 and was a founder member of Junction Avenue Theatre Company. He has also been extensively involved in collaborations with the Handspring Puppet Company.

Furthermore, working in a collective manner, one is able to generate multiple perspectives around a particular topic and in so doing can orchestrate an ensemble of voices. Transformation is thus possible, following Micki Flockeman's (2002) claim that "when cultures meet, values are inevitably transformed and inverted" (198). In striving to create theatre productions that allow for transformation by making space for multiplicity and diversity, workshop theatre often draws on the responses of individuals within a group, so that the focus is simultaneously on the individual and the group. Space can thus be made for diversity of expression and for the co-existence and voicing of multiple opinions.

A group comprised of diverse voices and juxtaposed points of view can in turn co-exist within the whole and, thus, contribute to the formation of the whole. About the relationship between juxtaposition and cultural formation, Stuart Hall (1995) explains:

A culture is formed by the juxtaposition and co-presence of different cultural forces and discourses and their effects. It does not consist of fixed elements but of the process of changing cultural practices and meanings (187).

This dynamic coalescence of cultural forces can provide the material and the impetus for the creation of theatre productions that are assemblages of multiple stories and cultural codes. It is not surprising therefore that workshop theatre has become intrinsic to a South African theatre identity from both an aesthetic and a generative point of view. The inclusive principles embedded in the workshop approach, allow space for what Mark Fleishman calls a "radical participatory democracy" (1997: 200) as mentioned in Chapter Five. In this regard workshop theatre, "made by a group of people together, as opposed to being written by a single playwright in isolation" (ibid), can more accurately and specifically represent a South African perspective in which the focus is more likely to be on "the collective subject rather than the individual subject of many Western Dramas" (ibid).

This collective approach has the potential to bring about feelings of solidarity: hence, it is often associated with theatre created in resistance to oppressive forces. In such theatre, designed to bring about feelings of togetherness, multiple voices and perspectives are generally celebrated and valued. In this sense, workshop theatre productions can be regarded as, in the words of Chandra Mohanty (2003), "political coalitions woven together by the threads of opposition to forms of domination" (47). During the apartheid era, workshop theatre approaches were certainly attempts to build resistant coalitions against the government's segregationist policies. One has to bear in mind though, that – despite the fact that collaborative theatre making can be regarded as a coalition, conjuring up associations with community building – the participating group is not necessarily unified. Mark Fleishman (1991) explains

that it is rather “a body in which a plurality of voices struggle to be heard” (71). This notion is reiterated by Athina Copteros (2002) who explains that during workshop theatre processes “individuals from diverse backgrounds [can] work together [and be] brought ... together, multi-positioned within the relations of power within the social order” (13). Workshop theatre thus offers the potential for democracy through “collective self-activity” (Fleishman, 1991: 62). In this manner

... collective practice [can be] returned to the people, with their individual nuances of performance and thought, [where] real discourse is released exposing relative, multiple truths [from which a] dialogical theatre [can be] born where a complex interplay of ideas is allowed to exist (Francis, 2006: 103).

Such a multi-positioning in relation to power is an important and powerful tactic through which theatre hierarchies and social constructs can be challenged and disrupted or re-imagined.

Because of its participatory nature, workshop theatre is often associated with biographical theatre, documentary theatre, or docudrama: all forms where space is created for people to share personal stories and experiences, which have often formed the basis for the development of creative work. The creative process in workshop theatre frequently starts with the performers’ life stories or personal responses to a subject. The use of individual stories and responses from people of diverse cultural and language backgrounds gives scope for multiple perspectives to be cast on the themes being explored. The biographical aspect allows productions to be relevant to the society that they address, and also to be topical, due to the relationship between the conveyed stories of the performers and their real life experiences. The performers thus become makers of culture in the sense that “the active culture of the wider society ... the ways in which people in that wider society formulate their responses to, and interpretations of, the diversity of their experience” (Vaughan, 1988: 10) can be reflected.

Furthermore, with regard to the ability of workshop theatre productions to be “laboratories for cultural negotiations” (Carlson, 1996: 214), able to bring together people from diverse backgrounds, this method is closely associated with experimentation and improvisation in an attempt to make discoveries. In workshop processes, the imagination is stimulated in ways that might be akin to the stimulation of discoveries in a laboratory. There is therefore a strong focus on awakening the imagination, particularly by means of encouraging spontaneous responses to stimuli and to evoking improvisation. In this approach, one could say, in the words of Alison Oddey (1994) that “there is a freedom of possibilities for all those involved to discover; an emphasis on a way of working that supports intuition, spontaneity, and an accumulation of ideas” (1). Arousal of the imagination can also bring about social or political

shifts in the sense that “the imagination has the capacity to extend us beyond the confines of our skin, situation, and condition” (Anzaldúa, 2002: 5). Workshop theatre also plays a vital role in cultural formation and can thus be linked to Bhabha’s (1996) third space in which negotiation is used in order

... to articulate differences in space and time, to link words and images in new symbolic orders, to intervene in the forest of signs and mediate what may seem to be incommensurable values or contradictory realities (8).

In order to create these “new symbolic orders”, experimentation and negotiation are necessary factors that can be associated with processes in laboratories. Such negotiation is crucial in a country with the cultural diversity of South Africa, where it cannot necessarily be assumed that a person is able to speak about the experiences of others. One can, therefore, say that as a strategy for the transformation of personal and other stories into theatre, workshop theatre offers possibilities for translation (of texts, cultures and languages). It can thus serve as a way in which transformations can be made, from the mono-culture of the source text to the multi-culture of the performance.

6.3 Translation as bridge builder

The word “translation” can be etymologically understood to mean “a carrying across or bringing across”. The word is derived from the Latin *transferre*. This word consists of two parts: *trans* (across) and *ferre* (to carry or to bring). The modern European languages have generally formed their own equivalent terms for this concept after the Latin model. This can be seen in the following words: “translation” (English), “translacion” and “traducción” (Spanish); “traduction” (French); “traduzione” (Italian). In German the term is “Übersetzung” (literally meaning “putting across”). The only exception in European languages is the word “vertaal” in Dutch, which refers to a change in language or a process of “re-linguaging” (Kasperek, 1983: 83-84).

This “carrying across” or “putting across” of language implies movement, a shift of sorts and, as a concept, can be applied to performance; particularly movement and dance. Furthermore, such “bringing across” of language and culture can be very useful as a way of overcoming or bridging barriers between cultures and languages: a way in which people from diverse cultural backgrounds can be brought closer to each other in a country where difference was once the grounds for segregation.

These notions of “carrying across” or “change” or “leading beyond” relate to one of the aims of this thesis, namely, to explain practices in which cultures and languages have been “carried” across perceived boundaries in an attempt to bridge differences. Such transformation, which can take multiple forms, can be said to be “a force necessary to change South African society” (Van Vuuren, 2009: 220); a society often still divided due to language and other cultural differences.

Stephan Meyer (2002) mentions that there are two predominant approaches to translation in South Africa. The one has a long historical context and is linked to translating a local language into a European language, something which dates back as far as the writings of the linguists Lloyd and Bleek in their translation of /Xam narrations (1875–1876). According to Meyer, this practice is now also used in a South African context, where local languages are translated into English for the benefit of people who do not understand the original language, but also for the person who does not have a comprehensive understanding of English (ibid: 1). The second category is the translation of key texts into all the eleven official languages. Meyer explains:

... selected stories held in common (rather than one unifying national language which establishes a common national ground) become the basis of an imagined community. Instead of leaving behind our private languages to communicate in the public sphere of English, these texts help us to establish a community in languages which permeate our own immediate, every day, linguistically structured life worlds, which in turn are enriched by these texts (ibid: 3).

An example of such a text is Nelson Mandela’s *Long Walk to Freedom* (1995). By translating central texts into the indigenous languages of South Africa, a network can be established between people from various language groups by means of the text. In other words, people have access to the same information but by means of different languages. In this manner, translation plays a vital role in a country like South Africa in which there are multiple official languages.

Translation is also a significant means towards cultural formation. Gabriele Klein makes the following claim in her book, *Tango in Translation* (2009):

The history of cultures is a history of translation. It is a history of borrowing and appropriation, of the drawing up of boundaries and the shifting of boundaries, of the mixing up and the fabrication of differences (7, trans. H. Gehring).¹⁵³

¹⁵³ “Die Geschichte der Kulturen ist eine Geschichte der Übersetzung. Es ist eine Geschichte der Anleihen und Aufnahmen, der Grenzziehungen und Grenzverschiebungen, der Vermischung und der Herstellung von Differenz” (Klein, 2009: 7).

Klein highlights the inherent relationship between the formation of culture and acts of translation, emphasizing the manner in which translation can bring about cultural shifts and exchange. Such shifts and exchanges are particularly important in a South African context as has been mentioned throughout this thesis. Helize van Vuuren (2009) explains:

Translation is understood as an intimate gesture of cultural interaction towards understanding and empathy, as transformation of the self and the other into a syncretic, collective “us” ... a striving towards transformation of the South African society as one where racial, cultural, linguistic and class barriers might be broken down, where a new communal identity might emerge, with the best of African culture and the best of Western culture combined in one syncretic whole (234).

It becomes clear that when one speaks of translation, it “does not only refer to the medium of another language in which to write but, also, to a ‘new way in which to speak’, and a different key in which to dream a new society” (ibid: 220). Ultimately, then, one can argue that, in a multicultural society, translation plays an important role in offering ways for people to understand one another and by means of such understanding to achieve a stronger sense of connectivity. Van Vuuren claims that “[t]ranslation is inextricably bound up with transformation – of the perceived identity of the self and of the South African society” (ibid).

This understanding of translation can in turn be linked to Jaques Derrida’s (1982) claim that “for the notion of translation we would have to substitute the notion of transformation: a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another” (20). Ultimately, then, one can argue that the act of translation can become a means of living together as a medium for transformation, with the expressed understanding that “[t]ranslation is an intentional interaction intending to change an existing state of affairs” (Christiane Nord quoted in Krog 2003: 267). Salman Rushdie (1992) explains this as follows:

Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately to the notion that something can also be gained (17).

Rushdie’s sentiment was shared by the late president Nelson Mandela who professed that “[o]ne’s language should never be a dead end. That is why I believe in translation: for us to be able to live together” (quoted in Krog, 2003: 268). Such contributions to living together are certainly crucial within a multicultural South African context where language barriers still contribute to societal divides. Furthermore, with regard to translation as a way in which different people can reach out to one another, Khethiwe Marais (2001) explains:

Translation is a concrete way of showing acceptance of other people’s humanity. Accepting other people’s languages means accepting their equality and cultures. It is

in essence accepting and practicing the principles of democracy, giving people their right to hear and be heard in their language (n.p.).

6.4 Collage as a form to promote change

From workshop theatre and cultural translation, a collage-like theatre form is able to emerge, which is able to represent a third space logic of “both/and also”. As a visual art form the collage played a significant role during the apartheid era by conjuring up possibilities that went beyond an apartheid construct, as can be seen in the works of Kay Hassan and Sam Nhlengethwa. By recontextualising magazine and newspaper cut-outs, an “imagined real” can be established, which in turn has value in “the project of decolonisation” (Brink, 1998: 31). An example of a literal way in which the collage was used to project future realities, can be seen in theatre director Lara Foot Newton’s production *Ways of Dying* (2000), based on a Zakes Mda novel. In one of the scenes, the male character, a praise singer at funerals, opens his jacket to reveal a paper collage pasted on the inside. This collage – made from magazine and newspapers cut-outs depicting furniture, food and other objects – represents the material things that the character dreams of possessing. By revealing this to the audience, a clear message was communicated by showing the “imagined real”.

Apart from being useful to bring about change, the collage offers a way to depict a diverse and fragmented society such as South Africa. About such fragmentation, Achille Mbembe (2009) makes the following observation:

Because the time we live in is fundamentally fractured, the very project of an essentialist recovery of the self is, by definition, doomed. Only the disparate and often intersecting practices through which Africans stylise their conduct and life can account for the thickness of which the African present is made (46).

To enact such a fractured society, the work itself needs to incorporate fragments, intersections and layers. Mark Fleishman (2012a) observes that “[t]he post-colonial body is too fractured to be easily reconstituted into a simple narrative” (17). He explains that in his work, there is a “search of coherence, of new ways of being together, but the forms that emerge tend towards disruption and discontinuity and ultimately dissolve back into fragments” (ibid). Following on from both Mbembe and Fleishman’s claims, it is possible to say that the collage is used to make fragmented identities visible.

Moreover, inherent to the collage is a re-imagining of existing forms. In this manner, materials/objects/texts originally designed for a particular function can be reconfigured into other forms, linking strategies of adaptation, composition and reconfiguration to the collage,

made “with things that were meant perhaps for other ends” (Spivak, 1976: xix). For example, in writing, a collage-like construction might involve “[c]utting and pasting, the use of found text, the willingness to use any type of discourse whatsoever, a complete disregard for genre and a love of the hybrid text” (Kerstetter, 2010). This method can also be applied to the theatre-making process itself, in which the construction of a theatre collage or bricolage can be understood to go hand-in-hand with the merging, interruption, scrambling, mixing and/or fusing of diverse performance or other texts. From such a perspective of re-imagining old forms, I believe, along with Frith, that a theatre text made in this manner “with its cut-ups, its scratches, breaks and samples, is best understood as producing not new texts but new ways of performing texts, new ways of performing the making of meaning” (1996: 115).¹⁵⁴ In relation to such “cutting up” and “sampling” of texts, Mathew Maguire (regarded as a multi-disciplinary theatre artist) contrasts temporal linearity with the way people integrate the multiple facets of experience:

I fragment, suspend and recombine the many stories coming into my eyes. Each one is a straight, linear story – but I don’t experience reality that way. They’re all flooding me at once, interweaving, overlapping, intercutting, overriding, interbinding, overtoning. I take the pieces, I chop them up, I keep them all floating at once, and then I reintegrate them so they fit at the same time (quoted in Steinman, 1986: 124).

Maguire’s strategy does not necessarily negate the linear construction of stories, but enables the bringing together of multiple stories and thereby suggests ways for departing from a logically constructed, singular, storyline as a premise for theatre. He proposes ways in which an assemblage of stories can be made. Such an assemblage is analogous to post-linear systems which originated from digital jargon, but are nowadays widely applied; also in theatre terms.

In this sense, post-linearity offers ways in which multiple options or pathways can be followed, due to the possibilities brought about by digitisation. Digital systems make it possible, for example, for information to be skipped, or cut, or pasted elsewhere (hence sampled and layered or repeated). Suzan Kozel (2002) explains that post-linearity has been associated with “a radical explosion of meaning [which] translates into a fragmentation of histories and language where it is up to the reader of multiple social texts to create meaning” (258). Post-linearity is thus an alternative to the traditional approach epitomised in analogue

¹⁵⁴ Although Frith made this comment about hip-hop music, it can be applied to a theatre context.

systems in which there is a systematic, uninterrupted flow of codes.¹⁵⁵ What is significant for the purpose of this thesis is that Kozel associates these technologies with particular political systems, offering the following interpretation:

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

In associating political distinctions with the terms “linearity” and “post-linearity” Kozel offers a useful framework for understanding how particular types of theatre can mirror the political climate of a particular society. Certainly, her claim about post-linearity being related to a “radical explosion of meaning” resonates with the post-1994 South African context, so that one could argue that a post-linear approach – as potentially captured by the collage – can be useful in mirroring a society consisting of “multiple social texts” (ibid).

One can thus say that a post-linear approach, and by implication a collage, is useful in depicting a situation or society that could be described as a shattered mirror. Because the collage is a reconstitution, the idea of something having been shattered is inherent in it. Some particularities of the image that has been shattered may then become elements of the reconstituted new, or they may simply be discarded: the possibilities for reimagining via collage are endless but what matters is that it is a powerful medium for questioning notions of homogeneity and destabilizing claims to authority. If one considers the work of collage artist Hannah Hoeh, for example, one can see how in her photomontages she questions gender stereotyping and power relationships.¹⁵⁶ The collage can thus be said to be very effective in distorting what could be regarded as a normative gaze. By means of distortion and obliteration, seemingly normative experiences or viewpoints can be unhinged or made strange. Apart from being used to question societal norms, the collage can contribute to the discovery of new forms: something that was actively pursued by many surrealists. Max Ernst, for example, described the collage as “[t]he exploitation of the chance meeting of two remote realities on a plane unsuitable to them” (quoted in Jamal, 2005: 61). The collage can thus make space for the

¹⁵⁵ The video and tape recorders, along with the record player, are examples of such systems. Although the tape and video recorders allow for a flexibility of movement, the format remains analogue. In order to reach a particular point, the user has to scroll through unwanted material.

¹⁵⁶ Hoeh was mainly active as an artist during the era of the Weimar Republic.

coming together of seeming incommensurabilities and by doing so it can offer opportunities for the discovery of new, and often unexpected, insights and possibilities.

Indeed, the fact that the collage is not a “stable, unified or autonomous object, but a network of references” (Stevens, 1996: 10) makes it suitable for the convergence of clashing ideas as can be found in hybrid and syncretic forms. With regard to the amalgamation of clashing objects/images/ideas, Max Ernst’s (1920) claim has value: “If the plumes make the plumage, it is not the glue (*colle*) that makes the collage” (quoted in Jamal, 2005: 61).¹⁵⁷ In other words, rather than making something whole – as is suggested by the reference to gluing – the collage shows up differences. This ability to bring together seemingly diverse objects, ideas or media, can be useful in projecting future possibilities, offering ways in which disparate viewpoints can co-exist. The collage can thus “promote change due to its duplicity and inconsistency – its inherent corruptibility” (Jamal, 2005: 62).

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I highlighted principles related to “workshop theatre”, “translation” and “the collage as visual art form” in order to communicate key principles that go hand-in-hand with these three approaches to creating art and theatre. In relation to the aims of the thesis, I wanted to make the ideological underpinnings of these approaches apparent, as well as show the possibilities for implementation in practice. Some of the key points that I wanted to bring across can be summarised as follows:

- Workshop theatre is an approach to theatre making as well as a theatre form that
 - offers opportunities for overcoming divisions between previously segregated people;
 - allows for an ensemble of voices;
 - can bring about cultural exchange and by implication cultural change;
 - can be representative of a radical participatory democracy;
 - can bring about a sense of solidarity amongst people;
 - is owned by the group;
 - is a laboratory for cultural negotiation.

¹⁵⁷ Ernst (1936) originally made this statement in French: “Si ce sont les plumes qui font le plumage, ce n'est pas la colle qui fait le collage” (quoted in Bischoff, 1987).

- Translation is
 - a way in which new symbolic orders can be formed;
 - a means of cultural formation;
 - a means to establish dialogue between self and other;
 - necessary for living together.

- The collage can
 - depict an imagined real;
 - represent a fragmented society;
 - bring about a re-imagination of existing forms;
 - promote change.

The manner in which these principles, approaches and strategies have been implemented is explained in Part Three by means of the case study productions *Hex*, *Lady Anne* and *Ekspedisies*.

PART THREE: IN PRACTICE

Chapter Seven: Hybridity, Syncretism and Translation in *Hex*

The best way to conceive the ... plural is to listen to the text as an iridescent exchange carried on by multiple voices, on different wavelengths and subject from time to time to a sudden dissolve, leaving a gap which enables the utterance to shift from one point of view to another.

- Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, 1974

There is a capacity to heal the human heart in the act not only of speaking – but in finally being heard. Acknowledging the past through sharing one’s personal story is the single most powerful action in the battle against the silence of indifference or fear. To testify not only uncovers ... but heals the speaker and the listener alike.

- Desmond Tutu in *Theatre as Witness*, 2008

7.1 Introduction: *Hex* as third space

This chapter sets out to demonstrate how third space theory, syncretism, hybridity and translation strategies were applied in the theatre production, *Hex* (2000-2010). Understood to be a theatre collage, this play can be viewed as hybrid and syncretic and, as such, many of the objectives that underlay its production coincide with the ideals explicated in the sections on hybridity and syncretism. These objectives are associated with bringing together and creating an interplay between cultures, languages and genres. The effect of doing this can be to highlight dissonance and the perceptions that underlie purism, and also to go further by depicting alternatives. The sections that follow will discuss some of the material and approaches that were used in *Hex* to challenge cultural stereotypes and present alternative realities.

7.2 Short stories as a source for multiple perspectives

The short story collection that was used as the primary source text for *Hex* is titled *Feeks* [Bitch], written by Riana Scheepers (1999).¹⁵⁸ The fact that stories rather than a play text were chosen is significant within a project that set out to foreground difference and multiplicity (multiple opinions / voices / languages / identities / cultural practices / performance forms / styles / genres / disciplines / media). As Jochen Achilles and Nina Bergmann (2015) point out, anthologies of short stories have the ability to reveal a “multiplicity of options” (16) and “bring together and amalgamate a multiplicity of different discourses” (ibid: 11). This was indeed the

¹⁵⁸ Although the word *feeks* is a hybrid, made up from the words “fee” [fairy] and “heks” [witch], it is commonly used in a similar context to the English word “bitch”.

case with the Scheepers collection which made it possible to reveal diverse world views and perspectives. This, in turn, made it possible to undermine the formation of a dominant voice speaking with overall authority on behalf of a complex society. In the words of Angelika Bammer (1991), the use of multiple sources can “destabilize the hegemony of a single, authoritative narrative” (127).

7.2.1 The merging of radically distinct identities

The *Feeks* collection was particularly conducive as source material for a hybrid theatre production because the stories take place in very different geographical and historical settings and merge starkly differing identities. As Scheepers explains, the title of the collection itself suggests a form of conceptual merging:

The word *feeks* is quite a provocative word. You immediately have an emotional reaction to it. What I find important is that the word fairy [fee] and the word witch [heks] are pulled together into the word *feeks*. I am completely convinced that there is a bit of witch in every woman. ... In the same manner, there is also the magic power, the lightness and the admiration for something so beautiful and so flighty as a fairy (n.p., trans. H. Gehring).¹⁵⁹

Given the author’s syncretic intention in choosing this title, it is clear that she wanted to subvert binaries based on stereotypical constructions of female identities by merging polarised concepts. Space was therefore made in the collection for fusion and amalgamation, and this offered possibilities for the formation of a hybrid theatre production. The merging of seemingly opposing identity constructs set the tone for the creation of *Hex*, in which we consistently tried to combine, fuse, hybridise and juxtapose stories, languages, media and styles. In both form and content, this integration of diverse elements was a deliberate attempt not just to foreground but to celebrate diversity. In a further accommodation of diverse sources and forms, over and above the material from *Feeks*, we incorporated monologues and scenes that emerged from within the workshop processes which were, in turn, regarded as extensions of the *Feeks* source

¹⁵⁹ “Die woord *feeks* is nogal ’n baie provokatiewe woord. Jy het oombliklik ’n emosionele reaksie daarop. Wat vir my belangrik is, is dat die woord *fee* en die woord *heks* saamgetrek word in die woord *feeks*. Ek is heeltemal oortuig daarvan dat daar in elke vrou ’n bietjie *heks* is, en ek dink dit is reg ook, die vrou is nog steeds ’n misterieuse wese. Net so is daar ook die misterie, die towerkrag, die ligtheid en die bewondering vir iets so mooi en so vlugtig en so pragtig soos ’n *feetjie*” (Riana Scheepers quoted in [http://www.givengain.com/cgi-bin/giga.cgi?cmd=print article&news id=48291&cause id=1270b](http://www.givengain.com/cgi-bin/giga.cgi?cmd=print%20article&news%20id=48291&cause%20id=1270b) last accessed on 17 May 2013).

material. This extension of and, in some cases, departure from the source material was the reason why the production was called *Hex* rather than *Feeks*.¹⁶⁰

7.2.2 Multiple truths through contrasting stories

In creating a hybrid production, a variety of voices could be foregrounded, the significance of which is described as follows by Charlene Rajendran (2009):

By developing platforms and stages where ... stories ... can be told from a variety of voices, to reflect the range of ideologies and diverse practices, the clashes and collages can be examined and apprehended with more insight and depth (189).¹⁶¹

This foregrounding of multiple voices was central to *Hex*. In using a story collection that was, in itself, a site for ambiguity and contradiction, we were able to generate a complex weave, so that the composition of the performance enacted the notion of multiple identities through the performance of multiple selves. Rather than being an attempt to mediate between disparate perspectives, *Hex* was simply a presentation of multiplicity, in the sense that Edward Said (1991) describes in the following passage:

... multiple identity, the polyphony of many voices playing off against each other, without ... the need to reconcile them, just to hold them together ... More than one culture, more than one awareness, both in its negative and its positive modes (26).

Such a focus on multiplicity was important, seeing that one of the aims of the production was to interrogate and critique social stereotypes and homogenous viewpoints, particularly with regard to women's role in society. Both the *Feeks* collection and the production *Hex* were platforms for the narration and sharing of stories that generally are not spoken about in public or in the media. Scheepers, in giving the female characters in her anthology a voice, was promoting what Homi Bhabha (2003a) calls "the right to narrate":

When you fail to protect the right to narrate, you are in danger of filling the silence with sirens, megaphones, hectoring voices carried by loudspeakers from podiums of great height over people who shrink into indistinguishable masses (181).

¹⁶⁰ One of the actresses, Anita Berk, wrote three stories called *The Birth, want dit sny nie* [because it does not cut] and *The Nun*. Another written contribution was by actress Brenda Ngxoli, who wrote the piece *Mother of none*. Apart from these written contributions, the actresses developed three sketches during a workshop process, simply called "Kugels 1", "Kugels 2", "Kugels 3".

¹⁶¹ Rajendran made this comment about Malaysian theatre, but it is applicable to most theatre contexts which want to reflect on multicultural societies.

It is notable that Scheepers wrote the collection partly in order to lay claim to her own right to express herself in whatever way she chooses. In some respects, the anthology was a riposte to severe criticism meted out to Scheepers after she told a joke in a national television comedy programme that included a swear word in the punch line: “I am not good with marches and sword fights, but I can write stories – and stories often have a bigger impact than sword fights” (Scheepers quoted in McFarlane, 2013: n.p.).¹⁶² As a woman, her swearing was widely criticised by the media, including the publishing house for which she worked at the time. This prompted Scheepers to resign from her position as well as to write the series of short stories. Her comment on this incident was as follows:

We still have not progressed one bit since the Middle Ages. This is what my short story anthology is about: that the witch (bitch) was eradicated because she did not conform to their idea of woman. It was the intensity of the attack on me that I found upsetting. It was the intensity that caused the women in the Middle Ages to be burned (quoted in Retief, 1999: n.p., trans. H. Gehring).¹⁶³

This feeling of outrage prompted Scheepers to do research about women in the Middle Ages, during which period women were branded as witches for the most ridiculous reasons (McFarlane, 2013: n.p.). Scheepers elaborates on this notion in an interview with Roné McFarlane (ibid). She says we might think that branding people as witches is something of the past “until [we] open the paper and read about yet another woman who has been rejected by her community or has even been killed because of apparently being a witch” (ibid).¹⁶⁴

The anthology was thus a way for Scheepers both to respond to the attack and question labels such as “witch” and “bitch”, which are often used to refer to women who do not conform to societal expectations. With regard to the right to narrate and the healing power of storytelling in general, Rustom Bharucha (2001) is of the opinion that “[s]tories matter in any exposition of truth, not only because they enable us to illuminate elusive realities but because they help us to deal with the aporias of pain” (3764). Following Bharucha’s reasoning, one could argue that Scheepers wrote *Feeks* not only to deal with personal pain, but also to reveal and share the pain of many others. By presenting these stories as a theatre production, we wanted to

¹⁶² “Ek is nie goed met opmarse en swaardgevegte nie, maar ek kan stories skryf – en stories het dikwels ’n groter impak as ’n swaardgeveg” (Scheepers quoted in McFarlane, 2013: n.p., trans. H. Gehring).

¹⁶³ “Ons het nog g’n stuk gevorder sedert die Middeleeue nie. Dis waaroor my kortverhaalbundel [Feeks] gaan: dat die feeks verdelg is omdat sy nie hul idee van ’n vrou was nie. Dit was die intensiteit van die aanval op my wat ontstellend is. Dit was die intensiteit wat veroorsaak het dat die vroue in die Middeleeue verbrand is” (Scheepers quoted in Retief, 1999: n.p., trans. H. Gehring).

¹⁶⁴ “tot jy die koerant oopslaan en lees van nog ’n vrou wat deur haar gemeenskap verwerp of selfs doodgemaak is omdat sy glo ’n heks is” (McFarlane, 2013: n.p., trans. H. Gehring).

encourage audience members and performers to share their personal responses to the stories, and also to tell their own stories in the spirit of Bharucha's notion that "stories matter in any exposition of truth" (ibid).

The cover blurb of the anthology states that the book is about "extraordinary ordinary" women, indicating that Scheepers wanted to highlight the fact that, although possessing certain extraordinary qualities, the women are also ordinary in many ways and hence unfairly labelled as "other". The extraordinary qualities of the characters in *Feeks* are varied and the stories represent a broad selection of types of people. The collection tells stories about contemporary and historical women, mythical and everyday women, and traditional and modern women. It tells stories about women from various parts of Africa as well as women from Europe. While the anthology was written from a feminist perspective, it can be regarded as going beyond a simple form of feminism:

In many of the texts written by the current generation of women it is the spirit of independence and obvious rejection of dominance of any sort, rather than a pure form of feminist thinking that is conveyed by the narrations (Roos, 1998: 104, trans. H. Gehring).¹⁶⁵

The characters depicted in *Feeks* undoubtedly manifest a spirit of independence. As such, they do not represent women who are in opposition to something in particular but, rather, women who voice their individualism and unique ways of being. In depicting such women, the stories in *Feeks* allow for the expression of multiple ways of being and make space for multiple perspectives to be addressed; so the production *Hex* was an attempt to avoid the formation of a dominant voice or ideology.

One way in which a range of ideologies was highlighted in *Hex*, was by placing contrasting stories alongside one another. For example, a contemporary story set in an airport was juxtaposed with a monologue about a pagan sacrifice. This was followed by a comic scene set at a meditation gathering, followed by an African folktale about a little girl who found her voice through song. By means of juxtaposition of this sort, diverse and contradictory characters and their stories could be foregrounded.

The eclectic nature of the stories was further highlighted through the use of extracts from Walt Disney films as interludes between scenes. In this manner visual stories were told as well. Apart from the thematic significance of these particular films, they provided an

¹⁶⁵ "In baie van die tekste geskryf deur die huidige generasie vroue is dit 'n gees van onafhanklikheid en die vanselfsprekende afwysing van dominansie van enige aard, eerder as 'n suiwer vorm van feministiese denke wat deur die vertellings weergegee word" (Roos, 1998: 104).

interlude during which the actresses could dress and ready themselves for the next story. This enabled a switch from vocal delivery, to animated film. The combination of more than one medium offered possibilities for layers, which made it possible to construct a complex interplay of mediums and narratives. The animated forms offered a plasticity of movement in contrast to the more naturalistic human movements of the actresses. Furthermore, the clips from the films *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *101 Dalmatians* (1961) and *The Little Mermaid* (1989), were based on stereotypical notions of witches as often seen in fairy tales or children's stories, whereas the stories that were performed "live" were grounded in lived experiences.

The film interludes, apart from offering another perspective on witches, gave the audience a chance to digest or take a break from the verbal text. In contrast to the real life experiences of ordinary women labelled as witches, the film clips provided a sense of playfulness as an alternative to the sometimes cerebral and word heavy spoken text. In this manner, the clips served as an interruption to the verbal stories and temporarily removed the audience from the live action on stage. The clips thus provided gaps for reflection, in a manner similar to musical interludes in variety shows or Brechtian estrangement devices. The usefulness of such estrangement or alienation can be explained in the words of David Huddart (2008):

Alienation would usually be thought of as a problem, but if it is something that is part of all experience, and is even something that might inspire us to re-evaluate our identities, then we can understand it as an opportunity. The meaning, in other words, opens up a space for us to reconsider how we have come to be who we are (83).

Such a re-evaluation of identity was important within a project that wanted to bring about shifts in identity, artistically as well as socially. Furthering identity shifts, the film clips were accompanied by music. In this manner the music was used as an extension to the visual and verbal communication of the film and acted stories. This represented an alternative medium through which to convey and signify an array of voices and thereby create an acoustic hybrid. Apart from serving as yet another layer of voices, the music also formed a juxtaposing device, as the recorded music replaced the original sound tracks of the film clips. In this manner, two sets of information could be communicated through the combination of film and sound in an attempt to create an enriching experience. Stylistically diverse music was played. For example, there were tracks from Miriam Makeba's album *Sangoma* (1988) and Kate Bush's *Hounds of Love* (1985), thus merging African and Western codes, and constructing what Obert (2006) calls "cross-cultural auralities" (2). In most of the chosen tracks, the lyrics were thematically

related to the over-arching witches' theme thereby bringing across information related to the play. Borrowing the words of Obert, one could say that this hybrid approach brought about a "cultural community in sonic space, staging border-crossings acoustically" (ibid), based on the assumption expressed by Jacques Attali's (1985) argument that "the world is not legible, but audible" (3).

A further significant merging in *Hex* was that of Afrikaans and isiZulu storytelling traditions, and of scribal and oral literatures. Many of the stories in *Feeks* were written "in the storytelling tradition of Africa" (Pople, 1992).¹⁶⁶ The reason for this is explained by Scheepers as follows:

What influenced me the most, because it made me a writer, was the stories that my black grandmother told me. At night time in the hut or around the fire, Juba's Zulu tales fostered in me an awareness of Africa. It gives a mythical dimension to my writing, actually to my entire life (quoted in Pople, trans. H. Gehring).¹⁶⁷

One could say that Scheepers' stories were from "worlds at odds with one another – such as simultaneously being a European and an African" (Pople, 1992).¹⁶⁸ Such a "fascinating falling together of worlds" (ibid) was true, not only in relation to the content of the stories but also to the form, in the sense that African stories are traditionally conveyed through performance.¹⁶⁹ Scheepers' stories, on the other hand, were written to be read. This confluence of worlds, in which the African oral tradition influenced the written text, is a significant convergence of two forms of literature; the oral (performative) and the scribal. Such a merging signified a cultural cross-over, intersecting different cultures and identities. Apart from the significance of such merging in defiance of dominant narratives, this coming together of worlds was also politically significant. Fleishman (1991) comments as follows on the positioning of oral cultures in relation to scribal cultures:

The missionary education and the colonial discourse in general marginalised the traditional communities and their orally based cultures as part of a general process in which the institutions and cultures of Europe asserted themselves as 'naturally' superior to those of Africa (49).

¹⁶⁶ "in die storieverteltradisie van Afrika geskryf" (Pople, 1992: n.p., trans. H. Gehring).

¹⁶⁷ "Wat my die meeste beïnvloed het, omdat dit van my 'n skrywer gemaak het, was die stories wat my swart ouma vertel het. Saans in die hut of om die vuur het Juba se Zoeloesprokies in my 'n bewuswording van Afrika gekweek. Dit gee 'n mitiese dimensie aan my skryfkuns, eintlik aan my hele lewe" (quoted in Pople, 1992, trans. H. Gehring).

¹⁶⁸ "wêreld in stryd met mekaar – soos om tegelyk 'n Europeër en Afrikaan te wees" (Pople, 1992: n.p., trans. H. Gehring).

¹⁶⁹ "fassinerende saamval van wêreld" (Pople, 1992: n.p., trans. H. Gehring).

One can, thus, say that in *Hex*, by merging orality and writing, a form of restitution took place in which the two forms were reconciled. Another significant confluence in Scheepers' stories was that of Afrikaans and Zulu cultures. The stories were written in Afrikaans, but were partially influenced by Zulu tradition, in this sense bringing together two cultures that are generally perceived to be unlike each other. Such combinations within the stories offered possibilities for further cultural crossing and bridging.

7.2.3 Traditional storytelling as hybrid

Due to the fact that there were already strong traces of traditional oral storytelling woven into the written stories, it made sense that some of the strategies used in creating the production were informed by such storytelling principles. In this context, traditional storytelling can be understood to be “a performance which includes enactment, characterization through gesture and vocal dramatics, mime, dance and song” (Fleishman, 1991: 43). From this description one can say that traditional storytelling is inherently hybrid in the sense that it merges various styles and disciplines and brings together diverse performance strands. One can, thus, say that storytelling as a form of oral performance is a meeting point for diverse entities. Such coming together of multiple strands can be seen in traditional San storytelling. Yvette Hutchison gives the following description (2004):

The performances include both sacred and profane stories and songs, which may be part of communal religious life or may reflect personal moods and events ... San stories blur western distinctions between prose, poetry and performance by mingling the narrative aspects of plot and character with rhythm through sound patterning, pauses, abrupt breaks and fluctuations of tone and volume coherence. The stories are not simple episodic narrations, but performed in cycles ... and are often bawdy and scatological ... these stories operate both as entertainment and as social structures through which rites and duties respecting ownership of a kill, food and support of the weak by the strong can be negotiated (316-319).

From the above description it becomes clear that multiple strands are pulled together into one performance and that the emphasis is on fluidity and assimilation, rather than on separation and classification. From such foregrounding of multiplicity, storytelling can be an alternative to Western theatre within which there is usually a dominance of dialogue. Furthermore, one can argue along with Licon (2012) that storytelling is representative of “a third-space consciousness to reveal potentially fertile and generative borderlands where third-space subjects put our perspectives, lived experiences, and rhetorical performances into play” (14).

From such a third space perspective, seemingly opposing entities – such as personal narratives and communal rituals, entertainment and religion, scatological narrations and sacred practices – can be combined in a transcendence of divisions. In this manner, then, storytelling allows for an interweaving of performance cultures. The fact that traditional stories are cyclical, imitating patterns from the natural world, further highlights a sense of connectivity and flow. Despite the fact that traditional storytelling in a pure form scarcely exists anymore and is only practiced on very rare occasions in isolated communities, the principles inherent to this ancient tradition have contemporary value, particularly in countering increasingly fragmented contemporary societies. One can thus say that storytelling, even in a contemporary context, has a binding function

In order to have this binding function, storytelling needs to involve the whole community because the role of the audience is just as important as that of the storytellers or performers. The story experience is built collectively, in that the performers involve the audience by either encouraging them to sing along or to make comments at crucial parts of the production. Storytelling can thus establish a bond by bringing a certain community closer together, and at the same time help to bridge differences. Harold Scheub (1975) explains that “[t]he performer [traditional storyteller] creates the community during her performance; she gives the community shape and form” (87). This can be done through setting up an interactive relationship between performers and audience, such that the audience members can be empowered through participation in the construction of the story. Creating space for spontaneous interaction between performers and audience opens the way for the emergence of something new and unexpected: both parties are influenced by one another, and in this manner become able to take ownership of the action. In keeping with the notion of audience participation, Kati Francis (2006), in following Duncan Brown (1998), describes the role of storytelling as “a free voice of the people, for the people, at the centre of their social existence, binding the community, preventing its fragmentation” (105).

This notion of a “free voice of the people, for the people” resonates with democratic ideals and can, thus, be associated with performances that wish to express such ideals. For this reason, performances that are akin to, or that incorporate, storytelling principles could arguably be ideal for mirroring a South African democracy. Furthermore, the “binding” function that can be established by means of storytelling can be an effective strategy for bringing together previously (and currently) divided people.

As for the active involvement of the audience, this, arguably, stands in radical contrast to most Western theatre forms where the audience members are often passive receivers of

information and are separated from the stage action, mainly due to the physical construct of the proscenium arch, which also has the effect of leaving the audience in the dark while lighting up the performers. This set up, rather than establishing a community, divides the performers from the audience. By contrast, the binding of a community within a theatre construct is a way of resisting or rupturing some traditional Western theatre customs.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, with regard to storytelling and the manner in which it draws audiences and performers together, Francis (2006) explains:

It is a public, informal event where the intimacy between the performers and the audience can blur the distinction between art and reality as the performance is produced in the immediacy of the moment by all present (105).

One can thus make the assumption that storytelling can, in many ways, bring about a third space that “offers a possibility for the concurrent, interacting, ambiguous, and even contradictory discourses” (Licona, 2012: 14) to co-exist.

7.2.4 Storytelling in Afrikaans theatre

Due to this binding function of storytelling and the ability to bring diverse people together, it is not surprising that Pieter Fourie – the first executive director of the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival (KKNK) – originally conceived of the festival as a “storytelling market” as mentioned in Chapter Three. Fourie wanted to create a platform for sharing stories and, by implication, bring diverse people together. Within an Afrikaans cultural context, the notion of a storytelling market makes sense, since the custom of informal storytelling is relatively common in Afrikaans culture. This is reflected in the titles of some of the productions and events that have featured at the KKNK, such as *Oppie Stoep* [On the Porch] (1996), *Stoepstories* [Porch stories] (2004) and *Struisvogelstories* [Ostrich stories] (2001).¹⁷¹ The typically Afrikaans custom of storytelling differs from traditional African storytelling in that

¹⁷⁰ Although there is an increasing tendency to incorporate audiences into performances in all kinds of ways, such as through immersive theatre, the community forming effect, as explained by example of storytelling, is not always foregrounded. There are, however, Western theatre groups that also have community binding at heart, but it is not very common. In Western forms, community binding often happens in non-theatre performance spaces, such as at music festivals, cabarets, circuses or similar events.

¹⁷¹ *Struisvogelstories* followed a different format from the other stories, in the sense that it was created through a workshop process in which local farm workers were the performers. In this production, music and dance reminiscent of African storytelling was used. The extent to which music was incorporated can be seen from the fact that the production was entered in the category “Cabaret and Music Theatre” [Kabaret en Musiekteater]. The nature of the production was summarised by director André-Jaques van der Merwe in saying that “the production had an indigenous quality that spoke to people” [Dit het ’n inheemse kwaliteit gehad wat tot mense gepraat het] (quoted in *KKNK20*: 87, trans. H. Gehring).

the Afrikaans stories tend to be more word heavy, dependent on wit and wordplay with little emphasis on an embodied response as in the case of traditional African storytelling.

This distinction between Afrikaans and African storytelling was bridged in the Afrikaans production *Uit die Bloute* [Out of the Blue] (1996), directed by Ilze van Hemert and featuring performers Gys de Villiers and Anna-Mart van der Merwe. This production combined typical Afrikaans storytelling with African storytelling devices, hence establishing a hybrid form. In *Uit die Bloute* stories written by the Afrikaans writer Eugene Marais were used as source material. Some of the stories were based on San mythology and, in these, the approach to the storytelling was much more embodied and physical; in line with approaches as traditionally used by San storytellers. The fact that *Uit die Bloute* incorporated African storytelling devices not usually seen in Afrikaans theatre was significant. This was particularly with reference to foregrounding the body and incorporating body, music, rhythm, poetry and characterisation; hence offering a holistic approach. About this production, one of the performers, Anna-Mart van der Merwe, said: “I find the show special because you go back to the ancient things, telling stories and you only have your body and your voice” (quoted in *KKNK20*, 2014: 26).¹⁷²

It is this embodied approach that opens possibilities for crossing the borders between oral literature and written text. Although the performance was not intercultural, seeing that all the performers in it were white Afrikaans speakers, the embodied performance style offered ways for bridging cultural divides. From such an embodied approach, there was the possibility of creating “a heartrending sensory experience” (Robinson, 1996).¹⁷³ Furthermore, with regard to the creation of a hybrid, Mariana Malan (1997) explains that the style of the music that was used was in “a genre for which there is not really a name” (n.p.).¹⁷⁴ This comment indicates the extent to which *Uit die Bloute* was ground breaking, creating a new form through the combination of various existing forms. Gabriël Botma (1996) describes the combination of performance mediums as follows: “They narrate, gesture, sing, dance and together display a world of wonder in front of your very eyes.”¹⁷⁵ *Uit die Bloute* was therefore a hybrid in many ways. It merged the physical theatre performance style as employed in traditional San stories

¹⁷² “Die show is vir my spesiaal omdat jy teruggaan na die oergoed, stories vertel en jy het net jou lyf en jou stem” (quoted in *KKNK20*: 26, trans. H. Gehring).

¹⁷³ “dit word 'n ontroerende sintuiglike ervaring” (Robinson, 1996, trans. H. Gehring).

¹⁷⁴ “'n genre waarvoor daar nie regtig 'n naam is nie” (Malan, 1997, trans. H. Gehring).

¹⁷⁵ “Hulle vertel, beduie, sing, dans en speel saam 'n wonderwêreld voor jou oë los” (Botma, 1996, trans. H. Gehring).

with the literary tradition of Eugene Marais. Apart from the fact that the storytelling was embodied, the production also used live music to further communication. This music was played by a band called Marimba, which used a collection of both Western and African musical instruments, such as guitars and violins, but also a kudu horn, djembe drums, and a reed flute.

Uit die Bloute therefore made an important contribution to a cross-cultural performance style, situating Afrikaans storytelling and ultimately the Afrikaans language within an African context. It also opened up possibilities for white Afrikaans speaking performers to cross cultural borders, thus signalling new possibilities for Afrikaans theatre.

7.2.5 Bridging divides

In *Hex*, the audience and performers were brought together, primarily, through the spatial arrangement in which the audience was seated on the stage with the performers. The choice to create such close proximity between audience and performers can be understood from the perspective that

It is the physical connection between bodies in a space that gives any theatrical experience its power; being part of the live event, watching bodies move in front of you, places you in a direct corporeal/phenomenological relationship with the performers and with the representations/images being presented in the piece (Duggan, 2007: 54).

In traditional storytelling, the audience usually clusters around the performers in a circular or semi-circular formation but, for *Hex*, we opted for tiered scaffolding so as to give the audience a good view. Although in this arrangement the audience was in fairly close proximity to the performers we still felt that tiered scaffolding was a compromise in terms of intimacy, so we looked for other means to restore the performer-audience connection. For instance, we constructed a shared physical space by suspending branches from the ceiling, which extended across the performer and audience spaces and created a canopy effect. Theatre director Anne Bogart (2007) regards intimacy as the heart of a performance and the more intense the material is the greater the need for depth of intimacy. She puts it this way:

Intimacy is the production's emphatic base line – its core and its attraction. A visually arresting, intellectually challenging or dense production, demands concomitant intimacy and vulnerability (65).

In *Hex*, the audience were mainly addressed directly, thus enrolling them as listeners. Many of the stories were told as if sharing secrets, thus establishing the notion that the performers were confessing to the audience and that the audience, in hearing the confessions, was complicit in

the action. This approach prompted many audience members to share their own experiences, or speak about how they identified with certain characters. The comments from audience members were mainly in the form of spontaneous conversations, after the performances, in which they were generally very keen to share their experiences. An example of such a response was from audience member Carin Lawrie (2012), who described her experiences as follows:

The play moved me in a conscious and almost subliminal way. I recognized many well-known female types, depicting positions and prejudices that most women experience at some time or another in their lives. The play had a cathartic effect on me. As I walked out, I knew my life had changed.

Furthermore, in seating the audience on scaffolding within the performance space and using the branches as an enclosing canopy, we not only bridged the gap between audience and performers but, also, between the inside and outside world through bringing aspects of the natural world into the theatre space. This merging of natural elements – wood, water, earth and fire – with the technical world of film clips and recorded music offered possibilities for the interplay between the natural world and the world of technology. The inclusion of natural elements retained a trace of my original idea, which had been to perform the work outside under a real tree.¹⁷⁶ Apart from being a more practical choice, bringing elements of the outside world into the theatre space offered opportunities for the juxtaposition of elements which, in turn, offered opportunities for creating a hybrid space.

7.2.6 In celebration of the body

Another key characteristic of oral tradition is the “celebration of the body” (Francis, 2006:13). With regard to such a celebration, Kati Francis (2006), following Mark Fleishman, explains:

In a tradition where there is no literary domination, the body is always an equal if not greater focal point in the performance than the words. The body’s movements are organically generated at the same time as or even before the words (115).

From Francis’ claim it is clear that oral performance allows for the integration of body and speech, foregrounding the notion that speech is also an embodied act. One can, therefore, argue that the body can be used as a way to transcend spoken text. With regard to such emphasis on the body, Harold Scheub (1975) explains:

¹⁷⁶ The reason why I decided against this notion of performing in an outside space was because it would have meant that I would have had to compromise on lighting and other technical equipment, due to budgetary constraints.

Characterization is achieved primarily through gesture, vocal dramatics, and body movement; the verbal narrative only sketches in the characters as it concentrates on their actions (54).

This links to Opland's (1983) claims about praise poetry where the "[t]exts are a small part of the overall performance" (258). He points out that "often the choreography supersedes the poetry for the fewer the words the better the poet is able to represent history in action" (258). Such a strong focus on the body is very common in contemporary South African theatre practice, where a blurring of boundaries between literary theatre and physical theatre has become the norm. In the production *Hex*, the body was foregrounded in multiple ways.

First and foremost, this was done by means of the fact that all three actresses were clad in undergarments. The undergarments were treated as a basic costume, enabling the actresses to play multiple parts, relying on the body to signify the transitions from one character to the other. Rather than being too reliant on costume and makeup to show transformation of character, the voice, posture and body language were engaged.

While the underwear served as the basic costume, the actresses also put on and took off other pieces of costume throughout the play, so that they were constantly engaged in putting on and taking off garments and accessories. The emphasis was, therefore, placed not only on the bodies but, also, on the acts of dressing and undressing. In this manner, the construction of identity through clothing could be revealed and by, means of that, also the construction of identity in general. In turn, by putting on diverse – sometimes contrasting – costumes, multiple identities could be represented.

As a further strategy to emphasise multiple identities, each of the three actresses portrayed multiple characters, representing fifteen parts in total. In this manner the "acting body as flexible sign" (Balme, 1999: 169) was foregrounded. Transformation of the body was used to indicate the possibility of transformation within the bigger social sphere. Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins (1996) explain that by means of one actor playing many parts "the performing body resists categorisation" (234). In this manner, then, a resistance to categorisation on stage can symbolize a resistance to categorisations within a social context; particularly in breaking stereotypes related to race, language and gender categorisation.



Image 7.1: Actress 1 playing multiple characters

The dressing and undressing drew attention to the actresses' bodies by covering up and revealing them. It also formed part of the play's action, contributing to the creation of a physical score. Rather than hide the act of dressing and undressing backstage it was foregrounded. This, in turn, could be regarded as a ritual, in the sense that it happened throughout the production. Such a ritual was practiced repetitively and brought about a sense of circularity. Yvette Hutchison (2004) explains that "... oral literature ... uses repetition as a rhetorical device to build anticipation and create a narrative" (317). The repetitive action of dressing and undressing in *Hex* was, indeed, a way through which anticipation from one story to the next could be generated.

This action of dressing and undressing was accompanied by other activities. All the clothes were hanging on a washing line and every time somebody wanted to put clothes on they took the clothes off the line. When they took clothes off, the clothes were thrown into washing baskets. In this manner, multiple activities that are stereotypically associated with women could be revealed. On the one hand, there was the act of dressing up as well as the construction of an identity through such dressing up. On the other hand, there was the reference to domestic activities. The reference to washing was in turn a reference to cleansing, something which featured throughout the play in multiple ways and which in turn suggested links to the notion of witches who had to be cleansed but, also, to the notion of witches as women in domestic spaces, associated with activities of cleaning. In this manner, then, various intertextual references could be made.



Image 7.2: Actress 2 playing multiple characters

Ultimately, the constant changes of clothing also communicated the notion of shape shifting; something that is also associated with stories or myths about witches. The shape shifting through changes in clothing could, therefore, also be used as a satirical device; a tongue-in-cheek reference to the so-called shape shifting of witches. Through these physical actions an attempt was made to communicate across language barriers, finding opportunities to create scenarios in which actions could speak louder than words.

The emphasis on the body – whether by means of highlighting the body through clothing, or through actions or core images – made sense within a play that predominantly aimed to highlight issues or matters related to women and their placement in society. Such a focus on the body made sense, following the notion that “the body is where gender distinctions are generally understood to originate” (Daly, 1991: 2). A focus on the female bodies in *Hex*, therefore, placed the focus on the womanliness or the femaleness of the performers. One critic understood this focus on the body and the fact that the women were clad in underwear as a comment on how men regard women; a comment on the male gaze.¹⁷⁷ If this was the impression created, it was not part of our intention, which was, instead, to draw attention to the various embodiments that could be taken on by these women and the multiplicity of identities that could be associated with one person; hence, suggesting a fluidity of identity rather than stationary identities.

¹⁷⁷ Theatre critic Francois Smith (2003) expressed this notion as follows: “Onmiddellik is daar dus 'n uitdaging van die manlike blik op die verhoogwêreld, en dit is hierdie manier van stereotipering wat in die brokke van die collage as 't ware op verskillende maniere geklee word”. [Immediately there was a challenge of the male gaze on the world of the stage, and it is this form of stereotyping that is clad in different ways in the fragments of the collage] (n.p., trans. H. Gehring).



Image 7.3: Actress 3 playing multiple characters

Moreover, the fact that the actresses portrayed multiple parts, sometimes in contrast to their own gender, was arguably a way in which fluidity was foregrounded, and in which there was a resistance to fixed identification based on race and gender stereotypes. Such a strategy in defiance of fixedness can be understood by means of Gilbert and Tompkins (1996):

Plays which used one actor to embody multiple characters usually aim for fluid action and role changes in order to emphasise the performativity of the body and thus to frustrate viewers' desire for a fixed and unitary subject (234).

Such transformation of the body then also indicated the possibility of shifts in imposed "identity traps" as mentioned before in Chapter Five. The significance of using the body in a range of forms, particularly within a post-colonial context, is described as follows by Gilbert and Tompkins:

The body takes on a much larger, more malleable form than that normally conveyed by the flesh and blood dimensions of an actor confined to one naturalistic role. This stretching of the borders of corporeality not only claims theatrical and, by implication, cultural space for the post-colonial subject, but also expresses his/her expansive and flexible identities. The strategic use of form emphasises the manipulation of the body on stage, as simultaneously split and multiple subjectivities develop into sites that disrupt the coloniser/colonised binary (ibid: 235).

In *Hex*, the multiple roles played by each actor meant that they could escape identity traps, not only with regard to the social context, but also in relation to the genre of theatre itself.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ With regard to this notion of theatre, one needs to take into consideration that the word "theatre" does not even exist in some indigenous African languages and that is a very contentious and often problematic notion to speak about and to try and define theatre in an African context.

7.2.7 Language as hybrid

Another manner in which multiplicity and inclusivity was generated in *Hex* was through something discussed in Chapter Four; the incorporation of more than one language. In this case we incorporated Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa. The stories were conveyed predominantly in Afrikaans with English and isiXhosa used to interrupt and at times disrupt the potential formation of an Afrikaans hegemony. The languages were placed alongside one another so as to form a dialogue between them, and, by means of such a dialogue, a possible relationship. Such a relationship was created in various ways. Sometimes an Afrikaans story was alternated with an English one. At other times, interjections were used. For example, in the opening scene of a story that featured in *Hex*, called *Indaba: Nomehlonkomo* [Story: Nomehlonkomo] (Scheepers, 1999: 34), the protagonist speaks in isiXhosa in a private conversation with imaginary birds (see *Hex* film clip 1).¹⁷⁹ The character's vernacular conversation with the birds is interrupted by a call from her grandmother, who speaks in English, but with a vernacular accent. In turn, the English conversation between the grandmother and granddaughter is interrupted by the narrator who addresses the audience in Afrikaans. In resuming her conversation with the imaginary birds, the protagonist reverts back to isiXhosa but, this time, with English interjections. The isiXhosa conversation is later extended into an isiXhosa song in the form of a lament. The song functions as a heightened expression of sorrow. Later in the story the character again sings in isiXhosa but, this time, to express joy.

Marie Noussi (2009) makes use of the term "'Xhosa-ification' of the English language" (292), which is something that was done in the dramatization of the *Nomehlonkomo* story. Although Noussi used the term to describe a stylistic characteristic in Zakes Mda's novel, *The Heart of Redness* (2000), the notion of "Xhosa-ification" is useful in describing what was done in the story that featured in *Hex*. It happened by means of the fact that the grandmother spoke English in an isiXhosa accent and because a mixture of isiXhosa and English was used in the dialogue of the little girl character. Such "Xhosa-ification" was also used in another *Hex* story, *Mother of None* (written by Brenda Ngxoli). In this story, which was essentially a monologue, the character switches from English into isiXhosa in such a manner that it appears as if the isiXhosa language started to take over from the English, or as if the English was flowing into

¹⁷⁹ The film clip on the DVD is from an "open showing" which was regarded as part of a rehearsal process during which time we were still in a decision making phase. For this reason the language switches did not happen in the same manner as described in this chapter.

the isiXhosa (see *Hex* film clip 2). The language crossover thus happened in a seamless manner.

The text below gives an idea of the manner in which this was done:

Now all I own is a whole lot of empty titles, like the woman who eats her children before they are even born, the traditional healer who sacrifices her own flesh and blood for the sake of healing powers. Inkuntsela nenkalanzinzi yegqwirha.¹⁸⁰ Into engasoze iphumelele.¹⁸¹ Awu madoda, intliziyo yam iyaphalala njengegazi.¹⁸² Ingqondo yam ithatha ibeka inyuka isihla njengamanzi olwandle.¹⁸³ Baphi na abantu xa umntu esifa zintlungu zokuba sisikhova.¹⁸⁴

From such switching of languages within one story, or even within one sentence, linguistic hybridity could be established, defined by Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) as

... a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by a social differentiation or by some other factor (358).

With regard to the significance of such linguistic hybridity, Noussi (2009) claims – as mentioned in Chapter Five – that it is the “standard towards which South African populations and South African writers must aspire in order to promote the much-desired linguistic and socio-political reconciliation” (292). In a similar vein, Marvin Carlson (2006) explains:

Dramatists living in a heteroglossic culture, writing for a heteroglossic audience, as is the situation in much of the world today, are more and more resisting the strongly monoglossic tendencies of much traditional European and American theatre, with its strong ties to modern nationalism (150).

The fact that there was not only a process of “Xhosa-ification” of English, but also the co-existence of Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa is significant. Such co-existence in turn enables “an enriching cohabitation” (ibid).

The switching from one language to the other in the production *Hex* not only foregrounded the multiplicity of forms of expression, but also reflected on everyday experiences in South Africa, where the switch from one language to another is a common occurrence and has become intrinsic to a South African way of speaking. Not only was this custom reflected theatrically, but the switch between languages also highlighted the

¹⁸⁰ “The witchcraft that is the hero of all witchcrafts” (trans. L. Skeyi).

¹⁸¹ “She will not go anywhere” (trans. L. Skeyi).

¹⁸² “Why, my heart is bleeding” (trans. L. Skeyi).

¹⁸³ “My head is spinning around like the sea” (trans. L. Skeyi).

¹⁸⁴ “Where are the people when somebody is suffering from the pain of being called an owl?” (trans. L. Skeyi).

interconnectedness between the languages. By means of this polyglot approach in the telling of one story, the possibility of a hybrid space was created. The approach not only enacted a simple celebration of diverse languages, it also went further to explore the linguistically complex act of code switching from one language to another, or between more than two languages. With regard to code switching in daily conversation, people do it for different reasons. It can be used to express a particular attitude that may be more aptly expressed in a particular language, or when people are bilingual and speak to other people who are also bilingual, they might switch from one language to the other depending on the attitude that they want to convey, as some attitudes or emotions are better expressed in one language than in another. In the dramatizing the story *Mother of None*, for example, the fierceness of the speaker's words could be much better expressed in isiXhosa as most of the terms that she used do not exist in English or Afrikaans and are, therefore, culturally specific. In order to convey the force of the words it was necessary to express them in isiXhosa as they would have lost their resonance in both English and Afrikaans. Code switching also happens when people want to show solidarity with other people from a particular language group.

In South Africa, such expression of solidarity by means of code switching serves a very important function; not only does it show solidarity but also recognition. Switching codes when speaking to a person of another language can serve as a form of respect and as a way to acknowledge the other person's language and, thus, identity. In *Hex*, both solidarity with and recognition of women who have had similar experiences was shown by switching to isiXhosa in the stories *Indaba* and *Mother of None*. In the same manner that code switching can bring about a feeling of togetherness, it can also serve as a form of exclusion. This was a device often used in protest plays, in which the switch into a vernacular language from English often signalled an exclusion of people who could speak only English. In the *Mother of None* narration, the switch from English to isiXhosa was also a way of excluding the audience. On the one hand, the power and sound of the language was used to frighten but also to move the audience emotionally. Most of the audience members who came to see the work did not speak isiXhosa. The use of isiXhosa was, therefore, a form of exclusion; giving the audience a similar sense of exclusion to that experienced by the woman in the play, who had been exiled by her community. This dual function of inclusion and solidarity on the one hand, and exclusion on the other, offered an opportunity to create tension and hence drama.

This switching between languages created a hybrid space in which possibilities for linguistic interaction were generated. The insertion of isiXhosa and English into an Afrikaans text offered possibilities in which the Afrikaans language could be opened up for the inclusion

of other languages; hence potentially crossing language barriers and offering ways in which the language could be re-imagined as an instrument of inclusivity rather than exclusivity. To summarize, once again in relation to Bakhtin (1981) and with regard to hybrid structures, one can follow the argument that

The ... hybrid is not only double-voiced and double accented ... but is also double languaged for in it there are not only (and not even so much) two individual consciousnesses, two epochs ... that come together and consciously fight it out on the territory of utterance ... It is the collision between differing points of view on the world that are embedded in these forms ... such unconscious hybrids have been at the same time profoundly productive historically: they are pregnant with potential for new world views with new 'internal forms' for perceiving the world in views (58).

7.3 Translation through immersion

This section describes attempts that were made to cross language barriers by means of immersive and sensory experiences. Immersion was used to create meaning and understanding through feeling rather than through a cognitive interpretation of the spoken word, in other words to “make the milieu felt” (Manning, 2008: 22). It is well known that a cerebral interpretive approach has the effect of overshadowing an emotional or sensory response. Susan Sontag (1982) suggests that there is a need to reclaim the senses:

Interpretation takes the sensory experience of the work of art for granted, and proceeds from there. This cannot be taken for granted now. What is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to *see* more, to *hear* more, to *feel* more (104, emphasis in the original).

What follows is a description of strategies that were followed to make the audience see, hear and feel more, in order to transcend limitations that are sometimes brought about by language.

7.3.1 Tactile experiences

One of the strategies used to invoke feeling was to engineer a tactile experience, since for many people “touch is the primary way to acquire information or access a work of art” (*Touch tours and other tactile experiences*).¹⁸⁵ This was done as soon as the audience entered the auditorium, by handing out a lavender twig to individual audience members. By doing this, “touch”, as “the most immediate and tangible of the senses” (Di Benedetto, 2010: 79) was used as form of communication, translating thematic concerns by means of an object. In a play that dealt with

¹⁸⁵ <<http://www.artbeyondsight.org/handbook/acs-touchtools.shtml>> last accessed on 15 December 2015.

the deconstruction of the witch as the archetypical female “other”, the choice of lavender was significant.

The ancient Greeks referred to lavender as the witches’ herb and related it to the goddess Hecate, who, amongst many other things, was associated with witchery, magic and enchantment, as well as protection of the house and family. Furthering this link to enchantment, it is said that lavender has the power to evoke love and to make dreams come true. For this reason it has been popular throughout history in the making of love potions and is used by some as “protection from violence and cruelty” (*Lavender Folklore*).¹⁸⁶ Others use lavender to “get in touch with the spirit world” (ibid) which is why it is sometimes used in celebrations aimed at transcendence, such as the Swedish Midsummer Night celebrations during which it is customary to throw lavender into the fire, an action informed by the ancient belief that it protects people from wandering spirits. In traditional medicine, lavender functions as a calmative and soporific (Tisserand & Junemann, 1998: 89).

As a point of entrance to the production, the lavender hand-outs established thematic links, prompting the audience to make intertextual associations in what could be understood to be acts of translation. About the relationship between thinking and objects, neurophysiologist Ainsley Iggo (2001) says the following:

Mental processes, as distinct from objects in the world . . . are about things, and this can be said to mean that our mental states are differentiated on the basis that we have beliefs *about* things, or we can remember things, or that we perceive things or that we think about things. We do not simply believe, remember, perceive, or think in the abstract (quoted in Di Benedetto, 2010: 93).

In an attempt to bring about thinking through objects, the act of handing out the lavender arguably functioned as a prologue to the play, in the sense that information about the play was conveyed in this manner. In this act of translation, the object not only gave a visual reference, but established communication by letting the audience hold onto and touch the object. From this act, attempts at a “tactile translation” were made, based on the understanding that “[t]ouch is ten times stronger than verbal or emotional contact, and it affects damned near everything we do. No other sense can arouse you like touch” (Field, 2004: 57). Not only was information conveyed in this manner, but the audience was also prompted to take action, following Janet Weisenberg’s (2008) argument that “the sense of touch is unique among the human senses in

¹⁸⁶ <<http://www.ourherbgarden.com/herb-history/lavender-part2.html>> last accessed on 18 December 2015.

that it is the only system that simultaneously interacts with objects in passive perception and active manipulation” (536).

Through such action, we wanted to give the audience a level of agency and, in doing this, to include them in the process of meaning-making as part of the bigger goal of integration and empowerment. One could say that the lavender served a bridging function, in that it established a connection between the world of the audience and the world of the performance. About the power of touch as a strategy for making meaning, Stephen Di Benedetto (2010) explains:

As we interact with the world through touch and our passive comprehension of touch qualities, we are able to put that data to use immediately. It is logical then that performances that make use of touch in a direct way will have meaning-rich expression. To activate touch in this context is to make accessible the material qualities of the art object presented (80).

By means of touch, the audience could arguably be reached at a deep level, ultimately prompting them to relay personal experiences connected to the play.

7.3.2 Smell/olfactory

Audiences saw and touched the lavender and, through such actions, brought out the object’s scent. Through this incitement of the senses, yet another attempt was made at sensory rather than interpretive communication. In this manner an interactive engagement could take place, in which the action – in the form of twisting, folding, stroking the lavender, for example – could alter the sensory experience. Furthermore, by means of such handling, a residue of the lavender scent remained on the audience’s skin so that the scent became tangible. The scent was further heightened by the fact that lavender essential oils were burnt in the auditorium, thus infusing the entire space, with the intention being to immerse the audience. In this manner, a translation was made from a visible, tangible object to the invisible omnipresent smell. John Leffingwell (2002) explains that “[f]or both humans and animals, it [the sense of smell] is one of the most important means by which our environment communicates with us” (5).

Apart from infusing the space with lavender, multiple strategies of communication through smell were used throughout the play in attempts to communicate ideas but, also, to manipulate the audience’s mood. This decision was informed by the understanding that the most primal area of one’s brain, namely the limbic system, is linked to the olfactory pathway, which means that we do not have control over our sense of smell (ibid: 94). Tim Jacob *et al* (2002) give the following explanation:

The limbic system is increasingly recognised to be crucial in determining and regulating the entire emotional “tone”. Excitation of this, by whatever means, produces heightened emotionalism and an intensification of the senses. It also has a lot to do with the formation of memories and this is the reason that smell and memory are so intimately linked (115).

Jacob expands on the above mentioned claim and explains that “mood effects are likely to parallel the hedonicity of the odour (pleasant odours give rise to pleasant mood states while unpleasant odours give rise to unpleasant moods)” (ibid). The mood that we wanted to create by means of the lavender was one of calm and harmony. We also wanted to create a magical space that, to a certain extent, seduced the audience. Such seduction was made possible by the soporific qualities of lavender. The strategy to translate ideas and to influence the mood of the audience by means of scent was also used in other ways.

In one scene, for example, the smell of sulphur was used to induce a sense of repulsion and dread. Two actresses repeatedly lit matches and then blew them out. This was done while they were circling a podium on which another actress was standing, as if she was tied to the stake to be burnt (see *Hex* film clip 3).



Image 7.4: Actresses circling podium

In accompaniment to this ritual of repeatedly lighting matches, the actresses were repeating the word “heks” [witch] as if mocking the woman on the podium. In addition to this repetitive chanting, match boxes were shaken, making a percussive sound. In this scene, the smell of sulphur created by the perpetual burning of the matches, coupled with the incessant repetition of “heks” and the percussive sound of the match boxes, created a sensory experience which communicated through a combination of smell, sound and visual effects. The visual imagery was predominantly through the flickering light of the matches being lit and the actresses that were circling the podium.



Image 7.5: Flickering of matches

The smell, sound and optic senses were evoked as if part of a ritual. Once again, as with the lavender, the smell was used not only to create a particular mood, but also functioned symbolically. Although sulphur is typically regarded by alchemists as symbolic of the sun, during the Middle Ages it was often regarded as a symbol of the devil from Christian mythology. In the context of *Hex* and of the depicted scene – which served as an introduction to a monologue in which somebody was accused of being a witch – the medieval association with sulphur was significant. In this scene, as with the lavender, smell was used to make intertextual references as well as to manipulate moods and emotions. Furthermore, the use of the matches to evoke smell followed on from the lavender scent, creating a strong juxtaposition with the smell of the lavender. In this manner, an abrupt change could be established from the calm, dreamlike scenario to something less pleasant and more dangerous.

In another scene in *Hex*, based on the story *Indaba: Nomehlonkomo* (Scheepers, 1999: 22) – the rendition of a traditional Zulu story that was mentioned earlier in this chapter – the burning of the traditional herb *impepho* was used as a way to create smoke underneath a three-legged pot, as if there was a fire burning.¹⁸⁷ Instead of creating a real fire on stage, the smouldering *impepho* served to create the illusion of fire. Apart from this practical function, it also gave off a sweet smell, generally known for its association with rituals. In this manner, the setting of the story was created, signalling that it was an African story. Furthermore, as in previous examples, it served a symbolic function in the sense that one of the themes of the story was related to the ancestors who had given the protagonist in the story a voice. In this manner, the smell of the *impepho*, which is regarded as a herb that is able to invoke the presence of the

¹⁸⁷ *Imphepo* is a South African indigenous herb widely used in cleansing rituals as well as in rituals designed to evoke the ancestors.

ancestors, was significant. Smoke from *impepho* can bring about a trance like state and, although we did not burn enough *impepho* to bring about such a state, it did offer opportunities for a slight alteration in the consciousness of the audience, particularly due to the fact that the audience members were sitting in close proximity to the performance space. Once again, by means of this herb, there was an opportunity to alter the audience's mood by means of smell.

Other smells that were used were those of a cigar, of coffee flavoured incense and of a blown-out candle. The cigar and the incense were used to set the scene in an interpretation of the Scheepers story (1999) *'n Wilde Kind, Koponderstebo* [A Wild Child, Upside Down] (25). Such a setting was meant to bring across a sense of the exotic as an introduction to a story about a woman who travels the world and lives according to her own rules. The cigar helped to characterise this highly independent woman while the incense gave the feeling of both homeliness – due to the coffee scent – as well as exoticism. In both cases, the smell was accompanied by the visual element of the smoke that came from both the cigar and the incense. With regard to the cigar smoke, the actress who smoked the cigar made a feature of blowing out the smoke, hence enhancing the visual quality but, also, drawing attention to the *hex*-related theme of fires, burning and smoke.



Image 7.6: Actress blowing out smoke

In the above mentioned scene, the cigar smoke also had an added function. In the story, one of the main incidents is related to a train accident. As the narrator told the story about the train, the recorded sound of an accelerating steam train could be heard. At the climax of the story,

the volume of the train sound was turned up to such a high level that it drowned out the narrator's speech, so that she had to raise her voice to be heard. At the same time, lights were shone into the audience's eyes to give the illusion of an approaching train. The loud sound, coupled with the performer's raised voice and the bright lights, were ways in which we wanted to create a feeling of discomfort in order to communicate part of the horror that was experienced by the narrator. While this was happening, one of the other actresses was still sitting smoking her cigar, as if looking out of a window in contemplation. The smoke thus fused with the other sensory elements, heightening the drama of the scene. At the climax of the narration, the sound subsided and the lights blacked out with only the smoke faintly visible in the semi-dark.

In this manner, the smoke could be interpreted in various ways; it could serve to indicate the aftermath of a catastrophe, or the smoke from the train being seen in the distance, or even the appearance of mist. Apart from the smell of the cigar, the smoke offered a visual element. In the last scene the smell of candle wax was used. On blowing out the candle at the end of the scene, the lights were blacked out and, for a short while, the lights were kept out, so that the audience were sitting in the dark with the smell of a blown-out candle hanging in the air, giving them space to take this in and to make their own associations triggered by this smell.

All the above mentioned examples were ways in which smells were used to transcend the space and to convey emotion and create associations, without having to use words. The trigger of smell could also allow the audience to make their own associations, particularly seeing that smell is the sense that is most associated with memory. As a conveyor of meaning, smell was thus used as a way to be "resistant to semantic or semiotic interpretation" (Thomson & Biddle, 2013: 10). Due to the close proximity between audience and performers, the smells were also a way of binding the performance and audience space, so that one could say that, by means of smell – and, later, sounds – "[f]rom one body to the other, a thread [was] made that [stitched] the two together in a temporal instant" (La Belle, 2010: xvii). In this manner, individual audience members, as well as audience and performers, could be woven together as a community.

7.3.3 Sound

Sound was yet another way in which communication could happen, over and above language. The device of sound was used throughout the production. As the audience members entered the space the performers were busy with various forms of cleaning. The associated cleaning

sounds were orchestrated to provide a soundscape.¹⁸⁸ One performer was shaking out and folding up a huge white sheet, another was scrubbing a wooden staircase, and a third performer was repeatedly dipping a cloth into water and wringing it out. All three activities generated sounds; the flapping sound of the sheet, the scrubbing sound on the wooden step, and the dripping of water.



Image 7.7: Performers wringing out cloth and shaking out sheet

Coupled with these sounds, the performers generated further sounds by sighing or speaking to themselves in whispers. One actress, for example, was quietly listing the ingredients for a recipe, while another was having a conversation with an imaginary person. By means of these sounds we wanted to establish what Erin Manning (2008) calls an “affective tone ... an environmental resonance of a feeling-in-action, a vibratile force that makes the milieu felt” (17). Regarding such feeling, Manning explains that “[t]he final cause of a feeling is the beginning of a society” (ibid: 27). Such a creation of a society was, indeed, one of the main aims in *Hex* in which we tried to find ways of making things *felt* in an attempt to bring people together. Such bringing together was, in turn, a way in which a third space could be created. As with the infusion of smells, sound permeated the entire performance: sounds such as sweeping, sighing, giggling, quiet murmurs, semi-audible prayers and/or chants, water poured from one container to another, drawers opening and closing and many various others were foregrounded. In this manner experiences were triggered and communicated beyond semantics.

¹⁸⁸ In this context of cleaning, yet another link was made to the lavender as lavender is often associated with cleansing and bathing, made clear by the fact that the name of this flower stems from the Latin word *lavare*, which means “to wash”. While lavender twigs were issued to the audience on arrival, the cleansing rituals were happening on stage.

7.3.4 Ritual

Another way in which a sensory experience could be evoked was by means of ritualistic actions, which were set up from the outset. The repetitive actions of washing, cleaning and sweeping, with their accompanying sound effects, created a ritual effect. Anne Bogart (2001) explains that one of the seven essential ingredients for the creation of a good play is the incorporation of ritual (24). The fact that the production was built around the theme of witches made the incorporation of ritualistic elements an obvious choice. These activities had a strangely mesmerising effect that was intended to draw the audience into the world of the performance. The performers themselves were in trance-like states at certain points of the performance, making them look as if they were unaware of the activity around them and mesmerised or bewitched by what they were doing. For example, the repetition of the domestic activities in the play's pre-set had a dual function, giving the impression that the performers were stuck in their domestic roles, but also functioning as a form of domestic ritual. To complement the notion of ritual, key natural elements were represented in the play's prologue, namely wind, water and earth/wood. The movement of the sheet created wind and signalled air; the wooden steps could be related to wood and earth; and the wringing of the cloth obviously signalled water. All three of these elements were referred to throughout the play as significant symbols in witch mythology. The repetitive action of most of the ritualistic activities as well as the sounds they created were designed to draw the audience into the play, almost as if enchanting them by placing a spell on them.

7.3.5 Spoken language

Apart from non-verbal communication through sensory experiences, strategies were implemented in which the delivery of the spoken text could be done in such a way as to reveal what was "beneath the sounding of words" (Manning, 2008: 21) and thereby transcend dependence on language. Two examples will be given here.

7.3.5.1 Example 1

The first example is from a performance extract, which was based on Scheepers' short story entitled *Heks* [Witch] (1999: 9). In the original story the action mainly takes place in an airport and on an aeroplane. Scheepers tells the story in the first person. As the narrator she describes how a red haired woman irritates her to the degree that she starts to think of her as a witch. Apart from the fact that the woman has natural red hair, which already creates suspicion in the

narrator, the red haired woman also misbehaves on the plane (she speaks loudly, she smokes, she stands in the passageway). This eventually riles the narrator to such an extent that she wishes that the woman were dead and puts a spell on her.¹⁸⁹ After the events on the plane, the story ends in tragedy. From a newspaper article the narrator receives the news that a group of tourists were tragically killed and on closer inspection she realises that the red haired woman is one of the deceased.

In the story, both protagonists are portrayed as witches. On the one hand there is the woman with the red hair. Her refusal to conform to rules places her in the position of witch. On the other hand there is the narrator whose angry reactions make her equally witch-like. In the production, only a short excerpt from the story was used as an introductory monologue in which the performer gives a description of the woman with the red hair, ending with the conclusive statement: “Witch, I thought with amusement” (Scheepers, 1999: 7, trans. H. Gehring).¹⁹⁰

In conveying the story on stage we set out to make the most of the rhythmic and auditory aspects of the language. Our intention was, in the words of Mark Fleishman (2014a), to “generate an experience that is immediate, sensual, felt, and somatic” (27). Towards this end, one of the strategies we used was to emphasise the repetition of consonants. The intention here was not only to serve as aural punctuation, but predominantly to set a particular mood or to bring certain emotions across by means of the sound. For example, the opening line of the monologue was “*Dit was die vrou se bos hare wat my opgeval het, dit was aan die brand*” [It was the woman’s bush of hair that I first noticed, it was burning]. In this sentence, we accentuated the “d” sound in the words, *dit*, and *brand*. The repetition of “*dit*” in the sentence and of the “d” sound, in its stutter-like quality, conveyed the feeling of urgency. The delivery of the words began just after the pre-set, before the stage lights went on, so that one heard the sound before seeing the performer thereby drawing attention to the sound before seeing the rest of the action (see *Hex* film clip 4). The loud repetition of the consonant functioned as an announcement, a demand for attention, in an attempt at bringing the audience into a state of high alert.

The sense of urgency created by means of sound was accompanied by the action of the narrator who could be seen struggling to find her way through clothes suspended from a

¹⁸⁹ In the short story this spell is placed on her in isiZulu by means of the words “Suka nyoka” (Scheepers, 1999: 18).

¹⁹⁰ “Heks, het ek geamuseerd gedink” (Scheepers, 1999: 7).

washing line that was part of the scenery. In this manner the sound simultaneously functioned as a way to bring the audience into a state of high alert and to indicate that the actress was struggling; signalling an underlying frustration. The physical effort of moving through the suspended washing combined with the repetitive “d” sound indicated a struggle in general – a struggle to utter the word; a struggle to communicate what the woman wanted to say; and ultimately also an emotional struggle. These combined strategies built up an impression of intensity and ultimately of hysteria, something that is associated with witch hunts and scapegoating as so well captured in Arthur Miller’s classic play, *The Crucible* (1953). This mood was in stark contrast to the lulling cleansing ritual that was set up during the pre-set. Such a contrast was yet another strategy to juxtapose stories. Initially the audience members were lulled into feeling at home and then they were wrenched out of that dream-like state, introducing another perspective on witch related incidents.

The repetition of the “d” consonant had an explosive quality, which added to the aggressive tone of the narrator. Onomatopoeically, it was also an imitation of gunshots. It was not so much what the actress was saying that conveyed meaning, but the manner in which she delivered the words; the energy and vibration created by the sounds created meaning, meaning through feeling.

The repetition of the “d” in the beginning of the scene was further emphasised by means of repeating the “d” at the end of the word *brand* ... which, in Afrikaans, is pronounced as a “t”. This repetition of the “t” sound functioned as an echo, so that it emphasised the word *brand* [burn] and, in doing so, highlighted one of the key themes in the play, namely that of burning and fire making; an obvious association with witches and witch hunts. Apart from using the repetition of the “t” sound to highlight the word *brand(t)*, the repetitive sound resembled the sound of spitting; once again highlighting the speaker’s emotional state, which in this case was a feeling of disgust. Various other consonants were also repeated throughout this first monologue making it appear, on one level, as if the speaker was stuttering and thus experiencing emotional turmoil. The repetition also created a soundscape which predominantly made use of explosive sounds, making a range of intertextual references. Apart from communicating aggression, the sounds were used to echo the sound of flames crackling. To add to this flame-like image, the “f” sound was also used repetitively. In the word “*vflammende*” [flaming], for example, the initial “v” consonant – which when pronounced sounds like an “f” – was repeated as if the actress was battling to say the rest of the word. The narrator’s repeated struggle to get the word out conveyed frustration, as well as setting up a soundscape in imitation of a fire.

The devices used, therefore, conveyed meaning that went beyond the semantic, so that audiences could make sense of the play on an experiential level. The significance of such an attempt can be described by means of Fleishman's (2014a) notion of the visceral quality of language:

This engagement with the sound of the word ... heightens the visceral quality of the language and links the semantic sense of the words with their semantic sensuality and emotional force (27).¹⁹¹

In this sense, by highlighting the sensuality of the language and revealing or disclosing its visceral or ingrained quality, one can reveal its "sonic materialism". In other words, the sound can be felt. In turn, one can argue that it is this materialism that makes the sound felt. In such a context, one can even say that "sound is used as sound itself removed from its purely cochlear interpretation" (Cox quoted in Parker, 2016). In this sense, one can speak of the ambient nature of sound, described by Dyson (2009) as follows:

Like color, the field of sound is not a chunk of divisible being, but is more like a state or quality, surrounding the listener, who is simultaneously hearing and being touched by the vibrating, engulfing, sonic atmosphere (120).

In this manner then, to hear is also to feel, so that the sound effects can offer meaning to listeners beyond the understanding of a particular language, thus translating the inherent sound qualities of the language into feeling rather than into understanding.

In the delivery of the story *Heks*, apart from the impact of sound on the audience, there was also an impact on the narrator, in the sense that her own utterances and creation of sound influenced and shifted her own body language. Quite literally, her body was shaped by making certain sounds. For example, in getting stuck on certain sounds or by stuttering, her body was affected; twisting or convulsing in an attempt to get the words out. In turn, the convulsions, or twitches, or accompanying hand gestures could be understood to be nervous twitches or even convulsions caused through burning. In other words, the speech and the sound patterns were intended not only as a way to affect the audience but, also, as a way in which the body of the performer could be impacted and shifted.

¹⁹¹ Although Fleishman's comment is made in relation to the work of director Mandla Mbothwe's use of isiXhosa in his plays, the comments are also applicable to the approach which was followed in *Hex*.



Image 7.8: Shifts in body through heightened speech

These movements were accompanied by hand gestures that became bigger and more demonstrative as the scene progressed, so that when the narrating actress demonstrated how voluminous the other woman’s hair was and raised her arms into the air as a descriptive gesture, the uplifted arms appeared to be raised to the heavens in the form of a plea. In such a way, it was possible to create an ambiguous image, so that the very person who was trying to convince the audience of the witch-like characteristics of somebody else, became a witch herself. Thus, by means of both the soundscape and the transformation of the performer’s body, the explicit meaning of the spoken words could be transcended by offering alternative forms of interpretation. As the monologue progressed, the actions as well as the vocal energy became more and more grotesque, creating a sense of estrangement. In this manner, “the strangeness of the language [could touch] ‘the unconscious so an ineffable experience [could be] *felt* in appreciation”” (Machon quoted in Fleishman, 2014a: 27). Mark Fleishman (2014a) describes the impact of this approach as follows: “the words are aimed at provoking the body primarily rather than the conventional approach of verbal dramaturgy that targets cognition first” (27).

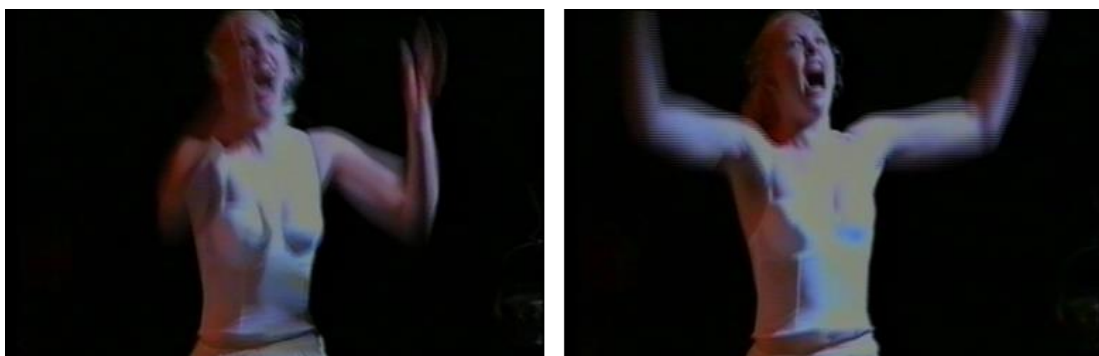


Image 7.9: Estrangement through sound

7.3.5.2 Example 2

The second example is from the monologue *Mother of None*, written by Brenda Ngxoli, as was mentioned earlier in the section on code switching. The story was based on actual events as experienced by the grandmother of the actress who wrote and delivered it and was, therefore, not only a story but also a confession. As mentioned already, the monologue was predominantly in English but spoken with an isiXhosa accent. At one point in the monologue, however, the narrator switched from English to isiXhosa and started to list a series of phrases; all related to the pain that she was suffering when labelled as witch by her community.

The script was performed in a heightened manner, as if she were delivering a praise poem. The delivery had an emphatic quality which applied to vowel as well as consonant sounds. When she started listing her emotions, she started building the vocal delivery, so that it sounded as if it was a bombardment of text. The rhythm of this listing was manipulated in such a manner that it built up to a climax, but then became more drawn out towards the end. The way, the narrator constructed this rhythmic delivery, and the manner in which the intensity of the words were communicated made the severity and sadness of the situation clear, and this was despite the fact that many audience members did not know the meaning of the text. The impact that this form of delivery had on the audience was noticeable: there was a tangible silence every time this monologue was delivered. Furthermore, the emotional quality of the delivery was enhanced by means of breathing and speech rhythms, which often brought people to tears regardless of whether they actually understood the words or not. One could say, therefore, that the predominantly Afrikaans speaking audience were moved by the energy and emotional force of the narrator's presence; her body language, her breathing, the force of energy as well as the sound and rhythmic construction of the delivery. Through an energetic connection, a synergy was created between the audience and the narrator in a manner that surpassed any cognitive understanding of language. In this manner, then, the isiXhosa delivery functioned in an affective manner, understood to be "those forces ... that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension ... visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other* than conscious knowing" (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010: 1).

The audience were thus moved without necessarily understanding the text in a rational manner. In this sense, then, the words were delivered in such a way as to bring about what Merleau-Ponty (1962) describes as "a mode of perception distinct from objective perception, a kind of significance distinct from intellectual significance" (157). Such a perception was created by means of a vibrational intensity, brought about by sound. By means of affect,

attempts were thus made to cross language barriers and, hence, to find ways to include audience members who did not necessarily understand the language. Following this approach, audience members who could not follow the semantic meaning of the language could still be offered a somatic experience. This was particularly important seeing that Scheepers' stories were very descriptive and written in a dense manner. The danger was that one could become overly reliant on the words. An overt reliance on words would have been dangerous because the very rich, detailed and nuanced stories could easily result in a type of seduction by words; due to their beauty and the decorative manner in which Scheepers wrote them, particularly with regard to double meanings.

Rich and layered writing of this type works on the page but it needs to be tempered for delivery in a play, where the pace of the action may be such that a rich verbal tapestry laden with double meanings can feel too laboured. For this reason, in constructing a script we were careful not to use too many of the verbally dense passages, and we incorporated moments of silence in which the audience could recover or digest the stories. Although the stories were richly described, they were mainly meant as ways in which to generate atmosphere and to make the reader visualise settings rather than to describe actions. For theatre, other ways were needed to keep the play rhythmically intricate in order to avoid potentially monotonous, purely descriptive stories. Because writing followed the rhythmic pattern of a short story collection, there was a danger that the production, too, would come across as a conglomerate of stories, with each one repeating the pattern of the previous one. We therefore needed to create an overall rhythmic structure that could hold the attention of the audience. Rather than base the structure on dramatic action, the manner in which the piece could be held together was by means of layering, so that actions could sometimes happen simultaneously. In this manner the audience were forced to negotiate where to place their focus, thereby forcing them to take part in the action; yet another way of drawing them in.

As a way to create the rhythmic variety, it was important to make sure that the stories varied in length. At times mere fragments of whole stories were communicated and at other times a full story. The rhythmic variety was also established by means of the choice of music and – as mentioned already – by means of various rhythms in speech. Juxtaposition played an important role in the construction of such rhythmic variety. This was by means of visual juxtaposition – of which examples have already been given – and through juxtaposition of the content of material and, also, through juxtaposition of languages and of media. By means of such juxtapositions, attempts were made to maintain the interest of the audience and to give the piece an overall coherence without its necessarily forming an obvious unitary whole.

This lack of unity was problematic for some viewers, so much so that one critic referred to the production as a “hodgepodge” assemblage of stories, similar to a variety concert (Smith, 2003: n.p).¹⁹² Off course, this very assemblage implied in the reference to a variety concert was what we had wanted to achieve. In this manner, one can again recall Said’s notion of multiple voices, in which he explains that there does not need to be a way of reconciling these voices but that they can simply co-exist, without necessarily forming a unit. What is interesting is that the “hodgepodge” comment was made with reference to the *Hex* performance that was performed at the KKNK. During that performance, audience members could not be seated on stage due to the logistics of the building. Apart from the fact that they were removed from the performers in this particular rendition of *Hex*, the performance also took place in a primary school hall used as a make-shift theatre, in which there was a very clear demarcation between the stage and the auditorium. This configuration undoubtedly created a separation between the audience and the performers. From this perspective, the intimacy between audience and performers that we had wanted to achieve was much harder to establish.

In an essentially fragmented piece – in which we wanted to leave gaps in order to show multiplicity and in order to offer opportunities for the audience to co-create meaning as a result of those very gaps – because of this physical separation, the intimacy was lost. As mentioned already with reference to Anne Bogart, such intimacy is vital to the success of a performance and can bridge important gaps, even if the work is made up of fragments. Without this vital intimacy, the assimilation of diverse fragments could be regarded as banal, as experienced by one of the critics. From this experience, one also felt how the change of venue (as part of a festival culture) contributed to a shift in identity of the production itself. Although the impact of a changed venue is not something that is within the parameters of this thesis, it is yet another contributing factor in shifting theatre identities, particularly with regard to Afrikaans theatre, which is increasingly dependent on a festival culture for its survival.

7.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I explained in what manner third space theory, as well as hybridity and syncretism, could be understood in practice by means of the production *Hex*. One of the main aims in the production was to foreground plural identities in an act of defiance against fixed, stereotypical representations of women. It was therefore conceived of as a meeting point for a range of entities: these being different stories, various forms of media, multiple embodiments,

¹⁹² “'n hortende relaas, 'n soort verskeidenheidskonsert” (Smith, 2003: n.p., trans. H. Gehring).

different languages, eclectic performance forms and styles, numerous sensory evocations, and several geographies and histories. From such an amalgamation, both the performance space and the performance itself could be regarded as a third space, following Adela Licona's (2012) notion that "third space offers a possibility for many concurrent, interacting, ambiguous, and even contradictory discourses" (14).

In the original performance of *Hex* an actual physical third space was constructed due to the fact that the audience were seated on the stage, sharing it with the performers. This third space was set up as an alternative to the divided stage/auditorium construct typically found in Western theatres. Such a merging of audience and performers was not only a form of integration, but also a form of decolonisation of traditional theatre constructs. In this manner, the performance venue was configured both as a shared space and as a space of defiance against first space / second space dualisms.

The impact of this spatial configuration was noticeable from the fact that after the production many audience members more or less spontaneously shared their own stories. In this manner, the audience members became co-storytellers and in doing that, yet another divide was crossed, namely the one typically constructed between audience and actors. In such an interweaving of stories, of which some were rehearsed (told by the performers) and others were spontaneous (shared by the audience) one could say that there was evidence of, "the precariousness of in-between, hybrid identities" to use the words of David Huddart (2006: 112). In this manner, then, through the construction of a third space, room was made for the formation of hybrid identities. However, such a conversion of the physical setting into a third space was not possible in all the productions of *Hex*, due to the built in divides in some performance venues. This did have an impact on the performances, and it would be safe to say that in general the work was more successful in smaller, more intimate spaces in which the audience was closer to or sharing the stage.

Hybrid identities were also constructed through visual and sonic means. The sonic hybrid was constructed by interweaving diverse sounds (natural and artificial), songs (both live and recorded), speech patterns (heightened or naturalistic), and accents and languages in an attempt to bring about, what could be described in Homi Bhabha's (2003a) terms as "a chiasmatic, diagonally crossed, lateral 'side-by-side' solidarity where differences do not aspire to be represented in sovereign autonomy" (174). In this manner, rather than amalgamating distinctive entities into a whole in which all parts become indistinguishable, the aim was to set identities off against one another, thereby revealing contrasts as well as connections. A similar approach was followed by means of a visual hybrid in which the design elements (from

costume to set design to the film components) could be regarded as collage-like and in which the performers embodied multiple characters, thus arguably being representative of hybrids within themselves.

Our attempt to set up a third space, and in doing so also to create hybrid identities, was not without challenges. One of the main ones was to translate or change the prose into a dramatic context. The anthology consisted of a series of short stories which as a whole had no obvious overall dramatic structure. The individual stories were written according to a typical short story model with each one having its own beginning, middle and end. For this reason, the play as a whole also did not have an obvious or typical structure in accordance with what would conventionally be considered a “well-made play”. This meant that other ways had to be found to create tension and to draw the audience into the action and sustain their interest. Strategies that we used to draw the audience into the play were to a) create an intimate space, b) make the audience complicit, and c) offer a sensory experience that could stretch beyond an engagement with words only. Apart from the fact that these strategies were practical ways to hold the fragments together, they were also ways in which divides could be crossed – divides between audience and performers; divides between words and images; and divides between feeling and thinking. In such a blurring of boundaries a third space consciousness could emerge.

Apart from creating a third space during the performance, it was also done during the rehearsal process in that the workshop space became a space for sharing and cultural exchange as well as a space for generating diverse responses to the short stories. The workshop process contributed to the development of a multiplicity of voices. A collaborative creative process made it possible to make discoveries which would not have been possible if I as the director had conceived of the work on my own, seeing that some of the insights were outside of my frame of reference. Not only did the workshop process encourage a multi-angled set of responses, but it also gave agency to the performers. In taking ownership of the creative part of the work I would argue that the performers came to a deep understanding of the play’s subject matter. They regarded the creation of the performance as more than a mere job, and communicated very real issues related to the content of the play, such as the branding of extraordinary women as witches – whether through satire or in a more serious tone.

They were therefore not only working towards truthful character portrayals, but also using the opportunity to speak their own, personal truth by means of the characters. This was particularly noticeable from the monologues that were written by the performers themselves. For example, when the actress Anita Berk wrote and performed her own monologues, she was able to use the stage as a platform for addressing matters about which she was personally

passionate and concerned. Rather than being didactic, the dramatic space allowed her to express her feelings in a creative and metaphoric manner, and in doing so she became part of her own healing process thereby entering a state of greater empowerment. This approach to empowerment was taken even a step further by Brenda Ngxoli, who wrote and performed a monologue based on the experiences of her grandmother, thereby sharing (and arguably shedding) aspects of herself. Finally, then, *Hex* was an attempt to create an “intercultural site of enunciation, at the intersection of different languages, jousting for authority, a translational space of negotiation [able to] open up through the process of dialogue” (Bhabha, 2009: x).

Chapter Eight: Hybridity, Syncretism and Translation in *Lady Anne*

Meanings do not arise in isolation. In translation, more than in any other form of writing, they are formed at the crossroads of cultures at sites where different systemic (or institutional) idiolects or discourses compete for power.

- Sirkku Aaltonen, *Time-sharing on Stage: Drama Translation in Theatre and Society*, 2000

8.1 Introduction: Translation as strategy to bridge language

The purpose of this chapter is to explain – in a similar manner to Chapter Seven – the strategies used to create language-specific theatre that was able to retain and transcend language. This is done with reference to the theatre collage, *Lady Anne* (2007). Whereas the source text for *Hex* was a collection of short stories and placed the emphasis on the conversion of multiple entities by means of stories and storytelling, *Lady Anne* was based on poetry. Such poetic impetus offered opportunities for abstractions beyond the mimetic interpretations that are generally associated with character driven theatre. From such abstractions, translations could be made of the spoken poetry; a strategy which was pursued extensively in the creation of this production, and which made a considerable contribution to giving it shape. These translations, in turn, offered opportunities for the creation of syncretic and hybrid forms so that, in this production, translation went hand-in-hand with hybridisation and syncretisation. Apart from bridging language barriers, other forms of bridging – particularly between histories and geographies – were brought about in the development of *Lady Anne*. These diverse histories and contexts were brought together so as to form conversations, collisions and fusions. The aim of this varied; it was sometimes to reveal differences and sometimes to create connections. The new combinations that arose in the process offered possibilities for manifesting the ideal of bonding and bridging. The manner in which this was done is explained in the rest of the chapter.

8.2 (Auto)biographical poetry as source

The source text for the production *Lady Anne* (2007) was a collection of poetry with the same title (*Lady Anne*, 1989), written by Antjie Krog. Just as Krog's collection was the starting point for this theatre production, her poetry was a re-imagining of the journals, letters and diary inscriptions of Lady Anne Barnard, who resided in the Cape of Good Hope between 1797 and 1802 (Lenta, 1994). The process of using historical documents as source material for contemporary poetry and, in turn, using the poetry to create a form of theatre collage, allowed for the circulation of historical along with contemporary texts. Remnants of the original texts

were traceable in the new contexts. It is thus clear that practices of translation were imbedded in the transition between Lady Anne's writing and Krog's poetry. From this understanding, these works embodied an intersection of genres and histories, so that "space and time [could] cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity" (Bhabha, 1994: 1).

In itself, Lady Anne's writing represented the crossing of literary genres, as it was diverse in form and type, consisting of private and official letters, personal and travel journals – some designed as records for colonial projects – and poetry and songs.¹⁹³ In addition, many of her documents included sketches and paintings, thereby giving information in graphic form (Lenta, 2006). This miscellaneous nature of Barnard's documents in turn planted the seeds for the eclectic nature of Krog's poetry. In true postmodern fashion, Krog's collection consists of a diverse range of poetic styles and genres but also includes other forms of documentation, such as sketches of fish from an encyclopaedia, a voting ballot, an ovulation chart, a newspaper cut-out, as well as quotations from other writers, so that one can say that Krog followed the cut-and-paste approach generally associated with making a collage as discussed in Chapter Six. About the significance of this approach, Louise Viljoen (1996) says the following:

The originality of Krog's use of the collage technique in this collection by means of pamphlets, advertisements, extracts from magazines and other literature, an ovulation chart and sketches enhances the multiplicity of interpretations (68, trans. H. Gehring).

¹⁹⁴

This focus on multiplicity, in turn, shaped the creation of the theatre production in which the technique of cutting-and-pasting was also used. This enabled an amalgamation of diverse fragments and "different networks of consciousness and [in doing so, revealed] a potential for greater understanding" (Licon, 2012: 13) in reflection of third space consciousness, as discussed in Chapter Two. From this approach, a hybrid theatre production could be created, in which more than one era – the eighteenth and the twentieth century – and more than one continent – Africa and Europe – could be referenced. The approach also provided a space in which diverse performance and art forms could co-exist in a "performative scenario [able to navigate] between the constantly recurring catastrophes of history and an imagined Utopia" (Rokem, 2000: xi).

¹⁹³ She was the author of the ballad *Auld Robin Gray* (1772) although this was only discovered after her death.

¹⁹⁴ "Die vindigrykheid van Krog se aanwending van die collage-tegniek in hierdie bundel by wyse van pamflette, advertensies, uittreksels uit tydskrifte en ander literatuur, 'n ovulasiekaart en sketse bevorder die meervoudigheid van interpretasies" (Viljoen, 1996: 68).

Barnard's letters expressed her desires and dreams against the background of the French Revolution in Europe and the colonial experience in the Cape of Good Hope. Krog, in a parallel narrative, compares her own life to that of Lady Anne by interrogating themes such as motherhood, marriage, political activism, the role of the artist in bringing about social change, and the financial independence of women. Apart from revealing aspects of Lady Anne's private life, Krog's collection offers a critical perspective of society during the early years of English colonialism in the Cape through the eyes of Lady Anne. She [Krog] mainly does this by juxtaposing the life of colonial imperialists with that of the local population. Issues such as the illegal slave trade and the maltreatment of slaves are addressed. In this context, Krog parallels the time of political upheaval in South Africa during the 1980s to that of the French Revolution. Odendaal and Van Coller (2010) explain that in Krog's collection, "(auto)biographical, 'small narrations', those of Lady Anne Barnard and those of the 'writing subject' are interwoven with the bigger, South African, national discourse" (151).¹⁹⁵

Krog's choice of Lady Anne as a metaphor can thus be predominantly understood from the perspective of gender politics and the socio-political tension of the day, where both Krog herself, like Lady Anne, is a woman, white and from the bourgeoisie [*besittersklas*]. Various aspects of Lady Anne's life are explored by Krog, such as her role as hostess, her practice of painting and writing, her love intrigues and her role as wife. These, in turn, are used to reflect and deliberate on Krog's life, in which she plays similar roles. Ultimately, then, one can say, following Pieter Conradie (1996), that Krog's "harking back to two-hundred years ago implies a continuous development of history through which she seeks to redefine political and personal identity" (99). Speaking in 1989, Krog (quoted in Conradie, 1996) explains this as follows: "I have to look at my history from scratch, my styles and mediums [of writing], my life and my private pain and sort it out: will this continent ever claim me?" (88).¹⁹⁶

The relationship between the personal and the political, as expressed in Krog's collection, is typical of her. From the beginning of her writing career – which started at the age of seventeen (Garman, 2009: 4) with the publication of her first poetry anthology, *Dogter van Jefta* [Daughter of Jefta] (1970) – she has been outspoken about the human rights violations and injustices created by the apartheid regime, so a political focus is central to her work. She

¹⁹⁵ "(outo)biografiese, 'klein vertellings', dié van lady Anne Barnard en dié van 'die skrywende subjek'" (Odendaal and Van Coller, 2010: 151, trans. H. Gehring).

¹⁹⁶ "Ek moet van nuuts af na my geskiedenis gaan kyk, na my style en medium, na my lewe en my private pyn en dit uitsorteer: sal hierdie kontinent my ooit opeis?" (Krog quoted in Conradie, 1996: 44, trans. H. Gehring).

also often writes about feminist themes, which can clearly be seen in the form and choice of content of *Lady Anne* (1989) that created much controversy at the time of its publication.

Krog wrote this collection as a response to the political turmoil experienced in South Africa during the late 1980s when the National Party government declared the country to be in a State of Emergency. This was due to the many protests that occurred, during that time, in an attempt by the African National Congress to upend National Party rule and put an end to apartheid in the name of human rights. During this time, many South Africans were unsure of the country's future. South Africa – as well as the rest of the world – was expecting a full blown revolution in the country where it was feared by those in power that, if given freedom, the oppressed were going to take revenge on their former oppressors. It was a time of great fear and uncertainty, but also a time of hope; a time that signalled new beginnings. Against this backdrop, Krog, who was already an established poet in Afrikaans and, also, a journalist, political activist and teacher, grappled with a multitude of questions pertaining to the political situation of that time. She was asking whether poetry has a function in times of turmoil and what the role of the poet is in being a political activist. She wanted to know whether a poet and artist could really bring about social change and whether poetry could effectively communicate political concerns during a time where “sticks and stones” spoke louder than books. She also grappled with notions of being privileged; asking herself to what extent sacrifice was needed in order to rectify political power and how much one was willing to give up for the rights of others. Furthermore, in the context of being privileged, she was plagued by feelings of guilt and was wondering whether one could really divorce oneself from one's background and one's position of privilege, other than being forced to do so.

8.3 Lady Anne Barnard as the subject

The significance of choosing Lady Anne as a subject for poetry and for theatre intended to investigate the impact of the past on the present and highlight plural ways of being, can be explained with reference to Lady Anne's biography. Barnard was born Lady Anne Lindsay, the eldest daughter of the Earl of Balcarres. Despite her Scottish descent, she lived in London for a substantial period of her life, where she became a noted socialite with significant connections to influential politicians and artists. As an educated woman, she had contact with high-profile people and it was said that she was “one of the most fascinating women of her time” (Theal, 1902: 42). Apart from the fact that she was known as an important socialite, she was also an accomplished painter and writer.

In South African history, Lady Anne is best known for her lavish entertainment and parties held at the Castle in the Cape of Good Hope – as expressed in Krog’s (1989) poem *jy word onthou vanweë jou partye* [you are remembered because of your parties] (95) – where she resided due to her husband’s position as secretary to the British governor of the Cape; Lord Macartney.¹⁹⁷ Due to the fact that Lord Macartney’s wife had not accompanied him to the Cape, Lady Anne was appointed as Macartney’s official hostess, in which capacity she “entertained senior British officials on their way to and from India” and “regarded it as part of her responsibility to break down the social barriers between the English and the Dutch” (Lenta, 1994: 20). Although remembered in this one sided manner, in actual fact she made a significant and important contribution to South African history. Brenda Collins (2007) argues that Lady Anne “was probably Britain’s most valuable unofficial diplomat [in the Cape] given her unique position in the colony combined with her personality, talents and wide range of interests” (3). In her role as diplomat, Lady Anne provided invaluable information to Lord Macartney as well as to Lord Henry Dundas, who was the Minister of Colonies at the time but also a close friend of hers (ibid: 4).¹⁹⁸ She did this by means of letters to Dundas, as well as through diary inscriptions and travel reports, in which she gave detailed descriptions of life at the Cape and of the various groups of people who inhabited the Cape. As mentioned before, these written documents were often accompanied by sketches and paintings, thereby giving information about the landscape and its people by means of pictures.

Apart from the fact that these documents provided information to British officials, they are also an invaluable source of information to trace the activities of life at the Cape during the stay of Lady Anne, particularly as they “provide the earliest records we have of a British woman’s life at the Cape” (Driver, 1995: 46). The fact that they are written by a woman – as opposed to a male – means that the documents give a “new perspective on eighteenth-century constructions of gender, race and class” (Driver, 1994: 1). With regard to such a perspective, Collins (2007) makes one aware of the following:

Lady Anne Barnard’s representations of the South African landscape and its inhabitants ... situate her in an ambivalent position in relation to the discourse of the colonial administration of the time ... Barnard, in her roles as a member of the British

¹⁹⁷ Her reputation as a socialite was fuelled by the fact that she was viewed as “eccentric”, mainly based on allegations that she bathed naked in a pool close to Table Mountain (an oil painting of her, possibly painted by herself, is evidence of this).

¹⁹⁸ Dundas wanted to investigate whether the Cape and surrounding areas were suitable for a colony (Wilkins: 1901). He was also the person who created the post for Andrew Barnard (ibid) and one could speculate that he did this partially due to the fact that he wanted Lady Anne to be an “unofficial” reporter of events as she could get better insight into the society in her role as hostess and in her role as “unthreatening woman”.

colonial administration and wife of a colonial official, is implicated in the process of colonisation. Her position, however, is complicated by her social role as a woman. She is effectively placed on the fringe of colonial policymaking, although her noble birth and diplomatic skills give her some influence with the male establishment. As a result, she continuously negotiates her position through the different roles that she assumes, such as writer, artist, wife, adventurer and colonial agent, fluctuating between the positions of centre and margin within colonial discourse (1).

This fluctuation between centre and margin links to Dorothy Driver's (1995) concept of "self-othering" (46). Driver uses this term to point out that;

[Barnard's] writing presents different facets of the self, as if the different speaking positions that constitute her subjectivity are engaged in negotiation (or contestation) with one another, the self engaged in dialogue with an 'otherness' within (ibid).

Driver further argues that from Barnard's writing it is clear that she shifts her perspective on herself and on the world, and that she is conscious of "otherness" and seeing through "other" eyes (ibid: 47). Barnard is, thus, able to represent herself as "the other" and view herself through the eyes of others (ibid). There are moments in her narrative "where the 'self' is placed as 'other' and 'other' becomes seen as if from the place of 'self'" (ibid). It is when Barnard, as writing subject, takes up these "shifting perspectives on herself and the world" that "the self becomes other to itself" (ibid).

This leads to a wrestling with the "embedded conventions of colonial discourse" (ibid) where Barnard is sometimes aware of the oppression of the other as seen, for example, in her sympathy with the oppressive conditions of the *Khoikhoi* in the colony where she recognizes "something of the inhabitants' humanity and not just their otherness" (ibid). In addition to this, Barnard is at times aware of "herself looking at other people" (ibid), which becomes evident in her *Journal of a month's tour into the interior of Africa* (1849) where there are instances in the narrative when "she is uneasy with the discourse of imperialism and its tendency to stamp its values and perspectives on the colony and its inhabitants" (ibid). According to Driver, such "self-othering" indicates a "fundamental disruption in the notion of 'self', a continual re-organisation of the relations between self and other" (ibid). She argues that this process in Barnard's Cape Journals disrupts colonial discourse, which is usually seen as the "domination of 'self' over 'other'" (ibid). Within this fluctuation between self and other, and between self and serving the colonial project – where Barnard's very stay at the Cape was related to this colonial plan – she was aware of fulfilling and playing, as it were, multiple roles. She illustrates her awareness of this when she tells Thomas Pringle that "he [is] mistaken if he suppose[s] that she is] one woman [and that she could be] one, two, or three different ones, and [is] capable of

being more, exactly as the circumstances [she] was placed in required” (Barnard quoted in Lenta, 1994: 164). In her writing, her use of these different voices enables her to shift between different perspectives. Barnard’s distinct voices, such as that of caring wife or cunning diplomat, thus indicate that she does not see the self as a fixed identity, but rather as adaptable to different situations or circumstances. Within the portrayal of multiple roles, Driver (1995) argues that Barnard can also be seen as “[fluctuating] between the so-called ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ positions, and between other positions designated in terms of ‘centre’ and ‘margin’, ‘culture’ and ‘nature’, ‘self’ and ‘other’” (60). This notion of multiple positions was a useful starting point in making a production that grappled with concepts related to shifting identities.

8.4 Translation from poetry to performance

One of the main strategies for the adaptation of poetry for a stage performance was to translate the poems into visual formations. Such imaginings of the spoken and written text were done by means of film, objects and the bodies of the performers. These visual translations were performed concurrently with the spoken text, so that two streams of communication – one visual and one aural – happened synchronously. Unlike in *Hex*, the spoken text in *Lady Anne* was entirely in Afrikaans with the exception of one scene during which isiZulu dialogue was whispered to underscore the Afrikaans. The code switching in *Lady Anne* was, therefore, not from one language to another but from one mode of expression to another; from aural to optical. Apart from the fact that these visual translations were strategies towards simultaneously retaining and transgressing the Afrikaans language, the choice to translate speech into visible form was also conceptually significant. The reason for this is that Lady Anne was a painter – as mentioned earlier – and many of her travel journals included visual documentation.¹⁹⁹ Due to this fact, the theme of painting and visual documentation was already implicated in making the production. This was further pronounced by the fact that Krog made reference to the activity of painting in some of the poems in her collection. For this reason, a conceptual choice was made to translate words into images as a strategy for both highlighting themes as well as bypassing language. In turn, these images gave rise to hybrid and syncretic forms due to the fact that many juxtaposing images could be amalgamated in collage-like constructs.

Furthermore, the translation of poetry into movement offered opportunities for developing what can be referred to as a “choreo-poem”; a term coined by American playwright

¹⁹⁹ Part of the reason why her documents from her stay in the Cape are so valuable is that they include visual references, giving a lively optical depiction of life at the Cape in the early 1800s.

and choreographer, Ntozake Shange, to refer to the combination of spoken word and dance as practiced in her production *for colored girls who considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf* (premiered in 1976; published in 1980). Described as “a polyphonic form that unites all of the senses” (Kamini, 2011: 287), the concept of the choreo-poem was useful as a way to integrate the spoken word and movement in an attempt to foreground multiplicity. From such interweaving, a “creolisation of the boundary between image and word” (Viljoen, 2009: 30) could be made, similar to approaches that were taken in the image-driven theatre works of Breyten Breytenbach, as discussed in Chapter Five. This relationship between word and image is arguably a natural extension of poetry due to the fact that poetry can be regarded as the construction of images by means of words. From such a perspective, imagery is already inherent to poetry, and the choice in the theatre production to translate poetry into visual performance could, therefore, be regarded as a natural progression of the imagistic nature, so that one can say that the performance was poetry embodied.

The use of poetry had a further advantage in that it was possible to escape fixed characterisations as generally used in Realism. In a theatre project which wanted to highlight possibilities for shifts in identity in attempts at bonding and bridging, such fixed characterisation would not have been useful. A poetry collection, and particularly one constructed as collage, was therefore a more useful source to highlight multiplicity than a realist, character driven play script. About the value of poetry in theatre and theatre as poetry, Hans-Thies Lehman (2006) explains:

... it is no longer – as in dramatic theatre – the *role* script that is regarded as the essence of the theatre text but instead the *text as poetry*, which in turn is meant to correspond to the “poetry” peculiar to the theatre ... By regarding the theatre text as an independent poetic dimension and simultaneously considering the “poetry” of the stage uncoupled from the text as an independent atmospheric poetry of space and light, a new theatrical disposition becomes possible ... In order to reach a new poetry of theatre it puts an end to the axioms of dramatic plot and story (59).

In wanting to create theatre as poetry, the use of Krog’s collage-like work was ideal. And notwithstanding Lehman’s claim about the departure of theatre from plot and storyline, the element of narrative embedded in Krog’s poetry collection was useful in that it helped to hold diverse fragments of the production together, albeit loosely. In this sense, the theatre production in some ways echoed the form of Krog’s work, which André Brink (1989) describes as “a novel of a collection” (13).²⁰⁰ Despite finding elements of the *Lady Anne* storyline useful, the focus

²⁰⁰ “n Roman van ’n bundel” (Brink, 1989: 13, trans. H. Gehring).

of our production was predominantly on the poetic nature of the source text and on using that as a means to create “poetry of theatre”.

8.5 Workshop theatre as means of translation

In order to create a theatre collage as a means to generate multiple perspectives, it was necessary to include diverse artists who could share and exchange multiple perspectives from their diverse backgrounds. The co-creators consisted of a choreographer (Gary Gordon), a composer/musician (Francois le Roux, known as the Ha!Man), an Afrikaans speaking actress (Coba-Maryn Wilsenach), and a dancer/choreographer (Sifiso Majola) who is trained in various dance forms such as gumboot, traditional Zulu and contemporary dance. I was the producer, dramaturge, director and narrator. The fact that Gordon was the choreographer was significant, seeing that he was the director of the First Physical Theatre Company – as mentioned in Chapter Two – and made a significant contribution to ways in which matters related to identity and subsequent shifts in identity could be addressed. Le Roux (Ha!Man) composed the music but was also on stage, improvising to his own music with the cello. Wilsenach played the part of Lady Anne. Although this was not done in a realist manner, her dialogue was entirely based on the poems, which Krog had written from Lady Anne’s perspective, mainly taking the form of letters and diary inscriptions, so that they functioned as internal monologues or confessions. Despite playing a single role, Wilsenach was representing Lady Anne at different stages of her life so she took on many identities within the role. By contrast, the dancer performed multiple roles; mostly representative of the men in Lady Anne’s life but also other male impersonations. The dancer’s roles depended on the context of the poems, so that sometimes he was representative of Andrew Barnard and at other times he was taking on the role of a helper in Lady Anne’s household, or of a slave, or of somebody altogether outside of Lady Anne’s world. This gave the dancer an ambiguous quality, seeing that sometimes he was representative of a colonial white man and sometimes he had to be seen as black. Such shifting in roles was achieved through movement.

The decision to cast a male and female performer in the lead roles was informed by the fact that themes related to Lady Anne’s love life and the dilemmas associated with it, featured prominently in the play. However, as themes from Krog’s poetry, I also wanted to address political matters related to race, privilege and power, and the influence of South Africa’s colonial history on the present. For this reason, I wanted the couple to be interracial and, more specifically, black and white. Both the man/woman and the black/white pairing suggested

binary constructions and, by implication, an “us and them” divide. In being consistent to this concept of setting up divisions, I used speech and dance as art forms that are stereotypically placed in polar opposition to one another. In setting up these binaries, however, I not only wanted to show divisions but, also, to generate dialogue as a means to bridge gender, racial and artistic divides. As a further way to create bridging – but also to disturb the man/woman, black/white, speech/dance dualisms – a third character was incorporated, in keeping with Soja’s (2009) notion of “thirthing-as-Othering” (51) as mentioned in Chapter Two. By doing this, I wanted to “[restore] a third dimension to hard-set profiles” (Bhabha, 1982: 24) in agreement with third space theory as has also been discussed in Chapter Two.

This narrator mainly served as counterpoint to the character of Lady Anne and represented the contemporary writer. For this reason, this character delivered the poems that were written from Krog’s perspective. She did not switch roles, but sometimes copied or shadowed the actress who played Lady Anne. This character was performed by myself, which made me doubly representative of the writer; once as a character and once in my role as director and dramaturge. The narrator character functioned mainly as a witness and documenter of the action. She also introduced a contemporary voice into the production, in the sense that she spoke poetry about contemporary concerns.

In many ways the narrator served the function of “focalizer”; a term used by Maaïke Bleeker (2008), who explains that “an external focalizer ... is the anonymous agent through whose eyes we as audience see the performance” (31). From this perspective, the role of the narrator could be understood to be “setting up a relationship between the seer ‘over here’ and the seen ‘over there’, inviting this seer over there to ‘step inside’, to leave behind reality and enter the fictive cosmos” (ibid: 29).²⁰¹ For example, the narrator created a connection between herself and the audience by wearing casual, contemporary clothes, which looked more like everyday wear than a costume. This was in contrast to the two other performers who were clearly in costume. Another manner in which a connection with the audience was established was by making direct contact with them in the form of a conversation. Although used more than once, the tactic was most pronounced when the narrator was delivering the poem *Lady Anne by die Mikrogolfoond* [Lady Anne at the Microwave Oven] (Krog, 1989: 71). She did this by sitting on the edge of the stage in a casual manner, thus placing herself in close proximity to the audience so as to create a bond between them. Ironically, in creating this bond, she also

²⁰¹ Bleeker used this term to describe a device that was used in William Forsythe’s production *Artifact* (1984). Here the concept of “focaliser” is applied to the role of the narrator in *Lady Anne*.

placed the attention on the performance, thereby simultaneously opening and closing the gap between performers and observers. In the words of Bleeker (2008): “this character [the focaliser] reaffirms that this is theatre by performing the critical gesture of Brechtian theatre: closing the gap separating stage and auditorium in order to create distance” (29).

One can therefore say that the narrator occupied an in-between space in which she was neither audience nor performer; neither fully agent nor fully subject. The fluidity of this in-between state meant that she fulfilled many functions. At times she was part of the action and at other times she was looking on but, in doing so, she was looked upon by the audience. The in-between state of this character was further accentuated by the fact that the part was performed by myself, thus placing me in the position of both creator and performer; both outsider and insider. One could, thus, say that, to a certain degree, the narrator played the part of translator or interpreter. Such a role of translation was also fulfilled by the other performers: not only were they translating words into action, but they could also be regarded as translators of history, considering the fact that the production and its source text were both based on the life of an actual person and, although not performed in a realist style, the historical events were nonetheless brought to life. From this perspective, they were “hyper-historians”, following Freddie Rokem’s (2000) argument that the actor performing in a historical play becomes a

... kind of historian ... a “hyper-historian”, who makes it possible for us – even in cases where the re-enacted events are not fully acceptable for the academic historian as a “scientific” representation of that past – to recognize that the actor is “redoing” or “reappearing” as something/somebody that has actually existed in the past (13).

This role of hyper-historian was undoubtedly fulfilled by the actress. Wilsenach did extensive research on Lady Anne and together we visited many sites related to Lady Anne’s stay in the Cape. From the fact that Wilsenach did so much research on the actual person Lady Anne, she was in a strong position to represent her.

8.6 Background to the narrative

Before explaining what strategies were used to translate the poetry into movement in order to create hybrid and syncretic forms, background information will be given to the content of some of the poems. The production was divided into three episodes; each depicting and interrogating a different theme. Episode 1 mainly dealt with the power struggle between men and women, particularly within the framework of a romantic relationship. Episode 2 addressed matters

related to land ownership, money and material possessions; as well as themes related to slavery, power and religion. Episode 3 was based on themes related to loss, loneliness and death.²⁰²

The poems chosen for Episode 1 were based, predominantly, on events that took place between 1791 and 1796, hence offering insight into the life of Lady Anne before her arrival at the Cape. The focus of these poems was primarily on Lady Anne's relationship with three men, namely William Windham, Henry Dundas, and Andrew Barnard who eventually became her husband and was the reason for her relocation to the Cape of Good Hope.²⁰³ Although Episode 1 was predominantly concerned with romance and the dynamics that this can bring about between men and women, it was set against a backdrop of political events, so that there was a constant reference to and awareness of the impact of the political on the personal, even with regard to romance.²⁰⁴ In response to this constant reference to the political, Krog (quoted in Conradie, 1996) says the following:

It is an incredibly depressing thought: I work on Lady Anne and I think, I want to tell you how she loves, but every word, every choice is politics. Am I allowed to engage myself with the superficial life of Lady Anne while so many millions of people are not allowed a dignified existence? I remember Camus's words: if literature persists as luxury, it also remains a lie (89, trans. H. Gehring).²⁰⁵

From Krog's comment it is clear that the political was inescapable in this production and it was, indeed, what fuelled most of the directorial choices, so that there was a constant oscillation and tension between the private and the political in which the character of Lady Anne was constantly torn between enjoying her life and having to face the political realities around her, such as the French Revolution or the illegal slave trade at the Cape. The examples of how translation strategies were used are all from Episode 1 and, for this reason, a short synopsis is given of this episode. The main theme in this episode was Lady Anne's love for William

²⁰² In Krog's collection the poems were not presented chronologically, but rather in a way that followed postmodern principles in which themes and ideas were often juxtaposed with one another. In addition, the sections of the poetry book itself were not numbered sequentially, but instead followed the unconventional order of: Part I, Part II, Part V, Part IV, Part III. This departure from convention had meaning within the context of a written text but, in re-imagining the poetry work as theatre, we wanted to create a loose narrative that worked chronologically. The episodes depicted in our dramatic work therefore followed each other chronologically.

²⁰³ Andrew Barnard was appointed as secretary to the British governor, Lord Macartney, in 1797, a post that was created for him by Henry Dundas on Lady Anne's request (Wilkins, 1901).

²⁰⁴ The specific political era to which Krog refers is that of the nineteen-eighties in South Africa. This she compares to the French Revolution, which forms the background against which Lady Anne's love poetry is set.

²⁰⁵ "Dit is 'n ongelooflike deprimerende gedagte: ek werk aan Lady Anne en dink, ek wil vertel hoe sy liefhet, maar elke woord, elke keuse is politiek. Mag ek my besig hou met die oppervlakkige lewe van Lady Anne terwyl soveel miljoene mense nie 'n menswaardige bestaan gegun word nie? Ek onthou Camus se woorde: as letterkunde volhard as luukse, bly dit ook leuen" (Krog quoted in Conradie, 1996: 89).

Windham – who was the British Secretary of War from 1794 to 1801 (Cannon, 2000: n.p.) – against the background of the French Revolution. What is made explicit in Krog’s poems is that Lady Anne could not act on her love for Windham in her capacity as woman. From this perspective the poems not only depict Barnard’s love for Windham, but also show an imbalance in power, in the sense that she can only communicate her interest in him through flirtation, or in attempts to make him jealous, but cannot actively declare her feelings to him. Her passivity and longing is expressed in the following extract.

Vanuit vensters sien sy skrams	From windows she sees partially
hoe William Windham tuiskom middernags	how William Windham returns home at midnight
(Krog, 1989: 27)	(trans. H. Gehring)

In the poetry collection, Krog references this reality about Lady Anne’s life in order to question the extent to which women have autonomy and choice in heterosexual romantic relationships. Furthermore, in her reference to the love affair between Lady Anne and Windham, Krog is also referencing the pursuit of a constructed image of romance. In other words, Krog sets up a contrast between the reality of a relationship and the difficulties that are often brought about by such a relationship, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the image or dream of romance or love. This image of love as something free and passionate is brought into question.

Wie trou wat hy lief het?	Who marries what he loves?
Mens trou respek, deugde, plig!	One marries respect, virtues, duty!
(Krog, 1989: 66)	(trans. H. Gehring)

From this context, most of the performance material created for Episode 1 was related to depicting romantic relationships but also to identity struggles as often entangled in such relationships. What follows are ways in which thematic concerns were put into practice.

8.7 Re-imagi-ning history - translation by means of image

One way in which the poetry was translated was through the construction of images, as in the production’s opening scene. This started with a sequence of images which consisted of a projected portrait of Lady Anne Barnard on a hanging screen that functioned as a billboard, followed by a tableau of a woman (the narrator) dressed in contemporary clothing and holding a notebook, followed by an image of a man and a woman (dancer and actress) mirroring one another.



Image 8.1: Accumulation of images

The accumulation of images was an attempt to establish connections, in a visual manner, between the key role players in the production. By means of the digitally projected portrait of Lady Anne, information was given about the main subject of the play: what she looked like; what her status was; the era in which she lived. This information was not only conveyed by the sitter, but also by the very portrait itself, since portraits became popular during the French Revolution as a way in which to “make subjects into citizens” and to effect “regeneration from the bottom up” (Freund, 2011: 325). Portraits were also a way in which women could be individualised. Amy Freund explains that “[i]ts centrality to Revolutionary visual culture made it a particularly effective means by which women could claim political agency (ibid). The foregrounding of a portrait on the stage, therefore, offered thematic clues to the production itself.

Once the image of Lady Anne was established, the narrator was introduced. She was lit, and standing in a frame. The fact that the narrator’s image followed straight after that of Lady Anne was intended to establish a connection between Lady Anne, the person, and the narrator character. The theme of portraits and frames and, by implication, of image making was emphasised by placing the narrator character inside a frame. It was important to show a connection between Lady Anne and the narrator from the beginning of the play because, as mentioned earlier, Krog’s poetry draws parallels between her own life and that of Barnard. Another parallel lay in the fact that the role of narrator was performed by myself; the director of the production, as mentioned already.

In this manner, attempts were made to draw parallels between the writer Krog – who used Lady Anne as a subject – and the director – who used the poetry of Krog to create a performance. The director was the interpreter or translator of the poetry, in the same manner that Krog was the interpreter or translator of Lady Anne’s writing. Lastly, the performers – the actress who represented Lady Anne and the dancer who represented multiple male characters

– were introduced.²⁰⁶ Their physical placement, as if mirroring one another, had political significance in that they represented binary constructions; such as that of man/woman, black/white and actress/dancer. By setting up these binaries, the theme of self and other, as well as of “self-othering” – as previously mentioned in relation to Driver’s notion of Lady Anne – could be captured. While Lady Anne, the historical writer, was juxtaposed with the contemporary narrator, the actress and dancer were locked in a “self and other” pairing. These binaries were destabilised and disrupted during the course of the performance, following a convention in which they would be set up or presented and then disrupted, only to be set up once again and then disrupted once again, in a constant process of construction and deconstruction.

The use of different sets of juxtaposed opening images created a collage-like impression. This, in turn, offered possibilities for re-imagining the so-called “real” as mentioned in Chapter Six. First, a projection was given of the actual Lady Anne. Then the narrator standing in the frame was shown as a representation of Krog who, as author, had wanted to re-imagine herself through Lady Anne in what one can refer to as a translated version of Lady Anne. After that the performers were shown, offering yet another re-interpretation: a re-imagining of the life of Lady Anne through the live medium of theatre. One can thus say that the images mirrored one another in a re-imagined form; simultaneously reflecting as well as shifting the original image. The possible significance of such an approach can be explained by means of David Johnston’s (2012) notion of translation, about which he says:

The translator’s shifting gaze allows the text to be simultaneously of then and there, encased in cultural difference, but also belonging to the shifting here and now of our spectator (19).

By constructing these re-imagined depictions of Lady Anne, an attempt was made at, in the words of André Brink (1998), “infusing the ordinary with a sense of the extraordinary, the everyday with the fantastic, producing a result in which the whole is decidedly more than the sum of its parts” (31). Following this argument, the real life experiences of Lady Anne could be re-imagined through a collage-like stage construct in what was not “a reproduction but an imagining” (Brink, 1998: 30) of Lady Anne’s life. The juxtaposition of diverse images also set the stage for the formation of a third space in which, by means of bringing together “dis/similar subjects” (Licona, 2012: 14), histories could be displaced, allowing for new structures to

²⁰⁶ Throughout the production, the actress’s dialogue consisted of poetry written from the perspective of Lady Anne, as if she was saying it in the first person.

emerge, in correspondence to third space ideals. As such, the stage was already prepared for hybrid possibilities in that, as Bhabha (1990) puts it, “hybridity is the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge” (211).

Once these opening images had been established, the dancer started to move concurrently to the narrator paging through her book, thus indicating a connection between the two actions. The opening of the book was the impulse for the dancer to move, but the dancer’s movement, in turn, encouraged further paging. Apart from being a strategy that could create links between the performers, the idea was also to show that there was a connection between the dancer and the book, as if he was *from* the book, as if the narrator was reading about him. The book was giving as much life to him as he was giving to the book. This reciprocity between the actions of the performers and those of the narrator was a device that was used throughout the production. The narrator sometimes prompted the actions of the dancer and the actress who operated as a pair but, at other times, the actions of the pair informed those of the narrator.



Image 8.2: Dancer comes alive when narrator starts to page through book

Once the initial parallel actions had been established, the focus was turned to the actress as the dancer touched her. This touch prompted the actress to draw an audible breath, as if she had become infused with life.²⁰⁷ At this point, the narrator started to speak. In this manner, yet another attempt was made to establish connections. The drawing in of breath by the actress, followed by the narrator’s speech, was a way of signalling that these two women represented aspects of the same person; “the other” of the self. One was breathing in order to let the other

²⁰⁷ Apart from drawing attention to individual characters, the initial movements also took on symbolic meaning. For example, the fact that the male dancer brought Lady Anne to life could be understood to be representative of the fact that Lady Anne was dependent on men – such as Henry Dundas and Andrew Barnard – for her survival. In this manner, one could also address a thematic concern.

one speak, so that one could say that it was an embodied expression of Krog's (1989) phrase: "I wanted to live a second life through you Lady Anne Barnard, show that you are possible" (40).²⁰⁸



Image 8.3: Dancer touches actress who draws in breath

By making these connections, a cycle could be created in which the reading of the text inspired a physical response, which, in turn, prompted further narration. Through the connection between the play's narrator and the actress who represented Lady Anne, a rapport could be established as if between the contemporary writer, Krog, and the historical figure, Barnard. In this manner, the historical figure's life (and writing) was re-imagined for a contemporary context, allowing for a confluence of the past and the present, following the notion that "history ... is not the history of the past as much as it is the history of the present" (Mark Fleishman, 2012: 50). History was thus re-interpreted through drawing parallels, making distinctions and problematizing divisions between past and present in an attitude similar to that of Keith Jenkins (2003) when he says:

The past is never (in that sense) over and done with, but is to be made tomorrow and the day after – and who knows what will happen tomorrow? The past is thus open to unstoppable newness; undecidable decisions and refigurings, of a sort logically beyond any curtailment: anything can come; anything goes (30).

This is the understanding of history that was followed when creating the production *Lady Anne* in which historical material was used to speak to and address current events or even future ones; so that in many ways attempts were made to show that what happened in the past could

²⁰⁸ "Ek wou 'n tweede lewe deur jou leef
Lady Anne Barnard, wys jy is moontlik" (Krog, 1989: 40, trans. H. Gehring).

also happen in the future. By using Lady Anne's portraits and paintings as a point of departure, there was already a strong impetus for choosing visual communication as a means to translate the poetry.²⁰⁹ Such visual communication was understood in its broadest sense so that it included still images, film projections, movement, dance and mime. Even the music was designed as a means to paint pictures through sound. The real image, namely the portrait of Lady Anne, led to the creation of further images. This then led to conceptual choices around image-making which became a strategy for translating the Afrikaans poetry into visual form. From such imaginings, it was possible to place diverse entities together creating a collage-like construct of juxtaposing impressions. This, in turn, led to the construction of a hybrid in which multiple eras could be brought together, leading to a re-imaging of histories and identities.

8.8 Social dance as means of translation

Another manner in which concepts were translated was through social dance forms (see LA film clip 1). As already mentioned, one of the themes in the production was that of romantic relationships between men and women. This theme was set against the backdrop of political turmoil (the French Revolution and the liberation struggle in South Africa). To introduce the theme of romance, a collage of social dance forms – historical/contemporary, African/European – was created, thereby using the physical act of dancing to communicate social, historical and relational concepts without having to use spoken language. Fragments from a waltz were, for example, interrupted by a more playful, unstructured dance; this, in turn, was broken up by a minuet-like dance reminiscent of the dances that were seen at courts in Europe during the eighteenth century (Guthrie, 1982: 17) which, in turn, was destabilised by variations on movements as found in some male Zulu dances, such as the Zulu war dance, the *indlamu*.²¹⁰ From this approach one could establish resonances – both positive and negative – between different eras, cultures and attitudes.

²⁰⁹ These visuals were comprised of sketches, portraits and paintings from archives, libraries and museums. We also used photographs of some sites once inhabited or visited by Lady Anne, such as the remaining ruins of her cottage in Newlands Forest, Cape Town or the Vineyard Hotel in which she once lived.

²¹⁰ The *indlamu* is a Zulu warrior dance.



Image 8.4: Depicting a strictly coded relationship by means of the minuet

The minuet served to signify a formally coded relationship on public display. As a tightly structured dance form associated with decorum, it was used to represent a relationship informed by clearly defined rules and societal constructs rather than passion or individual will. The minuet also referenced a particular historical era, as it was a popular dance in English and French courts during the time of Louis XIV (Neville, 2008: 236). It was associated with the ruling classes and regarded as a sign of courtly etiquette and dignity (McKee, 2012: 7). Its use in the production was a reference to Lady Anne's status as member of the European aristocracy.



Image 8.5: Depicting intimate relationship by means of the waltz

The waltz, while also stemming from European society, allows far more fluidity than the very formal minuet which is purposefully designed to induce restraint. It was, therefore, used to convey a contrasting attitude; one in which passion and intimacy could be expressed more openly. Although nowadays the waltz is regarded as formal dance with romantic undertones, during the French Revolution it emerged as a popular dance of the people and was regarded as an unstructured and free form (ibid: 11). For this reason, at that time it became associated with anti-establishment movements; symbolising freedom of expression (Yaraman: 2002: 45). In

fact, the waltz was regarded as so dangerous by some that “some advice books for women even claimed waltzing could lead to prostitution” (Carter, 1988: 156), so that many women were forbidden to waltz. Despite this, it eventually gained popularity over the formal minuet; especially given the minuet’s association with the ruling classes. In contemporary contexts, waltzes are often danced at weddings and associated with romantic love and Western-style marriages. In the production one could suggest a more intimate relationship by means of the waltz. And within this intimacy, we reconfigured the basic waltz form in various ways, so that throughout the prologue it revealed the shifting social and emotional dynamics between the two performers. On the one hand, it was used as sign of intimacy and togetherness – conveying a sense of safety and security – while on the other hand, it was also used to convey a sense of clinging or holding onto the other person with potentially negative implications.

The use of these contrasting dance forms allowed us not only to represent different attitudes to romance and male/female relationships but, also, to reference historical eras and political attitudes. In fluctuating between the waltz and the minuet, a wrestle between the “old order” and the “new order”, as played out during the French Revolution, could be depicted. It was also a wrestle between attitudes to romance; a struggle between formally arranged relationships and less restrained expressions of passion. The waltz was, in turn, interrupted by an even less restrained, playful and flirtatious dance which was meant to represent a free and playful relationship. It referenced movements as found in swing style dances, with more explicit sexual innuendo.



Image 8.6: Playful, flirtatious dance

These European dance forms were in turn interrupted by a dance that could be regarded as a variation of the Zulu war dance, the *indlamu*.



Image 8.7: Variations of the Zulu indlamu

As an elaboration on the war dance, fragments of the *toyi-toyi* – as protest dance – were also incorporated.²¹¹



Image 8.8: Dancer doing toyi-toyi

In contrast to the European dance forms, the incorporation of the Zulu war dance and the *toyi-toyi* not only shifted the focus to an African context but, also, made political parallels between the French Revolution and the South African liberation struggle. It therefore indicated the translation of historical events into a modern context. The interaction between Europe and Africa was depicted by means of the actress saying a poem describing the French Revolution and the dancer embodying a form of protest.

Dance was also used as a substitute for dialogue (see LA film clip 2). For example, at one stage, the dancer continued with a dance made up of fragments from the *indlamu* dance form and the *toyi-toyi*: the idea here was to manifest the concept of incessant talking, as was expressed by the actress playing Lady Anne in the lines: “He does not look me in the eye. He

²¹¹ As mentioned in Chapter Five, the *toyi-toyi* is a contemporary African protest dance.

keeps on talking almost 4 hours long” (Krog, 1989: 66).²¹² In this incessant dancing, we attempted to express the tone and something of the materiality of how the British Secretary of War – William Windham, who, as mentioned, was the object of Lady Anne’s passion – conducted himself. In other words, we created a physical form that conveyed the feeling of Windham’s continuous talking about the revolution. While the dancer was engaged in this vigorous dance, the narrator was vehemently writing and, as the dance gained momentum, so did the writing. In this frenzied kinetic manner, the dance – as a symbol of struggles for liberation – was translated into the narrator’s creative struggle, so that the one mode of expression became a metaphor for the other.

In terms of third space theory, one could say that in bringing together and merging these forms of dance we were creating a liminal third space in which “the cultures of the colonizer and the colonized” could go through a process that could recast “their fixed sense of identity” (Kuortti & Nyman, 2007: 8). Such a merging could, in turn, effect the creation of new forms and new relationships, “[generating] a new sense of identity that may resemble the old ones but is not quite the same” (ibid). New cultural meaning could thus be established, following the notion that “what is in-between settled cultural forms or identities – identities like self and other – is central to the creation of new cultural meaning” (Huddart, 2007: 7). By constantly switching from one dance form to the other, it was possible to simultaneously juxtapose and connect these forms, in what could be regarded as a “process of translating and thereby transvaluing cultural differences” (Bhabha, 1994: 252), effecting the creation of hybrid identities that could “find their voice in a dialectic that does not seek cultural supremacy or sovereignty” (Bhabha, 1996: 58). In turn, these hybrid formations could undermine polarised thinking by “[giving] privilege to liminality ... to undermine solid, authentic culture in favour of unexpected, hybrid, and fortuitous cultures” (Huddart, 2007: 7).

Following on from this notion, the interplay of dance forms – each as a seemingly fixed representation of particular histories and identities – were able to become fluid in their influencing of one another. The dances were fragmented, and fragments were reorganised in a process in which constant switching loosened fixed forms and thereby made it possible to bring about a cultural “mixed-ness” (Huddart, 2007: 7). For example, when the outstretched leg, as associated with the minuet, was merged with the kick of the *indlamu*, something emerged which was neither the one nor the other; representative of neither the coloniser nor the colonised. Instead, it created something unexpected in the act of re-imagination. In a similar

²¹² “Hy kyk my nie in die oë nie. Hy hou aan praat – byna 4 ure lank” (Krog, 1989: 66, trans. H. Gehring).

manner, when the rhythms of the *toyi-toyi* were combined with the waltz, an “in-between” rhythm emerged, thereby epitomising Brian Singleton’s (1997) notion of interculturalism as “a revision of a cartographic location of ... cultures, seen through the kaleidoscope of exchange, borrowing, bartering, and appropriation” (93).

Finally, then, in creating social dance as a means for the translation of emotional states, relationships, concepts, ideologies and, also, as a way to make cultural exchanges and translations, “border identities” were able to form. In turn, following Henry Giroux (1993), such “border identities” were able to demonstrate “that the self as a historical and cultural formation is shaped in complex, related, and multiple ways through their interaction with numerous and diverse communities” (10). From such formation of border identities through the merging of diverse dance forms, the utopian ideal of an interweaving of diverse communities could be envisioned.

8.9 Translation through gestures

Translation also took place through gestures. The manner in which this was done is explained in this section, with reference to a scene that was based on the poem *Windham se Parys* [Windham’s Paris] (Krog, 1989: 63). In the production this poem followed on from the previously discussed hybrid prologue and introduced spoken language as a form of communication (see LA film clip 3). In this way, by means of a step-by-step approach, the production progressed from communication through static images to which music was then added, then transitioned into movement and dance and, finally, culminated in speech. Each form of communication added another layer, until all the forms co-existed. This incremental approach allowed the audience to slowly become accustomed to receiving information via various somatic channels, until the point at which speech was introduced. Once all the streams of communication had been introduced, it was possible to let them converge and happen in simultaneous parallel streams. The use of parallel but diverse performance forms in this way is similar to acts of interpretation, such as audio translations or interpretation through sign language, in which it is typical for a delivery to take place in one language and then be followed by an interpretation of that delivery in another language (either in spoken or embodied form as in the case of sign language). Since these simultaneous – or almost simultaneous – acts involve complex coordination of the senses and the interpretative mind, we felt it was better to introduce the individual streams first before converging them.

Another reason for foregrounding the images, movement and sound before embarking on verbal communication was in order to accommodate – at least partially – the audience members who understood little or no Afrikaans. The added advantage of building streams of communication in this way is that it gives the work what could be described as a symphonic form: this allows each audience member to become an involved participant in the construction of the overall artistic form of the production, as each element is introduced and then incorporated. Although the non-verbal forms were used as a kind of translation – of both the written source material and the spoken poetry of the play – the fact of using non-verbal forms meant that these forms could function independently of verbalised speech and, thus, constitute a language in and of themselves. This, in combination with the effect of building a non-verbal language and then an overall language that included the verbal, meant that members of the audience who did not understand the Afrikaans language had enough means to follow the communication streams from beginning to end. It also meant that, for Afrikaans speakers, the spoken language was given new dimensions.

Ultimately, then, a three-tiered approach was followed, in which movement and music functioned as interpretations of the spoken text, but were also used as independent entities which could be followed individually. Coupled with the image and dance-based translation strategies – as previously discussed in relation to the prologue – was another form of physical performance for the translation of words into images, which was the use of gestures. In the context of translation, gestures were perceived to be another language, following David McNeill's (2008) notion that "gesture is essentially language and functions primarily in communicative contexts" (55). These gestures functioned as a type of sign language which could "run alongside and [interweave] with the words of the text" (Fleishman, 1997: 175). The manner in which these gestures were created is explained by means of two main strategies: 1) the creation of core images in response to words, phrases and ideas, and 2) the repetition of gestures to generate more gestures. I elaborate on these strategies in the following sub-sections.

8.9.1 Creating core images

One of the strategies that we used to create gestures was to develop an archive of core images in response to certain words or fragments from the poems. This was generally done by means of a process during which poetry was read repeatedly to the rehearsing performers. The performers had to respond by finding and then adopting static bodily postures, which could be described as “embodied impressions”. A series of core images was thus developed as gestural translations of words. An example follows of how this was done in response to an extract from the poem that appears below.

	1791		1791
Windham se Parys		Windham’s Paris	
Een bruuske winter wys hy my		One brutal winter he shows me	
Woordeloos grepe:		Speechless fragments:	
	’n dame knielend		a lady, kneeling
	in die koets		in the carriage
	haarwring dakhoogte		head piece ceiling high
eklips rondom		eclipse around	
die duiselende vel		the dazzling skin	
van Marie-Antoinette		of Marie-Antoinette	
waaierkodes – al taal		codes of hand fan – the only language	
2 tikkies: ek versmag		2 little taps: I yearn for	
ligte tik op mou: ons word dopgehou		light tap on sleeve: we are being watched	
visitekaartjie in boudoir:		visitor’s ticket in boudoir:	
	voel ondeund vandag		feel mischievous today
	en is pragtig aangetrek		and is beautifully dressed
	(Krog, 1989: 63)		(trans. H. Gehring)

In response to this poem, the following gestures were developed. In the first image, the actress is trying to capture the image of a high wig, as was fashionable during the Baroque era and expressed by the phrase “haarwring dakhoogte” [hair piece ceiling high]. In the second image she is trying to capture the act of opening a hand fan, as suggested by the word “waaierkodes” [hand fan codes]. In the third images, she has created a gesture for “pragtig aangetrek” [beautifully dressed].

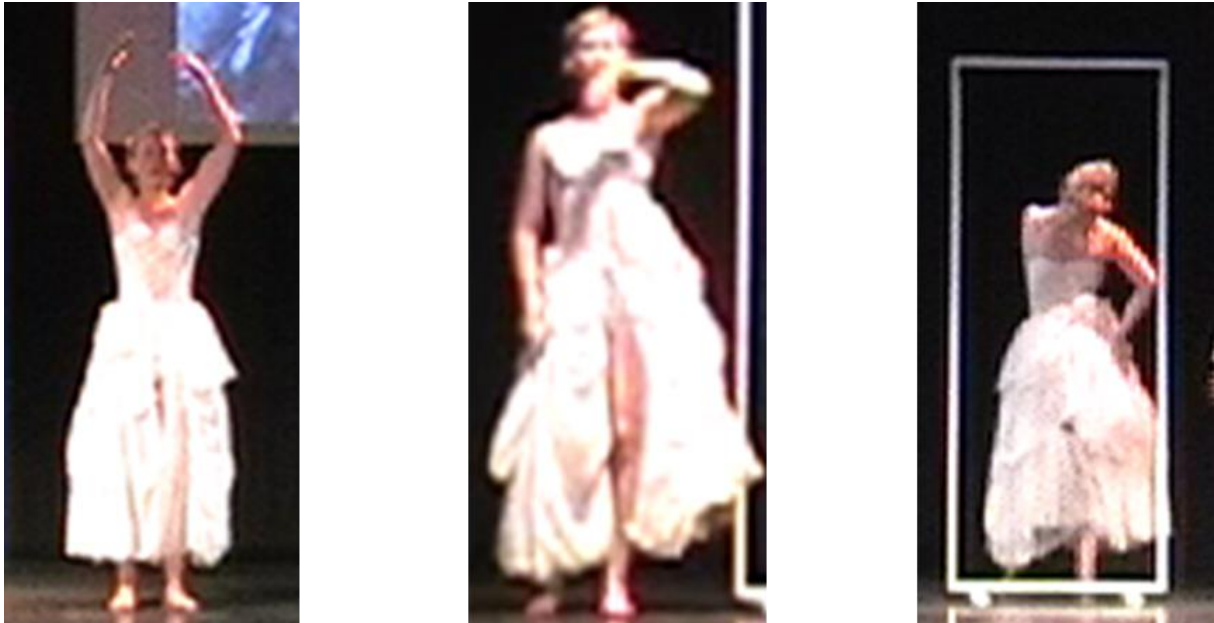


Image 8.9: Actress embodies hair piece, fan and looking beautiful

Many more embodied physical images were created by the actors following this translation strategy. These images, then, represented a stock gestural vocabulary, which could, in turn, be used in other contexts and, furthermore, could be transformed in order to shift or extend their original meaning. For example, the gestural translation of the wig was later used in conjunction with the phrase “die brandhout lê gereed vir rewolusie” [the firewood is ready for revolution]. In this context, the image took on multiple meanings; among other things, it suggested stacked wood or smoke. Images could thus be repeated and, in each repetition, they could be combined with different words or juxtaposed with other images, all of which extended or shifted their meaning. The image was, therefore, not only a means for translating words, but also a means to reveal shifts in context.

To give an example, in an echo of the actress’s gesture of holding her hands above her head, the narrator clutched her hair. While, choreographically – in the simple sense of arms raised above the head – the two gestures echoed one another, thus creating a dual gesture, the actual meaning – symbolised by the finer elements of the two gestures in combination with the two different contexts – was distinctly different, especially in emotional content. By means of this symbolically complex mirror image, the turmoil of the revolution could be depicted, which, in turn, could be regarded as a metaphor for the turmoil felt by the narrator as representative of the poet Krog. As the actress’ and dancer’s movements became more vigorous, the narrator also started to write more vigorously, making gestures that culminated in an image where she was tossing away paper and then (as described above) clutching her hair. Both character and

narrator were placing the emphasis on their heads, either holding their heads or their hands above their heads and, in this way, offering a very literal image associated with the beheadings of the French Revolution and, in particular, that of Marie Antoinette, which are referenced in the Krog poem that was used in the play script.

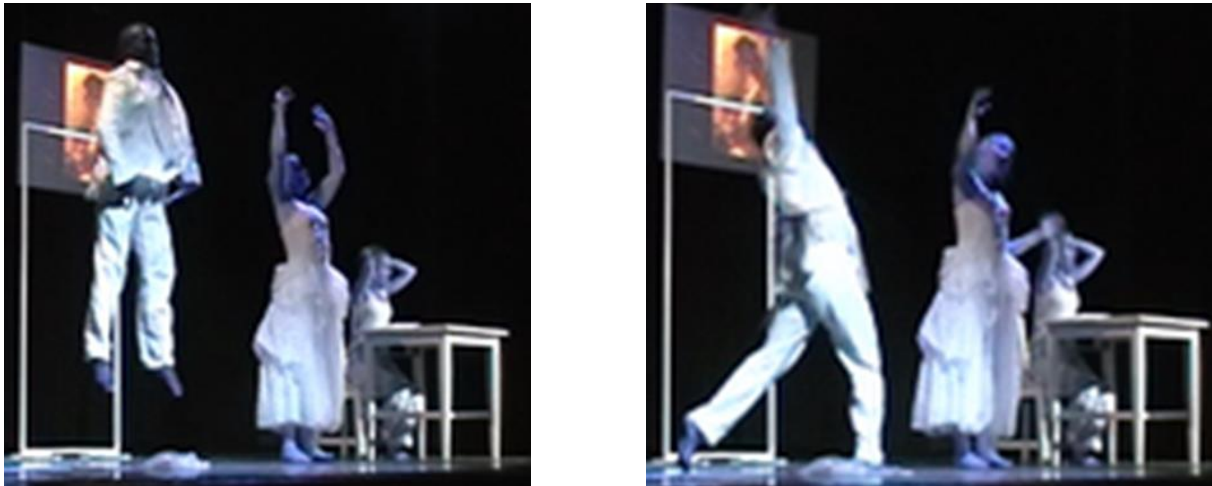


Image 8.10: Variations on hands above head

In a similar manner, the image that was created to suggest a fan was transferred to other contexts. The mutability of the fan image was achieved not only through bodily gesture, but also by means of a translation through rhythm, from which the phrase “twee tikkies” [two taps] was translated into a repetitive hand gesture. This gesture was later amplified by transmuting it into the tapping of a foot, or the nod of a head. Thus, as the gesture shifted context, it took on different meanings, thereby becoming a motif throughout the performance of the poem. Whereas, at one stage, the tapping of the head was used to suggest the beheading of Marie Antoinette, at yet another stage, it was designed to suggest a mixture of nervousness and excitement as experienced by Lady Anne. These image constructions and their shifts in meaning therefore indicated a process in which an image was first used as a means to capture words in visual form but then went through a process in which it was dislocated from its original meaning, then distorted – due to being altered and ultimately displaced – thereby taking on new meaning; undergoing a shift in identity. One can, thus, say that a process took place similar to Bhabha’s (1994) notion of *Entstellung* [shift through distortion], which he describes as “a process of displacement, distortion, dislocation, repetition” (105), and which he regards as necessary for the formation of hybrid identities within the process of decolonisation. One can, thus, say that although the translation strategy was originally intended to be a practical

solution for translating words into embodied forms, this strategy also started to take on a political role.

Another manner in which gestures were generated was by means of improvisations based on the act of getting dressed, as inspired by the phrase “voel ondeund vandag en is pragtig aangetrek” [feel flirtatious today and am beautifully dressed]. The performers had to pretend that they were getting dressed for a formal event, such as a ball. As part of developing the production, they were initially given some clothing and props with which to experiment, but were later asked to mime the actions without the costumes. They were free to explore, and could try on contemporary or period clothing, so that a diverse range of images could be generated. By taking the clothes away and making the performers mime the actions, interesting possibilities emerged from which a physical theatre score could be composed. For example, by miming the buttoning up of a shirt, the dancer developed an interesting series of hand gestures which became a linking motif in the play, or by pretending to put on a necklace, the actress generated postures that could be used again in other contexts. Another example was when the actress wanted to indicate that she was wearing a dress with a bustle. Seeing that she was not wearing an actual dress at that stage, the manner of showing the bustle was by protruding her hips and swinging them from side to side. This embodiment of the dress could in turn be used as choreography in other contexts. Again, this is an example of how the production evolved its own forms of “language”.

Apart from being used to capture poetic phrases, the choice to play dress-up was significant for other reasons. Given that Lady Anne was the official hostess at the castle in the Cape of Good Hope she hosted many formal occasions, including balls. In her writings, it is clear that she was a perceptive observer of the manner in which people dressed as an indicator of their social status. This association was important, given the notion that “dress is an aspect of cultural capital, part of how elites establish, maintain and reproduce politics of power, reinforcing relation [sic] of dominance and subordination” (Twigg, 2013: 20). One could, therefore, speculate that Lady Anne’s obsession with clothing did not stem merely from a love of fashion, but was also related to power and position. The decision to generate performance material from the putting on and taking off of clothes was, therefore, one of the ways in which we could impart information about Lady Anne. From the “dress-up” exercise, a diverse range of images and movement phrases emerged, which were incorporated into the final production to such an extent that the use of clothing became a prominent feature, particularly as a way to indicate switching identities. From such switching it was possible to reveal multiple facets of characters, or to indicate an identity exchange, or the transformation from one identity to

another, in a similar manner to strategies used in *Hex* as was discussed in Chapter Seven. The switching of clothing was also a practical choice, in the sense that the production was performed in makeshift venues and the costume changes served, to some extent, as a substitute for changes in stage settings.

8.9.2. The repetition of core images

As has already been explained, once the core gestures had been created, they were multiplied by various repetition strategies. The manner in which this was done can be seen from the opening section of the scene based on the poem *Windham se Parys* (Krog, 1989: 10). The scene started with the actress lifting her hand to suggest putting on a long glove. In response, this gesture was copied by the narrator who was standing at her desk. Although similar to the gesture made by the actress, it was also different. In the narrator's version she was holding an imaginary feather or pen, as if intending to write something. Through this repetition an attempt was made to establish a connection between the actress and the narrator in a manner similar to the connecting devices used in the prologue, in which – as previously discussed – breath was used as connecting method. It therefore appeared as if the narrator was being prompted by the actress playing Lady Anne, incited by the need to document what she [the narrator] was about to see and hear. The lifting of the hand could also be interpreted as a salute, making a gestural encapsulation of the phrase: “Hail Lady Anne Barnard!” (Krog, 1989: 16).²¹³ It was an attempt to signal that an announcement was about to happen – calling for the attention of the audience.



Image 8.11: Putting on glove and transforming into hand fan

²¹³ “Wees gegroet Lady Anne Barnard!” (Krog, 1989: 16, trans. H. Gehring).

Once the narrator lifted her hand, the actress responded with yet another gesture, this time indicating the opening of a hand fan, as mentioned earlier. This, in turn, prompted the dancer to replicate the gesture but, in this version, he put his hand in front of his face in a manner suggesting the holding of a mask (as was commonly practiced during balls in the Baroque era). The dancer's hand in front of his face was also used to indicate that Lady Anne and Windham were wearing metaphoric masks; not revealing their true feelings.



Image 8.12: Dancer with hand in front of face as if holding a mask

The repetition and multiplication of the hand gestures functioned in a similar manner to a theme with variations. Through such variation, the images could be made more pronounced, thereby strengthening and intensifying particular concepts. Many other gestures were generated from this “action-reaction” approach in which varied versions of the original gesture evolved into a sequence of shifting gestures, which could be described, in Bhabha’s terms, as “disjunctive repetitions” (Huddart, 2007: 75). From this act of repetition, meaning could emerge, following David Huddart’s (2007) explanation that:

Iteration – repeatability or iterability – is one of the processes from which meaning derives. However, this repeatability is not just the simple reproduction of identical marks in other times and places ... the repetition means that these marks, the statement, must reappear in different contexts: those contexts change what the statement means (11).

The glove could, thus, be seen as a statement and through shifting contexts it could give rise to many other statements. In this way, through a process of repeated shifting contexts, the glove was eventually transformed into a gesture in which the dancer raised his fist in the air, thereby making an association with liberation struggles.



Image 8.13: Gesture of fist in the air with gesture of hand in glove in the background

From the initial gesture of putting on a glove to the raised fist, a progression could be shown that began with the activity of dressing up and progressed to signs that were indicative of revolution. If one were to deconstruct the sequence, one could say that at the core of the revolution was the seemingly innocent act of dressing up; a privilege only enjoyed by a select few. As an extension of this idea, one could say that the glove became symbolic of colonial values as associated with Lady Anne. Added to this, in the form of a gestural intrusion, was the raised fist, in this case representing an act of defiance against colonial constructs. Through repetition, the initial gesture thus went through a process of hybridisation from which the fist eventually emerged. Due to the fact that the fist emerged from shifting versions of the initial glove gesture, one can say that these two gestures – putting on the glove, and raising the fist – were related. In other words, to use Bhabha's (1994) phrasing, it was a case of the "glove made strange" so that the glove and the raised fist were "the difference of the same" (Bhabha, 1994: 22).

From a political perspective, the fist thus arguably "[estranged] the image of authority" (Bhabha, 1994: 58) following the notion that the glove was representative of colonial power. Such estrangement was further made clear by the fact that, in the scene, the fist is raised against

the background of the gloved hand. In this manner, due to the fact that the fist was simultaneously related to the glove and, yet, also departed from it, “‘denied’ knowledges [could] enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority ... its rule of recognition” (Bhabha, 1994: 114). In other words, the fist destabilised the glove as image representative of authority by making it appear strange. Apart from this destabilising function, the co-existence of the glove and the fist made it possible to draw parallels between the context of the French Revolution, from the time of Lady Anne, and the 1980s South African liberation struggle, the time from which Krog draws much of her material. One can, thus, say that the translation from glove to fist also signalled a translation of geographies and histories. Through these juxtaposing images, a hybrid space was created: a space for intersection, collision and slippage between fixed identities.

Apart from addressing political concerns, the repetition of gestures was also a device for revealing relationships. For example, the fact that the narrator lifted her hand in response to the actress’ initial hand gesture indicated an exchange of information between the character of Lady Anne and the writer character. In this manner, a literal rendition was given of the fact that Krog used Barnard’s writing as a source for her poetry. The actions were, therefore, used as strategy for translating the written and spoken poetry into a movement score in which multiplicity was foregrounded. The fact that the gestures were the same but different, enabled the formation of “connections or articulations between the fragments” (Goldberg, 1994: 90), which could, in turn, be regarded as “forces-in-relationship” (Lorraine, 1999: 119). In turn, from such relationship, a flow of gestures was created, following Deleuze and Guattari’s (1983) argument that “[e]very ‘object’ presupposes the continuity of a flow; every flow, the fragmentation of the object” (6). Within such an understanding of gestures as a “flow machine” (ibid), they could at once be fragmented and connected; constituting both bonding and bridging.

8.10. Translation through mimicry and mirror images

Copying was another translation device. Although used as a strategy throughout the production, it featured more prominently in some scenes than in others. One scene in particular made use of copying as a strategy for translation. In this case, copying was understood to be an “exaggerated copying of ... culture, manners, and ideas ... repetition with difference” (Huddart, 2007: 39) in agreement with Bhabha’s (1994) notion of mimicry (85-92). The scene in which it was used formed part of the *Windham se Parys* poem (Krog, 1989: 63) which has been discussed in the section on core images. It was yet another scene that was inspired largely by the “dress-up” improvisation. In this case, the dressing up took place in front of a mirror so that a “double image” could be created, in which the performers were depicted as if mirroring one another. They were standing next to each other – side by side – as if looking into a mirror in front of them, signified by the same frame that outlined the narrator in the prologue. Apart from representing a mirror, the frame was also used as a separation device. From such separation, a division could be drawn between the two performers and thereby their duality could be made visible in an attempt at emphasising the man/woman, black/white binary constructs. By setting up such binaries, yet another strategy was used to depict Driver’s notion of “self-othering”; where the self is seen as other, but where the other becomes self, or is seen through the eyes of self. In this manner, it was possible to represent the characters as the “others” of themselves.



Image 8.14: Looking into mirror

Apart from looking into the mirror, the performers also mirrored one another. In this case it was the dancer mimicking the actress by standing next to or slightly behind her and copying her gestures without letting her see.



Image 8.15: Dancer copies actress

Although this copying was done in a playful manner, it was a form of destabilisation in the sense that the dancer was not only copying her actions but, also, mimicking her in an act of teasing or mockery. To explain this statement, Bhabha's (1994) notion of mimicry is useful:

Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed recognisable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference (68).

Through ambivalence, then, shifts in identity were able to take place. In the case of this scene, Lady Anne represented the coloniser and the dancer the colonised. Mimicry, therefore, became an act of defiance, following Bhabha's notion that mimicry is "both resemblance and menace" (ibid). Through such mimicry, the image of Lady Anne as colonialist could be destabilised and visibly critiqued. It was also possible to regard the dancer as representative of aspects of William Windham, who, notwithstanding his social status, was a supporter of the French Revolution. One could, therefore, say that the mockery was also meant as a critique of aristocracy as represented by Lady Anne.

Although this scene originated from a literal translation of people in front of a mirror in response to Lady Anne's lament about getting old and being alone as expressed in Krog's poetry, it was also intended to be understood symbolically. This was particularly with regard to notions of self and "other", in relation to which the mirror became important in a sense that can be understood by means of Helmut Plessner's notion of the mirror: "One finds the Self through forming relationships with the Other. By viewing the Self in the mirror as other or even in the

mirror of the Other” (Plessner quoted in Fischer-Lichte, 1997: 58). Plessner’s theory is similar to Lacan’s notion of the “mirror phase”, which is in turn used by Bhabha in his post-colonial analysis. Bhabha (1994) explains: “Like the mirror phase ‘the fullness’ of the stereotype – its image as identity – is always threatened by lack” (110).

Following on from Bhabha’s notion, if the dancer is understood to be the colonial subject in this scene, then, through mimicry, he was undermining both his own stereotype of himself as well as the stereotype of Lady Anne as coloniser. In doing this, he was destabilising an essentialised notion of the identity of the Lady Anne character, by doubling it. Furthermore, through mirroring a relationship could be shown between the characters and the “others” of themselves in, arguably signalling that “the other” was part of the self. In a production that wished to highlight the crossing of divides between histories, cultures and races, the understanding that self is formed through the other, and that self consists of “self” and “other” was important.

Apart from using mimicry as a form of destabilisation, it was also used to undermine or resettle power relations. This could be seen from the end of the mirror scene in which Lady Anne expresses the wish: “You are the first man whose equal I want to be” (Krog, 1989: 64).²¹⁴ As a translation of this phrase, the following image was constructed.



Image 8.16: Actress copies dancer

²¹⁴ “Jy is die eerste man wie se gelyke ek wil wees” (Krog, 1989: 64, trans. H. Gehring).

In this double image, it was not Lady Anne's but Windham's power that was destabilised. In this construct, the dancer became representative of the coloniser; so he shifted who he represented within the scene, oscillating between being the coloniser and the colonised. In this way, the dancer made visible the process of constructing identity.

Another scene in which mimicry was used was in a dramatization of the poem *Armoede forseer ons alles te verhuur* [Poverty forces us to rent out everything] (Krog, 1989: 29). In this poem, Lady Anne approaches Henry Dundas to free her from poverty by offering her husband a post. The imagery that was chosen to translate this poem suggested prostitution, or an exhibition of the body as is frequently used in cabaret acts (see film clip LA 4).



Image 8.17: Narrator copies actress

It was therefore suggested that Lady Anne had to prostitute herself for money. In this scene the narrator mimicked the actress so that one can say that the narrator became subject to the actress representative of Lady Anne. In this manner, the mimicry was an act of translation. The narrator repeated what the actress was doing, arguably suggesting that the contemporary woman was learning from or repeating from the historical woman. By the same token, the narrator's mimicry of the actress' actions could also be understood as a form of mockery of the prostitution image; a rupture in order to destabilise the image and to make it ironic.

The strategy of using mirroring and mimicry offered many possibilities for image making, by means of which slippages in identity could be shown. As a choreographic device, the image of the mirror offered opportunities for literal mirroring or copying. In this manner, repetition was used to create double images, which was, in turn, able to make strong visual statements.

8.11 Translation through clothing

Apart from miming the gesture of putting on and taking off clothes, translation was also achieved by means of using actual clothes, which can generally be regarded as contributors to identity constructions. One scene in particular was developed in this manner. This scene took place in silence. Rather than use music or spoken text to communicate, only the exchange of clothing and the subsequent actions generated by this exchange were used, thus constituting a silent interlude between spoken parts. From this silent, although dialogical, approach, strategies similar to those in the prologue were used as ways of substituting language; namely, by means of physical dialogue instead of speech.

The scene originated from two main impulses. One was an attempt to capture Lady Anne's unrequited love for William Windham, the other was an attempt to depict the image expressed in the poem *niks wat ek doen interesseer jou meer nie* [nothing that I do interests you anymore] (Krog, 1998: 28), in which Lady Anne explains that she wants to place her hand under Windham's skin in bidding him farewell (ibid).²¹⁵ In trying to capture these two central concepts, the performers were given the following tasks: the actress had to find ways of holding onto the dancer, bringing him close to her; he, in turn, was asked to find ways of escaping from her without leaving the stage. From these two conflicting goals a series of tableaux emerged, based on the thematic construct of "holding", as depicted in the images below.



Image 8.18: Ways of holding

These introductory impressions were followed by a sequence in which the actress tried to place her arm into the dancer's jacket in an attempt to draw him closer. It was also a way in which the image from Krog's poem about putting her hand under his skin could be brought into action.

²¹⁵ "roofsugtig my hand onder jou vel sit" (Krog, 1989: 28).

In this manner, the jacket – and later, the man’s shirt and pants – became representative of skin. In response to these actions initiated by the actress, the dancer tried to get out of his clothes. This, in turn, fuelled her to find yet another strategy for keeping him with her, which translated into more escape attempts from his side. This cycle of actions and reactions, which could be seen as some sort of game, eventually left the dancer standing only in his underwear. She, in turn, was left holding only his clothes as his empty shell. The manner in which this scene played itself out can be seen in LA film clip 5 as well as in the following images.



Image 8.19: Actress undresses dancer

From this interplay between bodies and clothes, it was possible to bring across dynamics related to romantic relationships. Apart from making such translations possible, the simple action of holding on and escaping revealed a strategy for choreography. In their attempts to get into or out of their clothing the actors’ bodies were inevitably pulled or twisted, thus manipulated into interesting forms. In this sense the act of translation took on a dual function; concepts and words were translated into action and, at the same time, such actions suggested strategies for choreology. Once the dancer was stripped of his clothing, another shift was brought about, in that the actress, now left with his clothes, started to put them on herself and, in doing this, was once again engaged in a dual signification.



Image 8.20: Actress puts on suit

On the one hand, she showed her character's need to hold the man in her memory but she also signalled a shift away from him. By displacing his suit onto her own body, the suit was no longer of him and, by implication, he no longer existed. In this manner the suit – as a symbol of him – was transformed, and through this transformation a literal as well as ideological shift was shown. In turn, this transformation represented a form of self actualisation along the lines that Judith Butler (1999) describes when she says “only through the death of the other will the initial self-consciousness retrieve its claim to autonomy” (49). In these terms it becomes possible to conceive of the simple act of stripping and donning as ideologically significant. By stripping the dancer of his clothes and, arguably, of his identity and, by taking on aspects of that identity the Lady Anne character was able to “kill” the “other” and, by implication, undo binary constructions of “self and other”. In place of her former sense of herself a new hybrid was formed, which enabled her to become both the self and the other, which, in turn, enabled her to “other” herself and thereby bring about a shift in her own identity.

This symbolic shift was, in turn, useful as yet another literal translation of content from the poem. Apart from bidding Windham farewell, the poem was also meant as an announcement of Lady Anne's marriage to Andrew Barnard, expressed as follows:

ek is gister met Andrew Barnard getroud in St. George's op Hanoverplein ek weet die nuus ruik nie eens na venyn	yesterday I married Andrew Barnard in St. George's on Hanover plain I know that the news does not even reek of revenge
my hawe is verseker teen verdriet ek skuil waar geen wisselende liefheid of koudheid of nuk of hartstog of ontrouheid my langer (my ooit weer) kan verneder of verruk.	my harbour is secured against heartache I hide where no changing love or apathy or mood or passion or infidelity will any longer (will ever again) humiliate or enchant me.

(Krog, 1989: 28)

(trans. H. Gehring)

Based on this information the fact that the actress was putting the suit over her dress became a way in which we made a literal translation of marriage; of the coming together of man and woman. In this sense, then, Lady Anne's freedom from Windham was, ironically, constituted by binding herself to another man. However, in marrying Barnard, Lady Anne could take on a political role: not only did she organise his post at the Cape through negotiation with Dundas, but she also took on a diplomatic role as wife of the colonial secretary and – as mentioned earlier – also the role of official hostess at the castle. This political role could only be played from the position of being married, so that, rather than being tied to Barnard, she became his manipulator. This was yet another aspect of symbolism that was woven into the translatory act

of putting on a suit, given that she became the manipulator of the suit as well. In this sense, the suit took on an ambivalent meaning, in that it became both a symbol of emancipation and of entrapment, in the sense that she served as an accessory of male power. The suit also became representative of a shelter against heart ache; a way of hardening herself. In all these ways, the suit in its various symbolic meanings, served as a means through which information from the poem could be translated into performance.

What is significant about this example, in terms of the thesis' focus on shifting identities through hybrid and syncretic forms, is that from an attempt to translate words into action and image, a hybrid construct emerged. The seemingly ill-fitting combination of a dress and a newly acquired suit was a form of hybrid stage costume, which manifested an identity shift; a character in the process of becoming. From this understanding, the hybrid construct of dress and suit could be regarded as representative of what Bhabha (2003a) calls "a negotiated (un) settlement [...] between the subject as first person – I – confronted by its split double – You – that is future's past, the politicized 'person to come'" (174). In this manner, then, the suit was able to unsettle or destabilise the fixed image as represented by the actress in her dress. This destabilisation happened by means of the suit as representative of the binary "other". In turn, by merging these juxtaposing elements – a mixture of suit and dress – possibilities were shown for undoing fixed identifications, thereby indicating future possibilities for change, which – in the case of this example – meant change from a fixed sense of self.

A progression thus took place. This began with the initial construct of Lady Anne, as performed by the actress, in which she was paired with, and even brought to life by the dancer who represented her male "other" – thereby constructing her in relation to an "other" rather than as a self-standing entity. This image developed to an image in which the actress (Lady Anne) was on her own (the dancer eventually left the stage) and was shown to be wearing both her own as well as the clothing of the dancer, in a metaphoric construct of becoming a fuller self. This shifting potential from merging self and other can further be understood in Deleuzian terms in which "the self is a product of a differentiating machine" (Grossberg, 1996: 99). This understanding of self and of identity in general can be further understood through the manner in which Bhabha (1990) understands identity construction and meaning making in general:

Meaning is constructed across the bar of difference and separation between the signifier and the signified ... always [underscoring] the claim to an originary, holistic organic identity (209).

Such meaning making across difference can, in turn, be said to be made up of acts of translation, bringing about both bonding and bridging. In terms of *Lady Anne*, the act of translation was

first conceived of as a way in which to cross language barriers, by translating the Afrikaans poetry into non-verbal forms of communication. However, in developing the production, the work done to bridge language divides became the springboard for the bridging of other forms of divide, such as racial and gender divides. In this sense, the act of translation also served a political need. Through such translation, hybrid and syncretic forms could emerge and thereby express – in visceral form – the notion of shift(s)in(g) identities. These hybrid and syncretic forms, in turn, offered a vision that was an alternative to the binary nature of polarized thinking.

8.12 Conclusion

In conclusion, various approaches and improvisations were used to “translate” the Krog poems into material that was suitable for theatre and which involved physical movement or gestures. One of these approaches involved the development – by the cast members – of core thematic images. These images were then used in various ways; sometimes they were interlinked to create movement sequences, or they were simply used as gestures in connection with certain words. In addition, the performers developed dance movements in reaction to the text. As director, I would for instance read the text and expect the performers to respond to it with free movement. These movements were then fragmented and converted or reassembled for use in the eventual production. Social dance forms were used to express certain attitudes regarding romantic relationships and to depict a historical period. In addition, the movement forms were used to indicate shifts; in the characters’ identities, or else a political identity shift and, also, to suggest the fact that a character might be playing multiple roles.

Apart from the fact that the translation into movement – and, by implication, into a visual translation of the written text – was intended to be a practical solution – by means of which the Afrikaans language could be transcended – the translation into multiple forms also offered opportunities for creating a layered production, which fitted with the description of theatre collage. Such a theatre collage could, in turn, be a representative form of theatre through which a diverse South African society could be mirrored. In this sense, the function of translation in *Lady Anne* is captured in the words of David Johnston (2012) when he says:

Translation is not a filter between the past and the present, for the cultural other and the located self; it is potentially a prism that releases, that fires off in different directions a series of intercultural and intertemporal moments that challenge and enrich spectator reception and experience (19).

In this production, the translation of written and spoken texts into other performance forms and media served an aesthetic as well as political function. Apart from bridging language barriers,

other forms of bridging were brought about in *Lady Anne*. One such bridging was to merge historical events from both Europe and Africa with contemporary concerns. These diverse histories and contexts were brought together so as to form amalgamations, conjunctions and mixtures. The aim of this was to make associations, sometimes in the form of connections and sometimes by showing up differences and, in the process, to sometimes create unexpected new forms. These combinations, in turn, enabled the formation of hybrid and syncretic artistic forms, which could bring about bonding and bridging, as used in the context of this thesis. In this sense, then, I can concur with Johnston (2012) in saying:

What translation can do ... is to promote hybridity, a hybrid text that simultaneously moves between and across different histories and geographies, locating and uprooting the historical and cultural imagination of the spectator in a way that seeks to overcome ... twin separations (ibid).

The bringing together of diverse components also offered an opportunity for revealing layers of text so as to show the influence of past events on present ones, and thereby to reveal the often unseen undercurrents that inform political reactions and manifestations.

Chapter Nine: Hybridity, Syncretism and Translation in *Ekspedisies*

“Beyond” signifies spatial distance, marks progress, promises the future, but our intimations of exceeding the barrier or boundary – the very act of going *beyond* – are unknowable, unrepresentable, without a return to the “present” which, in the process of repetition, becomes disjunct and displaced.

- Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1994

9.1 Introduction: Translation within and across productions

As with the chapters on *Hex* and *Lady Anne*, this chapter sets out to demonstrate how translation strategies were used for the creation of hybrid and syncretic theatre to bring about bonding as well as bridging. This is done with reference to *Ekspedisies* [*Expeditions*] (2008 - 2011). In a similar manner to the experiments made in *Hex* and *Lady Anne*, strategies for foregrounding multiplicity and multiple identities were explored in *Ekspedisies*. It also made use of workshop approaches as a way to generate multiple perspectives on a topic: it incorporated multiple languages, allowing for switches from one language to another, and it made use of translation from one language to another as well as from words to non-verbal forms of communication. Furthermore, this production was a theatre collage, created from a process characterised by the “interweaving, overlapping, intercutting, overriding, interbinding” (Maguire quoted in Steinman, 1986: 124) of performance forms and materials, as described in Chapter Six. Many of the strategies discussed in the previous two chapters in relation to the other two productions were also used in *Ekspedisies*. For this reason, only departures from strategies already explored will be discussed in this chapter: these strategies offer additional ways in which bonding and bridging in language theatre can be understood.

9.2 Origins

The source text for *Ekspedisies* was *Die Kremetartekspedisie* [The Baobab Expedition] (1981), a novella written in the style of Magic Realism by Afrikaans writer, actress and voice-over artist, Wilma Stockenström. Apart from referring to a production, *Ekspedisies* also refers to a series of productions. The Afrikaans version was the first production in this series and was commissioned by the KKNK (2008) and created as a tribute to Stockenström for her 75th birthday. The work can be described as a multifaceted theatre production characterised by the integration of poetry, acting, movement, dance, music and design in an attempt to create a

performance form able to resonate with the diverse nature of a contemporary South African audience. It was described in the *Classic Feel* magazine (2008) as a work in which

Words, sound, movement and moving pictures of nature are woven into an enchanting dreamscape, in which the relationship between the magic of nature and that of human beings is explored (1).

In Stockenström's novella, the story is told through a first person narrator who speaks herself into being. A brief summary is given here, because an understanding of the narrative will be useful to understand the thematic underpinnings that informed some of the choices made in the creative execution of this work. The narrator, who is also the protagonist, tells the story from the perspective of her dead self, reflecting back on her life. Although the story unfolds in a circular manner, it is summarised here in linear form. The narrator recounts how she was captured as a child and sold into a harem; an event that marks the beginning of a life of entrapment. After the birth of her first-born, the narrator and her baby are sold again (to separate owners) and the narrator becomes the possession of an abusive spice merchant. This fate changes when, due to a storm, she is caught in a tree and eventually saved, by yet another owner who buys her in order to make her his confidant. After the death of this owner and of his youngest son, to whom she had been bequeathed, she begs a friend of his – referred to in the novel as “the stranger” – to buy her, which he does, and then departs with him on an expedition in search of the rose quartz city. When her new owner (the stranger) gets eaten by a crocodile, she ends up as the sole survivor of the expedition and has to start a new life in the wilderness, where she eventually makes herself a home in the hollow of a baobab tree. This shift from being a slave to a free agent, in which the protagonist defines her own life, is understood by Susan Meyer (2013) as follows:

Nature becomes the context within which mankind can live with dignity, as a unique and valid entity alongside the uniqueness of other species, a separate but, at the same time, meaningful part of the larger whole of creation. A series of interactive experiences in, and relating to, the baobab and nature lead to a newly appreciated and more dignified experience of the Self, and to her becoming more fully human by acquiring independence and self-regard. This positive perception of a stronger self contradicts her previous sense of self-contempt and her socially constructed identity situation of worthlessness (3).

The character's freedom is deceptive in that her position of power and agency in the wilderness is also a position of suffering: she now has to struggle for basic survival. It is, thus, a time of empowerment as well as loneliness.

9.3 Translation as means towards plurality

Apart from this story's use in *Ekspedisies*, *Die Kremetartekspedisie* has been translated into seven languages, of which J.M. Coetzee's translation, *The Expedition to the Baobab Tree* (1983; 2006), is probably the best known. Stockenström's book has also been adapted for other theatre productions, such as *Intarsia* [Inlay] (1987) by Tossie van Tonder, and Juanita Swanepoel's stage adaptation, *Die Kremetartekspedisie* performed at the KKNK in 2006.²¹⁶ The use of Stockenström's original as a source for translation and adaptation into other languages and forms makes sense if one considers an observation made by Antjie Krog in the foreword of the 2004 reissue of *Die Kremetartekspedisie*:

One hears whilst reading. Somebody is addressing the reader in a lyrical and evocative manner. The speaking subject of the text does not allow convention to prescribe to her. She invents her own language (n.p.)

Krog's observation takes account of two aspects that played an important role in the creation of the various performance versions of *Ekspedisies*; namely, the lyrical quality of the writing and the fact that the protagonist (speaking subject) invents her own language.

This lyricism in turn influenced choices that were made in the creation of *Ekspedisies*, in the sense that singing and movement became strong features, to the extent that the KKNK newspaper, *Die Krit*, claimed that it was "the perfect marriage between words, movement, music and content" (2008). Apart from the fact that the novella was written in an enticing manner, the theme of speech and translation was inherent to *Die Kremetartekspedisie*. This can be seen from the two passages from Coetzee (2006 edition) that follow:

From far and wide we came, we spoke a variety of tongues, but here we got along by mangling the natives' language and turning it into our idiosyncratic workers' language (23).

Now I have the names for everything ... I have the names and I am not listened to (ibid: 100).

In translating Stockenström's novel into theatre a broad spectrum of tactics was implemented, in which a combination of "interlingual" and "intersemiotic" translation strategies were used. In Roman Jakobson's (1958) terms, "interlingual translation" can be understood to be "translation proper"; a word-for-word translation from one language to another. On the other hand, "intersemiotic translation or *transmutation*" is the "interpretation of verbal signs by

²¹⁶ These productions did not have an influence on the creation of *Ekspedisies* as I only became aware of them after *Ekspedisies* was made.

means of signs of nonverbal sign systems” (127). As mentioned already, these approaches were used to create not just one production of the novel, but many related productions, so that a whole series of *Ekspedisies* came about. These different productions were performed in separate places and in different years and were put together in distinctive ways, using different languages and choreographies. Ultimately, then, despite the fact that they were based on the same source text and shared the same title, they were distinctly different, so that one can think of them as *Ekspedisies 1*, *Ekspedisies 2* and *Ekspedisies 3*, as if variations on a theme. The Afrikaans version was *Ekspedisies 1*.

In creating these successive productions, the performers and I did not start entirely from scratch; instead *Ekspedisies 1* was the source for *Ekspedisies 2*, which was in turn the source for *Ekspedisies 3*. One can thus say that each new version of *Ekspedisies* was a re-imagining of the previous one, in what can be described as a “re-departure”, in Trinh T. Minha’s (1991: 14) sense of the word as discussed in Chapter Two. One could also say that in the process of creating versions of *Ekspedisies* there was a return to the sources – both the novel and previous productions – as well as a shift away from them. In practical terms, the performers and I were engaged in a process in which the discoveries made in one production inspired us to return to the source text in order to access it on a deeper level. In following this approach, pathways or streams were formed that shared the same origin but developed in alternative ways. The manner in which this was done is discussed in the rest of the chapter.

9.4 Interlingual translation

As a strategy for bonding and bridging two language versions of *Ekspedisies* were created; one in Afrikaans and one in English.²¹⁷ Since there were already two language versions of the source text available – Stockenström’s novel and J.M. Coetzee’s translation – we did not have to translate the Afrikaans into English ourselves. In producing these two language versions, we followed principles similar to the ones that were used in creating the productions *Nag Ma/’night mother* (2012) and *Ont/Undone* (2013), as mentioned in Chapter One. From this approach, contexts could be crossed: the Afrikaans version could be performed at the KKNK for a predominantly Afrikaans speaking audience and the English version could be performed in non-Afrikaans contexts, such as the National Arts Festival and the Goethe on Main gallery in Johannesburg.

²¹⁷ Both these productions included other languages but were predominantly in Afrikaans and English.

This approach was different from the translation strategies we used in *Hex* and *Lady Anne* where the particular combination of languages used – and the role that each language played – stayed the same within each production regardless of the performance context. For *Hex* and *Lady Anne*, the language strategies for accommodating a range of contexts – in terms of the languages understood by the audiences – were built into the productions. (Although these have been discussed in the chapters dealing with the specific productions, they are mentioned again here for the purpose of comparison.) For example, three languages were used in *Hex*, in an attempt to represent a multilingual society. Immersion was yet another strategy for overcoming language divides; translating semantics into somatics. In *Lady Anne*, the spoken language was translated into visual form so as to create alternative “languages” that could run parallel to the spoken language. Language shifts therefore happened *within* these productions rather than from one version of the source text to the next.

For *Ekspedisies*, the creation of a bridging strategy of two language versions represented yet another manner in which attempts were made to create Afrikaans theatre that could cross the language divide and include non-Afrikaans contexts in the project towards bonding and bridging. In this manner, we followed one of the translation models mentioned in Chapter Six, with reference to Stephan Meyer’s (2002) claim that one of the most common translation strategies used in South Africa is that of translating a local language into an international or bridging language – such as English – for the benefit of those who do not understand the original language.

In *Ekspedisies*, apart from creating a production that was predominantly in Afrikaans and one that was predominantly in English, other interlingual translation strategies were also used. One such method was to repeat dialogue: saying the words in one language and then reiterating them in another. In this manner, a switch from one language to the other could be brought about but, also, a strengthening: a reverberation; the content repeated. In the case of the production that was staged at the KKNK, this switch was between Afrikaans and Setswana and in the staging that was done at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown the switch was between English and isiXhosa.

The Setswana text was generated during a workshop process in which the performer who spoke Setswana in the play made the translations herself, given that Setswana was her own mother tongue and she was fluent in Afrikaans. The fact that the translation was done by a performer, rather than a formally trained translator, made the translation process part of the rehearsal process. The performer was, therefore, able to use translation as a form of character

development; as if the character in the play was herself Setswana speaking. From such an approach to translation it was possible for the performer to “own” the dialogue.

In addition, within the actual performance, the act of translation was used as a dramatic device. This performer, playing the role of the protagonist in the novel, started the play with a narration in Setswana. This narration was repeated in Afrikaans by another performer who represented the writer. This created a cycle, in the sense that the Afrikaans text written by Stockenström was translated into Setswana *during the rehearsal process*, and then spoken and translated back into Afrikaans *during the performance*. One can thus say, in the words of Mark Fleishman (2014), that such a cycle created a “loop” by means of which “affinity and association [could] rise to the surface”.²¹⁸ In other words, a connection could be established between these two languages which could, in turn, show the utopian possibility of an interweaving of identities.

Apart from establishing language connections, the act of translation in *Ekspedisies* was also used as a dramaturgical device. In the production just referred to, the work was staged in such a manner that the impression given was that the original text had been written in Setswana (or isiXhosa in the alternative version) and then translated into Afrikaans (or English). This was due to the fact that the protagonist started by telling the story in Setswana (or isiXhosa in the English version). Her speech was then translated back into either Afrikaans (or English). The reason for setting up this particular illusion in the opening lines of the production was to create the impression that the protagonist – in both the play and in Stockenström’s novel – spoke in an indigenous African language. In turn, I wanted to create the sense that the writer character, as representative of Stockenström, was copying and interpreting the information that she received from the protagonist and, in doing so, translating it from Setswana into Afrikaans. Once again, as in *Lady Anne*, this translator character (the writer) was representative of the author. Furthermore, as in *Lady Anne*, this role was played by myself as director and dramaturge, so that I was also representative of myself as creator of the work.

In this manner, while the first character was recounting the story to the audience, the writer character was repeating the story as though hearing it in her imagination and thereby constructing the story herself. What the writer heard, she repeated out loud and then wrote down. She appeared not to be aware of the audience; only of the other character. This device made it possible to create two layers of the same story: the first character conveying the story as if she was remembering it, and the writer as if constructing it. Not only did this allow us to

²¹⁸ From a keynote addressed delivered at the 2014 IFTR conference.

foreground two languages simultaneously – echoing one another – but also to depict more than one form of narration. There was the protagonist, who told the story to the audience in what could be regarded as a form of oral narration or storytelling, and there was the writer, who, while also speaking out loud, appeared to be speaking only to herself – as if thinking out loud – and simultaneously writing. In this manner, the act of writing – as yet another form of storytelling – was foregrounded. Thus, in more ways than one, the two parallel worlds could co-exist: that of the writer and that the character; the world of orality and the world of writing. Mediums and languages were therefore duplicated, showing connections but also making space for difference.

In *Ekspedisies*, the decision to use this form of “interlingual” translation was a political, as opposed to a practical, strategy for clarifying the Afrikaans language. It was not a strategy for bridging the Afrikaans language to make it more comprehensible to non-Afrikaans speakers, but was done from the wish to follow a polyglot approach. In doing this, another form of bridging could take place, in which a solidarity between the two languages could be established in an attempt to achieve what Paul Gilroy (2000) calls a “universal humanity powerful enough to make race and ethnicity suddenly meaningless” (249).²¹⁹ In this manner, then, the Afrikaans – and in the other version the English – language could be “opened up” in order to make a connection with another indigenous language. Space was therefore made for Setswana (isiXhosa), as “other” language within an Afrikaans (English) context. However, the Setswana (isiXhosa) was also translated as a way to show interconnectivity between the paired languages.

To make such interconnectivity apparent, various performance strategies were used. Sometimes parts of a sentence were said in unison, or interrupted one another, or were spoken as if one language was taking over from the other in a literal understanding of translation as a “putting across” of languages. In this manner, then, an “ex-change” rather than a “change of” tongue could take place. In overlapping, intercutting, crossing over, reverberating, echoing and harmonising the two distinct languages, a rich soundscape could be developed, in which two voices in two distinct South African languages could be strengthened, supporting one another; making one another resonant. In this manner, the ethical decision to follow a polyglot approach became aesthetically significant. In synchronising these two voices, “a shared text [could be formed] to bring language to a space of community” (Bhabha, 1998: 24).

²¹⁹ In explaining how interconnectedness can be achieved, Gilroy also mentions factors that contribute to the division of many people, namely race and ethnicity. From this perspective one can see the complexity of matters related to binding and bridging within diverse ethnic and language contexts.

One can, thus, say that this translation did not represent simply a “linguistic encounter” but, rather, a “cultural encounter”, in the sense in which Terry Hale and Carole-Ann Upton (2000: 127) refer to theatre translations. The original text and the translated text could be heard and be present simultaneously, in what Umberto Eco (2001) calls “translations *in praesentia*” (119). Such translations are ones in which the source language and the translated language are situated next to one another. In the case of *Ekspedisies*, the translation “*in praesentia*” meant that it was possible to hear both the source language and the translated one. Such a disclosure of the original text in the presence of the translated text – so that both languages are present, as opposed to having one language representing the other – can have political significance. In *Ekspedisies*, the fact that translation happened “*in praesentia*” meant that the text could be repeated, or echoed. About the significance of such an echo, George Steiner (1975) says the following:

There can be no doubt that echo enriches, that it is more than shadow and inert simulacrum. We are back at the problem of the mirror which not only reflects but also generates light. The original text gains from the orders of diverse relationship and distance established between itself and the translations. The reciprocity is dialectic: new “formats” of significance are initiated by distance and by contiguity (159).

From this understanding of translation as an act of interchange, one could argue that a dialogue between one language and another emerged – a conversation not between two characters but between languages – “multiple languages speaking to each other” (Curran, 2008: 1) thereby creating pluralized authenticities. This multiplicity of languages was further extended when the singer in the KKNK production of *Ekspedisies* sang in kiSwahili. This use of multiple languages in one production was intended to mirror multiculturalism, in the sense understood by Kalaga and Kubisz (2008):

Multiculturalism implies plurality of cultures and polyphone of voices; it speaks of difference, transgression, and transculturation, but above all, it enforces questions and produces dilemmas which have the potential to destabilise meticulously drawn borders that separate “us” from “them”, often disrupt the coherency of what has been taken for granted too promptly and even more often put us in a position of disputing the notion of cultural authenticity (9).

Ekspedisies was indeed an attempt to destabilise meticulously drawn language borders, thereby contributing to language transgression (as described by Kalaga and Kubisz) and, arguably, generating hybrid constructs by doing this. Furthermore, in the context of the original narrative on which the play was based, the switch in language was also a strategy in which the themes of a divided self, or a self, consisting of multiple identities, could be portrayed.

In summary, then, the translation strategies were used as follows:

- On the one hand, there was the practical solution of translating the information from one language into another and, by doing this, there was the possibility of letting two indigenous languages – namely Afrikaans and Setswana (or alternatively English and isiXhosa) – be placed next to each other and, thereby, of allowing for the formation of a relationship between the paired languages. In fact, what we discovered was that, at times, certain sounds complemented each other to such an extent that they started to merge with one another. This discovery was exploited, in the sense that we started to overlap the dialogue so that the translation from Setswana to Afrikaans was not merely functional as a way to benefit the audience, but was also turned into a musical experience in which the sound qualities of the two languages could be synchronised and, by means of such synchronicity, could create a rich sensory experience greater than the sum of its parts.
- All the female performers in *Ekspedisies* represented aspects of the same person. From this perspective, the fact that both the protagonist and the writer character spoke the same text – though in different languages – was significant. They could be regarded as reflections of one another in different contexts.
- Apart from the connections between languages, difference could also be shown. The languages thus set each other off so that, by being placed alongside one another, the distinctive character of each language was emphasised. By juxtaposing the languages, the specificity and unique qualities of each language could be demonstrated as much as the points of connection and harmonisation. The translation of the one language into the other not only marked the fluid interface between the two languages but, quite literally, marked an exchange of languages. This in turn was a significant metaphor for the spirit of interconnectivity, creating a linguistic weave and thereby a linguistic community.

9.5 Intersemiotic translation

In addition to the use of Stockenström's novella as a source text, performance material developed during a site-specific production, called *Expeditions to the Baobab Tree* (2006), was also used as source. This meant that *Ekspedisies* was not only created as a translation from a literary text, as typically associated with acts of translation, but also "translated" from the site-specific production – *Expedition to the Baobab Tree* – to the stage production, *Ekspedisies*. In other words, an adaptation was made from a performance that happened outdoors, in natural surroundings, to one that happened indoors in make-shift theatres. This initial site-specific performance – which was a translation of J.M. Coetzee's *The Expedition to the Baobab Tree* (2006 edition) – formed an important point of departure for creating the theatre production(s) *Ekspedisies*. Through the site-specific production, the building blocks were developed from which the theatre production was made. This means that the site specific work functioned as a pre-runner or laboratory experiment for making discoveries which could then be used for the theatre production. What is important is that the site-specific work was not merely transferred for performance on-stage, instead, a transmutation took place in what could be described as a translation. Inherent to this was a process of hybridisation: Wilma Stockenström's *die Kremetartekspedisie* was translated into *The Expedition to the Baobab Tree* by J.M. Coetzee. This Coetzee translation was used as source text for the site-specific work which, in turn, was the source text – along with Stockenström's novel – for the Afrikaans stage production, *Ekspedisies*. This Afrikaans production was then further re-imagined and translated into other versions of *Ekspedisies*. Ultimately, then, through such a hybridising process, many strands could be formed and woven together which in turn could rise to complex theatre works, able to reflect multi-layered conditions.

The choice of site specific work was in many ways a natural extension of the novel's subject matter. As suggested in the Meyer (2013) quotation (see Section 9.2) one of the central themes in the novella *Die Kremetartekspedisie* is the relationship between the narrator and the Baobab tree in which the now free former slave finds shelter after being the only survivor of a disastrous expedition. The tree is where her life journey ends but it is also where her journey of independence starts.

Meyer (2013) explains this as follows:

When, in the final years of life, the slave woman is no longer caught within an enslaving social dispensation, but finds herself within the context of the rhythm, cycles and processes of nature, aspects of identity emerge that lead to a much fuller and more meaningful experience of the Self (18, trans. H. Gehring).²²⁰

The tree thus becomes the woman's home; her source of survival. It is also the first time in her life that she is not owned by anybody and that she can own something herself. Her relationship with the tree is expressed in the following extract:

... trusty baobab, confidant, home, fort, water source, medicine chest, honey holder, my refuge, my last resort before a change of residence over which I shall have no control at all, my midpoint, guardian of my passionate outbursts, leafless coagulated obesity winter and summer life-giving rocking cupola of leaves and flowers and sour seeds that I press to my cheek You protect me. I revere you (Coetzee, 2006: 30).

The woman identifies with the tree as an extension of herself:

A supreme being I am in my grey tree-skin. When I appear in the opening I stand proudly Reborn every time from the belly of the baobab, I stand full of myself (ibid: 14).

This tangible relationship with nature – as depicted in both the original novella and the English translation – had a direct impact on choices that we made when creating the site-specific work, *Expeditions to the Baobab Tree* (2006). This version in turn served as a source for the subsequent versions of *Ekspedisies* (2008), all of which conveyed a sense of nature's powerful presence. The site-specific production was created in the Grahamstown Botanical Gardens and performed in and around an ancient fig tree, representative of the Baobab. Apart from the fact that the tree, in itself, was a valuable source for interpreting the novel in performative form, its positioning was also useful in creating a third space. Audience members were able to sit or lie on the lawn and view the performance from under the tree, while looking up into its canopy of branches. By encouraging audiences to watch the performance from a position of lying down and looking upwards, our intention was to induce a dream-like meditative state. This state of

²²⁰ "Aangesien die slavin haar in haar laaste lewensjare nie meer bevind en beleef binne die verkneegtende sosiale bestel van besitters en besittings nie, maar binne konteks van die ritme, siklusse en prosesse van die natuur, kom identiteitsaspekte na vore wat tot 'n veel ruimer, vollediger en sinvoller ervaring van die Self lei. Haar slawe-identiteit, gekonstrueer binne sosiale en kulturele verband, word grootliks opgehef en oorstyg in afwisselende prosesse van differensiasie ten opsigte van die natuurwêreld en vereenselwiging met aspekte daarvan" (Meyer, 2013: 18).

being in-between wakefulness and sleep in turn related to one of the themes of the novel, expressed as follows:

Injairu: Only when I am asleep do I know fully who I am, for I reign over my dream-time and occupy my dreams contentedly. At such times I am necessary to myself (Coetzee, 2006: 45).

Simply by letting the audience look up into the tree and placing the action in the tree, a dream-like state was induced. The site not only informed the mood of the work but, also, became an important way of shaping the production. Rather than impose preconceived ideas onto the site, the natural environment allowed images and actions to emerge organically. It shaped the performers' movements, so that the environment contributed to generating performance material. For example, when the performers stood or walked on the branches of the tree, they had to keep their balance, which sometimes forced them to lean forward or backwards, or to shift from side to side. This can be seen in the following images.

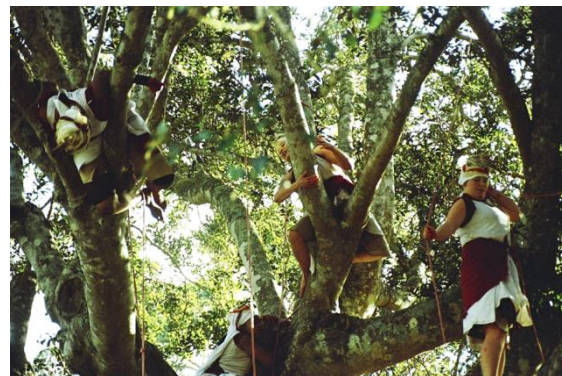


Image 9.1: Performers balancing on branches

In this manner, then, the architecture of the site instigated the choreography. This meant that some of the movement forms and body images arose not directly from attempts to convey specific meaning but, rather, from the manner in which the environment affected the performers' bodies. In other words, the performers were responding to the site in organic ways, whether this meant that they had to contort their bodies in trying to crawl through a small hole, or move from side to side in an attempt at keeping their balance whilst standing on branches. These movements, once discovered, were in turn manipulated and combined with words to take on meaning in a demonstrative manner. For example, from the mere necessity of balancing on the branches, a range of diverse and interesting movements and images emerged.

These movements were, in turn, given added meaning by executing them whilst speaking extracts from the text. One such text was the following, made up from fragments of J.M. Coetzee's *Expedition to the Baobab Tree* (2006):

- Avril: A colony of sea anemones slithering over dry rocks on their single feet.
Alude: Fish walking on their fins.
Nicola: Wobbling salt-scaled coelacanths.
Alude: Our procession of bearers and cattle and sedan chairs with passengers on the shoulders of bearers wound into the interior on the way to the great ocean that booms at the uttermost limits of the world.

In merging with spoken words, the movements became embodiments of “sea anemones slithering”, “fish walking”, “wobbling coelacanths”, “procession of bearers”. In this manner, two forms of translation took place. On the one hand, movement was generated and shaped by the space itself. On the other hand, the images that arose – as influenced by the environment – could take on meaning when combined with words from the text, thereby shifting from being pedestrian and functional to something more poetic. The images of these actions were, in turn, used as source material for the subsequent *Ekspedisies* productions.

Another example of such an approach can be seen from the manner in which the following text from J.M. Coetzee's (ibid) translation was interpreted:

- Injairu: In two low huts we lived, the slaves, all together, not separated by sex.
Nicola: From sunrise to late at night we toiled for him, the spice merchant. The work was what separated us.
Injairu: The men worked in his warehouse at the waterfront and the women in his residence.
Avril: We spoke a variety of tongues but got along by mangling the natives' language into our own workers' language.
Nicola: We were acquired second-hand, third-hand, even fourth-hand, mostly still young and healthy, we women fertile and rank.
Tshego: At night it was legs apart for the owner on his sweaty skin rug. Some of us welcomed it. Not I. He was clumsy and rough. I did not mind standing in front of the fireplace.
Alude: I did not mind toiling with pick and hoe in the garden in the murderous heat to keep it neat around his mango trees and yam vines.
Injairu: I did not mind tidying his house.
Nicola: Keeping my murmurs for the sleeping quarters.
Avril: And even there being careful, for there were telltales amongst us.

Nicola: And to be discovered meant that your tongue was cut out. I kept myself as I had been taught. I did not give in.

Avril: I did not surrender.

Tshego: I let it happen.

Avril: I could wait.

Injairu: I listened to the beat of the waves far behind his groaning, and it lulled me.

Alude: I was of water.

Tshego: I was flowing into all kinds of forms. I could preserve his seed and bring it to fruition from the sap of my body.

Injairu: I could kneel in waves of contractions with my face near the earth to which water is married.

Alude: And push the fruit out of myself and give my dripping breasts to one suckling child after another.

Avril: My eyes smiled. My mouth was still.

Nicola: Always still.

Chorus: We were all one woman, interchangeable, exchangeable.

Alude: So we comforted each other and each other's children.

Chorus: So we shared, so we looked for lice on each other's scalps and wore each other's clothes and sang together, gossiped together, complained together, without prospect.

As the director, these words made me want to establish the impression of constant and endless activity; of repetition and relentlessness. I also wanted to create a sense of flow, as suggested by the reference to water but, at the same time, to induce discomfort. Despite the fact that there were only five performers, I wanted to create the illusion of many people, all being treated – by their master – in the same manner. The performers were asked to crawl through a hollow in the tree trunk, then walk around the tree on the edge of a rock ledge, and then crawl through the hollow again. The hollow was small and it was cumbersome to crawl through it. The performers had to do this repeatedly, thus establishing the sense of a never-ending cycle. In order to get to the back of the tree, they had to walk on a small ledge, forcing them to balance. Not only was this a precarious space but its surface was rough, exposing their bare feet to rough stones, which influenced the manner in which they walked. The following images capture these activities.



9.2 Performers crawling through tree trunk

The performance material of the site-specific work was later re-imagined for use in the various versions of *Ekspedisies* that took place in indoor venues. We found that we were able to transfer some aspects of the movements and images that had emerged organically from exploring the natural setting to subsequent productions which took place in indoor venues. However, in the formal, indoor spaces, an organic development of movements and images was more challenging. One example of how we translated the images generated from the natural world into a make-believe world can be seen from the images that were used in the 2011 version of *Ekspedisies* performed in a gallery space (Goethe on Main gallery) of the Goethe Institute in Johannesburg. In this context, the notion of balance and the formation of tree-like images were explored through the performers' bodies. Here, in contrast to balancing on actual branches, the act of balancing and the relationship between human and tree was explored in an altogether different manner, as can be seen in the following images.



Image 9.3: Gallery version of bodies in tree

In this version, the bodies of the performers represented the image of the Baobab tree; one performer was the tree and the other a person in a balancing act. Although the image arose from a translation of the original act of balancing on an actual tree, the image of the two performers in dual balancing acts was not intended to be a literal translation of somebody in a tree. Instead, the original tree images were merely points of departure. In this manner, the trace of the original image created in nature was still there. By making the translation from natural elements onto bodies, it was possible to make intertextual references. On the one hand, the relationship between the performers – as depicted in the images – suggested the relationship of the protagonist with the Baobab tree. On the other hand, it suggested a human relationship, showing the interdependence between the man and woman. In this sense, by re-imagining traces from the original production, a hybrid form was created in which the language of movement suggested a combination of diverse influences. In doing this, intertextual references could be made through bodies that became representative of a merging of worlds. The bodies of the performers could thus be regarded as being representative of Foucault’s (1984) *heterotopia* – as discussed in Chapters One and Two – in the sense that they were bringing together “a whole series of places that are foreign to one another” (6). The bodies became third space sites able to “[entertain] difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha, 1994: 4). Through their embodiments, the image of the two dancers in the gallery space made

references to the Baobab tree and to trees in general; however, because the image was made by two human beings, what the viewer saw was also an abstraction of a relationship of sorts. In this manner the bodies were testimony that a process of hybridisation as a “process of intersection and transaction” (Bhabha, 1994: 87) took place – “an intersection between nature and culture” (Weiss & Haber, 1999: 206).

As a clarification for the abstract movements, the image of a real Baobab was projected onto the wall behind the dancers. A double image thus emerged, in which the one was mirroring or repeating the other. On the one hand, there was the image of the tree created by bodies and, on the other, there was the projection of a tree. Both were images of the Baobab tree but shown by means of two mediums.

Another example of translations made across productions can be seen from the way that the following extract – made up from fragments of Coetzee’s translation (ibid) – was interpreted.

Injairu: I was sold off a second time.
Tshego: Was sold second hand.
Injairu: A damaged plaything.

From this extract, we developed a scene in which the performers were standing around a tree holding onto branches, as can be seen in the image below.



Image 9.4: Performers holding onto branches

The manner in which this depiction was translated for the Afrikaans *Ekspedisies* (2008), performed at the KKNK and for the *Ekspedisies* that was performed at the *Goethe on Main* gallery (2011), can be seen in the following images.



Image 9.5: Translation of performers holding onto branches for KKNK production



Image 9.6: Translation of performers holding onto branches for gallery production

In the KKNK production, the image of the performers holding onto branches was “translated” into more than one image in which the branches were substituted by other means. In the one scene the dancer mimed the image of holding onto branches and in another scene, ropes were used instead of branches. In the gallery space the performers were standing on wooden crates, the crates served as a replacement for the tree, but the performers were still standing as if on display. The postures were similar to the original ones in the site-specific production so that traces of the original remained in the translations.

One can, thus, say that in creating the various versions of *Ekspedisies* including the site-specific *Expeditions* version, images were translated into other images in a similar way as in the production, *Lady Anne*, following processes such as “displacement, distortion, dislocation, repetition” (Bhabha, 1994: 105), “disjunctive repetitions” (Huddart, 2007: 75), and re-imaginings. Despite using similar approaches, the main difference was that in *Lady Anne* such image-making came about *within* the production, whereas in *Ekspedisies* images that were

generated in one production were used as source text for subsequent productions. From the “scraps” of previous existences, as Salman Rushdie (2010: 12) would put it, new versions – and by implication meanings – could emerge. Fragments from previous productions were thus translated into new ones so that “‘new’ could be made from ‘old’” (Floch, 2000: 5) in what can be described as a bricolage approach.

From such an approach a “flow machine” – in Deleuze and Guattari’s (1983: 6) terms – was formed, as an ongoing cycle of flow and fragmentation, which was able to contribute to making hybrid and syncretic works. Each element in the various *Ekspedisie* versions was hybrid and the productions, in themselves, were also hybrid in that they consisted of diverse entities that were stitched together. Each production generated material from which the next one could be generated, which in turn generated source texts for the next, so that the successive productions were caught in an ongoing cycle of in-betweenness, making exchanges as new versions emerged. Multiple strands were also generated within each work as a result of processes of interweaving performance forms.

9.6 Conclusion

In conclusion one can say that a “routes” approach was followed in *Ekspedisies*, in the sense described in Chapter Four by Stuart Hall (1994) and Paul Gilroy (1993). Both Gilroy and Hall use this image of “routes” to describe an attitude to cultural formation that is associated with being open to shifts and movement. They see this understanding of culture as an alternative to an essentialised perspective in which there is a wish to replicate and hold onto cultural “roots”, thereby seeing culture as something static with little space for change. From a “routes” perspective, cultures can thus shift shape and identity and yet still be connected to the mother culture. In the context of *Ekspedisies*, such a “routes” perspective was significant. On an ideological level, it showed a commitment and openness to change and an understanding that identities are always in states of becoming. On a practical level, such an approach allowed us to adapt to shifting contexts; so that an Afrikaans production could shift into an English one, or a theatre production could be re-imagined for a gallery space, or new cast members could give expression to forms suited to their particular bodies and backgrounds.

Thus, the approach to making the work was as much informed by practical concerns as thematic ones. With a “routes” approach it was possible to develop a system of theatre making that echoed the themes of expeditions and journeys as found in the source novel. From such attempts, the diverse versions of *Ekspedisies* formed “a complex combination of continuities

and breaks, similarities and differences” (Hall, 1995: 274). From the shifting nature of the productions, they could be seen as “stories-so-far”, to use Doreen Massey’s (1991: 12) description of space. They were always subject to change, in that new versions of *Ekspedisies* could be formed with each new context.

Finally, by using “interlingual” and “intersemiotic” approaches it was possible to develop strategies for overcoming language divides and, also, for accommodating the co-existence of multiple voices in pursuit of Edward Soja’s (2009) notion of a “[t]hird space consciousness [as] the precondition to building a community of resistance to all forms of hegemonic power” (56). The ongoing shifts could also be regarded as a metaphor for an ideological commitment to shifting identities. *Ekspedisies*, therefore, not only grappled with shifts in personal and theatre identities, but also shifted the identity of the production itself; offering multiple perspectives on the same source. The productions themselves formed a network in that, following Merleau-Ponty (1960), they were “no longer ... subjects simply in relation to their individual selves, but in relation to one another as well” (134). From such a network, in which productions could be self standing but also be related to one another, the concept of bonding and bridging was made manifest once again.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

This thesis emerged from my own position of in-betweenness: a position that brought about a search for ways to mediate worlds; worlds often divided and seen as being incommensurable. It was a search inspired by utopian “rainbow nation” ideals. Driven by such pursuits, I wanted to find methodologies and models for theatre able to reflect on and capture the nature of a country “united in diversity”. From such a general wish I came to a more specific one: this was to find out in what manner my utopian ideals were able to play themselves out in an Afrikaans idiom. Such an investigation gave rise to the production *Hex*, which ignited further pursuits; resulting in the productions *Lady Anne* and *Ekspedisies*. My practical explorations extended into theoretical ones, which took me down pathways of anthropologies, geographies, histories and cultures.

In my theoretical journey I discovered that these ideals – which in my practice I had in many respects already been working towards – were articulated by theories on “third space”, “syncretism” and “hybridity”. From such an insight, I made my way back to practice; this time to reflect on and analyse that which I had already made. In this sense, it was a to-and-fro process of theoretical investigation and then reconsidering the theatre productions in light of the new insights gained. By traversing in this manner, I came to the realisation that – at this period in the history of South African theatre – hybrid and syncretic forms offer one of the most effective ways in which to both mirror existing plurality and bring about diversity. This realisation prompted more thoughts in which I considered how in theatre, language – in the sense of a specific language, in this case Afrikaans – could be retained while embracing the notions of hybridity and syncretism. This brought me to notions of “bonding and bridging” as strategies for making theatre which could simultaneously be exclusive and inclusive. From this discovery, yet another realisation came to the fore; namely, that strategies for bonding and bridging were, in turn, able to bring about a third space that was able to function as “possibilities machine”.

Ultimately, then, from my search into and through theatre practice via theory and back to practice again, I have come to the conclusion that in a post-1994 South African context, for Afrikaans language theatre to be an effective mirror, such theatre must be able to allow for both bonding and bridging: processes that are not necessarily compatible. This means that Afrikaans theatre needs to be able to be language specific on the one hand, while on the other hand it needs to be able to cross language contexts in a spirit of inclusivity. I believe that such bonding and bridging can be understood in terms of third space theory, which can be put into practice by means of hybrid and syncretic cultural forms.

This thesis has come into being more than twenty-five years after the iconic fall of the Berlin Wall and twenty-one years after the first ballot was placed in the democratic South African voting box. Events that were in many ways symbolic of an opening of borders and a celebration of difference; something that forms an intrinsic part of this thesis. Today these historical events are a mere shimmer on the horizon and it seems as if the fallen walls from the past have made space for new ones: there is talk of the fortress of Europe, and in South Africa there is still a tendency to think in racial and dualistic terms. In general, the South African imaginary has not yet managed to fully escape the bars of the black/white prison. In fact, it appears as if scepticism about the rainbow nation identity is growing.²²¹ Based on the reactive behaviour of some groups, one can make the assumption that the more diverse communities become – due to integrated neighbourhoods and mass migration all over the globe – the more there is a tendency for people to react against such integration, by forming smaller groups in which there is sometimes a wish to solidify identities in fear that they will melt away when merged with other, more dominant ones.²²² Peter Burke (2009) observes

The price of hybridization, especially the unusually rapid hybridization that is characteristic of our time, also includes the loss of regional traditions and of local roots. It is surely no accident that the present age of cultural globalisation, sometimes viewed more superficially as “Americanisation”, is also the age of reactive nationalisms or ethnicities – Serb and Croat, Tutsi and Hutu, Arab and Israeli, Basque and Catalan, and so on (7).

So too, in the context of international theatre, there seems to be a growing antagonism towards cultural mixing.

²²¹ About such scepticism, the director of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation [Instituut vir Geregtigheid en Rekonsiliasie], Dr Fanie du Toit, mentioned in a television interview (December 2014) that there are currently more white South Africans who do not believe that apartheid was a crime against humanity than there were twenty years ago when most white South Africans confessed that it was indeed a crime.

²²² At a 2015 conference on reconciliation in Cape Town, Kgalema Motlanthe commented that the racial divides were “evidenced in the race rows that raged on social media in recent weeks. If there is one space that provides a useful index (of) racial relations in the country it is social media. In the recent past the social media space has seen torrential racial abuses across the social spectrum openly advocating the biological, historical, economic and social utility of the construct of race as the organising principle in human affairs”. He continued to explain that “[m]ost disheartening about this open manifestation of racial hostilities is the debilitating effects on what we are trying to build; a nation united in diversity” (<<http://mg.co.za/article/2015-02-04-race-is-dividing-sa-motlanthe-de-klerk-rupert>> last accessed on 14 February 2015).

Patrice Pavis, in his latest book *Contemporary Mise en Scène: Staging Theatre Today* (2012) is of the following opinion:

Experimental theatre ... is suspicious of cultural hybridity. ... Despite the official discourse, intercultural theatre does not interest theatre-goers and theatre-makers very much. ... Thus cultural exchanges within France have diminished [due to] a “voluntary inner *apartheid*”. ... One paradoxical consequence of globalisation is that French society no longer manages to integrate and absorb populations of foreigners and those who see themselves as foreign (231).

Certainly, in the case of South Africa – most notably within disadvantaged communities where competition for resources, particularly income opportunities, is fierce – there is hostility against foreigners or strangers. The incidents of violence due to xenophobia and the hate speech and racist remarks made by members of various ethnic and racial groups leave one with the impression, along with Ashraf Jamal (2005), that

... no call to national unity has addressed the psychic dependency on fear and denial [and] the South African imaginary has not separated itself from the legacy of colonialism, nor from apartheid (15).

If there is indeed a growing divide between diverse people, I would argue that it is now more important than ever for cultural workers to make a contribution by imagining and enacting a more tolerant future. I would say that intercultural practice is not only inescapable but also vital for the formation of healthy democratic societies in which the appropriation and borrowing of cultural practices and the (re)collection and (re)imagination of the past is not only natural, but also essential. Furthermore, I would argue that within a climate of hostility towards foreign cultures it is even more important for intercultural and hybrid and syncretic theatre practices to take place. Carsten Colpe, in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion* (1987), explains:

A tolerant attitude to all that is of value in the world is thus a basic condition for the rise of any syncretism, as well as a basic virtue of the human being who is shaped by syncretism and in turn supports it. In addition, however, an enormous intellectual power is required in order to cement all the elements together into a new type of tradition and, further, to maintain the combination of the erudite and the popular (226).

For this reason, and considering the mirroring function of theatre, hybrid and syncretic systems can be highly valuable as symbols of tolerance and acceptance. To illustrate the point, during the 1980s and 1990s syncretic music – often categorised under the label of “world music” – played an important role in attempts to foster world peace and tolerance. It was also used in celebrations of diversity and made significant contributions, in some parts of the world, to

bringing about awareness about violations of human rights.²²³ I would therefore say that at times when the building of barriers might appear to be a tempting strategy for protecting cultural and economic rights, it is more vital than ever to create third spaces; not simply as meeting points but also as generative “possibilities machines”. How else will people come to any understanding of difference, how else will people know anything beyond themselves? How else can dialogue and negotiation be established? How else will the new be born?

Furthermore, I would argue that in times of language and cultural protectionism, strategies need to be considered or developed that can allow for both the retention of local languages and, simultaneously, the bridging of language barriers and, by implication, segregationist tendencies. A concerted effort is needed to embrace and advocate diversity; a project in which theatre can play a vital role. With regard to such efforts, Mark Fleischman, in the keynote speech at a 2014 conference of the International Federation for Theatre Research, posed the question: “are we willing to make an effort in the face of difference?” and, in turn, responded by admitting that “[i]t is not convenient or practical but it is vitally necessary”.

It is in pursuit of making a difference in the face of diversity, and in an attempt to come to a better understanding of diversity and foster tolerance in an increasingly hostile world, that syncretic theatre can make a powerful contribution. However, this does not mean that it is without challenges. Certainly, within the context of Afrikaans theatre and, specifically, the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival, syncretism can be particularly challenging and perhaps threatening, due to a need to preserve the Afrikaans language while also being inclusive of the other South African languages and cultures. On the one hand, the KKNK suggests a bonding of people who speak Afrikaans and share what are, arguably, collective cultural values. On the other hand, the aim of the festival is to provide a bridging function. Possible tension can arise between these sometimes disparate objectives of bonding and bridging, and these need to be straddled with caution.

In his 2014 World Theatre Day message, Brett Bailey asked the following questions pertaining to the role of theatre in a contemporary society:

In this world of unequal power, in which various hegemonic orders try to convince us that one nation, one race, one gender, one sexual preference, one religion, one ideology, one cultural framework is superior to all others, is it really defensible to insist that the arts should be unshackled from social agendas? [Are] we, the artists

²²³ Despite the claims about world music and the fact that it did indeed bring diverse people together and bring awareness about human rights violations, it is not certain to what extent it made a difference in the political status quo of many suffering countries. Peter Burke (2009) observes, for example, that “African music ... travels the world with less difficulty than Africans” (10).

of arenas and stages, conforming to the sanitized demands of the market, or seizing the power that we have: to clear a space in the hearts and minds of society, to gather people around us, to inspire, enchant and inform, and to create a world of hope and open-hearted collaboration?²²⁴

In response to Bailey's questions, I believe that syncretic and hybrid theatre forms can contribute to manifesting a world view of hope through collaboration. Syncretic and hybrid theatre forms can be regarded as sites of diversity, whether those sites highlight cultural clashes, or the harmonious co-existence of diverse cultures. Through such theatre, future visions can be imagined and diversity can be embraced and highlighted as something necessary for growth, rather than something that threatens annihilation, so that one can concur with writer Michael Palin (2003) when he claims:

Contrary to what the politicians and religious leaders would like us to believe, the world won't be made safer by creating barriers between people. Armageddon is not around the corner. This is only what the people of violence want us to believe. The complexity and diversity of the world is the hope for the future (Extract from "A letter from London", 2003).²²⁵

Following such an argument, borders can have the opposite effect from creating safety, in that the more borders there are, the more people are prone to thinking in terms of opposites; in terms of "us and them". On the other hand, when bridges are built or cultural borders are crossed, opportunities for interaction are created. Border crossing can show up the commonalities and the points of sharing between people who might perceive themselves to be different from one another. It is within situations of complexity and by means of diversity that influencing can also take place – following the argument that by means of influencing, shifts can happen. The notion of diversity also relates to the notion of "other" and learning from "other" in order to grow the self, following Goldstein and Rayner's (1994) notion that

... collective identity in late modern society might often be strengthened through a process of continuous interaction with other collectivities – a process that requires each community to see itself from the perspective of others, and incorporate those perspectives through the prism of its own consciousness in a continual reflexive process (381).

One can thus argue that "identities are constructed *through*, not *outside*, difference" (Hall, 1996: 4) [my own emphasis]. To return to syncretic and hybrid theatre and its role in identity

²²⁴ Extract from 2014 World Theatre Day Message by Brett Bailey, <<http://www.world-theatre-day.org/en/message.html>> last accessed on 12 February 2015.

²²⁵ <<http://palinstravels.co.uk/static-51?topic=1752&forum=12>> last accessed on 7 March 2015.

formation, one can argue that apart from the fact that syncretic and hybrid theatre is a deliberate action towards either protest or empowerment, it can also be the result of collaborative projects between people from diverse cultural or linguistics backgrounds. Syncretic forms tend to arise as a natural extension of creative enterprises that emerge when people of diverse backgrounds are brought together through circumstance, whether recreational or work related. In such collaborations, a sharing of diverse skills and knowledge systems can bring about new forms that can be seen as a celebration of diversity and creativity. In other words, hybridity and syncretism have an inherently generative capacity.

Ultimately, then, it is my belief that by means of hybrid and syncretic productions, space can be made for creative forms of cultural translation. And, furthermore, that these creative forms have the potential to bring about both bonding and bridging, both of which are intrinsic to notions of third space, understood to be a cultural meeting point and generator of future possibilities.

Such a space for cultural translation is vitally important for a healthy democracy and, in the case of a local language context such as Afrikaans, it is vital if the language and theatre in that language wants to make itself count. Christopher Balme (1999) has indicated that syncretic theatre in South Africa has indeed played an important role in decolonising the stage, and making way for a new South African theatre identity. Balme uses examples of how, in the period before 1994, black theatre groups used such tactics as a way to decolonise and ultimately re-invent a South African theatre that could be more reflective of a South African reality. These plays paved the way for democratic ideals to be realised. I would say that since these early syncretic productions, syncretism has moved on to fulfil not only a function of decolonisation, but also one of making sure that the borders between cultures are kept open, and furthermore it has contributed to the opening up of a third space which serves as a mixer for the generation of the new.

Within the context of Afrikaans festivals – attended predominantly by a homogeneous group – hybridity and syncretism can be a way of “transgressing” the closed boundaries that are perceived to be part of the identity of many Afrikaans festivals, such as the KKNK. By following third space thinking, productions can be created to disrupt essentialist notions of identity (whether this identity is defined by ethnicity, language, class or culture). This is particularly important as a way to derail attitudes of “us and them” which are still prevalent in South Africa, despite the country’s constitution. The mixing facility of the third space might be a way in which such views can be softened or shifted. Finally then, with regard to shifting

identities as a springboard to this thesis, one can concur with Kevin Robins (1996) when he asks:

What would an identity mean in isolation? Isn't it only through the others that we become aware of who we are and what we stand for? We must consider identities in terms of the experience of relationships: what can happen through relationships and what happens to relationships. In this way, we can take up again the question of dynamism versus closure in identity. Ideally, cultural relationship and interaction will be open to new experience (79).

From Robins' perspective, a third space as a form of mixer, and hybrid/syncretic productions as sites for such third spaces will, ideally, offer opportunities for the building and shifting of identities. In contributing to such identity formation, notions of bonding and bridging can play a vital role in strengthening and broadening, and thus ultimately shifting personal, cultural, linguistic and artistic identities, thereby paving the way to new experiences.

While this thesis has offered some ideas of how bonding and bridging can be practiced in language theatre in a multilingual society, there is still immense scope for further investigation. Many South African plays and productions were not investigated in this thesis, so the field for studying local productions remains wide open, as does the opportunity to conduct comparative investigations with plays in diverse languages.

A further perspective on the concept of "bonding and bridging" could have been to go beyond the borders of Afrikaans theatre to make comparisons with theatre in other South African languages. I also would have wanted to include more Afrikaans plays in my investigation, looking in particular at those Afrikaans plays that mirror notions of shifting identities. Furthermore, issues of power were not addressed; questions could have been asked about space and place, and ownership of language and identity, and the role of theatre in addressing such ownership. Lastly I would have liked to explore how theatre in Afrikaans, and in other indigenous languages, can be practiced in a global realm. Although these areas are far too diverse and broad to be addressed in one thesis, my hope is that some of the ideas and questions that emerged in this research will instigate research in the areas that were not addressed here.

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