

**THE DRAMA AND THEATRE OF TWO SOUTH AFRICAN PLAYS
UNDER APARTHEID**

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I WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALETTA BEZUIDENHOUT,
REZA DE WET, FATIMA DIKE, SAIRA ESSA, JILL
GREENHALGH, PHYLLIS KLOTZ, GCINA MHLOPE,
SUSAN PAM-GRANT, CLARE STOPFORD, AND POPPY
TSIRA FOR ALLOWING ME TO INTERVIEW THEM IN
1989-1990.

* * *

The Bantu symbol-language- which is our form of writing -
is not taught to the common people and is reserved mostly for
recording secret things. But the *witchdoctors and tribal elders*
still employ it, and as it is standard for all the tribes in Africa,
men from such widely separated tribes as the Zulus and the
Lundas of Angola, who do not speak the same language at all,
can still understand each other's symbol-writing.

The various symbols, *which have not changed since the
earliest times*, do not represent single letters; each expresses a
whole word, or, more often, a complete idea, rather in the style
of Chinese and Japanese writing. I cannot list them all, as they
would fill this book, but I have included enough, I hope, to
show their interesting scope and variety. Some of these, as
indicated, have an abstract as well as a literal meaning.

Credo Mutwa: *My People: Writings of a Zulu
Witch- Doctor*

1971:238 (researcher's italics)



BUCK (L)
LION (R)

WATCH



COWARDLY

* * *

[Derrida] suggests that writing is always already a part of social existence,
and cannot be dated from the moment when the anthropologist, that guilty spectator,
introduced its merely graphic conventions. In truth, there is no such pure 'authen-
ticity' as Levi-Strauss (like Rousseau) imagines to have been destroyed by the advent
of writing in this narrow sense. 'Selfpresence, transparent proximity in the face-to-
face of countenances ... this determination of authenticity is therefore classic ...
Rousseauistic but already the inheritor of Platonism' (Derrida 1977 *Of
Grammatology* 1977:138). From this point it is possible for Derrida to argue that the
violence of writing is there at the outset of all social discourse; that in fact it marks
'the origin of morality as of immorality', the 'non-ethical opening of ethics'.

Christopher Norris *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* 1982:39
(researcher's italics)

* * *

Jacques Derrida is also this collection of texts

G.C. Spivak "Translator's Preface" to Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (ix)

* * *

Many of those black people who encouraged the struggle don't understand about reconciliation *and why whites are not being killed*.[..] I want to write a play about reconciliation..[..] Tolstoy wrote about a man who spoke to an angel. The angel said: "If you were not born, a lot of things would not have happened." *The angel erased what he did*. We [black writers and black people] have to show that we can make a difference [by writing not erasing].

Fatima Dike's thoughts about future projects expressed at the Open University South African Theatre Conference, Milton Keynes, England in August, 1996,

Marcia Blumberg and Dennis Walder (eds.) *South African Theatre As/And Intervention* 1999: 240
(researchers italics and interpellations)

* * *

Like Kristeva, Shoshana Felman defines femininity as a "real otherness ... [which] is uncanny in that it is not the opposite of masculinity but that which subverts the very opposition of masculinity and femininity."¹ Avant-garde feminism's answer, then, is that woman, like theatre, does not take (a) place (Kristeva), but rather, revises positionality itself.² In what sense does a feminism so defined differ from deconstruction? Or [differ] from theatre, which manages both to acknowledge the symbolic and disrupt it from within, to acknowledge and subvert positionality on a continuous basis?

Josette Féral, one of the few theoreticians to explore feminist deconstructive theatre, assumes both [feminism and deconstruction] are possible-but only when theatre is not theatre per se.³ For Feral, *theatre is on the side of inscription in the symbolic*, whereas performance is on the side of *deconstruction in the semiotic* (thus Feral's "theatre" corresponds to Elam's "drama," and her "performance" corresponds to Elam's "theatre"). Féral finds theatre and performance "mutually exclusive" "when it comes to the problem of the subject," since "in contrast to performance, theatre cannot keep from setting up, stating, constructing points of view" and depends on a unified subject which performance deconstructs into drives and energies, since theatre assumes and depends on the narrativity and models of representation which performance rejects in favour of *discontinuity and spillage*. If performance highlights the "*realities of the imaginary*," [it] "*originates within the subject and allows his flow of desire to speak*," the theatrical "*inscribes the subject in the law and in theatrical codes, which is to say, the symbolic*."

Barbara Freedman "Frame-Up: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, Theatre"
1990: 70 ff (researcher's italics)

* * *

The situation of black and white women in South Africa presents a challenge to any oversimplified feminist notion of 'sisterhood'. That challenge is sharpest in the institution of domestic service where the wages paid and the hours of work exacted by white 'madams' from their black 'maids' suggest a measure of oppression of women by women.

¹ Shoshana Felman, "Rereading Femininity," *Yale French Studies* 62 (1981): 42.

² Julia Kristeva's "Modern Theater Does Not Take (a) Place". In her interview with Gauthier, [noted in Freedman op.cit. p.70] she identifies "the moment of rupture and negativity which conditions and underlies the novelty of any praxis 'feminine.'" Kristeva's article is in *Sub-Stance* 18/19 (1977) 131-134

³ Josette Féral "Performance and Theatricality" *Modern Drama* 25 (1982): 170-184

In South Africa most white households employ servants. Poverty, labour controls and a lack of employment alternatives combine to 'trap' many African women in domestic service. They are trapped in a condition of immobility within which they are subject to intense oppression. Such oppression is evident in their low wages and long working hours and in the demeaning treatment of them by the white women who are their employers. ('She does not see me as a woman. She looks down on me.') This oppression is expressed in many domestic servants' sense of being slaves, of leading wasted lives which they are powerless to change. ('I have been a slave all my life.' 'We are slaves in our own country.') Other Africans also experience their working lives as a form of slavery. This is because Africans in South Africa are one of the most regimented labour forces in the contemporary world. *In this context feminist theory has to be sensitive to the complex inter-relation of race, gender and class. The intersection of these three lines of oppression in the situation of black women in South Africa raises important questions regarding both the limits and the possibilities of feminist struggle. Feminists here are forced to recognise that white women stand in a power relation as oppressors of black women.*

Jacklyn Cock *Maids and Madams: Domestic Workers Under Apartheid*
1989:1 (researcher's italics).

* * *

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- (i) The *writing* of a whole dramatic *story* – largely the symbolic - and
- (ii) the staged *performance* of moments in a theatrical plot – largely the *chora / semiotic* - can be in a aesthetically satisfyingly dynamic interplay;
- (iii) it is through transference relationships and the mechanisms of defence that this interplay can be observed “within” the received “text”.
- (iv) De-positioned otherness emerges from the interactions in the text and the inter-texts of the author and critic

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PREFACE: BACKGROUND ASSUMPTIONS

This dissertation takes for granted certain background assumptions in critical theory (as read by the researcher). The psychoanalysis of the text enriches but does not fully explain the aesthetic power of the text. Further, the text carries on replicating itself by a process of the *constant deferral* of its meaning – as Derrida (1977)⁴ and Kristeva (1986: 37,111) suggest – i.e. in subtexts and intertexts. The read, heard and acted text moves *diachronically* through time and it is *synchronically* synthesised at one and the same time. This synthesis occurs through the media of the various participants in the dramatic process (the writing) and the theatrical process (the staging). I assume Elam's (1980) interactive polarity of drama and theatre but go further: drama is heard, registered, repressed, and may even include ignored discourse about what Lacan calls the Real: unsymbolised and unimagined brute existence and the “impossible all” (Leader and Groves 2000:61, Bowie 1991 *passim*). Drama interacts with theatre. Drama/theatre is recognised in and through historical experience (Gadamer 1977a *passim*).

The scientific basis of psychoanalysis.

In all spheres ranging from art to psychotherapy, in the study of the mind-body relation, throughout the fields of psychology, neurology, psychiatry and sociology especially in gender and queer theory⁵, and in ethnographic studies there has been extreme controversy as to the validity of

⁴ Trans. G.C.Spivak see her Introduction: xliii-xliv. Balme (2008: 83-85) draws together the post-structuralist psychoanalytic sources for a post-modernist theatre, including Derrida, Artaud and Lacan.

⁵ See “Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick: writer and critic considered a founder of queer theory” (Phillips 2009). All the characters in *Zandile* are women creating different erotic resonances.

the psychoanalytic paradigms. My reading of the literature coincides with Paul Kline's (1984) summary – these paradigms may be, in various parts, empirical and in some respects valid, having produced hypotheses to an extent corroborated. They are also discursive – a world-view of meaning:

- 5[...] It was shown that there was a degree of empirical support for:
 - a. oral and anal character syndromes, although links to childhood training and pre-genital eroticism were not well established;
 - b. Oedipus and castration complexes in a whole array of cultures;
 - c. dreams as wishes; symbolism in and out of dreams; the psychological meaning of dreams and the implication of unconscious conflicts; importance of manifest as well as latent dream content;
 - d. defence mechanisms and especially repression;
 - e. the importance of unconscious conflicts in psychopathology.
6. A sizeable number of important Freudian concepts have been shown, therefore, to have an empirical foundation.
7. A number of empirical methods, in the course of examining these concepts, were shown to be valuable in the study of psychoanalytic phenomena:
 - a. psychometric investigations including cross-cultural studies;
 - b. hologeistic studies;
 - c. percept-genetic methods and similar techniques, such as those of Silverman (1980)
 - d. Malan's (1979) approach to the investigation of psychotherapeutic success.
8. The implications of Freudian theory for a number of important areas of human life were explicated to illustrate the richness of the theory.
9. Given that some significant concepts in Freudian theory have empirical support and given that the theory can illuminate the vast gamut of human behaviour, certain conclusions seem to follow directly:
 - a. It is incorrect to say that psychoanalytic theory is unscientific in the sense that it cannot be refuted.
 - b. It is incorrect to reject psychoanalytic theory as false.
 - c. It is incorrect to accept psychoanalytic theory as true.
 - d. The theory needs far more careful empirical analysis than it has yet received.
10. [...] I want simply to argue that this further empirical analysis of Freudian theory is valuable, not as an attempt to prove Freud was right, but rather as an attempt to sift through a theory which, founded on *brilliant insights, does deal with concepts that have a bearing on the matters that seem truly of importance in human life [...] together with all those other concepts which have similar experimental support, although derived independently of psychoanalysis.*

Kline 1984: 157-157 (researcher's italics)

If therefore orality, anality, oedipal relations, dream process, mechanisms of defence and the unconscious *may* have validity, often cross-culturally, then cross-cultural texts *may* be subjected to psychoanalytic

criticism without necessarily violating standard of empirical possibility as long as one avoids “psychic vivisection” such as subjecting members of other cultures to psychiatric labelling when they are going through normative processes such as healing themselves or others (Sachs 1937, Sachs 1947, Marks 1987 all *passim*, Hammond-Tooke 1989: 104, Dubow 1993, Rose 1994 both *passim*).

Psychoanalytic process working on the subject in the text

In this way *part* of criticism, then, may be awareness of the process of *unrealised* dialogue and suppressed or dis-torted narrative within a text between subjects, and between subjects and audience or readership. And at a socio-cultural level there may also be repression, amnesia or ignorance held in place by propaganda, irrational taboo and societal control of information. Thus there may or may not be realisation in the subject(s) of the Real. The Real in Lacanian thinking may go beyond the social construction of reality (the fusion of the symbolic and the imaginary which includes actual empirically demonstrated historical context whether or not it is directly experienced) as well as the All of brute existence. But the subject in the Real may differ from any other socially and ideologically constructed subject in *his* reality including *his* imaginary and *his* symbolic. What Freud may have dismissed as neurosis or anomaly, the African Real embodying the apparently bizarre imaginary, the symbolic and the All Lacan would countenance.

The subject changes according to a philosophical and psychodynamic process. In terms of critical theory: the three orders are re-visioned as

if in the mirror of time and circumstance (Jameson 1972:108) - in the minds of groundlings and the educated at the Elizabethan Globe theatre and in our minds but often intuitively and unconsciously so.⁶ In terms of modern psychoanalytic discourse (Green 1978a and 1978b and 1979 *passim*)⁷: it is possible that for Hamlet, Gertrude / Ophelia, Old Hamlet / King Claudius, are *complexes*: Catholic whore/Madonna and Catholic God/Devil, mysteriously fascinating “protesting-ly” internalised “objects” projected outward drawing from both Catholic ideas and Protestant processes. Fusing together some of the terms of post-modernist psychoanalysis and using Lacan’s terms a (castrating) symbolic net is thrown over Hamlet’s real and Real, endlessly deferring the death drive to kill the whore and the Devil and himself (these bad objects in himself) – re-vised in us in the psychological/theatrical space of the reflective mind (Lacoue-Labarthe 1977: 133).⁸ Old Hamlet/Uncle Claudius and Gertrude / Ophelia lock him into endless deferral. At another level in this writing there is the violent historical/ideological “writing” (of which Derrida writes⁹). History is represented in the *hiatus*, the empty (but theatrical) presence of the moment in which he should act “between”. Hamlet rehearses: “Am I my father’s son or my mother’s son or my uncle’s nephew? Have I and her father Polonius driven a wretched and lovely girl mad or is Ophelia a corrupt spy? Is my mother a lustful whore or a sadly abused and manipulated woman with whom I should deal gently?” The paternal, maternal, erotic and psychotic bodies with which he *plays* are for us also the grimly fascinating pleasure of the text stretched out in narrative tension like language

⁶ Jameson is quoted and discussed in Eagleton 1990:266.

⁷ Discussed in Wright 1987: 99-104

⁸ Wright 1998: 158-159

⁹ See Norris on Derrida in the first inscription on p.2.

itself as we await the end of the sentence (Barthes 1977: 119).¹⁰ They signify and are signified at the phallic (metaphoric/metonymic) and narcissistic (Imaginary) levels (Lacan 1977a: 197). Kristeva puts it in a less tendentiously sexist fashion: literary language is (a) symbolic and (b) semiotic; (a) full of meaning and (b) full of pulsation, excitation, rhythm expressed in the tropes of desire (Kristeva 1986:94).

At yet another level: Hamlet's melancholy is not only grief. It is not only political and metaphysical paralysis – although it is that too for a man caught between the medieval and the renaissance periods. Because his uncle did what unconsciously he might have wanted to do – enact the Oedipus complex – he is therefore chronically conflicted, his ego battered by his superego, the fantasy of guilt (Freud 1905, VII: 309-310). Even if this is a Freudian parody: the “potential space” becomes tragic, “a place for misrecognitions” in the words of the aesthete Green.¹¹ In any event this post-Freud theatre is a “theatre of desire, a theatre of the primary process.”¹² We see and feel this in Artaud's physicality of signs which impacts through great Hamlet *acting* resolving Derrida's writing/presence dilemma.¹³

The applicability of critical theory to a South African play.

For many decades during the apartheid period, despite the depredations of the state's racist education and censorship policies vis-à-vis society and the stage (Orkin 1991 *passim*) there was a tradition of radical and liberal criticism

¹⁰ Quoted in Vice (ed.) 1996:205. See also Barthes 1976: 18, 27, 62 quoted in Wright 1987: 88-89.

¹¹ Wright 1987: 100-101 quoting Green 1979: 9-10. See Edwards 2003:79-81 on Hamlet.

¹² The primary process is the id, the instinctual drives: Wright 1987: 100-101.

¹³ *Ibid* and Balme 2008: 81-83

and debate. Psychoanalysis and critical studies in English, theatre and even psychotherapy were very much alive in the bohemia of Johannesburg, Cape Town and the other big cities and in universities. Wulf Sachs a professional “descendent” of Freud himself had already established himself in Johannesburg in the 1930’s as a medical psychoanalyst and he and later anthropologists were aware of the value of a psychoanalytic understanding of African psychiatric healing practices called “witchcraft” by largely ignorant South African and colonial authorities (Rose 1994). F.R. Leavis’s critical practice was very much alive in English departments of the universities. The so-called *Drum* group of journalists under the editorship of Anthony Sampson established a huge reputation, part of a whole liberal-radical culture detailed in Nadine Gordimer’s early novels such as *The Lying Days* and *A World of Strangers*. Despite the external exile of some of the *Drum*/Sophiatown group – the rebels of the late ‘50’s such as Nat Nakasa – black and white intellectuals stayed on to face harassment, arrest, imprisonment and banning but managed somehow to go on with their political and artistic work (see Robert Mshengu Kavanagh 1985 *passim*). In South Africa this debate had, legally, to occur within the limits of the “anti-terrorist” and “anti-communist” legislation of the Afrikaner Nationalist government which came to power in 1948 and stayed in control of the country until the great rapprochement with the ANC and the liberation movements of the late ‘80’s and the first democratic elections of 1994. In the heyday of apartheid the authorities were able to ban “subversive” writing and performance and forbid multiracial productions in certain geophysical spaces. Publications only available overseas such as by South African exiles and the black American radicals like

Angela Davis had to be smuggled in.¹⁴ There was a split between home writing and exile writing with the possible exceptions of the Space Theatre in Cape Town and the Market Theatre in Johannesburg which workshopped and hosted plays by Athol Fugard and his colleague Barney Simon and their collaborators (Fuchs 1990 *passim*). Township venues were also sometimes able to escape censorship and banning. Avant-garde plays embedded with ideas of the unconscious, surrealism, symbolism, sexual, social and political liberation had entered what Foucault calls the *epistémè* – amongst educated white and black writers and performers. Nevertheless for political reasons Fugard and the left eventually supported a European and American playwrights', directors' and actors' boycott of South Africa. Still, home-grown radical avant-garde (called “experimental”) theatre was encouraged by activists. As well as in Cape Town, Johannesburg and the Witwatersrand some of these South African plays originated in Fugard's home city of Port Elizabeth and its African township, New Brighton. Because of the special status of the radical South African authors and their theatre spaces, some multi-racial and oppositional South African plays went on to become part of a world theatre canon in defiance of the ethos of apartheid.

Why shouldn't the Pretoria government reassure investors that the regime was not so dictatorial and repressive after all? Overseas audiences would be impressed and reassured to see Stanislavski, Beckett, Ionescu, Brook, Grotowski, The Method, recycled and fully indigenised in South

¹⁴ See generally Nkosi 1965, Chapter One below on Dike working in her brother-in-law's bookshop in the 1970's in Cape Town, Gordimer and Abrahams eds. 1967 introduction by Sampson pp.11-15, Gray 1979, Mutloatse 1980, Gray 1982, Coplin 1985, Mzamane 1986, Fuchs 1990 all *passim*.

African terms. The Ministers of the police, the interior and even education wouldn't have heard of them anyway! They would have known of Breyten Breytenbach as an Afrikaner "traitor" because of his family connections to the regime. *Die Sestigers* a radical group of Afrikaner poets, novelists and playwrights like Breytenbach, Andre Brink, Ingrid Jonker and later the post-modernist J.M.Coetzee had entered and would change the modern cultural *epistémè* (see Cope and Plomer 1988 on Jonker and Dovey 1988 on Coetzee). The avant-garde *per se* would only have been deeply threatening when linked to black consciousness and Marxism and the liberation movements at home and in exile. Then the viciousness of the regime would be manifest in bannings, arrest, politicised trials, censorship, torture, killings.

Black writers naturally favoured other black writers in Africa and abroad who were oriented toward their common origins and amongst them there was a greater stress on the ideological rather than the aesthetic. *Negritude* was exported from West Africa and Kenya and came home to its sources after a visit to Harlem, California, Cuba, Columbia, Argentina and Algeria - being nurtured by the writers of anti-colonialism. *Negritude* and some West, Southern and East African black consciousness writers saw what purported to be a radical avant-garde aesthetic as a bourgeois white aesthetic.

New wave feminism in this South African writing.

A white critic and anthologist Cecily Lockett (1990: 31) is able to say: "The women's movement, growing as it did in America out of the leftist atmosphere of the civil rights movement, never took root in quite the same

way in South Africa. Nor has it quite the same impact. But it is apparent in the writing of women poets that the ideas of the feminist revolution reached South Africa and were embraced by women.” However this is not the North London of Doris Lessing’s *The Golden Notebook* (1962). But with a black woman writer like Fatima Dike (1948-) in a play like *The First South African* there is, however, I would maintain, an example of an eclectic play, conforming partly to a Western-type tragic drama but with strong feminist and African influences. In this play the following occurs: an arc of unresolved conflict, short partial climaxes, a major climax and a slipping away into the clutches of destiny and denouement. There is a feminist and an African slant on this: the women, with their faults, are seen as keeping their integrity. The men are feared for their maleness or respected for their strength.

Theatre aesthetics: using the writing of dramatic depth in the African context.

From the African point of view the play is partially a township play somewhat in the tradition of Gibson Kente, a famous commercial black theatre entrepreneur, with comic routines, ludicrous policemen, satirised characters, caricatured *tsotsis* (street criminals speaking English / Afrikaans / African jargon laced with Americanisms), melodramatic and sentimental situations. But additionally Zwelinzima’s African mother, his black girl-friend, his white-would-be-girl-friend and his criminal peer-group are internalised by the anti-hero without integration or insight: *the women see this*. His stressed identity moves towards psychological catastrophe and eventual collapse. Aesthetically and psychologically as a literary critic I find no difficulty comparing this play published only in South Africa 30 years ago and

virtually unknown except amongst a few theatre scholars, with *Hamlet*. In no way does it compare in richness and depth with Shakespeare. But it values richness and depth and the tragic structure as part of its complex African-European aesthetic. As in *Hamlet*, Zwelinzima's death-drive exacerbated by the machiavellian (apartheid) system, eventually overcomes and destroys him. In Dike's play this is complexly and poetically explored in depth only in the first scene of the play through the Chorus and in odd cameos throughout the play. It operates as a partially submerged symbolic chain and a latent semiotic rhythm throughout the play which can be brought out by direction (see Chapter One). Even on the bare page we participate vicariously in his awful decline whilst the groundswell of black consciousness, the semiotic, throbs outside in the streets, the schools and the African townships as the uprisings following the 16th June 1976 sweep the country – although, diplomatically, never mentioned perhaps for fear of censorship. But the theme is obvious. Zwelinzima cannot find black justice and self-understanding so as to discover a way out for himself in his dilemmas. He looks too white, he acts and feels too African, he is too patronised by those who will protect him from the colour bar as a poor white in the psychological sense of the term.¹⁵

Psychological, political, historical and ethnographic inter-texts, then, are not only conscious and unconscious at the individual level in the characters. They are between the author and her history and her genre, and between the critic's hidden or open texts which bring his history to bear on the process.

¹⁵ See Herbstein 1978, and Hirson 1979 *passim* on the uprisings of 1976 and the historical axial age they represented: the presentation of black identity for Africans. Some mixed-race and even white youth activists then and subsequently identified with black youth. Zwelinzima is morally paralysed.

These processes function as *aesthetic* inter-texts within the whole language (*langue*) and its particular expression - (*parole*) - in a cultural network (Kristeva 1986:37-38). Dike is writing bilingually within the whole English and Xhosa *langue* as total systems, but also within the subcultures of the Christian respectable working class Xhosa speakers *and* by contrast delinquent youth as *parole*. The play appeals sufficiently to a cross-ethnic South African consciousness to be explicable despite or perhaps because of its bilingualism. I and a Christian Xhosa speaker and a *tsotsi* criminal can interpret it hermeneutically. This is the interpretation of the text, through its time, so as to realise itself in me in my time and in their time (Gadamer 1977a *passim*, 1977b/2000: 181-186).

Naïf African theatre aesthetics and the new South Africa: giving the young hope, compared with giving the adults reality.

The issue with *Have You Seen Zandile* (1986/2002a) is related but somewhat different. When I realise that *Have You Seen Zandile?* is a modern folk-tale or an up-dated fairy-story or a romance in a context of the mid-1980's when apartheid was beginning to crumble and a young girl looked forward with hope, I realise that in the new South Africa some members of a black political class including Mhlophe - a Cinderella figure autobiographically and fictionally - have justly advanced but the needs of the very poor – the real and remaining Cinderella class – have not been met (Hadland and Rantao 1999: xx, Gevisser 2007, Gumede 2008, Johnson 2009 *passim*, Theroux 2008). The play is not naïve but *naïf* yet its underlying politics are naïve at least on first inspection although it touches on serious

problems of emotional and marital child abuse and the rights and power of women.

Mhlophe's realisation through the discovered and re-discovered grandmother is, in part, magical thinking unfortunately replicated in political life. It has been argued that after 1994 the country was run from day to day by a *naively* but inevitable chosen crown-prince, Thabo Mbeki, enthroned by the Christian Mandela and quite the opposite of him: a paranoid, authoritarian and emotionally damaged man. Mbeki was the actual enforcer under Mandela (his "Prime Minister" / Vice-President). Pre-occupied with power he failed right from the outset in May 1994 and for the next *13 years* (he was president from 1999-2007) to deal with HIV/AIDS, and with acts of terror and violence internally and externally (Gevisser 2007 Introduction and Johnson 2009 *passim*)¹⁶. *Zandile* overlooks the *contemporary* totalitarian and patriarchal context of the regime, and the comrades in the real. It is a partly naïve and a *naïf individualist (liberal) feminist* drama; that is seen as enough of an achievement in itself (see Goodman 1994: 174-178).

By contrast *The First South African* also in some sense a feminist drama foresaw ten years earlier than *Zandile* that it was an *apocalyptic* idea for a peaceful and effective liberal democracy to emerge in a post-apartheid

¹⁶ Yet the choice by Mandela of Mbeki given Mbeki's key position (analogous to Stalin amongst the Bolsheviks) in the ANC/SACP and therefore in the secret talks was inevitable or seen as such amongst the leadership of: Thabo's father Govan Mbeki, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo and Mandela (Milne 2008). This occurred despite the presence of Cyril Ramaphosa, a trusted and trusting co-writer of the new constitution and trade union leader as an obvious candidate in the peace and reconciliation process who could organise a new government and also delegate. The patriarchal/*Stalinist* ethos although opposed by Mandela within the ANC/SACP alliance added to the inevitability of the coming Mbeki near-dictatorship.

Southern Africa (for special reasons, apart from Botswana) – whatever miracles occurred (and the rapprochement of 1990-1994 was “miraculous”). The father(s) alone cannot heal a whole nation already so divided.

Patriarchy, apartheid and the post-apartheid mess, and dramatic redemption

Despite *TFSA*'s hopes for an ultimate redemption through brotherhood and sisterhood, democracy in the modern western sense never existed in pre-colonial or colonial eras still less in the time of apartheid – by definition and *de facto*.¹⁷ Like pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial authoritarian leaders Thabo Mbeki and his Minister of Health Manto Tshabalala-Msimang played into taboo and used denial as tools of convenient propaganda against the “colonialists” and “imperialists” and “racists”: in their case concerning the HIV/AIDS virus as a biological entity which was an invention of the drug companies and a slur on black people's sexuality invented by European ideology and better treated by large doses of beetroot, lemons and garlic to boost vitamins and antibodies. In fact consciously or unconsciously it was probably motivated as a vote catcher to please African men who share that denial and that taboo (Steinberg 2008 *passim*). The recent achievements of the peace process and the ANC government include *merely allowing the existence of an NGO* - the Treatment Action Campaign - but until recently ignoring it. In this there is a strong feminist input (Steinberg 2008: 43).

¹⁷ Wilson and Thompson eds. Vols. I & II 1971 *passim* e.g. on the Zulu empire, on the *difikane* and the destruction of the African chiefdoms by the colonial and Boer regimes.

Examples of the continuation of the patriarchy include the grand, old, wise man Nelson Mandela having to *plead* to be allowed into the presence of his prodigally tyrannical “son” Mbeki in 1999 to try to get him to stop his inadmissible denials of HIV/AIDS as a biological entity and to urge an apparently charming but fanatical and intolerant man, his craven female health minister and obsequious colleagues, already afraid of his “purges”, of the urgent need for anti-retroviral drugs to be *allowed* (Johnson 2009 *passim*). Even sympathetic biographers like Mark Gevisser and Hadland and Rantao are, diplomatically, able to point to typical sources of emotional deprivation and tragic murderous suffering inflicted on the Mbeki family, to a cold ideological father like Govan Mbeki, to the stigmatised history of the “Jews of Kaffirland” (the Mfengu refugees from the imperialist Zulu). All these factors explain the cruelty of the “velvet glove” patriarchy covering Mbeki’s now tragically and dramatically destroyed iron fist regime of men and collusive women (Gevisser 2007 *passim* and his Introduction).

The ideological mess in South Africa following the surrender of the apartheid regime has resulted in machiavellian plotting and counter-plotting amongst the political class with no clear policy direction amongst them other than appeal to “the masses”, positive discrimination (benefiting the political class) and the prevailing capitalist climate. The failed electoral revolt against Thabo Mbeki’s successor Jacob Zuma, who is said to be semi-literate in any international language and is alleged to be corrupt¹⁸ was a revolt which

¹⁸ RW Johnson “An ugly situation is developing on South Africa’s university campuses where a witch hunt is threatened, with white academics as its likely victims...To appreciate the situation one must begin with the huge drop in national [sic] morale caused first by the

claimed to be against Zuma's ally the Communist Party and was being carried out by Mosiuoa Lekota (who was Minister of Defence during the allegedly corrupt arms deal and is now led by a "clean" Methodist Bishop Dandala) with the backing of "Mbeki dissidents" through a new breakaway party, the Congress of the People in the name of the 1955 Freedom Charter¹⁹. But Mbeki was himself authoritarian and treated the Freedom Charter as unrealistic given the conditions of the handover of power from capitalist racist South Africa who did a deal with the ANC to this effect and in so many words: "you can have power, but leave us the entrepreneurial economy!" (Sparks 1990, Hadland and Rantao 1999, Thompson 1999, 2001, Gevisser 2007 *passim* on the transition). At least now Zuma (who according to the judge in the Shabir Shaik case behaved fraudulently see fn 18) has great personal charisma, is felt to have his heart in the right place, has backing both on the left and the right, and may be able to deliver services (electricity, clean water, health, law and order and education so urgently required, and greater economic equality). The bloody chaos predicted in the chorus of Dike's play

election of Jacob Zuma – [now President Zuma] - as president of the ruling ANC, [in December 2007 at the national conference at Polokwane] ” guardian.co.uk Tuesday March 18th 2008. That Zuma was *peacefully* elected can be regarded as another miracle given the history of other Southern African post-colonial states; but that a macho-man who calls for his machine gun [metaphorically his penis or his real weapon or both] before addressing meetings and did so before his inauguration as head of state, and who according to the evidence given at the trial of his accomplice, now jailed but soon to be released (Shabir Shaik), is implicated in corruptly receiving kick-backs for steering a parliamentary committee towards accepting the infamous arms contract which the navy and the air force didn't want, can be seen as an potentially bloody event predicted by the Chorus in *The First South African* 40 years before. This is from Helen Zille, leader of the Democratic Alliance's newsletter *South Africa Today* 16th September 2008: “[Zuma] is facing allegations of 783 counts of bribery over 10 years involving R4,2-million.. Zuma has done everything to avoid his day in court in order to gain the power of the Presidency. If he does become President, it is likely that he – more so than Thabo Mbeki – will abuse the office to protect and enrich himself and his clique. Cadre deployment is one of the key tools of abuse.” See also Xan Rice “Court revives corruption charges against Zuma:...Zuma faces 16 charges relating to an arms bribery case, including racketeering, corruption and money laundering involving about 4m rand (£267,000)” *The Guardian* 13/01/09 p.21.

¹⁹ See Chris McGreal “South African ANC breakaway party unveils leadership” Guardian.co.uk 16/12/08

may now be allayed but she got to the heart of the problem when she foresaw that brother against brother, white brother (with skills and “access”) against black brother (with the fundamental power to revolt) would constitute an existential crisis for an emergent South Africa.

The authoritarian politics of apartheid still exist on a smaller less state-regimented scale through, perforce, another opposition, the Democratic Alliance, which appeals largely to mixed-race and white voters. Africans on the whole will not vote for the DA, perhaps because it has a white woman as leader, even though she was a highly successful Mayor of Cape Town, Helen Zille, now Premier of the Western Cape. The strong father-figure, before white, now black, remains *at this stage* unassailable in Southern Africa. Only minor inroads are being made by oppositional women and men. Dike and even to an extent Mhlophe reflect the open and the hidden collusive father manipulating the women.

The populist reading of African reality: ideology and historical reality is asleep whilst maturation occurs.

Zandile is in the paradoxical position of being *feminist but playing into consumerism and the romantic ideology of girls and young women* - therefore “realistically” accepting black patriarchy. Because it is really a child’s story although a significant one it insists that reading a text and trying to understand and appreciate it, is, *partly*, itself a kind of text revealing something of the *political history* of the author(s) of the text(s) and of the critic(s) which is concealed from the child – naturally, of course – we don’t want children to be

disturbed by the real and the Real so we tell them stories.. This most innocent of genres allows a repressed, deformed, ideological, ignored, dis-torted re-
 vision of events which in themselves cannot be denied. Such events might in
 other children's stories include the transatlantic slave trade, the genocide of
 the South African San and the Australian aborigines, the Turkish massacre of
 Armenians, the Nazi holocaust – the cruelties of apartheid too – all of which
 figure in or could be appropriately represented in children's literature. This is
 part of what Frederic Jameson (1981) would call the political unconscious
 which exists within what he also calls the prison-house of language (Jameson
 1972). To use the psychoanalytic terminology - this is part of the transference
history of the text and the critic – the way the author, imagined characters and
 the critic transfer to each other previous relationships of desire which the other
 in the art-object can, in part, fulfil in an *historical context sometimes to the
 detriment of what can taken to be historical truth*. How author, critic,
 audience or readership became the persons they are through their many
 socialisation experiences... all this is drawn into a denialistic, voyeuristic or a
 therapeutic identifying or rejection of the figures exhibited, when the artist has
 created them whilst he or the subjects, are in a sense ideologically asleep. This
 is what we have to do to children: to keep them asleep like Sleeping Beauty,
 ideologically until they are old enough to understand the “Real” – the brutal
 nature of human existence. At least this sleep of ideology can allow internal
 psychological transition from childhood through puberty into adolescence and
 adulthood. The blood shed is what comes of pricking the finger on a spindle
 or briar rose – “the curse” suffered by the girl – in Mhlophe's case
 menstruation at the age of puberty coincides with the threat of marital rape of

herself and the adolescent rape of her half-sister as represented in “Nokulunga’s Wedding” (Mhlophe 2002b). In Africa one may be put to sleep before and at puberty but for the very unfortunate, never, always awakened by the dreadful blow of reality or awakened too late after adolescence. This may be the hidden feminist message certainly of *The Sleeping Beauty* and its variations and this has an echo in *Zandile* (Bettleheim 1978: 225-236).

The psychodynamics of a Christian play in South Africa.

But *TFSA* is an adult’s play. In the Christian terms implicit and overt in the play Zwelinzima is a heartless crook, a faithless lover, an ungrateful hating stepson, and an opportunistic survivor, a beneficiary of his mother’s and father’s simple religion, the tolerance of which he exploits rather than uses as a stimulus for transcendence. The author and we enter this young man’s divided personality, a man who is understandably alienated under apartheid. We are inoculated against his “disease” and participate in his “normality” given his circumstances. But he fails. His dead mother and his black girlfriend succeed morally by refusing to stop being black in identity and continuing to show Christian love. He becomes a poor-white in the cultural and psychological sense of the term.

Both artist and audience-member work out their desire for validation and consummation of the alienated Self through the idealised Other in the art-object which is, partly, what they project of themselves outward. They draw on the artistically *compelled* in themselves and *compelling* in the art-object. This *compulsion* sometimes occurs on the borderline between the conscious

and the unconscious – in the realm of the dreamlike, the vicarious, the uncanny (Freud 1907, 1905-6, 1907, 1919 in Strachey ed.1985).

The *naïf* text: full of the psychodynamics of the uncanny.

In *Zandile* alienation happens at the level of the dis-located object: the white car is a compulsive image (Goodman 1993: 176) because like a dream symbol or a symptom when viewed at the borderlines of the unconscious and the pre-conscious it stems from the death-wish, *Thanatos*, of which, naturally a girl of 8 (in the play) and 12 in (“real life”) would be terrified concerning an aggression against her - driving out *Eros*, the wish to live and love. It is both an ambulance and the instrument of a kidnap (in the play). Earlier in fictional time but only discovered by us later we learn that the kidnapper came to find out if the child would come back to the Transkei voluntarily. She may have come in a white car then. It is also a *white* car – symbol of white power or a car normally used by whites – perhaps a smart taxi or a smart-looking car of the sort Europeans can afford not a run-down “black” taxi or borrowed or old car usually seen in the townships. The white car is also pre-figured in dramatic irony in a previous scene when Zandile threatens her choir of flowers who won’t sing properly with a white car to take them away (Goodman *op.cit.*). Thus Zandile as in a thriller “uncannily” predicts her own fate. This is a human fate exacerbated by apartheid and deprivation, partly caused by racial and class oppression and the dead hand of patriarchal tradition both white and black.

There are, then, naturally, aesthetic qualities in a text or the signified/signifying art-object in the first place which make it attractive for the reader, audience and critic. Freud regarded the creative qualities in art and literature as a mystery beyond psychoanalysis but in saying this may have done himself an injustice. In his essay on “The uncanny” (1919) and his work on jokes (1905) he is felt by critics such as Weber, Hertz and Cixous to both exhibit and himself repress the full and artful workings of the unconscious as creative demiurge (Wright 1987: 138-150). Freud himself tells his story of his art-objects and his cases *artfully* using identification with transference “objects” repressed in the unconscious and held in abeyance in the pre-conscious where they are controlled and expressed by “mechanisms” of the id working against and within the ego and superego.

The psychodynamics of vicarious pleasure coming from the *chora*.

Hamlet is more than Freud’s story of the prince’s Oedipus complex although, with paradigmatic hindsight, it is, perhaps a version of that too and even that process of conflict has for us *vicarious pleasure*. The very poetry is clothed in figures of desire: speech and musical denotation which issue from an imaginary realm, the Mother/Child realm (Kristeva 1986: 93-94).

This, the *chora*, breaks through what Lacan calls the phallic bar into symbolic meaning under threat of symbolic castration (Lacan 1977: 197). Hamlet has to speak / act and in so doing unjustly die at the hands of the wicked uncle whom he, or the plot also kills as justice requires – the symbolic castrations of the evil and the good. When he does nothing he still returns

pleasurably (for us) to suppressed desire and grieves for the good father and the good lover, emotionally trapped “within” what is internalised and projected (“abjected”)²⁰. Abjection for him is revolting. He grovels within a state of self-loathing. But we enjoy it vicariously. On his behalf we also, unconsciously, may enter Gertrude and Ophelia and remain in an abject but masochistically pleasurable state - within these characters. This in turn interacts with a whole genre of dramatic/historical writing: the medieval/renaissance conflict between fear of Christian hell – the ghost is not his father but the devil - and the new rationalism - urging machiavellian or Hobbesian justice – kill Claudius, restore moral order.

The symbolic order, women and writing: Kristeva’s view.

What is chronic melancholy and an antic (manic) disposition but this insoluble conflict dragging down the person into the misery and humiliation of perpetual indecision? The modern woman is also torn between “.... striving for access to the word and to time, [and in so doing] she identifies with the father, [and] she becomes a support for transcendence. But [like Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, Maria Tsvetaeva] when she is inspired by that which the symbolic order represses, isn’t a woman also the most radical atheist, the most committed anarchist? In this society, such a posture casts her as a victim. But elsewhere?” (Kristeva 1986: 158).

Freda and Thembi in *The First South African* in a moderate and anonymous way, along with millions of unknown women in the developing

²⁰ The term is Julia Kristeva’s in her *Powers of Horror* (1982) *passim*.

world are also striving for access to the word and to time, and in so doing they identify with the good father, and become a support for transcendence. Freda identifies with Christian-missionary tradition and the Xhosa woman's stabilizing role in urban society. She identifies with her German lover and her African husband, and with the male God and the male Christ. Thembi does not seriously dispute her father Hlazo's demand for Zwelinzima to pay *lobola* – bride-wealth – or a fine for “breaking into my kraal” – his sleeping with Thembi without permission. She holds Zwelinzima up as a moral failure in the light of the law of old and new patriarchy – he abuses the norms of modernity and tradition. The women are not radicals or revolutionaries and only inadvertently committed to what Kristeva calls a de-positioned position – not (a) woman. But they are certainly more fluid, closer to their *chora* as a centre of emotional rhythm and a changing but relevant sense of moral feeling than the men except Hlazo and Austin, Zwelinzima's stepfather. All the other men are street-criminals interested largely in individual survival or denizens of apartheid-law and the state, or inscribed in a macho symbolic order, tragically, perforce; or remote mythical figures like Karl his father.

The messiah-myth and the self-reflective myth in the South African theatre of two writers.

The source material for creativity may also be found partly in a myth – an archetype of the male or female magician/artist plunging into an archaic searching after truth. This search is not purely cognitive but poetic: refined by rhetorical, metaphoric, metonymic processes and tropes (C.G.Jung et al 1964/1978). In Freud and Jung the unconscious condenses, symbolises and

displaces libidinal and aggressive forces: in the example of *Hamlet*: the archetypal good old king/father and the archetypal bad usurper/seducer are enacted by travelling players in an uncannily resonant way. In the artist and in the artistically socialised audience this process of uncanny resonance comes to be regarded as creatively enthralling. If not uncannily resonant with the unconscious *and* refined or reworked according to some acceptable aesthetic - why would the art-object be regarded as a work of art, an example of a ritualised artefact or an enacted myth in the first place having the potential to release emotion aesthetically or religiously?

The First South African is the enactment of a realistic but tragically abortive version of the messiah-myth: underneath the social-realist exterior and within the township-theatre encasing there is the story of Ham, a descendent of the fallen Adam, now fallen a second time, rejected as a black brother struggling to get back into the worlds of Shem and Japhet his brown and white brothers, and the realm of Noah his father, or into a new re-created world of his own, a narrative pre-figured in the poetic opening Chorus of the play. Through the archetypes touched on by the myth positive and “healing” (integrating) religious emotion is released in the sense understood by Jung. The narrative is clear, gripping, tense, uncertain enough and therefore aesthetically appealing. It goes through a tragic and partially redemptive arc (we, if not Zwelinzima, are redeemed through bearing witness to his wilful yet unwilled tragedy) and for that reason it has appeal for those whose sense of dramatic form is shaped by ancient Greek, Judaeo-Christian and Shakespearean ideas of redemption. It verges on a feminist play in its portrayal of a strong woman although a

Madonna too. She resonates with our narcissistic need for a reflective and supportive mother. But a mirror is not enough. The peer-group and the culture enter into the psyche to create psychological and social conflict. In the artist such symptoms are replaced by creativity *focussing and channelling* what in delinquent and psychiatrically disturbed others is symptomatic.

The three women who work-shopped *Zandile* re-fashioned Mhlophe's raw autobiographical experience which was symptomatic of harsh separation events by means of displacement, condensation and symbolisation *uncannily* representing it, yet making it oddly *dissonant* with what could possibly be the case in ordinary psychological reality outside a folkloric rendering (Wright 1987 *op.cit passim*).

The collective and the individual in the African and the Western theatre traditions: searching for the historically true beneath these ideologies.

African theatre, in particular, has always been close to mythology and an oral poetic tradition, music and dance which had access to intuitive artistic sources common to all societies. Here the borderlines between conscious and unconscious, dream and reality, spiritual and real, ghost and living are not as definite as in rationalistic, materialistic, scientific and technological civilisations. Total, multi-media performance crossing genres involved religion, history and narrative combined, used ritual, masks, acting and mime and transgressed the boundaries of imagination (Schipper 1982 *passim*). Westerners would regard African art as either inherently wise or as naïve. In either event African theatre was a collective performance until individual

authors like Wole Soyinka emerged under colonial and early post-colonial, modern conditions. Certainly in Africa the completely individual *modern and modernist* author is not “dead” even if this is suggested in relation to post-modernist Western literature (Barthes 1977: 142-148).

However even in the western tradition the dramatist was never the exclusive author of the collectively inherited tradition behind what went onto the stage and how the audience responded. At all times emotion and intellect, feeling and knowing, the conscious and the unconscious were and are involved and these are part of a cultural aesthetic tradition.

But the collective understanding and expression of art does not undo other “objective” realities within art. There may be something “objectively” and individually true in the writing of *history* behind and within the text of which we may be more or less ignorant and to which we can connect intellectually through the understanding of society and emotionally. The uncovering of our *ideological* (not just emotional) transferences may have truth-value or may be absent in truth-value in what purport to be the human sciences generally, including how we regard art especially when the dramatist distorts history and politics for opportunistic reasons - currying favour with the current ruling Tudors as Shakespeare did in portraying the Plantagenet “enemy” Richard III:

Psychoanalysis stands as close as possible, in fact, to that critical function which, as we have seen, exists within all the human sciences [...] advancing in the direction of that fundamental region in which the relations of representation and finitude come into play.

Michel Foucault 1974:374 quoted in Wright 1987:161

Like archaeology criticism may have to uncover the text through many layers of previous history and previous aesthetics. However, unlike a physical ruin carefully disinterred, a text, apparently unchanged by time, may be fundamentally - historically and aesthetically - changed in the very act of uncovering it and interpreting it. As Gadamer (1977 *passim*) has suggested there are artistic traditions – such as that of Greek tragedy - *of which one is part* or which one *partially shares rather than transcends* in some sort of specified or unspecified way - through aesthetic play - which changes the reading or acting of the text. “The work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it.” (Gadamer 1989:102, quoted in Bruns 2002: 65). There is an aesthetic in modernist art which differs from classical art but to which one orients oneself by entering the artist’s world hermeneutically, through what Bruns, interpreting Gadamer, describes as witness, testimony, appropriation (Bruns 2002:65). The historical context of the art-work is not the art-work, nor is its aesthetic a thing-in-itself which I absorb. Rather I appreciate the art-work through “an epiphany within my own historical and cultural environment” (Bruns *ibid*).

A world theatre aesthetic and a South African theatre aesthetic

Now that the New South Africa is upon us no one playwright of such large gifts and political courage has had the stimulus and commitment of an Athol Fugard so as to produce a world-wide theatrical epiphany in audiences everywhere. In the early and middle period of apartheid he spoke to local and global inter-racial audiences on their existential situations not

merely their ethnic position vis-à-vis the state (see his *Boesman and Lena* and numerous studies on Fugard , Gray ed. 1982: 40-51,57-62, 190-197, 202-223, Vandenbroucke 1986:156-203,Walder 1984: 75-95).

In my case an epiphany has to do with the redemptive effect: – we become greater than ourselves in being redeemed from destiny and sin. This redemptive effect occurs through the suffering, the unveiling, the opening of the eyes of those formerly blind to their fate - as for example in the Theban trilogy of Sophocles. There is the redemptive effect in Shakespearean tragedy – we are redeemed of the faults of the characters by identification with them – to some extent being inoculated against their suffering. This happens too in the Hebrew Book of Job, other *Ketuvim* – Jewish “Writings” and in the *Nevi'im* the Prophets. For me this *becomes part of the art / ritual work which does not exist in itself but requires a celebrant or theoros – a participator in the ritual or a theatrical witness*. The tragic-comedies of Chekhov (for example through the characters of Vanya and Sonya in *Uncle Vanya*), the tragedies of Arthur Miller (Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*) re-iterate for me the redemptive effect.

I am this kind of *witness/theoros*: an ex-South African, a British citizen living in Wales who writes, directs, acts in and is a critic of plays. As this *theoros* I have a theory of the theatre: my identity forms part of the inter-text through which the texts of others and my texts are examined and experienced, acted and directed in the theatre. The inter-text is *creatively* literary and critical. What is at issue is to know that criticism and literary creativity are

both subject to inter-textual criticism. Criticism by itself, because it does not necessarily see itself as ideological literature, may be blind to its literary dimension (Johnson 1978: 9 quoted in Wright 1987:123). Roland Barthes in *A Lover's Discourse* (1979) to some extent abandons these demarcations and “collapses the reader/writer/critic distinction” (Wright 1987: 124). He turns Balzac's *Sarrasine* into *S/Z* and both authors are implicated in this.

The hermeneutics of identity as my history in my group

What I have done – although not in this dissertation - is to turn the real-life “story” of a mixed-race woman Sandra Laing- who for that matter could have been a very dark Jew - ²¹ born to supposedly white Afrikaners in 1955 into a play *Shades of Brown* (1978/1986). This theme of ambiguous identity has been my constant project in plays about Africans caught between imperialist or colonialist and modern societies. This is the key to the character John Grootboom, Rhodes' servant in *Ancestors and Diamonds*, and Jan Pieterse, Diane Cupido, Valma De Villiers and Mrs De Villiers, brown and white Afrikaners struggling with sectarian conflict in the mid-1980's in *The Cape Orchard*, conflict which drives them apart from each other and from themselves. My plays are situated in the social reality of apartheid and post-apartheid and are not biographies transformed into literature. They represent the suffering of rejected or alienated people divided within and without. In this dramatisation, however, I and, I believe, all *Jews* are critically implicated. A central part of their identity involves being caught up in the cultures from

²¹ See Judith Stone *When She Was White: The True Story of a Family Divided by Race* (Miramax) 2007. For an account of the contribution of some Jews to anti-apartheid and a democratic South Africa see introductions to and interviews with Nadine Gordimer, Barney Simon, Joe Slovo, Isie Maisels, Arthur Chaskalson, Albie Sachs, Helen Suzman, Shawn Slovo and Denis Goldberg in Immanuel Suttner (ed.) 1997.

which they have had to emigrate, into which they have had to assimilate and from both of which they have absorbed the genes of converts or open or secret Jews of mixed ethnicity or the children of rapists or children conceived through *droit de seigneur* (the children of Jewish mothers with whom their feudal landlord had sexual intercourse “as of [his] right” on the first night of the marriage or subsequently). This may also have happened in the Cape Colony and certainly subsequently as regards Dutch or Boer slave-owners and employers of virtual serfs: i.e. it may have occurred vis-à-vis their Khoisan or Malay workers. This *extremely compound* genetic and cultural identity is naturally not the only definition of being Jewish (see De Lange 1986, Konner 2003 *passim*): there is a long Judaic history. And of course, the whole of mankind is really to some extent or other, of mixed evolving ethnicity and of genetically common African ancestry. But under apartheid, colonialism and religious fundamentalism this issue becomes a focus of intense political and spiritual anxiety, faced as we are with extreme reactions to globalisation and international mass-migrations, the so-called clash of civilizations.

The hermeneutics of the Other

Why me? My particular upbringing caused me to doubt who and what I was *at all* – that is, I was so *Other*, I could never be a *Self* of whatever colour or cultural allegiance unless I fought for it. In that respect I am an *Other*. As Simone De Beauvoir remarked in *The Second Sex* that sense of Otherness is exactly what constitutes being female – and I am male (De Beauvoir 1972:

16-18). De Beauvoir refers to Emmanuel Levinas on alterity as a virtue.²²

Perhaps I see it thus. I therefore had a natural predisposition to form an alliance with women and to want to research into women's theatre writing. Bluntly, the dominant sex and patriarchy had so raped Africa of its human and physical resources (in which of course women, especially white women have been collusive – see Jacklyn Cock in the inscription at the head of this Preface) that it would be interesting to see whether women playwrights could go further than Bessie Head, Doris Lessing and Nadine Gordimer had gone in the fields of the novel, the short story and criticism in deconstructing this state of affairs. There is also Kosovsky Sedgwick's queer theory: perhaps being *too* heterosexual, or *too* immersed in Kristeva's womb/*chora* (Phillips 2009).

This then is to know “where I am coming from” in the current fashionable jargon. It seems madness otherwise. There cannot be “pure” theatre criticism from me an Other in relation to other Others. This, then, is

²² “Their [e.g. Spinoza's, Heine's, Marx's, Freud's and Einstein's 'Jewish'] mind[s] matured where the most diverse cultural influences crossed and fertilised each other. They lived on the margins or in the nooks and crannies of their respective nations.” Deutscher 1968: 26-27. Creative truth can be better seen from the painful position of the Other situated in an alienated border zone. To an extent this may apply to Durkheim whose *anomie*, to Freud's psychology of totem and taboo, to Levi-Strauss's structuralist anthropology, and to Derrida's “Talmudic” theory of infinitely deferred “rabbinic” meaning - which are all germane to this dissertation – and which come, in part, from the standpoint of the alienated Jewish Other. The extraordinary number of Nobel laureates, 155, who are Jews or half-Jews outnumbering any other ethnic/national grouping (Jews being only 0.2 of the world's population) suggests not world conspiracy but the deep insight of an incessantly enquiring, scholarly, fructifying, constantly emigrating and marginalised culture internalised and transmitted over 3000 years: an historic situation more than a genetic phenomenon. See Konner 2003: 198-199. None of this addresses the situation of the Zionist Jew who commits atrocities. See Morris (1987) on the war crimes of the Palmach (within the Haganah) during 1947-1948 such as at Ein Datun and the racist language of David Ben-Gurion. The “ethnic cleansing” of Arabs during what Palestinians call the *Nakhba*, the catastrophe suffered by about 600,000 refugees who were driven out as a result of “black” Israeli propaganda, atrocities, inept local Arab leadership as well as the futile and misleading pretensions and promises of the five invading Arab armies against committed amateurs fighting for their lives and a Jewish state in Palestine – agreed by the UN in November 1947 - a two-state solution - is extensively documented. See Rose's suggestion concerning the underside of Other-writing and the universal as coming from Jews, Africans and Palestinians (Rose 1994).

the me, the inter-text between myself, my play and other plays – as it happens by women – an underclass in South Africa as generally in Africa – like me - a *constant* Other, perhaps, like Kristeva, seeking to displace positionality itself – as suggested in the inscription from Freedman concerning Féral’s theory of the theatre. There are, of course, many other debateable issues, theoretical and practical, to do with *feminine écriture* in and outside of the theatre (Showalter 1985, Case 1988, Case ed.1990, Goodman 1993, Aston 1995, Keyssar ed. 1996, Murray ed. 1997, Harris 1999 – referring to just a few studies). The issues raised in feminist criticism and women’s theatre writing are usually much wider than the purview of this research. But the creative and critical writing of women in Southern African literature should not go un-noted before we narrow the focus. There are women composers and performers of Zulu praise-poetry; there is Olive Schreiner as a feminist and novelist; there are Sarah Gertrude Millin, Elsa Joubert and Miriam Tlali as well as Doris Lessing, Nadine Gordimer, Bessie Head, (see Clayton ed. 1989).

This then gives the reader some idea of the background assumptions of my critical method: to read Dike and Mhlophe through their historical context, their transferences mapped onto characters through what Kristeva calls the *chora*: the emotional rhythm of the theatrical plot as it impacts on the symbolic of the whole dramatic story anticipated as it unfolds.

INTRODUCTION: CENTRAL HYPOTHESES

This research is original in that it looks at the relationship between (a) the narrative of two South African plays including how the critic conceives some of the writing in its and his historical and ideological context, that is, in terms of its discourse; and (b) its speech/presence in the moment on the stage. Using Kristeva's terms this relationship can be seen through (a) the symbolic and (b) the semiotic - the *chora* (Kristeva 1986:93-94). Both the story and the moment on the stage have symbolic and semiotic/*choral* elements but my approach is to identify the semiotic/*chora* with the theatrical performance and the symbolic with the dramatic story and to show how at points they interact. Often the vehicle through which the critic observes this interaction is through the transference relationship between the writer and her characters and through the *historical* transference relationship between the characters and himself as part of an audience (see Preface and Kristeva 1986: 45-46). Avant-garde feminism's answer, though, is that woman, like theatre, as a result of this interaction does not take (a) place (Kristeva), but rather, *revisions positionality itself between the symbolic and the semiotic, the male and the female, drama and theatre* (Freedman 1990: 70-71 see p. 2 above). Theoretically this revisioning of place can occur in any society whether or not that society is pre-literate or modern, although existing power relationships will condition the success of the outcome.²³ The research

²³ All society according to Foucault (1982: 225) involves a struggle to confine and to free discourse within a relationship of power. Totalitarian, anarchic or a repressed society betrays a lack of discourse within a free-ing relationship allowing and containing many discourses. The writing of discourse – writing in a special sense - is inscribed even in traditional oral literature, in unwritten religion and in unwritten law handed on orally – to which Derrida 1977: 138 seems to be referring. This is “writing” traced into memory or even into ruins

takes for granted the assumption gleaned by Norris from Derrida (see the inscription above) that even in so-called pre-literate societies (see Mutwa 1971, the first inscription above) to the effect that “the violence of writing is there at the outset of all social discourse; that in fact it marks ‘the origin of morality as of immorality’, the ‘non-ethical opening of ethics’”.(Norris 1982:39). Moreover the text of the published drama and the theatre of its production are supplemented by the text of the writer as she writes about her ethnic, class, age and cultural group directly or, I would add, through interviews (Spivak 1977: ix – see the inscription p.2 above). The critic, myself, am part of the inter-text through which my own “text” is implicitly read and compared with

such as Great Zimbabwe - see Terence Ranger 1979: 1-45 on Ndebele and Shona “unwritten” history from the European Dark Ages to early modern times. We suggest incidentally (therefore in a footnote) that all theatre and poetry although published and symbolically complex has the characteristics of partly oral production with the narrative embodied in highly rhetorical forms and physically – the image-motifs, movement and sound predominating, as well as being inscribed in some sort of discursive cognitive consciousness as writing with or without a full socio-political conclusion. (See Walter J. Ong *Orality and Literacy* (1982) “Some psychodynamics of orality”, and “Writing restructures consciousness” pp.31ff). Complex oral narratives, partly written, partly traditional tales, such as Homer and the Hebrew Bible suggest there is an uncertain boundary between oral narratives and discourse. The writing-speech dichotomy and deconstructions occurring within speech and writing are elaborated in Christopher Norris’s (1982) and Elizabeth Wright’s (1987) accounts of Derrida and other deconstructionists’ concerns with related issues such as absent or erased writing in the unconscious – what Freud called “the mystic writing pad.” Norris quotes Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* (1977: 43-44) and the deconstructive tension between speech and presence on the one hand and writing in the sense of *differance referring to constantly deferred meaning*. Derrida’s interpretation of Artaud’s “writing” as the “hieroglyphs” (perhaps archetypes) of the unconscious represented in a sacred *theatre* expressing the *story* of a religious mystery (Derrida 1978: 232-250) is an important insight. Aspects of the dynamic interplay of story and performative plot including de-familiarisation were investigated by the Prague School of semiotics (Veltrusky 1976 /1941, Deak 1976, Zich 1931, Honzl 1976 discussed in Aston and Savona 1991: 8 and in chapter 6 of that volume). Story is the sequential sequence of events or “actants” (Ubersfeld 1999: 32-71) as they have unfolded in “true” (but fictional) time as ultimately revealed including the political-ideological writing or discourse of the actual or represented history of the characters some of which may be unconscious in the Freudian, or post-Freudian (Lacanian/Kristevan/Deleuzian/Guattarian) sense (Wright 1987: 107-203). Plot disguises story by allowing us to see only small pieces of theatrical “presence” which intriguingly – horrifyingly, comically, farcically, tragically, satirically – plays off against what only we or some intuitive part of us as audience and some of the characters or some part of a character know of what is going to happen narratively “in the end” leading to redemption, katharsis or deconstructive insight.

Dike and Mhlophe - “womanist” writers of the late apartheid and post apartheid periods. “Womanists” are black women who like Alice Walker who coined the term, do not hesitate to show up black and white men for what they do to women and girls and to other men for that matter, but will not adopt a separatist feminist position. This is in contrast to some radical white women and indeed black women, feminists who may take up strongly committed ideological positions against deviant black and white men, neglecting ethnic commonality in the interests of the sheer survival of women and children. This discourse is illustrated in the literary career of Alice Walker (Edemariam 2007).

The central hypotheses in this dissertation are :

(i) The *writing* of a whole dramatic *story* – largely the symbolic - and (ii) the staged *performance* of moments in a theatrical plot – largely the *chora / semiotic* - can be in an aesthetically satisfying dynamic interplay and can deconstruct and reconstruct each other in so doing. Further (iii) it is through transference relationships and the mechanisms of defence that this interplay can be observed “within” the received “text”. (iv) De-positioned otherness emerges from the interactions in the text and the inter-texts of the author and critic as suggested by Freedman quoting Kristeva and Féral:

Like Kristeva, Shoshana Felman defines femininity as a "real otherness ... [which] is uncanny in that it is not the opposite of masculinity but that which

subverts the very opposition of masculinity and femininity."²⁴ Avant-garde feminism's answer, then, is that woman, like theatre, does not take (a) place (Kristeva), but rather, revises positionality itself.²⁵ In what sense does a feminism so defined differ from deconstruction? Or [differ] from theatre, which manages both to acknowledge the symbolic and disrupt it from within, to acknowledge and subvert positionality on a continuous basis?

Josette Féral, one of the few theoreticians to explore feminist deconstructive theatre, assumes both [feminism and deconstruction] are possible-but only when theatre is not theatre per se²⁶. For Feral, theatre is on the side of inscription in the symbolic, whereas performance is on the side of deconstruction in the semiotic (thus Feral's "theatre" corresponds to Elam's "drama," and her "performance" corresponds to Elam's "theatre"). Féral finds theatre and performance "mutually exclusive" "when it comes to the problem of the subject," since "in contrast to performance, theatre cannot keep from setting up, stating, constructing points of view" and depends on a unified subject which performance deconstructs into drives and energies, since theatre assumes and depends on the narrativity and models of representation which performance rejects in favour of discontinuity and spillage. If performance highlights the "realities of the imaginary," [it] "originates within the subject and allows his flow of desire to speak," the theatrical "inscribes the subject in the law and in theatrical codes, which is to say, the symbolic."

Barbara Freedman "Frame-Up: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, Theatre" 1990: 70-71

In brief, theoretically, these hypotheses are supported by the following post-structural psychoanalytic argument: whilst Kristeva acknowledges a debt to Lacan she does not necessarily equate the symbolic with the phallic realm. Signification may emerge from *narcissism, oral, anal and oedipal* conflicts as Lacan suggests, finally resolved by the threat of castration – by the phallic as symbol of final authority and forced into language as a substitute for violence. But why should the whole of cognition be named after a male symbol, other than because of Lacan's Freudian filial piety? She prefers to give more

²⁴ Shoshana Felman, "Rereading Femininity," *Yale French Studies* 62 (1981): 42.

²⁵ See Kristeva's "Modern Theater Does Not Take (a) Place," as well as her interview with Gauthier, noted [in Freedman op.cit. p.70] where she identifies "the moment of rupture and negativity which conditions and underlies the novelty of any praxis 'feminine,' " and adds: "No I is there to assume this 'femininity,' but it is no less operative, rejecting all that is finite and assuring in (sexual) pleasure the life of the concept" Kristeva's article is in *Sub-Stance* 18/19 (1977) 131-134

²⁶ Josette Féral "Performance and Theatricality" *Modern Drama* 25 (1982): 170-184

emphasis to a pre-figured imaginary which may “contain” the potential for aesthetic processes mediated through oral and anal drives and the *mother’s body* which opposes and even destroys the symbolic through aggression and the death-drive (Kristeva 1986: 103). She does not bring in the question of the real when it is philosophically – ontologically – questionable at the early stages of creativity. She does however speak of the true- real within and outside aesthetics, mental illness and child development – discourses in their own right (Kristeva 1986: 95 and *passim*).

**CHAPTER ONE: DECONSTRUCTIVE THEME AND CHARACTER
IN FATIMA DIKE'S *THE FIRST SOUTH AFRICAN* (1977 / 1979)**

The context of the play in the Cape

As suggested by the biographical and historical accounts given by Blumberg and Walder (1999:231) and Kruger (1999:161-163) the political and social context of the time is crucial in understanding the significance of Dike's writing. *The First South African* is the second of two plays published by the same black woman in South Africa. It was presented initially to a multiracial audience at the Space Theatre in 1977 in Cape Town – a city known for the relative liberality of its “English”-colonial culture. The South Western Cape in general was and is less racist and divided culturally - given the extreme policies emanating from strongholds of Afrikanerdom in the north – the stronghold in the period of high apartheid of the Afrikaner working, lower-middle and middle-class of Johannesburg and the Witwatersrand, the civil servants and politicians of Pretoria the seat of executive government, the Orange Free State “platteland” (notoriously racist and known for its reactionary *mielie-boere* – maize-farmers), the rural Transvaal and Northern Cape – all very much in the grip of the National Party dependent on an exclusively white electorate with more and more of the English-speaking voting for the B.J.Vorster regime. In the Cape, at least, mixed-race brown people shared a language with the Afrikaner whites – regarded as more moderate anyway than the Afrikaners of the north - and often spoke English as well especially in the urban areas – a language

preferred to Afrikaans by urban Africans for reasons made very clear in the revolt beginning on 16th June 1976.

However generally even in the Cape those designated as Africans were not represented but controlled by often corrupt puppet-regimes in the various “Bantustans” like the Transkei and KwaZulu which had been set up under the inspiration of the architect of apartheid Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd (1901-1966). The ANC and the South African Communist Party and their allies in the trade union movement and other liberation organisations which claimed to represent approximately 80% of the total population who were non-white – the black African, mixed race and Asian populations - were in exile, banned and its leaders were under banning orders or jailed and subject to torture. They suffered police and army assassinations, repression and media censorship as well as to day-to-day apartheid in residential areas, in education, in health facilities, and like the non-European population at large lacked freedom of movement. They were deprived of land and of course deprived of a national Parliamentary franchise in a unitary state. In this only whites had overall power. Given the history of the time it seems that there had to be an outlet for change, given the events on and following 16th June 1976²⁷

Dike had written *The Sacrifice of Krelie* (1976), which also sought to reclaim black experience for black people in general and the Xhosa in particular concerning the moment that history was at another turning point.

Krelie was written from the standpoint of the 19th century “tribal” Africans,

²⁷ Wilson and Thompson (eds.) 1971 Vol. II and Leonard Thompson 1999 and 2001 *passim* on segregation/apartheid, the ANC and resistance, Herbstein 1978, Hirson 1979 on the students’ revolt, Hadland and Rantao 1999 on the political history of the 1960’s - 1980’s.

national victims of, and resisters in wars against the British colonial authorities on the Eastern Cape Province frontier – wars between local pastoral-agricultural “chiefdoms”²⁸ and the imperial authority partly devolved to Cape Town and its colonial surrogates, the white and mixed race military, white officials and white settlers. These wars involved British missionaries, who, in the person especially of the first western-qualified black clergyman the Reverend Tiyo Soga, are seen by Dike as the ideological representatives not only of an inevitable modernisation but of colonial rule. Soga is a person who in the current jargon of 1976 would be regarded as a “sell-out”.

The Space, the Market and the 16th June 1976

In accord with the ethos of what was called “Cape liberalism”, the Space was founded for the purpose of non-racist theatre, and had managed to remain open to all audiences and had mixed casts. Its funding would have come from charitable white sponsors who had an interest in a radical theatre. Perhaps implicit in the ethos of the time was a concern about avoiding so-called dangerous “agitation” concerning government policy and risky confrontations with the Special Branch and, away from the Space which was in the city centre, difficulty handling the townships administrations concerning “subversion”. Particularly vulnerable was black consciousness theatre and even Gibson Kente’s populist musical-comic but morally critical theatre (Orkin 1991: 150ff). The Space had a club status which gave it some immunity. Orkin describes how Brian Astbury, the manager of the Space dealt with Special Branch officers who dropped in to spy on one of Fugard, Kani

²⁸ Described as such by Leonard Thompson in Wilson and Thompson’s 1971 history of South Africa pp. 245-288.

and Ntshona's plays and went away "reassured" after enjoying the evening at what was now a private club rather than a place of public entertainment (*op. cit.* pp.151-152). But a number of revolutionary and confrontational black consciousness plays coincided with *Kreli* and *TFSA* especially so after the watershed of 16th June 1976 – the date of the Soweto and Cape Town and other school-pupils' uprisings when black consciousness writers came to fore as never before. The state then had enough on its hands without having to worry about "preaching to the converted" at the Space and the Market Theatre in Johannesburg. A wide-scale revolt had broken out.

The issue was ostensibly the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in black schools but this issue was the trigger for a colossal build-up of discontent over the whole panoply of apartheid. Ironically Afrikaans was the home language not only of the apartheid leadership and the ostensibly white Afrikaner "settler" class led by successive leaders - Hendrik Verwoerd, John Vorster, and Piet W. Botha and by the last president of the old regime, F.W. De Klerk (whose supposedly "tripartite" parliament – inherited from Botha - lasted from 1989-1994 and initiated the New South Africa) - but was also the *language of the brown Afrikaners, the coloured or mixed-race people*, who lived mainly in the Cape. The slave and serf forebears of the coloured people first developed the language as a form of "low" or colonial Dutch (kitchen-Dutch or *kombuis-Duits*), creolising the language of the masters with indigenous words and dialect and using a simplified grammar developed amongst those largely excluded from formal education.²⁹

²⁹ See Marais 1939 *passim*.

But such was the militance of black youth and such the oncoming splits in the political leadership of the anti-apartheid opposition in the country, such the national aspirations of the black majority that, to some extent, whatever the official leadership of the ANC on Robben Island or in exile might have said to the youth, *African* concern for *brown (mixed-race Afrikaans-speaking)* compatriots in this struggle was to an extent put aside.

This is actually and evidently the theme of TFSA written by a black eye-witness, a participant in these struggles:– the disintegrating nature of a united front against apartheid which in the first place put brown people and white people at odds with black people by placing them in a hierarchy – white, brown, black. The United Democratic Front in the 1980's, a surrogate for a more authentically non-racial ANC in exile and in prison, tried to re-build such a common anti-apartheid movement. What happened in the 1970's to inspire and require a united front is implicitly a theme in Dike's epoch-making play. What had to happen and what did happen at the political level amongst at least black youth was the re-definition as black of all "non-white" people, including "brown" or mixed-race people - against the whole tenor of apartheid and cultural history as promoted by both British and Boer, English-speaking and Dutch colonials – in theory. In practice all the groups were economically and sexually intertwined and in conflict.

As mentioned, the Space had a "club" status and thus was able to evade apartheid legislation - both the ethnic and the sexually censorious

aspects of Afrikanerdom's and white South Africa's racial obsessions, repressions and suppressions (Kruger 1999: 161)³⁰. Dike had worked as a stage manager at the Space and had seen the plays of Athol Fugard and some of the modernist and sexually subversive classics of the European theatre (such as by Beckett and Genet). She had studied at a relatively independent Catholic boarding school run by Irish nuns in the Transvaal near a small country town, Rustenberg, away from the heavy state security apparatus found in the big cities. To judge from a later play of hers *Glasshouse* (if that is autobiographical) her school was not entirely free from the oppressive, intellectually and culturally constricting "Bantu education" found in the vastly inadequate township schools in and around her own area – the African township of Langa. To make their own predicament even worse, African youth using intimidation and persuasion began to boycott state schools systematically and continuously throughout the 1970's *and later* becoming in effect an *educationally "lost generation" prone to street-violence and crime*. This state of affairs from which black fellow citizens suffered as well as whites became "normal" amongst the "comrades" (township youth) who fuelled the civil war of the mid-1980's in urban South Africa (see Sparks 1990 *passim*).

Dike's educational biography

Dike went through a parallel period of conscientization – consciousness-raising - within the black consciousness movement of the early and mid-seventies in Cape Town. In an interview with Stephen Gray she has

³⁰ See Thompson 1990: 198 for an account of the books, films, articles and plays banned by the government in 1977.

said that her aim was to write about the present and the past – with the theatre of the ancient Greeks and Shakespeare in mind– in effect restoring pride to cultural traditions crossing the boundaries of Europe and Africa, colonialism and black nationalism (Gray 1980).

Very evidently *TFSA* incorporates the ironies of a black theology which Dike would have come across in her conscientization (consciousness raising) during the period between leaving the Rustenberg convent where she received her secondary education in the early/mid-1960's, and her return to Cape Town in the mid/late- 60's (see the opening Chorus analysed below based on Dike 1979:1). It was in the 1970's that she rejected careers in nursing and teaching inside the apartheid health and education systems. Instead she participated in informal cultural and political work centred on her brother-in-law's bookshop – which had become a focus of black consciousness literature - home grown and from black America (Perkins 1998:23-25).

A critical deconstruction of theatre and drama

This is the opening of the play:

ACT ONE

The stage and the auditorium are in darkness. Freda and Austin enter, and Freda lights an oil lamp which is on the table and sits down. Zwelinzima is on a raised platform, wearing only a pair of scants.

ZWELINZIMA: God created man in his image, male and female.
 And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground.
 And breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.
 Man became a living soul.
 He carried out God's wishes with the help of his woman.
 And they filled the world with their children.

The Father looked at them one day and found one different.
 This is not from heaven, it is from hell, he said.
 And the child was not fit to be called by its Father's name.
 Now, man fears what is to come.
 Man is obsessed.
 Fear makes man into a savage who pulls bodies apart,
 And bathes in their blood.
 He'll come out of the blood bath one day
 To find his colour has changed ... to ochre.

He'll look at himself in the mirror,
 And see himself for what he is.
 He'll turn round to find his brother looking at him,
 And the reflection in the mirror will be the image in front of him.
 He'll put his hand in his brother's,
 And they'll both walk into the kingdom of life.
 Am I not a man then?

Exit Zwelinzima.

The South Africanisation of the myth of the fall of Ham

The Fall is the casting into hell and shedding of blood as an *ironised* condemnation by the bad “white” Father/God of one [Ham?] on account of his colour. This, not Eve’s temptation by the snake to choose disobedience against God’s wishes, is the origin of evil. God or the primeval patriarchal “white” Father is Himself, *ironically, evil* – i.e. a version of Satan: for how could “the Father” – other than the archetypically *bad white* father arising out of a *feminist consciousness* (or what Alice Walker calls a *womanist consciousness*) and a *black* consciousness, reject a son simply because he was the wrong colour? As a parallel to this and as a corollary it is *savagery, not hard work and not pain in childbirth* that is let loose by this version of a Second Fall. Man is divided from man by hate, more than from God by sin.

In essence the Second Fall is the rejection of the individually different *black* child of God after pre-lapsurian bliss. But there is also the Judaeo-

Christian idea of redemption: a [Shemite? Japhite?] brother awaits the [Hamite?] black brother after his colour has been changed to ochre [through the puberty ceremony?] which will lead to redemption for all the races they represent. *The First South African* has to be born again through a rite of passage which is predicted but does not yet occur.³¹ There is a shift of subjects, or internalised love- and hate-objects, from what Kleinians would call narcissistic bliss, to the paranoid-schizoid position to resolution in the depressive (reconciling) position (Klein 1977:219-232, Segal 1977/1955: 384-405). Art fights for a “hidden order” which corresponds to a separating-out from the mother’s body involving Kristeva’s *chora* and Lacan’s mirror phase.

Perhaps it is through a Lacanian mirror that Ham, Shem and Japhet see each other and a redeemed life together eventually comes about. In this Chorus, and as a result of the subtext of Zwelinzima’s refusal to be categorised, *even in his amorality*, the theme of identity is established. The Other can become the Self, the Self can become the Other, both can be brothers in an Africanised Christ – as they pass through a rite of passage as through a mirror reflecting both as essentially human.

³¹ These interpretations are based on Dike’s text. However the critic who as pointed out in the Preface has himself “been through” Judaeo- Christian consciousness and feminist consciousness (see books by Ruth and Justine Picardie noted in the Bibliography) is able to decode an ironic black Christian consciousness written by a black woman as a socialised state of mind overlapping with his own consciousness. Her consciousness ironically distances itself somewhat from the black *men* who come into and emerge from rejection and what she describes as a *myth of human (not African) savagery*. This is at the symbolic level of writing. Even at this level the distancing from *men* brings about the uncanny feeling that this is taking place in a de-positioned space: Dike is refusing to take up *a* position as a woman just as Kristeva advocates or describes. Lyotard 1983:338 and Lacoue-Labarthe 1977 refer to theatre as “outside representation” in “de-realized space”(referred to in Wright 1998: 158-159). This is the *choral* or semiotic response to the production of poetry in the symbolic. It holds it down in an emotional womb.

The myth of the black Virgin Mother

The fortitude of the women under apartheid needs no Lacanian mirror just a spotlight of interrogation seeking to take the Christ-child away from Freda; or the betrayed Thembi losing her child through stillbirth or miscarriage tragically conceived “inter-racially”. It is a *humble woman, a Virgin Mother* who expresses a Christian struggle against what the white man has introduced in this version of the Fall. God is a *false* father when he is assumed as white. But the humble women Freda and Thembi will condemn in *moral* not *racial* terms those who have fallen out of black/brown solidarity conceived as a cultural entity overlapping with universal Christianity.

This Chorus predicts savagery but we have to wait for the play to find out what that savagery entails in detail: in the modern urban context bride-price doesn't work any more; non-racial sexual relationships haven't been legalised yet; sometimes there is no fulfilment in “free” individual romantic and sexual choice; male bonding across race and class evidently doesn't work yet – in South Africa; there is no moral centre in modernity or in the transition to modernity; Christianity has been de-mystified but black theology has yet to fully re-situate values in an African context. Is this to happen through the charismatic evangelical churches where Christ and the devil take possession of Africans and exorcism has to be practiced in front of the cross, the Virgin, the Holy Child? The violent chaos in e.g. Hillbrow is moral and spiritual anarchy, a Hobbesian state of nature where the forces of the state no longer operate – as predicted by Dike in 1977 (Theroux 2008).

De-positioning the subject through “spillage and discontinuity”

This pseudo-messiah dramatically predicts his and others’ crucifixion and what Dike calls savagery. Theatrically, in performance, there is great scope to deconstruct the drama of the symbolic in the text through the *chora* of its semiotic rhythms which move the actor out of the position of Chorus - near-naked-crucifixion - into de-positioning the subject:

Féral finds theatre and performance "mutually exclusive" "when it comes to the problem of the subject," since "in contrast to performance, theatre cannot keep from setting up, stating, constructing points of view" and depends on a unified subject which performance deconstructs into drives and energies, since theatre assumes and depends on the narrativity and models of representation which performance rejects in favour of discontinuity and spillage. If performance highlights the "realities of the imaginary,"[it] "originates within the subject and allows his flow of desire to speak," the theatrical "inscribes the subject in the law and in theatrical codes, which is to say, the symbolic."

Barbara Freedman “Frame-Up: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, Theatre” 1990: 70-71

So, directorially, following up on Féral’s suggestion about “spilling” and “discontinuing” the narrative – something may be added to the text onstage by getting Christ/Chorus/Zwelinzima to deconstruct the crucifixion in mime.

The *choral* or Imaginary or Otherly fusion of Edenic Mother and the Black Christ mythologies which jointly attack the phallic father: Adam and Noah re-coded.

The dramatic effect of the Chorus has to do with the impact of the ironic, rejecting, aggressive *chora* on the neo-Freudian (Lacanian) *phallic* representation of the cruel, racist, “white” God . The theatrical twist in the *plot* of the written drama of the whole creation myth fuses the Adam and Eve story with the Noah / Ham story and attacks the God of Noah in this passage. Zwelinzima and Thembi attack black and white patriarchy in the name of an

Edenic love and attempt to enter the Shemite and Japhite worlds by a transformative act. Zwelinzima then capitulates to opportunism – an affair with a white girl when it suits him – when Thembi is pregnant. Love and desire are transferred from Adam and Eve to the Black Son in what should be a valid oedipal revolt against Noah his father’s God. But this turns out to be merely delinquency and faithlessness. Revulsion occurs against the mythological murder by the son of the Hlazo and Austin fathers.

Zwelinzima’s peer-group eventually reject him and he cannot bear his own betrayal of himself and his African group. In theory a Christ or a messianic brother could establish a new law of brotherly equality to prevent a regression to the Hobbesian state of nature. But a perfect Otherness in a “kingdom of life” which will one day come about will break down again. The very absence of women in this myth is suggestive. The author is a woman and her silence as a polemical narrator is loudly present and insinuates itself in bringing her womanist brothers to life (Kristeva 1986:45-46).

The dramatically absent writing of apartheid and the theatrical presence of its victim

The power situation of apartheid is presented very dramatically with the white “super” *silently* absent from the stage in the next scene. In this “dramatic” writing there arises an intense theatricality. The white legislator/administrator is absent but his “legal” writing is always present in the form of his power. His comments and questions are reflected, as it were, through the unspoken *writing of apartheid itself*. Freda speaks his dialogue indirectly. His presence is represented by the interrogating spotlight of the

theatrical moment. This is the essence of my hypothesis: symbolic and semiotic in dynamic interaction with the *chora* an emotional beat threatening Freda and her child through her fear and apprehension.

Fade up on Freda at the Bantu Administration Office.

FREDA: Good morning *bhuti* ... Can you tell me where the superintendent's office is? ... Oh, that door ... Hayi ... you see, I received this letter here, which says I must come and see him. Thank you very much. *Enkosi kakhulu*.

She takes a seat and waits. A spot comes on a few feet from where she's sitting. She stands up.

FREDA: Good morning sir ...

.. Yes I am Freda Jama sir.

. . Excuse me sir.

.. My rent card? Here it is sir.

.. Yes, we rent both rooms sir.

So she begs for Zwelinzima not to be separated from her. The child looks white and she is black. He actually *has the "writing" of apartheid on his skin colour when seen in contrast to his mother but the "super" cannot believe the story.*

She is docile, respectful but fiercely loyal to her child and adheres to the truth. The reality of being in the poor working class and expressing Christian loyalty, truth and love constantly works for the idea of redemptive transformation. But theologically she is just herself not seeking a Black

Christ. For the male Chorus, for black consciousness to be realised, transformation has to happen in the Lacanian mirror-image of a messianic figure – *or so Dike decrees. The women just are.* Freda has a child and a husband. Thembi loses a child through miscarriage. The men have to *do* even if it just doing crime. Ultimately their doing can only be realised job-wise or politically or creatively. Most of the men do not succeed in these terms in 1976 under apartheid although conventionally Hlazo and Austin do not fail.

We have to look further on into the story beyond this moment in the plot to achieve the following critical perspective: the unveiling of an aesthetic of depth and deconstruction. The dramatic theme and the theatrically realised character deconstruct, neutralise and negate each other because in actuality Freda is, of course, *not the Virgin Mother* who ascends directly to heaven but dies after a heart-attack, remains on earth, the earth to which she claims she belongs, the earth which she defends for her child. Freda is defeated, yet, ultimately, even though she is not overtly political, her heroism feminises the anti-apartheid struggle. But ultimately she cannot cope with what the racial system demands of her and her son. We may question her Christianity and even her conventionality as she submits to the interrogation of the state. We do not question her implacable courage.

So, given her values, she never abandons her integrity. She and the “super” are talking about an impossible solution under apartheid. Such a solution would corrupt her idea of the values of decency and justice. Her character as a theatrical and psychological reality remains expressive and

intact. It is under attack by what apartheid and corrupted values have brought or are likely to bring. Dike predicts in the opening Chorus that these cruel and violent values will be present in the transition to post-apartheid. All this writing is yet to come but is implicit in her courageous confrontation with the “super”.

At this point the dialogue is so “loaded” legally and politically that it is theatre properly realised out of ideological writing (discourse) and will probably “direct itself”. At this point we can indeed “hear” and “see” Freda’s voice and body on the stage:

.. Sir, what can a man do with a new-born baby? He can't wake up in the middle of the night to feed it, or wash nappies each morning before going to work. That is the duty of a woman.

.. A nanny? Sir, how can a child grow up without the love of its mother?

.. Thank you very much sir, but I cannot let you adopt him. I can look after him.

.. I know that sir. But what will your wife say?

.. What will Zwelinzima say one day when he is old and knows that I'm his mother, he'll hate me ..

.. You won't tell him about meyou mean my child won't know me?

.. But why can't I keep him?I'm not dead ... I work ...

.. But the law cannot take him away from me .. , I have a birth certificate from the magistrate in Windhoek, that was where he was born, that was where he was registered.

.. I know that the area we live in is notorious, but I will look after him very well. I don't sell liquor, I keep out of trouble's way 'strue'sGod. · .. I know that he is white, but he is my son .

.. But ... but *nkosi*, the birth certificate ...

....Do you think it will be alright.. I mean at Native Affairs?

.. *Nkosi*, please *mhlekazi*, I beg of you, don't make my child suffer, he does not deserve it. It's not his fault, it's mine.

Fade.

So at the thematic level Christian abnegation of self, surrender of self, admission of transgression when there was no fault, deconstructs the presumed validity of Christianity in a vastly unequal society. At the personal level the society hurts and undermines her. Freda at a human level is attacked for nothing. She is attacked for only loving her child. She provides an example of the redeeming figure of the Christian mother. But in the acute theatrical expression of the drama: "I keep out of trouble's way 'strue's God" this pathos fails to address the "proper" "ideologically correct" way apartheid should be approached. The "correct" way is ferocious opposition though in the Christian mode, not with violence, but certainly not through submission to morally dubious authority. Yet what else is she to do? Commit suicide existentially? And as for "It's not his fault, it's mine..." - *what could be more Christian and more guilt-inducing* - and more effective theatrically in its pathos?

We have only to listen to and feel the lines and focus on the accompanying figure of Freda to acknowledge the interaction of *chora* / semiotic and symbolic de-situating *a* position for women and replacing it with their fluid existential situation. Yet we are in the midst of the gender stereotype. In the context of apartheid, poverty and African patriarchy this is the *reality* she faces. She implicitly questions by the force of the *chora* – *literally the pulsations of the womb* - which according to Kristeva are not

state-able - not writable - yet underpin this gender situation:

.. Sir, what can a man do with a new-born baby?

She “speaks” and “moves” the female body in this. This is the connection between women and nature – lactating women bound by attachment. Lactation and attachment involve aspects of the *chora* for women in Kristeva who is herself a mother and rejects the anti-motherhood strand of radical feminism (see her “Stabat Mater” in Kristeva 1986). Presumed nature is her power and her power is in her presumed nature – whatever childless, white, middle-class, or wealthy black westernised radical feminists may say to re-write her situation. From the core of her being as a self-possessed working woman the longing of her womb speaks and her economic respectability cries out for the “super’s” charitable response:

But why can't I keep him? I'm not dead ... I work .

My vicarious identification with Austin's naïf Christianity and his and my necessary and understandable hope

The whole complex of gender, power, ethnicity, apartheid, bureaucracy, white supremacy, a religion inducing sacrifice, is contained in the writing of the next scene. It relies for its theatrical effect in Austin acting *inwardly* in his physique, expressing himself with Artaud's intensely powerfully presence emotionally and intellectually. His inward acting includes his limited theology. A black theologian might regard his theology as naïve. But this is the theology of St. Joseph himself. This is the theology of the poor, two-roomed township house, a replica of a poor manger in Bethlehem sheltering them on a journey from Nazareth to pay taxes:

Fade up on Austin in the room.

AUSTIN: Mr Smith, our superintendent, sent his wardsman here to call my wife to the office. I don't know why. Because we pay our rent on the 7th of every month. Unless he has something to say about my boy, Zwelinzima. Otherwise ... *hayi*, I cannot see any other reason. But he should have asked me to come too. After all, I'm his father, I'm the man in this house. On the other hand I'm glad he didn't call me. The thought of getting to that office. You go to room 2, no the superintendent is on the 2nd floor, room 205. You go there, and after standing in a queue for twenty minutes, they tell you the superintendent has moved to the 6th floor. Christ, how I hate that place. Have I not always asked this wife of mine if we were doing the right thing by keeping this boy here? And has she not always answered me like a hen that has seen her eggs taken away? The white people are very clever ... *umlungu mdala, maan*. They know everything, see everything. But when I tell her this, she always says she will fight for the flesh of her flesh. But ... she is my wife, and I've got to protect her. These things have happened since the beginning of time. The bible tells us that Joseph was chosen to be the father of Christ. Today we all know that Jesus is the son of God. We too must accept these things in the spirit of God. Our reward is in Heaven ... *Kodwa*, I hope they don't take Zwelinzima from us. For if they do, we will have to accept what they say. Because we are nothing, having nothing ..

Fade.

The *chora* of the rhythm evokes a corresponding discourse to be expressed in the directions to actors which will bring to mind the narrow but intense spiritual space into which we have to be invited. I have to transfer to the stage situation my desire to experience vicariously even through those whom Freud called "Psychopathological characters on the stage (1905/6) – not that Austin is in any way psychopathological only designedly and *naifly* pious. I have to be at one with a *creative* writer rather than her and my *daydreaming* - Freud's (1908) other important aesthetic distinction in the psychology of writing for the stage and in literature. For this to be really creative vicarious writing compared with vacuous daydreaming, it has to serve a future purpose in the play and meet my/our emotional needs. We/I have already had a glimpse of a future pseudo-messiah in the opening Chorus. The narrative, both the *story* and this moment in the *plot* causes me/us to be drawn into the big question: "What will happen next?" It is not so much a physical representation we seek to enter. Austin on the stage of

the Space theatre has to occur in a reality outside representation, de-realised space, Lyotard's idea (1974), and Lacoue-Labarthe concept (1977:25). We have to be enabled to enter this space with both aesthetic pleasure and in this case a sort of surrogate neurosis. This neurosis involves us in suffering through rebellion against an inner authority but somehow enjoying it – even masochistically as Freud suggests (1905/6). *We will put aside our doubts about Austin's theology and his passive politics.* We would want to rebel against *his* inner authority which is to be passive. But in this de-realised space outside literal representation we enter into the Christ-like suffering which he and therefore we have masochistically to endure. Again, the critic sees this through his own transference experience (see my Preface) through what seems like an impossible but understandable doctrine of Judaeo-rabbinical humility preached by Hillel, Akiva and the messianic *Zohar* concerning *Adam Kadmon* but put in Christian terms instead of being the anthropologically understood myth (see Konner 2003 *passim*) which the critic sees as dictated by *their* real/Real entering into the symbolic and the imaginary.

These things have happened since the beginning of time. The bible tells us that Joseph was chosen to be the father of Christ. Today we all know that Jesus is the son of God. We too must accept these things in the spirit of God. Our reward is in Heaven ... *Kodwa*, I hope they don't take Zwelinzima from us. For if they do, we will have to accept what they say. Because we are nothing, having nothing ..

We have to make the leap from Austin's *naïf* theology and passive politics and incredible prognostication about a messiah. He cannot fully articulate to why there are *tsotsis not messiahs and his stepson is more likely to become a tsotsi* – a male African street criminal - in the next scene about

15 years later when the boy's friend Max, a shoplifter, introduces him to us. For his own religious motives Austin overrides the social reasons concerning what his stepson is likely to become: spiritual hope will defeat poverty, inequality and apartheid. That too, we *want* to believe, because it gratifies our need for a divine Eros against deathly Thanatos.

The alienation-effect, the identification-effect and the choral pulsation beneath the dialogue

The connection between Max in the next scene (p.66 below) and Austin is implicit in the absent writing concerning the ideological difference between a traditional missionary-educated but simple Christian and a modern, “emancipated” rather clever crook. This becomes the *chora*, the semiotic space, the de-realised space, outside representation. The fact that we *jump-cut* (actually according to the stage directions on p. 4 of Dike 1979 *op.cit.*) *fade out* and *fade up* from Austin to Max creates theatre out of the dramatic writing still to come.

Max tells us we are in Langa, a black township near Cape Town. The crime black market is one of the ways apartheid and poverty in the midst of plenty become liveable. Compared to Austin's scene, Max's scene is intensely and *outwardly* theatrical. Austin was inwardly theatrical expressing intensely felt conflict in the actor's body. Max addresses a passer-by trying to sell the jacket. He has to keep his eyes skinned in case there is indeed an “*impimpi*”, observing him who will get money from the police for turning him in. The actor addresses us. We are drawn into the conspiracy, into the frame. Being

poor theatre not bourgeois theatre, we can be addressed out of the frame by being the surrogate customer : “This is theatre”; but also “This is so very real. This is actually happening between audience and actor, text and performance interlocking perfectly.” There is potentially, depending on the direction, also a possible *alienation effect*: “Don’t be taken in by this as theatre. I am actually addressing you to show you this is *not* theatre so that you won’t forget what it’s like to be a *tsotsi* in Langa”.

Fade up on Max, smartly dressed in the latest fashion. He carries a paper bag. He pulls a new sporting jacket out of it.

MAX: *Heyitha, hoezit, sweet? Lovely. I've got this jacket here, beautiful pure wool. The label is 'EMBASSY'. I can let you have it cheap. It was a suit before I got it in town, but if you would rather have the suit, I can get you the trousers tomorrow ... No, getting the trousers won't be a problem. I'll get it in the same way that I got the jacket ... Here's the price tag ... No, no no, I was not going to charge you that amount. You see, the suit costs this much, and the jacket will be half the price of the suit. But I want half the price of the jacket. Look, you can wear this jacket with a red or a yellow shirt, or even a white shirt for that matter ... Also, I've got this pyramid handkerchief (pulling it out of his pocket) here, your *bhasela* for buying this jacket. You can put it in the top pocket, and you'll look really nice, I mean *umnyengezo my laiti* ... I only want R16 that's all. After all you're my friend, anybody else would have had to pay me R20 for this jacket. You can see for yourself it's good quality *Ne maan Jack, jy sien, jy praat nie soos 'n bra nie*. I need money now. Look, if I were to be arrested, where would I get the money for bail from, heh? And you know that lawyers demand high fees nowadays to defend shoplifters. O.K. let's do this, I'll keep this jacket till Friday O.K.? .. (*shrugs*) Well, if you don't trust me, *daais jou indabas*. You see, that's a small time clever. He thinks he's going to jive me, but he forgets that I have heard this story of 'Come on Friday' a million times before. If he refuses to pay me, can I have him arrested for breach of promise? No dice. You see, in this game you've got to be sharp, or else you'll be everyone's target. Maybe he thinks I'm going to *sukkel* to sell this jacket. But he forgets, this location is full of *moegoes*, *Langa is vol moegoes maan*. When my friend Rooi comes, we'll make a plan. (*Someone whistles off stage.*) Ah huh, pink pyjamas, that's him. That's Rooi. *Ek se majita, sien julle summer-time neh?**

Exit Max.

The rhythm or rather the spasmodic leap from Rooi (Zwelinzima) as a baby to being Max’s fellow teenage street criminal, the collusive or

satirical jokes between black shoplifter and black customer, the aggressive, intriguing and surreal nature of the street lingo are the *choral* and semiotic backing for the symbolic narrative of how *tsostis survive*.

Theatricalising the dramatic back-story of Zwelinzima's childhood and initiation

In the next scene Freda and Austin would have to use props such as plates, pots of food and billy-cans of homebrewed beer on tables newly covered with cloths ready for the boy's initiation party. The homeliness of the scene, the physical detail of life in a very poor township slum, the understanding of child psychology in working class black parents of a white son of whose intellectual gifts we and they know nothing but which we might hope (given the careers of his creator and other black and Coloured writers) he *might realise* (within a less oppressive educational environment than that of an apartheid school in a black township) – *all this can be theatricalised* so that the writing is put more fully into a dynamic perspective around it.

A director might even have a silent mime of non-distracting tribal dancing and quietly choreographed stick fighting (both indicated in later scenes) and Max on his pitch still hustling for a sale on a composite set *occurring concurrently with the following scene:*

AUSTIN: Mamsukwini, is everything ready?

FREDA: Yes, are you leaving?

AUSTIN: Yes, the other men are here.

FREDA: Hayi ke ta'ka Zwelinzima, go and fetch our son. Bring him home to me.
The house has been very empty without him.

AUSTIN: Yes. But you'll like what you will see, he's handsome and fat.

FREDA: It was very difficult for me to let him go. Were it not for you and everybody else, I wouldn't have let him go.

AUSTIN: He wouldn't have been able to look the other boys in the eye.

FREDA: Yes. Uya khumbula when we first came here, nobody was prepared to accept him. Things were difficult.

AUSTIN: Yhuu kaloku, don't tell me, I was in it with you. The men in the township insulted me. They said I was stupid to think that that boy would ever accept me as his father. They said you'd bewitched me, because no man would marry a woman with low morals like yours. But I swallowed their insults because I loved the boy.

FREDA: I knew how you felt. And I used to pray in those dark nights that you wouldn't leave us. One morning you were away at work. I went to the 'was plaas' to wash Zwelinzima's nappies. Mamkhume was at the tap before me, so I decided to go to the toilet. Just then Zwelinzima woke up and cried. Mamkhume put her bucket on her head just as I was coming out of the toilet. She gave me a dirty look and walked away. 'Nyaa nyaa nyaa all night bloody boer, we want to sleep.' As if she didn't have children of her own.

Our hypothesis is that dramatic story has to come alive through interplay with the movement, emotion, intuition of an aggressive *chora* producing theatre that we cannot necessarily “see” on a page of script but which we can tell unfolds in a theatrical way rather than in the form of back-story exposition. Even when there are few directions in a script we can tell when it is unfolding in a theatrical way by comparison with a script stuck in non-dramatic exposition. What is written may use a dialect and accent that we cannot necessarily “hear” because we are not attuned to the culture from which they spring but if the theatre is alive because the drama unfolds itself “dramatically” – unexpectedly but in a formally beautiful way where content waits for form to express it – we are gripped. For this to happen we have to

see Austin and Freda acting *inwardly and communicating* otherwise the back-story of itself will be deadening. Their inward acting has to be so intense that it connects with and transcends Max's "pitch" and the traditional mock stick-fighting accompanying the initiation ceremony still to come, which are silently concurrent with the above scene in my directorial innovation not in the original script. So there is theatricalisation of the drama and the tension of social change: there is black racism (calling a black woman's son a "bloody boer" and black traditions looking backwards into a reactionary and decaying past as well as forward into parental love and hope).

Theatrical dialogue which is essentially expressive of the back-story because of a total fusion of character, plot and setting.

Kruger (1999: 162) has noted that the most striking image of the whole play now occurs. We might add that this is indeed in de-realised space, creating spillage, discontinuity causing us to question who and what the black and the white subjects are. A director might help the actors with an historical and sociological subtext indicated in the following footnotes which attempt to work by means of satire as the script progresses into the next scene. Associated with it are satirical and critical subtexts produced by the author's affectionate but questioning transferences stemming perhaps from ambivalence towards traditionalism in a modern urban context:

Freda looks for the kierie³² and finds it under the curtain of the wall bed. Austin goes out. The music grows louder and the men come in singing and doing a bit of stick fighting. A man covered with a blanket leads the group. They guide him to his sitting place. The other men sit around him in a semicircle. One of the elders stands up and goes to stand next to the man in the blanket. One of the men

³² The stick with which her son will be encouraged to beat her!

*uncovers his head and we see [uncannily] a white man with [uncannily] red ochre on his face*³³

1st ELDER: My son, today you're a man. With this stick protect your father's house. With this stick, beat your mother³⁴ when she forgets that she's a woman in this house. (*Puts money on the floor next to Zwelinzima.*) Here my boy, buy yourself tobacco³⁵

2nd ELDER: My son, today you are one of us³⁶. If your parents offend you, talk to them like the man you say you are. If not, come to us, and we will talk to them on your behalf. Your life as a boy is over. Now you must bring a wife to this house³⁷, who will look after your parents and fill this house with your children³⁸. My boy, I am going to give you this matchstick, because it is better to light a candle than to curse darkness³⁹

3rd ELDER: *Hayi ke mfo wami, ooyihlo bawa gqibile*, there is nothing I'm going to say, except this. You go back and play dice again, you go back and stand on the street corners with boys again, *inene le mfo wam uya kunya ndi ku xeled'u ku xeleda*, you'll get what you want from us⁴⁰ My boy here's a present, go and buy yourself matches.

1st ELDER: (*Stands up*) Ehhhh kwedini, (*to a boy sitting nearby*) go and fetch us beer from the house. (*To the other Elders*) Kaloku madoda, we must drink with him, to show that we welcome him.

They drink first the home-made beer and then brandy, with lots of joking and laughing.

When they have finished drinking they sing another song and go out. Zwelinzima picks his presents up, takes the billy can of beer in the other hand and his stick, and goes out.

Fade.

Dike *TFSA*: 1979: 6-7.

³³ The red ochre perhaps signifying the blood of initiation into manhood and war which the Xhosa have already lost in the colonial struggle with the British - a hundred- to a hundred and fifty years before. Red ochre now perhaps signifies merely the blood of internecine war. Of this Rooi will only know a version in the streets – fights between petty criminals over women. But we also see that he is white. This is a confused world of mixed-up values.

³⁴ Who does most of the work and earns money and takes on the strong authority role whilst men like us sit around drinking and dancing!

³⁵ Which even in 1977 some people knew caused lung cancer and certainly bronchitis.

³⁶ Although respected in traditional society, now seen by *tsotsis* as usually unemployed beer-drinkers celebrating an outworn past.

³⁷ A municipal dwelling of two rooms with no land for cultivation attached, in an urban slum!

³⁸ Who as a result of overcrowding and deprivation may very well be condemned to crime and unemployment!

³⁹ Which should be an urban upliftment programme of which no one here knows anything!

⁴⁰ Which is to say: men can be both boys and men in the false consciousness of an outworn ideology irrelevant to the grim urban-industrial scene in which this ritual is something of a parody. And, yet, uncannily, the elders are giving an African rite of passage to an apparently white boy, suggesting the power of *umuntu* – solidarity and humanity.

The next scene involves a knife-fight between Solly, a jealous rival for Thembi who is Rooi's girl friend. Solly believes Thembi only loves Rooi because he is a pseudo-white man – actually a “boertjie” – a little Boer. Rooi announces himself as a circumcised coloured. During this encounter Rooi kicks Solly in the balls. At the end of it Max kicks Solly in the teeth.

Rooi goes to the (unseen) township superintendent to get an African's pass that will entitle him to stay in Langa – where there are many coloured people anyway. This is denied him because of his colour and parentage. Again the “super” offers to adopt him – shades of *Oedipus*... (Give his mother money for this change of parentage which may change his doom-laden fate...) He feels his mother would never accept this. And he feels he is too old now and they are too old to be on left on their own. He is told he has to accept an identity card as a Coloured person or his parents will be moved out of the township.

The violence of the streets and the legalised violence of the apartheid administration keep jabbing away ceaselessly. There is a semiotic / *choral* undercurrent of one-line dialogue. A symbolic framework of bourgeois reason and rationality is subverted. In this dark world Max and Rooi have to struggle to keep alive and solvent and psychologically intact. This they do through crime – cheating honest originally-rural workers like Goodman who lives in a hostel and uses originally-rural whores from Sea Point to keep himself feeling like a man.

What I have called the semiotic / *choral* undercurrent of one-line dialogue creates a symbolic framework of bourgeois reason and rationality - subverted by their impossible realities within apartheid. We see the devastated and humiliated reaction of Freda and Austin to the news that Walters, the “location” super “castrated” [sic] Rooi. Freda is not well after a day washing – her chest is tight. Still she encourages Rooi to have faith, to be patient. We see Rooi unsuccessfully hunting for jobs. Given that he looks white he has the wrong (African township) address: 8 Jabavu Street, Langa. The scene changes quickly. Freda reproaches him for not finding a job, for fighting in the streets and for hanging around with a *tsotsi* like Max.

Thembi’s father demands *lobola*, bride-price or bridegroom’s dowry or compensation for Rooi’s sleeping with his daughter without promise of marriage. Rooi although initiated as an African redefines himself in modern terms, failing to see that this perhaps reactionary custom is nevertheless a way of affirming community bonds, that in reality his group *is* the African group because of his mother’s and step-father’s affiliation, and that the *inter-racial* identity he affirms has no social context in apartheid South Africa in the 1970’s outside a traditionally “Coloured” area and he is not a traditional Coloured. He is a genuine anomaly because the system has no places for individuals as such.

Here a symbolic framework of bourgeois *and* traditionalist *and* modern reason / rationality - creating and therefore subverted by people’s impossible realities within apartheid:

AUSTIN: *Kwedini*, go and open the door.

Rooi goes to open the door. Hlazo storms into the house pointing at Zwelinzima with his stick.

HLAZO: *Uya bona kwedini*, stop fooling around with my daughter, otherwise, I swear by my clan Zondwa I'll give you something to remember me by.

AUSTIN: *Hogayi* Hlazo, first of all, this house is mine, it does not belong to this boy.

HLAZO: Are you teaching him to disrespect his elders?

FREDA: Hlazo, Austin is right. We do not know what Zwelinzima does on the streets. You as a parent should talk to us in the proper way, the way you walked in here is not mannerly.

HLAZO: *Mamelani apha*, tell this dog of yours to leave my daughter alone, or else ...

FREDA: *Ta'ka Zwelinzima myeke*, he's not prepared to listen to anyone. (*To Hlazo*) *Aku zoku mbetha*.

HLAZO: No daughter of mine is going to waste her life away on a *tsotsi*, not after all the education I've given her. *Hai khona, ayi khali kanjalo nxa iza kulunga mos*.

FREDA: *Kodwa*, still that is not the way to talk.

HLAZO: *Wena* keep quiet, you're a woman.

AUSTIN: Hlazo, Hlazo, this is not the way to talk.

HLAZO: *Mfondini*, I'm the one that's hurt. Should I beg him to leave my daughter alone?

ROOI: *Tat'u* Hlazo, I did not drag Thembi out of her home, we are friends.

HALAZO: Then you're not the right friend for her.

ROOI: Why?

FREDA: *Hayi Zwelinzima, thula*.

ROOI: Mama I'm a man now. This is my business, let Hlazo deal with me. I went to Thembi because I love her, you did not send me to her.

HLAZO: If you love her behave like the man you say you are.

ROOI: What do you mean?

HLAZO: I'm not the one that's going to teach you the custom, your father should have.

AUSTIN: What do you mean?

HLAZO: *Ulilawu, hiii*, are you a coloured? *Hayi maan*, your son has broken into my *kraal*. You should put things right. (*Hlazo goes.*)

Dike *TFSA* 1979: 18

Nothing deters Zwelinzima. He is unmoored, drunk with a sense of unreal freedom. For her part Thembi is drawn into a relationship with him that has no future but from which she seems, terrifyingly, unable to withdraw, even when the police attack them on the grounds that their having sex is illegal under the Immorality Act because Zwelinzima is a white man. To get out of this situation the police have to be bribed. There is the grotesque sight of these police who spend their time checking on the race of people having sex in a lorry whilst real crime is rampant. Let alone the state, the black community itself will not legitimate inter-racial sex. Here the white policeman is depicted indirectly through the reactions of the black policeman and the others. Throughout the play the whites are entirely absent and are the most powerful, their absence is presence, their darkness is light, and their light is darkness too when the policeman's torch is used to see the skin-colour of those having sexual intercourse. All our gazing is on Thembi's disarrayed clothes after they have been disturbed in the middle of lovemaking – next to the police-station itself. The eyes of authority which should not look at such private things become our prurient in-looking. The white policeman asks

Zwelinzima if he is a white man and he replies that he is coloured and lives in

Langa:

.. I'm not lying ... you can ask her.

(Points at Thembi who is arranging her dress.)

The white policeman is unconvinced and he has to ask the “sell-out” black policeman to confirm his identity:

.. Ask him. *(Gestures to Mtshiselwa, the policeman.)*⁴¹

In such an environment what counts is to become anaesthetised against the absence of joy, against the constant intrusion of sex as power. Drink and drugs provide opiates along with the delusive drug of phallic sexuality. As soon as Zwelinzima and Thembi are free of the police there is the offer of a bag of *dagga* (marijuana) to be sold on the streets:

MAX: Anyway Rooi, I've got something for you. (He takes a parcel of dagga from the inside pocket of his jacket and gives it to Rooi.)

ROOI: Awu, wat is dit?

MAX: "G". Make some money till you get a job.

THEMBI: Zwelinzima, hayi.

ROOI: Hayi wena maan, wag.

THEMBI: One thing's sure, you are not going to get involved in that stuff.

⁴¹ An intuitive polemical note: if only we could stop him, stop the situation disgracing them. At this point feminist theory more or less forces itself upon us whether we like it or not. Here is Irigaray's the “speculum of the other” which reflects the male stare into the gaping vagina as well as the inside of the female. Here is the obscene instrumental phallus of the law intruding to create something horribly intrusive, disgraceful and misleading. We long for Thembi not to need Zwelinzima. We want her to have the lips that always touch, to express herself bisexually, to be the sex that is not one – to reinterate Cixous and Irigaray's feminism (See Moi 1985; 109-110. 143-144). We wish Thembi might invoke Kristeva's powers of horror, cast out the introjected bad phallus delusively mistaken for a source of joy, abject it (Kristeva 1982 *passim*). But this is apartheid South Africa hardly emerged from patriarchal agricultural society, roughly cooped up in urban ghettos to provide cheap labour.

MAX: Hey Rooi, talk to your girlfriend.

THEMBI: He's not going to sell dagga. (To Rooi) If you are I'm leaving now.

ROOI: Max is talking to me neh?

Thembi stands up to leave but Rooi pushes her back into her seat.

ROOI: Heeey utheni?

THEMBI: Ndiyeke.

MAX: Thembisa, moenie laf wees nie.

ROOI: Hey, sit down.

THEMBI: Jonga andi yo ntombi yakho 'va?

MAX: And Rooi isn't your son, akuz'u va ngawe.

THEMBI: (To Rooi) Then why don't you let me go?

ROOI: (Rooi sits her down firmly.) Hey baby, c'mon ... What's wrong with this chick?

Dike *TFSA* 1979:22-23

Zwelinzima has a job. Yet instead of this being an opportunity now to relax another heedless fall into the urban mass occurs: Thembi is pregnant. One theatrical moment follows another but in the background is a silent, grand and terrible historical process at work: the making of the city out of the African societies which were ground up in the process with no supportive network for an eventuality such as this – only silence:

ROOI: Thanks Max, I've got a job.

MAX: Neh where?

ROOI: Ford Holmes, Epping showroom.

THEMBI: Rooi, that's great.

MAX: Is the dough O.K.?

ROOI: More than I expected.

MAX: Are you complaining?

ROOI: *Ney wat, ek's nie maal nie.*

MAX: Anyway, like the farmer said, I'll dig you later when you're better.

ROOI: O.K. Max.

MAX: Hey Thembi, no hard feelings neh, remember *jy's 'n cherrie, jy moenie baie beweeg nie. (Exit)*

THEMBI: Hey Rooi, I'm so pleased you've found a job.

ROOI: Yes, now I can take you out.

THEMBI: Rooi let's think of that later.

ROOI: Why, there's nothing to stop us?

THEMBI: Rooi ... there are other important things.

ROOI: You're not thinking of getting married?

THEMBI: I'm a woman.

ROOI: Not now, when last did we go to the movies?

THEMBI: Rooi I've got to stop teaching at the end of the month.

ROOI: Why?

THEMBI: I'm expecting.

ROOI: Heee?

THEMBI: *(Silence)*

ROOI: Thixo!

THEMBI: (*Silence*)

ROOI: How far are you?

THEMBI: Seven weeks.

Dike *TFSA* 1979: 23

The Christian redeemers cannot survive and the Chorus is tragic

These have been the historical moments of theatre expressing the interweaving themes of tribalism, inter-racialism, modernity and the economy which the main representatives of value – the Christian Freda and the tragic Chorus ironically predicting redemption, cannot survive. Once we know imaginatively of what the theatrical moments will consist we can see them in the context of the whole narrative. This confirms our hypothesis of the dynamic of the theatrical and the dramatic, of writing and presence, of symbolic and semiotic in Kristeva's sense.

Naturally after this Hlazo will continue to agitate theatrically for his *lobola* inscribed traditionally in the dramatic scenario of rural African society even in the city. Zwelinzima, being essentially not only weak but because weak torn apart between all these systems, will try to evade Hlazo by trying to pass for white and his mother will finally confront him with what he is. It is Freda who incarnates all these themes and the climax of the play is her martyred and barely redeeming death. Freda asserts that in sleeping with a white girl friend Zwelinzima is throwing her own "sin" up in her face – as if this is the inevitable outcome of a predestined tragedy. Her speech in very

formal English (Xhosa rendered on the English-speaking stage in perfect grammatical and language terms) and is in marked contrast to the *tsoitsitaal* the young people speak. Here is the very theatrical confrontation of unrelenting theme and character (“semes” - chains of connotative signifieds making up what appear to be realistic meanings) bending and deconstructing under their own weight: the chain indicating theme exerts a colossal strain on the chain indicating character:

FREDA: Zwelinzima don't play with fire.

ROOI: What are you talking about?

FREDA: I heard you talking to Max about this white woman.

ROOI: Then you know how I feel about her.

FREDA: Why do you do it?

ROOI: You've got no right to ask me that.

FREDA: Throwing my sin back at me are you, throwing all the years of sacrifice at my face.

ROOI: Why are you so upset?

FREDA: Do you think that I want to see you do what I did? In your case it's even worse. This white witch doesn't love you, she doesn't care about you.

ROOI: Mama you're upsetting yourself over nothing.

FREDA: You knew that I was sleeping in the back room. You wanted me to hear that you too can do it. I did not bring you up for that.

Dike *TFSA* 1979: 28

Again, Dike has “learned” the “lesson” of Greek, Biblical, Shakespearean and African tragedy which, by the way, the stories of Oedipus,

the wickeder Israelite and Judaic kings, Shaka Zulu, Macbeth, Lear and Hamlet illustrate.⁴² As one sows so shall one reap by some ineluctable law of destiny – except when, through some absurdity, one escapes what fate or destiny seems to lay down – and others suffer in one’s place. The innocent suffer in any event as tragedy takes its course. And sometimes the victims of tragedy seem utterly blind to what could have been avoided.

The return of the repressed and its direction in theatre.

I have already suggested that the hold the compulsive tragedy has on Dike is also ideological – the hangover of classical and Judaeo-Christian ideology in Shakespeare and ultimately in Freud strengthened as psychoanalytic science; the superstition of the Greeks, Jews and Romans concerning the oracle and God(s) which became embodied in the ideology of tragedy and which eventually via her high school education and private reading in the liberal atmosphere of Cape Town, got to Dike. It is expressed full-bloodedly, but here the researcher has interposed directorial explanations and interpretation for the actors which convert the thematic drama into immediately understandable theatre for the audience. Here too the director’s feeling for intention and implicit attitude establishes writing, drama, ideology – the symbolic - as a counterpoint to theatre, presence, the semiotic/chora, thus making space for my hypothesis to be more fully expressed on the stage. What the director suggests is obviously only what goes on in rehearsal not at all altering the original script:

⁴² Stephen Gray “Interview with Fatima Dike” 1980.

ROOI: Ma, I am not going to marry her [Either the white girl or Thembi who is carrying my child].

FREDA: Huh, tell that to somebody who doesn't know what it's like. [Can't you see how lonely I and you and Austin have been because I couldn't marry the white father of my illegitimate child and live in peace in some sort of community? What sort of solution is just having an affair? Either in relation to Thembi or the white girl?] At least I loved your father, and I love you too. I could have gotten rid of my shame if it is shame at all [When I was pregnant with you, but I chose life, not death. Now you, you chose merely pleasure. You are both messing around with a white girl and you have got a black girl pregnant but unlike your decent white father you won't take responsibility for your child]. Son, if you want to have fun, have it amongst your own people.

ROOI: Fun. Huh! Fun is when Hlazo insults everybody [you, Austin, Thembi, my friends] because of me? You know, you can't be one minute with your [my black] girlfriend [Thembi] and a torch is shone in your [my] face, and you're [I'm] made to feel dirty. I ask myself why I do it. [I am really a proud African or white South African man – it doesn't matter what – and I should be allowed to make love to any woman I choose ! But it's no good.]

FREDA: Is that why you're wearing new clothes every day? [Your vanity, your ego, disgusts me. You are nothing but a gigilo.]

ROOI: What are you talking about?

FREDA: She gives you the fine feathers? Huh, my boy, one day I won't be around to pull you out of your troubles [when she and, God forbid, her men-folk discover you're not white]. One day these clothes will catch fire from the merest whisper of a match. [If the law – the Immorality Act – doesn't get you – her family will ruin you] And you'll wish that life could give you another chance. I know it. What's wrong with Hlazo's daughter? Just because Hlazo is kicking a row about you and Thembi doesn't mean it's the end of your world. He wants you to prove your manhood. [Why shouldn't you save money from your job and pay him lobola?] What you are doing shows that you're not a man. God, I did not raise you up for that.

ROOI: Hlazo is not my God. [My God is my own ego, my own pleasure – but I pretend my God consists of my rights]

FREDA: Then Thembi means nothing to you. [You treat women as just sex-objects]

ROOI: Thembi has to accept me for what I am [I am an African man at heart or a German colonizer in Africa like my father and entitled to have any woman I choose. Or I have my "rights" in freedom].

FREDA: What are you Zwelinzima?

ROOI: Oh mama please ... when I was a boy, I obeyed you as a child.
Today I'm a man, and yet in my manhood there is no freedom.

FREDA: You do not understand what your manhood is. [There is only freedom from and freedom for, not abstract freedom!] I have seen men being made [been hardened by circumcision and by the vicissitudes of life, and understood what they are free from and free for.] We, the mothers of these men, know that it is a joy that leaves a bitter taste in our mouths. We understand that the boy has been buried forever. A man is born [perhaps at birth, perhaps after puberty/circumcision] with the lusts and aggression of men [This is not gratuitous feminism. Men have to be like this to survive the township, to survive rural poverty] Do we go to look for a bucket of water to bring us back to sanity? No! You swallow the gall, and tighten your belt, so that when it happens again, you are ready for it. Face the enemy, don't ever turn your back on it. That is why the parents of men never say '*bhuti*' [“little brother” from the Afrikaans “boetie” usually used affectionately] to their sons, even when they are circumcised. That is why to us you will always be a boy, to us you'll die a boy [so that I can keep threatening you with castration, so to speak, in order to keep watch over your lusts and aggression and keep you fighting for us, the black community]

Freda's end comes soon after this. Dike orchestrates her death skilfully so that she confronts Zwelinzima at the very same time as the revelations come that he has lost practically everything: the white girl, what little honesty and “decency” he had (not doing petty crime, gambling, drugs and alcohol) and, most importantly his job. He has also lost Thembi's full respect if not her love. Thus Zwelinzima in a sense dies morally himself and kills his mother through the additional stress on her heart caused by anxiety brought about by his dangerous, even outrageous behaviour. The opening lines have to do with how he has lost his job. In the “coda” she reverts to traditional rural imagery which combines with a western image of agricultural technology – the bulls that refuse to be driven to the dipping tank. Again they both speak in formal English, indicating formal and respectful Xhosa. The drama of her final denunciation and death is dynamically expressed through theatrical effect – symbolic writing and *choral* pulsation coming together to strengthen my hypothesis as to what works on the stage in practice:

ROOI: I don't want to talk about it.

FREDA: Yes, but I'm asking you. Zwelinzima what happened?

ROOI: Well, she asked me for a light. I told her to get it from my jacket pocket. I suppose she must have gone through my pockets and found a letter Thembi wrote me. It all came out, who I was. She told the boss and I was fired.

FREDA: And you told me you were concerned about me.

ROOI: What did you expect? Surely ma, you know how great the temptation is, to reach out and touch, to take and to hold. So that you too can say, 'I've held them.'

FREDA: And now you pay.

ROOI: Yes, there's nothing for nothing and very little for five cents.

FREDA: Zwelinzima, *yizapha mntanam*. (*Rooi sits next to his mother.*)

In my time things were not like this. Now, days go into night so quickly that you begin to wonder what it is in the future that draws to it so quickly. You live with a man, and you are so close that not even a shadow can come between you. But time flies, and that man is no longer by your side. You find another one, not quite like your first one, but with certain qualities in him that make him dear to you as the years go by. You young ones, you have no sense of values. You are like bulls that refuse to be driven to the dipping tank. You have no patience, that is why you are foolish. I look into the faces of the people from my past, or children born in front of me, and I don't see the people in those faces. Because to them, life was cheap. To us who have survived life is dear. You must be strong, Zwelinzima. Look at Austin, he's fresh, not only for himself ... there are others too, who when they look at you ... must feel inspired, just by you ... Zwelinzima, you must go now.

ROOI: (*Turns to look at his mother, who is breathing heavily.*) Mama?

Mama? Tata? (*Austin comes in.*) Ina, go and phone the hospital quickly.... -

AUSTIN: (*Feels Freda's pulse. Goes down on his knees and prays.*) God of the Heavens and the earth, God of my fathers, I your servant kneel in front of You this night. I have no right to ask anything of You, Lord, but I have no one to turn to but You my Lord, for You are the father of the scum of this earth. I ask You to show my wife the way. With Your might give her back her good health. No one but You can give us what we want, if it is good for us. Watch over this house. Watch over the child You gave us to look after. Bless this country and the people who rule it. Show them wisdom. Your wisdom. So that they may rule with Your word in their hearts. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ROOI: Now go! (*Exit Austin.*) Mama ... mama ... (*He goes out through the back room and shouts for their neighbour's daughter.*) Vuyelwa! ... Vuyelwa! ... Vuyelwa! ... (*He comes back through the front door, looks at his mother, then goes into the back room and comes back with her pills. He crushes two tablets between two spoons, throws them into a glass and mixes them with water. He helps her to drink, but she chokes. He puts the glass down and massages her back. He goes and gets a rag to wipe her mouth. Goes outside and shouts for . Vuyelwa again.*) Vuyelwa!... Vuyelwa!... Will nobody help? (*Stands at the door*

of the house and looks to see if his stepfather is coming. Then he goes back into the house and sits down. Austin comes back.) Where the hell have you been?

AUSTIN: Shhhhhhh, you'll disturb her.

First denouement

What is then released is the full pent-up fury brought about by the resentment that exists between the self-sacrificing and caring adoptive father, (the step-father) and the son who is basically contemptuous of him, of the man who colludes with white supremacy and a submissive Christianity:

ROOI: Where the hell is the ambulance?

AUSTIN: Be patient, it's coming.

ROOI: Did you tell them how serious she is?

AUSTIN: They will come.

ROOI: If you can be patient, I can't.

AUSTIN: It will come, *(Freda dies and Austin shuts her eyes.)*

ROOI: Ag maan, we are people too.

AUSTIN: They will come.

ROOI: *(Sees him closing Freda's eyes.)* Tata ... tata is she ... ?

AUSTIN: *(Nods)* Ja.

ROOI: Mama ... mama ... mama ... mama ...

AUSTIN: Yes, yes, yes.

ROOI: But tata, why her?

AUSTIN: Sick people die.

ROOI: But tata ...

AUSTIN: We could not have saved her.

ROOI: You're talking shit.

AUSTIN: You bastard.

ROOI: You're not saying this to me. You're saying it to her.

Austin grabs Rooi by the collar and they fight. Rooi throws him down and beats him with his fists. Then he grabs his stick and beats Austin until it breaks. Just then the ambulance's siren is heard.

AUSTIN: You're too bloody late.

Black out.

Final denouement as directed theatre

Zwelinzima is arrested for stealing from a “*moegoe*”, a rural greenhorn (who lives in a hostel), his father goes to the police station to try and help him, is himself arrested for not having his pass, they fight again in the cell, Austin is released, Zwelinzima takes his rage out on the bucket of faeces and urine in the cell. He will still not acknowledge his obligation to Thembi and the child that she carries, which in fact she loses. In the meantime a transformation occurs offstage. He becomes a kind of white man. Someone in the apartheid bureaucracy enables him to get a job as a “boss boy” supervising black railway workers maintaining the rails. His friends in Langa, Thembi especially, try to contact him but he has moved to Salt River, an important railway junction and he can't or won't respond to their desire to meet and talk to him. Then he returns to Langa but is psychologically changed, a man with a message, or messages, cryptic ones, encoded in paranoid psychotic private meanings, all of which are shot through with

ethnic-cultural significance deriving from his situation but impenetrable in the context of the Real and the True, not the messianic transfiguration promised when he was the messianic pre-figuration of the First South African.

And yet in a “primitive” (psychotic) way he is the First South African – come before his time. Interpretative directions to the actor are interpellated to help him convey the meaning of Zwelinzima’s regression back into the Imaginary from a Symbolic, through the failure of the phallus to erect meaning, to produce signifiers.

ROOI: I've got no time to waste, *jy wil nie verstaan nie* [I am not only a new white man arisen out of the crucifixion I suffered - for being neither one thing or the other, don't you understand that? Didn't I tell you at the beginning of the story that I would be baptised in blood which would change to ochre and I would go through the mirror of self-understanding and join my brother in the kingdom of God reflected to both of us on the other side?]

MAX: Poor boy ...

ROOI: (*Grabs Max by the lapels of his jacket.*) Where do you get the guts to call me boy? Now get out. Bloody shit! [I may be the messiah but I am not gentle Jesus because I have been an African man treated as a boy and even now they call me a boss boy: tragically nothing has changed]

AUSTIN: That was a wrong move to make.

ROOI: Listen, I'll handle this my way.

Thembi comes in.

THEMBI: Rooi, so it's true you're back.

ROOI: Ja.

THEMBI: You're looking well. By the way, I went to Salt River station ...

ROOI: Listen. I haven't got time to waste [I am on a mission to magically transform everything with my very presence.]

THEMBI: Hey wait a minute, just because you're living in town doesn't mean you have to be rude to us.

ROOI: If you have nothing to say, don't come again.

THEMBI: *Heee bethuna, litheni n'e libhulu.* Have the white people in town given you airs? *Sies!* If they have, then I'll tell you a thing or two, maybe you've forgotten ...

(Rooi throws her out bodily. She calls from outside.)

THEMBI: *Ra!* Who do you think you are? Only yesterday you couldn't afford to maintain your child. Just because your skin has earned you the privilege of being a poor white working on the railways you think you are better than us. *Sies,* I'll show you Zwelinzima. Even that job now, being a baas boy, you got it under false pretences.

(She goes off)

ROOI: Bloody bitch!

AUSTIN: Zwelinzima, this is not a shebeen. I am not going to allow your friends to shout and swear in my yard. Go outside and remove them. *(Pause)* I said go outside and remove them!

ROOI: *(Goes outside)* Once I used to listen to aeroplanes flying high up high above meI would run outside to give them a messagebut you knowthey were in a hurry and I can't keep them waiting ... because they have very important papers to carry.[Become ye as little children. I am also a child, the very centre of his world, with the dimmest awareness of the adult reality only magically available to me] Hallo, Thami. You see these men, you could be watching them working ... but they know nothing, nix, I mean if you really want to work, the man must see you can work. You don't play around with spades and all those funny things. [This Thami is a little African boy: be like me: magically I have become a white man: you don't have to really work: be like me: I watch them work: or if you have to work because you are black then really work don't play around] Hallo, Mzwandile. You are mad. Ag, this boy is mad. I don't know why your people don't make an offering to the gods for you.[There are handicapped and mentally ill children in the township. But because they are ignorant as I was – as part of me still is – there is nothing for it but their superstitious magical religion] You must rest in peace. [Really everything is dead or better off dead] You can be walking down this road, this very road, and you see a rabbit, then suddenly you see a rabbit so big, so big. And you try and run away from it. And it runs into an electric pole and melts into it.[Hare, was once a man like all the Bushpeople's animals and their gods were all made out of animals. And Moon said to Hare when Hare complained that his sleeping mother was dead, No, there is no death, but Hare insisted so Moon smashed his lip in two and indeed from then on there was death. But I, the white messiah am above death and in my madness I can banish even death] *(Pause)* Sometimes, sometimes it's like swimming inside my mother.[I accept that I am mad and in my madness I become the child I once was in her womb, like my own child I could not support in the African girl for whom I was too vain and egotistic to pay brideprice and I called

that refusal freedom] Wait a minute, somebody's calling me. (*He goes off stage and comes back.*) Ag! These people worry me you know, they keep calling me all the time [Now that I have begun to accept that I am mad because after all that is at least a peaceful refuge from all my problems of who and what I was and how I was to live. I cannot tell the difference between my own thoughts and what I hear on the outside] (*He opens his coat and talks to his armpit.*) Sssssh! Keep quiet, they'll hear you. [I told you I was mad. Did you not know that in the old days there was only the Moon and from the armpit of an old Bushpeople's god the children threw up the Sun into the sky? Did you not know that in madness there is a kind of truth when we go back into earlier time?] (*Pause*) You know this black man? I know him. He's got a son, a nice boy. They always come round over the weekends. [I too had a black father and I was his son. This was home once. But my mission calls me to leave this place] (*Chuckles*) You don't trust them ... hayibo ... mmm ... mmm ... if they touch you, you'll never be the same again, you'll become a zebra ... [The mad are like children believing in magic curses but there is nothing wrong in becoming a striped black and white animal because that is after all what I am] Here's an aeroplane coming ... [I am going back to madness, back to childhood] I've got to give it a message ... it's very important ... you see the papers are very important very important ... v-e-r-y important! [Something has happened, I am now a white man and this must be officially recognised even in the sky which is where God's heaven is] Nee my baas, I'm quiet I'm listening. (*He stands to attention.*) Yes yes. . . I'm listening *dankie my baas* ... thank you, my baas ja ... *dankie my baas oubaas*. Leave me alone ... I'm sick and tired of you. (*He takes the stick and puts it across his shoulders and breaks it.*) I told you it's time to go to bed, sleep, sleep. *Ja my baas, ek verstaan baie mooi, my baas*. Thank you very much quietly, quietly my baas. Yes sir ... ja ... ja ... ja ... ja ... ja .

Fade.

Dike: *TFSA: 42-43 – the end of the play* (Researcher's interpellations underlined and bracketed)

These theatrical moments are the culmination of the themes and although sanity is destroyed for Zwelinzima how we read his madness may indeed sow the seeds for the First South African for us.

The trajectory of the movements of the plot through the whole story

Only Freda knows the early story of Zwelinzima's life and although he is the protagonist he lacks full self-awareness except of himself as a victim - which role does not fully connect with his transcendental presence as the Chorus at the beginning of the play. His adoptive father, Freda's second

partner Austin shares her knowledge of his early story to some extent. But Freda dies half-way through the play and Austin withdraws from the latter part of the story. Zwelinzima's friends, even Thembi his girl friend know only part of his story - from the standpoint of the peer-group which feels either in solidarity with him or betrayed by him and cannot see him against the whole background of the apartheid system and the system of Christian thought which informs the play's discourse. So each of these characters' moments or standpoints or to use Husserl's concept of social reality – the phenomenological reductions in the plot - are in tension with our growing awareness as a critical audience of the tragic nature of the whole story or a theme within it - apartheid. *Fabula* (story) and *sjuzet* (plot) are central to structuralist methodology as identified by the Russian Formalists and others (Aston and Savona 1991:15-33). We are concerned more with the theatrical moment within the plot reverberating through the story as memorised or anticipated writing.

Realising radical literary and dramatic theory and feminist theatrical practice.

There is debate between male and female critics as to whether the psycho-physiology of story-telling actually resembles male and/or female orgasm, whether writing can or should be, metaphorically, subjected to the phallus and the ejaculation of messages and a linear logic, or whether on the contrary it can or should have contradictory logics, as stressed by Cixous and Irigaray who see, rather than a (w)hole to be filled by male intrusive logic is a negative experience. Instead they posit the vulva, the clitoris, the breasts which are in a sense separate "stories" each capable of other and different

fulfilment, scandalously auto-erotic or bi-sexual, within the sex that is not One (Moi 1985: 102-149).

Kristeva in applying Bakhtin's idea of the Menippean narrative to the theatre (Kristeva 1986 *passim*) also searches for subterranean logics that subvert the main logic of the story via the *chora* the womb-pulsations which cannot be theorised – although it is an inspiration from the endless flow of the mother being in the unconscious. In the Menippean or avant-garde literary narrative buried places are found in society and in the psyche at odds with the social order which enrich the main literary order but subvert it also - cause it to become filthy-“rich” with deviant sexuality and experience.

Even so in Kristeva, Lacan's mirror-phase *partly* transforms the imaginary into the symbolic when poetic language comes to fullest fruition as realised meaning (Moi 1985: 150-173) although this aspect of post-structuralism does not need to be either phallic or vulvic. It may be that through the reflection of the Other – classically the mother – the child finds her identity and aesthetics obtains its form and subject. Kristeva subverts Lacan's logic of the phallic process from signified to signifier through poetic rhetoric by endowing that process with the female rhythm of a living and fructuating receptacle that contains and enlivens rather than an instrument that rules and instructs.

All these feminist aesthetics are germane to the tragic story of a man who is not one unified human being and the women who are *not* the sex which is *not* One – such, archetypically, is the state of proto-feminist anti-apartheid South Africa in Fatima Dike's world in the mid-1970's – a world still today very much the norm in this an industrialised version of a typical patriarchal African country. The phallus of the First South African (man) is a castrated one but on the other hand we don't get to see alternatives to castration except the sublimation of transcendent redemption by the women who *do* attempt to be One rather than fluent symbolic Others. This spiritualised state we must take to be this woman writer's version of the writing of the whole society which is not yet able to write the (w)hole female body and deconstruct it as un-writable *chora*, *in dynamic interaction with a transcendent symbolic* – Kristeva's developmental norms (Kristeva 1977,1982, 1986, 1992, 1998,2006)

In the play there are classic examples of Zwelinzima's castration and his mother's awareness of the phallic power than he and she lack. As in a Freudian Oedipus there are these characters' tragic *blindness*. Blindnesses are theatrical moments in the plot. They interact deconstructively with her and our *insightful* awareness. This awareness is of how they are trapped and potentially free to have *vision*. Vision creates seeds of sight. These seeds are sown by the playwright in the interstices of the plot as it unfolds into the wider themes of narrative or story.

But how does this come over in a literary and narrative process that is effective? The overall theme to which the character is blind is de-familiarised in the immediate as the structural meaning undermines and exposes the character's shocking and shocked unawareness of what s/he is or what a dilemma s/he is in: "What? Is that what is happening!" That revelation is the fascination of literary and dramatic art (Tomashevsky, Rylance, Barthes in Rylance 1987: 57-65, 68-74, 83-85). The assumptions of realism which after all are dependent on a social construction of meaning "through the juxtapositions of 'semes' (signifieds of connotation)". Semes are decentred not only through de-familiarisation but by a whole critical theory which repositions the subject in ideology (Belsey 1984:47-67).

Although critical theorists do not usually write plays or novels (Cixous and Kristeva are exceptions) what they have to say about the de-familiarisation of the repositioned subject seen in relation to writing as an endless series of discourses throws light on the aesthetics of African performance and is perhaps at the heart of much literature as a whole, and is not always culture-bound. The narrator of Zulu praise-poetry is the repository of the richly descriptive heroic dramas of Shaka Zulu and Dingane which are full of metaphors and metonymies deriving from ancestral memory. As well s/he is the expositor of their time-bound particular expression in the theatre of its incidents. Shaka Zulu *does not know* Dingane is plotting to kill him but the poet and we *do*, and can withdraw from the *plot* into the wider *story*. Shaka Zulu himself is so immersed in the plot because of his history as a rejected

illegitimate child, very much the victim of his ruthlessly cruel half-siblings, and is psychopathic and uncaring about the suffering he causes as regards the wider story of African peoples. We through the praise-poet's criticisms can become aware of this story – or at least the poet can modulate his dramatic narrative so as to stress this in actual performance. The tension between the two awarenesses is artistically defamiliarising, compelling and revelatory as the one structure deconstructs the other (Cope 1968 Introduction).

Deconstruction which is a less immediate form of de-familiarisation can occur where writing in the form of the dramatic text (story) and speech in the form of theatrical action (plot) oppose each other right through a piece of literature including drama. Derrida has shown how writing and speech operate as competing systems in Western thought (Derrida 1977:43 discussed in Norris 1982:29). We might adapt certain philosophical / psychological categories used in Freud, Heidegger, Lacan and Derrida to show how the total *being* (memory traces) of writing – dramatic interpretation - and the actual *presence* (audio-visual signifiers) of speech / action / movement / make-up / costume / lighting – (theatrical understanding in the here and now) - interact with each other to create the play with resonances in the unconscious as well as in conscious apprehension (Freud 1925, Laplanche and Leclaire 1972, Derrida 1978, Culler 1983 discussed in Wright 1987: 133-156). The splitting involved creates alienation, strangeness, defamiliarisation which gets under our skin so to speak. It enters us in an entrancing, hypnotic way.

Thus interpretative being - the past, present and the imagined future writing of the plot/story - and the understood presence of stage signifiers - can deconstruct each other in a positive and transcending way in the sense that the play as a result is experienced as having *aesthetic depth*. This is perhaps a way of suggesting that the play is rich in what musically we would call dynamics.

Thus within the play of theatre and drama interacting against and within each other in a general sense, there is the deconstructive dynamic of *dramatic theme as a prevailing stream or chain of cognitive sign-vehicles reiterated in verbal and non-verbal media* acting in a focussed way on *theatrical character which consist of sign-vehicles operating at the behavioural and speech levels of media so as in some way to render (tear to bits) the character into pieces*. This may also occur in the reverse direction. The theme is destroyed to be replaced by a new theme because a character transcends it, perhaps then incarnated in another character or the same re-incarnated character.

For example, the presence on the stage of a theatrically presented *character* rooted in her limited vision – say *Christian* - is deconstructed by and deconstructs the overall dramatic theme remembered and responded to in the writing: – *Christianity as the resurrection of the whole human being and the acceptance of suffering in the form of apartheid* are dramatic themes fundamentally opposed to each other and even to the theatrically presented

character which cannot cope with the conflicts that ensue. She is caught up in this thematic transcendence by fate, destiny, absurdity which may be dynamically opposed to her and will destroy her as a character even though she tries to be a good Christian – *because* she tries to be a good Christian. She and the theme of which she is characterologically expressive may give out deconstructive repercussions which go on to situate the work in an-all-the-more memorable canon of stage fiction. This is experienced by educated audiences as aesthetic depth through what Culler calls a naturalised poetics or aesthetics, one that is fundamentally intuitive (see Norris 1982:2 on Culler 1975).

The receptive context

The First South African, as might have been predicted in the volatile ethos of black consciousness theatre surging forward at the time, and given the liberation ideology then prevalent in a nascent urban scene, was well received in 1977 not only in Cape Town but when it toured to the Market Theatre, the Space's partner in non-racial protest or alternative theatre, in Johannesburg. That setting, like the Space, potentiated the effect of the play. Its reception, then, has to be considered in understanding how its Symbolic message interacts with its *choral* Imaginary and its Real.

Enough to say that the Market was and is situated in Johannesburg in the border-zone between the increasingly Africanised inner-city and the

hugely powerful “white” dominated business sector. Enormous skyscrapers tower over black traders, buses and taxi-drivers in the streets below. These huge buildings look out over white suburbs nearby. Soweto and the other townships are from 5-20 miles away and the closest are visible from the tops of the buildings. Immediately below are the dangerous trains ridden by largely black commuters and criminals. Downtown Johannesburg questioned apartheid geographically and proclaimed the evidence of a multiracial economy. Bridges crossed the railway between enemy zones (Kruger 1999 *op.cit*: 161-163). But what with extensive and violent crime and tension in the streets, the townships and the suburbs, at times almost a quasi-war situation (the youth uprisings of 1976 which had continuous repercussions), we may ask what the Market’s and the Space’s “protest” was exactly and what was the possible alternative to apartheid so endemically institutionalised at least in Johannesburg and acted-out in the streets there, although less so in Cape Town a racially somewhat more integrated place?

The response was the hopeful and idealistic one: integration through anti-racism and non-racism or the new black consciousness which could become a “justified” (recompensating) black racism within ferocious hegemony of apartheid in the environment. Actually in this environment, economically, even though labour laws controlled workers and management in terms of racial grouping, there was already a non-racial participation in a much more open market than South Africa had been used to. Before world war two the Afrikaner white working class brought into power and kept in

power segregationist governments which protected it from African competition. But as always, there was always a need for skilled labour in mines, farms and factories, always a need for management which could actually manage a multi-racial work-force (Wilson and Thompson eds. Vol. II 1971, Kavanagh 1985 and Thompson 1999 *passim*).

All the more reason for there to be a historical process at work in all the urban areas preparing the ground, as it were, for a mixed multi-racial society and eventually attempts at a non-racial economy – a process deriving in part from the strictures concerning how it is that the African male finds himself alienated in the struggle to survive with his pride and dignity intact in the hostile environment of economic, political and social apartheid. Although the play is a protest against the deconstructive effect on personality of the ethos of apartheid there is a kathartic, theatrical corollary, very effective on the stage: the inherently *explosive* nature of a questionable identity in a white-looking man who was also Coloured (mixed race), who was culturally African and spoke Xhosa as his first language.

If we carry on with Kruger's analysis we can see throughout this chapter that the theme of the corrosive effects of apartheid on personality – not being able to choose an identity in conformity with needs, aspirations and abilities - are reacted to with violence and internal self-violence by both men and women in the play, but *externally-acted out* with hatred and a sense of betrayal by the women and by the men with *forms of physical hurting*

(Kruger 1999 *op. cit.*) So ethnicity and gender are seen in practical theatrical terms to play a primary and a secondary role in a primarily race society in which *women's violence is more symbolic and emotional rather than through the body's outward action.*

The reasons for this are not hard to find and are perhaps associated with the historically greater physicality of men institutionalised in legitimated physical violence whether via crime or politics or war or “policing” women. As Kruger suggests the black struggle is and was a nationalist struggle ostensibly led by black men and (to a lesser extent black women) against white rule. In this black women *were subjugated* by the actual threats of so-called male “comrades” actually known to Dike and other township dwellers as street criminals (see Dike’s interview with Marcia Blumberg in Blumberg and Walder 1999: 231-240). Dike sees very well that they are *subjugated by their inferior position within black patriarchy: they cannot be allowed to “get out of hand” because it is black men who lead “the struggle” as well as maintaining their own superiority within black societies.*

However gender and race have to be *enacted* through performance which becomes an important issue throughout this chapter - affecting male and female characters equally.

Conclusion and context

In *The First South African*, Freda Jama, the anti-hero's mother is a woman of Christian values which are the essence of her character theatrically and an important expression of the thematic text. The whole dramatic text dwells on the erosion of personality by apartheid and by crime (which some of the African working class use to survive in apartheid). Naturally some continue to do this in post-apartheid because poverty has not been fundamentally ameliorated. Freda has to die in a way which approaches redemption but a death which also fails to redeem her son, the would-be First South African – a white-looking mixed race child who speaks Xhosa – a potential messiah of the society. He, on the contrary, turns out to become a virtual poor white protected by the Afrikaner Nationalist government's colour bar laws. She is a martyred and a potentially redeeming character, but also, horrifyingly, one who dies in vain as far as her son is concerned. Character stops being a fully transcendental character with such a theme. No one can withstand the pressure of the state and the society. A process of history thematically at work finally destroys her, brings her death about symbolically and actually, as it does to her son although with him only at the level of metaphor and consisting in a kind of moral failure from which he retreats into a kind of partially-redeeming madness.

By comparison in a children's and adolescent's story such as Mhlophe's *Have You Seen Zandile?* (1986, 2002) theme and character are not opposed in such an ambitious architecture of the aesthetic. The *themes* –

realisation of individual self by an African girl previously submerged in the urban masses and threatened by marital rape and the consequence of bridegroom's dowry being arranged by her rural mother - *are* the *character(s)*. There is drama and theatre deconstructing each other but in a different way – not as theme and character but in the *aporia*, the *lacunae* of the drama, around the “holes” of which the characters hang theatrically in quite a grotesquely effective way like stereotypes in a particularly grisly and sickly fairy story – all part of a dramatic literature of young working class women in a society in swift transition.

What is deconstructive in Mhlophe, then, is something else: the silences and repressions in the text. And these too can produce deconstructive dramatic and theatrical depth which lodge the work in our consciousness and unconsciousness in a disturbing and potentially life-changing way. In Mhlophe's play, by design a play for the young in age and the person developmentally youthful, what *cannot* be enacted, addressed or discoursed about, deconstructs its fairy-story Cinderella plot and redeems it as a memorable work. But not one with great theatrical and dramatic depth in itself.

In Dike's play a dramatic theme like apartheid and the consequent search for identity and redemption is one which uses characters who are very far from the fullest identity and redemption. The theme intermeshes deconstructively with those characters' tragic and comic behaviour on the

stage trapped as they are *within* the theme so to speak. The characters are very firmly locked in discourse which blinds them, leaves them tragic or comic in our eyes and causes us and them pity, terror, laughter and katharsis as we see them failing and falling over in their struggle. This applies not only to the Christian mother and the hedonistic son but affect minor comic characters like urban elders recreating a rural society which has disappeared, the angry would-be-father-in-law cheated, as he sees it, of bridegroom's dowry, the jealous boy-friend, and the comic policemen.

Some sense of deconstructive and aesthetic tragic depth is essentially the appeal of Fatima Dike's play which was landmark in the history of anti-apartheid theatre in South Africa (Gray 1980 *op.cit.*).