

**Tour(ist)ing Post-Apartheid South African Theatre:
The Works of Brett Bailey, Yael Farber, and Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom
in (Inter)National Production**

by

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After the fall of apartheid in 1994, South Africa and its theatre-makers faced a pressing question: what now? This thesis investigates how three South African dramatists negotiated the exigencies of theatre production in post-apartheid South Africa. Brett Bailey, Yael Farber, and Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom developed idiosyncratic theatrical forms experimenting with notions of “authentic” South African identity, both theatrically and culturally. Through inventive theatrical recombinations, all three dramatists formed canons around particular South African performance traditions and cultural sources. The first half of this thesis analyzes the negotiations of these new, divergent forms as “authentic” (re)presentations of South Africa as a whole.

The latter half of this thesis scopes out to interrogate the effects of such authorizing structures on an international scale. Deploying theories of tourism and museum cultures from John Urry, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, and others, this thesis asserts that international theatre festivals create “museums of plays” for global spectators. These festivals privilege particular forms of theatre, namely the “Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre” defined by Daphne P. Lei, which typically constructs syncretic “intercultural” works by adding “cultural” (i.e. non-Western) elements to Western stories and structures. Like tourism and museum cultures, the international

theatre market places great value on “authentic” cultural objects, creating an exchange market for variably different cultural products.

The impacts of these systems on post-apartheid South African theatre are multiple. Notably, between 2003 and 2008, all three dramatists premiered new works that directly reimaged European source material (*MoLoRa*, *Orfeus*, and *Foreplay*). Such appropriation of “Western” cultural material raises important questions concerning the long-term trajectory of South African theatre. Namely, lacking dedicated funding domestically, South African theatre-makers have often found larger audiences and profits from touring their works to international theatre festivals, primarily those located in Europe. With both textual sources and productions tending towards Euroamerican spectators, South African theatre faces the threat of becoming “South African” product shaped primarily by international beliefs of and demands for “South Africa.” Thus, the international traffic and travel of South African theatre over the past two decades begs the very question of South African theatre’s putative “South Africanness.”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	VIII
1.0 INTRODUCTION: POST-APARTHEID AND THE FORMATION OF A <i>NEW</i> SOUTH AFRICA.....	1
1.1 (INTER)NATIONAL SOUTH AFRICAN THEATRE	10
2.0 AUTHENTIC(ATING) SOUTH AFRICAN THEATRE IN THE POST-APARTHEID ERA	26
2.1 BRETT BAILEY: SYNCRETISM OF “ESSENTIAL ENERGIES,” MIRACLE, AND WONDER.....	29
2.2 MPUMELELO PAUL GROOTBOOM: CONTROVERSY AT THE END OF THE “RAINBOW NATION”.....	44
2.3 YAEL FARBER: ACTING OUT AND WORKING THROUGH TRAUMA IN TESTIMONIAL THEATRE.....	53
2.4 SCOPING OUT	63
3.0 “MUSEUMS OF PLAYS”: WORLD BANK DRAMA, HEGEMONIC INTERCULTURAL THEATRE, AND THE TOUR(IST)ING OF SOUTH AFRICAN THEATRE.....	65
3.1 FARBER’S <i>SEZAR</i> AND <i>MOLORA</i> : THE “UNIVERSALITY” OF TRAUMA AND THE EXOTICIZATION OF THE PARTICULAR	72

3.2	GROOTBOOM'S <i>FOREPLAY</i> : FOR THE "FUN" OF IT; OR BLACK BODIES, SEX AND VIOLENCE ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE	92
3.3	BAILEY'S <i>ORFEUS</i> : INSTALLATIONS OF TRAGEDY ON TOUR.....	101
4.0	(IN)CONCLUSIONS	114
4.1	WORLDING OF/AND SOUTH AFRICAN THEATRE.....	118
4.2	HOW (AND WHERE) TO PERFORM "AFRICA".....	126
5.0	AFTER WORD(S)	131
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	134

PREFACE

This study originated out of several serendipitous encounters between younger versions of myself, South Africa, and theatre. In 2003, I travelled to South Africa with my father on a safari tour of the nation's renowned Kruger National Park. After nearly two weeks, we returned to Johannesburg, staying behind eight-foot-high fences and barbed wire that protected our bed and breakfast's quaint English aesthetic from the "edgy city" outside.¹ We ventured into the city for the necessary tourist fare: the Apartheid Museum, a walking tour to Soweto, and a driving tour of the "real" Johannesburg that took us through several urban areas, complete with stops at a shebeen and a downtown market for "witchdoctor" exotica. I returned to my Minnesotan high school feeling an increased awareness of my privilege, but also carrying a sense of having attained what many colleagues called "culture."

Beyond the dubious notion of "culture" as an objective, commoditized object, my trip to South Africa unsettled me. Frankly, I did not feel any different after my trip than I had before. I had gained memories, experiences, and a certain (limited) amount of factual information about my tourist destination; yet, I was not myself changed. In fact, during the trip, I found myself regularly contextualizing my new, South African experiences within my previous exposure to a

¹ Loren Kruger, "Theatre, Crime, and the Edgy City in Post-apartheid Johannesburg," *Theatre Journal* 53.2 (2001): 223-252.

mythic “Africa” through global mediascapes. Strange geographies and cultural formations brought forth recollections of broad portrayals of “Africa” from global media: Disney’s *The Lion King* (1994), a TV episode of *The Simpsons* titled “Simpson Safari” (2001), and, for a fellow traveller of mine, the music group Toto’s song “Africa” (1982).² As a tourist, I measured any non-contextualized experiences against my extant understanding of the world, even though my understanding of Africa was limited to other individuals’ mediations through their own personal encounters and mediascapes. Tellingly, Toto’s “Africa” resulted from keyboardist David Paich’s viewing of a TV documentary about “all the terrible death and suffering of the people in Africa” and drummer Jeff Porcaro’s encounter with the “African” pavilion at the 1964-65 New York World’s Fair.³ Whatever “culture” I gleaned from my experiences was undoubtedly circumscribed by my ability to negotiate the new experiences within my preexisting cultural biases, as well as my particular culture’s biases. To this day, my personal memories of this trip are highly suspect, bound as they were to my now-glaring unawareness of any specifics of South African cultures. Nevertheless, once I realized the symbolic value of my experiences, I mobilized the trip as a marker of my cosmopolitanism. “Actually, I’ve been to Africa. You know, the Apartheid Museum is really amazing.” In the negotiations of cultural capital, it appears, I was a quick study.

² As Susan Arndt notes, there were likely manifold other formative representations of Africa circulating in my own ideoscape of Africa. Arndt observes, “The dominant images of Africa are brought to the public through the mass media, school books, and feature films; then through person to person contacts; advertisements; children’s, youth, and adult literatures; comics; as well as travel literature. Historical travel reports and the colonial belletristic literature also remain important ‘re-producers’ of common images of Africa.” (Susan Arndt, “Introduction: Rereading (Post)Colonialism. Whiteness, Wandering and Writing,” in *Africa, Europe and (Post)Colonialism. Racism, Migration and Diaspora in African Literatures*, ed. Susan Arndt and Marek Spitzczok von Brisinski (Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies, 2006), 35).

³ “Toto: Releases,” accessed 14 Feb 2012, <<http://www.toto99.com/releases/toto/balladsrelease.shtml>>; “Africa,” 18 Apr 2007, accessed 14 Feb 2012, <<http://www.toto99.com/blog/ency.php?archives/269-AFRICA.html>>.

In 2005, I had the opportunity to “return” to South Africa. As an undergraduate student, I was cast in a North American premiere production of *Ipi Zombi?*, a post-apartheid play by Brett Bailey. Again, I found my tourist expedition to South Africa valuable to me. However, my character work and dramaturgical research troubled some of my own memories and presumptions about the “Rainbow Nation.” As an actor, I dutifully attempted to embody my character authentically, doing my best to apply variations on Stanislavski’s “Magic If” to a polysemic theatrical work rooted in South Africa’s many performance styles. Despite my struggles to conceptualize a form of acting different from the realm of psychological realism, the production was a success. Critics noted the play’s ability “to elicit a quite different feeling deep inside you: the rare exhilaration of having been exposed to a world of wonder.”⁴ Several conversations with audiences made me question the play’s efficacy. Surely the play expanded the canon of Washington University’s production work, but did anyone leave the event with a more cogent experience than one fixated on the play’s exotic “difference”?

These two experiences formed the basis for what has become a continued (and continuing) study into South African theatre. My early research focused on the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, South Africa, where many young theatre artists such as Brett Bailey have launched their careers, both nationally and internationally. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to share this work at the Association for Theatre in Higher Education conference in 2011, where fellow panelists, respondents, and auditors provided helpful feedback and provocations to further inquiry. Following these veins, and rippling out down the many garden paths that constitute such research projects, I began this study. Importantly, this thesis writing could not possibly outstrip the wide range of fine scholarly work on domestic South African

⁴ Dennis Brown, “Spellbound,” *The Riverfront Times*, 01 Feb 2006, accessed 14 Feb 2012, <<http://www.riverfronttimes.com/2006-02-01/culture/spellbound/>>.

theatre production in Loren Kruger's *The Drama of South Africa: Plays, Pageants, and Publics Since 1910*, or in Anton Krueger's more recent *Experiments in Freedom: Explorations of Identity in New South African Drama*.⁵ Rather, this thesis focuses more specifically on the international dynamics governing the traffics of South African theatre.

On “South African” Theatre, the “Authentic,” the “Essential,” and the Global

First, allow me to clarify that there is no singular “South African” theatre. In a nation variably marked and divided by eleven official languages as well as multiple sociocultural groups, identities, and ideologies, there can be no easy definition of what South African theatre has become in the post-apartheid era. Instead, examples of a wide array of theatrical formations serve to signal the diversity inherent in post-apartheid culture and its theatre. My selection of three playwrights attempts to model, though by no means to encapsulate, the manifold schisms endemic to South African culture. Thus, I have selected: Brett Bailey, a white male South African playwright from Cape Town's suburbs; Yael Farber, a Jewish woman playwright who expatriated to Montréal in 2006; and Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom, a black male playwright who has become the resident director of the South African State Theatre in Pretoria. Again, the racial and gendered identities of these dramatists in no way presuppose the subject matter or the form of their works. Nevertheless, issues of identity are often mobilized within and around cultural negotiations in the peculiar economics of the “authentic” identity of various agents and their authority to engage with particular cultural material.

This awareness necessitates a point of further clarification: the “authentic” is more of a conceptual term than a real quantity. As Patrice Pavis argues, “the spectators are the final and

⁵ Loren Kruger, *The Drama of South Africa: Plays, Pageants, and Publics Since 1910*, (New York: Routledge, 1999); Anton Krueger, *Experiments in Freedom: Explorations of Identity in New South African Drama*, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010).

only guarantors of the culture which reaches them, whether it be foreign or familiar. [...] Everything depends on what the spectator has remembered and forgotten.”⁶ Within any (inter)cultural performance, the spectators arrive with a collection of interpretive frames through which they perceive the cultural materials on display. One such frame is the concept of the “authentic” culture that an (inter)cultural performance attempts to (re)present. The value a spectating-audience attributes to the “authenticity” of a performance often depends on how well the performance measures up to the preconceived notion of an “authentic” performance held by the audience prior to the event. In Benjamin’s terms, the sought-after “authentic” *aura* can never be adequately reproduced; any perception of the “authentic” in the reproduction results from the desire of the spectator-audience for notional “authenticity” and/or “truth.” Thus, “authenticity” rests in the proverbial eyes and ears of the beholder; resultant cultural capital emerges not only in the production of cultural material, but also in its consumption. Thus, as I will explore, individual artists may capitalize on the perceived authenticity of “heritage,” inherently playing on notions of “essential” cultural qualities, ranging from indigeneity, primitivism, and primordialism, to other “essential” qualities that constitute ethnic *difference*. While “staged authenticity”—i.e. performances that attempt to recreate the (often folkloric) elements of a culture for the tourist gaze—has a dubious legacy and an inherently suspect “authenticity” due to its complicity in perpetuating essentializing stereotypes of difference, the peculiar economics of theatrical signification relies on successful execution of authenticity, believability, and its concomitant appeals to truth value.

Particularly in the Western world of theatre, where psychological realism has a long and deeply entrenched cultural position, notions of attaining the “real” through performance have

⁶ Patrice Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, trans. Loren Kruger (New York: Routledge, 1992), 19.

been well established. As Joseph Roach tracks the tradition of “World Bank Drama” historically, such formations of the “real” on stage can be found in 1930s America or in 1990s Australia, involving “authentic” displays of American rustic livelihood or aboriginal Australian identity formation.⁷ Similarly, Daphne P. Lei’s concept of “Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre” charts a formation by which Robert Wilson stripped “authentic” Taiwanese performance traditions of their specificity and combined with hegemonic traditions that hold the proverbial center, leaving the particular Taiwanese performance traditions as markers of “real” cultural difference within the intercultural theatre frame.⁸ Successful “World Bank Drama” and “Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre” thus does not need to exhibit any adherence to the *meaning* of the “authentic” elements appropriated within the performance frame; rather, the “authentic” itself becomes a sign—an authenticating marker that endows the production with claims to truth, cultural value, (neo)liberal compassion, “diversity,” and even the exotica at the root of such “authentic” essentialism. Decontextualized from cultural meaning, elements of cultural import such as African masks in a museum or life histories on display become elements of the exotic/erotic Other, wherein the spectator can project desire through the matrix of “World Culture.” Thus, particularities become recast as examples of the universal; cultural differences become simultaneous markers of both global projects of “universal” sameness and “authentic” difference.

⁷ Joseph Roach, “World Bank Drama,” in *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature*, ed. Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 171-183.

⁸ Daphne P. Lei, “Interruption, Intervention, Interculturalism: Robert Wilson’s HIT Productions in Taiwan,” *Theatre Journal* 63.2 (2011): 571-586.

Therefore, throughout this study I intentionally avoid referring to cultural meanings as fixed. As Clifford Geertz outlines,

A culture is a system of symbols by which man [*sic*] confers significance upon his own experience. Symbol systems, man-created [*sic*], shared, conventional, ordered, and indeed learned, provide human beings with a meaningful framework for orienting themselves to one another, to the world around them and to themselves.⁹

Geertz's definition of culture attests to the underlying fabrication of culture through several social processes and agreements that together provide interpretive frameworks for events such as theatrical performances. I similarly combat the notion that culture can in any way be viewed as carrying "essential" traits. Rather, I regularly deploy the parenthetical construction of "(inter)cultural" theatre and its traffic to indicate that notions of "cultural" performance are inherently tied to notions of cultural (inter)actions.¹⁰ Working from Arjun Appadurai's skepticism of "the primordial thesis," I argue that all cultural definition relies inherently on cultural oppositionality, from perpetuations of cultural encounter marked by the fundamental division between "me" and "not-me."¹¹ In order for a "culture" to emerge as perceptible, it must be in some way marked as *different*. Such differences arise not out of an "essential" origin that predetermines cultural formation; rather, difference can only be perceived through the comparison of two or more cultural formations against one another.

⁹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 250.

¹⁰ I similarly refer to sites of (inter)cultural performance as (inter)national where appropriate. As Trinh T. Minh-ha famously has asserted, "there is a Third World in every First World, and vice versa" (Trinh T. Minh-ha, "Introduction," *Discourse* 8 (1986-87): 3). Thus, my deployment of the parenthetical formation "(inter)-" gestures towards the mutual codependence of such metastructures, which range from the delineations between "First" and "Third" worlds, dominant and subaltern, global and local, to the international and the national. Importantly, the "national" boundaries of our increasingly globalized world are always to some extent (inter)national. Moreover, notions of "the international" fundamentally depend on the perpetuation of *different* national identities and cultures; conversely, the boundaries of "national" cultures must be drawn against some other groups. Thus, the concepts of the national and the international are inextricably (inter)twined.

¹¹ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 140-141.

With that noted, there are many agents, including prominent artists and critics within and without of South Africa, who pursue their respective goals under ideologies structured around cultural essentialism. Thus, when I include arguments pertaining to such essentializing notions, it is not to endorse or perpetuate the concept of essential cultural difference, but rather to elucidate the effects that different understandings of culture have on the formation and negotiation of cultural difference. Like Catherine M. Cole's provocative inquiries into the oft-presumed "blackness" of African theatre, I ask a similarly problematic question: "When is South African theatre South African?"¹² Such a question ultimately drives to the heart of the international and intercultural dynamics governing contemporary South African theatre production. Additionally, such a broad question necessarily generates more avenues of productive inquiry, such as "For whom is South African theatre produced?" and "Why?"

In pursuit of such questions, I deploy several historical examples as elucidatory evidence for contemporary conceptions of "South Africanness." I also acknowledge that no event(s) can possibly explicate the fluid understandings of a South Africa or the several traditions of South African performance that are continuously in flux. Thus, this study focuses first and foremost on contemporary negotiations with performance forms, audience behaviors, and imaginaries of race and culture. In each particular example, some of these elements will be more pertinent and will receive more attention. However, the works of each playwright analyzed herein draw deeply from the dramatic traditions of South Africa; each engages with both continuity and change in his or her relationship with audiences; and each contributes to—and grapples with—existing images, ideas, and flows of (inter)cultural understanding.

¹² Catherine M. Cole, "When is African Theater 'Black'?" in *Black Cultural Traffic: Crossroads in Global Performance and Popular Culture*, ed. Harry J. Elam, Jr., and Kennell Jackson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 53.

On Work(s)

Additionally, I use the term “work” in reference to the dramatic texts in question intentionally. Unlike Barthes delineation between fixed classical works and malleable postmodern texts, my usage of “work” is polysemic and multivalent.¹³ “Work” encapsulates the manifold labors that produce, reproduce, create, and revise meanings in each text. Additionally, it signals the interpretive labor done by spectating-audiences, and the range of work necessarily involved in crossing (inter)national and (inter)cultural boundaries. Thus, a “work” results from the creative labor of both its creator(s) and performer(s), the unseen labor of capital that authorized its production, and the labor done by spectating-audiences to both interpret and make meaning in the moment of its performance.

In terms of the international elements of South African theatre traffic, I also work with an understanding of the effects of global capital on theatre production. As Judith Butler has aptly noted, “Capitalism is itself a difficult text. [...] It does not show itself as transparent, it gives itself in enigmatic ways; it calls for interpretative hermeneutic effort.”¹⁴ The processes governing the globalized traffics of theatre and performance present contemporary theatre scholars with manifold “texts” evidencing the opaque, enigmatic work done by global neoliberal capital. One of the aims of this study will be to account for some of the actual performance of capital within the globalized system of theatre traffic, as well as the effects of that work on the performance and textual products formed therein. Namely, I investigate the commodifying effects of capital in the authorization of particular works from South Africa as representative; I also analyze the

¹³ Roland Barthes, “From Work to Text,” in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. Josue Harari (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), 73-81.

¹⁴ Judith Butler quoted in *Critical Intellectuals On Writing*, eds. Gary A. Olson and Lynn Worsham (Albany: State University of New York, 2003), 46.

effect of global capital on international perspectives on the “authentic” within South African theatre.

Therefore, as I work with the scripts—the textual archive—of each play, I also work with an understanding of the performance potential of each play. Moreover, I attempt to situate the different work done by different audience members in deciphering and decoding dense moments of performance. Thus, I attempt to analyze each play as a textual work, a performed work, and an interpreted work, as well as a product that requires labor in its inception, its performance, and its interpretation.

On Authority

The juncture between the work of global capital and notions of authentic cultural formations necessarily raises issues of authority. Indeed, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the primary definition of “authentic” is “(adj.) Of authority, authoritative (*properly* as possessing original or inherent authority or as duly authorized); entitled to obedience or respect.”¹⁵ The noun form of the “authentic” is defined similarly as “an authoritative book or document” or “an original.” These definitions emphasize the authority endowed upon “authentic” objects as having value derived from “real, actual, genuine” origins as opposed to the realms of the imaginary, pretended realms of representation. Importantly, the “authentic” implies a self-generative capacity of value wherein that which one defines as authentic gains the value of being “real,” “authoritative,” and presumably unadulterated. Cultural authority thus often rests in the perceived authenticity of cultural material.

¹⁵ “Authentic, adj. and n.” *Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition, 1989; online version December 2011. accessed 14 February 2012, <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/13314>>. All ensuing definitions of “authentic” are taken from the same source.

Indeed, notions of “authenticity” are always multiple and often conflicting. Within the frame of South African national and cultural formation in the post-apartheid era, several competing, “rhizomatic” paradigms on cultural authority and authenticity arose.¹⁶ Borrowing from the language of Eyal Zandberg’s work on representational authority of the Holocaust, I inquire how South African theatre practitioners negotiated contested notions of cultural authority through the positional lenses of who has the “right to tell the (right) story.”¹⁷ As Zandberg notes, “Collective memory studies postulate that each community develops its own memory of the past that marks the boundaries of the group.”¹⁸ Thus, writing on cultural and national formation in post-apartheid South Africa and in the specific terms of the dramatists under analysis herein, I explore where individuals and/or groups site their authority to produce “South African” works as sites of and for South African “collective memory” and identity formation.

Additionally, I deploy Zandberg’s terms for various source material, which range from “biographic,” “official,” “academic,” “cultural,” and “professional-journalistic.”¹⁹ Zandberg argues that “biographic sources” were historically perceived as the most authentic, as they were sited in the “really real” experience of survivors of trauma. On the opposite end of the spectrum, “professional-journalistic sources” were the “weakest authority group and [as a result] they had to apply different techniques to retain their authority,” necessarily compensating for their absence from the “really real” event with other supplementary authorizing sources.²⁰ Taking the performance of first-person narratives and experiential cultural material (i.e. traditional

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Athlone, 1987). Deleuze and Guattari define “rhizomatic” structures as oppositional to the determinate concept of genealogical “tree-like” conceptions of cultural evolution. They elaborate: “The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb ‘to be,’ but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction ‘and...and...and...’” (25).

¹⁷ Eyal Zandberg, “The right to tell the (right) story,” *Media Culture Society* 32.5 (2010): 5-24.

¹⁸ Zandberg, 6.

¹⁹ Zandberg, 11-12.

²⁰ Zandberg, 12.

performance styles, techniques, and even costuming, etc.) as forms of “biographic sources,” I explore how South African dramatists recombined such material with their own “professional-journalistic” techniques of theatre to create “authentic” dramatic works. As Zandberg concludes, such techniques are often essential to individuals attempting to represent a larger cultural group, for “a basic precondition for attaining authority, which enables authors to take part in shaping [cultural] memory, is the integration of biographical and official sources.”²¹ As I will demonstrate, these authorizing formations repeat in the dramaturgical work of all three dramatists under analysis herein, but especially in the works of Bailey and Farber. Importantly, I will investigate how Bailey and Farber, both of whom are white, negotiate their own “biographical” sources with those of others, as well as with “official source” material drawn from other groups and organizations in the formation of their drama. I also will engage in how notions of blackness, deriving from the cultural authority of the Black Consciousness Movement of the 1970s, authorize Grootboom’s occasionally controversial engagement with the uniquely South African tradition of “township theatre” as a “cultural source” for making authentic meaning. In all of these cases, South African dramatists must negotiate with the “right to tell the (right) story” in order to produce an “authentic” narrative of South African experience.

However, in addition to the national cultural forces that negotiated the authenticity of particular stories and/or their tellings in post-apartheid South Africa, the international arena opens such (re)presentations to manifold forces that also negotiate the presence of authenticity from within and from without of the nation’s particular cultural frames. Moreover, as global investments transform authentic “Culture” into “heritage,” value-added authenticity rests at the heart of such cultural and capital exchanges. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett perceptively

²¹ *Ibid.*

argues, the current dominance of the concept of cultural “heritage” as indicative of originary cultural traditions belies the fundamental disjuncture that “All heritage is *created* and economic arrangements are but one factor in shaping it.”²² Kirshenblatt-Gimblett identifies two crucial aspects to the authorizing systems of global cultural traffic. First, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett extends Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic capital, which “directs attention to the *apparent producer*, the painter, writer or composer, in short, the ‘author,’ suppressing the question of what authorizes the author, what creates the authority with which authors authorize.”²³ The argument that “all heritage is created” directs critical attention to the questions “Who authorizes?” and “For whom?” Second, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett notes that economic factors are only one of several authorizing forces that participate in a “rhizomatic” system of various authorizers in a global system that simultaneously creates “authentic” cultural material as “heritage” and mobilizes the perceived authenticity of such cultural material for capital gain. Within the arena of global cultural traffic, the primary authorizers and authenticators of cultural “heritage” are sourced primarily from the Global North and exhibit predominantly Eurocentric biases towards the formations of traditionally “Western” theatre.²⁴ Extending from my analysis of the (often unseen) work done by global capitalism, I also engage with questions over authority, particularly in regard to who represents cultural material, who spectates upon cultural performances, and what forces authorize such performance events.

²² Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “World Heritage and Cultural Economics,” *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, ed. Ivan Karp et al. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 195. Italics mine.

²³ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randal Johnson (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1993), 76.

²⁴ For an analysis of the tension between notions of ethnocentrism and cosmopolitanism, see Elijah Anderson, *The Cosmopolitan Canopy: Race and Civility in Everyday Life* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011). As Anderson argues, “Generally, ethnocentric people emphasize loyalty to their own group, which is defined by ascribed characteristics, such as skin color, while cosmopolitans emphasize individuality and achievement” (189). While the ethnos and the cosmos are divergent poles on a spectrum, they are inherently inflected by different valuations of each idea in different cultural arenas. On the (inter)national scale, global notions of cosmopolitanism tend to govern over particular deployments of ethnocentric deployments of “culture.”

However, beyond the dynamics of cultural authorization within South Africa, the international theatre market also wields power over representations. Additional forces arise, each with the potential to “authorize the author.” These forces range from attempts by international agents/agencies to tour particular productions, curational processes at international festivals, to awards and other systems of valuation of artistic merit, among others. Importantly, these forces rely to some extent on the domestic processes of authorization to establish a certain amount of authenticity; however, once brought into the international theatre market, works are often presumed to be “authentic,” regardless of the valuation of these works within the national communities that they purportedly represent.

There are several historical examples of touring works that were controversial in South Africa but attained commercial success abroad, establishing different perspectives on the “authenticity” of such works for different audiences. One such example, *Ipi Tombi* (1974), toured to North America and Europe, and still lives in the cultural imaginary of the destinations where it toured. Several commentators on audio recordings and videos posted on YouTube reminisce on their nostalgic feelings for the original production, such as commentator “barondemonrepos,” who writes, “Good memories....I saw musical in London in the 1970’s. Was it 1974??? Great music!” and “glynis22,” who adds, “I still have the record, saw the show, rediscovering this today is like picking up a piece of gold!”²⁵ Contrary to these positive reactions to the work, Loren Kruger notes that members of the Black Consciousness Movement of the 1970s were “emphatically critical of white ‘management’ of black talent in such shows as *Ipi Tombi* (1974, roughly translated as ‘Girls! Where?!’), which used a sketchy ‘Jim comes to Johannesburg’ scenario as an alibi for scantily clad women dancing to canned *mbaqanga* to the greater

²⁵ “Ipi 'Ntombi Featuring Margaret Singana - The Warrior,” *YouTube*, 10 Nov 2007, accessed 13 Feb 2012, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1RPPO-c1vU>>.

profit of impresario Bertha Egnos.”²⁶ Especially with glynis22’s ironic references to ownership of the cultural material in question and her commodification of the record as “a piece of gold,” these discordant perspectives on *Ipi Tombi* reveal a wide chasm between the perceived “authenticity” of South African theatrical works on national and international stages. Moreover, these differences in perceived “authenticity” are not easily contested, for they are bound up in individual’s “biographic” experience of a particular culture, which ultimately feed into the repeated authorization of such perspectives within the cultural imaginary. Like Toto’s “Africa,” *Ipi Tombi* remains a popular touchstone for many Europeans and North Americans who experienced the music and its performance. This example models how audiences can and do authorize particular works as “authentic,” favoring particular performative enactments and theatrical formations over others.

Such issues regarding authority and its function as both an authorizing and authenticating force also raise questions about academic (re)presentations of South African works. Whereas many scholars have favored certain lenses for the interpretation of particular histories and works, I am wary of applying any totalizing frame for this study. Thus, contrary to postcolonial readings/viewings that favor binaristic formations between “the dominant European culture” and the subaltern populations of the globe, I attempt to engage with the multiple sites of authorization and the negotiations of authority and authenticity therein.²⁷ However, popular notions that globalization has created a “world [that] is flat,” wherein inequities in power, capital, and authority have been leveled out are equally suspect.²⁸ Rather, the contestatory processes of authorization within global traffics of theatre production arise in rhizomatic structures, sited

²⁶ Kruger, *The Drama of South Africa*, 137.

²⁷ Bill Ashcroft, Gereth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989), 7.

²⁸ Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Picador, 2007).

multiply around the globe, but with persistent inequities in capital and power. Such formations inherently permit some of the rhizomatic structures to perpetuate the inequitable systems, even as they are contested. Moreover, these processes must continually engage with perceptions of cultural difference, the unequal distribution of global capital, markedly different paradigms on the same historical events, and many of the other contested issues filling the space between the global and the local. The negotiation of these slippery terms and concepts lies at the heart of this study.

On Difference

Finally, I must admit a particular theoretical heuristic of this study, namely that of “difference.” Throughout this study, I privilege analytical frameworks that attempt to theorize and explicate difference. In terms of culture, I deploy Geertzian concepts of culture as a constructed set of ideological and semiotic systems that differ from one group of people to another. My analysis of theatre production and reception depends fundamentally on such differences. Similarly, I work with a number of theories of theatrical reception that emphasize the different positionalities of performers and audience-spectators, including several articulations of post-structural theories and performance studies. Throughout, I attempt to balance investigations of the different frameworks of the national and international, the local and the global, the cultural “West” and “the rest,” and the economic power of the Global North and the Global South, among others. These binaristic structures emphasize the different economic, political, and cultural contexts created within each category. Again, these issues of difference are the object of this study.

However, there are many potential alternative frameworks with which I could instead analyze the material investigated herein. I could have mobilized frameworks of globalization and

cosmopolitanism to analyze the positive externalities of the global flows of theatre in post-apartheid South Africa.²⁹ Similarly, rather than post-structural and performance studies theories that I deploy, I could have adopted a framework of the emergent field of cognitive studies in theatre and performance. Such shifts in methodology would invariably have affected the shape of this study and also, potentially, of its conclusions. Notably, the theoretical framework of cognitive science emphasizes the humanistic universalities arising from cognitive processes; indeed, one of the central tenets of cognitive science is the biological commonality of all *homo sapiens*. Theories of culture and difference are not the objects of such analytical frameworks as they emphasize the cognitive function of “empathy” and its resultant emotional behaviors.³⁰ While such frameworks are already forcing reconsiderations of theatre and performance, I do not mobilize them herein because of my specific investigations into the disjunctures arising from the traffic of South African theatre across different contexts. My emphasis on difference is less of an epistemological valuation of a new brand of theory and more a critique of the (neo)liberal ethos of multiculturalism and other ideological structures such as cosmopolitanism, which historically arose from—and perpetuate—globalized capitalist frameworks.³¹ Indeed, my focus on difference fundamentally stems from the capitalist production, valuation, and commodification of “difference.” The second half of this study will engage with the effects of globalized, “intercultural” theatre and its traffic within the international theatre festival circuit.

²⁹ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*.

³⁰ See Bruce McConachie, *Engaging Audiences: A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). Chapter Two, “Social Cognition in Spectating” is particularly notable for its exploration of empathy as a cognitive and social process.

³¹ Ian Collier, “East of Enlightenment: Regulating Cosmopolitanism between Istanbul and Paris in the Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of World History* 21.3 (2010): 447-470.

Acknowledgements

In analyzing the disjunctures between the national and international production of theatre, traffics of “authentic” cultural material between these two systems, and the processes that authorize these systems, a good deal of work will be necessary. That work necessarily remains in process as the negotiations of these forces develop concurrent with this writing. However, this thesis draws from the productive and thought-provoking work of many others to whom I am indebted.

My pursuit of this project has been aided greatly by the timely and gracious support of several other scholars and organizations. First, my personal journey into researching South African theatre was spurred by the acceptance of my work to an Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) panel in 2011. Additionally, a very early draft of this work was included as part of a working group at the 2011 conference of the American Society of Theatre Research (ASTR) on the “Economies of African Performance.” I am indebted to all of my fellow panelists at ASTR, and I am especially grateful to Megan Lewis and Elliot Leffler for organizing this working group, the first at ASTR to focus specifically on African performance. I also would like to thank Catherine M. Cole for her response at the ASTR conference and for providing advice and insights into this project in its early stages.

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My hope is that in this study I do justice to those individuals, cultures, and organizations that I (re)present to my readers, as well as to those forces that have supported my work thus far. Though in some ways this study can never escape its status as a mediation of South African culture through decidedly Western lenses, I hope that I am a more responsible medium than some of those presented to me prior to my early encounters with the continent at large, and particularly with the complex formations pervasive in South African society, culture, and theatre.

1.0 INTRODUCTION: POST-APARTHEID AND THE FORMATION OF A *NEW SOUTH AFRICA*

On 27 April 1994, the advent of non-racial, democratic elections signaled the official end of apartheid government in South Africa. The nation's newly liberated citizenry performed a range of activities affirming and establishing the free South Africa. First and foremost, twenty million people (approximately 86% of the electorate) participated in the nation's first non-racial elections. As Leonard Thompson recounts, "for former voteless people, (the election) was the experience of a lifetime; for some it took on the aura of a religious experience."¹ Also signaling the transcendent hopes of the historical moment, a significant majority of the electorate selected the nation's first black president, Nelson Mandela. Mandela's inaugural address (10 May 1994) voiced his utopian vision for South Africa's future, in which the inchoate nation would become a "Rainbow Nation at peace with itself and the world."² The "Rainbow Nation" mythos aimed at the creation of post-apartheid South African exceptionalism, particularly in its emphasis on multiculturalism and equality and its explicit oppositionality to apartheid-era segregation and other hegemonic structures.

State events perpetuated and amplified the quasi-religious sentiment of the post-apartheid moment. As recounted by Loren Kruger, Nelson Mandela's inauguration was accompanied by

¹ Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 263.

² Nelson Mandela, "Inauguration as President," in *In His Own Words*, ed. Kader Asmal et al. (New York: Little, Brown, & Company, 2003), 69.

several performances drawing from manifold traditions of South African culture.³ The inaugural performances ranged from kinesthetic displays such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo's variation on the traditional Zulu *isicathamiya* dance to aurally focused performances such as Johnny Clegg's singing of "Asimbonanga Mandela."⁴ As Kruger further notes,

the range of languages, from Afrikaans via English to Zulu, and music, from the *boeremusiek* of Nico Carstens to the *isicathamiya* of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, was matched by visual diversity, in dance, from *Bharata Natyam* to *tekiedraai*, and in formal and informal costume from one *imbongi's imvunulo* (Zulu festival attire, including skins) to another's designer shirt, or from the diplomatic blue 'Western' suit—competing with the daishiki or the *boubou* (in homage to West Africa)—in the amphitheatre above to the T-shirt emblazoned with 'Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika' or with Mandela's face or clan-name (Madiba) on the lawn below.⁵

Kruger's dense account of the diversity modeled in the inaugural performances attests to the inherent multiplicity of South African identities made visible through particular performances, the sum of which staged the mythic "Rainbow Nation" of post-apartheid South Africa. Sharing the same stage and liberated from decades of enforced segregation, each performance embodied various "authentic" qualities of cultural difference that comprised the newly egalitarian South African state. As voters of South Africa's many races, languages, religions, and creeds all openly acted on their political rights through the democratic voting processes, at the inaugural, representatives from the nation's manifold cultures performed their respective cultural traditions as both as examples of particular South African identities and as part of the newly collective, non-segregated South African whole. Indeed, the collective aim of such a diverse performative array was the representation of the new, postapartheid South Africa as Mandela's imagined community of "many cultures, one nation."⁶ Implicit in the inaugural performances was a shared

³ Kruger, *The Drama of South Africa*, 1-22.

⁴ Kruger, *The Drama of South Africa*, 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

understanding that the embodied repertoires of the various performed traditions carried cultural meaning and value particular to each constituent culture. The performances also modeled how South Africans could “build” the “Rainbow Nation” (10 May 1994): by staging a diverse array of collective, public, non-segregated performances of these “many cultures,” the South African government signaled that its constituent cultures could create a visible, embodied, *new* South African nation in real terms.⁷

Of course, post-apartheid South Africa, however, did not form into a coherent wholeness through a singular collection of performative enactments. In order to overcome decades of enforced segregation, oppression, and political violence, South Africans needed a new frame for imagining their relationship to the state and to their fellow citizens. While President Mandela’s inaugural celebrations attested to the multicultural ethos of the new nation and its valuation on multiple cultural materials, South Africans also needed to be reconciled to the nation’s traumatic past. In short, the most pressing question arose from the cultural differences established and perpetuated by the apartheid state. How could South Africa’s “many cultures,” each with different understandings and experiences of the nation’s past, coalesce into a singular, peaceful nation?

The new state attempted to answer these uncertainties by authorizing investigations into the truth—indeed, the multiple truths—of the apartheid past. Through the hearings of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the South African government enacted a

⁷ Anna Reading explicates the relationship between memory and nation-building, asserting “The rationale [behind the “right to memory”] lies in the ways in which the mass media and culture are understood to play a local, national and international role in what is collectively and individually remembered, and how the past is mobilized. Electronic media and digitization enable rapidly networked, mediated memories that can be reassembled and reused. Mediated and cultural memories have important implications in terms of identity and belonging, as well as for justice conflict and social change. Cultural and collective memories are part of the process of nation-building and citizenship, and can act as a central dynamic in the destruction and reconstruction of democracies” (Anna Reading, “Identity, Memory, and Cosmopolitanism: The Otherness of the Past and a Right to Memory?” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 14 (2011): 382).

public forum in which individual, “biographic sources” could be shared, valued, and recorded with equal—if not greater—value as the government’s “official sources.” Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who became the (inter)national face of the TRC hearings, explained the underlying logic of public testimony and the empowerment of first-person narration: “To testify not only uncovers what lay hidden in a regime’s enforced silence—but heals the speaker and the listener alike.”⁸ When the first public hearings began in April 1996, the TRC began the nation’s unprecedented, *public* processes of truth-telling and collective healing.⁹ Like the inaugural performances, these acts of testimony perpetuated an increased national valuation of the “authentic” experience of individuals, whether it was in the forms of narration of personal history or embodiment of cultural tradition. In order to combat the National Party’s apartheid regime’s “enforced silence,” the post-apartheid democratic government sought to give voice to the heretofore-oppressed cultural and political groups of South Africa. Contrary to the oppressive South African government of apartheid, the new South Africa would be defined by openness, benevolence, and most importantly, truth.

The multiplicity of South Africa’s heretofore-oppressed voices also produced several new challenges for the post-apartheid cultural and national formation processes. As Nelson Mandela noted, despite the highly visible, televised celebration of South African unity through diversity, the nascent nation was still marred by “traces of deep divisions” from its violent apartheid past.¹⁰ Prior to Mandela’s election, South Africans had no historical precedent for a unified, nonracial state. Extending back to the first European encounter with South Africa in 1652 by Dutch

⁸ Desmond Tutu, “Foreword,” in *Theatre as Witness* (London: Oberon Books, 2008), 7.

⁹ Catherine M. Cole, *Performing South Africa’s Truth Commission: Stages of Transition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), xii.

¹⁰ Nelson Mandela, “One City, Many Cultures,” in *In His Own Words*, ed. Kader Asmal et al. (New York: Little, Brown, & Company, 2003), 293.

explorer Jan van Riebeeck, cultural conflicts and race-based oppressions had long defined the social and political construction of South African identities. Indeed, during the most violent throes of apartheid, even culture (i.e. the arts, literature, theatre, etc.) was viewed as “a weapon of struggle” to combat the apartheid government.¹¹ Conversely, the geographic and ideological demarcations of apartheid were regularly deployed to delimit the range of performable actions available to South African citizens. Moreover, the enunciation of multiple competing narratives about the past created a complex network of truths, each equally “authentic.” The multiplicity of truth claims worked both to validate the unbiased nature of the TRC, but also threatened to destabilize the TRC’s product. After all of the truth-telling, what coherent stories could South Africans share to make sense of their past in their newly “imagined community”?¹²

Like the government, artists faced difficult negotiations with the shifting power dynamics of the “new” post-apartheid South Africa. During apartheid, anti-government theatre performers maintained the primary claims on truth-telling within their communities. Apartheid-era “Protest Theatre” and “Theatre-for-Resistance” formations favored dramatic structures in which performers rallied populist support against the oppressive governmental structures; these dramatic formations became commonly known by its functional deployment of “culture as a weapon of struggle,” specifically to be deployed against the political rule of the apartheid state.¹³ Theatre practitioners intentionally enacted some of the entrenched divisions of apartheid for several decades in attempts to raise opposition to the Nationalist apartheid government. Theatre groups divided along lines of regional and cultural difference, most visibly in formations along the apartheid-supported color lines of “black” and “white” theatres. However, many of the most

¹¹ Albie Sachs, “Preparing Ourselves for Freedom,” *TDR* 35.1 (1991): 187.

¹² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Second Edition (New York: Verso, 2006), 6-7.

¹³ Robert Mshengu Kavanaugh, *Theatre and Cultural Struggle in South Africa* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1985); Martin Orkin, *Drama and the South African State* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1991).

internationally successful of the various “theatre as a weapon” productions were collaborations across color lines, such as the collaborative works of Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona (*Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972) and *The Island* (1973)), of Percy Mtwa, Mbongeni Ngema, and Barney Simon (*Woza Albert!* (1981)), and of Simon and his collaborators at the Market Theatre (*Born in the RSA* (1985)). Contrary to such apartheid-era successes, the post-apartheid South African theatre faced a reality in which democracy had collapsed the distance between the state and the people and in which the color line was contested politically and ideologically. No longer could theatre address itself “to the oppressor with the aim of appealing to his conscience” or “to the oppressed with the overt aim of rallying or mobilizing the oppressed to fight against oppression.”¹⁴ Instead, South African theatre necessarily faced new exigencies, new social and political issues, as well as new market pressures on the production and reception of theatre as a product.

Though Nelson Mandela’s inaugural address and its attendant performances worked towards the mythic post-apartheid “Rainbow Nation,” it remained unclear how such complex ideological aspirations could be realized in governmental policy or in artistic production. Indeed, throughout the interregnum period (1990-1994), during which the African National Congress (ANC) and the National Party (NP) carried out their peaceful transition of power from Afrikaner-dominated apartheid rule to ANC-dominated post-apartheid democracy, South African artists, critics, and theorists negotiated new concepts, ideals, and frameworks in which theatre could function for the people and the state. There were some moments of clarity. In his highly influential and controversial paper, “Preparing Ourselves for Freedom” (1989), Albie Sachs called for the retirement of the phrase “culture as a weapon of struggle” from the lexicon of

¹⁴ Zakes Mda, “Theater and Reconciliation in South Africa,” *Theater* 25.3 (1995): 41.

South African theatre artists.¹⁵ Sachs further argued that the South African theatre of the post-apartheid era needed to not merely “separat[e] art and politics, which no one can do, but (to) avoid a shallow and forced relationship between the two.”¹⁶ Sachs foresaw a new relationship between the state and the theatre in the postapartheid era in which both “protest theater” and “theater-for-resistance” would become obsolete. After 1994, the state would cease to be the enemy, but would instead become the representative of the people in a manner unprecedented in South African history. Playwright and critic Zakes Mda shared this perspective, and in 1995, he foreshadowed the government’s own conciliatory processes when he suggested a “theater of reconciliation” that would replace the “theater-for-resistance”:

A true theater of reconciliation will not shy away from addressing the past. But it will not address the past for its own sake, nor for the sake of feeding the victim syndrome. It will not address the past in order to make our white compatriots lead a constantly guilt-ridden life. It will address the past solely for the purpose of understanding the present, of understanding why it is absolutely necessary for us to have reconciliation.¹⁷

Like the public processes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, theatre in the post-apartheid era held the potential not only to reconcile the people to the state, but people to other people, victims to oppressors, blacks to whites, and past to present. Moreover, it could potentially act as “a *true* theater of reconciliation” through which a collective understanding of the past and present could result in a collective “truth” about the nation and its future. Ultimately, Mda viewed theatre as a site for dialogue, which if pursued, might facilitate the reconciliation processes necessary for a *new* South Africa. Similarly, Sachs’ exhortation for a new South African theatre called for theatre that could “expose contradictions and reveal hidden tensions” as well as art that could act on “the right to express our humanity in all its forms, including our

¹⁵ Sachs, 187. Sachs was then a member of the ANC Constitutional Committee and was personally involved in the transitions to ANC-rule.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Mda, “Theater and Reconciliation in South Africa,” 44.

sense of fun and our capacity for love and tenderness and our appreciation of the beauty of the world.”¹⁸ Such aims were central tenets for theatre artists who shared a desire to create a *new* South Africa in the way theatre was created, the imaginative substance of such theatre, and its purposes. Particularly during a moment in which “the death of apartheid [was still...] symbolic” and not yet realized in the broader social contexts of South Africa, theatre was viewed as a tool to create a truly *post*-apartheid South African theatre. During this time, “the notion *culture*—including art and theatre—was radically redefined to allow for and include the full spectrum of cultural endeavor by *all* the citizens.”¹⁹ Theoretically, the creation of new artistic works would do work on South Africa and its culture, helping the newly liberated nation to *reimagine* itself as a new and different community.

Importantly, these cultural critics established a relationship between artists, critics, and audiences by which new South African dramas would be measured and authorized. The ensuing post-apartheid era saw many diverse attempts to create a theatre for the new South Africa, which Anton Krueger calls “Experiments in Freedom.”²⁰ Loosed from apartheid’s binaristic formations, theatre and its objects took on much more complex cultural relationships. Thus, in the immediate post-apartheid moment, theatre artists and critics evidently viewed theatre as a tool for social change, often summoning metaphors for its ability to facilitate reconciliation, unity, and a clean break with the apartheid past. Critics praised works that succeeded in these ways, authorizing them as representative works of the post-apartheid era. These acts of authorization were vital to the development of a *new* South African theatre that diverged intentionally from the preceding

¹⁸ Sachs, 188. Other wide-ranging perspectives of the new South African theatre were voiced in *Theatre and Change in South Africa*, ed. Geoffrey V. Davis and Anne Fuchs (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers GmbH, 1996) and in the special “South African Theater” section of *Theater* 25.3 (1995): 8-54.

¹⁹ Temple Hauptfleisch, “South African Theatre: Some Major Trends of Past Developments,” in *Words and Worlds: African Writing, Theatre and Society*, ed. Susan Arndt and Katrin Berndt (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2007), 71.

²⁰ Krueger, *Experiments in Freedom*.

formations, both because they asserted power over South Africa's cultural imaginary as well as evidencing a desire for a newly authorized and *authenticated* vision of what a liberated South Africa would become.

However, contrary to the apartheid-era international touring of "authentic" theatre-for-resistance which reinforced the political efficacy of such works, the international touring of post-apartheid South African theatre inherently complicated South Africa's processes of national cultural formation through the theatrical medium. The international destinations to which South African theatre travelled split dramatists' idealized audience along dubiously simple lines of the "international" and the "national." However, both inequities in capital between the Global North and Global South and persistent differences in valuation of cultural material from "the West" and "the rest" created an environment in which the much-emphasized "authentic" in South African theatre was jeopardized by competing issues of representation, interpretation, and projection.

In the ensuing chapters, I will explore the negotiation of such national and international forces within the production of theatre by three South African dramatists: Brett Bailey, Yael Farber, and Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom. Within the international theatre system of what Joseph Roach terms, "World Bank Drama," which traffics in performances of globally sourced performances of cultural authenticity, multiple (inter)national festivals and organizations authorize certain performances. Simultaneous with this international development, several South African dramatists attempted to negotiate an authentic, new South African theatre in the post-apartheid era. However, the effects of the international traffic of "authentic" and authenticated representations of South African culture inherently complicated the nascent development of post-apartheid South African culture. In this study, I argue that the nationalistic project of self-imagining undertaken in post-apartheid South African from 1994-2010 was regularly affected,

disrupted, and occasionally co-opted by (inter)national forces that commoditized “authentic” representations of South Africa for international consumption.

1.1 (INTER)NATIONAL SOUTH AFRICAN THEATRE

The (inter)national theatre market is not the sole purveyor of cultural material across national boundaries.²¹ Rather, theatre is merely one form that comprises the culture industries that structure and perpetuate cultural tourism. As Kennell Jackson observes, African cultural material has long been of interest to European spectators, for “One of the most significant flows of African cultural material into the world was assisted by colonialism, by colonials collecting vast caches of African art objects for marketing, often in curio shops and museums in Europe.”²² Thus, there is a long-established traffic of African cultural material has long moved from the proverbial “dark continent” to the “enlightened” intellectual and artistic centers of the Western world. However, in addition to museumified physical objects, contemporary cultural traffic also trades in the motion of bodies to international performance venues. The continuing development of (inter)national theatre festivals worldwide perpetuates and drives the international traffic of theatrical material, providing both a staging place for performances as well as a temporospatially

²¹ Throughout this study, I deploy the parenthetical construction “(inter)national” to signify the dependence on notions of internationality on national difference. Simultaneously, this phrasing gestures towards the constant presence of elements of the inter- and trans-national within “national” frameworks. For instance, the National Arts Festival is one of South Africa’s most internationally renowned performance venues.

²² Kennell Jackson, “Introduction,” in *Black Cultural Traffic: Crossroads in Global Performance and Popular Culture*, ed. Harry J. Elam, Jr., and Kennell Jackson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 21.

fixed viewing place for the world's cultural tourists. Indeed, through theatre festivals, the theatrical body eclectic has become "among other things, a museum of plays."²³

Joseph Roach views the product(ion)s of the international theatre market in similar terms, coining the phrase "World Bank Drama," because of the inherent inequities in cultural and economic value between the "First World" financiers and "First People" performers of international theatre. His insights are worth quoting at length. Roach elaborates,

The world bank of drama is a loosely organized network of transnational performances that overlap and invest one another or, more precisely, invest *in* one another. These performances intertwine with the global economy, assigning values asymmetrically but reciprocally between and among their constituents. They may be observed most clearly in transactions of cultural capital between the First World and so-called First Peoples, the long-term indigenous inhabitants of particular regions or environments. [...] There is, I hypothesize, a peculiar algebra involved in the financial performances of the World Bank, on the one hand, with its mind-numbing abstraction of value into blips on computer screens, transferred at the speed of light, and on the other, the world's perceived accumulation of cultural capital, categorized under the portmanteau *heritage*, which is also increasingly treated as an intangible but 'bankable' abstraction, global in scope but most readily authenticated only in local, preferably indigenous detail.²⁴

As Roach argues, the structure of "World Bank Drama" is not strictly authoritarian nor does it presume a rigorous establishment of cultural codes. Rather, "World Bank Drama" exists as a structuring system for complex negotiations of multifaceted issues inherent to (inter)cultural performances which traffic in "authentic" mobilizations of *heritage* as a valuable commodity. However, the valuation of "authentic" cultural material in an international context often operates differently—indeed, sometimes oppositionally—to the valuation of the "authentic" within its own cultural context. Thus, fundamental areas of concern for the international theatre market include issues of cultural ownership, appropriation, authenticity, authority, and representation. Each individual theatre artist, producer, and organization attempts to negotiate these complex

²³ Hanna Scolnicov, "Introduction," in *The Play Out of Context: Transferring Plays from Culture to Culture*, ed. Hanna Scolnicov and Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2.

²⁴ Roach, 175.

issues in the (re)production of theatrical works. Not all negotiations are successful. Instead, the successes and failures of (inter)cultural theatre production slowly contribute to the formation of trends and patterns indicative of dominant global ideologies and global capital.

While individual artists must grapple with divergent pressures on the production and reception of cultural material in different markets, the structures of (inter)national theatre festivals provide some stable frameworks for producers and audiences to come together. First, the economic pragmatism of globalizing forces supports the touring of particular performances to centralized geographies. Whereas traditional tourism would necessitate hundreds or thousands of individuals from the Global North to travel to a South African metropole such as Cape Town or Johannesburg in order to gaze upon a South African theatre product, the contemporary touring system favors the economically cheaper formation for the tourists. South African theatre arrives at theatre centres in in European and North American cities, among other (inter)national localities. There, global tourists may select and consume theatrical works already preselected from a wide array of South African performances at local South African festivals, theatres, and community centres, within the relatively comfortable, familiar confines of Euroamerican metropolises. As I will argue, while the tourist no longer travels to the destination(s) of interest, he or she undoubtedly continues to engage in constitutive behaviors of tourism. The tourist may rest comfortably with his or her purchase of access to cultural material knowing that he or she will be treated to a vetted display of the “best,” most “authentic” theatre that South Africa has to offer.²⁵ Moreover, artists necessarily exhibit their (inter)nationally mobile cultural material out of context, divorced from the original geographies and populations that necessarily informed the creation of the artistic works.

²⁵ As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues, “humanity does not want to inherit everything, just the best” (“World Heritage,” 186).

A great deal of institutional instability within post-apartheid South Africa's theatre communities added to the emphasis on (inter)national appeal in South African theatre. Long-established organizations, such as Johannesburg's Market Theatre, South Africa's central authority on all things dramatic since its inception in 1976, faced new difficulties in the post-apartheid era. Lacking the ideological imperative of the weaponized theatre of the apartheid era, producers in the post-apartheid era grappled with newly disinterested investors. Some producers attempted to translate theatre's apartheid-era role in cultural education to other contexts. In the most (in)famous example of such awareness-based theatre, Mbongemi Ngema created an AIDS "awareness" piece, *Sarafina II* (1996), as a sequel to his apartheid-era protest musical, *Sarafina* (1986).²⁶ A scandal arose out of the use of R90 million in AIDS funding for what turned out to be a flop both as an artistic and educational venture. This episode severely dampened government investment in individual theatre projects. Geoffrey V. Davis observed the economic foundations for this tendency towards theatre for export in the Reconstruction and Development Programme of the 1990s. As Davis writes

even if the country's 'Reconstruction and Development Programme' does evince concern for 'developing a unifying national culture' and does recognize the need to allocate 'adequate resources' to such a project, it nevertheless remains the case that, faced with equally pressing demands in the provision of housing, education, health, etc., culture may not in fact receive the kind of budgetary priority it would otherwise deserve.²⁷

Additionally, the 1995 death of Barney Simon, the Market Theatre's long-time artistic director, threw the organization into a state of disarray that lasted nearly a decade.²⁸ In the ensuing theatrical vacuum, the National Arts Festival (NAF), which as late as 1996 was viewed as "a

²⁶ Kruger, *The Drama of South Africa*, 208-209.

²⁷ Geoffrey V. Davis, *Voices of Justice and Reason: Apartheid and Beyond in South African Literature*, ed. Gordon Collier et al. (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 2003), 258; Cf. African National Congress, *The Reconstruction and Development Programme: A Policy Framework* (Johannesburg: ANC, 1994), Sect. 1.4.8: 9.

²⁸ Hilary Burns, "The Market Theatre of Johannesburg in the New South Africa," *New Theatre Quarterly* 18.4 (2002): 364-366; Loren Kruger and Malcolm Purkey, "Market Forces: Malcolm Purkey Interviewed by Loren Kruger," *Theatre* 38.1 (2008): 18-29.

largely establishment institution,” became an integral presence in experimentation and establishment of the *new* South African theatre.²⁹ The National Arts Festival provides opportunities for the (inter)national display of a wide range of artistic work, such as “concerts, plays, cabarets, dance, recitals, lectures, art shows and attendant merchants from all levels of South African society.”³⁰ Moreover, with its increasing popularity during the post-apartheid era, the NAF spawned a network of alternative arts festivals which formed around different sociolinguistic and/or cultural groups, such as the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK), the Aardklop Nasionale Festival, the Volksblad Kunstefees, the Arts Alive Festival, and Macufe: Manguang African Cultural Arts Festival.³¹ Vicki Ann Cremona notes that in post-apartheid South Africa, these “festivals play a dominant role in the theatre culture of the country.”³² As such, festivals became the principal sites for—and the authorizing agents of—theatrical development in the new South Africa. Accordingly, several systems of cultural authorization developed. For instance, the National Arts Festival selects a recipient of the “Standard Bank Young Artist Award” in several artistic categories each year.³³ These awards are highly sought after and carry both prestige as well as the incredibly valuable opportunity to present work on the (inter)nationally visible NAF Main Programme, which reserves one of a limited number of spots for the award recipient. The resultant exposure of artistic work authenticates the artists as theatrical practitioners of the highest note and authorizes them as artistic representatives of South

²⁹ Kenneth W. Grundy, “Cultural Politics in South Africa: An Inconclusive Transformation,” *African Studies Review* 39.1 (1996): 10.

³⁰ Michael Dry Arthur, “Think Differently: South African Theatre Of/In Transition and the Standard Bank National Arts Festival: 1992-1996.” (PhD diss. University of Texas at Austin, 1999), 48.

³¹ Gustav Visser, “Festival Tourism in Urban Africa: The Case of South Africa,” in *Urban Tourism in the Developing World*, ed. Christian Myles Rogerson and Gustav Visser (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 116.

³² Vicki Ann Cremona, “Introduction,” in *Festivalising! : Theatrical Events, Politics and Culture*, ed. Temple Hauptfleisch et al. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 6.

³³ There is not a recipient in each category every year. For instance, there was no recipient of the Young Artist Award in Drama in 2007 or 1999 (www.naf.co.za).

African culture on both national and international stages. Through both the selection of award recipients and the valorization of particular artists and works through curational processes, festivals such as the NAF authorized the artistic merit of select works as representative of the “best” in South African theatre.

Despite the titular “National” aspects of the NAF, the openness of festival structures invites both national and international eyes and ears to the authorized/authorizing stage. Some artists set their sights internationally, often touring their work to a variety of international festivals that feature authorizing/authenticating structures similar to that of the National Arts Festival. In such (inter)national settings, theatre from South Africa can be authorized as “South African theatre,” inherently presuming its representativeness of “authentic” South African beliefs, identities, ideologies, performances, and even dramatic formations. However, as Jerry Mofokeng asserts, theatre geared towards the international market often does not reproduce South African concerns or interests but instead becomes “theatre for export” by which

Culturally and artistically dominant societies thus confer their own aesthetic prejudices onto subject cultures, using their own values to define those cultures and the way they represent themselves. The aesthetic is thus imported, perhaps implanted, in order for the commodity to be suitable for export.³⁴

Zakes Mda reiterated Mofokeng’s assessment in the early 1990s, arguing, “today it is the ambition of most playwrights to have a play at the Market Theatre, and then of course in Europe and America. [South African] writers now write purely for export, and design their plays in a manner which they think will be acceptable to an overseas audience.”³⁵ Further supporting this “theatre for export” construct are the problematic dynamics surrounding the valuation of

³⁴ Jerry Mofokeng, “Theatre for Export: The Commercialization of the Black People’s Struggle in South African Export Musicals,” in *Theatre and Change in South Africa*, ed. Geoffrey V. Davis and Anne Fuchs (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers GmbH, 1996), 86-87.

³⁵ Zakes Mda, “Politics and the Theatre: Current Trends in South Africa,” in *Theatre and Change in South Africa*, ed. Geoffrey V. Davis and Anne Fuchs (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers GmbH, 1996), 203-204.

“authentic” cultural material. As Regina Bendix observes, “The transformation from felt or experienced authenticity to its textual or material representation harbors a basic paradox. Once a cultural good has been declared authentic, the demand for it rises, and it acquires a market value.”³⁶ Once authenticated by such awards, festivals, and critical praise, South African artists can “cash in” on their authorized position, turning their artistic work into an opportunity for economic success. The three playwrights that I have selected for this study are remarkable both for their inventive and challenging dramaturgical styles as well as their authoritative positions as representatives of South African theatre internationally. It is with these contested (inter)national structures that I seek to analyze the (inter)cultural flows attendant on South African theatre production and reception.

Simultaneously, the formations of (inter)national theatre festivals permit radically broad arrays of choice to the tourist, remapping the cultural imaginary on an (inter)national, global scale. At the Vienna Festival, tourists from around the globe can convene to view particular South African theatre such as Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom’s *Interracial* (2008), or Brett Bailey’s *Big Dada* (2005) and *Orfeus* (2009). Attesting to the cosmopolitanism of such festivals, the 2007 Vienna Festival, a total of forty-one productions from twenty different countries were produced. However, lest tourists from the Global North be dismayed at the erosion of particular European identities in the face of such (inter)national, globalizing forces, the Vienna Festival assures its guests that the structure is one based around Europeanness, with accents from the rest of the globe.³⁷ In support of this structure, Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and *Twelfth Night* received

³⁶ Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 7.

³⁷ “Weiner Festwochen,” accessed 14 Feb 2012, <<http://www.festwochen.at/index.php?id=149&L=1>>. The website proclaims, “Today the Wiener Festwochen is a firmly established high-point of the cultural calendar of Vienna: a metropolitan festival that sets particular accents, enters into a dialogue with artistic creations of other cities of

productions, as did *The Tempest* through Lemi Ponifasio's translation of the original through Maori/Tahitian languages.³⁸ Importantly, such dynamics of ethnocentrism are not local to European festivals. At the 1996 NAF, for instance, critics bemoaned the prevalence of theatrical works originating in the United States and Germany.³⁹ As a result, NAF organizers emphasized the centrality of South African theatre in the ensuing years, establishing a similar formation wherein at the NAF, South African theatre occupies the proverbial center and (inter)national productions dot the periphery. Indeed, festival structures often take this shape, with a primary emphasis being surrounded by secondary accents. However, this formation does not address the exigencies of production confronting individual theatre artists, which regularly transgress and confuse (inter)national boundary lines.

Whereas festivals are relatively stable industries with established sources of funding, South African theatre artists rely on their performances to draw international audiences. Successes within the national frame and/or the favorable attention of international producers are necessary intermediaries before the (inter)national travel of theatrical works. Once works leave their national boundaries, they are often performed more on the international stage than in their country of origin. Brett Bailey's *The House of the Holy Afro* (2004) toured to Africa, Australia, and Europe for six years before receiving a production within South Africa. Similarly, the works of Yael Farber often draw more performances and larger audiences abroad than in their limited runs at the National Arts Festival or other South African venues. Even Mpumelelo Paul

Europe and the world at large and presents spectacular productions while at the same time upholding and showcasing Viennese creativity.”

³⁸ “AUSTRIA: VIENNA FESTIVAL 2007 STARTS MAY 11, 2007,” 18 Dec 2006, accessed 14 Feb 2012, <<http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P3-1186148761.html>>.

³⁹ Eckhard Breiting, “A German Presence at the National Arts Festival,” in *South African Theatre As/And Intervention*, ed. Marcia Blumberg and Dennis Walder (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), 207-218; Michael Carlin and David Alcock, “Review: Standard Bank National Arts Festival. Grahamstown, South Africa. 4-14 July 1996,” *Theatre Journal* 49.1 (1997): 53-81.

Grootboom, who runs the South African State Theatre in Pretoria, has toured his productions widely, seeking audiences on the same three continents as Brett Bailey. Indeed, all three of these dramatists are represented by the same (inter)national (European) promotional agency, UK Arts International. Their mutual agent, Jan Ryan, markets particular South African artists and their productions to (inter)national festivals such as the Vienna Festival (Austria), Afrovibes Festival (Netherlands), as well as several other venues around the globe. With the exception of the Afrovibes Festival, which promises audiences “the best of South African theatre and dance and lets [them] think and debate as well as relax and enjoy,” these (inter)national festivals routinely place South African theatre as part of an international matrix of global performances.⁴⁰ In all cases, organizers attentively curate the festivals, ensuring the quality of each piece and its potential profitability on the global stage.

Thus, the (inter)national theatre festival structure occludes the costly and tiring work of international travel from the view of touristic spectator-audiences. The strains of cultural (re)production are borne primarily by the theatre artists and producers who must adapt their work to the exigencies of the (inter)national frame. The result of this labor is that a world of theatre appears fully formed at the tourist’s fingertips, in brochures and advertisements from which he or she may select the object(s) of his or her gaze. However, as John Urry compellingly argues, the “tourist gaze” relies on some fundamental structures of touristic engagement. Urry outlines,

Tourism results from a basic binary division between the ordinary/everyday and the extraordinary. [...] [P]otential objects of the tourist gaze must be different in some way or other. They must be out of the ordinary. People must experience particularly distinct pleasures which involve different senses or are on a different scale from those typically encountered in everyday life.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ “About Afrovibes,” accessed 14 Feb 2012, <<http://www.afrovibes.nl/2010/en/about-us>>.

⁴¹ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, Second Edition (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 12.

Importantly, the “world” that appears before the touristic spectator-audiences at (inter)national theatre festivals is presumably both complete and accurately (re)constructed, representative of a whole world of *difference* by means of curated theatrical works from around the globe. The tourist thus enters a constructed world within the festival frame, experiencing the basic divisions inherent to tourism: everyday/extra ordinary, normative/different, self/other. (Inter)national theatre festivals may construct the “distinct pleasures” of tourism through perceived oppositions between cultural materials, amplifying the pleasure by increasing the range of cultural oppositions. For instance, the “diversity” of the 2007 Vienna Festival relies on the assumption that Grootboom’s *Interracial* provides an experientially different event from *King Lear*, or that the internalization of difference within Ponifasio’s Maori/Tahitian variation on *The Tempest* produces the experience of cultural exchange within a single theatrical display. Such differences are manifold within (inter)national theatre structures. Diversity arises through differences in geography, linguistics, race/ethnicity, cultural traditions, and representations of gender, among others. In any case, the syncretism of festival structures depends fundamentally on perceptions of difference, which may then be manipulated into production of value through the tourist gaze.

The principle element that holds such panoply of global cultural material is an assumption of the authenticity of each cultural form on display—the putative “realness” of cultural difference that creates the global matrix upon which cosmopolitanism relies. In order for an object to be worthy of a tourist’s gaze, it must be marked in some way to inform its spectator-audience “how, when and where to ‘gaze’.”⁴² Advertisements and playbills for productions at (inter)national theatre festivals invariably attest to the nation of origin as well as a cultural primer

⁴² Urry, 10. “Global cultural material” here means cultural material from around the globe as opposed to material produced by a “global culture.” However, it is important to note that the traffic of cultural material from around the globe is herein repackaged as part of a cosmopolitan global culture wherein cultural differences can be transgressed.

informing spectator-audiences how to gaze upon the works responsibly and respectfully (i.e. according to the standards of each particular festival). Contrary to culturally and/or linguistically syncretic productions such as Ponifasio's Maori/Tahitian *The Tempest*, (inter)nationally touring productions involve the traffic of bodies as well as language, text, and cultural objects. These shows further emphasize the centrality of difference to the tourist experience, for as Urry notes, "Tourists show particular fascination in the 'real lives' of others that somehow possess a reality hard to discover in their own experiences."⁴³ Essential to this fascination with "real lives" is the tourist's belief in the "real life" to convey some authentic meaning to the spectator-audience.

Indeed, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett affirms this paradigm, noting,

Live displays, whether recreations of daily activities or staged as formal performances, also create the illusion that the activities one watches are being done rather than represented, a practice that creates the illusion of authenticity, or realness. The impression is one of unmediated encounter. Semiotically, live displays make the status of the performer problematic, for people become signs of themselves. [...] Whether the representation essentializes (you are seeing the quintessence of Balineseness) or totalizes (you are seeing the whole through the part), the ethnographic fragment returns with all the problems of capturing, inferring, constituting, and presenting the whole through parts.⁴⁴

Such supposedly "unmediated" live displays present touristic audiences with the authentic markers of cultural difference, namely visual, aural, and kinesthetic (as well as psychosocial) elements which are perceivably "different" from the tourists' everyday experiences. Whether the "difference" arises through divergences in the daily activities or the performance formations of the Other and of the tourist, the spectating tourist is more likely to accept on the differences between the self and other as "authentic" and "unmediated"—and thus as indicative of the essential or totalizing qualities of each particular instantiation of Otherness—than to investigate the potential mediations by the performer(s) or producer(s) to heighten and exoticize notions of

⁴³ Urry, 9.

⁴⁴ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 55.

difference that may or may not be inherent within the performances on display. Thus, the encounter itself provides the tourist with the experience of illusive “authenticity” because perceivably “different” bodies engage in unfamiliar and exotic matrices of kinesthetic, aesthetic, and aural realms.

Indeed, the multivalent significations of the exotic performing bodies—as sign and signifier, and signified of the “exotic”—reinforce such perceptions of authenticity. As Jane C. Desmond perceptively argues, “the implicit framing of the body as that which is ‘really real,’ is the hard heart of [...] epistemologies of difference.”⁴⁵ Importantly, the “really real” presence of performing others, marked by several signifiers such as ethnicity and gender, creates friction between the performance of Otherness and the performing other’s real presence. When is the performer exhibiting otherness “authentically” and when is he or she performing Otherness to meet the scopophilic gaze of the tourist? The indeterminism of such (inter)actions between touristic audiences and performers attests to the continual slippage of the performed “authentic” and the “really real” performance.

Regardless of where on the spectrum of “authenticity,” the presence of experientially “different” performing bodies before touristic audiences replicates the “exhibitionary complexes” indicative of contemporary globalized tourism wherein “actual objects anchor illusions and give them authority.”⁴⁶ Thus, despite the fact that theatre performances are invariably mediated by dramatists, directors, and producers, the tourist experiences the totalizing effects of the production as “authentic” and “real” representations of the other through the performance of the “really real” body. Thus, the authentic (“really real”) performance of culture

⁴⁵ Jane C. Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 251.

⁴⁶ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Exhibitionary Complexes,” in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, ed. Ivan Karp et al. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 42.

depends fundamentally on the creation of oppositionality between the “really real” bodies of the performers and the similarly “really real” bodies of spectator-audiences. These oppositions arise out of the perceived difference of one set of “really real” bodies to those (re)presenting another cultural frame and in the excess or lack of the “different” bodies. Thus, despite the mutual existence of tourists and performers as possessors of autonomous “really real bodies,” such touristic understandings of performance perpetuate and reinforce the underlying cultural divisions between “us” and “them.” The incongruities arising out of (inter)national performances are the very markers of cultural diversity upon which international theatre festivals rely; they promise real encounters through the exotic, unfamiliar, inherently “different” commodifications through which cultural tourism traffics.

Now, these cultural negotiations do not predetermine the efficacy or value of (inter)national performances. Indeed, the (inter)national tours of *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead*, *Woza Albert!*, and other apartheid-era “theatre-for-resistance” works proved to be efficacious in garnering support for the anti-apartheid movement on a global scale. However, focusing on the structures of (inter)national theatre traffic reveals its foundations on a complex system of “self/Other” representations and “self/Other”-reproductions. As modeled in President Mandela’s inaugural celebrations, artists and performers from South Africa seek not only to reproduce South African identities, ideologies, and putative “selves,” but also to engage in the complex processes of identity formation, ideological exploration, and self-discoveries. The realm of performance provides a broad arena for such “experiments in freedom.” However, when mobilized into the (inter)national market, these idiosyncratic processes are placed on display for non-South Africans who are simultaneously engaged in their own processes of self-discovery. As Peggy Phelan argues, “[s]eeing the other is a social form of self-reproduction. For in looking

at/for the other, we seek to re-present ourselves to ourselves.”⁴⁷ Therefore, in (inter)national contexts, South African performance risks becoming an “other” to the non-South African “self,” and thus a mere tool for (inter)national/(inter)cultural value rather than an independent process of self-definition. Indeed, all cultural materials may be treated as opportunities for cultural reification through reflection of the “self” against the “other.”

Thus, the focus of this study is twofold. First, I will engage with South African theatre production domestically, paying close attention to the negotiation of an authentically new South African theatre (and an authentically new South African identity) during the post-apartheid moment. Such negotiations were part of a broader project to re-imagine the South African community as a multicultural collective in the wake of the “separateness” endemic to apartheid. Different artists, such as Brett Bailey, Yael Farber, and Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom, developed creative means of creating and deploying the “authentic” within the stage frame and therein providing potential answers to the manifold questions raised by South Africa’s undefined identity. However, Bailey, Farber, and Grootboom have all toured their shows widely, opening their productions to the touristic gazes of (inter)national audiences and implicitly endangering the efficacy of their national projects.

These global dynamics lead to the second focus of this study. (Inter)national theatre production relies on different structures from domestic production; its concerns are also inherently different. Like the 1994 inauguration that attempted to realize the “Rainbow Nation” through embodied performances, particular performers and/or performances may be endowed with “authenticity” in order to promote certain political, social, or cultural agendas. Whereas domestic, “national” theatre production can be, and often is, part of a wider development of an

⁴⁷ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 21.

“imagined community” with all of its attendant issues resulting from intranational concerns, (inter)national theatre production imagines each national theatre as part of a global whole. (Inter)national theatre producers and agents select particular theatrical works for production in part based on the presumed cultural “authenticity” of each work. In order to meet the demands of a touristic audience, authentic difference must be included in the festival repertory, allowing for individual audience members to engage in the (inter)cultural dialectics of “self” and “other.” Theatre festivals thus authorize the “authenticity” of individual works as parts of their whole cultural project. The ascendancy of Brett Bailey, Yael Farber, and Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom on the (inter)national stage presumes their successful performance as mediators of South African culture to (inter)national audiences. However, the putative authenticity of these three artists occludes the several steps of mediation by other unseen agents (such as Jan Ryan of UK Arts International), as well as their engagement in a broader (inter)national theatre system that authorizes certain works over others.⁴⁸ All three artists inherently negotiate the expanding (inter)national theatre economy, inherently participating in “this latest stage of globalization [which is] a stage fueled primarily by the export of cultural products as Trojan horses of neo-imperialism.”⁴⁹ As such, several later works by Bailey, Farber, and Grootboom suggest an active engagement in the (inter)cultural demands of (inter)national theatre production, namely what Daphne P. Lei terms “Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre.” The focus of this study will therefore be the effects of such mediations, negotiations, and productions of South African cultural material in various (inter)national contexts—including its potential deployment as a proverbial “Trojan

⁴⁸ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 76.

⁴⁹ Tricia Rose, “Foreword,” in *Black Cultural Traffic: Crossroads in Global Performance and Popular Culture*, ed. Harry J. Elam, Jr., and Kennell Jackson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), vii.

horse of neo-imperialism,” and its attendant co-optation as a mere signifier of cultural diversity within the broader schema of global neoliberal capitalism.

Importantly, the successes and failures of each dramatist in these negotiations can hardly be determined authoritatively. For each perspective that claims an artist’s representation is “selling out” the cultural material of a particular group, a rebuttal can invariably claim that the representation simply “cashes in” on an opportunity to portray the “authentic.” Thus, this study will not be evaluative of the (inter)cultural worth of various South African works. Rather, I will explore several contestations of authenticity in both the formation of post-apartheid South African theatre and its international traffic in order to elucidate the connections between cultural authenticity, cultural/capital authority, and the interplay between these forces on national and international stages.

2.0 AUTHENTIC(ATING) SOUTH AFRICAN THEATRE IN THE POST- APARTHEID ERA

Uncertainty, and the search for an ameliorating certainty, strongly marked the post-apartheid era in South Africa. In terms of theatre, Loren Kruger defined the immediate post-apartheid period as one of “post-anti-apartheid” during which South African theatre was “an institution under threat by crime, fear, and the loss [...] of the cultural and political energy generated by the anti-apartheid movement.”¹ The post-apartheid era was marked distinctly by the loss of the proverbial “devil that South Africa knew” during apartheid, for the oppositionality inherent in apartheid-era formations created a relatively simple binary of unjust power structures countered by righteous activism. Post-apartheid, this dynamic gave way to an ambivalent present and future formations constantly at risk of being co-opted by cooperation and alliances with apartheid-era enemies. No longer “devils” and “freedom-fighters,” post-apartheid South Africans needed a new means of conceptualizing formerly oppositional Others as potential compatriots within the “Rainbow Nation.”² As outlined in the introduction, the post-apartheid government’s mythos and its enactment of the TRC as a conciliatory process authorized truth and authenticity as formative markers of South African identity in the post-apartheid era.

South African theatre artists took up the manifold banners of truth, proliferating several dramatic formations originating from “authentic” sources such as newspaper accounts, first-person narratives, and cultural heritage, among others. Some post-apartheid plays, such as

¹ Kruger, “Theatre, Crime, and the Edgy City in Post-apartheid Johannesburg,” 225.

² David Graver, “Theatre in the New South Africa,” *Performing Arts Journal*, 17.1 (Jan 1995): 103-119.

Andrew Buckland and Bheki Mkhwane's *Makanda*, attempted to locate an "authentic" South African culture in the myths and histories preceding the apartheid era.³ Others, such as Lara Foot Newton's *Tshepang: The Third Testament* (2003) and *Relativity: "Township Stories"* (2005) by Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom and Presley Chweneyagae, elaborated fictional tellings based on "real," traumatic, contemporary events in post-apartheid township life.⁴ Mike Van Graan's *Green Man Flashing* (2004) also interrogated contemporary anxieties regarding sexuality, politics, and their problematic juncture along lines of "truth" in the post-apartheid government. Perhaps most famously, issues of truth and reconciliation were placed centerstage in both John Kani's *Nothing But The Truth* (2002), which explores the issues of truth and reconciliation within the theatrical realist frame of a domestic drama, and in *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1997), a reworking of Alfred Jarry's classic anarcho-political *Ubu* farces within the stage frame of the TRC. Importantly, none of these works invested in a didactic or absolutist notion of truth or its representation theatrically. Rather, they evidenced a broader African philosophical conception of the truth in which, "a story is less true for being fictional or constructed."⁵

Yvette Hutchison elaborates on this uniquely "African philosophical approach" by noting "a story's truthfulness is evidenced in the audience's reaction, insofar as it recognizes itself in the story and its telling."⁶ Thus, within a South African context the "authenticity" of a work depends primarily on the perceived representativeness or believability of its subject matter. In this formation, a work's audience serves as the primary authorizing agent of the work's authenticity.

³ Zakes Mda, "South African Theatre in an Era of Reconciliation," in *Words and Worlds: African Writing, Theatre and Society*, ed. Susan Arndt and Katrin Berndt (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2007), 85.

⁴ Notably, the script for Foot Newton's *Tshepang* proclaims that the play is "Based on Twenty Thousand True Stories" (Lara Foot Newton, *Tshepang: The Third Testament* (London: Oberon Books, 2005). Both involve accounts of infant/child rape, while the latter also incorporates the story of the "G-string killer," which derives from several accounts of serial murder/rape in Johannesburg's townships.

⁵ Yvette Hutchison, "Post-1990s Verbatim Theatre in South Africa: Exploring an African Concept of 'Truth'," in *Dramaturgy of the Real on the World Stage*, ed. Carol Martin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 62.

⁶ Hutchison, 62.

Working within this spectator relationship, dramatists experimented with several deployments of truth and authenticity while working towards representations of what was and/or what could be the *new* South Africa of the post-apartheid era.

The three dramatists of this study work with multiple representations of the “authentic” new South Africa. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how each playwright repurposes “authentic” cultural material to create representations of South African “reality” in the post-apartheid era, ranging from the spiritual mysticism of Brett Bailey’s “Plays of Miracle and Wonder” to the (re)presentations of traumas in Yael Farber’s testimonial theatre and to the cynical hyperrealism of Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom’s filmic reworking of township theatre aesthetics. Particularly for Bailey and Farber, such processes necessitate the negotiation of the still-present color lines demarcating cultural authority and ownership in South Africa. Both Bailey and Farber deploy their own artistic processes as “biographic sources” for authenticating their engagement with the “cultural sources” of black South Africans. Grootboom, on the other hand, demonstrates a simpler process of representing his individual perspective on the “cultural sources” of township life. Importantly, all three dramatists also direct their own productions, mediating all cultural material through their individual processes of author(iz)ing the written and performed works. Each individual artist thus relies heavily on his or her own ability and authority to (re)present an “authentic” post-apartheid South Africa.

Tracking these negotiations of representational authority and authenticity, I will focus primarily on textual evidence of the plays as well as archival material documenting performances within South Africa’s national boundaries. These performances suggest several active, vital processes of negotiation wherein individual dramatists provide works that may be interpreted multiply by diverse audiences. The resultant contestatory discussions suggest the valuable role

that these dramatists have played in contributing to the formation of both a new South African theatre and a(n) (imaginary) new South Africa in the post-apartheid era.

2.1 BRETT BAILEY: SYNCRETISM OF “ESSENTIAL ENERGIES,” MIRACLE, AND WONDER

Brett Bailey and his theatre troupe, Third World Bunfight, first garnered acclaim at the 1996 National Arts Festival (NAF) where the Fringe served as the premiere stage for *Zombie*, a play based on real events surrounding a 1995 car crash in Kokstad that resulted in the deaths of fifteen boys. Local youth blamed the crash on witchcraft, prevented the interment of their dead fellow students, and ultimately killed two women who were accused of perpetrating the witchcraft. The production was wildly successful critically and commercially, garnering Bailey an invitation to the 1997 NAF Main Programme and launching Bailey’s career as a dramatist. Zakes Mda called the production “a work of genius that maps out a path to a new South African theatre.”⁷ Despite the relatively simple plot based on “real events,” Bailey created a vibrantly syncretic play that blended together amaXhosa rituals and dance, South African mythology, apartheid-era “protest theater” formations, and even cabaret-style performance pieces. Indeed, Bailey’s interest in drawing from multiple potentially “taboo” South African traditions and his irreverence in deploying them earned Bailey a reputation as “the bad boy of the [South African] theatre scene.”⁸

⁷ Brett Bailey, *Ipi Zombi?* in *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder* (Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2003), 40.

⁸ Judith Rudakoff, “Why Did the Chicken Cross the Cultural Divide?” *TDR* 48.2 (2004): 81.

Bailey's four earliest works, *Ipi Zombi?*, *iMumbo Jumbo*, *Heartstopping*, and *The Prophet*, which are collected in *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder*, daringly explore the limits of post-apartheid theatre through syncretic admixtures of indigenous rituals and Western theatricality. Bailey's fascination and deployment of multiple "essential" lineages into a syncretic blend attempts to reveal the "hectic primal energy" lurking "just beneath the fragile web of society."⁹ Drawing from his personal journeys and study of Xhosa ritual, Bailey establishes his authority to represent culturally "other" rituals based on his own biographical experience. For instance, Bailey attests,

I've lived for extended periods in mud huts in the rural parts of the Transkei, and with mystics in sacred African caves. I've worked very deeply with my troupe of actors in townships around the country, and toured the rural Transkei with plays in Xhosa translation. I have sought out voodoo in West Africa, and undergone an initiation ceremony in northern Uganda. [...] The plays [of *Miracle and Wonder*] come out of this milieu: through interaction, observation, research and improvisation. These works are based on real events. They are told in the realm of illusion.¹⁰

Moreover, much of the text of both *Ipi Zombi?* and *iMumbo Jumbo* derives from Bailey's own interviews with individuals in the aftermath of the "real events" around which the plays developed. Thus, authorizing himself through his personal experiences with real events and actual rituals, Bailey frames his (re)presentation of amaXhosa rituals, performances, and myths as well as South African history as *authentic*, unmediated by Western agents or eyes.¹¹ Drawing from Jerzy Grotowski, Antonin Artaud, Richard Schechner, and indigenous performance traditions, among others, Bailey refers to his works as "total theatre" that act as "releaser[s] of

⁹ Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder*, 84.

¹⁰ Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder*, 10.

¹¹ Though he is white, Bailey, who calls himself "a third-generation African" claims no connection to Western culture or its values. Indeed, he repeatedly disparages Western society and theatre as inferior to their South African counterparts (Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder*, 15).

essential energy” into moribund societies.¹² Despite (or because of) Bailey’s beliefs in the “essential” qualities of indigenous performance, his theatre enacts the active negotiation of cultural identity in South Africa, drawing from diverse strands of identity, memory, history, and performance.

In order to deeply explore Bailey’s techniques of cultural negotiation through his theatrical acts of syncretic blending, I will take a close look at *Ipi Zombi?*, a revision of *Zombie* commissioned by The National Arts Festival Main Programme in 1998. First, Bailey describes his dramaturgical “Method” as one in which he “take[s] township traditions and styles, throw[s] them in the blender with rural performance and ceremony, black evangelism, a handful of Western avant-garde and a dash of showbiz, and flick[s] the switch.”¹³ Much has already been written on Bailey’s inclusion of authentic rituals performed by practicing *izangoma* [plural of *isangoma*, or diviners], which draw from Bailey’s understanding of theatre as a fundamentally ritual act.¹⁴ In addition to staging rituals encoded with real efficacy, Bailey also includes additional phenomenologically affective elements, such as musical performances ranging from traditional amaXhosa songs to lip-synching performances of Doris Day’s “Shakin’ the Blues Away,” highly aromatic imphepho herbs ritualistically burned during *iMumbo Jumbo*, and the use of natural candlelight in *Ipi Zombi?*¹⁵

¹² Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder*; Anton Krueger, “Essential Energies of the Forest,” *South African Theatre Journal* 324, 331.

¹³ Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder*, 9.

¹⁴ Bailey quotes both Wole Soyinka on “ritual drama” and Richard Schechner on “trance dance” in his essay, “Performing So the Spirit Can Dance,” in Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder*, 18-25. See also Judith Rudakoff and Anton Krueger.

¹⁵ Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder*, 40.

Bailey's adherence to ritual is further borne out in his creation of idiosyncratic imagistic and spatial orientations for each of his plays.¹⁶ As Bailey attests, "the language I speak is not so much one of words, it is one of other signs: of images and sounds. These signs or symbols are as complex as—if not more so than—a language of words, for they resonate with so many nuances, meanings, associations, can be read in so many ways."¹⁷ For instance, Bailey prescribes that *Ipi Zombi?* should be "played in three-quarter round, the way many African ceremonies would be performed [while] [t]he floor is covered in dry cow dung, and surrounded by grass mats on which the performers sit, sing, play music, etc."¹⁸ Such ceremonial staging recalls the geophysical orientations of traditional Zulu and Xhosa rituals, while simultaneously presenting the ritual performances of izangoma within a "three-quarter round" theatrical arena which recalls the three-quarter thrust stages of early modern England.¹⁹ Similarly, in costuming his characters, Bailey prescribes that all performers are to be covered from head to toe in ceremonial white clay, in keeping with the performance traditions of amaXhosa rituals. While this tradition is an "authentic" element within the play, it also potentially signifies a theatrical "whitening up" of all of the actors, ironically commenting on the historical dynamics of theatre in South Africa and formal theatre's unavoidable Western/European lineage. Indeed, the tension between Western and non-Western performance courses throughout Bailey's drama. In one telling example, Bailey closed his 2003 Baxter Theatre production of *iMumbo Jumbo* with the actual sacrifice of a live chicken, explicitly challenging the Western theatrical separation of the "real" and the

¹⁶ Rudakoff, 80-90; Anton Krueger, "The Dionysian Theatre of Brett Bailey," *Experiments in Freedom: Explorations of Identity in New South African Drama* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010), 153-170; *At This Stage: Plays from Post-apartheid South Africa*, ed. Greg Homann, (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009), 8.

¹⁷ Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder*, 37.

¹⁸ Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder*, 40.

¹⁹ Peter Larlham, *Black Theatre, Dance, and Ritual in South Africa* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985), 27-28; Christopher Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage: Theatrical Syncretism and Post-Colonial Drama* (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1999), 236-237.

representational.²⁰ Moreover, the inclusion of what practitioners—and some audience members—believe to be efficacious rituals continually reaffirms the potential for Bailey’s theatrical works to have real efficacy and for the performances therein to be viewed as real. Controversies arose surrounding both the live sacrifice and the deployment of ritual performance outside a socially circumscribed context, leading some to view Bailey’s work as both unreasonably provocative and “tantamount to blasphemy.”²¹ Such is the radical syncretism of Bailey’s oeuvre, which incorporates divergent traditions, forms, and styles while maintaining the authenticity of the disparate parts. Seemingly contradictory “authentic” histories, ideologies, and cultures are blended with and into purportedly opposing frameworks, creating deeply layered representations of an inextricably intertwined South African identity. Bailey’s language of “signs” thus playfully challenges authoritative “readings” of his plays as well as the origination of the events staged therein.

Rather than seeking absolutist conclusions, Bailey instead favors decentered productions that challenge audience members to make meaning out of seemingly contradictory and disparate elements. Throughout *Ipi Zombi?*, Bailey interpolates metatheatrical reminders of the work’s theatricality. In the opening monologue, immediately prior to a cast rendition of a sacred isangoma song, the Narrator announces, “we tell you the stories from the heart of the country, we The Natives, we the Real Live Blacks! Ja!”²² Thus, in a single moment, Bailey crafts what Harry J. Elam, Jr., calls a “Reality ✓” wherein Bailey “brusquely rub(s) the real up against the representational in ways that disrupt the spectators and produce new meanings.”²³ The actors are

²⁰ Rudakoff, 80-90.

²¹ *Ibid*; Mda, “South African Theatre in an Era of Reconciliation,” 86.

²² Bailey, *Ipi Zombi?*, 44.

²³ Harry J. Elam, Jr., “Reality ✓,” *Critical Theory and Performance: Revised and Enlarged Edition*, ed. Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 173.

in fact “real live blacks” covered in ritually significant traditional Xhosa white clay who perform ritual acts and traditional songs and dances. But, in naming themselves “The Native” and “Real Live Blacks,” the performers summon associations with historically objectifying curio-performances of Real Live Black-ness. This dissonant moment leads directly into a sacred ritual performance, repeating the authentically real, live, black performance. While the metatheatricality of this moment attests to the inherent inauthenticities of theatrical(ized) performance, it also carries the potential to re-authenticate, for by admitting the presence of the “man behind the curtain,” Bailey suggests that he will pull no tricks on the audience even as he does so.

A later moment repeats this metatheatrical dynamic. When the Narrator calls out for the play’s “special star,” Intombi ‘Nyama, to take the stage, he phrases his summons entirely in isiNguni, calling out, “Iphi Intombi ‘Nyama?”²⁴ In this relatively unobtrusive moment, an avid South African theatregoer may perceive Bailey’s ironic reference to the controversial apartheid-era “tribal musical,” *Ipi Tombi*.²⁵ Indeed, the title of Bailey’s play, *Ipi Zombi?*, satirically echoes the apartheid-era exploitation piece, which was produced by white theatrical entrepreneurs Bertha Egnos and Gail Lakier and which toured internationally where it drew protests and boycotts for “projecting a romanticized image of the black man in Africa, trading on the excitement, vigor, and exoticism associated with tribal life.”²⁶ This explicit reference to an exploitative theatrical representation of “real live black” performers produced by white agents draws attention to Bailey’s own role as a white male potentially profiting from the appropriation

²⁴ Bailey, *Ipi Zombi?*, 53.

²⁵ Bailey, *Ipi Zombi?*, 53.

²⁶ P. Larlham, 72. Bailey makes the reference explicit in his afterword: “The title is a pun on the patronising hit musical drama of the seventies, IPI TOMBI, which was boycotted by conscientised blacks all over the world” (Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder*, 86).

of black performance for personal gain. However, Bailey's staging completes the irreverent reference to South Africa's theatrical past, for when Intombi 'Nyama (trans. "little girl") takes the stage, the audience does not see a "little girl," but "an urban superstar in drag: pearls in her dreadlocks, plastic ball gown, diamanté jewelry, etc."²⁷ Potentially referencing the political satires of Pieter-Dirk Uys's drag performances in apartheid- and post-apartheid-era theatre, Bailey presents his theatre as a drag performance of South African theatre, culture, history, and myth.²⁸ Importantly, as Laurence Senelick argues, "the conflation of clowning, blood-letting and cross-gender roles provides a vivid target for the efficient release for cultural tensions."²⁹ Intombi Nyama's presence permits the audience to acknowledge again the inherent theatricality of the performance, to see Bailey's own self-awareness of his role as a proverbial puppet master, and to invite laughter at the theatrical (mis)representations of the past.

All of these syncretic moments engage with various conceptions of the "real" South Africa through time. Bailey's references to both "Real Live Blacks" and *Ipi Tombi* attempt to create distance between his works and the tradition of white entrepreneurs capitalizing on "authentic" blackness. In addition to such revisionary concerns, Bailey seeks to engage with deeper (pace "truer") meanings latent in quotidian representations. As Bailey elaborates,

If I make a play about zombies, for instance, I have a story, and subject matter with many associations and issues clustering around it: witchcraft; superstition vs. Belief; colliding worldviews; white stereotypes of blacks; ritual vs. Superficial pop etc. etc. And so I can group together a variety of dramatic styles; conflicting voices and viewpoints; provocative jibes, and sequence them and frame them so they problematise or comment on one another and acquire meaning. I can load them.³⁰

²⁷ Bailey, *Ipi Zombi?*, 54.

²⁸ Laurence Senelick, *The Changing Room: Sex, Drag, and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 474-478.

²⁹ Senelick, 460.

³⁰ Bailey quoted in Anton Krueger, "On the Wild, Essential Energies of the Forest: An Interview with Brett Bailey," *South African Theatre Journal* 20 (2006): 323-324.

Through his highly visualistic and kinesthetic theatre, Bailey attempts to give life to such historically unspoken and unrecorded narratives, drawing on various historical origin points in order to explore his contemporary moment in an uncertain and turbulent South Africa.

A prime example of Bailey's "load[ing]" of meaning unfolds midway through *Ipi Zombi?* during a sequence titled "The Fear."³¹ In this scene, the schoolboys rally themselves to the task of finding and killing the witches. First, the schoolboys strip off their own shirts, tie them around their waists, revealing their less-mud-covered black skin as they transform into "savage boy-dogs," chanting the song "Bulala bathakhathi—"Kill the witches." Throughout the percussive song, three women run into the center of the circular stage space where the boys stone them. This remarkable, visceral stage moment is followed by a scene in which the boys "crouch in ambush," slowly encroaching on Mrs. Magudu, an accused witch, while her son looks on, narrating the events in the past tense to a TV reporter. Thus, the audience perceives the performance of the "live" event and its reportage, the presentation and re-presentation of an actual historical event.

Beyond the layering of competing "real" and theatrical frames, Bailey further loads the scene with cultural and historical divisions. Importantly, though the song, "Bulala bathakhathi," repeats its message solely in isiZulu, the dialogue in the ensuing scene ensures that an English-speaking audience can understand its translation, for characters repeat the phrase "Kill the witch" throughout both "The Fear" and the ensuing scene, "The Sacrifice."³² This latter scene reaches its climax when the schoolboys "dance the dance of death" around Mrs. Magudu, whom they violently execute on an altar, "plung[ing] in and bludgeon[ing] her to death." While these stage events are shocking, creating a visceral experience in and of themselves, they also embody a deeply ingrained and controversial historical reference familiar to most South Africans: the

³¹ Bailey, *Ipi Zombi?*, 65-67. All subsequent quotations will be taken from this section unless otherwise noted.

³² Bailey, *Ipi Zombi?*, 67-69.

murder of Voortrekker leader Piet Retief by Zulu chief Dingane. As anthropologist Adam Kuper describes,

Dingane asked [Retief's party] for a farewell celebratory dance. [...]As the dance reached a climax, Dingane gave a signal—whistling and calling out, '*Bulalani abathakathi*—kill the witches.' The soldiers then fell on the Boers and dragged them off to the place of execution, on a ridge north-east of the capital. Here they were clubbed to death, and left, as was customary, unburied. Retief was forced to watch while his followers (including his son) were killed, before he was himself put to death, his body mutilated.³³

The murder of Retief was only the beginning of a longer conflict, and “the slain Boers were ‘avenged’ at the Battle of Blood River on 16 December 1838. This date was sanctified in twentieth-century Afrikaner culture as ‘the Day of the Covenant,’” which is commemorated annually at the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria, where a beam of light ritually passes over Piet Retief's symbolic resting place.³⁴ This story became a formative event in Afrikaner culture and identity, perpetuated by its enshrinement in the monolithic Voortrekker Monument as well as its inclusion in South African textbooks laced with “negrophobia” and the deeply racist lenses of apartheid.³⁵

In summoning the ghosts of Piet Retief and his murder at the hands of black Zulu natives, Bailey places both the recent past and the formative history of South Africa on stage for interpretation by his audience. However, the apartheid resonance of the Dingane narrative is likely more familiar to most South Africans than both the local history of Kokstad and the distant memory of settlement. Dingane, “the symbol of the adversary” in the Afrikaner mythology, was

³³ Adam Kuper, *Among the Anthropologists: History and Context in Anthropology* (London: The Athlone Press, 1999), 195.

³⁴ Peter Merrington, “Masques, Monuments, and Masons: The 1910 Pageant of the Union of South Africa,” *Theatre Journal* 49.1 (1997): 12n34. See also Joseph Lelyveld, *Move Your Shadow: South Africa, Black and White* (New York: Times Books, 1985), 58-59.

³⁵ Leonard Thompson, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 59.

later reimagined as a stand-in for “Godless communism and the ANC” during apartheid.³⁶ In *Ipi Zombi?*, Bailey resurrects this apartheid paradigm as the schoolboys seeking revenge can easily be viewed as “savage black natives” threatening to violently destroy the status quo; simultaneously, they reenact the apartheid-era political action of militant, predominantly male black youth in opposition to the National Party government. Indeed, any chauvinist ex-Nationalist Party member in the audience would likely be deeply disturbed and potentially threatened by the stage events unfolding before his or her eyes.

Such fear would likely be warranted to some extent, not because the scene actually threatened to turn violent against the audience, but because the schoolboys’ zealous search for witches “was in part a response to their own disempowerment as their political authority gained by direct action during the 1980s passed back to older and better educated people in the communities in the 1990s.”³⁷ Thus, in addition to the theatrical, ritual, and ideological histories that Bailey layered into his dramaturgy, he also interwove the real pressure that histories place on present notions of identity and individual action. The schoolboys’ concepts of masculine agency were irrevocably intertwined with apartheid-era displays of machismo and active rebellion against authority. The result of their collective realization of social and political agency was the death of two local women. Despite the abstract nature of myth and history, the coalescence of the past into present action here results in conflict, violence, and death. For Bailey, this dynamic supports his theoretical writings, which emphasize a worldview in which there is no break between the real and the represented, nor a strict division between the past and the present.

³⁶ Alan Cowell, *Killing the Wizards: Wars of Power and Freedom from Zaire to South Africa* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 146. It should be noted that Cowell’s title, *Killing the Wizards*, is an alternative translation of “bulala bathakathi.”

³⁷ Kruger, *The Drama of South Africa*, 203.

In Bailey's theatre, the past continually haunts the present, imbuing it with echoes, scents, and sentiments of the preceding moments.

Nonetheless, the "*Bulala bathakathi*" excerpt from *Ipi Zombi?* highlights an integral element of Bailey's project: the interrogation of South African history via exceptionally liminal moments that can be read variably depending on the viewer's subject position and engagement with subnational discourses. Like Dhlomo, the proverbial father of South African drama, Bailey "telescopes the events in the record to intensify the power of the play as subjunctive enactment of 'African history...and metamorphosis' and so to amplify the historical resonances of the present occasion."³⁸ The significance of cultural codes embedded throughout the performance creates matrices of meaning divorced from singular semantic "readings." Instead, Bailey "loads" the meanings in *Ipi Zombi?* within a wider cultural frame of South African memory, experience, and performance, remobilizing them within the frame of theatre. Fractures within the audience along variably sociolinguistic, cultural, ethnic, and class lines will inherently result in different readings and different resultant meanings. For instance, for a chauvinist Afrikaner watching the "*Bulala bathakathi*" sequence to connect the past to the present, he or she must not only imagine the live performers as (re)enactors of Piet Retief's murder. Rather, he or she must also complete the reference by mapping the Voortrekker Piet Retief, the father of Afrikaner patriarchal mythos, onto Mrs. Magudu, an amaXhosa mother from the rural Bhongweni/Kokstad community. Meanwhile, a Zulu-speaking audience member will immediately understand the phrase "*Bulala bathakathi*," even if he or she does not immediately associate it with Piet Retief's murder. A mixed South African audience, reflective of the mythic post-apartheid "Rainbow Nation," would

³⁸ Kruger, *The Drama of South Africa*, 69. Two of Bailey's "Plays of Miracle & Wonder" involve references to Dhlomo's foundational dramatic works. Dhlomo's *Dingane* traces the life of the Zulu ruler who killed Piet Rietief, which is strongly referenced in *Ipi Zombi?* and Dhlomo's *The Girl Who Killed to Save* centers on a girl, Nongqawuse, who is at the center of Bailey's *The Prophet*.

inherently experience *Ipi Zombi?* through vastly different cultural lenses. Thus, *Ipi Zombi?* produces multiple significations, opening the work up to multiple (mis)readings, each of which is invariably informed by a spectating-audience's critical and cultural awareness.

Regardless of Bailey's ideas of "authentic" cultural essentialism and his apparently effective displacement of singular meanings from cultural signs, he drew criticism within South Africa for his deployment of cultural materials, particularly of those "belonging" to other cultures. In 2001, Brett Bailey won the Standard Bank Young Artist Award, and soon after, began touring Third World Bunfight shows globally, beginning with his 2001 NAF premiere show, *Big Dada: The Rise and Fall of Idi Amin*. Perhaps reacting to the "export" of traditional South African culture, mediated by a white theatre producer in an ironic reenactment of previous "tribal musicals" such as *Ipi Tombi*, critic and dramatist Duma kaNdlovu invoked the concept of cultural ownership in order to challenge Bailey's authority as the appropriator/mediator of cultural material. kaNdlovu stated

I think that Brett Bailey is brave, and I think again that you do need that kind of people in any society. However, Brett Bailey is not going to touch us [black South Africans] the right way, because he ventures into some of the sacred aspects of our culture that there is no way he could understand. [...His plays] were offensive to an intelligent black person like myself—not because they were intended to be offensive, but he has been trying to do what you cannot do. He has gone to sacred places where you cannot go on your own[.]³⁹

kaNdlovu further emphasized Bailey's lack of cultural authority by claiming "Bailey needs to get a very senior person in terms of theatre and intellectual thought, who will say to him, Black people are not going to like this."⁴⁰ Daniel Larlham affirms that kaNdlovu's criticism is

³⁹ kaNdlovu quoted in Rolf Solberg, *South African Theatre in the Melting Pot* (Grahamstown, SA: Institute for the Study of English in Africa, Rhodes University, 2003), 270-271. kaNdlovu is no stranger to international touring as he was the curator of the *Woza Afrika!* festival at New York's Lincoln Center in 1986. That festival, however, was politically rooted and featured theatre predominantly authored and acted by black South Africans. See *Woza Afrika!*, ed. Duma Ndlovu, (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1986).

⁴⁰ kaNdlovu quoted in Solberg, *South African Theatre in the Melting Pot*, 271.

“representative” of a wider community of black South Africans who objected to the appropriation of the “cultural sources” owned by black South Africans.⁴¹ Indeed, another critic disparaged his engagements with both traditional African ritual and predominantly black community theatre formations by terming Bailey “the Stromboli [Pinocchio’s puppet master] of community theatre.”⁴² Despite Bailey’s appeals to his own biographically rooted authority over the ritualistic material of his works, after 1999’s *The Prophet* his theatrical productions deviated from such investments in authentic African rituals. In 2003, Bailey wrote that he “felt that [he] had lost touch with the roots of Xhosa culture, which had made the first plays in the series so strong and vibrant [... He] began to question [his] right to work with this material at all.”⁴³ These conflicts over representational authority demonstrate both South Africa’s deep engagement in notions of cultural authenticity and in the interconnectedness of staging authenticity and the authority over the “authentic” material.

Bailey’s authority to represent South Africa evidently relied on the central questions: Why does Bailey seek to represent South African life through the inclusion of sacred rituals? For whom does Bailey seek to perform these rituals? Though Bailey repeatedly attempted to answer the first question by attesting to his personal investment in South African traditions, the second question created a breach of trust in Bailey’s representational authority. Whereas individual South Africans could potentially experience their own estrangement (*Verfremdung*) from their own South African culture in pieces such as *Ipi Zombi?* and *iMumbo Jumbo*, shifting the audience’s awareness from one deeply invested in the cultural intricacies of South Africa to one invested more in spectating upon South Africa fundamentally alters the dynamics embedded in

⁴¹ Daniel Larlham, “Brett Bailey and Third World Bunfight: Journeys into the South African Psyche,” *Theatre* 39.1 (2009): 9; Zandberg, 11.

⁴² Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder*, 195.

⁴³ Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder*, 198.

such syncretic works. What do the ironic juxtapositions of the “*Bulala bathakathi*” sequence signify to an international audience? Without the linguistic or cultural clues to connect the phrase to the foundational historical moment of Piet Retief’s death, would international audiences see anything beyond the portrayal of young black men as “savage-boy-dogs” raping and murdering a middle-aged woman?⁴⁴

Though Bailey never toured *Ipi Zombi?* internationally, his awareness of such difficulties in cultural mediation within the international frame of “World Bank Drama” unavoidably affected Bailey’s approaches to—and perceptions of—theatrical production. Following international tours of *Big Dada* (2001), *iMumbo Jumbo* (2003), and *Safari* (2003), Bailey became an internationally visible theatre artist.⁴⁵ As a result, Jan Ryan of UK Arts International (an international organization that represents Bailey, Farber, and Grootboom, among others), commissioned Bailey to produce *Voudou Nation* (2004), a piece based on “Voudou lwa” (including archetypes such as Ogou the warrior and Bawon Samedi, the “joker”), “various characters of Haitian mythology and carnival,” and Haitian Voudou-rock of the group RAM.⁴⁶ Similarly, his commissioned work as resident company at the Speier Estate’s Moyo restaurant (2004-2007) and his production *The House of the Holy Afro* (2004) suggest a theatrical sensibility informed more by “bubblegum” showbiz aesthetics than a deep investigation into

⁴⁴ As Peggy Phelan prudently asks, “Who is looking and who is seen?” (Phelan, 140).

⁴⁵ Bailey explains that 2003’s *Safari* was “made for a Dutch festival, [...] was in every way [his] least satisfactory work, and ended up pandering to every European stereotype of exotic idealised Africa that [he]’d been terrified of perpetuating. I blushed every time a provincial Dutch audience rose to its feet in what I believed was a patronising ovation” (Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder*, 199). He further emphasizes that the international productions of *Safari* realized his worst fears of touring: “I was concerned about the work being perceived as merely exotic by European audiences: like a sacred tribal mask recontextualised as a grotesque ethnographic artefact behind glass in a display case” (Bailey (2003): 198).

⁴⁶ Brett Bailey, “Playing in the War Zone,” *TDR* 48.3 (2004): 181-182.

South African issues.⁴⁷ As Bailey notes, *The House of the Holy Afro*, a contemporary “funky, upbeat, Afro-kitsch house music show” was not performed in South Africa until 2010, despite it being Bailey’s most widely touring show.⁴⁸

Thus, promoted by international agents of World Bank Drama, such as the Speier Estate and Jan Ryan, Bailey’s dramaturgy began to shift from intracultural dialectics among various South African constituent groups towards a pronounced (inter)cultural theatrical framework spanning multiple continents and focused on production within international theatre festivals. Expressing his disappointment in his earlier attempts to tour *Ipi Zombi?* and *Big Dada* to remote populations within South Africa and Uganda, Bailey stated, “I don’t feel like I’m orientating so much towards trying to reach the masses anymore.”⁴⁹ Compounded with his assertion that “theatre is, probably all over the world, a middle-class pursuit,” Bailey’s shift from an idyllic, populist theatre towards one aimed at a global, middle class audience suggests the power wielded by neoliberal economic forces over the imaginary of individual artists.⁵⁰ The promise of symbolic and material success apparently proved too much for Bailey’s ethical imperatives towards his art. In the next chapter, I will further investigate the effects of such economic pressures on Bailey’s dramaturgy, as well as the effects (inter)national production can have on particular cultural material.

⁴⁷ Bailey quoted in Matthew Westwood, “House has no room for Africa’s troubles,” *The Australian* 8 Jan 2008, LOCAL, 6.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* Importantly, Bailey asserted that *The House of the Holy Afro* is “exotic to people overseas, but to try and raise funds to do it in South Africa is much more difficult” (Westwood, 6); “Brett Bailey CV & Bio,” accessed 31 Jan 2012, <<http://www.thirdworldbunfight.co.za/about-us.html>>.

⁴⁹ Bailey quoted in D. Larlham, 17.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

2.2 MPUMELELO PAUL GROOTBOOM: CONTROVERSY AT THE END OF THE “RAINBOW NATION”

Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom rose to prominence in the South African theatre community in the late 1990s through several collaborative efforts with fellow playwrights. Mentored by Aubrey Sekhabi (winner of the 1997 Standard Bank Young Artist Award), Grootboom developed a signature “hardcore aesthetic” that he deployed to represent the various extremities of township life.⁵¹ Grootboom’s hyperreal theatrical aesthetic earned him the nickname the “Township Tarantino” for his dual embrace of both Gibson Kente’s “township theatre” and the highly sexualized and violent filmic repertoire of US filmmaker Quentin Tarantino. However, Grootboom contests this moniker because “it reduces [his] work to sensationalism and shooting”; moreover, Grootboom asserts that he “write[s] about [his] own experiences” with life in post-apartheid South Africa.⁵² Importantly, by so contesting such a presumably complimentary nickname, Grootboom reinforces his claim to biographical ownership of his source material and his hyperrealistic representation thereof, suggesting that Grootboom has developed a theatrical style solely invested in the “authentic” portrayal of township life. Dian De Beer attests that Grootboom’s signature aesthetic demonstrates his ability “to capture the soul and the spirit of an emerging country and its people.”⁵³ Grootboom’s evocation of “authentic” township life, including its various rough edges, resounds throughout his early dramatic works such as *Cards* (2002), *Relativity: “Township Stories”* (2005), and *Interracial* (2007).

⁵¹ Qudsiya Karrim, “A self-educated success story,” *Cue*, 5 July 2007, 16.

⁵² Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom quoted in Karrim, 16; Grootboom quoted in Jacqueline Keevy, “Interracial Mumbo Jumbo: Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom and Brett Bailey’s Theatre” (MA Diss. University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2008), 64.

⁵³ Dian De Beer, “A relative talent,” *The Star Tonight*, 28 March 2006, 6.

Indeed, Grootboom's willingness to explore the taboo, rough edges of post-apartheid society lies both at the heart of his dramaturgy and his appeal. Ironically, Loren Kruger cites Grootboom's willingness to engage in the problematics of post-apartheid reality as proof that he is "very much a post-apartheid playwright" because he is "[m]ore interested in contemporary society than in the anti-apartheid legacy."⁵⁴ Such apparently contradictory claims further attest to the appeal of Grootboom's work, which does not explicitly engage with the "anti-apartheid legacy," but does not shy away from the often untold stories resulting from apartheid's repercussions. Thus, as Shane Graham summarizes,

Grootboom's *Cards* is set in a brothel in inner-city Hillbrow, and his *Relativity* depicts life in a township outside Johannesburg—both worlds in which white domination and racism seem a distant, almost irrelevant memory in the face of more immediate, day-to-day problems and concerns.⁵⁵

The plots of both *Cards* and *Relativity* bear out Grootboom's investment in the "authentic" quotidian experiences of black South Africans. Placing stereotypical characters from the township theatre tradition within "realistic" contemporary worlds, *Cards* deals with the trials faced by prostitutes in Hillbrow, ranging from drugs, abuse, and HIV/AIDS, to death. For instance, Market Theatre Artistic Director Malcolm Purkey described *Cards* as a "violent, melodramatic but, judging by audience numbers, riveting treatment of Igbo drug dealers and their hangers-on in the brothels in Hillbrow, Johannesburg's and Africa's densest square kilometer."⁵⁶ Purkey elaborates that *Cards* was a "popular innercity piece," an "edgy drama addressed to the up-and-coming audience."⁵⁷ Grootboom's early plays were and continue to be

⁵⁴ Loren Kruger, "Review: FOREPLAY. By Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom, after Arthur Schnitzler's *Der Reigen* (aka *La Ronde*). Market Theatre, Johannesburg. 5 September 2009," *Theatre Journal* 62.3 (2010): 453-454.

⁵⁵ Shane Graham, "'I Was Those Thousands!': Memory, Identity, and Space in John Kani's *Nothing But The Truth*," *Theatre Research International* 32.1 (2006): 69.

⁵⁶ Loren Kruger and Malcolm Purkey, "Market Forces: Malcolm Purkey Interviewed by Loren Kruger," *Theatre* 38.1 (2008): 24.

⁵⁷ Kruger and Purkey, 26.

successful in South Africa, staging “authentic” performances of black inner-city life for increasingly black audiences in South Africa’s urban centers of Johannesburg (Market Theatre) and Pretoria (South African State Theatre).

Similarly, Grootboom’s *Relativity: “Township Stories,”* a collaborative work co-written with Presley Chweneyagae, stages a crime drama centered on discovering the identity of the “G-string killer,” a serial murderer with a particular affinity for killing prostitutes. *Relativity* also incorporates pressing social issues such as rape, child abuse, alcoholism, police brutality, torture, and incest. Common to such early pieces are Grootboom’s twin themes of sex and violence, both of which he regularly stages with signature hyperrealism. Rolf C. Hemke notes, “Grootboom’s stylistic devices are overtly explicit rather than subtle and that is also true of the language he uses. Sex is shown openly and is raw and sometimes graphic in its choreography.”⁵⁸ Thus, Grootboom’s dramaturgy emphasizes the real actions of real bodies, both physically and linguistically. Grootboom explains his aims in such (re)presentations of sex and violence:

I want to encourage the audience to think differently about the use of violence. I try to achieve that in the way I stage my plays rather than through the texts of my plays. For example, when I stage a very long and violent scene—drawing out scenes is a technique I like using a lot—then the audience ends up wondering, “Why is the scene so long? Why do we have to watch this for so long?” That’s when it suddenly stops being routine entertainment, because the audience asks why the director is inflicting this brutal scene on them for so long. That’s how I try to affect the audience.⁵⁹

Extremity, both in terms of duration and content, is the foundation of Grootboom’s much touted “hardcore” aesthetic. Like Harry J. Elam Jr.’s “Reality ✓,” Grootboom attempts to create disjunctures by “brusquely rub[bing] the real up against the representational in ways that disrupt

⁵⁸ Rolf C. Hemke, “Staring Dispassionately into the Abyss: Director and Author Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom from Soweto, Johannesburg,” in *Theater Südlich Der Sahara/Theatre in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Rolf C. Hemke (Berlin: Theater der Zeir, 2010), 169.

⁵⁹ Grootboom quoted in Hemke, 167.

the spectators and produce new meanings.”⁶⁰ David Peimer attests to the efficacy of such extreme staging techniques, arguing that *Relativity* captures “a very South African identity burnt into the soul by the extreme violence, racism, and poverty in its collective memory and current reality.”⁶¹ In 2005, *Relativity* premiered at the National Arts Festival where it earned Grootboom a Naledi Theatre Award for his direction. In 2006, Grootboom toured *Relativity* to the Vienna Festival (Austria) and the UK, including the Edinburgh Festival, where the work won a Glasgow Herald Golden Angel Award, establishing Grootboom as an internationally known and valued theatre artist. Grootboom’s ensuing production, *Interracial*, premiered at the 2007 National Arts Festival Main Programme and forever altered the course of his career.

Contrary to Grootboom’s previous hyperrealistic, mostly apolitical works, in *Interracial* he engaged audiences with a metatheatrical, politically charged affront to prevailing South African sensibilities. Grootboom described his work, which “had been envisaged as a mixed-race production that would somehow examine the illusion of the ‘rainbow nation’, that hopeful ideal that was espoused by Mandela at the end of Apartheid in the spirit of reconciliation.”⁶²

Grootboom further explains that he “wrote [*Interracial*] to get people to acknowledge the problems [South Africans] have in a post-apartheid society. The law says apartheid is over, but it’s not.”⁶³ Ironically, the persistent “separateness” of apartheid in the post-apartheid era made itself visible when Grootboom could not find more than one white male actor for his play.

Grootboom resolved to stage *Interracial* in a revised form, with black actors portraying the white

⁶⁰ Harry J. Elam, Jr., “Reality ✓,” 173.

⁶¹ David Peimer, “Introduction,” in *Armed Response: Plays from South Africa*, ed. David Peimer (New York: Seagull Books, 2009), xi.

⁶² Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom, “‘Fuck White People!’ Misunderstandings and Reactions Related to the south African Production of *Interracial*,” in *Theater Südlich Der Sahara/Theatre in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Rolf C. Hemke, (Berlin: Theater der Zeir, 2010), 203.

⁶³ Grootboom quoted in Karrim, 16.

roles, “much like a minstrel show” in reverse.⁶⁴ The apparent artifice of such “interracial” performances were contextualized within a metatheatrical frame, complete with a “Director” character, Klaas, who informs the actors how to play white characters: “how to think white, for example, is being very stressed, taking Prozac, and breathing in a ‘heavy’ way.”⁶⁵ Similar to his deployment of township theatre stereotypes of blacks, Grootboom assigned stereotypes to each of the major white characters, such as the writer who “speaks in a sort of Oxbridge accent” and a “stereotypical version of a racist Afrikaaner.”⁶⁶ While there appears to be much apparent humor in such stereotypical (re)presentations of black and white South Africans, particularly in a play titled *Interracial*, many white audiences balked at such broad representations.

Anton Krueger captured the ambivalence of many white audience members at seeing caricatures of South African whites portrayed by black performers. Krueger noted that contrary to the “gritty realities” of earlier Grootboom productions, “very little [was] credible” in *Interracial*.⁶⁷ Krueger took particular umbrage with the representation of “the character playing an English hobo [who had] an accent which was last heard in Africa when Cecil John Rhodes was still in town.”⁶⁸ Similarly Krueger questioned the efficacy of Grootboom’s dramatic framework of an inverted minstrel show in providing any ameliorative functions for the audience. While Krueger’s complaints center on the contentious (re)presentation of racialized discourses within South Africa, his analysis did not extend to the play’s reception by larger, more diverse populations. Considering the controversies that the show encountered, Krueger’s omission of any sign of the work’s efficacy is curious.

⁶⁴ Grootboom, “‘Fuck White People!’” 203.

⁶⁵ Krueger, *Experiments in Freedom*, 203.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Anton Krueger, “Interracial or anti-Racial?” *Cue Online*, 06 July 2007, accessed 01 March 2012, <<http://cue.ru.ac.za/comedy/2007/inter-racial-or-anti-racial.html>>.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Indeed, the controversies surrounding *Interracial* have become deeply intertwined with narratives about the show and Grootboom's career. In a review of the 2007 National Arts Festival for *Theatre Journal*, Megan Lewis recounted that despite *Interracial*'s aesthetic failings, the play's political critique provided the 2007 NAF with its "most contentious moment."⁶⁹ Lewis summarized the play with an uncompromising critique of the work's aesthetics, calling the play "a three-and-a-half-hour train wreck of a show" and noting that "two-thirds of the audience did not return after intermission, and those that stayed fell asleep, chatted loudly, or snored through this abysmal show."⁷⁰ However, Lewis noted that the play and the audience's reception thereof both changed dramatically when the "Director" character (Klaas) stormed onstage to declare, "We can't do this white theatre anymore [...] Fuck this! Fuck white people! I hate them!"⁷¹ Klaas's ensuing Protest Theatre-style closing monologue further connected the limitations of "white theatre" to the wider oppressions historically enacted by white people on South African blacks. In the final monologue, The Director raged:

They've been killing us all these years and we've forgiven them [...] But today, when we could have said 'FUCK YOU' to them after we got power, we still have to explain ourselves to these motherfuckers ... we still have to struggle ... When will this struggle ever end? ... Fuck these motherfuckers! FUCK WHITE PEOPLE!!⁷²

After the Director's first salvo, Grootboom remembers seeing white audience members "turning pale with shock" and that later into the Director's tirade, "a few white people started to rise in the auditorium and they walked out, rather furious."⁷³ Grootboom continues his account, noting that

⁶⁹ Megan Lewis, "Past, Present, Future: A Tense South Africa Performs," *Performing Arts Journal* 89 (2008): 100.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ "The Director" quoted in Lewis, 100.

⁷² "The Director" quoted in Grootboom, "'Fuck White People!'", 204.

⁷³ Grootboom, "'Fuck White People!'", 204.

he “got worried that there’d be a riot in the theatre with the black audience stamping about and the white audience frozen in their seats.”⁷⁴

Lewis’ account corroborates this dynamic, noting that the previously uninterested black audience awoke and “joined the *toyi toyi*, cheering in solidarity” in an ironic reenactment of apartheid-era protest.⁷⁵ This spontaneous, collective performance restaged the embodied differences of apartheid era South Africa, for as Albie Sachs notes, “When we [black South Africans] dance the *toyi-toyi* we tell the world and ourselves that we are South Africans on the road to freedom.”⁷⁶ Such an immediate and embodied performance of politically coded apartheid-era identity validates Lewis’ surmise that “a sore spot had been touched, or as Sunday Independent critic Adrienne Sichel suggested [...] ‘a festering boil had been lanced.’”⁷⁷ Indeed, the language of both of these critics is telling, for it summons the image of a collective body politic in which “a festering boil had been lanced,” thus affirming that the culture(s) of South Africa arises from a lived experience, embodied in its multiple particular sites of a geographic and psychosocial habitus. The pronounced difference between differently racialized audience responses ironically demonstrates a certain amount of “authenticity” in Grootboom’s dramaturgical vision, for the audience performance of the *toyi-toyi* embodied a cultural division along racial lines deeply inscribed in South African communities. Regardless of the play’s

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Anthropologist Shannon Jackson explains, “*Toyi-toyi*ing is a demonstration of uniform political dissatisfaction. It is an embodied form of resistance popularized in South Africa in the early 1980s amidst a Defiance Campaign, waged to render the country ungovernable. It can be summarized as an up-and-down thrusting of the body to a beat which seems to emanate from within; it is often accompanied by chants, raised fists, and sometimes weapons. Like the menacing movement of a military regiment, it is a demonstration of strength in unity, but, unlike the regiment, it is spontaneous and unrehearsed, intended to signify resistance rather than conformity” (Shannon Jackson, “Coloureds don’t *Toyi-Toyi*: Gesture, Constraint & Identity in Cape Town,” in *Limits to Liberation After Apartheid*, ed. Steven L. Robins (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005): 209fn2).

⁷⁶ Sachs, 189.

⁷⁷ Lewis, 100.

aesthetic value, the play was effective in staging a critique of South African society and in communicating a collective frustration with race relations in post-apartheid South Africa.

Nevertheless, a pronounced backlash formed against Grootboom as a result of the production, resulting in a boycott of his works by South African critics lasting from 2007 through 2010.⁷⁸ Notably, despite his status as recipient of the 2005 Standard Bank Young Artist Award, the National Arts Festival has not produced any of Grootboom's shows on the main programme since *Interracial* in 2007. Grootboom asserts that the backlash arose from a sense that "People felt [he] was racist."⁷⁹ However, the "people" to whom Grootboom refers cannot be monolithic, and instead gestures towards the power wielded by authorizing agents within South African theatre structures. Indeed, the reception of the play at the 2007 NAF reveals widely divergent reactions to the piece that seem to be determined predominantly by the race of the audience member and by different perceptions of the authenticity of Grootboom's staged protest of white theatre and broader white hegemony. Such racial divisions followed *Interracial* abroad as well, where advance press for its production at the 2007 Vienna Festival billed its authentic portrayal of interracial dynamics as "a slice of South Africa realities that is totally out of sync with preconceived European notions."⁸⁰ Yet there was nothing exotic about the play's reception within South Africa. Despite the claim that the play is "out of sync" with European conceptions, a significant portion of the play's South African audience clearly enjoyed the production, as they joined in and partook in the Director's protest against perceptions of white culture's continuing oppression of blacks. These acts suggest an investment in the authenticity of the play by black

⁷⁸ Rolf C. Hemke, "Staring Dispassionately into the Abyss," 166. See also Kwalene Sosibo, "Paul Grootboom and the quest to reroute South African theatre," in *Positions: Contemporary Artists in South Africa*, ed. Peter Anders and Matthew Krouse (Sunnyside: Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd, 2010), 61-74.

⁷⁹ "Paul Grootboom: Interracial," *The Star* (South Africa), 25 November 2008, accessed 21 July 2011, <<http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-189699288.html>>.

⁸⁰ "Interracial: By Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom and Aubrey Sekhabi," accessed 21 July 2011, <<http://www.culturekiosque.com/travel/item13138.htm>>.

audiences that was not matched by South African whites. Indeed, the black audience members who remained for the second act and took the stage to dance the toyi-toyi apparently did not object to the aesthetics or the subject matter of the play. Rather, it would appear that many black audience members were more than ready to engage in a performance against the predominant “white theatre” that Klaas (“The Director”) castigated. Nevertheless, likely due to the racially-tinged controversy surrounding the production, *Interracial* significantly affected Grootboom’s rise as a prolific, if controversial, South African theatre artist.

While the critical boycott of Grootboom’s work somewhat de-authorized him as the representative of a wider South African theatre community, he gained a great deal of authority and authenticity within the black South African communities wherein he continued to produce works at Pretoria’s South African State Theatre. Moreover, despite (or because of) his alienation of South African whites, Grootboom continues to tour globally, finding funding and audiences at (inter)national venues primarily in Europe. Grootboom’s follow-up work, *Foreplay* (2008), toured to the Afrovibes Festival (Amsterdam and The Hague), Koninklijke Vlaamse Schouwburg (Brussels), Theatre Royal Stratford East (London), Parc de la Villette (Paris) and Alcantara Festival (Lisbon).⁸¹ In 2009, he produced *Welcome to Rocksburg*, which many already consider his greatest “*coup d’état*” to date.⁸² *Welcome to Rocksburg* opened at the National Arts Festival and also toured to Theatre der Welt (Germany) and the Afrovibes Festival (the Netherlands and the UK). The (inter)national traffic of Grootboom’s work merit further investigation and the (inter)national dynamics of *Foreplay* will be taken up in the next chapter.

⁸¹ “Foreplay,” accessed 01 March 2012, <<http://ebooks.johngood.com/UKArts/Grootboom/>>.

⁸² Hemke, “Staring Dispassionately into the Abyss,” 166.

2.3 Yael Farber: Acting Out and Working Through Trauma in Testimonial Theatre

Like both Brett Bailey and Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom, Yael Farber began her career by establishing her idiosyncratic dramatic voice and theatrical style within the framework of South African theatre production. However, contrary to her contemporaries, Farber's dramatic work has always been more inflected by international connections and concerns. Though all three dramatists have toured widely, Farber regularly frames her works within a discourse of universality, often suggesting connections between the particular South African stories and the wider (Western) world. Such a global perspective likely arose from Farber's early international training and theatrical work.⁸³ Farber's first major directorial success arose from her 1998 Market Theatre production of Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking*, a British play from the "In-Yer-Face Theatre" movement of the 1990s.⁸⁴ Ravenhill's brand of "in-ye-face theatre" evidently influenced Farber's own dramaturgical inklings, for both share an investment in "drama that takes the audience by the scruff of the neck and shakes it until it gets the message."⁸⁵ Like Ravenhill's "in-ye-face" aesthetic, Farber's work regularly pushes the limits of what is represented onstage, including harrowing personal narratives and scenes of traumatic violence. Throughout, Farber places great value on using the stage to communicate truth, often favoring

⁸³ Between 1999-2001, Farber participated in training programs and/or production work at New York's Lincoln Center Directing workshop, Joseph Papp Public Theatre, and Mabou Mines Theatre, as well as at the In Transit Laboratory in Berlin.

⁸⁴ Chris Dunton, "Review Article: South African Theatre/Theatre Studies," *English in Africa* 26.1 (May 1999): 124. Farber's production of *Shopping and Fucking* won seven Vita Awards, including Best Director. I borrow the term "In-Yer-Face Theatre" from Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today* (London: Faber, 2001).

⁸⁵ Sierz, 4. The deployment of violence on stage did not enter Farber's work much until *SeZaR* and *MoLoRa*, both of which I will investigate in greater detail in the next chapter. Also, it should be noted that Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom's works potentially could be categorized as "In-Yer-Face Theatre" as well, particularly because of the common connection made between "the Tarantino effect" on his writing and dramaturgical styles and his touring to Royal Stratford Theatre East, one of the hubs of "In-Yer-Face Theatre."

“real” stories and simple theatrical techniques over representational theatre formations. Indeed, even as *Shopping and Fucking* played to sold-out houses in Johannesburg, Farber was sowing the seeds of what would grow into the major chapter of her theatre career to date: while attending a directing workshop at New York’s Lincoln Center, Farber contacted South African actor Thembi Mtshali-Jones about collaborating on a testimonial theatre piece about Mtshali-Jones’s life. After receiving a commission from New York’s Joseph Papp Public Theater and 651ARTS, Farber began work on her own brand of testimonial theatre drawing from the stories of real South Africans in the wake of apartheid.

The result of Farber’s collaborative work with Mtshali-Jones was *A Woman in Waiting*, which premiered at the 1999 National Arts Festival and earned Farber further acclaim. Built around Farber’s Township Theatre style aesthetic presentation of a bare stage with a few relevant props and set pieces, the first-person testimonial piece recounts Mtshali-Jones’s true journey from being a child who daily watched her mother leave home to work as a nanny for richer white South Africans to becoming a young mother forced to perform the same labor in order to support her child. Mtshali-Jones’s narrative grows optimistic when she auditions for the musical *Ipi Tombi*, which toured the world and brought Mtshali-Jones to the West End and Broadway.⁸⁶ The play ends happily after the peaceful transition away from apartheid government and to the presidency of Nelson Mandela, with Mtshali-Jones finding meaning and purpose through her engagement in theatrical performance. Moreover, the play’s final lines affirm the optimism and faith placed in the TRC and the “Rainbow Nation,” as Mtshali-Jones concludes the play singing “Bayeza kusasa, bayeza! [The healers are coming, to heal our land!],” simultaneously

⁸⁶ As I explored in greater detail earlier in this chapter, *Ipi Tombi* was a very successful example of “theatre for export” and/or “Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre” that toured Europe and the United States in the 1970s. Critics and protestors argued that the show trivialized South Africans and reduced them to exotic stereotypes on display for Western audiences.

manifesting the ameliorative power of performance and the utopian beliefs in the nation's transition into a new, democratic state.⁸⁷

A Woman in Waiting's focus on healing and reconciliation through the truth-telling platform of theatre anticipated Farber's ensuing works (*Amajuba: Like Doves We Rise* and *He Left Quietly*), for the script explicitly invokes the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the pressing need to resolve the "haunting silence of stories waiting to be told."⁸⁸ Thus, for Farber, personal authenticity connects directly to the project of national cultural development; individual acts of witnessing potentially resolve the "haunting silence" plaguing the nation. Notably, James Gibbs identified Farber's early testimonial theatre as attendant upon the conflation of personal and national narratives, for Farber's work "seeks to show South African history through the eyes of one woman."⁸⁹ Such a compressed historiographical project inherently required authentication in order to authorize its representativeness of South African histories at large. Indeed, Farber authorized her work multiply. In *A Woman in Waiting*, Thembi Mtshali-Jones portrays herself on stage as her younger self grows up in apartheid-era South Africa, navigates the weary terrain of domestic service, and finds escape through international theatrical performance. Additionally, the collaborative process of *A Woman in Waiting* modeled both continuity with collaborative South African theatrical traditions and a symbolic representation of the negotiations attendant upon "authenticity" in the post-apartheid era. As Farber's dramaturgical and thematic interventions shaped Mtshali-Jones's narrative into a dramatic work, Farber delicately negotiated notions of authenticity drawing from Mtshali-Jones

⁸⁷ Yael Farber, *A Woman in Waiting* in *Theatre as Witness: Three Testimonial Plays from South Africa* (London: Oberon Books, 2008), 85. Translation by Yael Farber.

⁸⁸ Farber, *A Woman in Waiting*, 81.

⁸⁹ James Gibbs, "Noticeboard," *African Theatre: Women*, ed. Martin Banham et al. (Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 2002), 122.

as a “biographic source” while contributing her own authenticating work as a “professional-journalistic source.”⁹⁰ Mtshali-Jones’s “really real” body and her “really real” voice further compressed the distance between the “real” and representational qualities of live theatrical performance and lending credence to the play’s truthfulness and authenticity. The result was a cohesive, collaborative production wherein Mtshali-Jones’s personal and embodied narrative stands in for the manifold other “stories waiting to be told”—the unspoken “biographic” and “cultural” sources silenced during and after apartheid.

Thus, like the TRC, Farber’s testimonial plays functioned as a means of documenting the repressed archives of the apartheid era. Moreover, like the self-narrativized stories that arose from the TRC hearings, Farber’s theatre provides a literal and symbolic “forum for the voices—often the suppressed, repressed, or uneasily accommodated voices—of certain victims who were being heard for the first time in the public sphere.”⁹¹ In performances, Mtshali-Jones shares her story with an attendant community of spectator-auditors who valorize her authenticity and worth simply through incorporating her story into the extant canon of apartheid-era narratives. Such a structural similarity between the TRC and *A Woman in Waiting* attests to Farber’s larger concern of deploying “Theatre as Witness.” As Amanda Stuart Fisher describes,

Unlike verbatim or documentary theatre, these stories are not drawn from reportage or documentary evidence. Instead Farber harnesses the power of poetry, metaphor and song to craft together theatre texts that bear witness to actual *lived* experience. The authenticity of these stories rests less on their claim to factual veracity, instead it emerges from the ‘testimonial truth’ of the witness presented before us. [...] The witness [...] does not

⁹⁰ It is necessary to remember that, according to Eyal Zandberg, “biographical sources” often carry the most symbolic capital and authenticating power, whereas “professional-journalistic sources” carry the least. Nevertheless, *A Woman in Waiting*, which cannot be performed without Thembi Mtshali-Jones, is published in a compilation naming Yael Farber as the author of her collection of testimonial plays. The cover of Farber’s *Theatre As Witness* credits all of the plays as “created with & based on the lives of the casts,” but unavoidably reopens questions of representation and authorship that have dogged collaborative forms of South African theatre for decades (see Gibson Alessandro Cima, “Resurrecting *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972-2008): John Kani, Winston Ntshona, Athol Fugard, and Postapartheid South Africa,” *Theatre Survey* 50.1 (2009): 91-118).

⁹¹ Dominick LaCapra, “Trauma, Absence, Loss,” *Critical Inquiry* 25.4 (1999): 696.

merely add to the weight of factual evidence of what has happened, rather he or she gives voice to that which the objective narrative of history tends to overlook and even suppress.⁹²

Thus, Farber's Theatre as Witness sought not only to reconcile the various traumatic losses incurred through South Africa during apartheid, but also to fill in many of the absences generated and signaled by such losses.⁹³ In production, Mtshali-Jones occupied a liminoid space between her present self—the product of her years of struggle and self-realization—and her performance of younger versions of herself at formative moments of crisis. Mtshali-Jones's inherent doubleness was augmented by her physical presence as the “really real” body of her represented character, by which means her “bod[y] and [her] voice attest[ed] to the challenge of moving forward from the past to the future.”⁹⁴ Thus, Mtshali-Jones herself stood in for the absent presence of countless other “women in waiting,” as well as for the country at large, providing an authentic (and authenticating) touchstone for Farber's investigation into apartheid-era traumas.

In Farber's words, the actors in her productions “choose to go out and strip their skins away each night, and express the collective truth for us all.”⁹⁵ Telling previously silenced stories putatively creates a communal engagement that fills in the previously enforced silence while simultaneously filling in the particular historical wounds—the psychic, social, metaphorical losses—created by apartheid. The political and ethical imperatives associated with such acts of witnessing and communal valorization further echo the political and ethical aims of apartheid-era Protest Theatre and Theatre-as-Resistance traditions that built (inter)national sodalities around

⁹² Amanda Stuart Fisher, “Introduction,” in Yael Farber, *Theatre as Witness: Three Testimonial Plays from South Africa* (London: Oberon Books, 2008), 10.

⁹³ Here I deploy LaCapra's delineation between “absence” as a transhistorical, universal phenomenon that speaks to that which one never had, whereas “loss” arises from particular historical circumstances through the actual displacement of that which one attained.

⁹⁴ Fisher, 13. Though Mtshali-Jones takes on multiple roles throughout the piece with the virtuoso improvisational style of township theatre, the most common character is herself at various ages, with her female ancestors (her mother and grandmother) the next most common characters.

⁹⁵ Yael Farber quoted in Fisher, “Interview,” 22.

common ideological purposes. Farber's negotiations of deep and persistent post-apartheid anxieties similarly succeeded in creating communities of witnessing both domestically and abroad. *A Woman in Waiting* toured the world, including the United States, Canada, Bermuda, the United Kingdom, North Africa, where Mtshali-Jones won the Carthage Festival Best Performance award, and the Edinburgh Festival, where the production won a Scotsman Fringe First Award.⁹⁶ Importantly, in both domestic and international productions of *A Woman in Waiting*, the work remained connected to its claims to "authenticity," as Mtshali-Jones remained the sole performer of her own biographic story. Farber's directorial and dramaturgical contributions work solely to *realize* (in both senses of the word) Mtshali-Jones's first-person performance. Unlike Bailey and Grootboom, Farber's work does not invite distance between the real and the (re)presented, offering instead minimalistic, presentational modes of "authentic" performance wherein real stories are shared between performer and spectator-audiences.

Farber's ensuing productions, *Amajuba: Like Doves We Rise* (2000) and *He Left Quietly* (2003) both developed variations on this structural formation, wherein collaborative artists staged their "authentic" first-person narratives theatrically, speaking for multiple, otherwise-silenced stories.⁹⁷ *Amajuba* incorporates five narratives, one from each of the performers: Tshallo Chokwe, Roelf Matlala, Bongeka Mpongwana, Philip 'Tippo' Tindisa, and Jabulile Tshabalala. Each individual tells his or her own story while assisting the fellow cast members to recreate each particular story, suggesting the intertwinedness and commonality of the stories. Like *A Woman in Waiting*, in *Amajuba*, Farber assured her audiences, "Everything [the performers] will share with you tonight is true...the intimate details of their own childhoods

⁹⁶ Yael Farber, *A Woman in Waiting*, 32-33.

⁹⁷ The performance scripts for both *Amajuba* and *He Left Quietly* are collected in Yael Farber, *Theatre as Witness: Three Testimonial Plays from South Africa* (London: Oberon Books, 2008).

lived within the Apartheid divisions.”⁹⁸ Like *A Woman in Waiting*, in *Amajuba*, Farber emphatically framed her theatre as an opportunity to witness the all-too-real struggles and traumas of apartheid-era South Africans. The performers each physically embodied the stories of other cast members, contributing their individual selves to the performance of a communal, shared narrative. *Amajuba* was widely successful as well, attracting audiences at the National Arts Festival and Pretoria’s State Theatre, among many other South African venues. Additionally, the show travelled to Ireland, Australia, and New York City where it was nominated for a 2007 Drama Desk Award, as well as several productions in the United Kingdom, most notably at the 2004 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, where it garnered an Angel Herald Award before moving to the West End.⁹⁹ The show continued to tour internationally until 2007, when it was retired “despite continued invitations from around the world to this day.”¹⁰⁰ Thus, Farber’s construction of witnessing communities traversed (inter)national boundaries, further extending the reach of particular, “authentic” South African stories to broader, globalized witnesses.

He Left Quietly further extended Farber’s testimonial theatre structure, focusing again on the story of only one individual, Duma Kumalo, who survived a death sentence and was freed after the end of apartheid. However, in this work, the last of Farber’s “theatre as witness” productions, Farber incorporated non-narrative performers into the staging for the first time. In production, Lebohang Elephant portrayed “Young Duma” while Yana Sakelaris portrayed a “Woman” who served as a stage surrogate for Farber’s own presence throughout the production process. Throughout, Elephant and Sakelaris embodied individual “authentic” moments such as

⁹⁸ Yael Farber, “Director’s Programme Note,” *Amajuba: Like Doves We Rise in Theatre as Witness*, 91.

⁹⁹ Yael Farber, *Amajuba: Like Doves We Rise*, in *Theatre as Witness*, 90.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Kumalo's narrativized experiences and Farber's journey of discovery through her interactions with him. Indeed, Farber's acknowledgement of her own presence on stage, manifest in Sakelaris's performance, potentially grants the piece more (rather than less) authenticity by incorporating Farber's subjectivity into the stage frame. Similar to both *A Woman in Waiting* and *Amajuba, He Left Quietly* toured to Europe, garnering success and audiences for Farber until Kumalo's death in 2006.

While such structural evolutions create new and dynamic stage opportunities in production, they also threaten to estrange the productions from the very "authentic" and biographically sourced material that the works seek to (re)present. The tension between the (re)presentation of "real" traumas within these works raises further questions regarding how audience-spectators engage with such loaded material. Rustom Bharucha summarizes many of the anxieties inherent to witnessing traumas, asking:

What happens when you are not a victim yourself, but you become a spectator of someone else's pain? How do you deal with it? How do you resist the obvious possibilities of voyeurism, or the mere consumption of other people's suffering? How do you sensitize yourself politically to the histories of others that might not have touched on your own?¹⁰¹

In addition to Bharucha's urgent questions, Farber's structural formations further complicate the risks of "mere consumption of other people's suffering" by adding the inherent complexities of representation. Whereas Farber's works likely would not have necessitated much "political sensitization" within a South African context, their travel abroad often requires some form of ancillary material to preface and/or contextualize their particularities. Nevertheless, such

¹⁰¹ Rustom Bharucha, "Between Truth and Reconciliation: Experiments in Theater and Public Culture," in *Experiments with Truth: Documenta11_Platform2*, ed. Okwui Enwezor, et al. (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002), 378-79. Bharucha offers "Memorial museums" as a potential solution, but troubles them by interrogating the "post-Holocaust museumized suffering" of the Dachau and Auschwitz museums as potentially being "essentially narcissistic, masochistic, parasitic, unproductive, even factitious" (379).

techniques do not obviate concerns about voyeurism or “consumption of other people’s suffering,” which is only heightened by the entry of such performances into the (inter)national theatre market.

The persistent issues of funding South African theatre contribute heavily to anxieties over (re)presentation, for capital risks creating a system in which South African theatre becomes shaped primarily by the expectations of non-South African producers à la Jerry Mofokeng’s assessment of “theatre for export.”¹⁰² In this particular case, Farber developed *He Left Quietly* as a commissioned work for the In Transit festival in Berlin, where it premiered in 2003. Farber’s emphasis on international touring and recognition of her “Theatre as Witness,” combined with the commissioning of such work from international organizations destabilizes Farber’s investment in authentic portrayals of particular South African stories. Can a work developed for an international audience (re)present local concerns authentically? Interestingly, Farber chose to develop *He Left Quietly* with Duma Kumalo despite the fact that Kumalo had already told his own story dramatically in the Khulumani Support Group’s *The Story I Am About to Tell* (1997).¹⁰³ Notably, in keeping with the Khulumani Support Group’s mission to attend to the “unfinished business” of the TRC, *The Story I Am About to Tell* was significantly more critical of South Africa and its transition in the post-apartheid era than any of Farber’s testimonial theatre pieces.¹⁰⁴ How does Farber negotiate her potentially contradictory imperatives to (re)present “stories waiting to be told” to international audiences while “avoiding sensationalism and

¹⁰² Mofokeng, 86-87.

¹⁰³ Stephanie Marlin-Curiel, “The Long Road to Healing: From the TRC to TFD,” *Theatre Research International* 27.3 (2002): 275-288.

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.khulumani.net> ; Cf. Berber Bevernage, “Writing the Past Out of the Present: History and the Politics of Time in Transitional Justice,” *History Workshop Journal* 69 (2010): 111-131.

indulgence, while doing justice to the pains of the past through deeply authentic performances in a simple but powerful piece of theatre”¹⁰⁵

While Farber’s vision of testimonial theatre clearly articulates *whose* story needs to be told, deep engagements into *how* and *for whom* such stories are told often remain unexplored. Though Farber’s works evidently succeeded in conveying “authentic” narratives of South African individuals to communities (inter)nationally, I am skeptical of the efficacy of such productions to generate more than voyeuristic opportunities for spectating upon another’s suffering. Though they are crafted as sites of cross-cultural empathy, Farber’s work relies upon an understanding of each particular narrative as part of a universal whole in which she and her performers “are just part of the channel through which this story—these stories—must be told.”¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, despite the utopian sentiments of such statements, Farber’s work also must find funding and audiences. Like all works produced within the (inter)national theatre market, these exigencies of production are not innocent and invariably affect theatre production. In Farber’s case, it arises in the fact that her “Theatre as Witness” productions “had only very limited runs in South Africa due to the desperate lack of funding for theatre at home.”¹⁰⁷ Farber further notes, “it has been far easier to have international presenters pick up the works than it has been to get South African producers interested.”¹⁰⁸ Though Farber carefully crafts her theatre to avoid “sensationalism and indulgence,” she cannot control the effects that her works have, nor the ways that audiences receive such works. At the root of such tenuous negotiations lies Farber’s deep investment in truthful, just, and authentic (re)presentations of South African stories and the perpetual risk of cultural and economic exploitation across the borderlines of inequity.

¹⁰⁵ Yael Farber quoted in “Interview” in *Theatre as Witness*, 21.

¹⁰⁶ Farber quoted in “Interview,” in *Theatre as Witness*, 27.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Farber quoted in “Interview,” in *Theatre as Witness*, 27-28.

2.4 SCOPING OUT

Yael Farber developed her career out of crafting authentic, first person stories into (re)presentations of the new and old pressures attendant upon life in South Africa in the post-apartheid era. Similarly, Brett Bailey and Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom explored variously contentious social and political forces within post-apartheid South African life. All three base their dramaturgy on notions of truthfulness and authenticity, particularly surrounding controversial moments of violence that alternately signifies “real” events and/or the metaphorical impact of traumas on the South African imaginary. Thus, issues of (re)presentation of such “authentic” South African works arise for all three dramatists, for each playwright presumably develops meaning first and foremost within the South African context in which the plays were produced.

However, as Farber, Grootboom, and Bailey developed their careers, they began to travel internationally with their works and to engage with theatre on a globalized—and oftentimes “universalized”—scale. As Dominick LaCapra argues, the abstraction of particular instances of loss, traumatic or otherwise, into generalized (re)presentations of absence “facilitate[s] the appropriation of particular traumas by those who did not experience them, typically in a movement of identity-formation that makes invidious and ideological use of traumatic series of events in foundational ways or as symbolic capital.”¹⁰⁹ Thus, whereas South Africans gazing upon such theatrical works may find self-recognition in the most traditional sense of mimesis, Europeans or Americans are more likely to view themselves through their own lack of reflection in the stage events or through the warped, funhouse mirror effect that turns particular South

¹⁰⁹ LaCapra, 712.

African traumas into placeholders for other global traumas such as “Hiroshima, Baghdad, Palestine, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Bosnia, the concentration camps of Europe[,] and modern-day Manhattan.”¹¹⁰ Farber referenced these broad-ranging geographies in her foreword to *MoLoRa*, an adaptation of Aeschylus’s *Oresteia*, in an attempt to demonstrate the universality of trauma across lines of nationality, race, gender, ideology, and time. However, I wonder at the effects of such reduction of particularities to the exigencies of the globalized “universal” and the potential injustices done to “authenticity” in the exchange. The ensuing chapter will address a selection of later works from these three dramatists, all of whom drew from canonical Western narratives to create new, putatively “South African” works that toured the (inter)national festival circuit. The tensions and disjunctures inherent to such works and their concomitant processes will be the focus of the next chapter.

¹¹⁰ Yael Farber, “Foreword,” *MoLoRa*, (London: Oberon Books, 2008): 8.

3.0 “MUSEUMS OF PLAYS”¹: WORLD BANK DRAMA, HEGEMONIC INTERCULTURAL THEATRE, AND THE TOUR(IST)ING OF SOUTH AFRICAN THEATRE

Throughout the past fifty years or so, (inter)national theatre artists and audiences have demonstrated a marked increase in performance as a marker of cultural difference and also as a location for the transcendence, transgression, and/or confusion of such differences. Major theatre artists have made their names through radical new theatrical syncretism. For instance, Julie Taymor’s (inter)cultural syncretism of Balinese puppetry, African song and dance, and Western showbiz conventions created a production of *The Lion King* that has run on Broadway for over fifteen years. Meanwhile, Peter Brook’s much-discussed (and more controversial) production of *The Mahabharata* has become a seminal case study in the tensions surrounding (inter)cultural theatre production. Patrice Pavis cited Brook’s (inter)cultural production as a prime example of “a universalization of a notion of culture, a search for the common essence of humanity, which suggests a return to the religious and to the mystical, and to ritual and ceremony in the theatre.”² However, *The Mahabharata* was hardly without its detractors. As David Moody persuasively argued of Brook’s production, an important conversation arose around

¹ Hanna Scolnicov, “Introduction,” in *The Play Out of Context: Transferring Plays from Culture to Culture*, ed. Hanna Scolnicov and Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2.

² Patrice Pavis, “Problems of translation for the stage: interculturalism and post-modern theatre,” in *The Play Out of Context: Transferring Plays from Culture to Culture*, trans. Loren Kruger, ed. Hanna Scolnicov and Peter Holland, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 42.

a specific incident in the portrayal of Bhima by the Senegalese actor Mamadou Dioume, in which the character disembowels his defeated enemy Duhsassana with his teeth, and then drinks his blood. In his review of the production, Indian critic Sadanand Menon argued that “what is reinforced (by having a black actor as Bhima) is a viewpoint that subconsciously pervades the narrative—the White West’s conviction of the ‘primitivism’ of the African and the Asian...of the black man’s ‘natural’ cannibalism.”³

Moody and Menon both investigate the risks of (re)presenting culture—even in “authentic” cultural representations—in ways that reinscribe stereotypical, essentialized conceptions of particular cultures. Similar issues to those apparent in *The Mahabharata* also arose in Brook’s *The Ik*, wherein the titular tribe was robbed of its cultural particularities and turned into “the story of a tiny, remote, unknown African tribe in what seems to be very special circumstances [but which] is actually about the cities of the West in decline.”⁴ In this latter production, Brook again demonstrated profound cultural biases in both his description of the Ik tribe (“a tiny, remote, unknown African tribe”) and his further reduction of the Ik’s particular context to a reflection of Western anxieties over the loss of political and cultural dominance.⁵ Several additional high-profile examples of (inter)cultural theatre, such as the production of a *Kathakali King Lear*⁶, have repeated such Western-centric formations wherein performance traditions from culturally “Other” geographies and populations are robbed of their own contextual matrices of meaning, reducing hallowed cultural traditions to colorful signifiers of difference within a

³ David Moody, “Peter Brook’s *Heart of Light*: The Discourse of Primitivism in Inter-Cultural Theatre,” *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 29.93 (1994): 93; Cf. Sadanand Menon, “Giving a bad name to interculturalism,” *The Hindu* 29 (Dec 1989).

⁴ Peter Brook, *The Shifting Point* (London: Methuen, 1988), 136. See also David Moody, “Peter Brook’s *Heart of Light*,” and Rustom Bharucha, *The Politics of Cultural Practice: Thinking Through Theatre in an Age of Globalization* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000).

⁵ As David Moody interrogates, “‘remote’ from where? and ‘unknown’ to whom?” (Moody, 100).

⁶ See Phillip B. Zarilli, “For Whom Is a King a King? Issues of Intercultural Production, Perception, and Reception in a *Kathakali King Lear*,” in *Critical Theory and Performance: Revised and Enlarged Edition*, ed. Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 108-133.

Western frame.⁷ In each case, differences in the valuation of particular cultural material interrupt the cosmopolitan ideals of (inter)cultural exchange, leaving the audience-spectators of each work to determine the (inter)cultural merits of each.⁸

Importantly, these productions are not isolated instances of (inter)cultural theatre gone awry. Rather, the structure of (inter)cultural theatre has long been invested in the creation of “difference” as a commoditized object within the performance frame. Indeed, all of the aforementioned productions involved the selection and curation of particular iterations of cultural “difference” systematically incorporated into theatrical productions as part of larger projects structured around theatre’s putative ability to create localities wherein audiences potentially could overcome such difference. As (inter)cultural theatre has emerged in greater prominence, so have international theatre festivals. Indeed, the coemergence of these global(ized) structures suggests a mutualistic symbiosis between the two forms, wherein the cosmopolitan ethos of the international festival iterates throughout in (inter)national and (inter)cultural theatrical displays. Thus, like major touristic destination sites such as museums that traffic in the collection of artifacts of difference, contemporary international theatre festivals capitalize on

the [predominant] conception of museums as the kind of “differencing machine” proposed by official policies of multiculturalism. The emphasis [in such formations] is on developing the museum [or festival] as a facilitator of cross-cultural exchange with a view to taking the sting out of the politics of difference within the wider society.⁹

⁷ Like Daphne P. Lei, I write with an understanding that in “the discourse of interculturalism, ‘East’ naturally does not refer to the eastern hemisphere, but to the constructed ‘Orient’ discussed in Edward Said’s *Orientalism* or ‘the Rest’ in the dichotomy of ‘the West and the Rest.’” (Daphne P. Lei, “Interruption, Intervention, and Interculturalism: Robert Wilson’s HIT Productions in Taiwan,” *Theatre Journal* 63 (2011): 571fn1.) I will take up Lei’s terminology and her investigation of intercultural theatre later in this chapter.

⁸ Patrice Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, trans. Loren Kruger (London: Routledge, 1992), 18.

⁹ Tony Bennett, “Exhibition, Difference, and the Logic of Culture,” in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, ed. Ivan Karp et al. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 59.

Through centralized points of (inter)cultural contact, festivalgoers may engage in multiple cultural encounters without ever leaving their own geography. Such a centralized structure perpetuates the cosmopolitan ideology that forwards particular cultural (re)presentations as “‘surrogates of travel,’ [which] enable the visitor[s] to gaze upon the world via the exhibits on show.”¹⁰ Festival organizers thus create a simulacrum of the world through (inter)cultural performances wherein (inter)cultural encounters between performers and touristic spectator-audiences may occur. Though such festivals trade on perceptions of diversity and difference, they actually create unified (re)presentations of the world, structured around particular dominant cultures and their particular ideological imperatives.

While such (inter)national festivals provide manifold opportunities for theatre practitioners to produce works, the prevalence of European-based (inter)national festivals within the “global” system of theatre traffic belies the fact that, as Pierre Bourdieu observes, “unification profits the dominant.”¹¹ Like the aforementioned productions of *The Lion King*, *The Mahabharata*, *The Ik*, and *Kathakali King Lear*, “intercultural” theatre often follows a pattern wherein European and/or Western theatre artists conceptualize, direct, and produce theatrical works wherein non-Western individuals and performance traditions take center stage. However, oftentimes, as with these aforementioned works, the productions fail to adequately honor the actual performance traditions that they curate and incorporate. Instead, such “preexisting, authorless [forms], by the very fact of [their] priority and anonymity, add authenticity and hence

¹⁰ Leslie Witz, “Transforming Museums on Postapartheid Tourist Routes,” *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, ed. Ivan Karp et al. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 129. Witz here deploys Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s notion of “surrogates of travel,” which Kirshenblatt-Gimblett develops in *Destination Culture*, 132.

¹¹ Pierre Bourdieu, “Uniting Better to Dominate,” *Items and Issues* 2 (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2001): 1.

value to the commercial work,” regardless of the “authenticity” of their deployments within the theatrical frame.¹² Indeed, often in (inter)national theatre festivals

There is thus a suppression of *representation* markers and a foregrounding of *presentation* markers, an avoidance of the suggestion of ‘theater’ and an attempt to achieve the quality of pure presence, a slice of life. [...] And given the way that spectacle brings authenticity into question, it is easy to see why an ascetic aesthetic to staging should appeal to festival producers aiming to present rather than represent that life.¹³

Thus, though such structures gesture towards cosmopolitan, globalized structures, these self-same “world” structures occlude the machinations of global capital in producing value from the particular, inherently inauthentic, (re)presentations of cultural difference on display.

Such transformations of cultural difference into capital value are at the heart of Joseph Roach’s notion of “World Bank Drama.” As I elaborated in the introduction, Roach’s “World Bank Drama” traffics in “the world’s perceived accumulation of cultural capital, categorized under the portmanteau *heritage*, which is also increasingly treated as an intangible but ‘bankable’ abstraction, global in scope but most readily authenticated only in local, preferably indigenous detail.”¹⁴ The perspective of “heritage” as a “bankable” condensation of cultural capital inherently reinscribes a valuative divide between “the West” and “the rest,” for as Roach’s metaphor suggests, the evaluative authorities of “World Bank Drama” locate themselves primarily in the Global North and the cultural “West.” Thus, “heritage” encapsulates performances across a wide range of particular geographies, identities, and cultures, which are repackaged and recombined with elements of Western dramaturgy as value-added authenticators of cultural value. Thus, cultural memories such as those collected in Yael Farber’s testimonial theatre are placed in the same matrix of “cultural performance” as the gritty realism of

¹² Joseph Roach, “World Bank Drama,” 172.

¹³ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, 74.

¹⁴ Roach, “World Bank Drama,” 175.

Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom's Township Theatre works and the highly performative syncretism of Brett Bailey's ritualistic works. Moreover, the various forces driving World Bank Drama matrix these three divergent models of South African theatre within an even wider range of "African theatre" writ large and an ever more diversified "World theatre."

Despite the totalizing aspects of "World Bank Drama," particular formations have emerged within this superstructural frame as methods of (re)centralizing "the West" within the expanding globalized theatre economy. As Daphne P. Lei argues, "the most dominant form of intercultural theatre" at present is what she terms "Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre."¹⁵ Lei defines her term as indicative of "a specific artistic genre and state of mind that combines First World capital and brainpower with Third World raw material and labor, and Western classical texts with Eastern performance traditions."¹⁶ Though Lei works specifically with Taiwanese productions wherein Robert Wilson adopted/appropriated "Eastern" performance techniques in productions of *Orlando* and *1433*, she clearly lays out that "Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre" operates within "the discourse of interculturalism, [wherein] 'East' naturally does not refer to the eastern hemisphere, but to the constructed 'Orient' discussed in Edward Said's *Orientalism* or 'the Rest' in the dichotomy of 'the West and the Rest.'"¹⁷ Thus, in this chapter, I deploy Lei's concept of "Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre" to elaborate how South African theatre traffic has been interrupted and disrupted on its way to the international theatre festivals where Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre predominates. Like Lei, I argue that support for Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre draws from its instantiation as a recognizable and commoditized "way to comply with an

¹⁵ Daphne P. Lei, "Interruption, Intervention, and Interculturalism: Robert Wilson's HIT Productions in Taiwan," *Theatre Journal* 63 (2011): 571. *The Mahabharata*, *The Ik*, and *Kathakali King Lear* are prime examples of Lei's "Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre."

¹⁶ Lei, 571.

¹⁷ Lei, 571fn1.

official rhetoric of multiculturalism and diversity without doing too much outsourcing.”¹⁸ Thus, the prevalence of Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre at sites such as (inter)national theatre festivals creates the very pressure that drives its perpetuation, both within and without the (inter)national festival circuit.

Indeed, the profound effect of contemporary Western hegemony in (inter)cultural theatre production manifests itself in the incorporation of Western texts within the works of previously established South African dramatists. As I will demonstrate, in *MoLoRa*, Yael Farber interpolates several versions of *The Oresteia* as an organizing frame for staging real traumas brought to light through the TRC; similarly, Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom’s *Foreplay* reconceives Arthur Schnitzler’s *Der Reigen (La Ronde)* within a South African township; and Brett Bailey’s *Orfeus* recontextualizes the Orpheus myth within a post-apocalyptic, post-apartheid South African landscape. In each case, the Western text in some way reorients particular South African images, myths, stories, and bodies within a broader, “universal” framework. However, unlike the canonized works of “Intercultural Theatre,” in these particular South African examples, no external non-South African theatre director appropriated South African stories or performance traditions for the creation of intercultural theatrical works. Rather, I argue that Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre has penetrated the (inter)national theatre market to such an extent that (inter)cultural collaboration is no longer the primary marker of (inter)cultural theatre. Rather, some form of (inter)cultural syncretism—a combination of variable “cultural” materials structured in a form familiar enough to a putatively cosmopolitan Western audience—is the hallmark of the new Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre, which no longer is bound to the ethical aims of (inter)cultural exchange in the pursuit of a more easily commoditized product.

¹⁸ Lei, 573.

Ultimately, I argue that compliance with the exigencies of production at (inter)national theatre festivals favors particular formations such as Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre, wherein contentious issues such as “tokenization, miscommunication, misinterpretation, and even appropriation” are marginalized in favor of the rhetoric of cosmopolitan globalism.¹⁹ Therefore, because in performance encounters, “quick recognition eases the anxiety of cultural ignorance and affords access to global citizenship” to spectator-audiences, theatre practitioners adopt condensed markers of cultural “authenticity” that assures spectator-audiences of the “really real”-ness of the cultural performances enacted within the Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre frame. The self-same “authentic” qualities that carried deep biographical, cultural, and national meanings potentially transform into mere markers of exotic difference within the structures of Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre production. Thus, in *MoLoRa*, *Foreplay*, and *Orfeus*, elements of each dramatists’ stylistic “authentic” formations are recombined with Western texts, creating Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre products that simultaneously stage elements of South African culture while challenging the boundaries of what constitutes “South African” theatre.

3.1 FARBER’S *SEZAR* AND *MOLORA*: THE “UNIVERSALITY” OF TRAUMA AND THE EXOTICIZATION OF THE PARTICULAR

Contrary to the testimonial theatre that first garnered her acclaim and success, Yael Farber laid the framework for dramaturgy for the ensuing decade in *SeZaR* (2001), an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*. Indeed, Farber’s canon can be split between her testimonial

¹⁹ Lei, 575.

theatre described in the previous chapter and her adaptations of Western texts within various “world” contexts. Farber’s award-winning *SeZaR* translates Shakespeare’s source text into a polyphonic array of South African languages and, aside from altering Brutus’s motivation for his betrayal and emphasizing the roles of women within the story, *SeZaR* remains structurally faithful to Shakespeare’s original.²⁰ Most importantly for this discussion, Farber’s translocation of the play to an imaginary but decidedly African setting, “Azania,” directly referencing the post-Apartheid South African state imagined by resistance groups during the apartheid era.²¹ In her director’s note for both Market Theatre and international productions, Farber asserted that she was motivated to write *SeZaR* by a February 2000 issue of *Newsweek* that featured a cover image of “A young guerilla soldier, armed to the teeth and brandishing an AK-47, [which] was framed by the shape of Africa. Emblazoned across the image were the words: AFRICA: THE HOPELESS CONTINENT.”²² Farber’s *SeZaR* attempted to take a jaundiced eye at such claims that suggested the dystopian limitations projected upon “a continent so rich in possibility.”²³

Nevertheless, Farber’s attempt to create a definitively South African *Julius Caesar* “to communicate the immense beauty, darkness and humanity of the continent we [*sic*] come from” faced numerous challenges in its formation. For instance, rather than viewing the adaptation as one attesting to the universality of the play, Laurence Wright’s review of the production (ironically) indicates the slippage between a specific South African context and “the African nightmare *sui generis*,” further rooting the epistemology of African difference. As Wright asserts, *SeZaR*’s staging of extreme violence and political dissolution indicated a viewpoint in

²⁰ Laurence Wright, “Confronting the African Nightmare: Yael Farber’s *SeZaR*,” *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* 13 (2001): 102-106. *SeZaR* won South Africa’s prestigious Vita Awards in categories for Best Director, Best Production, Best Actress, and Best Costumes.

²¹ Martin Orkin, *Local Shakespeares: Proximations and Power* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 52.

²² Yael Farber quoted in “SeZar: Info,” accessed 08 March 2012, <<http://www.farberfoundry.com/>>.

²³ *Ibid.*

which “There are no excuses, no ameliorative gestures towards the colonial legacy, the IMF or the World Bank. Equally, there is no explanation. This is what happens.”²⁴ Beyond the evident essentialism of Wright’s claim that “This is what happens” in Africa without explanation or cause, Farber also connected the political intrigue of *Julius Caesar* to apartheid-era conflicts. As Martin Orkin recounts, in *SeZaR*, Antony’s famous speech ended when

men from the crowds, as a stage direction indicates, enter, carrying tyres, chanting the “*Toyi-Toyi in the traditional manner of resistance*” (36), while enactment on stage of the civil wars is anticipated, as a stage direction again indicates, by bodies—represented in the staging by display mannequins—which “*drop from gallows above them, as a symbol of the purging that they begin to conduct in Azania*” (37). Tyres were the implements used in the violent act of “necklacing” while the “toyi toyi”, one of the famous anti-apartheid dances used during political protest, was a sign not only of the will to resistance but also of a threat of the readiness to retaliate with violence.²⁵

Thus, in Farber’s (inter)cultural framework, the Azanian revolution takes the form of a series of immediately recognizable apartheid-era images and performances—theatrical quotations of previously authorized signs canonized within the halls of Johannesburg’s Apartheid Museum.²⁶

Moreover, *SeZaR*’s decontextualized deployments of such historical violence creates an existential, unspecified reality in which “this [violence] is what happens” without explanation or cause. Such contextual nonspecificity further undermines Farber’s protestations against the dystopian discourses modeled by the *Newsweek* image that inspired her production. Indeed, in Farber’s purportedly valorizing retelling of *Julius Caesar*, her (re)presentation of South Africa slips into “Azania,” which further suggests a “generic African”-ism that perpetuates nostalgic European notions of Africa as “a universe filled with portents, omens, significant dreams and

²⁴ Wright, 103.

²⁵ Orkin, *Local Shakespeares*, 55. Orkin here quotes from an unpublished version of *SeZaR* to which I did not have access. Also, the “necklacing” that Orkin references entails placing a car tire around a victim’s neck, filling the tire with gasoline, and setting fire to the “necklace” and in effect, immolating the victim alive.

²⁶ The “Hanging Room” and the toyi-toyi are both featured prominently in the Apartheid Museum’s archives of apartheid-era violence. See “Permanent Exhibition,” <www.apartheidmuseum.org>, particularly the sections on “Political Executions” and “Total Onslaught.”

ghostly visitations.”²⁷ In addition to such stereotyped imaginaries of Africa, Martin Orkin observed that

Farber’s dramatization of the civil wars included presentation of the naked torsos, painted in traditional fashion, of the warriors Antony and Oktavius, which, together with the sensuous beauty of their dances, presented them not only as active subjects of their aggression, but also as erotically labile male *objects* of the audience’s gaze.²⁸

Such slippages compound one another, combining the promises of exoticism and scopophilic pleasure within an authorized “post-colonial” reworking of a canonized Western text.

Indeed, the vulnerability of such decontextualized (re)presentations of “Africa” and black performing bodies to an audience’s gaze(s) are complicated further by Farber’s emphasis on international touring. Indeed, on her own website, Farber does not list domestic South African productions of her work; rather, she lists only venues with international visibility.²⁹ Thus, while productions such as *SeZaR* actually delve into the complexities of (South) African life and politics in a deeper way than the exploitative displays of previous South African touring productions such as *Ipi Tombi*, they also threaten to perpetuate frameworks of African strangeness and difference within the global ideoscape.

These tensions are perhaps best modeled in Farber’s commercially and critically successful production, *MoLoRa* (2003), a syncretic retelling of *The Oresteia* through the lens of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission.³⁰ Like in *SeZaR*, Farber translates the “classic” Greek tale through manifold South African languages, often leaving bits of text in a regional tongue, *untranslated* for European ears. Deploying visual quotations from the TRC with textual excerpts from several translations of *The Oresteia* to frame a global investigation on the

²⁷ Wright, 102; Yael Farber quoted in “SeZar: Info.”

²⁸ Orkin, *Local Shakespeares*, 183fn49.

²⁹ Pointedly, her listing of *SeZaR* omits the 2002 Market Theatre production of the show. (www.farberfoundry.com).

³⁰ Like *SeZaR*, *MoLoRa* premiered at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown.

qualities of justice. Throughout, Farber juxtaposes elements of South African language, culture, and history with canonical Western texts authored by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and even Shakespeare.³¹ Further emphasizing the juxtaposition between Western textuality and African orality, Farber recruited the members of the Ngqoko Cultural Group, a collective of amaXhosa women from rural South African communities, to act as a decidedly South African Chorus. Throughout, the Ngqoko Cultural Group acts as a collective witness to the stories of Klytemnestra, Elektra, and Orestes, and to their (re)enactments of violence and trauma recounted within the TRC. In addition to their passive witnessing, the Ngqoko Cultural Group also performs “UMNGQOKOLO (Split-Tone Singing),” establishing the “unearthly tone” in which *MoLoRa* takes place.³² Presumably, the presentation of the Ngqoko Cultural Group as carriers of the amaXhosa culture creates the “unearthly,” non-Western context of the play’s events.

The tensions between the African and Western elements of the work comes to a climax at the play’s highest point, when Elektra attempts to murder her mother, Klytemnestra, for her past oppressions, symbolically enacting the potential for retributive justice in the post-apartheid era. Rather than perpetuating this putatively Western frame of revenge-seeking, in *MoLoRa*, Farber trades Athena’s divine intervention in the plot for a more humanist *deus ex machina*—namely, Farber utilizes her chorus, the Ngqoko Cultural Group, to enact an intercession of *The Oresteia*’s violence. Farber’s inversion of the original tragic Greek conclusion, in which only divine forces can save the House of Atreus, acts as her most tangible critique of the European cultural texts. Indeed, near the play’s conclusion, Farber’s Orestes pleads with Elektra to “Rewrite this ancient

³¹ Though the published version of *MoLoRa* asserts that the play is “based on *The Oresteia* by Aeschylus,” Farber actually draws from both Euripides’ and Sophocles’ versions of *Electra*, as well as Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Aulis*, The Old Testament (specifically *Genesis* and *Exodus*), and Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*.

³² Farber, *MoLoRa*, 12.

end.”³³ Farber clearly aimed to rewrite the ancient Greek myth, to reinvent the possibilities of reconciliation, and to reify the exceptionalism of South Africans as a universal model of restorative justice through the nation’s peaceful transition from a repressive to free society.

Herein Farber’s adherence to formations of Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre becomes evident. In the front matter of Farber’s published text of *MoLoRa*, Farber explains her choice to incorporate the songs and divinations of the Ngqoko Cultural Group as a means to offer the audience to “experience a deep participation in a prayer to our ancestors for an end to the cycle of violence in South Africa—and indeed the world.”³⁴ Additionally, Farber connects the thematic of South Africa’s apartheid-era traumas to other world tragedies, ranging from “Hiroshima, Baghdad, Palestine, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Bosnia, the concentration camps of Europe[,] and modern-day Manhattan.”³⁵ Throughout her promotion of the work, Farber appeals to the global implications of *MoLoRa* and the inherent “universality” of its staged traumas.³⁶ Like her adaptation of first-person narratives into testimonial theatre, Farber justifies her dramaturgical engagements as pragmatically interested in audience engagement, noting

The audience needs to be transported from indifference to empathy, from their own limited perspective to deep inside the interior landscape of another person’s world. I am constantly on the lookout for the detail that an audience will recognise in their own lives in order to bridge them into a life so dramatically different from their own.³⁷

In *MoLoRa*, the “bridge” that Farber offers to her imagined audience is a prime example of Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre. To “transport” her potential audiences “from indifference to

³³ Yael Farber, *MoLoRa*, 83.

³⁴ Yael Farber, *MoLoRa*, 13. My emphasis.

³⁵ Farber, *MoLoRa*, 8.

³⁶ Farber, at least for a North American audience, refers to *MoLoRa* as “both a post-apartheid and post-9/11 play.” (Pat Donnelly, “Give peace, and theatre a chance; Romance brought South Africa’s Yael Farber to Montreal and the stage is all the better for it,” *The Gazette (Montreal)*, 17 January 2009, E4).

³⁷ Yael Farber and Amanda Stuart Fisher, “Interview,” in Yael Farber, *Theatre as Witness: Three Testimonial Plays from South Africa* (London: Oberon Books, 2008), 20. While Farber here refers to her use of visual and linguistic metaphor in her testimonial plays, I argue that the formations of *MoLoRa* evidence similar logic.

empathy,” Farber adopts the original text of *The Oresteia* as an organizational framework for the cycles of violence that plagued South Africa throughout its recent history. However, such a formation implies her audience’s “dramatically different” awareness from her performers as well as her audience’s unfamiliarity with the intricacies of the TRC and the vicissitudes that threatened to derail the restorative function of its hearings. While *MoLoRa* has found success on international tour since its 2003 premiere, Farber’s invocation of a global, international appeal is problematic because of her choice of essentially translating the experience of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for non-South Africans.

The tensions between addressing work to the national and international communities arises in part through Farber’s deployment of physical actions drawn from the TRC. Contrary to her earlier “theatre as witness” wherein Farber deployed the machinations of theatre to address the “haunting silence of stories left to tell,” *MoLoRa* capitalizes on narratives and imagery already seared into the collective memory of South Africans. Indeed, several of the images and metaphors that Farber deploys in *MoLoRa* were well-known revelations from the TRC that also would potentially be known to international audiences.³⁸ One such highly visible incident was former apartheid-era police officer Jeffrey Benzien’s revelation and demonstration of “wet-bag method”—a long denied, but widely used, apartheid government technique of torture. In *MoLoRa*, Farber adapts this act of political torture to the domestic space wherein the white Klytemnestra performs the role of interrogator and torturer of her black daughter, Elektra. Klytemnestra “takes a plastic bag from her pocket, places it over ELEKTRA’s head, and pulls it

³⁸ It should be noted that such references are likely much more immediate to South Africans who regularly participated as witnesses to the TRC or to the weekly South African Broadcasting Company television programme, *TRC Special Report*.

tightly. *ELEKTRA* begins to suffocate.”³⁹ Pointedly, Farber indicates that in production, “*This suffocation should be performed for longer than the audience would be comfortable with.*”⁴⁰

Here, elements of Farber’s early work with British “In-Yer-Face” theatre come into conflict with her goal of “avoiding sensationalism and indulgence, while doing justice to the pains of the past through deeply authentic performances in a simple but powerful piece of theatre.”⁴¹ How does the (re)performance of such trauma communicate anything more than a spectacularization of violence to an uninformed audience? As in *SeZaR*, how does Farber’s deployment of sensationalized violence negotiate extant imaginaries of Africa as a site of dysfunctional politics, violence, death, and disorder? Perhaps most importantly, non-South African audiences would likely need to rely on Farber’s director’s note or other dramaturgical material outside of the theatrical frame to understand the significance of this particular act of stage violence and its ubiquitous (real) deployment during apartheid. Ironically, in (inter)national contexts, the “authentic” nature of Farber’s (re)deployment of TRC’s documented traumas inherently risks the “sensationalism and indulgence” that Farber intended to avoid.

First, Farber does not radically alter the signification of race within *MoLoRa*’s structure, pitting a white matriarch (Klytemnestra) against her two black children (Elektra and Orestes) which consistently plagued the TRC and its efficacy. Whereas many black South Africans participated in the TRC and shared testimonies of apartheid-era abuses, significantly fewer whites—both victims and perpetrators—took part. Thus, the TRC often perpetuated the common

³⁹ Yael Farber, *MoLoRa*, 48.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Yael Farber quoted in *Theatre as Witness*, 21.

apartheid-era delineation between white, governmental abusers and black, individual victims.⁴² In *MoLoRa*, Farber mobilizes all such performances of violence within the agency of the white character of Klytemnestra. These torturous acts range from the aforementioned “wet-bag method” to the murder of Agamemnon and even to an interrogation in which she submerges her daughter’s head underwater and then burns her with lit cigarettes. Notably, while Klytemnestra herself was the victim of tortures at the hands of Agamemnon, all instances in which Klytemnestra was a victim are recounted through testimonial accounts rather than through live reenactments. This structure invites more critical distance between the audience and the event than in the mimetic reenactments of violence performed by Klytemnestra on her two children. Indeed, by selecting highly recognizable acts of torture by the apartheid government and by siting such acts within the agency of the white character of Klytemnestra, Farber selected the most visceral and infamous moment of Afrikaner confession of torture and places it centerstage in *MoLoRa*. Simultaneously, Farber omits the atrocities performed by the black South African majority during apartheid. Any active violence perpetrated by black South Africans thus remains signified solely by the potential for retribution against Klytemnestra after apartheid’s fall rather than as a very real element of the apartheid era.⁴³ Thus, the play dramatizes the globally authorized version of apartheid-era South Africa wherein black bodies endured brutal oppression at the hands of white words, deeds, and ideologies. *MoLoRa*’s *deus ex machina* conclusion, moreover, enacts the liberal, globalized myth of the exceptionalism of the “Rainbow Nation” vis à vis the victory and moral righteousness of the oppressed in combating their oppressors.

⁴² For a detailed analysis of the successes, failures, and performative nature of the TRC, see Catherine M. Cole, *Performing South Africa’s Truth Commission: Stages of Transition* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010).

⁴³ Again, it is important to note that while there were clearly more transgressions on the side of the repressive apartheid government that needed to be uncovered by the investigations of the TRC, Farber omits of any overt aggression or violence on the part of the resistance movements’ stage surrogates, Elektra and Orestes.

This is, of course, not to condemn *MoLoRa* as merely exploitative; rather, I hope to elucidate how it perpetuates internationally authorized frameworks for engaging with South Africa and the TRC. Farber's dramaturgy effectively incorporates particular South African histories, performances, and cultural material, most notably in her incorporation of the Ngqoko Cultural Group's split-tone singing. The women of the Ngqoko Cultural Group provides *MoLoRa* with both a constantly human, haunting soundtrack to the unfolding stage events, and a device for Farber's *deus ex machina* through which Farber signifies the TRC as a climactic moment of national and cultural intervention. However, even this deployment of South African particulars is fraught with issues of context.

As Farber establishes in her Director's note, the Ngqoko Cultural Group's symbolic intervention correlates to that of Cynthia Ngewu, a mother of one of the seven teenage boys killed in 1986.⁴⁴ The deaths of these young men, known collectively as the Gugulethu Seven, remained a controversial mystery until information gathered during the TRC revealed their deaths to have been unprovoked murders carried out by apartheid state police. Cynthia Ngewu emerged as one of the most famous participants in the Gugulethu Seven hearings and the TRC at large. During the hearings, Ngewu, the bereft mother of a child murdered by the apartheid state police, valorized the goals and efficacy of the TRC:

This thing called reconciliation... If I am understanding it correctly...if it means this perpetrator, this man who has killed my son, if it means he becomes human again, this man, so that I, so that all of us, get our humanity back...then I agree, then I support it all.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Farber cites inspiration from a "Cynthia Ngwenyu, mother of one of the murdered Gugulethu 7, when facing her son's state-sanctioned murderer at the TRC" (Farber, *MoLoRa*, 7). However, both the quote's origin, Antjie Krog's TRC narrative, *Country of My Skull*, and Catherine M. Cole's *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission* use the spelling "Cynthia Ngewu", as the mother of Christopher Piet. I use the latter spelling due to its higher frequency.

⁴⁵ Cynthia Ngewu quoted in Farber, "Foreword," *MoLoRa*, 7. The quote is taken verbatim from Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2000), 142.

Ngewu's support for the processes and aims of the TRC has become one of the most widely cited authorizing examples of communal engagement with—and approval of—the government commission. Indeed, since appearing in poet Antjie Krog's TRC memoir, *Country of My Skull*, pro-TRC parties routinely have used Ngewu's quote as validation of the Commission's process and reconciliatory effects.⁴⁶ It should not be surprising, then, that Farber opens her foreword to *MoLoRa* with Ngewu's call for reconciliation as an example of "the common everyman and everywoman who, in the years following democracy, gathered in modest halls across the country to face their perpetrators across a table, and [found] a way forward for us all."⁴⁷ Through the combination of Ngewu's appeal to restorative justice and the Ngqoko Cultural Group's staged intervention into retributive violence, Farber mobilizes various symbols of "exceptional" South African culture as authorizers of the TRC's efficacy and of South Africa as a model for the global potential of restorative justice.

Nevertheless, there is a notable elision in *MoLoRa*, by which Farber embodies Ngewu's call for reconciliation through the Ngqoko Cultural Group in her creation of a South African "common everyman and everywoman" version of the Greek chorus. Despite the problematic elision of cultural difference between the performatively amaXhosa women, who actively embody and preserve the repertoire of amaXhosa traditions, and Cynthia Ngewu, a modern woman living in Cape Town's townships, Farber's selective quotation of a much circulated and oft-referenced version of the TRC runs counter to Farber's previous goal of telling untold stories. More importantly, Farber's perpetuation of the selective quotation similarly elides the controversies, frictions, and disjunctures of the TRC's processes.

⁴⁶ Krog, 142.

⁴⁷ Farber, *MoLoRa*, 7.

As Catherine M. Cole recounts in *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission*, the hearings surrounding the Gugulethu Seven were nothing if not controversial. Contrary to the heavy circulation of Ngewu's appeal for reconciliation, Cole's analysis of the TRC's performance elements reveals a series of disruptive and discordant events surrounding the Gugulethu Seven hearings. As Cole summarizes, the Gugulethu Seven hearings were prominent events within the broader context of the TRC because they were "considered a 'window case' (a case identified by the truth commission as representative of broader patterns of abuse) for the Western Cape."⁴⁸ Indeed, the Gugulethu Seven hearings were some of the most controversial of the TRC, aptly serving as a "window case" for the broader tensions in the negotiations between truth and reconciliation. Importantly, Cynthia Ngewu's performance at the hearings indicates a persona diametrically opposed to the ethos signified by her much quoted statement on reconciliation. At one point, Ngewu demanded that "these boers must be put in front of us, in front of this commission."⁴⁹ The TRC Human Rights Violations Committee granted Ngewu's demand and called the accused police officers before the hearing body. In addition to the physical presence of the police, the Committee also subpoenaed and viewed a video documenting the murders and the treatment of the victims' bodies afterward. As per the demands of the bereaved matriarchs, the video was played before the TRC, at which point the decorous proceedings of reconciliation devolved into turmoil. In the midst of the viewing, a member of the audience threw a shoe, striking one of the police officers.⁵⁰ As Cole describes, at this point in the proceedings, the transcriber of the hearing ceased to differentiate the voices and actions of

⁴⁸ Cole, *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission*, 18. Interestingly, Jeffrey Benzien's performance of the "wet-bag method" occurred during the Gugulethu Seven hearings (Cole, 18).

⁴⁹ Cole, *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission*, 19. "Boers" is a slur against Afrikaners which references the colonial history of Afrikaner's settlement of black African lands, reinscribing Afrikaners as colonial invaders in South Africa.

⁵⁰ Cole, *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission*, 20. Cole notes that the shoe-thrower was purported to be the sister of Ngewu's deceased son, Christopher Piet (180fn89).

individual court members, stating in capital letters, “PEOPLE ARE HYSTERICAL—CRYING AND SCREAMING.”⁵¹ Eventually, the crowd subsided and order was restored to the proceedings.

While this episode of crisis was not indicative of the TRC as a whole, it is deeply ironic that a woman deeply involved in such a fraught moment wherein restorative and retributive justice met on the TRC floor became the voice of the most famous utopian appeal to restorative justice. Compounding these ironies is Ngewu’s own investment in truth and the significance that discovering and sharing such knowledge holds within the framework of reconciliation. Ngewu ended her testimony before the TRC by highlighting the impossibility of recovering knowledge in the wake of her son’s death: “They killed all of them so that no one could give evidence about why they were shot. Nobody knows the truth of this story.”⁵² Clearly Farber’s account of Ngewu’s conciliatory gesture omits a great deal of the events surrounding Ngewu’s actions and words during the actual TRC hearing. Moreover, Farber’s version of the TRC does not grapple with the complexities and ruptures evidenced by the Gugulethu Seven hearings. Both these omissions and simplifications, I argue, operate in support of an (inter)nationally authorized, simplified, and inherently inauthentic narrative of the TRC that has circulated since the hearings themselves.

Indeed, Farber’s interpretation of the TRC hearings is not unique in its limited focus. As Cole astutely observes regarding the TRC itself, “interpretation is always an intervention based upon selection, omission, imposition, distortion, and aesthetic embellishment.”⁵³ Like the complex events from which the TRC created its archives, Farber’s *MoLoRa* acts as an

⁵¹ Cole, *Performing South Africa’s Truth Commission*, 21.

⁵² Cynthia Ngewu quoted in Cole, *Performing South Africa’s Truth Commission*, 87.

⁵³ Cole, *Performing South Africa’s Truth Commission*, 81.

interpretation of the TRC and its impact on South African society. Therefore, *MoLoRa* also selects and omits information, imposing Farber's narrative on the accounts and embellishing these same infamous moments to her own ends. None of this should be altogether surprising, as the very nature of authorship implies that the author's agenda and bias will inform his or her art. Nevertheless, it is notable that Farber's text interpolates such iconic moments from the TRC such as the wet-bag method and the Gugulethu Seven hearing, both of which would be well known to South Africans even if they did not view the events directly.⁵⁴ Conversely, Farber omits Ngewu's repeated and unapologetic reference to the police officers by the antiquated and racially loaded term, "boers."⁵⁵ Instead, Farber fixates on Ngewu's single appeal to the reconciliatory function of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, omitting large parcels of relevant truth in the process. Clearly, and understandably, Farber seeks to valorize the TRC and its efficacy in embodying Desmond Tutu's ideal of "restorative justice." Such an idyllic (re)presentation runs counter to Farber's alternative goals of sharing untold stories. It is my argument that Farber's selective quotation suggests a move towards imagining an (inter)national, "universal" audience for *MoLoRa*.

The authorized, stereotyped representations of the TRC from which *MoLoRa* draws suggests a distanciation between the source material and its performance for an audience. In Farber's own terms, there appears to be a rather large "bridge" to "transport" her imagined audience "from indifference to empathy, from their own limited perspective to deep inside the

⁵⁴ Both hearings received coverage on the South African Broadcasting Company's weekly summation of TRC hearings, *TRC Special Report*. While Jeffrey Benzien's performance of the wet-bag method was aired, no footage was shown of the Gugulethu Seven hearing's devolution into disorder (Cole, 83).

⁵⁵ I have no evidence that Farber consciously omitted this information. However, even if Farber merely quoted Krog's *Country of My Skull* without further researching Ngewu's testimony, she then unintentionally perpetuated the established, archived story of Ngewu's conciliatory appeal without the complexities that spawned it.

interior landscape of another person's world."⁵⁶ Such deployments of actual TRC testimony in conjunction with the live performance of the Ngqoko Cultural Group root *MoLoRa* deeply within a South African context. However, whereas a South African audience would likely be familiar with both the TRC's processes as part of their own lived, embodied experience and with performance styles such as the *Umngqokolo* of the Ngqoko Cultural Group, a Euroamerican audience would more than likely be *unfamiliar* with the particularities omitted in their dramatic (re)deployment. Whether intentional or not, Farber's crafting of *MoLoRa* along the lines of Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre supports such a "universal," nonparticularized structure. In (inter)national performance, the Ngqoko Cultural Group's split-tone singing becomes recoded as the "unearthly tone" of African difference within *MoLoRa*'s performance frame and thus reducing the embodied repertoire of amaXhosa performance to "a powerful indigenous aesthetic" that connects the South African context to the primordial realm.⁵⁷ Similarly, Farber's deployment of an oppressor/oppressed paradigm of recent South African history risks perpetuating a "white guilt" version of (South) African history at large, wherein (neo)liberal international audiences may achieve catharsis through the triumph of the oppressed black Other over the guilty ("not-me") white perpetrators. Here, the cosmopolitan ethos of "empathy despite difference" becomes its own commodity, transforming the complexities of South Africa's particular circumstances into harmonious dramatic works wherein African performance forms exist alongside "classic" Western texts. Thus, cultural forms such as the Ngqoko Cultural Group's *Umngqokolo* and the TRC itself become evidence of Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre's

⁵⁶ Yael Farber quoted in *Theatre as Witness*, 20.

⁵⁷ Betine van Zyl Smit, "Orestes and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission," *Classical Receptions Journal* 2.1 (2010): 132.

practices of “tokenization, miscommunication, misinterpretation, and even appropriation.”⁵⁸ In the service of “quick recognition,” the complexities of South Africa’s conciliatory processes are reduced to markers of Africanness, authorizing authentication of cultural value as heritage and “really real” *truth* about South Africa during the TRC.

Admittedly, Yael Farber’s *MoLoRa* presents a gripping version of the “classic” Greek myth of the House of Atreus, bringing South African particularities into the consciousness of international audiences. However, Farber’s deployments of such dubiously “authentic” instantiations of South African culture in her (re)presentations thereof suggests a certain amount of entrenched (inter)cultural dissonance in acts of cultural exchange. Writing on issues of translation, Peter Burke notes that the recipient (target) culture of a work often exhibits “the principle of confirmation, according to which people in a given culture translate works that support ideas or assumptions or prejudices already present in the culture.”⁵⁹ Thus, *MoLoRa* can be viewed as a work of Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre, a form that acts as a translational medium through which cultural particularities are selected for their communicability to international theatre audiences. Evident in Farber’s metaphor of a translational “bridge” is her acceptance that her selectivity is in service of a particular type of audience. In this case, she transports her international audience to a fictive version of South Africa. Like her imaginary “Azania” from *SeZaR*, *MoLoRa*’s “South Africa” and its attendant Truth Commission may indeed communicate new information to audiences and even may generate empathy. However, both works do so through the deployment and reinscription of extant myths drawn from the global imaginary of “Africa.”

⁵⁸ Lei, 575.

⁵⁹ Peter Burke, “Cultures of Translation in Early Modern Europe” in *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 20. See also: Mark Gamsa, “Cultural Translation and the Transnational Circulation of Books,” *Journal of World History* 22.3 (2011): 553-575.

Indeed, such works are a far cry from the “untold stories” staged in Farber’s “theatre as witness.” Moreover, Farber’s sustained appeals to *MoLoRa*’s central metaphor emphasizes her universalizing ethos, for in Farber’s terms, “*Molora* (the Sesotho word for ‘ash’) is the truth we must all return to, regardless of what faith, race or clan we hail from.”⁶⁰ Farber clearly articulates the breadth of her definition of “we,” invoking the memories of conflict-scarred geographies as diverse as “Hiroshima, Baghdad, Palestine, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Bosnia, the concentrations camps of Europe[,] and modern-day Manhattan—to the remains around the fire after the storytelling is done.”⁶¹ Thus, for Farber, the audience for *MoLoRa* is global, is the world at large that can learn from South Africa’s peaceful transition to democratic self-governance. The revolutionary notion of incorporating “world” performances into the (inter)national theatre circuit again presents non-Western performance as a figurative mirror by which the West may perceive “universal” lessons regarding justice and humanity.

Nevertheless, several vital questions arise in international productions of *MoLoRa*. What is the efficacy of (re)presenting the traumas revealed through the TRC? Is *MoLoRa* an investigation of South Africa’s particular struggles toward reconciliation, or an argument for the universal efficacy of community-based justice? Does the Ngqoko Cultural Group and the “unearthly tone” of its split-tone singing stand in for all South Africans, for the amaXhosa people, or for communities everywhere? While many of these questions elude simple answers, they all point to the central disjuncture of (inter)cultural performance, which depends fundamentally on who is looking to determine whom and/or what is seen.⁶²

⁶⁰ Farber, *MoLoRa*, 8.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Phelan, 140.

The traffic of works such as *MoLoRa* through established pathways of (inter)national performance such as (inter)national theatre festivals further problematizes how audiences may engage with such works. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett puts it, the wide touring of performances such as *MoLoRa* demonstrates how “festivals have a tendency to reinforce the status quo even as enlightened organizers and performers struggle to use them to voice oppositional values. Carnival represented is carnival tamed.”⁶³ The widespread popularity of formations such as Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre and its recognizability as a commodifiable theatre product is one of the primary ways through which the carnivalesque potential of (inter)cultural performance has been “tamed.”

The academic attention that *MoLoRa* has thus far received further supports the normalizing influence of both (inter)national theatre traffic and of the academy itself. Despite minimal academic work on any of Farber’s “Theatre as Witness,” there have been at least four published interpretations of *MoLoRa* in dissertations and peer-reviewed journals since the play’s publication in 2008.⁶⁴ Ironically, the majority of these academic works focus on Farber’s dramaturgical engagement with the Greek original rather than as a stand-alone work of South African theatre. Indeed, the academic writings on *MoLoRa* to date demonstrate an increasing emphasis on (inter)cultural theatre that—like postcolonial treatments of theatre—cannot escape “a central concern with cultural power.”⁶⁵ However, the emphasis such studies devote to intertextuality in both *SeZaR* and *MoLoRa*’s and their respective “classic” source texts as well as

⁶³ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, 77.

⁶⁴ See Glenn A. Odom, “South African Truth and Tragedy: Yael Farber’s *MoLoRa* and Reconciliation Aesthetics,” *Comparative Literature* 63 (2011): 47-63; Bethany Rose Banister Rainsberg, “Rewriting the Greeks: The Translations, Adaptations, Distant Relatives and Productions of Aeschylus’ Tragedies in the United States of American from 1900 to 2009,” (PhD. Diss., The Ohio State University, 2010); Astrid van Weyenberg, “‘Rewrite This Ancient End!’ Staging Transition in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” *New Voices in Classical Reception Studies* 3 (2008): 31-46; and Betine van Zyl Smit, “Orestes and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” 114-135.

⁶⁵ Helen Gilbert, “General Introduction,” in *Postcolonial Plays: an anthology*, ed. Helen Gilbert (New York: Routledge, 2001), 1.

the marked difference in academic attention paid to Farber's attempts to "write back" to European cultural material ironically indicate the persistent cultural capital vested in the "classics."⁶⁶ Indeed, as Helen Gilbert perceptively argues, while postcolonial writing may in many contexts

indicate a degree of agency, or at least a programme of resistance, against cultural domination; in others, it signals the existence of a particular historical legacy and/or a chronological stage in a culture's transition into a modern nation-state; in yet others, it is used more disapprovingly to suggest a form of co-option into Western cultural economies.⁶⁷

Whereas Farber's "postcolonial" (re)visions of "classic" texts may successfully "write back" to the former colonial powers when staged within post-colonial, post-apartheid South Africa, an inherently more complex formation arises in their tour(ist)ing performances before European spectator-audiences. Indeed, at this point, the notions of postcoloniality, cosmopolitanism, and interculturalism have attained a certain amount of symbolic and cultural capital, inherently adding potential forces to the already fraught matrices of (inter)national performance.

The commercial and academic investments in particular formations within the frame of South African theatre attest to the peculiar cultural logic behind international performance. Despite (or because of) the apparent peculiarities to such formations, Farber continues to have success on the global stage, particularly in her continued explorations of formations of Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre. Since expatriating from South Africa to Montréal, Canada, in 2006, Farber has continued developing works with her production company, Farber Foundry. Her most recent works continue the pattern established by *SeZaR* and *MoLoRa*, drawing from

⁶⁶ Bill Aschroft, Gereth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989). This canonical text of postcolonial literary theory argues that postcolonial writing is a key element in "the process by which the language, with its power, and the writing, with its signification of authority, has been wrested from the dominant European culture" (7).

⁶⁷ Gilbert, 1.

“classic” Western texts to comment on contemporary “world” issues. *KADMOS: Damned Be The Hands That Did This Thing* (2011) adapts Sophocles’ *Theban Plays* and first-person testimonies within a scenescape of contemporary, abstracted, globalized warfare; *RAM: The Abduction of Sita* (2011) retells the Hindu epic, *The Ramayana*, as a contemporary parable about the “Sacred Feminine”; and *The Lear Project* (2011) sites Shakespeare’s tragic text in contemporary Middle Eastern politics and violence. What is remarkable about these works is not so much their distantiation from African contexts, concerns, and realities; rather, all three productions model variations on Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre productions wherein “authentic” contemporary events and/or stories from the putative “world” stage are (re)combined with canonical texts. Indeed, in *RAM*, Farber exhibits the promiscuous nature of Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre formations. Like the works of Peter Brook and other forerunners of intercultural theatre, *RAM* looks to the exotic “East” to find source material through which the “West” can contextualize the essences of contemporary social and cultural issues. Thus, Farber has become deeply invested in both (inter)national production of her work and therefore in the Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre that such (inter)national markets support. While Farber has more explicitly established a particular framework for her international work than the other two South African playwrights analyzed herein, both Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom and Brett Bailey demonstrate their own idiosyncratic deployments of (inter)cultural theatre formations on the international theatre tour(ist)ing circuit.

3.2 GROOTBOOM'S *FOREPLAY*: FOR THE "FUN" OF IT; OR, BLACK BODIES, SEX AND VIOLENCE ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

After the controversies surrounding the 2007 NAF Main Programme production of *Interracial*, Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom went back to the drawing board to develop new works. In 2008, Grootboom premiered *Foreplay* at the Afrovibes Festival in Amsterdam. Like Farber before him, in *Foreplay*, Grootboom explores the world of (inter)cultural and/or postcolonial dramaturgy by adapting a canonical Western playtext to a South African setting. In *Foreplay*, Grootboom adapts the structural frame of Arthur Schnitzler's late-nineteenth century classic, *Der Reigen (La Ronde)*, from its canonical European context to a particularized South African setting. However, unlike Farber's *MoLoRa*, Grootboom does not base the script on Schnitzler's original, instead creating an entirely new script on the revolving structure of *Der Reigen*. Despite these alterations, *Foreplay* retains Schnitzler's focus on sexual politics between individuals of different social positions, particularly of different classes. In *Foreplay*, however, Grootboom updates several thematic elements, transposing the German original into contemporary South Africa by suggesting a township locale in the set design and by "translating" the crisis of syphilis in 18th century Germany to the contemporary South African (and global) crisis of AIDS. Grootboom's other contextualizations similarly position *Foreplay* as a local site of post-apartheid South Africa that can be viewed as a model of macroscopic contemporary global concerns.

Indeed, *Foreplay* demonstrates a complex interplay between South African and Western theatrical traditions in its construction. For instance, the set in which the play was staged was decidedly South African. As Loren Kruger recounts in her review of the 2009 Market Theatre production, "the set and lighting [...] remained spare and dark throughout, occasionally featuring

a bed or an upholstered chair, but always framed by security fencing that also could signify the perimeter of an outside shebeen [bar].”⁶⁸ The spare stage represents another of Grootboom’s inheritances from township theatre, which traditionally built scenes around a “flexible, polyfunctional performance space.”⁶⁹ In addition to the set, Grootboom also adapted *Der Reigen*’s characters through a township theatre lens. The traditional Township Theatre cast consists of archetypes such as “a dim-witted policeman, often brutal, a priest, a comical school teacher, a shebeen queen, a township gossip who is also a comic relief character, a diviner, a streetwise fast-talking hoodlum, and a beautiful ‘sexy’ girl.”⁷⁰ Meanwhile, *Foreplay* features the Prostitute (among several “beautiful ‘sexy’ girls”); the Thug (a “streetwise fast-talking hoodlum”) who steals the uniform and identity of the Soldier; the Barmaid (shebeen queen) who seduces the Spoilt Young Man; the Preacher (“priest”); the aloof Playmaker (“comical school teacher”) who teaches three schoolgirls; and the Actress (another “beautiful ‘sexy’ girl”). Notably lacking in Grootboom’s variation of township theatre is the stock “brutal,” apartheid-era policemen figures who Grootboom replaces with a similarly “brutal” and corrupt post-apartheid politician and his henchman. In addition to these several continuities within township theatre structure, Grootboom also incorporates some of *Der Reigen*’s original character types, for his Barmaid and Spoilt Young Man “resembled Schnitzler’s figures quite closely.”⁷¹ Such negotiations of equivalence between South African theatrical forms and canonical Western works suggest an investment in (re)asserting the value of South African formations in the context of more widely authorized Western ones.

⁶⁸ Loren Kruger, “Foreplay,” *Theatre Journal* 62.3 (2010): 453. *Foreplay* premiered at the Afrovibes Festival before returning to Pretoria’s South African State Theatre for both the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 seasons. Johannesburg’s Market Theatre also produced the show during the 2009-2010 season, the production for which Grootboom won a Naledi Award for Best Direction.

⁶⁹ Balme, 251.

⁷⁰ Zakes Mda, “Politics and the Theatre,” 199.

⁷¹ Kruger, “Foreplay,” 453.

Additionally, *Foreplay* draws from multiple cultural elements circulating in global flows and media. As Loren Kruger notes, Grootboom's adulterous Preacher quotes the similarly adulterous American Pentecostal preacher Jimmy Swaggart.⁷² Also, *Foreplay*'s (re)presentations of schoolteachers and their students trading sex for school fees are drawn from both sensational news accounts as well as from popular soap operas. Moreover, characters reference canonical and contemporary works ranging from *Hamlet* to Guillermo Del Toro's Spanish-language *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006). The sound design further resonates the global scope of the play, opening with Philip Glass's "November 25 (Morning)" from the American/Japanese film *Mishima* (1985), and later calling for English pop singer Des'ree's song "Feel So High" (1998). Within the blends of these disparate, global cultural materials, actors perform particularized South African roles, incorporating various vernacular languages including Tswana and Sotho, among others. Thus, Grootboom's first foray into (inter)cultural variations on a Western text demonstrates a complex arrangement of various cultural materials, drawn from manifold global sources, but sited firmly within a South African context.

Nevertheless, as with the other (inter)cultural works analyzed herein, *Foreplay* opens itself up to many potential (mis)readings in international production. First, the play begins with a scene of extreme violence without any dialogue. In the scene, the Thug stalks the Soldier before "violently mug[ging]" him, stripping him of his uniform, and ultimately, stealing his identity.⁷³ Indeed, this non-verbal performance of violence sets in motion "a chase that leads to a bloody shooting only at the end of the evening," with characters constantly switching roles between

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom, *Foreplay* (London: Oberon Books, 2009): 15.

pursued and pursuer and with sex and violence continually intermingling.⁷⁴ The concluding scene explicitly combines sex and violence when the Politician rapes the Prostitute in retribution for her previous acts of blackmail against him. As Rolf C. Hemke recounts, the performance of this scene “is extremely realistic and deliberately drawn out under Grootboom’s direction. No one in the audience can be unaffected by it.”⁷⁵ Though Hemke rightly asserts that “no one in the audience can be unaffected” by such performances, crucial questions in (inter)national performance are what the effects of such performances may be and *how* such performances convey meaning across cultural lines.

Indeed, Grootboom was disappointed in the reception that *Foreplay* received when performed in London in 2009. He observed, “The people there didn’t really like it that much. I think that they felt it lacked subtlety. [...] One thing we kept getting in London was that it’s not nuanced.”⁷⁶ Such reactions attest to the different cultural understandings and performance traditions of each locality. Whereas Grootboom deploys hyperrealistic staging’s of sex and violence in conjunction with the somewhat larger-than-life performance styles of township theatre, European audiences have been more apt to perceive his “actors [...] as] a little naïve and simple, when really they were leaning towards a ‘township theatre’ style of acting.”⁷⁷

Nevertheless, because Euroamerican audience-spectators arrive at the theatre with different cultural frameworks, such misunderstandings are to some extent inevitable. However, there are

⁷⁴ Rolf C. Hemke, “Staring Dispassionately into the Abyss: Director and Author Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom from Soweto, Johannesburg,” in *Theater Südlich Der Sahara/Theatre in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Rolf C. Hemke (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2010), 168.

⁷⁵ Hemke, “Staring Dispassionately,” 169.

⁷⁶ Grootboom quoted in Kwanele Sosibo, “Paul Grootboom and the quest to reroute South African theatre,” in *Positions: Contemporary Artists in South Africa*, ed. Peter Anders and Matthew Krouse (Sunnyside: Jacan Media (Pty) Ltd, 2010), 68.

⁷⁷ Stephanie Carp, “The Pitfall of Exoticism and Other Misunderstandings: Considerations for the Intercontinental Transfer of Theatre Productions,” in *Theater Südlich Der Sahara/Theatre in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Rolf C. Hemke (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2010), 212.

particular patterns of misunderstanding and cultural (mis)reading that attest to deeper problems in (inter)cultural theatre traffic.

Bluntly, *Foreplay* presents an opportunity for (Euroamerican) audience-spectators to engage with performances of black bodies on display. When removed from South Africa and its various performance traditions, the extremity of Grootboom's characters and their actions further opens his work to receptions which see his characters as "spectacular 'black types,' [which are] clearly fetishistic in nature" and which risk becoming mere "spectacles for erotic consumption."⁷⁸ Combined with the hyperrealistic staging of several acts of sexuality within *Foreplay*, the commodification of (inter)cultural performances through (inter)national theatre festivals risks turning Grootboom's performers into commodity fetishes. As Josephine Lee writes,

Commodity fetishism describes how capitalist society promotes a fetishistic consciousness, which invests objects and bodies with particular symbolic properties and value. Any desire to see the body of color, then, is tied to that body's value as a spectacular commodity; the theatrical power of that body serves only to generate profit and becomes measured by its marketability.⁷⁹

While Grootboom has distanced himself repeatedly from allegations of "sensationalism," he regularly mobilizes sensational topics and imagery in pursuit of the social and political functions of his works. Moreover, as evidenced by *Foreplay*'s scene between the Playmaker and the Schoolgirl, Grootboom is well aware of the potential for exploitation of other's sexuality, emotions, and trauma within the auspices of dramatic storytelling.⁸⁰ Indeed, the play's

⁷⁸ Josephine Lee, "Cultural Nationalism and Racial Fetishism," in *Modern Drama: Defining the Field*, ed. Ric Knowles et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 152; Eric Lott, *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 140.

⁷⁹ Lee, 153.

⁸⁰ Grootboom, *Foreplay*, 48-62. In this sequence, the Playmaker teaches several Schoolgirls acting, becoming increasingly emotionally manipulative, and causing one Schoolgirl to break into tears. He then orders that everyone abandon her. The next scene begins when the Preacher enters and preys on the vulnerable Schoolgirl for his own

conclusion manifests this exchange explicitly when the violent rape of the Prostitute in a “drawn out” performance of individual trauma enacted on a black female (Other) body. The Prostitute’s final monologue concludes the play when she, still nude as a result her rape, addresses the audience. Moments after a violent and traumatic event, the Prostitute smiles at the audience, announcing her (a)moral conclusion of the play: “All I know is...the bottom line is...EVERYBODY IS A FUCKING WHORE...” [sic].⁸¹ Though Grootboom’s unresolved ending creates an uncomfortable unease, it also raises questions of identification. Does a Euroamerican audience “identify” with the Prostitute? Do they even see themselves as implicated within her grouping of “Everybody”?⁸² Or, in the wake of the performance of such trauma, do the codifications of performer/audience, East/West, Self/Other, and black/white disrupt such empathetic identifications?

Such questions reveal the interplay between “authentic” cultural material and (inter)national, (inter)cultural misunderstanding. While Grootboom mobilizes township theatre as an “authentic” South African performance tradition, which putatively authenticates his engagement with canonical Western material, the combination of particular South African traditions with “universal” Western text reinforces notions of cultural difference as well as the arrangements of (inter)cultural inequity. Whereas Schnitzler’s text holds the proverbial center, Grootboom’s adaptations and incorporations of township theatre performance traditions risk becoming value-added commodities to the moribund textual relevance of *Der Reigen*.⁸³

gratification. After the Preacher leaves, the Playmaker returns and does the same. The Playmaker then describes how he will turn the Schoolgirl’s life experience into a story, appropriating her trauma for his art.

⁸¹ Grootboom, *Foreplay*, 78.

⁸² For further exploration of such questions of (dis)identification, see Elin Diamond, “The Violence of ‘We’: Politicizing Identification,” in *Critical Theory and Performance: Revised & Enlarged Edition*, ed. Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 403-412.

⁸³ Lei, 571.

Indeed, Grootboom's Director's Note addresses such concerns of (inter)cultural exchanges. Grootboom preempts several questions regarding his adaptation of Western source material, attempting to negotiate the tensions between pandering to Western audiences and their expectations and his own artistic desires. In order to demonstrate Grootboom's rather convoluted explication, I will quote the complete Director's Note for *Foreplay*:

Okay, why a trivial Viennese play from the 1890s?... What's the relevance to me, to us as South Africans?... Let's begin with the universal aspect called 'fun'... I mean, what can be more fun than watching ten people having sex with each other, talk about nothing but crap and give each other STDs?... That idea is almost Chekhovian in itself... as classic as anything... plus, all of us can relate to that shit... the way these characters talk... These personas don't talk about world issues and complex philosophies... they don't talk in 'life changing wit'—they talk just like you and me... because that's what they are: 'you and me'... it's about the games we play with our sexual partners... So what's the point?... Why a play about that?... Well, let's look to Shakespeare for answers... 'Hold the mirror up to nature', right?... 'show virtue her own feature', 'scorn her image', blah, blah, BLAH... This is just like *Hamlet*... Great people and slight people all getting basic... The difference is in *Hamlet*, the characters philosophise about their basic instincts—but you and me, we don't... and that's what Schnitzler knew... that there are also great lessons to be learnt from just holding the mirror up to nature and not bloody philosophising about it... The problem is that we tend to take theatre too seriously... and then moan about its death... so my theory is (which is nothing new judging from this play as written by Schnitzler), if theatre is indeed dying, at least let's have fun as we descend down to the grave... but it doesn't mean that if it's fun it can't have messages and themes and motifs and symbolism, right?... That's the idea anyway... If I was someone very clever (like Brecht, say, or Soyinka, or any of these great playwrights who contrived intellectual labels for their style of theatre) I'd label this theatre which I am proposing to explore, the 'blaze of glory theatre'... Ookay, I admit, I'm no Brecht or Soyinka, so to hell with labels... in fact, to hell with this Director's Note... Let's hope you have fun watching the show...⁸⁴

Throughout the Note, Grootboom attempts to deflect many of the criticisms attached to adapting “a trivial Viennese play from the 1890s.” First, Grootboom argues that *Foreplay* is a successfully syncretic work: its concerns are “as classic as anything,” but the characters “talk just like you and me.” However, in order to justify his Westernized project, Grootboom calls it “Chekhovian” and then turns to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, quoting the play severally and contesting that *Foreplay*

⁸⁴ Grootboom, *Foreplay*, 3.

is “just like *Hamlet*.” Grootboom’s arguments here belie an investment in—or at least an awareness of—the different cultural valuation of Western and non-Western materials. Tellingly, Grootboom grounds his justification for writing *Foreplay* in its adherence to the Western tradition of Shakespeare and Chekhov rather than the South African tradition of Dhlomo, Kente, and Fugard, among others.

Such cultural dislocation undermines Grootboom’s repeated emphasis on “fun,” which forms the spine of his justification for *Foreplay*. Indeed, his assertion of “fun” as justification for performance and spectatorship inherently avoids the many unseen “political” assumptions imbedded in such a construction. Rather than engaging in the “political,” Grootboom aspires to create drama that is “more emotional than political” and that “fun” is itself an inevitable pursuit in theatre. However, I wonder whose “fun” Grootboom writes towards. While Grootboom creates comic moments and shrewd juxtapositions throughout *Foreplay*, much of his subject matter can hardly be considered “fun” in a traditional sense. Instead, *Foreplay* invites audiences to engage with difficult subject matter in the context of theatrical performance. Inherent to the performance of such fraught material, and in highlighting the “fun” elements of *Foreplay* Loren Kruger argued of the 2009 Market Theatre production, “Grootboom risked the charge that his play makes a spectacle of rape.”⁸⁵ In an (inter)national context, with the added signification of “South Africa” as a country marred by AIDS and (sexual) violence, *Foreplay* risks becoming merely another (re)presentation of (South) African difference. Moreover, such (re)presentations, which can raise awareness and offer social critiques within a South African context, risk reinforcing the existing imaginaries of South African as an Othered locality, defined by its several markers of exotic/erotic difference.

⁸⁵ Krueger, “Foreplay,” 454.

Importantly, despite (or because of) these significations within the (inter)national theatre circuit, after its production at London's Theatre Royal Stratford East in 2009, *Foreplay* quickly received publication. In addition to productions at the 2009 NAF Fringe, the 2008-2009 Market Theatre season, and at the South African State Theatre, *Foreplay* has toured to the Afrovibes Festival (Amsterdam and The Hague), Koninklijke Vlaamse Schouwburg (Brussels), Theatre Royal Stratford East (London), Parc de la Villette (Paris) and Alcantara Festival (Lisbon).⁸⁶ As a result of its wide tour(ist)ing to European theatre festivals, within Grootboom's canon, *Foreplay* trails only Grootboom's breakout success, *Relativity: "Township Stories"* in (inter)national productions.⁸⁷ It is likely not a coincidence that these two widely tour(ist)ing productions are to date the only two published works in Grootboom's canon. Thus, regardless of critical analysis of what may motivate the consumption of *Foreplay* within the (inter)national marketplace, *Foreplay*'s negotiation of the dynamics of Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre have established it as a stand-alone work of post-apartheid South African theatre. Compared to his domestically impactful but internationally unpopular *Interracial*, *Foreplay* demonstrates some of the formations that (inter)cultural theatre makers may deploy in order to retain some elements of the "authentic" while also garnering a wider, whiter appeal. Thus, while both plays bear evidence of Grootboom's idiosyncratic township theatre aesthetics, differences in their reception and circulation attest to the power of the (inter)national theatre market to selectively authorize particular (re)presentations of South Africa, its people, and their world(s). Such negotiations of value are imbricated throughout the system and become visible through (and despite) the struggles of individual artists to obviate them.

⁸⁶ "Foreplay," accessed 01 March 2012, <<http://ebooks.johngood.com/UKArts/Grootboom/>>.

⁸⁷ "Township Stories," accessed 01 March 2012, <<http://ebooks.johngood.com/UKArts/Grootboom/>>.

3.3 BAILEY'S *ORFEUS*: INSTALLATIONS OF TRAGEDY ON TOUR

While both Farber's and Grootboom's textual structures evidence the influence of Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre on South African dramaturgy, my final investigation of (inter)national production of South African theatre will focus on a return to Brett Bailey's syncretic blends of variegated strands of South African cultures. In Bailey's theatre, connections arise between performances of "authenticity" and the capitalist (inter)national theatre superstructure in which they proliferate. Indeed, such tensions have long been part of Bailey's negotiations of "authentic" cultural material into theatrical (re)presentations bearing capital value. However, despite (or because) Bailey's early "Plays of Miracle and Wonder" often sparked controversy for their incorporation of traditional divination rites and highly coded cultural (re)presentations, Bailey tended towards particularized, specifically South African subject matter. Moreover, Bailey's imagined audience for these early plays was decidedly broad and South African; his theatrical aims were widely populist. As Bailey wrote in 2003,

Motivations for this work continue to be: the quest for a theatre accessible to people right across the social spectrum of this land (from the highbrows who pay R50 for a ticket to those who scurry to their shacks to find 50c); the stimulation of interest in this country's heritage of cultural forms, drowning in the sludge of television effluent, dissolving in the brash glare of Americana; the development of the performers of TWB [Third World Bunfight]; and the injection of Spirit into theatre and our lives.⁸⁸

Bailey evidently aimed to bring his theatre to the South African masses, but also expressed ambivalence about the funding for South African theatre, bemoaning a prevalent structure that commissions funds for a single project at a time.⁸⁹ Perhaps as an attempt to resolve the anxieties

⁸⁸ Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder*, 10.

⁸⁹ Bailey clarifies his frustration with a salient metaphor: "Imagine if a soccer team were only able to train when they had a big game on the cards" (Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder*, 10). It is also curious that Bailey identifies the South African "land" as the locality of "the masses," presumably as opposed to the metropolitan centers of Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Pretoria, among others.

brought on by perpetual underfunding and to provide firmer economic footing for Third World Bunfight, in 2004 Bailey signed a contract to provide nightly entertainment at the Moyo restaurant on the Spier Estate outside of Cape Town.

Despite the financial stability provided by such a commercial venue, Bailey expressed frustration about the creative limitations presented by producing work in such contexts, for “what might work in the context of one of [his] plays comes across as flat, exotic and trite at Moyo,” to the extent that Bailey “struggle[d] to make pieces which have integrity there.”⁹⁰ Nevertheless, Bailey and TWB continued to perform at the Spier Wine Estate to “diners—many of them foreign tourists—[who] help[ed] themselves to lavish buffet meals within a Disneyfied Pan-African ambience.”⁹¹ While working under the financial support of Moyo and within an environment multiply marked by acts of consumption, Bailey’s oeuvre underwent an apparent change. Bailey’s works shifted from the ritualistic theatre of his early plays and towards a more spectacularized, though still imagistic, theatrical style. Indeed, Daniel Larlham observes a marked division in Bailey’s dramaturgy, noting that Bailey’s “work seems to have split into two distinct currents: the dark theatrical strain [of his early *Plays of Miracle and Wonder*] and a strain of flashily culinary entertainment represented by [*The House of the Holy Afro*] and the dinnertime performances at Spier.”⁹²

Complicating such a dichotomy are both Bailey’s persistent mobilization of “authentic” stereotype and imagery in all of his works and Bailey’s increasing tour(ist)ing of such works. Though *Ipi Zombi?* is itself vulnerable to a wide range of cultural (mis)readings, Bailey never

⁹⁰ Bailey quoted in Anton Krueger, “On the wild, essential energies of the forest: an Interview with Brett Bailey,” *South African Theatre Journal* 20 (2006): 324

⁹¹ Daniel Larlham, “Brett Bailey and Third World Bunfight: Journeys into the South African Psyche,” *Theatre* 39.1 (2009): 20.

⁹² D. Larlham, 23. While Daniel Larlham draws an astute delineation between two periods of Bailey’s repertoire, he does not clearly place *Orfeus* in either category.

toured his earliest work. Meanwhile, Bailey's attempts to tour his earlier works that drew from stereotyped (re)presentations of African cultures—most notably *Safari* (2001)—were marred by Bailey's own anxieties that he “ended up pandering to every European stereotype of exotic, idealised Africa that [he]’d been terrified of perpetuating.”⁹³ Indeed, Bailey wrote that he “blushed every time a provincial Dutch audience rose to its feet in what [he] believed was a patronizing ovation” in response to *Safari*.⁹⁴ Bailey's anxieties that his work would inevitably be misinterpreted outside of its particular cultural context (“on [his] home turf”) were nevertheless compounded by the continued paucity of public funding for theatre in South Africa and the perpetual presence of the “First World” in the “Third World” through cultural flows such as tourism.⁹⁵ While attempting to make “pieces with integrity,” Bailey simultaneously negotiated the exigencies of (inter)national and (inter)cultural theatre traffics within the frame of the decidedly tour(ist)ing venue of the Spier Estate. The results of these negotiations provide ample room for analysis of such (inter)cultural exchanges, particularly within the realm of geography and its functions in contextualizing works.

While the touristic space of the Spier Estate and its particular imperatives fostered spectacularized dinnertime entertainments such as the “funky, upbeat, Afro-kitsch house music show” *House of the Holy Afro* (2004), during his time at Spier Estate, Bailey also developed his syncretic, postcolonial, site-specific *Orfeus* (2006).⁹⁶ In *Orfeus*, Bailey combined the original Greek myth with Balinese masks, tableaux vivants of other Greek mythological figures, and contemporary (South) African resonances. The site-specific *Orfeus* also drew from its location at

⁹³ Bailey, *The Plays of Miracle & Wonder*, 199.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Bailey quoted in Matthew Westwood, “House has no room for Africa’s troubles,” *The Australian* 8 Jan 2008, LOCAL, 6.

Moyo, for it took advantage of “Spier’s one-thousand acre estate” which Bailey called “a ‘canvas’ of ‘wild, barren terrain.’”⁹⁷ In addition to the complex significations of the very real South African landscape in which the production was sited, the original performances at Spier featured textual elements drawn primarily from the Orpheus myth, Congolese music performed by Bebe Lueki, and non-verbal, visualistic performances of other characters from Greek mythology such as Tantalus and Prometheus, as well as, notably, the King of the Underworld who took the form of “an African tin-pot dictator,” further placing *Orfeus* firmly as an “Africanized” reworking of the original European text.⁹⁸

Interestingly, this earlier version of *Orfeus* at Moyo—a touristic, but decidedly South African site—underwent major revisions in order to prepare it for its (inter)national festival premiere at the 2007 NAF Main Programme. Importantly, in the 2007 version, “there [were] references to Africa, but [it was] far away from an African version” of the Orpheus tale.⁹⁹ Bailey transformed the role of the King of the Underworld from that of an “African tin-pot dictator” into a (neo)colonial white man wearing a colonial pith helmet for a crown, a laptop for his scepter, and surrounded by boxes of UN Aid packages.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, whereas in the Spier Estate production his characters shared dialogue and even long monologues, in the 2007 NAF version, the Narrator, portrayed by the white actress Jane Rademeyer, acted as the play’s primary storyteller, verbally contextualizing the play’s kinesthetic, musical, and geographical

⁹⁷ D. Larlham, 20.

⁹⁸ Brent Meersman, “Ritual theatre alive in Brett Bailey’s *Orfeus*,” *Cue Online* 08 (2007), accessed 16 July 2011, <<http://cue.ru.ac.za/theatre/drama/2007/ritual-theatre-alive-brett-baileys-orfeus.html>>, no pagination; Brett Bailey, *Orfeus*, accessed 16 July 2011, <<http://www.thirdworldbunfight.co.za/productions/orfeus.html>>, 11; Adrienne Sichel, “Falling Hard for *Orfeus*,” *Daily News* (South Africa), 5 July 2007, available in “Full Press Reviews,” accessed 16 July 2011, <<http://www.thirdworldbunfight.co.za/productions/orfeus.html>>.

⁹⁹ Meersman, “Ritual theatre,” n.p.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

performances.¹⁰¹ The only other characters to speak during the work are the King of the Underworld and “Frog,” Orfeus’s spirit guide through Hades. The entirety of the work thus consists of fragmented performative elements, with embodied performances juxtaposed against Compared to his earlier “Africanized” version of *Orfeus* and his productions of *MedEia* (2005) and *Macbeth* (2001), in his 2007 production of *Orfeus*, Bailey “universalized his themes.”¹⁰²

Indeed, such fragmentation of narratives into visual, aural and kinesthetic displays demonstrates a broader trend in Bailey’s oeuvre towards museumified displays within theatrical frames. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett elucidates about museum displays,

Fragmentation is vital to the production of the museum both as a space of posited meaning and as a space of abstraction. Posited meaning derives not from the original context of the fragments but from their juxtaposition in a new context. As a space of abstraction exhibitions do for the life world what the life world cannot do for itself. They bring together specimens and artifacts never found in the same place at the same time and show relationships that cannot otherwise be seen.¹⁰³

In *Orfeus*, Bailey (re)presents several (inter)cultural elements as sites for audiences to “posit meaning” through abstractions and/or juxtapositions of (inter)cultural material. Again, these juxtapositions can be viewed as loosely following the structures of Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre with specific African contexts provided by Bebe Lueki’s Congolese musical score and the signification of the South African landscape structured around “universal” elements such as the Western source material and its emphasis on the West as the driving force behind Orfeus’s tragedy. While the textual retelling of the Orpheus myth grounded *Orfeus* within a particular narrative frame, the work structurally incorporates many of Bailey’s experiments with installation art. Throughout the *mise en scène*, Bailey avoids contextualizing markers of the

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² “Open-air Orfeus is near faultless,” in “Full Press Reviews,” accessed 13 March 2012, <<http://www.thirdworldbunfight.co.za/productions/orfeus.html>>; Meersman, “Ritual theatre,” n.p.

¹⁰³ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, 3.

nonverbal performance installations, preferring instead the abstractions of his visual, aural, and kinesthetic displays. Pointedly, in justification for his transition away from the amaXhosa stories and subject matter that constituted much of his early works, Bailey explained that it was impossible to adequately contextualize such cultural material when it travelled to international venues. Bailey specifically noted the difficulties in providing his audiences with “a cultural primer beforehand.”¹⁰⁴ Thus, Bailey relies on his audience’s interpretive abilities in order to posit meaning from the primarily visualistic performances on display.

Nevertheless, when *Orfeus* premiered at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown in 2007, Bailey included a “cultural primer” of the Orpheus myth in the show’s programme, expounding mythological references that Bailey draws out in his play such as the Prometheus and Tantalus myths.¹⁰⁵ Additionally, in the programme Bailey wrote reverently of the Orpheus tale, calling it “smooth as a river pebble, carried by the human imagination for over 3000 years.”¹⁰⁶ The “universal” Orpheus tale thus became the organizing structure for Bailey’s particular fragments of South African realities within a global, post-colonial frame. As in Bailey’s later installation works, *The Sea of Longing* (2007), *Terminal* (2009), *Exhibit A: Deutsch Sudwestafrika* (2010), and *Exhibit B: Paradis Perdu* (2011), *Orfeus* incorporates silent, embodied performance installations that attempt to shed light on the many sites of (post)colonial conflict and oppression through time. In *Orfeus*, these installations take the forms of “The Forgotten Man,” “The Broken Man,” and “The Shoemakers,” who symbolically enact traumatized personas of the contemporary globalized world. Bailey explained the significance of

¹⁰⁴ Bailey quoted in D. Larlham, 18.

¹⁰⁵ Brett Bailey, “Programme Notes,” accessed 16 July 2011, <<http://www.thirdworldbunfight.co.za/productions/orfeus.html>>. Additionally, as Megan Lewis notes, Bailey’s “Broken Man” reinvents the Tantalus myth (Megan Lewis, “Past, Present, and Future: A Tense South Africa Performs,” *Performing Arts Journal* 89 (2008): 94. Similarly, the “Forgotten Man” brings the Prometheus myth into a modern context, and the “Shoemakers” offer contemporary resonances of the Sisyphus tale.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

these roles, arguing

what is really significant in telling the Orpheus tale is its location within the post-colonial developing world. The fact that Orpheus and Eurydice are black, that the Lord of the Underworld is a decaying old white man and that the horrors of the Underworld I show are a litany of the hidden face of western luxury: sex slaves, sweatshops. These issues are central to every one of my works—an exploration and digging below the surface of the post-colonial landscape of Africa.¹⁰⁷

Like his technique of “load[ing]” meaning in dense moments of theatricality, Bailey’s installations are intentionally multivalent. The human universals of race and gender clearly bear a great deal of significance in Bailey’s crafting of the King of the Underworld’s (neo)colonial exploitations.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, he also layers in references to culturally “universal” Greek myths in addition to that of Orpheus: “The Forgotten Man” reenacts the tortures faced by Tantalus, “The Broken Man” brings the Prometheus tale to a contemporary context, and “The Shoemakers” collectively enact a Sisyphean fate, compelled to work forever by the disembodied German voice of the sweatshop foreman. Again, Bailey crafts dense imagistic (re)presentations of particular (South) African realities; however, unlike his early plays, the underlying symbolic meanings are not those of South African history and myth but rather those of the “universal” myths of the Western world.

Thus, Bailey reveals a set of unintentional biases supported by the globalized (and globalizing) framework of (inter)national theatre traffic. Whereas priming a global, cosmopolitan audience with the stories of the amaXhosa presents too great a challenge for Bailey’s programme, doing the same for a canonical Greek myth appears only natural. In this contradiction, Bailey exhibits his complicity in perpetuating (and reinforcing) the cultural

¹⁰⁷ Brett Bailey quoted in Rolf C. Hemke, “No Holds Barred for the Cake Battle: Brett Bailey and his Production Company Third World Bunfight from Cape Town,” in *Theater Südlich Der Sahara/Theatre in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Rolf C. Hemke (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2010), 161.

¹⁰⁸ Importantly, though race and gender are “universal” in their phenotypic, biological articulations, Bailey’s codification of race and gender predominantly follow normative Western binaries.

centrality of “classic” European myths over more “difficult” mythologies from around the globe. Indeed, the pliability of the “universal” Orpheus tale exists in harsh juxtaposition to the abstracted and silenced performances of *Orfeus*’s actors. Black bodies are seen and not heard, while white voices communicate their stories. The historical and epistemological divide between “First World” logocentricism and “Third World” corporeality structurally echoes the very same critique posed within the play’s dynamics between the white (neo)colonial King of the Underworld and the oppressed, exploited black members of his harem. Thus, the persistent inequities in (inter)cultural exchange again arise, demonstrating the often unseen, unspoken biases of the market.

While such biases are evident even in the South African productions of *Orfeus*, they are magnified by the (inter)national travel of this site-specific work. Unlike *Safari*, which Bailey stopped producing because of his fears that it could not be staged without inviting gazes that would perpetuate negative stereotypes of South Africa, the site-specific *Orfeus* was uprooted from its South African context for tours to the 2009 Vienna Festival, the 2009 Holland Festival, and the 2011 Theaterformen Festival in Hannover, Germany.¹⁰⁹ Ironically, whereas South African critics generally viewed *Orfeus* as a resounding success within a South African context and landscape, its tours to Europe demonstrate underlying structures of Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre and World Bank Drama. Tellingly, in the 2007 NAF production, *Orfeus*’s landscape regularly contributed contextualizing meaning to the work’s installations. The elements of locality within *Orfeus*’s “universalized” frame were provided primarily by the landscapes

¹⁰⁹ According to Daniel Larlham, “Bailey admits to naivete and even ‘youthful arrogance’ in his once-insistent demands for ritual stringency and now tailors his productions to particular target audiences” (D. Larlham, 18). Importantly, like many of Bailey’s works, as well as those of Grootboom and Farber, as of 2012, *Orfeus* has been performed more outside of South Africa than within. It’s only South African performances were the original production at the Spier Estate and at the 2007 National Arts Festival.

through which both performers and audience-spectators travelled. As Brent Meersman recounted,

Staged in an old quarry, we engage with nature and the beauty of the landscape—the craggy face of the surrounding cliffs, the trees outlined against the rock look like fossil ferns, and two giant eagle owls – perfectly choreographed – swoop over us, one with a dead mouse hanging from its beak.¹¹⁰

In addition to such spontaneous performances by the South African landscape, Bailey etches specific references to “this [African] continent,” pointedly invoking apartheid-era imagery such as “bones litter[ing] the ground” and “towers of skin-singeing flames emitted by piles of burning tyres.”¹¹¹ When *Orfeus* travelled to Vienna, Bailey had difficulty finding a “peculiar” “no-man’s land” that could replicate the putatively abstracted space of South Africa’s unmarked landscape.¹¹² Ultimately, Bailey’s search for a decontextualized space within Europe resulted in the staging of *Orfeus* on the grounds of an abandoned factory space near the city. However, as Stephanie Carp summarizes, the result of Bailey’s search unavoidably lost some of the work’s specific contexts, which Bailey sought to signify through the geography itself. Carp recounts,

In order for the audience not to know where they [were], they [were] brought to the venue in buses with tinted windows. During the half-hour journey they watch[ed] a TV screen on which they pass[ed] through a South African township and listen[ed] to the accompanying soundtrack of noises, voices and music, so as to create the feeling that they were passing by these very scenes behind the black windows.¹¹³

Thus, Bailey’s desire to simultaneously decontextualize each individual installation within a “no-man’s land” unavoidably conflicted with his need for such fragmented (re)presentations to bear significance within a theatrical frame.

¹¹⁰ Meersman, n.p.

¹¹¹ Bailey, *Orfeus*, 11; Sichel, n.p.

¹¹² Stephanie Carp, “The Pitfall of Exoticism and Other Misunderstandings: Considerations for the Intercontinental Transfer of Theatre Productions,” in *Theater Südlich Der Sahara/Theatre in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Rolf C. Hemke (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2010), 210-211.

¹¹³ Carp, 211.

In restaging *Orfeus* in such a re-/de-contextualized geography, Bailey further demonstrated some of his hegemonic biases which further centered As Bailey argues, “what is really significant in telling the Orpheus tale is its location within the post-colonial developing world,” wherein the particular South African landscape stands in for a wider, abstracted, “post-colonial developing world.”¹¹⁴ Thus, despite the deep imbrication between the “First” and “Third” worlds and their mutual interdependence, Bailey’s restaging of *Orfeus* in a European context emphasizes their difference. The European audience(s) presumably needed to travel a great deal of literal and metaphorical distance in order to arrive at the “post-colonial developing world” signified by video and audio recordings of a contemporary South African township.

Though Carp attests that the restaging of *Orfeus* at the 2007 Vienna Festival avoided “the feel of something exotic, something far away,” she notes that the juxtaposition of such performances of Third World oppressions and exploitations was “not all that comfortable for everyone.”¹¹⁵ Indeed, when Bailey remounted *Orfeus* at the 2009 Holland Festival, the production created controversy because “the Dutch audience found the blacked-out windows in the buses particularly discomfoting and also [disliked] being given instructions while being brought into a sphere of uncertainty.”¹¹⁶ Whereas Bailey’s presumptions that his European audiences needed signifiers of South Africa to locate the contemporary atrocities in a particular space, his attempt to decontextualize his Dutch audience’s experience of geography unintentionally recoded their journey to spectate upon his work with signifiers of imprisonment, human trafficking, and World War II-era cattle cars, among others. Such complexities elucidate the difficult position that successful South African theatre artists find themselves in, particularly

¹¹⁴ Brett Bailey quoted in Hemke, “No Holds Barred for the Cake Battle,” 161.

¹¹⁵ Carp, 211.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

in relationship to European audiences. Moreover, these examples demonstrate the constant influences of locality and geography as contextualizing and signifying elements within the experience of audiences.

Such travel and the negotiations concomitant on successfully navigating these world stages reveal both the internal multivalence of such works as well as the tendency for particular audiences to “read” them singly. Indeed, (inter)national audiences are often encouraged to engage in particular, established frameworks of “empathy” and “compassion.” For instance, in his explanation of the importance of *Orfeus*, Bailey unintentionally echoes Peter Brook’s Eurocentricism regarding *The Ik*. Bailey claims that *Orfeus* reveals the “hidden face of western luxury: sex slaves, sweatshops” among other “horrors of the Underworld” found “below the surface of post-colonial landscape of Africa.” Questions similar to those that critics raised about Brook’s “intercultural” theatre abound: Hidden from whom? Certainly not the sweatshop workers. Indeed, the construction of Bailey’s assertions here reveals the depths of his investment in producing theatre for the (inter)national theatre market. Whereas Bailey’s mobilization of cultural material rarely approximates the “unmediated” frameworks of tourism, his regular deployment of nonverbal performances invites touristic, museumified gaze(s) onto the bodies of his performers. Through engaging with such spectacularized bodies, audiences may access their own emotional empathetic responses while simultaneously participating in a marketplace for trauma wherein the (re)presentation of global suffering surrogates the real. Finally, the (inter)national productions of Bailey’s work are further distanced from particulars because, unlike Bailey’s previous investments in particular South African myths and histories, *Orfeus* and his ensuing installations, most notably *Exhibit A* and *Exhibit B* demonstrate a profound investment in revealing (neo)colonial abuses of Africa by the West to predominantly Western

audiences. Tellingly, no “cultural primer” is necessary to communicate Greek myth or (neo)colonial exploitation.

Thus, though Brett Bailey developed *Orfeus* within South Africa and its myriad cultural influences, creating what is undoubtedly a product of South African culture; however, when *Orfeus* toured internationally, many of its markers of South African particularity were lost in translation, risking the production turning into a commoditized “product of South Africa.” Indeed, several recent communiqués from Brett Bailey to his global fanbase attest to Bailey’s shift in imagined audience. On the Facebook page for Third World Bunfight, Bailey wrote,

Coming to the end of the end of the epic trip I have been on to sell our work in Europe: Paris, Brussels, London, Helsinki, Edinburgh, Avignon, Marseilles, Berlin, Amsterdam, Coventry, Birmingham. A great deal of interest. Let's just hope the economy doesn't collapse... Big day today in Paris - I'm presenting 5 works to a gathering of 40 programmers and presenters in Paris. Light a candle for us...¹¹⁷

And

Just so you know, we're taking over the performance scene in France in 2013 (thanks to Institute Francaise and ONDA). Just been on a whirlwind tour of that pretty country selling my ass to presenters and festivals. And making a presentation to 40 more presenters in early november. Isn't going to be a city that doesn't host at least one TWB production.¹¹⁸

In both of these examples, Bailey demonstrates both a profound desire to “sell [his] work” and his “ass” to (inter)national agents of World Bank Drama.¹¹⁹ Outstripping the concerns of “authenticity” explored in the previous chapter, these engagements with global (neo)liberal capitalism suggest a system in which the commodity matters more than its content. Indeed, in such global markets, “even the most rebellious words and images of cultural nationalism are

¹¹⁷ “Third World Bunfight,” 7 Nov 2011 (1:05 am), *Facebook*, accessed 26 Jan 2012, <www.facebook.com>.

¹¹⁸ “Third World Bunfight,” 19 Oct 2011 (2:58 am), *Facebook*, accessed 26 Jan 2012, <www.facebook.com>.

¹¹⁹ Ironically, Bailey here imagines himself selling his own body rather than those of his performers. Indeed, Bailey has the authority to sell his own body, but he does not imagine himself selling the bodies of others as such a construct would risk validating previous criticisms that he profits from the culture and performance of black South Africans. In either case, Bailey’s desire/need to sell such cultural work on the (inter)national market attests to the complexities inherent in such exchanges.

ultimately co-opted into ‘radical chic,’ easily suiting corporate multicultural initiatives that embrace racial visibility only to disassociate it from political reform.”¹²⁰ Again, “Carnival represented is carnival tamed.”¹²¹ As Bailey continues to negotiate the demands of spectator-audiences within museumified (inter)national theatre markets, his work will continue to be inflected by his artistic desire to share his works and audience desires for certain (re)presentations of (South) Africa and its culture(s).

However, as with Yael Farber, I wonder at the appropriateness of continuing to frame Brett Bailey as a “South African” artist in light of his continuing—and increasing—investment in (inter)national productions and (inter)cultural theatre formations. Stripped of its South African geographical context, I argue that Bailey’s international productions of *Orfeus* are markedly more “universal,” (inter)national, and (inter)cultural in their formations than they are “South African.” Nevertheless, the works of Third World Bunfight continue to travel as representations of South African theatre in the global market, demonstrating the slipperiness of historical context(s) in an increasingly globalized world. Repeating one of my guiding questions for this study, Bailey’s works beg the question of their putative South African-ness. Indeed, when (and where) is South African theatre “South African”?

¹²⁰ Lee, 155.

¹²¹ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, 77.

4.0 (IN)CONCLUSIONS

Though this study has in many ways been a(n) (over)long investigation into questions of (re)presentation within frameworks of national and international, local and global, and the ever-blurry lines of (inter)cultural theatrical production and reception, I believe that it would be inappropriate to attempt to draw firm conclusions about these particular artists, or post-apartheid South African theatre as a whole. Rather, Brett Bailey, Yael Farber, and Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom act as particular participants in the (inter)national traffics of (inter)cultural theatre. None of their works should be definitively categorized as inherently exploitative, appropriative, or reductive in terms of their subject matter. Instead, I argue that their works and their negotiations of cultural materials therein demonstrate the tenuous position of producing theatre within such hegemonically structured systems of theatre production. Inherently, such hegemonic structures inform and shape audience reception in ways outside of the control of individual artists. Thus, while all three playwrights have adopted literary and textual techniques attempting to “write back” to European (neo)colonial powers, they simultaneously draw on embodied, performative, and stylistic significations that reinscribe “difference” along well-established lines of European cultural hegemony. Without drawing a strictly fatalistic scenario for (inter)national theatre production, such tenuous negotiations of cultural works in multiple contexts appear to place (inter)cultural theatre works on a spectrum wherein appropriative practices and cultural (mis)representations are unfortunate realities of (inter)cultural theatre.

This is not, however, to abdicate responsibility over the representations produced by theatre artists. Rather, it is to place appropriate responsibility on both the individual authorizing agents of production, both artistically and financially. In this study, such analysis has meant investigating the broader implications of (inter)cultural theatre within a framework of globalized media and (inter)national production. Again, these structures are not inherently negative. Nevertheless, as Lynn Szwaja and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto argue, they carry negative potential:

The processes of globalization are as likely to produce newly disadvantaged institutions and deepen the patterns of inequality between regions of the world as they are to provide occasions for attracting new publics and developing programs. The positive aspects of globalization—increased access to and innovative use of new technologies, the reemergence or preservation of voice and traditions, and the creation of “imagined communities” united across geographic boundaries—are in some cases offset by negative effects such as the global proliferation of mass media and concomitant loss of some traditional cultural transmission, clashes of value systems, and increasing inequality and poverty.¹

The various inequities in access to transmission media, cultural valuation, and economics undergird the formation of structures such as World Bank Drama and forms such as Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre. Indeed, sites such as (inter)national theatre festivals depend upon disparities in funding for theatre between the First and Third worlds in order to sustain their simulacra of “world” theatre on an affordable scale. Conversely, South African theatre artists depend vitally on the economic structures of (inter)national theatre festivals to support their work precisely because global economic inequities preclude many nations in the Global South from strongly supporting arts through funding. Indeed, “Commissioning from festivals has been a lifeline for [South African] writers and directors as well as actors who take the stage seriously.”²

¹ Lynn Szwaja and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, “Foreword,” *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, ed. Ivan Karp et al. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), xii.

² Adrienne Sichel, “The Unequal Brothers: The Controversial History of the Two Leading South African Theatres,” in *Theater Südlich Der Sahara/Theatre in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Rolf C. Hemke (Berlin: Theater der Zeir, 2010), 180.

Despite the ethos of globalized unity promoted at such festivals, the realities of difference commoditized by global markets for performance simultaneously perpetuate the systems of economic and valuative difference along lines of center/periphery, East/West, First/Third worlds, global/local, and dominant/subaltern, among others.

Persistent biases towards textuality further complicate such already fraught issues of cultural and national representation on a global scale. Whereas artists such as Bailey, Farber, and Grootboom personally profit from their engagements in the (inter)national festival circuit, their visibility continually *reauthorizes* particular (re)presentations of South African theatre. Indeed, none of the works analyzed herein were published until after they had toured to Europe and/or the United States. More importantly, the published scripts for Farber's "Theatre as Witness" and *MoLoRa*, as well as Grootboom's *Relativity: "Township Stories"* and *Foreplay* were all published by the same London publishing house: Oberon Books.³ Thus, (inter)national touring, with its attendant investment in touristic frameworks, seems to have become a precondition for global circulation of printed playscripts from "world" sources.

The continued authorization of such processes perpetuates the South African critical perspective that "the imposition of a foreign form on [African] material also serves to facilitate international consumption and digestion," particularly in what Jerry Mofokeng terms "theatre for export."⁴ Indeed, though Brett Bailey, Yael Farber, and Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom all emerged from a relatively open, horizontal rhizomatic system of theatrical production within South

³ Additionally, Lara Foot Newton, who became Artistic Director of Cape Town's Baxter Theatre in 2012, premiered her 2003 play *Tshepang: The Third Testament* at The Tropen Theatre in Amsterdam before remounting it at The Gate Theatre in London in 2004. Her later plays *Hear and Now* (2005) and *Karoo Moose* (2007) both premiered in South Africa before touring the UK (to the Gate Theatre (2006) and Tricycle Theatre (2009), respectively). Oberon Books published all these three plays as well. Meanwhile, her play *Reach!* (2007) premiered at the TheaterFormen Festival in Hannover, Germany before returning to South Africa; it also toured Sweden. *Reach!* has been published in two separate collections of postapartheid South African theatre: Greg Homann's *At This Stage: Plays from Post-Apartheid South Africa* and David Peimer's *Armed Response: Plays from South Africa*.)

⁴ Jerry Mofokeng, 86.

Africa, once they entered the (inter)national theatre circuit, they all necessarily negotiated extant systems of (inter)national and (inter)cultural theatre production. With all three sharing the same international artistic representation (UK Arts International) and with two of the three having their works printed by the same publishing house (Oberon Books), these South African artists also reveal that though the international marketplace has become increasingly globalized, the global flows still follow certain established channels. Moreover, the consumers who frequent the (inter)national theatre marketplace also bring with them expectations of what and how cultural materials will be performed as well as interpretive lenses that favor some formations over others.

Thus, the promiscuous nature of (neo)liberal capitalism constructs value-added meaning out of much more than the textual realm of theatrical works. Rather, bodies, sounds, landscapes, and the myriad interplays between these performance elements communicate commodifiable significance to audience-spectators. Even ideological constructs that have developed from the bastions of the academy have been commoditized to some extent. “Post-colonial” variations on “classic” works are now a stylistic and value-added category of (inter)national, (inter)cultural performance. Similarly, Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre productions create similar structures that reify the Western center with accents of the peripheral “world” satisfying desires for displays of cultural “difference.” Such formations operate in a globalized system wherein cosmopolitanism (i.e. “worldliness”) has become a value-added performance for spectator-audiences, and thus, works that can capitalize on and/or commoditize (re)presentations of cultural material—particularly in the form of (inter)culturalism—become even more valuable.

South African theatre has long been a site for experiments in such (inter)national and (inter)cultural theatrical formations. South Africa’s unique blends of linguistic, performatic, social, and ideological differences have created a matrix of potential (inter)cultural connections

ripe for exploration—and exploitation—on domestic and world stages. Moreover, the prevalence of English-language South African theatre and the current predominance of English as the international language of (neo)liberal globalization has permitted the easy cultural translation of South African performance to the (inter)national theatre market by obviating the need for linguistic translations. Drawing two additional examples from South African theatre production in the post-apartheid era, I will conclude this study with a brief look at the critical responses to and the economics behind both the renowned Handspring Puppet Company and Welcome Msoni's *uMabatha: A Zulu Macbeth*.

4.1 WORLDING OF/AND SOUTH AFRICAN THEATRE

As of 2012, post-apartheid South African theatre has no greater success story than that of Handspring Puppet Company. Indeed any assessment of the cultural and economic forces on post-apartheid South African theatre must include at least a cursory glance at the “phenomenally successful” company led by Adrian Kohler and Basil Jones.⁵ In 2011, *War Horse*, Handspring's collaborative production of a World War I-era melodrama that premiered at London's National Theatre, opened on Broadway. A stunning blend of multiple forms of puppetry, live actors, and technical wizardry, *War Horse* was a resounding success at the 2011 Tony Awards, receiving the awards for Best Play, Best Direction, Best Scenic Design, and Best Lighting Design. Indicating the impact *War Horse*, Handspring Puppet Company received a Special Tony Award for their

⁵ Brent Meersman, “New audiences, new fans,” *Mail & Guardian Online*, accessed 22 July 2011, <<http://mg.co.za/article/2009-12-24-new-audiences-fans>>.

“outstanding creative artistry” in the creation and execution of their remarkable puppetry.⁶ Notably, however, *War Horse*, Handspring’s greatest (inter)national success to date, bears no artistic or aesthetic signs of the company’s South African origins. Rather, Tom Morris of the National Theatre in London saw *Tall Horse*, Handspring’s 2004 collaborative production with the Sogolon Puppet Troupe, and proposed that Kohler and Jones transpose their research and capabilities from *Tall Horse*’s Malian giraffes to England’s First World War-era cavalry.⁷

Of course, Morris was only able to experience Handspring’s renowned puppetry because of their previous successes in navigating the (inter)national festival circuit. Indeed, South African theatre toured Europe and the United States extensively during the 1990s. Handspring Puppet Company grew steadily as a theatrical enterprise through the 1980s, reaching mainstream South African success at the end of the decade with their joint production with Malcolm Purkey and the Junction Avenue Theatre Company (JATC), *Tooth and Nail*. Following the success of this early production, Handspring Puppet Company continued to collaborate with prominent South African theatre artists, most notably and repeatedly with visual artist and theatre director William Kentridge. The first collaborative venture between Kentridge and Handspring Puppet Company, *Woyzeck on the Highveld*, began a trend of reinventions of European “classics” in (South) African contexts. Beginning with *Woyzeck on the Highveld*, the Kentridge/Handspring collaborations were quite popular in Europe. As a result, Handspring received funding from

⁶ “CT company gets Tony nod, 04 May 2011,” accessed 11 July 2011, <<http://entertainment.iafrica.com/editors/725417.html>>. Prior to its American success, *War Horse* received notices for the original London production as it was awarded the 2007 Evening Standard, Critics' Circle and Laurence Olivier Awards for the set design, as well as an Olivier Award for choreography. (See: “WAR HORSE Opens in the West End 3/28/09,” accessed 10 July 2011, <http://westend.broadwayworld.com/article/WAR_HORSE_Opens_In_The_West_End_32809_20081218#ixzz1RkdzeBIF>.)

⁷ At his first meeting with Morris, Basil Jones did not seek out *War Horse* as potential material for a project. Rather, he hoped the National would be interested in housing *Tall Horse* for an English tour. (See: Donna Bryson, “South African Puppeteers Win Tony,” 3 May 2011, accessed 11 July 2011, <<http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/wireStory?id=13519242>>.)

numerous European, American, and South African sources to continue their work.⁸ Basil Jones recounted the success of Handspring's collaborations with Kentridge, noting

Between 1990 and 2000, Handspring Trust received funding totaling R4,500,000 from the governments of the USA (via USAID), Denmark (via INTERFUND) and Canada, the European Community (Via Kagiso Trust), the Rockefeller Foundation, ESKOM, the Liberty Life Foundation and the Swedish Save the Children Fund.⁹

Moreover, Jones credited the financial and artistic successes of *Woyzeck on the Highveld* (1992) for attracting European funding for Handspring's ensuing productions of *Faustus in Africa* (1995) and *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1997). In contrast, Jones bemoaned the state of funding within the South African theatre community, attributing Handspring's greater financial success in Europe to better infrastructure and more readily available public and private funds for the arts. Pointedly, international funding for Handspring Puppet Company was 45 times greater than domestic funding, with R4,500,000 coming from abroad and only R100,000 from the South African National Arts Council.¹⁰ Such were the economic exigencies of South African theatre production in the post-apartheid era.

As I have explored throughout this study, the (inter)national traffic of South African theatre, and the economic power wielded by Euroamerican producers and audiences inevitably affects the works produced by South African artists. Both *Faustus in Africa* and *Ubu and the Truth Commission* premiered at Germany's Weimar Arts Festival and depended heavily on European and American funding, attendance, and interest for their successes. Indeed, after the

⁸ As Basil Jones explains, Handspring received funding specifically for *Woyzeck on the Highveld* from "The City of Johannesburg, the National Arts Festival, the Foundation for the Creative Arts and the German Embassy and raised R 177,000" (Basil Jones, "Financing Handspring Puppet Company: A South African Experience," *African Theatre: Companies*, ed. James Gibbs and Jane Plastow (Woodbridge, UK: James Currey, 2008), 103).

⁹ Jones, 104.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* Jones further bemoans the lack of administrative support in South Africa, complaining, "when performing in major theatres in South Africa, Handspring had to hire the theatre, engage a publicist, print posters, and basically take on all the risk. It has become normal for us to anticipate a loss. In fact we have sometimes made substantial losses when performing in our own country" (Jones, 104-106).

major success of *Woyzeck on the Highveld*, Handspring and Kentridge followed a relatively formulaic pattern along the lines of Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre in the remainder of their European-funded projects—both *Faustus in Africa* and *Ubu and the Truth Commission* were similarly based on canonized European source texts.¹¹ While the plays were greatly successful in Europe and were much lauded in both European and South African venues, Kentridge, Handspring Puppet Company, and Jane Taylor (in *Ubu*) clearly aimed their productions to particular audiences. While William Kentridge does not explicitly name his imagined audience, he admits some bias in his process:

I suppose in my head if I assume that these are the things that interest me or the connections that I would find interesting, [the audience] would presumably be people with a similar range of references and an ability to make the connections between different points, the hope that the theatres would be full and packed with everyone.¹²

Thus, intentionally or otherwise, Kentridge fashions his theatrical products with an eye toward what interests him, namely a fusion of African concerns and European metanarratives along the structures of Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre. Fortuitously for Kentridge, Handspring Puppet Company, and Jane Taylor, the result of such syncretic fusions of cultural sources are currently the most dominant form of (inter)cultural theatre on the world stages. As of 2012, the pinnacle of Handspring's several Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre productions is *War Horse*, which further exhibits the peculiar logic of World Bank Drama by stripping Handspring's ingenious puppetry of any direct references to South Africa. Indeed, in the course of the play, South Africa only exists as a far-flung arm of the British Empire where characters may prove their valor in colonial

¹¹ Geoffrey V. Davis makes an important distinction between *Ubu* and the previous two Handspring/Kentridge collaborations. Whereas the latter two were direct adaptations of German source texts, *Ubu and the Truth Commission* was an original script by Jane Taylor which drew from Alfred Jarry's several *Ubu* plays (Davis, *Voices of Justice and Reason*, 333).

¹²Quoted in William Kentridge, Geoffrey Davis, and Anne Fuchs, "'An Interest in the Making of Things.' An Interview with William Kentridge, 15 September 1992," in *Theatre and Change in South Africa*, ed. Geoffrey V. Davis and Anne Fuchs (Amsterdam: Overseas Publishers Association, 1996), 151.

wars.¹³ Whereas Handspring's several previous syncretic productions can certainly be viewed as "South African," at least in domestic performances, *War Horse* demonstrates the limit of such syncretic blending at which point any adherence to national identity becomes subverted by the power of the (inter)national theatre market.

Similar (and different) issues arose in 1997 and 2001, when Welcome Msomi's Black Consciousness-era *uMabatha: The Zulu Macbeth* received productions at Lincoln Center's Woza Afrika! Festival and at London's Globe Theatre, respectively. *uMabatha*, which originally premiered in 1972, was one of the earliest instances of syncretic formations that "blend traditional music, dance, and divination scenes" into a particularized South African theatre.¹⁴ However, as South African scholar Martin Orkin recounts, after the 2001 Globe Theatre production, several post-colonial scholars such as Kate McLuskie were apt to "align [themselves] alongside past habits of separatist construction of difference as part of processes demarcating at multiple levels an 'alien' from a 'known'."¹⁵ Orkin attempts to salvage the South African work by charting the international travel of *uMabatha*, which, Orkin argues, demonstrated the global dynamics of international theatre production as well as the interconnectedness of South African and European systems and audience preferences:

Collusion in the 1970s of two related or proximate systems of commodification within which the commercial production and exploitation of a Zulu version of *Macbeth* in South Africa and then in London (both at the Aldwych and, twenty years later, at the Globe)

¹³ From notes taken after observing the Lincoln Center production in New York on 4 March 2012.

¹⁴ David B. Coplan, *In Township Tonight! South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre* (New York: Longman Group Ltd, 1985), 216.

¹⁵ Martin Orkin, *Local Shakespeares: Proximations and Power* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 51. Orkin specifically selects Kate McLuskie as a representative of such post-colonial readings of Shakespeare, noting her argument's binaries of "the opposition between art and commerce, between the authentic and the fake and, in this case, between the metropolitan and the third world" (Kate McLuskie, "Macbeth/uMabatha: Global Shakespeare in a Post-Colonial Market," *Shakespeare Survey* 52 (1999): 165). However, it is important to note that in addition to criticism targeted at explicitly exploitative productions such as *Ipi Tombi*, Black Consciousness Members "were also skeptical of interracial collaborations such as that between Elizabeth Sneddon and Welcome Msomi, who produced *Umabatha*, 'the Zulu Macbeth'" (Kruger, *The Drama of South Africa*, 137).

could so successfully occur, points, further, not so much to ‘modernist’ or ‘post-colonial’ evidence of Western ‘spin’ upon the ‘authentic’ and the ‘primitive,’ as to efficacy of an already well-functioning linked commodity system.¹⁶

Essential to Orkin’s observation is his timely intervention into strict divisions between ideas of an “originary ‘authentic’ *uMabatha* and one that has had a ‘post-colonial spin’ applied to it,” for as Orkin demonstrates, such a binaristic conception of international theatre traffic “evades completely the *continuums* in economic practice within both South African and British locations.”¹⁷ In pursuit of these “*continuums*,” Orkin provides a nuanced explication of potential motivations behind the 2001 restaging of *uMabatha* at London’s Globe Theatre, suggesting that Nelson Mandela’s endorsement of *uMabatha* in international press for the show was a tactical move on his part to defuse tensions between his newly ascendant ANC government and Zulu Chief Mongosuthu Buthelezi’s Inkatha Freedom Party. Thus, the (inter)national performance of traditional Zulu identities could serve as a means of valorizing a marginalized Zulu culture, and also a means of politically mollifying the demand for cultural recognition that partly drove the Inkatha Freedom Party’s brand of militant nationalism. Indeed, the original 1970s *uMabatha* arose out of the nationalistic Black Consciousness movement that attempted to find value for blackness and various African identities in the context of oppressive white rule and cultural hegemony.¹⁸ Thus, in all international productions of *uMabatha*, Orkin argues, the commodification of a particular, spectacularized African-ness cannot be fixed as originating in either a European or South African location.¹⁹ Rather, as Orkin rightly intervenes, the global traffic of theatre does not necessitate active engagement in (re)presentations of African-ness through explicit acts of “Western ‘spin’ upon the ‘authentic’ and the ‘primitive’” because such

¹⁶ Orkin, *Local Shakespeares*, 51.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ See Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like*, ed. Aelred Stubbs C.R. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

¹⁹ Orkin, *Local Shakespeares*, 48.

(re)presentations are the products of (in both senses of “product”) a globalized, neoliberal commodity system.

As a work produced within the globalized theatre economy and as a product consumed by audiences, *uMabatha* demonstrates in a liminoid case modeling how “the market is ‘in’ everything.”²⁰ Valuation of cultural material is inherently multivalent. Whereas manifold cultural forces create the conditions in which a work develops, the context in which a (re)presentation of such cultural work exists fundamentally alters its range of potential meanings. Such tenuous negotiations have been the object of this study, which has attempted to elucidate the problematic deployments of the “authentic” as (re)presentations of South Africa and South African identities traverse the increasingly blurred boundaries signified by the parentheses in the (inter)national theatre economy. The range of possible “authentic” (re)presentations has exponentially increased—and will likely continue to—with continued incorporation of variously “non-Western” concerns in the global ideoscape.

Nevertheless, whereas Orkin’s nuanced analysis rightly intervenes in overdetermined analyses of “post-colonial” productions of Shakespeare by locating the originary (“authentic”) meanings embedded in *uMabatha*, his argument does not account for Kate McLuskie’s awareness of how such “authenticity” can be *reauthorized* in a new cultural frame, fundamentally destabilizing (and potentially delegitimizing) the cultural valorization attempted by the production.²¹ Focusing solely on (inter)national productions of such works (as McLuskie does)—or by presuming fixity in cultural meanings (as Orkin does)—creates additional unarticulated binaries that are as problematic as McLuskie’s binaries “between art and commerce, between the authentic and the fake and, in this case, between the metropolitan and the

²⁰ Donna Landry and Gerald M. MacLean, *Materialist Feminisms* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), xii.

²¹ See also Laurence Wright, “*Umabatha*: Global and Local,” *English Studies in Africa* 47.2 (2004): 97-114.

third world.”²² Such binaries resist the persistent (inter)connectivity of complex, rhizomatic systems of theatrical production, performance, and reception. Nevertheless, as Orkin’s particularized analysis of the South African contexts of *uMabatha* reveal complexities masked by the apparent exoticism in (inter)national production, so does McLuskie’s Marxian lens adroitly focus on the additional complications borne by inequitable distributions of capital (real, cultural, and otherwise) within a globalized framework. The discourse between these two oppositional viewpoints on *uMathaba* reveal the impossibility to fix meaning or value on (inter)cultural works that fundamentally depend upon their performance context for establishing interpretive frameworks for (inter)cultural understanding.

Thus, as Orkin explores in *uMabatha*, South African audiences may find both value and self-recognition in the various South Africas staged by Brett Bailey, Yael Farber, and Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom. Conversely, as McLuskie argues, European audiences may also discover new elements of themselves through engagement with performances of South African works. A common desire for empathetic connection with other human beings lies at the root of such theatrical processes in nearly any context. Indeed, both theoretical frames that I have deployed herein—namely Joseph Roach’s “World Bank Drama” and Daphne P. Lei’s “Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre”—identify Western investments in incorporating non-Western performances into otherwise Western contexts and/or the development of Western frames for otherwise “authentic” non-Western performances. Thus, the (inter)national theatre market has developed particular frameworks to quickly authorize the incorporation (or appropriation) of “authentic” cultural materials for easy circulation. However, as with *uMabatha*, context is everything. Where in the world “Africa” is staged invariably affects what “Africa” signifies.

²² McLuskie, 165.

4.2 HOW (AND WHERE) TO PERFORM “AFRICA”²³

Such tensions between (re)presentation of (South)African material on the global stage are not new to the post-apartheid era. Indeed, notions of “Africa” and what its peoples signify have been negotiated for centuries. One hundred and fifty years prior to Van Riebeeck’s “discovery” of South Africa in 1652, Europeans were developing sign-systems with specific meanings of blackness, particularly as an opposition to whiteness.²⁴ Of course, those sign-systems have evolved and changed over the past five centuries as contact between Africans and Europeans has increased, and, importantly, since white Europeans stopped performing the roles of “blackness,” and thus have ceased perpetuating many of “the projections of imaginations that capitalize[d] on the assumptions, fantasies, fears, and anxieties of England’s pale-complexioned audiences.”²⁵ However, though blackface performances by white actors are no longer culturally sanctioned, many European images and myths—“the projections of imaginations”—attendant on blackness remain deeply embedded in the cultural imaginaries of Western nations. Indeed, the curiosity of audiences in the West and the Global North are often driven by desires for and anxieties about the unknown Other. Indeed, curiosity about the world and its cultures historically has driven culture industries. However, the culture industries often responded to such a demand for (re)presentations of the Other with a supply of exoticized and eroticized curio-performances. Though officially termed “curio-performances” have long fallen by the wayside of (inter)cultural practices, outward ripples of their impact on cultural imaginaries in both Euroamerican and African ideologies repeat regularly. For instance, the cultural frictions exposed by international

²³ The title of this section references Binyavanga Wainaina, “How to Write About Africa,” *Granta* 92 (2005), accessed 01 March 2012, <<http://www.granta.com/Archive/92/How-to-Write-about-Africa/Page-1>>.

²⁴ Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 6.

²⁵ Vaughan, 5-6.

touring of *Ipi Tombi* were echoed when a 1974 New York performance of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, wherein John Kani's deployment of township style comic performance drew associations to blackface minstrel character, Stephin Fetchit.²⁶ Thus, a putatively "authentic" South African performance tradition was recoded as the grotesquely inauthentic tradition of blackface minstrelsy.

Such (mis)readings of culturally sourced material demonstrate the inability of individuals—particularly within dominant discourses—to comprehend material outside the dominant discourse. As Susan Arndt argues, "Since writings by authors from Africa and the African diasporas mainly fail to meet White Europeans' fantasies of Africa, they shy away from these literatures which would severely shake and deauthorise archives of White knowledge."²⁷ Thus, rather than offering impossibly unmediated encounters between Africa and touristic audiences, dramatists must negotiate the tensions incumbent on cultural translations, often by adopting authorized imaginaries of "Africa." Once packaged in these particular authorized deployments of "Africa," works may more easily be brought into the globalized market of ideas wherein dominant discourses often frame Africa as a potential source of sustenance for the West's putatively moribund cultural economies.

Nevertheless, even in particularized, politically engaged works such as the Fugard, Kani, & Ntshona collaborations, *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead* and *The Island*, the effects of global cultural hegemony have made impact. Notably, Loren Kruger notes that "[t]he classical allusion as well as the resonance of its theme earned *The Island* more international attention" than *Sizwe Bansi* as

²⁶ M. Feingold, "Son of Stepinfetchit and a Vigorous Bolshevik," *New York Village Voice*, 5 May 1975, 98. See also: Kruger, *The Drama of South Africa*, 159. As Josephine Lee notes, this instance demonstrates how "the magic of cultural nationalist bodies refuses to die" (Lee, 155).

²⁷ Susan Arndt, "German Inventions of Africa: Many Intentions, Few Hopes," in *Words and Worlds: African Writing, Theatre, and Society*, ed. Susan Arndt and Katrin Berndt (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2007), 14.

the former garnered more (inter)national productions than the latter.²⁸ Though these undeniably South African works both addressed issues of apartheid-era oppressions and injustices, one was more often selected over the other in large part due to its incorporation of an extant Western frame. Thus, as Alan Filewood argues, “Theatrical tropes are ways of knowing; they not only reconstitute imperial epistemes, and the gaze that fixes them, but actively constitute knowledge.”²⁹ Therefore, formations such as Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre have emerged as commercially and critically successful negotiations of the tensions inherent to the globalized dynamics of World Bank Drama, unavoidably reiterating the inequities of power inherent to the cultural positions of the agents involved. Like all entrants into the (inter)national theatre market, South African artists must negotiate these inequities, sacrificing the possibility of “authentic” (re)presentations to the altar of global cosmopolitan appeal.

Thus, processes of national cultural identity formation are increasingly inflected with elements drawn from global imaginaries. The “new South Africa” of the post-apartheid era has come to bear multiple significances. Within the domestic production venues, “authentic” (re)presentations of works dealing with culturally valued issues such as truth and reconciliation are prized, particularly when authorized by multiple cultural sources. Internationally, “authenticity” bears similar value, although in these contexts “authenticity” often does not depend primarily on South African authorization, but rather on the authorizing agents of (inter)national and (inter)cultural production. To date, Brett Bailey, Yael Farber, and Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom have emerged as three of the most successful negotiators of South African

²⁸ Kruger, *The Drama of South Africa*, 157. Kruger further notes, “*Sizwe Bansi* was performed in tandem with *The Island* in Cape Town, Johannesburg, London, New York, Washington, Australia, and West Germany and revived often in South Africa, but *The Island* was also revived on its own in Paris, Dublin, East Germany, and the United States” (Kruger 235n4).

²⁹ Alan Filewood, “Modernism and Genocide: Citing Minstrelsy in Postcolonial Agitprop,” in *Modern Drama: Defining the Field*, ed. Ric Knowles et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 172.

cultural material within the (inter)national theatre market. Their works, which draw on both “authentic” strands of South African culture(s) and (inter)nationally authorized formations such as Hegemonic Intercultural Theatre, demonstrate the cultural hybridity necessary to succeed in (inter)national arenas. Simultaneously, these works model the dangers of global hegemonies during periods of cultural formation, for as South African artists attend more to “world” audiences, they inherently turn away from their South African particularities.

While bodies carry and transmit meaning, the iterative and interpretive potential of various bodies are circumscribed by the structures (doxa, traditions, etc.) of each particular cultural framework, of each particular space. There remains a mutually constitutive relationship between space and bodies in producing meaning. Which bodies and which meanings persist in particular spaces, however, are accentuated, emphasized, determined, and reified based on cultural and economic biases. Who is (re)presented is not always who is seen. Who looks is not always who that person imagines him- or herself to be. The unseen systems connecting global neoliberal capitalism and (inter)national theatre traffic often hide themselves in plain sight. Yet, the two are undoubtedly linked, often in ways that can be deciphered. The repetitious invocations of stereotyped (re)presentations of Africa and blackness on the global stage constantly attest to the pervasive anxieties surrounding (inter)cultural (mis)interpretation. The recurrence of such (re)presentations and interpretations further attests to the limits of (neo)liberal interest in the ethical potentials of such (inter)cultural exchange. Bluntly, there remain minimal costs for misrepresentation, large gains in “cultural” representations, and minimal gains for justice.

As a result, I argue, “South African” theatre has become a moving target, shifting between various aims and goals domestically while (re)presenting and developing different strands on the (inter)national marketplace. Nonetheless, the persistent formations of national

identity, national culture, and theatres structured on or around such concepts perpetuate frameworks such as “South African” theatre. While there is hardly a singular “South African” theatre in the post-apartheid era, there are certainly formative structures that govern the development and (re)production thereof. Thus, the past twenty years of “South African” theatrical work demonstrates both the continuing imbrication of the national and international, the negotiation of culture and identity through acts of authorization and authentication, and the interplay between these various forces. From these complex negotiations, several examples of vibrant, daring, and engaging theatre have emerged. Whether these works significantly influenced the processes of South African identity formation in the post-apartheid era remains debatable. Regardless, what will remain from these various iterations of “South African” theatre in the post-apartheid era will likely be those that received (inter)national productions and have been published (inter)nationally. Thus, the ironies of the increasingly globalized (inter)national theatre marketplace perpetuate hegemonic formations, and fundamentally (re)structures the theatrical world in its image.

5.0 AFTER WORD(S)

Finally, I would like to venture a brief reflection on my methodology. This study has attempted, among other things, to do too much. As the summative work of my two years of master's degree work at the University of Pittsburgh, and within the auspices of a project that demands academic rigor but opens itself to theoretical play, I have attempted to compress several questions and curiosities concerning both a particular historical theatrical tradition with a broad range of theoretical frameworks. I can hardly say that the project has been wholly satisfactory in its realization, though I am immensely grateful for the opportunity to explore my many engagements in the field with such latitude. Though my work continues to want for concision, because of the breadth and (I hope) the depth of this study, I have been able to discover several broader questions and points of investigation for further work.

Thus, as the frames of the “post-colonial” continue to give way to the cosmopolitan, globalized, planetary, post-national, and re-/neo-colonial frameworks for imagining the world, I wonder about the academy's imperatives in categorizing particular works within such structural frames. Should any work that travels globally be analyzed solely as the product of a national culture à la “South African” theatre? What languages can be developed to articulate the multivalent significance of (inter)cultural performance in a world with culturally structured systems of audience reception? How can such complex flows of cultural material be specified within historical and social contexts? While this study by no means has answered such broad,

wide-reaching questions, I hope that it has elucidated some of the risks of leaving such issues uninterrogated.

However, I do not aspire to a totalizing lens for explicating (inter)cultural exchange. Rather, I am aware that in the academy, as in the field of culture, “unification profits the dominant.”¹ The unification of scholarly language through single authorized framework(s) has invariably led to constant ideological battles between the appropriateness of each successive frame as superior in some facet over prior theoretical lenses. However, as Trinh T. Minh-ha writes,

theory no longer is theoretical when it loses sight of its own conditional nature, takes no risk in speculation, and circulates as a form of administrative inquisition. Theory oppresses, when it wills or perpetuates existing power relations, when it presents itself as a means to exert authority—the Voice of Knowledge. [...] To declare, for example, that so-and-so is an authority on such-and-such matter (implying thereby that s/he has written with authority on the subject concerned and that this authority is recognized by his/her peers) is to lose sight of the radicalness of writing and theorizing. It is to confuse the materiality of the thing named—or the object of discussion—with the materiality of the name—the modalities of production and reception of meaning—and to give up all attempt at understanding the very social and historical reality of the tools one uses to unmask ideological mystifications—including the mystification of theory.²

The inherent conditionality of theory remains a guiding ethos for my continuing work.

Moreover, I find it valuable to note that while Minh-ha advocates towards a radical theoretical relativism, she also agitates towards a hyperspecificity in the deployment of theory and terminology. Rather than seeking to unify all theory into Theory, Minh-ha acknowledges the provisional nature of knowledge as particular to a circumscribed arena of experience. The provisionality of all such knowledge and frameworks attests to the pressing need for

¹ Pierre Bourdieu, “Uniting Better to Dominate,” *Items and Issues* 2 (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2001): 1.

² Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman Native Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 42.

contextualization of all artistic work, both in production within (inter)national theatre frameworks and in academic analyses thereof.

In short: embodiment matters; geography matters; identity matters. Each set of experiences results from and (re)creates its own array of imaginaries, (re)structuring particular ways of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and emotionally engaging with the world. While this study has attempted to regularly scope in and out of various frameworks in pursuit of particular instances and structural frameworks arising out of South African theatre, I have remained bound to my own inherently limited frameworks and languages for theorizing and writing about both the particular theatrical works under analysis and the structural forces presiding over their production and reception. My identity as an American theatre scholar undoubtedly has influenced this writing and theorizing in ways both immediately apparent and, likely, in ways far outside my own awareness. My hope is that despite my own limitations, I have done justice to the complexities of these particular theatre artists, the cultures about which I have written, and the systems that I have explored herein. Invariably, this study will be revealed to have manifold shortcomings. Nevertheless, I hope that my thoughts translate through my various acts of theorizing and writing to stimulate and further both my own work and that of others.

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