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National Crises and Moments of Laughter in 'Second Interregnum'

South African Drama, 2001-2014

By

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DISSERTATION

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

Doctor of Philosophy in English and Film Studies

Wilfrid Laurier University

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Abstract

This dissertation analyzes Anglophone South African dramatic critiques of national crises in the post-apartheid moment. Focusing specifically on the years after Nelson Mandela's retirement, it examines some of the country's prominent plays produced between 2001 and 2014. This was an important period of social and political change in South Africa, described by drama theorist Marcia Blumberg as a second interregnum where acts of reconciliation or disaffection were staged frequently ("Reconciling" 140). I build on Blumberg's temporal model by extending her framework to account for recent events of national significance leading up to, and including, Mandela's death in 2013. In addition to expanding her temporal framework, this project contributes new research on second interregnum drama by examining the rise of humour as a key component of the social and political criticism occurring in works from this period.

My project is divided into four research chapters that highlight major challenges curtailing reconciliation and nation-building during this time: continuing class inequality, silence around mothers' experiences of trauma during apartheid, ethnic minorities' feelings of exclusion from national narratives, and continuing cycles of physical and psychological violence. Drama is an important barometer of the state of the nation. During apartheid, it was often used to oppose the state by staging "sites of conflict between different discourses" (Orkin 5). In the second interregnum drama continued to play a significant role in critiquing conditions by highlighting unaddressed areas of class, gender, and racial inequality. Playwrights in this period used drama to engage contemporary audiences in South Africa, and abroad, in order to encourage social change through debate and dialogue.

This project analyzes the appearance of humour in second interregnum drama and the way it foregrounded unresolved tensions in the nation, especially discrepancies between personal

and national narratives, and provided alternative ways of dealing with them. Moments of laughter emerge throughout the plays in this dissertation to challenge state discourses, critique social conditions, but also encourage expressions of unity through instances of collective laughter. Mapping key intersections between postcolonial studies and humour, this project provides new analysis of Pieter-Dirk Uys's *MacBeki: A Farce to be Reckoned With*, Greig Coetzee's *Happy Natives*, Fatima Dike's *The Return*, Lara Foot Newton's *Reach*, Ashwin Singh's *To House*, Ntokozo Madlala and Mandisa Haarhoff's *Crush-hopper*, Zakes Mda's *The Bells of Amersfoort*, and David Peimer and Martina Griller's *Armed Response*.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Moving beyond the Ecstasy of Freedom: the Rise of Second Interregnum South African Drama

Focus of Study

This dissertation argues drama in contemporary South Africa plays an important role in the social and political debates surrounding the nation's transition to a free democracy. Dramatists have responded to crises such as growing class divisions, continuing gender inequality, ethnic othering, and violent criminality after apartheid. While independence represented progress for the majority of South Africans who were historically oppressed under apartheid, they continued to struggle with injustice and inequality twenty years after liberation. In 2005 South African cultural theorist Ashraf Jamal described South Africa as experiencing a “jaundiced present moment” because the country had not yet been able to move beyond the racist, sexist, and classist thinking that apartheid entrenched (*Predicaments* 19). Within this landscape dramatists played an important role exposing previously unaddressed crises, modelling strategies to further advance reconciliation, and spurring debates regarding the best path toward building a new sense of national identity.

Broadly speaking, drama in South Africa has often been a barometer for the state of the nation. During apartheid, theatre was regularly deployed both by indigenous and white liberal communities to criticize the National Party, the political organization that implemented and maintained the system of racial segregation known as apartheid.¹ Professor Martin Orkin's 1991

¹ In some cases theatre helped affirm state discourses and advance oppression during colonization. Pro-nationalist performances, such as the National Pageant in 1936 (Kruger, *The Drama* 37), espoused the benefits of colonisation and silenced indigenous narratives within national discourses. This specific event portrayed indigenous populations as “prehistoric preludes or in capitulation to the imperial plan” (37).

study, *Drama and the South African State*, asserts that drama's "dialogic nature" was beneficial to the anti-apartheid movement because it helped to stage "sites of conflict between different discourses" (5). In the context of apartheid South Africa any kind of discursive heterogeneity was seen as subversive because it opposed the state's desire that all citizens adopt "uniformity and conformity to the discourses of apartheid" (5). Theatre's ability to stage opposing points of view, and generate debate, led researchers such as Orkin to affirm its vital role in resisting state ideology. Unsurprisingly, plays that problematized or contradicted government discourses such as Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1974) and *The Island* (1974), or Percy Mtwa, Mbongeni Ngema, and Barney Simon's *Woza Albert!* (1981), remain canonical examples of anti-apartheid drama after independence. It is from such works, and many others, that recent politically-oriented drama draws inspiration.

In addition to its dialogic nature, drama became an important tool of the anti-apartheid movement because its mobility and accessibility meant it could disseminate a political message widely, and with relative safety. These earlier productions differ from the types of plays I deal with in this dissertation because they were often staged in informal venues and composed of casts made up of amateur or semi-professional actors. As a result, anti-apartheid theatre was able to move quickly from stage to stage and could circulate broadly while remaining hidden from National Party censors and the police. Writing in 1997, theatre scholar and novelist André Brink posits black theatre during the nineteen-seventies and eighties operated on a "fly-by-night basis" and as a result was "hugely inventive in its means and mobile in its movements, [...] unfettered by formal constraints of stage and lighting and auditorium" ("Challenge" 165). This mobility meant state authorities had difficulty shutting performances down and arresting actors for breaking apartheid laws that curtailed the free movement of non-white citizens. The minimalist

staging aesthetic of apartheid drama helped to heighten its mobility. Often actors would develop improvisational techniques to avoid carrying written texts of a play and if any props were used they were typically everyday items so as to evade detection. These strategies helped to diminish the potential of incarceration as there would be little physical evidence with which to convict actors and playwrights if they were arrested.² These factors meant that theatre became highly popular amongst anti-apartheid groups as a means to resist the state and its agents.

While there have been extensive social and political changes in South Africa since the free democratic elections on April 27, 1994 – a date that marks the official end of apartheid – theatre remains a powerful tool to oppose or critique the state. In fact, a number of contemporary plays that critically assess South Africa’s present condition utilize the aesthetics and staging techniques of anti-apartheid drama. For instance the minimalist style of apartheid-era works continues in plays that appear in this project, such as *Crush-hopper* and *Happy Natives*. In recent plays the minimalist aesthetic ensures a work is financially viable by reducing production costs and transportation.

In the past twenty years of independence South Africans have produced a large quantity of drama that covered a broad range of themes from a multitude of directions. For instance, Miki Flockemann records that the 2002 National Arts Festival, held annually in Grahamstown, featured “342 events and 1191 presentations” during a year critics believed minimal sponsorship would reduce the size of the festival (“Translations” 199). In order to limit the scope of this project I have selected works available in published and unpublished manuscripts. This decision means my project can analyze plays that were important at key moments in the second interregnum, but are no longer in production because trends or conditions have changed. The

² Examples of improvisation can be seen at the outset of plays such as *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, where a character named Styles reads headlines from a newspaper and offers critical commentary on the day’s news (Brink, “No Way Out” 440).

works featured in this project have either won accolades within South Africa (*Crush-hopper* and *To House*), have been written by a playwright considered canonical by researchers and critics (*MacBeki*, *Reach*, *The Return*, *The Bells of Amersfoort*), or have been anthologized in collections intended to represent new South African drama (*Armed Response* and *Happy Natives*). This dissertation's focus on works by established and emerging playwrights highlights some of the major gender, class, and race concerns appearing in post-independence drama.

Temporal Framework

The close correlation between politics and drama in South Africa means researchers often employ temporal models to discuss major shifts in theatre. For example, Robert Kavanagh's 1981 introduction to *South African People's Plays* divides anti-apartheid drama into two categories, pre and post-Soweto Uprising (xii). This is because, as Loren Kruger explains, the violent police suppression of protests on June 16, 1976, spurred a critical change in anti-apartheid opposition, which produced a more militant type of drama known as "theatre of resistance" (*The Drama* 130). Like Kavanagh's apartheid-era study, scholars continue to frame discussions of contemporary drama around political events. In her 1999 publication *The Drama of South Africa* Kruger divides post-independence theatre into two categories: "post-anti-apartheid" and "post-apartheid" (191, emphasis in original). For her, the post-anti-apartheid period ran from "Mandela's liberation in 1990" until his retirement, where she posits South African drama transitioned into a "post-apartheid" moment beyond the millennium (191). Alternatively, director and theatre scholar Greg Homann divides the first twelve years of liberation in half, describing 1990-1996 as "pre-post-apartheid" and the years spanning the Truth

and Reconciliation Commission, hereafter referred to as the TRC, as the “early-post-apartheid period” (*At This Stage* 2, 7). Homann argues the earlier period contained “little theatre of substance” (6) whereas the second period, from 1996 to 2002, was “dominated by the discourse inculcated by the TRC” (7). Like Kruger, Homann describes South African drama beyond 2002 as “post-apartheid,” a time when new themes, views, and styles emerge (11).

While Kruger’s study ends approximately in 1999, and Homann’s concludes in 2008, Marcia Blumberg offers a more recent temporal framework for contemporary drama. This model emerges in two articles: “Reconciling Acts: Theatre beyond the Truth and Reconciliation Commission” and “South African Theatre beyond 2000: Theatricalising the Unspeakable.” In the first article she argues 2001 marks the beginning of a “second interregnum” in South Africa (139). Blumberg’s claim divides post-apartheid drama into two phases: “an initial period of euphoria, patience and hope” that began with Mandela’s inauguration and a second interregnum after “the Mandela years” marked by “desperation to break silences” (139). Blumberg’s two-part division of South Africa’s post-apartheid history builds on cultural critic Grant Farred’s argument in 1997 that the nation was going through an “idiosyncratic interregnum,” moving “between reconciliation and disaffection” (64). Adapting Farred’s theory to South African drama, Blumberg posits that some plays staged disaffection towards continuing oppression, especially black experiences of poverty and economic exploitation, while other performances “stage[d] successful acts of reconciliation” by voicing the concerns of minority groups after the TRC (140). For Blumberg the second interregnum was a period plagued by instability and social change, a time of transition where drama encouraged a rethinking and reworking of collective and individual identity (140).

Blumberg's two part model for South Africa's post-apartheid moment positions the second interregnum as running between 2001 and 2010. However, her use of Nelson Mandela's presidency to frame her project suggests that the model should be modified to accommodate recent developments ("Reconciling" 139). When her work was published in 2011 Mandela was alive. In light of his death on December 5, 2013, I posit the second interregnum should be extended through until 2014, a time of national remembrance and the laying to rest of the most prominent leader of apartheid struggle. Blumberg's use of Mandela's presidency and subsequent retirement to frame her discussion of the first and second interregnums means his death should also have a significant impact on society, and its culture. The beginning of 2014 marked a time when citizens faced the reality that they could no longer look to the surviving leaders of past resistance movements in order to define national identity and sense of self. As time passes the leaders of the past are being replaced with a new generation of politicians and artists who have grown up in a society free from laws restricting movement, enforcing identity categories, and preventing interracial relationships. 2014 is also the twenty-year anniversary of free democratic elections in South Africa. Moreover, it is the year that author Nadine Gordimer, the nation's first female Nobel Laureate, passed away. It is in this sense that my project considers 2014 a watershed year, a time suitable for marking the conclusion of the second interregnum while simultaneously opening up the possibility of a new national consciousness. In making this assertion I do not claim that all South African theatre changed immediately after Mandela's death, but his passing signals a new phase of criticism where themes such as xenophobia, globalisation, and the country's unstable economic condition move to the forefront.

This project focuses exclusively on contemporary Anglophone South African drama. In doing so, I adapt Blumberg's model throughout this dissertation as a framework for a detailed

analysis of eight plays from the second interregnum. Blumberg's articles provide only a broad summary of theatre from this period by focusing on thematic concerns as well as a wide spectrum of works emerging in recent years. In keeping with Blumberg's assertion that, "No matter how volatile the political scene, the creative arts seem to thrive by responding to challenges and raising new awareness" in South Africa ("South African" 258), this project adds to the body of scholarship on South African drama by emphasizing the ways in which humour assisted in carrying out the social and political critiques occurring during this period.

Structure and Context

This dissertation comprises four research chapters that analyze four major national crises highlighted by playwrights in the second interregnum. The chapters are structured thematically, addressing: continuing economic divisions and rising corruption amongst the new black elite, the TRC's failure to adequately address mothers' personal narratives of suffering, ethnic minorities' feelings of exclusion in post-independence national narratives, and continuing cycles of physical and psychological violence beyond apartheid. Framing my project in this way, each chapter provides a comparative reading of two plays which engage with similar political, cultural, or social phenomena. I have selected plays that provide contrasting perspectives in order to bring a broad spectrum of views to light. In some chapters this results in comparing points of view from different cultural positions, such as the English and Xhosa mothers in Chapter III, or the similar feelings of alienation experienced by coloured and South African Indian communities in Chapter IV. In other instances my study foregrounds temporal differences between plays from earlier and

later moments in the second interregnum, such as shifting views on corruption and colonial mimicry in Chapter II or increasing violence and criminality in Chapter V.

In addition to structuring each chapter as a comparative essay, the overall progression of this project moves from crises that were more prominent at the beginning of the second interregnum, to crises arising in the latter half. This project advances from plays that question the physical limits of the TRC or critique Mandela's legacy, to ones that condemn ongoing violence and evaluate forgiveness after perpetrators have been granted amnesty by the TRC. As these examples indicate, the nation has been in perpetual transition throughout the last fourteen years. The chapters are designed to foreground how drama responded to, and in some instances attempted to predict, the quickly changing political and social landscape. For example, in his introduction to *MacBeki* Pieter-Dirk Uys expresses apprehension that the political arena preceding the 2009 national election "was changing so quickly" that his play "was in constant danger of being outdone by events" (vi). Such a dynamic political landscape highlights one of the main strengths for using theatre as a mode of critique: it can quickly adapt to change. In Uys's case, his play still remained pertinent after Jacob Zuma replaced Thabo Mbeki as the head of the African National Congress. In fact, Uys felt this shift made his work stronger because his play was no longer "just a mirror-image of what was around us," but rather a production "with three-dimensional people" caught in a web of lies (vi).

This project incorporates works by ten different playwrights in order to present a range of drama from both established and upcoming writers. Uys, Fatima Dike, Zakes Mda, and David Peimer represent an older generation who lived and worked under apartheid, although under vastly different conditions. Uys, an Afrikaner, is renowned for his drag acts and for having infuriated apartheid censors by ridiculing them during performances (Lieberfeld and Uys 67).

Dike is regarded as “the first African woman to publish a play in South Africa” and is known for addressing racial oppression and indigenous identity in her works (Perkins 23). Mda, who “emigrated with his father to Lesotho during the heyday of apartheid,” lived and wrote in exile for many years (Ebewo 27). His first plays were about Lesotho’s political conditions but he later shifted to South African themes in novels such as *The Heart of Redness* (2000) and plays like *The Bells of Amersfoort*. Like Mda, Peimer has also lived abroad extensively. Although the anthology containing *Armed Response* identifies Peimer as “Professor of Theatre at New York University (Prague Division),” he recently held the position of Associate Professor at the University of Witwatersrand (“Academic Staff”) and currently works in the United Kingdom. His collaboration with Martina Griller, whose international work experience in Vienna, Berlin and London is outlined in the play’s press release, presents both local and international views on security and violent crime in *Armed Response* (Artslink, “Media Release”).

The inclusion of playwrights who established themselves during apartheid highlights the direct connection that current drama has with apartheid-era protest works. Half of the selected plays in this study have been written by playwrights whose careers span the past thirty years or more. This highlights the significant shift that is coming as people like Uys and Dike retire and make way for newer generations such as Mandisa Haarhoff and Greig Coetzee. The continued success of the older generation suggests many who began writing during apartheid successfully transitioned into the new democracy. And while their works remain current, it is vital to remember the social and political targets of their plays have changed greatly, as have dramatic styles. As theatre scholar David Graver wrote in 1995, “The days when protest was enough to electrify the stage are gone. The simple conflicts of good against evil, oppressor against victim, rebel against state have melted into a complex, uncertain world” (104). Apartheid’s end gave rise

to a plethora of new voices because there was no longer a single entity that dramatists predominantly opposed. And it is precisely this change that makes contributions from younger playwrights, who grew up outside the basic kinds of binaries Graver describes, so interesting.

The younger generation of playwrights in this project take up drama at different points. Lara Foot Newton, the current CEO and Director of the Baxter Theatre, completed her undergraduate degree as South Africa's transition was being negotiated.³ While born under apartheid, her career began as the political system collapsed. For Coetzee, apartheid's final days were spent serving as a conscripted soldier. Like Foot Newton, his career in theatre emerged out of the transition to democracy. This initially meant producing drama about life in the military in *White Men with Weapons* and, later, in *Johnny Boskak is Feeling Funny*.⁴ However, as plays such as *Happy Natives* epitomize, white racist military mindsets are not the sole focus in his works. Ashwin Singh began his career as a lawyer, later becoming a professor, and eventually settling into stand-up comedy and theatre. *To House* is his first play, although he has written many more.⁵ Based in Durban, his plays reflect crises of identity and inclusion widely affecting the South African Indian minority. The youngest playwright to appear in this project, Haarhoff, asserts *Crush-hopper* is "an act of intervention on behalf of [...] marginalised voices in a black/white South Africa" (*Story4* 2). Her focus on coloured ethnicity is semi-autobiographical and reflects challenges she faced growing up in the new South Africa. She shares the credit for her play with Ntokozo Madlala, a lecturer in drama and performance studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.⁶ Haarhoff is currently completing a PhD at the University of Florida.

³ Foot Newton currently publishes her work using the last name Foot. This dissertation uses Foot Newton because *Reach* identifies the playwright as such.

⁴ *White Men with Weapons* was first performed in 1996 (54) and *Johnny Boskak is Feeling Funny* debuted in 2004 (2). Both plays appear alongside *Happy Natives* in *Johnny Boskak is Feeling Funny and Other Plays* (2009).

⁵ Singh's other works include *Spice 'n Stuff*, from 2006, *Duped*, from 2011, and *Beyond the Big Bangs* from 2013 – all published in his 2014 book *Durban Dialogues, Indian Voice* (11).

⁶ Madlala is not credited with writing the play in later versions of *Crush-hopper* (Haarhoff, *Story4* 1).

Many of the texts in this project are under-researched. For example, Dike is a prominent black South African playwright yet *The Return* has not attracted the critical analysis that her earlier plays like *The Sacrifice of Kreli* (1978) and *So What's New?* (1991) enjoyed. Similarly, there has been little critical commentary on Uys's *MacBeki*. Studying these works is important because it will help to understand how drama and the nation arrive at their present location. These plays and the others in my project reveal the shifting political and social landscape after the nation's euphoria began to wane. Recent drama captures examples of the fears, tensions, and personal narratives that have arisen over the past fourteen years. Peimer expresses a similar view when he argues his anthology of contemporary plays "'photographs' a post-revolutionary society" in order to reveal "a remarkably fluid and dynamically changing sense of identity" (xvii). In this regard, second interregnum drama documented feelings and experiences, as much as it critiqued material conditions.

My analysis of these texts draws on personal interviews conducted with playwrights and scholars in South Africa, critical reviews from both local and international critics, as well as scholarly publications. Many of the reviews come from archival records at the National English Literary Museum (NELM) in Grahamstown. This institution has been vital to my project both because of its extensive collection, but also because its location is home to the National Arts Festival, one of the principle hubs for new drama in South Africa. In Flockemann's opinion the National Arts Festival offers "an artificially concentrated conglomeration of artistic products which in turn provide scope for tracking recognizable cultural and thematic trends that would otherwise be dispersed across the country's theatres and exhibition spaces" ("Translations" 198). Put succinctly, the festival contains a broad sample of the nation's newest and most innovative works. It is not surprising then that Blumberg bases portions of her second interregnum model on

plays she watched at the 2009 National Arts Festival (“South African” 240). However, the rise in theatre festivals was not unique to the second interregnum. Graver claims that, in 1994, the National Arts Festival was “the largest in Africa, and in the world” (103). Similarly, Kruger posits festivals became one of the most likely locations to see original contributions in the years immediately following liberation: “new work and new ways of doing theatre for new audiences has in the 1990s more often happened on the festival circuit or outside theatre altogether” (*The Drama* 195). The large proportion of works in this project that have appeared at the National Arts Festival – five out of the eight plays – suggest that festivals remained a key venue where artists tested ideas and showcased new work. The prestige of the National Arts Festival ensured extensive press coverage which in turn has helped trace the reception of plays through critical responses.

In addition to utilizing reviews and scholarship on the plays themselves, my research incorporates theories from postcolonial scholars and humour theorists. Postcolonial scholarship is important to the study of South African drama because of the nation’s recent liberation. Viewing apartheid as a system of colonization because of the physical and psychological oppression effected under “direct-rule domination” (Young 57) in a “non-democratic [apartheid] state” (Homann, *At This Stage* 2), South Africa’s free democratic elections signal the beginning of liberation for those in the country. However, South Africa has yet to move beyond the vast economic, physical, psychological, or cultural damage inflicted by apartheid. The nation is in a process of decolonization, and it is for this reason that theorists often use postcolonial models to explain circumstances and conditions in the country.

Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of colonial mimicry and Otherness are central models used in this project.⁷ His discussion of colonial mimicry forms the theoretical framework of my first research chapter and his discussion of Otherness frames Chapter IV. The theoretical models he develops in *The Location of Culture* and other articles help explain the alienation and cultural damage wrought by apartheid. For example, his discussion of mimicry theorizes how and why colonized subjects imitate the language, gestures, and consumerism of colonizing powers ("Of Mimicry" 129). Furthermore, his writings on Otherness facilitate the exploration of cultural hierarchies at work in many of this project's plays. In addition to drawing on Bhabha's theories, my dissertation utilizes more recent models from scholars who have been influenced by his work. For instance, Jamal's analysis of South African culture after apartheid reframes Bhabha's theories in a South African context, whereas Graeme Dunphy and Rainer Emig adapt Bhabha's discussion of stereotypes to humour studies. I draw repeatedly on Bhabha's theories because of their broad applicability, but also because they have informed prominent studies of South African identity.

Other major postcolonial scholars that I draw on include novelist and postcolonial theorist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, whose scholarship on the cultural damage inflicted by English-language education during colonization is linked to similar experiences during apartheid (*Decolonising* 3). Furthermore, his writings on neocolonialism, along with Kenyan activist Micere Mugo and postcolonial theorist Kwame Nkrumah, help define neocolonial violence in this dissertation. Generally speaking, the study of South African decolonization is useful to

⁷ Postcolonial scholarship uses the term "Other" to identify subjects whose identities have been shaped, or influenced, by colonial discourses. As Ania Loomba explains, colonialism reshaped systems of knowledge to favour white Europeans: "The definition of civilization rests on the production of an irreconcilable difference between 'black' and 'white', self and other (53). In this manner non-Europeans were constructed as inferior, a move that helped justify European military operations, settlement, and religious conversion in regions outside Europe (54). In instances where this dissertation refers to subjects who have been, or continue to be, harmed by stereotypes and racial categories established during colonization, I capitalize the term Other and Otherness to raise attention to this violence.

postcolonial studies because it uncovers useful strategies to resist the legacy of colonial violence. Examples such as the nation's TRC and recent protests such as the Rhodes Must Fall campaign at the University of Cape Town are indicative of citizens' efforts to address the lasting impact of the nation's fraught colonial past. South Africa's challenges are pertinent to other settler colonies like New Zealand, Australia, and Canada, where indigenous communities and people of European ancestry coexist. The close timing between South Africa's TRC and Canada's version of this process, for instance, exemplify the similar approaches both countries are using to document colonial violence, address past injustices, and reconstruct national identity. In fact, Canada's participation in the Boer War and similarities between Canada's reservation system and South Africa's Bantustans suggest there is fertile ground to compare systems of colonization and its aftermath between the two nations. But that is not the purpose of this project. Focusing on drama from the second interregnum, this dissertation is primarily concerned with analyzing the kinds of crises playwrights are highlighting in South Africa, how they are formulating their criticism, and drawing on humour and laughter which erupt in these narratives.

Moments of Laughter

All of the plays under discussion critique social or political crises in South Africa. And yet, at the same time, all works show respect for people's right to inhabit the country. Interestingly, no character is denied inclusion in the nation, regardless of how self-serving or violent his or her actions are, or were. While characters themselves feel excluded, such as former police sergeant Johan van der Bijl in *The Bells of Amersfoort*, they are never denied re-entering the nation's borders. Uys's play, one of the more cynical works in this project, even shows the

tyrant being reabsorbed into his political party after he is ousted from power (87). So it seems on the one hand the playwrights in this project criticise politicians, political entities, judicial processes, and everyday citizens for falling back into prejudicial mindsets or sustaining various kinds of violence after apartheid, and yet on the other hand there is an effort to make people feel included and represented in the new democratic moment. This demonstrates one of the key reasons humour appears throughout plays from this period: fulfilling the need to balance criticism with acts or expressions of inclusion. For example, the lampooning of politicians during performances can shift into moments of unity when mixed-race audiences collectively laugh, helping to signify their common ties.

During a keynote speech at the 39th annual African Literature Association Conference former Constitutional Court Judge Albie Sachs proposed stand up comedy was one of the largest growing industries in recent years. One possible reason for this growth is that humour and comedy can help develop new routes to overcome the sweeping social divisions that apartheid attempted to entrench in the psyche of all South Africans. Humour finds fertile ground in post-apartheid South African society because it often plays off conflicts between state narratives proclaiming progress, and the material reality that positive change has been slow to arrive. For instance, while the country is widely referred to as the “Rainbow Nation,” an image meant to evoke national unity based on ethnic diversity after apartheid’s end, the reality is many individuals feel excluded or underrepresented in official discourses and state practices. The significant contradictions between national and individual narratives have inflicted broad harm on many different ethnic groups and lower-class citizens, a reality reflected throughout the plays in this project.

Humour may help overcome the impasse of apartheid-logic by foregrounding unresolved tensions in the nation, and providing alternative ways of dealing with them. As Uys contends, you can “laugh at fear and put it into perspective. It’s always going to be there, but once it has a name, it also has a place” (*Elections* 1). Helping to situate and locate social anxieties, humour has serious uses in a nation where humour theorist Dorothy Roome suggests it functions as a “barometer for evolving cultural relations” (60). Moments of humour and laughter appear throughout these plays as a means of coping with historic and continuing violence. This is especially the case in *The Bells of Amersfoort*, where gallows humour emerges as a reaction to torture, or *MacBeki* and *Happy Natives*, where political satire may reflect anxieties held by the playwrights themselves. The works in this project are primarily focused on seeking meaningful social and political change, and voicing the needs of individuals and minority groups. Humour is one of the tools employed to accomplish these goals by highlighting feelings of dispossession, coping with trauma, but also drawing audiences in and establishing new communities through collective laughter.

This project frames its discussion of humour around “moments of laughter” because humour is rarely sustained throughout the entirety of these plays. The majority of the selected texts are realist works that contain examples of humour alongside troubling, or serious, material.⁸ As such, few, if any, of the plays can be labelled comedies. Even *MacBeki*, a farce, was written with a careful balance of “49% anger and 51% entertainment” (Uys v). The examples of humour that appear in these works are diverse and complex, a reality reflected in Uys’s description of the careful balance he had to strike in *MacBeki*. Susanne Reichl and Mark Stein argue that there are only two available options to study humour today: “being content with addressing rather specific

⁸ Even in cases such as *The Bells of Amersfoort*, which some theorists interpret as magic realist (Mekusi, “Sameness” 578), a similar tension exists between laughter and trauma.

cases” or else “attempting the impossible” by trying to develop an overarching or comprehensive model (6). My work utilizes the former approach by creating case studies that draw on a variety of humour theories from Western scholars (Bergson, Jelavich, Hutcheon), postcolonial theorists (Achebe, Reichl and Stein), and South African specialists (Homann, Hansen, Parker) to analyze the types, and strategic uses, of humour in recent drama.

The case studies in this thesis draw on all three of the major theories of humour: superiority, release, and incongruity. This decision reflects the diversity of humour that appears in my selected works. Rather than attempting to fit all of the plays within one of the three overarching models of humour, I utilize scholarship and humour theories that suit each theme or work individually. Plays like *MacBeki* and *Happy Natives* adhere to superiority theories of humour because witnesses view characters as inferior to them, producing laughter as a social corrective as described by Henri Bergson (17). In other instances plays such as *The Bells of Amersfoort* epitomize release theories of laughter, which contend an individual can “regain his or her social and emotional equilibrium” through humour (Erichsen 28-9). And perhaps the broadest appearance of humour in this project, incongruity, arises out of cultural or generational clashes where multiple perspectives collide in absurd or contradictory ways, such as in *The Return*. This latter form is common in my study because, as a nation attempting to unite various ethnic, religious, and class identities under one national identity, conflict occurs daily. Tapping into anxieties around these experiences, humour can ease tensions related to political and social change. For example, postcolonial theorist Gisela Feurle argues the comic strip *Madam & Eve* has been highly successful in South Africa because it creates humour out of the “contradictions and contrasts between reality and words” in recent years (280).

There are few postcolonial studies of humour, as Reichl and Stein note in their introduction to *Cheeky Fictions: Laughter and the Postcolonial* (2). One of the reasons for this phenomenon, posits South African historian Sandra Swart, are material concerns related to scholarship: “Laughter is singularly lacking in an archive” (892). It is thus unsurprising that there are few studies of humour in South Africa. Feurle argues “Humorous writing was rare” during apartheid as a result of censorship, perhaps explaining the brevity of humour studies prior to independence (279). Similar to Sach’s conjecture, Feurle posits there is a new emphasis on humour after liberation – both as a mechanism to unite South Africans, but also a means to address the “sensitive contradictions of the nation” (284). Adding to this body of research, my project merges postcolonial theories with humour theories to evaluate dramatic responses to national challenges. Approaching the second interregnum period thematically, this project highlights four of the major crises continuing to fragment the nation after independence.

Summary of Research Chapters

Chapter II, “Wielding the ‘weapon of bitter shaming laughter:’ Class Movements, Mimicry, and Ridiculing Humour in Pieter-Dirk Uys’s *MacBeki: A Farce to be Reckoned With* and Greig Coetzee’s *Happy Natives*,” commences my study by outlining some of the major economic and political changes in the country after 1994. This chapter investigates the rise of the new black elite – as politicians and business leaders – and examines the fear that corruption and a perpetuation of apartheid’s unequal distribution of wealth will continue to sustain divisions after apartheid. This section draws on Bhabha’s theory of mimicry and Bergson’s writings on automatism to argue both plays ridicule the power structures upon which colonial mimicry is

sustained. Automatism – a kind of comic imitation – unravels mimicry and exposes characters that are self-serving as well as the individuals who support cultural hierarchies. In both plays the audience is encouraged to laugh at people who seek to sustain antiquated cultural codes in a period where class structures are quickly shifting.

Chapter III, “Rethinking Reconciliation beyond the TRC: Motherhood and Private Healing in Fatima Dike’s *The Return* and Lara Foot Newton’s *Reach*,” investigates how second interregnum drama responded to the roles mothers were encouraged to occupy at the TRC. Drawing on research by feminists Meg Samuelson and Ilze Olckers, this chapter argues recent drama shifts discussions of reconciliation into the private realm, opening up new roles for mothers to voice past injuries and facilitate healing. The silence that Samuelson argues women endured performing the role of “mother-witness” at the TRC has been replaced by drama’s efforts to voice experiences previously unaccounted for (159). Identifying these works as post-TRC drama, *The Return* and *Reach* break stereotypes of women as passive victims by illustrating the agency mothers have in their households, their families, and the community. Although humour in these plays operates slightly differently, in both instances it emphasizes the agency mothers have in the new democracy. *The Return* contains a mother who uses humour to express her anger towards the apartheid injustices she suffered and to subvert patriarchy in the post-colonial moment. Lacking some of the biting irony that appears in *The Return*, humour in *Reach* helps to forge bonds across boundaries of culture and class.

Chapter IV, “Claiming Space for Ethnic Minorities in the Rainbow Nation: Identity and Othering in Ashwin Singh’s *To House* and Ntokozo Madlala and Mandisa Haarhoff’s *Crush-hopper*,” examines the position of ethnic minorities after apartheid. As literary critic Pallavi Rastogi asserts, South Africa is still largely conceived around a “black and white binary” (550).

Claiming space in the post-apartheid national imaginary, the plays in this chapter subvert the binary Rastogi describes by locating South African Indian and coloured ethnic identities as members of the nation. This chapter combines Bhabha's writings on the Other (*The Location* 31) with theories on self-deprecating humour put forward by Thomas Blom Hansen and Peter Jelavich. In doing so, the chapter argues self-deprecating humour can help facilitate integration into post-apartheid nationalism by overcoming externally and internally held stereotypes.

Chapter V, "Attempting to Break Cycles of Violence after Apartheid: (Re)Visioning the Nation in Zakes Mda's *The Bells of Amersfoort* and David Peimer and Martina Griller's *Armed Response*," concludes my study by analyzing continuing physical and psychological violence beyond liberation. Both plays indicate apartheid's police state created systems of violence that continue to manifest after independence. This not only occurs in the form of post-traumatic stress disorders and street criminality, but also internalized forms of violence such as extreme paranoia. The two works present opposing views – Mda's play proposes seeing the humanity of others can help to heal divisions caused by past trauma, whereas Peimer and Griller's work indicates such revelations are unlikely when people continue to be surrounded by physical threats. The discussion of humour in this chapter revolves around physical violence and dispossession, largely appearing as gallows humour in the plays.

The analysis of these eight works builds on and expands Blumberg's temporal model to reflect events such as South Africa's hosting of the 2010 World Cup, the Marikana mine massacre, and the political scandals surrounding Mbeki and Zuma. In doing so, my project explores power structures and feelings of alienation in the post-colonial moment and then draws on humour theories to explain why, and how, humour appears. Postcolonial theory combines well with humour theories because both are concerned with mapping power relations and points

of view. As Reichl and Stein argue, postcolonial interests in revealing the histories and counter-histories of imperialism also reflect the similar kind of double-vision necessary to produce certain types of humour, such as incongruity (9). However, not all instances of incongruity “result by default in laughter,” especially those concerning imbalances of power between coloniser and colonised (9). And yet, the multiple points of view colonisation created help to explain the abundance of material to produce humour after liberation. Studying the types of humour appearing in new South African drama will highlight the contradictions, and absurdities, continuing to haunt the nation twenty years after independence.

Chapter II

Wielding the “weapon of bitter shaming laughter:” Class Movements, Mimicry, and Ridiculing Humour in Pieter-Dirk Uys’s *MacBeki: A Farce to be Reckoned With* and Greig Coetzee’s *Happy Natives*⁹

Introduction

This chapter examines two plays depicting a new class of South African elite – politicians and young professionals – seeking wealth and territory in the new South Africa. Pieter-Dirk Uys’s *MacBeki: A Farce to be Reckoned With* (2009) and Greig Coetzee’s *Happy Natives* (2009) foreground ways that people who mimic colonial systems of governance maintain social and economic inequality for post-apartheid South Africans. In these plays oppression occurs not only in economic but also cultural terms as indigenous customs and knowledge are displaced by characters that revere, adopt, and exploit Euro-imperial systems of representation and power for personal gain. Importantly, both plays subvert this system. In Uys’s play hybridity undermines the continued supremacy of European culture and language by blending colonial and African aesthetics in an adaptation of William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. For Coetzee, irony helps liberate South Africans from colonial mimicry by exposing and castigating citizens who maintain these power structures in the post-colonial moment.

In his essay “Of Mimicry and Man” Bhabha defines the colonial mimic as a recognizable colonized Other who is “*almost the same* [as the colonizer], *but not quite*” (126) due to his inability to “fully become that which he is not” (128). In essence, the colonial mimic is “the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis” which emphatically prevents the colonized from gaining

⁹ The quotation is an excerpt from Uys’s *MacBeki* (51).

acceptance within the colonizer's position of power (128). While colonial mimics may master the language and knowledge of the colonial power, and even imitate its gestures, they are barred from acceptance because of their ethnic difference. In Bhabha's words, they are "*Almost the same but not white*" (130). Castigating corrupt leaders and citizens who appear to blindly imitate colonial culture, language, and customs, Coetzee and Uys's works speak out against the systemic inequalities and injustices of European imperial power. For both playwrights the imitation of colonial behaviour leads either to neocolonial abuses of power or to continuing social and class divisions. The plays in this section highlight how citizens and leaders continue to emulate colonial oppression, sustaining divisions among South Africa's citizens long after independence. Furthermore, both plays make use of representations of mimicry to ridicule, creating humour in the mode described by Bergson where imitation produces laughter by foregrounding the unconscious automatism in a person's behaviour (22).

Political Change and the Growth of Economic Divisions

South Africa remains socially and politically divided. For Jamal this crisis is caused by a "South African imaginary [that] has by no means weaned itself from the oppressive legacy" of colonialism and its stand-in, apartheid (*Predicaments* 19). In this regard, apartheid ideology continues to negatively impact the country's citizenry by sustaining race, class, and gender divisions after independence. In Jamal's assessment unification has yet to be realized, existing only in "the record books and the advertising industry" (18). Similarly, foreign affairs reporter Bill Schiller uncovers a similar trend when analyzing class and economic differences among South Africans. Comparing unemployment rates between 1994 and 2012, Schiller notes at

independence the nation had a 20% unemployment rate whereas eighteen years later the rate had risen to a staggering 33%, “including those who have given up looking for work.” The increasing economic divide in recent years is, at least in part, a result of the global economic downturn, a recession that has hurt South Africa’s financial stability and its job market. According to Steven Friedman, professor of international relations at the University of Johannesburg and Rhodes University, South Africa “has been affected by declines in investment and exports and [in 2009] is experiencing its first recession in seventeen years” (119). In addition to the weakened global economy, political scientist Leonard Thompson proposes that international investment in the new democracy has dwindled because of increasing crime rates since independence (88) and a lack of competitive wage rates with other developing nations (85). While it is clear economic divisions among South Africans are a result of multiple factors, the general fear is that gaps are growing and people are becoming increasingly disenfranchised.

The broadening division between rich and poor in South Africa suggests the country is continuing to sustain apartheid economic inequalities; this is occurring in a modified form, however, with a black upper class also potentially exploiting poor black South Africans. As journalist and theatre reviewer Brent Meersman notes, reports as early as 2002 suggested “inequality was starting to track class not racial lines,” and that “Stats SA in 2008 confirmed that the highest inequality is now *within* the [black] African population,” not between white and black South Africans as was the case historically (“The Problem,” emphasis added). Many critics of the current system of economic redress criticize BEE – the Black Economic Empowerment policy – as a process that has exacerbated divisions in South Africa. Described by the Government of South Africa as “a necessary government intervention to address the systematic exclusion of the majority of South Africans from full participation in the economy,” BEE seeks

to rebalance historical inequalities through affirmative action policies, private-sector agreements, and by increasing the proportion of black citizens owning or managing businesses. Contrary to the goal of facilitating economic equality, many South Africans believe BEE has encouraged a number of black politicians and entrepreneurs to continue to exploit poor populations after apartheid. For Meersman, there are “too many examples of BEE businesses engaged in ruthless labour practices” (“The Problem”); conversely, ethnicity scholars Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed condemn BEE for distributing financial support based on race, without taking an individual’s class into consideration (8). These economic realities attest to the ways in which structures carried over from apartheid continue to exploit poor labourers, thereby sustaining neocolonial systems of power.

The economic imbalances occurring in South Africa can be described as neocolonial using Mugo’s definition of neocolonialism; Mugo classifies neocolonialism as a system of governance where “members of the ruling elite (whether military or civilian) essentially represent the interests of imperialism at the expense of the economically deprived masses” (146). This is especially the case where multinational corporations form agreements with rising black politicians and business leaders. South Africa’s present ties with international investment can be traced back to apartheid, when global corporations benefited from low wage structures imposed on non-white South Africans. In his seminal work *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, published in 1965, Nkrumah asserts that an estimated “50 per cent of the foreign capital invested in Africa has been poured into South Africa” alone (120). This figure indicates how closely connected the apartheid economy was to global capital. While the transition to democracy has raised the possibility of rebalancing economic disparities, scholars such as Farred assert the real hegemony in South Africa continues to be beneficiaries of apartheid economic

imbalances, especially white landowners (65). Similarly, in 2010 cultural anthropologist Anne-Maria Makhulu argued national unification had been “complicated by the liberalization of [South Africa’s] markets in the past decade or so, fostering the conditions for perpetuating rather than eradicating inequality” (553). In this regard the contemporary economic exploitation of black labourers echoes Ngũgĩ’s description of neocolonialism as a system of exploitation sustained through “Dependence abroad, [and] repression at home” (*Writing Against* 12).

Events such as the Marikana mine massacre on August 16, 2012, epitomize the true threat posed by systems that exploit the poor. For Schiller, Marikana is a prime example of the increasing gap between wealthy and poor because the high value of platinum sharply contrasted with the dire poverty of mine workers. He explores this tension by reminding readers that while platinum traded at US\$1,600.00 an ounce, miners at the Lonmin mine in Marikana used open-pit toilets and often occupied inadequate housing. Lonmin is an example of neocolonialism’s collaborative enterprise between local and foreign interests because it is owned by a British company but now includes black South African board members. In the wake of violence that left thirty-four miners dead, former struggle leader Cyril Ramaphosa has been accused of encouraging police brutality (Schiller). This is the same Ramaphosa that appears in *MacBeki* as a corrupt leader who forms agreements with three multinationals to gain wealth (43-4). The control of the Marikana mine by foreign investors and the role local politicians and police played in violently disbanding strike lines exemplify the threat neocolonialism poses to stability. While the political system is under new management, plays such as Uys’s *MacBeki* make it clear that the incoming leaders are eager to maintain the exploitative practices of their predecessors by placing

their own interests above those of the general population. As a result, economic equality has been slow to arrive and corruption remains rampant throughout the country.¹⁰

Drama and theatre in the second interregnum responded to class tensions by criticizing the government's failure to curb corruption and resolve economic inequalities. While racial and economic oppression during apartheid was often portrayed through the figure of the white boss in plays such as *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *Woza Albert!*, South Africa's new affirmative action policies resulted in a tendency to replace dramatic depictions of the white boss with a black one. Although this transition should indicate progress for South Africa's black majority, representations of black leaders as greedy and corrupt – such as Ramabanquo in *MacBeki* and Luthando Vela in Mda's *The Bells of Amersfoort* – highlight the danger of continuing exploitation reconfigured along economic lines rather than apartheid's fixation on racial division.

The plays in this chapter were written by two Afrikaner playwrights. My decision to select these texts is based on their divergent publication dates, which reflect early and later moments in the second interregnum, and their different portrayals of colonial mimicry; whereas *MacBeki* portrays an indigenous South African who recites passages from Shakespeare to foreground his English education, Coetzee's *Happy Natives* includes white South Africans who either openly desire black citizens to imitate white customs and culture, or imitate Zulu culture themselves. While different in this aspect, both plays similarly depict black characters entering positions and spaces historically prohibited to them during apartheid. In doing so, they reflect citizens' concerns of corruption and abuses of power in the ANC after Mandela's retirement.

¹⁰ A *Mail & Guardian* article titled "Mbeki 'Paid R30m Arms-Deal Bribe'" alleges Mbeki accepted money to ensure a contract for three navy submarines was awarded to MAN Ferrostaal, a German shipbuilder. The newspaper reports Mbeki defended himself against the accusation by claiming he gave two million rand to Zuma and transferred the rest of the sum to the ANC. Zuma's involvement in the scandal broadened the scope of the political crisis as both Mbeki and Zuma were leading members of the ANC in 2008 when accusations were made. Zuma narrowly dodged corruption charges just prior to the 2009 national election, and subsequently led the ANC to a victory.

The playwrights in this chapter also cover two different phases in South African dramatic writing. Uys, the senior of the two, has a broad and detailed literary career that began in 1969 with *Faces in the Wall* and spans to the present day.¹¹ In contrast, Coetzee's career is significantly shorter. Having been "conscripted into the South African Defence Force at the end of 1989," Coetzee's first play, *White Men with Weapons*, was performed at the University of Natal in 1996, just after South Africa's liberation from apartheid (Coetzee 54). Emerging at two different moments in South Africa's history, Uys began writing at a time when drama largely focused on political protest while Coetzee entered the field when discussions of social and political reconciliation were broad national concerns.

Although this chapter focuses on white South African playwrights' critiques of the rising middle and upper classes of post-apartheid South Africa, the plays offer a nuanced examination of economic abuse among South Africa's black population. Reflecting current economic trends in the country – 64% of black South Africans continuing to live in poverty – the plays foreground the multiple class and educational divisions in a group traditionally viewed as homogeneous under apartheid's system of racial categorization (Schiller). Furthermore, while this chapter examines the works of two Afrikaner playwrights, it is important to note that major black playwrights such as Mda have made it clear that there is also a body of criticism from black artists attacking the "unbridled accumulation of wealth in the so-called black empowerment frenzy" (*qtd. in Amato xviii*), and staging dissent through dramatic styles that intermingle the "stink of decayed old Europe and corrupt new Africa" (xiv). Mda's words, from a note written to his publishers, express the disenfranchisement many feel as a result of corruption and inequality.

¹¹ For a full list of Uys's plays and publications see: <http://pdu.co.za/CV.html>.

Pieter-Dirk Uys's *MacBeki: A Farce to be Reckoned With*

Uys's work illustrates how drama – historically used for political protest and staging conflict in apartheid South Africa – continues to play an important role in criticising government corruption and incompetence after 1994. As playwright, Uys has a well documented history of using drama as a weapon against political injustice. In his book *Subversive Laughter: The Liberating Power of Comedy*, Ron Jenkins asserts Uys historically used comic improvisation and theatrical satire to highlight anxieties affecting white South Africans (94). In making this claim Jenkins notes that Uys's work was so influential that, “In July 1992, the Sunday magazine of the *Johannesburg Times* ran an article featuring Evita [– a character Uys performs in drag –] as one of the decade's ten most influential South Africans, [in] a list that included former president P.W. Botha and Nelson Mandela” (95). Understanding Uys's mainstream status and his long history of politically subversive writing helps to identify him as a canonical satirist in South African theatre circles.

MacBeki, first performed at The Little Theatre February 25, 2009, by University of Cape Town drama students, highlights corruption and hypocrisy during Mbeki's administration (v). Attacking shortfalls of the BEE system, embezzlement, and Mbeki's contentious denial of the link between HIV and AIDS, the play is a scathing response to the failures Uys sees in South Africa's government.¹² As a work of political protest, *MacBeki* was widely praised by critics for its response to inadequacies in Mbeki's leadership, being hailed as “the first theatrical rendering (apart from the one person shows) in 15 years that directly confronts and exposes those who

¹² Political scientist Adam Sitze's research on Mbeki's handling of the HIV/AIDS crisis in South Africa contends that Uys's parody of Mbeki implies that the politician's “position is informed by a certain madness” (783). Sitze posits Uys views Mbeki in this way due to the latter's questioning of the link between HIV and AIDS, and his scepticism of the efficacy of anti-retroviral medications (783).

would wield enormous power over our lives” (Thamm 12). Like Marianne Thamm, the director of the UCT performances, Christopher Weare, describes the play as a “comedy towards farce with political satire as an undercurrent” (*qtd. in* R. Cohen 8). Using farce to highlight corruption and the sense of entitlement held by leaders in Mbeki’s administration, *MacBeki* foregrounds the increasing distance between political leaders and their voter base in the new South Africa, a crisis documented by scholars such as Friedman (110), Gerrit Olivier (816), and L. Thompson (94). Reviewer Terri Dunbar-Curran describes the play as using “South African politics as the subject matter” and proclaiming that, “if all goes according to plan, more than one politician will have their feathers ruffled” (7). While in some instances reviewers found characters such as “the Porter” to be problematic in light of Uys’s white liberal position (Corrigall, “To Mock” 27) or found lines predictable and at times “a little stretched and thin” (Polatinsky 83), many embraced *MacBeki* for its ability to “jolt” audiences into reflection (R. Cohen 8), for its “imaginative and daring” commentary on the “chaotic state of affairs” in 2009 (Sichel, “Going” b3), or as a well-timed satire ahead of the 2009 national election (Moncho 3).

MacBeki, a loose parody of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, farcically portrays Mbeki’s rise to power in the new South Africa. In the play South African leaders such as Mandela, Mbeki, and Zuma make appearances, renamed Maduba, MacBeki, and MacZum respectively; in doing so the work speaks to different generations of South Africans and reflects major changes within the ANC leadership since 1994. Other prominent ANC politicians depicted in Uys’s play include Mbeki’s political rival Ramaphosa in the character of Ramabanquo, Finance Minister Trevor Manuel in the character of McTrev, and Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang in the character of Lady Manta, MacBeki’s wife. The play’s Porter, who usurps lines from *Macbeth*’s Porter, is a white liberal seeking inclusion in the new South Africa. At moments he exhibits a

desire to be viewed as a model for successful transformation, while at others he is also quick to point out the limitations affirmative action policies place on his inclusion in the workforce and nation (23). Such behaviour leads reviewer Megan Furniss to argue the character is an embodiment of “every white man in the country.” However, the Porter’s dialogue (38) and his imitation of Celine Dion at the conclusion of the play (87) identify him specifically as Uys, who is well known for his drag acts. Collecting all of these figures on stage, *MacBeki* farcically depicts the political upheaval at the ANC Polokwane conference prior to the 2009 national election.

Uys recasts *Macbeth* in a post-colonial South African context. For example, Shakespeare’s witches are news reporters, able to predict MacBeki’s future because, quite literally, they write it. Subsequently, MacBeki’s rise to power is facilitated through publicity campaigns and deceit. The play begins with Maduba serving as King of the Rainbow Nation, overseeing the transition between apartheid and the new South Africa. Soon after the play’s opening MacBeki is promoted to Deputy, causing Lady Manta to plot a coup to secure the throne for her husband. MacBeki carries out the plot peacefully, seizing power through hypnosis by subduing Maduba with an iPod full of Celine Dion songs. Crowning himself King of South Africa, MacBeki limits the political power of characters such as Ramabanquo by re-assigning them to lucrative positions in multinational corporations that are now required to have black board members because of BEE policies. While MacBeki’s plan to acquire ultimate power works for a short period, his greed and materialism ultimately lead to his downfall. MacBeki is overthrown when MacZum wins popular support of the people at a convention in Polokwane forest, leading to a confrontation with MacBeki at Luthuli Castle. MacBeki refuses to abandon the fortress, choosing to oppose MacZum at all costs. Importantly though, unlike Shakespeare’s

play, Uys's work concludes with the deposed King escaping death by going "back into the collective leadership," avoiding a violent conclusion (vi). The play ends with political opponents, workers, and the poor ousting MacBeki and placing MacZum in power.

Published in 2009, *MacBeki* serves as an exemplary model of second interregnum drama. While a number of theorists outline different temporal models for studying post-apartheid theatre, it is widely accepted by scholars such as Homann and Blumberg that the period immediately following the 1994 elections was a time when drama celebrating the nation's achievements prevailed. Homann labels the period from 1990-1996 a "honeymoon" for the nation, a time when "Our achievements were inviolable. Criticism and pessimism were almost taboo" (*At This Stage* 6). Although there were still significant social, racial, and economic divisions during the first years after independence, a general exhilaration kept many citizens from openly voicing discontent. Conversely, the second interregnum was a period where disenfranchisement was openly voiced (Blumberg, "Reconciling" 139). *MacBeki* adheres to this temporal model because, unlike the jubilation after liberation, Uys's play underscores government corruption and the continuing economic exploitation of many working class South Africans. In doing so, it attacks a number of political leaders, particularly Mbeki, Ramaphosa, and Zuma.

Although many of the characters in the play bear a striking resemblance to actual politicians, *MacBeki* does not accurately portray South Africa's political leaders. The play's caveat, which claims "characters in *MacBeki* are fictitious" and any association with political leaders is "purely coincidental and should not be taken seriously," indicates Uys draws inspiration from the country's politicians (x). While individuals have similar histories or traits associated with figures such as Mbeki or Zuma, the caricatures' flaws are satirized through

exaggeration. In doing so Uys gives short shrift to the historical achievements of leaders like Mbeki, who was in direct danger when he was ordered into exile by the ANC (Lodge 66). Living abroad from 1962 to 1990 (L. Thompson 92), Mbeki's successes include rebuilding underground structures for resistance (Lodge 66), developing slogans to sustain the cause (68), and securing financial support from Sweden to help the ANC "develop an embryonic policy apparatus" (67). Uys downplays these accomplishments by having MacBeki view exile as a comfortable experience that offered educational opportunities (15) and financial rewards (27). Examples such as this illustrate how *MacBeki* eschews political leaders' contributions to the struggle and reshapes their past to heighten the satire. This being the case, the play does reflect serious criticism levelled against Mbeki's administration, such as its principal focus on global and pan-African interests while South African poverty went largely unaddressed (Olivier 824). Although there is not a seamless correlation between MacBeki and Mbeki or MacZum and Zuma, their flaws are clearly connected to the real-life politicians. And yet reviewers point out that at times such portrayals, especially MacZum, "may feed into stereotypes" and thus limit the play's power (Thamm 12). What we see then in *MacBeki* is not an accurate portrayal of political leaders and their history on-stage, but rather Uys's critical, and at moments cynical, view.

As Uys poignantly states in *MacBeki*'s introduction, "My fury and frustration had to be filtered through that essential definition of 49% anger and 51% entertainment" (v). In this sense satire helps Uys find a balance between political criticism and humour as the comic form mixes laughter with disdain. Although the play's title labels *MacBeki* a farce, the work is both a farce and a satire because farce is a subcategory of satire. As humour theorist Albert Bermel helps elucidate, farce began as a way to "scoff in public at whatever their neighbours cherished in private: standing in the community, habits, customs, affectations, eccentricities, weaknesses,

virtues that are vices, friendships, enmities, work, play, the responsibilities and constraints of belonging to a family, a tribe, a clan, a race” (13). In doing so farce produces humour out of contempt and, as Bermel indicates, is meant to engage as broad an audience as possible “from illiterates to intellectuals” (14). The closest definition to farce offered by major scholars in the field comes from Bermel’s contemporary, Jessica Milner Davis. For Davis, farce is a “broad, physical, visual comedy, whose effects are pre-eminently theatrical and intended solely to entertain; comedy which is slapstick, if you like, in a more or less coherently funny narrative” (1). While Uys describes *MacBeki* as a farce, the political elements within the play move it beyond a work that solely entertains, at points transforming it into a satire. The comically improbable elements in the play are farce – such as Maduba being ousted from power through the hypnotic singing of Celine Dion (21) or the sudden relocation of an entire forest in the play’s final act (77) – whereas the portrayal of a corrupt politician gaining power based on his foreign education is a satirical attack against Mbeki.

MacBeki is a mimic man – a colonized or formerly-colonized subject who has adopted the colonizer’s culture and codes. It is not his ability to quote Shakespeare that makes him a mimic man, but rather the way that he brandishes his European education as proof of his intelligence and ability to govern South Africa. In a sequence when *MacBeki* is plotting with Lady Manta to oust Maduba from power, *MacBeki* absurdly announces that he has “read enough to understand the need for original thought” and that his genius will help to assure their success (18). This statement is ridiculous because, from the play’s outset, the audience sees *MacBeki*’s hubris. He believes he is superior to other political competitors precisely because he can mimic colonial performances of power. Educated in exile during apartheid, he believes himself the only suitable choice to govern the new South Africa. *MacBeki* embraces British culture and aesthetic

values in order to gain political influence, assuming a few verses from Shakespeare or his education in England will force his political opponents into submission. Even though MacBeki brandishes his education as a device to gain power, his actions throughout the play are reduced to mere mimicry because he imitates structures of power that place the white colonial master at its apex.

MacBeki will never surmount the hierarchy he perpetuates because, as Bhabha reminds us, the colonial mimic is “*Almost the same but not white*” (“Of Mimicry” 130). While MacBeki believes that his education and knowledge of British culture make him the ideal political candidate to lead the nation, his thinking is absurdly out of touch with reality. MacBeki believes other South Africans will view his British education as the mark of an excellent leader because, as Ngũgĩ explains in *Decolonising the Mind*, during colonization indigenous African populations were taught to view such achievements as prestigious (12). Ngũgĩ captures the kind of social elevation that indigenous populations who excelled at English received within the colonial education system when he writes, “any achievement in spoken or written English was highly rewarded” and as such “English became the measure of intelligence and ability in the arts, the sciences, and all the other branches of learning” (12). MacBeki continues to think in such a manner at a time when the rest of the nation is striving to decolonize. This exemplifies one of the ways in which MacBeki is out of touch with the needs and goals of his electorate.

During another pivotal moment in the play MacBeki’s monologue reveals the sense of entitlement that grows out of this European education. Announcing that he feels a “poetic moment coming on,” MacBeki addresses the audience directly as he composes a poem that describes his experiences studying abroad in Britain (5):

I would sit in Brighton after classes,

Sussex University was the place.
 Studying UK history and farces,
 Meanwhile dreaming of the day
 I would be only second in line to the rainbow throne.
 It is now all coming true.
 But there are some in my way, like you.
 Comrades always, star or runt,
 Comrades in a collective front. (5-6)

MacBeki's poem points to a foreign education based primarily on the literature and history of the UK, indicating that some of the play's critique centres on his cultural distance from the electorate and other leaders. This is underscored by his compulsion to paraphrase Shakespeare (3, 8, 15) and his familiarity with shops associated with white consumers, such as Woolworths (12). Unlike fellow leaders such as MacZum who were given a partial education in apartheid prisons, MacBeki's education in exile is extensive. MacZum has "only [a] Standard Three" education (26), whereas MacBeki boasts a degree from Sussex University. The differing levels of education cause MacZum to defer to MacBeki when investigating the disappearance of Maduba (26). And yet, overall, the play faults both men's education for different reasons; MacZum is not sufficiently educated to lead the nation, able to be duped by MacBeki's lies, whereas MacBeki's university education poses a different threat by aligning him with European culture and capitalism.

In this manner MacBeki's experiences abroad are presented as suspicious because they have caused him and Lady Manta to become avaricious and self-centred. For example, Lady Manta's description of their life abroad includes references to drinking Johnny Walker while

planning the future of South Africa (10). At another point later in the play MacBeki admits “she has some remarkable souvenirs from her days in exile. Watches, rings, earrings, brooches. Even some dentures” (27). Examples such as these suggest the pair were corrupted while living abroad. Furthermore, the couple’s consumerism is shown to carry on after they have risen to lead South Africa, emphasized by Lady Manta’s confession that their extra baggage must be “wrapped up carefully and so hidden from official scrutiny” when they return from shopping trips overseas (12). These excursions allow the couple to hide their expensive tastes from voters because the majority of those who voted them into power cannot afford such trips.

Uys’s criticism of Mbeki comes across as severe because the politician’s education abroad was an asset to the ANC. But time in exile also meant that he was often viewed as lacking “Mandela’s liberation-struggle credentials and common touch” upon his return (L. Thompson 92). Thompson’s use of the phrase “slipped out of the country” (92) to describe Mbeki’s escape from apartheid authorities downplays the gravity of the situation as Mbeki had recently been arrested for engaging in clandestine activities (Lodge 66). Overall, the play suggests Mbeki’s education abroad and continued travel outside the country have weakened ties at home. And such a position seems apt as Olivier describes him as “an indefatigable international globetrotter” (816) and as someone who has made “foreign relations, particularly African and Third World causes [...] his main political pursuit” (815), at the serious cost of connections with his electorate (824). Unfairly though, Uys implies exile was a site of privilege for the politician. He does so by having Mbeki’s caricature defend his flight into exile by asserting: “Not all of us could languish in prison, Comrade MacZum. Someone had to be there to answer the phones, [and] collect financial support” (27). MacBeki’s inappropriate response here draws scorn for his self-serving

actions in the struggle, but also reveals his tremendous greed because he was corrupt before independence was even achieved.

The play ridicules colonial mimicry. MacBeki is a comic character because he inadvertently exposes his own flaws. While he acknowledges and at numerous points embraces his position as a colonial mimic, MacBeki foolishly believes he controls the process and can manipulate it to his advantage. At one point in the play he goes so far as to proclaim: “The enemy trusted me. They saw me for what I displayed for their scrutiny. But remember, I was educated in Sussex halls of hallowed wisdom and so I can act like them while thinking like me” (15). Being able to “act like them while thinking like me,” MacBeki claims to be able to act British while preventing himself from being controlled by colonial structures of power (15). MacBeki’s stance is flawed here; as Bhabha states, “Mimicry *repeats* rather than *re-presents*” (“Of Mimicry” 128, emphasis in original). And in this case, Bhabha’s words hold true. As a mimic man MacBeki repeats, or sustains, the purported superiority of European culture.¹³ For example, when describing Sussex University MacBeki still reveres its “halls of hallowed wisdom” (15) – a British education that causes ANC rivals like MacZum to defer to MacBeki’s judgement because they are “humbled” by his “intellect and guile” (26).¹⁴ And, as his comments suggest, MacBeki’s performance operates on two levels: to impress indigenous South Africans, but also to gain favour from colonial masters whom he describes as “the enemy” (15).

Although MacBeki imagines he is able to cease privileging European culture at any moment and simply think for himself, he is not. MacBeki’s bid to gain power, predicated on his

¹³ Thamm notes that Uys’s play “gives literal expression to Karl Marx’s famous maxim that ‘history repeats itself as tragedy and then as farce’” (12). *MacBeki* epitomizes this transformation as events of grave importance and political gravity from South Africa’s past are reworked into comedy.

¹⁴ It is important to consider Sussex is a newer university in the UK and not part of the prestigious tradition associated with older institutions like Oxford or Cambridge. In this regard MacBeki’s reverence for Sussex University is part of the humour directed at him. The way he lords his education over other South African politicians is overblown, causing him to look foolish to those familiar with the university education system in the UK.

European education and pretensions, relies on a hierarchy that he can never fully surmount. Regardless of how well MacBeki masters European cultural standards and knowledge, such as developing an appreciation for Vivaldi because “it soothes” his “native intelligence” (18), he also capitulates to imperial power structures. At the same time MacBeki is also unable to escape the system as easily as he claims because he must continually praise the superiority of European culture in order to sustain his own privileged position within it. It is due to this system of control that MacBeki’s claim to be able to “act like them while thinking like me” is, in the context of the play, impossible (15). Unconsciously, MacBeki betrays himself.

Bergson’s *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* helps to explain how self-betrayal produces humour. According to Bergson, “what is essentially laughable is what is done automatically. In a vice, even in a virtue, the comic is that element by which the person unwittingly betrays himself – the involuntary gesture or the unconscious remark. Absentmindedness is always comical” (71). MacBeki is an absentminded character because his comments and mannerisms constantly betray his flaws. His belief that he can control his mimicry is unsound because, through his thoughts and actions, he continues both consciously and unconsciously to imitate gestures of European culture. Even MacBeki’s rejection of critics who call him a “coconut,” a derogatory term implying a non-white South African is a colonial mimic, indicates he is a new type of colonizer. MacBeki’s retort, “They say ‘Coconut’? No. Coconuts fall off a tree. I will become that tree and all who follow me will be rich as golden fruit,” establishes him as a colonizer in the metaphor because he envisions himself as the tree producing coconuts, or in the metaphor’s terms, colonial mimics (15). Throughout such examples MacBeki absentmindedly repeats colonial norms without ever effectively subverting them.

The humour extending from MacBeki's behaviour, gestures, and speech in Uys's play creates laughter that assails corrupt and hypocritical leaders. The audience laughs at MacBeki because we despise him as a self-serving leader whose flaws include ignorance, egotism, and greed. Although this comes as a result of Uys deviating from an accurate portrayal of Mbeki's presidency, the attack and its implications are appreciated by a number of critics. As one reviewer notes, the play "airs the country's dirty laundry with glee" and leaves audiences "laughing at the hypocrisy and chiding the inadequacies" in their leaders (N. Bosman). Laughter is thus a social corrective, working to ridicule and castigate Mbeki who, in theatre reviewer Mary Corrigan's opinion, "already disgraced himself before taking office" and has since failed to live up to voter expectations ("To Mock" 27).

Bergson argues that laughter can serve as a public corrective because it is "a social gesture that singles out and represses a kind of absentmindedness in men and in events" (46). It is in this light that *MacBeki* becomes a tool for Uys to directly ridicule Mbeki's failings. As Uys explains in an interview, "We make it clear who's who in our zoo. I am not deconstructing Shakespeare, but Thabo Mbeki" ("Daggers"). Ridiculing Mbeki in this way, Uys suggests Mbeki is a fraud, incompetent, and greedy. Significantly, the items of wealth and symbols of power that MacBeki adopts are not those of South Africa's indigenous population, but rather those of global capital. References to knowledge of the French language (84), attending performances of *Macbeth* in London, and foreign shopping sprees directly link MacBeki and Lady Manta to a broad consumption of European goods and culture (12). MacBeki's fixation on wealth, power, and imitating models of European culture and consumerism lead him to lose sight of his electorate's needs, ushering in a new era of, in Uys's words, "Mbekivellian intrigues" (*MacBeki* v).

In this light MacBeki can be read as both a critique of Mbeki and of the lingering fixation on European cultural superiority. While the audience laughs at MacBeki because he unwittingly betrays himself throughout the play, MacBeki also serves as a double for the English colonial master. His ability to pass as a colonial mimic, regardless of how poorly he fulfills the role, illustrates how colonial notions of cultural superiority rely on performance; language, knowledge, and even gestures are codified and repeated to show one's status. Bergson's description of the automaton helps to explain how imitation leads to comedy. As Bergson states:

I find that a certain movement of the head or arm, a movement always the same, seems to return at regular intervals. If I notice it and it succeeds in diverting my attention, if I wait for it to occur and it occurs when I expect it, then involuntarily I laugh. Why? Because I now have before me a machine that works automatically. This is no longer life, it is automatism established in life and imitating it. It belongs to the comic. This is also the reason why gestures, at which we never dreamt of laughing, become laughable when imitated by another individual... To imitate any one is to bring out the element of automatism he has allowed to creep into his person. (22)

The automatism – or predictability – of an imitation indicates absentmindedness in the individual being impersonated. In the case of Uys's play, MacBeki produces corrective laughter but also becomes a clown imitating the colonial master. In doing so, MacBeki exposes the reliance of colonial authority on performance. As Bhabha explains, "The *menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" ("Of Mimicry" 129, emphasis in original). Performing these gestures, even improperly, still gives MacBeki the advantage he needs to prevent rivals such as MacZum from blocking his rise to

power. Yet, at the same time, the imitation of colonial language and aesthetic values disrupts colonial authority because it shows these characteristics can be easily reproduced. In other words, MacBeki's imitation of the colonial master uncovers the generic performances of colonial superiority.

Whereas many of the characters on stage are taken in by MacBeki's British education, the audience watching is presumably not. This is because they witness him plotting with Lady Manta to deceive political opponents by quoting "Shakespeare, Woolworths and Thesaurus" (12). The generic nature of these three terms, broadly associated with English culture or white ethnicity, reiterates the performative nature of colonial mimicry. MacBeki's success does not require him to be sophisticated; he merely needs to sound cultured. And the absurdity of quoting "Woolworths" reiterates this artifice (12). Although he manages to deceive and corrupt MacZum and Ramabanquo respectively, the citizenry grow discontented and vote him out of power. As McTrev explains: "The electronic vote has been rejected by the majority of our comrades. Manual counting took time, but, while that system proved itself to be cumbersome, it was successful. The people have spoken. We have won the battle" (72). Placing the power of the overthrow in the hands of the people who have spoken through the ballot box, the play implies citizens hold the real power in the nation, not their elected officials. And in this regard Uys seems to be calling on his audience to use this power in the upcoming election.

Building on Uys's remark that his play is "not deconstructing Shakespeare, but Thabo Mbeki," I posit *MacBeki* should be read, more broadly, as a general critique of the dangers of mimicry and neocolonialism in the South African political system ("Daggers"). Although my chapter so far has focused on the cultural aspect of MacBeki's mimicry, it should be noted that he also imitates colonial systems of governance and control. This is particularly apparent in

MacBeki's dealings with the three businessmen from Angla, Sosal, and Giltfelds. The trio originate "from the old structures" of South Africa and possess particular "expertise and talents" they believe will help MacBeki's new government, namely in corrupt or dishonest dealings (36). Put succinctly, they represent wealthy apartheid beneficiaries who seek to retain power after the nation's transition to a free democracy. Although the men are clearly involved in underhanded dealings, MacBeki establishes a mutual relationship with them. As a result, the corporations continue to hold great economic sway over the nation while, at the same time, their finance backs MacBeki's rule.

Representing a group that historically oppressed a majority of labouring black South Africans, Angla, Sosal, and Giltfelds's inclusion in the post-apartheid nation highlights the continuation of corporations' involvement in sustaining economic inequality. These characters represent major multinational corporations in South Africa, namely Anglo-American, Sasol, and Goldfields, and speak to the ways that industry, especially mining, benefited from apartheid's low wage structures and poor labour laws.¹⁵ Uys's choice of satirical targets here relates directly to the growing economic gaps in South Africa because Anglo-American, a company once based in South Africa, may have heightened the post-apartheid economic downturn. Relocating its headquarters to the UK after independence, Anglo-American took jobs and capital out of the country at a time when the economy was already unstable (L. Thompson 85). The appearance of these entities in *MacBeki* reminds the audience that multinationals continue to play a major role in South Africa's economy, but they also reveal connections between global capital and MacBeki's government (36). Most obviously, they are in business together. But in addition to this, both institutions seem to benefit from closely monitoring the citizenry.

¹⁵ There are many examples of South African drama and literature exposing the mining industry's abuses and exploitation during apartheid, including jibes in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, the character Morris Tshabalala in Fugard's novel *Tsotsi*, and Gordimer's short story "Once Upon a Time."

Noting that many of the comrades, especially MacBeki, “have learnt so well from your old structures,” Angla acknowledges that South Africa’s leaders appear to be using similar strategies as the apartheid government to monitor citizens (42). In the context of the play the three men discuss private business ventures in a bathroom of Luthuli Castle and presume the room is bugged, as it would have been before the transfer of power in 1994. Similar to the days of apartheid when government-sanctioned surveillance was frequently used to uncover subversive activities, the businessmen believe MacBeki uses surveillance for control: “it used to be bugged in the old days. No reason to think they’ve removed all the things that were aimed at them. If you know what I mean” (42). Such accusations from former colonizers indicate MacBeki, in addition to imitating colonial culture, is also modelling himself on apartheid systems of control and surveillance as a means to further increase his power. MacBeki’s willingness to profit from systemic inequalities established during apartheid suggests he is simply another colonizing force, unable to fulfill his claim that he can “act like them while thinking like me” (15). As a result, he continues to believe he is different from other colonizing powers while, concurrently, supporting many of the institutions and systems of oppression that flourished during apartheid.

MacBeki even convinces the three businessmen to hire Ramabanquo, a political rival, to prevent Ramabanquo from obstructing his progression to the throne. During the negotiations with the company representatives MacBeki’s bargaining chip is the threat of affirmative action and financial redistributions after apartheid. MacBeki threatens the men by stating: “You realise that those structures of the past cannot be tolerated any longer. Our people have been marginalised by minority-greed and manipulation” (36). Although one might hope this indicates MacBeki has had a change of heart, in reality it is only a ploy. As a result, MacBeki’s actions

leave the power and influence of these businesses untouched because he assures them Ramabanquo will be “instrumental in adding noughts to your profit margins” (36). MacBeki’s decision seals Ramabanquo’s fate, condemning the man to a life trapped in CEO board meetings (47). While MacBeki abuses his power for personal gain in this moment, the satire also implies Ramaphosa abandoned his political career because of greed. Ramabanquo’s lines in this section suggest as much, pleading to MacBeki: “I am now so rich, I cannot leave my house to go catch trout in my favourite river, in case someone burgles my house and robs me” (47). Significantly though, Ramabanquo also blames MacBeki for diverting his “passion to serve my land,” attributing Ramabanquo’s fall, at least partially, to MacBeki’s bid for power (47). In this manner MacBeki continues the economic oppression established during apartheid, opening only a liminal space for corrupt comrades such as Ramabanquo to enter into the upper levels of business and politics in South Africa. MacBeki exploits the nation’s affirmative action policies to remove political opponents from office instead of using them for their intended purpose: to help reverse economic imbalances caused by apartheid labour restrictions. Disregarding the need to rebalance divisions between wealthy and poor citizens, MacBeki sustains systems of economic oppression that were a cornerstone of apartheid oppression.

MacBeki’s co-conspirator, Lady Manta, underscores the couple’s intention to exploit economic imbalances by reminding MacBeki that, once he has completed his climb to power, the South African poor will be rewarded with his face on their coins (40). Or, as Lady Manta prefers to explain, “coin” because “few [of the poor] have more than one” (40). The imagery invoked in this example is salient to my discussion of mimicry because minting MacBeki’s face on South Africa’s currency would place his likeness in a location often reserved for imperial monarchs. By extension, the image of the minted coin also entertains the possibility that MacBeki can

reproduce his likeness with a reduced emphasis on race. Because mimicry is sustained through racial difference – sounding or acting as though a white colonizer, but ethnically different (Bhabha, “Of Mimicry” 130) – MacBeki’s portrait on a coin would eschew any identification based on skin colour. Images on coins typically being minted without colour, Lady Manta offers MacBeki a way to distribute his likeness in a fashion identical to any European monarch. At the same time, her disregard for the poor shows no effort to rebalance the economic injustices wrought by apartheid.

Although Uys’s introduction states the play’s intended target is Mbeki because “he was not the right comrade for the job of building on the legacy of Nelson Mandela,” the characters and events suggest corruption is far more deeply embedded than solely in Mbeki’s administration itself (v). For example, when planning MacBeki’s overthrow in Polokwane forest, MacZum’s dialogue indicates opposition forces are just as greedy as the politician they seek to oust:

I see the overweight Politburo of the King arrive in their Hummers and 4x4s, hooting at the ordinary people in humble wagons and on tired donkeys, making an entrance like Emperors on a hunt. There are also many boys here too young to have beards, but who will have joined our battle before they will be men. They are not impressed by the imbalance. (67)

In this instance MacZum’s comment aptly captures the massive economic divide between the politicians and their supporters. The humble wagons of the ordinary folk serve as a foil for the wealth and opulence of MacBeki’s affluent political rivals. MacZum’s description of the Politburo arriving “like Emperors on a hunt” suggests that, even as opponents to MacBeki’s corruption, little will change economically for voters who place these leaders in power (67). So

the common people are left in a bind: either support the corrupt brand of leadership represented by MacBeki or fall behind his former Politburo, themselves ironically likened to emperors amongst the working class. Uys's use of the term "Politburo," the upper leadership of a communist party, suggests that socialist and pro-communist South African leaders are equally as corrupt as their capitalist counterparts (67). The same kind of sentiment appears when the three businessmen, Sosal, Angla, and Giltfelds convince Ramabanquo to leave politics and join the business sector. Angla describes Ramabanquo as a "socialist fatally compromised by the trappings of wealth and affluence," suggesting that even those opposed to economic exploitation of the workers are unable to resist corruption (45).

MacZum's use of the adjective "overweight" links politicians' bodies with greed; it is a term commonly used by Uys to describe the dishonesty of South Africa's leaders. In a statement taken from another of Uys's works, a website he created for a false political party, the satirist critiques the changing physical stature of politicians following South Africa's first free elections. Noting that "corruption is in the width of the seat," Uys jests: "Mandela's cabinet of 1994 was trim, slim, elegant and looked their age of hope and optimism. The same people today are so wobbly and bulbous, they can scarcely move without an entourage of underlings there to bounce them along" ("DATE: 25 January 2009"). In both examples Uys caricatures corrupt politicians by exaggerating one characteristic – weight – in order to emphasize their greed and apathy. In doing so, the "hope" Uys associates with the Mandela years on his website ("DATE: 25 January 2009") is replaced with beardless youths who are "not impressed by the [economic] imbalance" of the subsequent Mbeki years (67).

Using the cruelty of satire, Uys encourages the audience to scorn MacBeki so that the play constitutes an intervention in South African political debate. The vital date of the play's

debut, just prior to the 2009 national vote, is underscored by a number of South African critics who assert the play is “downright good for democracy” (Thamm 12) and provides “some sobering perspectives just ahead of the elections” (N. Bosman). In this manner Uys’s work not only foregrounds broad problems of corruption and economic abuse in the government, but did so at a watershed moment in South Africa’s political timeline. The play represents a turning point in the second interregnum, staged during a period of major political change in ANC leadership. Although the ANC won a clear victory, it was the first electoral retreat since their rise to power in 1994 (Friedman 116). The decline in voter support reveals Uys was not alone in his discontentment.

Uys’s introduction to the play captures the political uncertainty at the time by recalling the swift political changes that led up to the election: “Imagine my surprise when President Mbeki was thus swallowed and replaced. A daily pattern of scanning the news became essential. Who was the President today?” (vi). Uys’s emphasis on a lack of visible political leadership indicates a moment when serious questions needed to be asked about the future of the ANC. The only productions of *MacBeki* both occurred in South Africa prior to the April 22, 2009, election: The Little Theatre in Cape Town in February with a cast of UCT students directed by Weare and The Market Theatre, Johannesburg, with a professional cast under the direction of Uys in early April (“Pieter-Dirk Uys CV”). The fact that Uys has not presented the play since 2009 suggests the timeliness and topicality of the production as a political response to the crises besieging the nation at the close of Mbeki’s leadership; it also indicates the temporal limits of satire more generally, as a good satirist “must describe, decry, denounce the here and now” (Hight 17). The impact of the play diminishes outside its political moment, likely causing Uys to abandon it in favour of more recent productions.

Strikingly, Uys's criticism of government corruption in 2008 and 2009 appears to be uncomfortably apt in light of recent occurrences such as the Marikana massacre and accusations that Mbeki's successor, Zuma, has embezzled the equivalent of twenty-seven million US dollars from the treasury to enhance his home with an airstrip and an underground bunker (Schiller). Attacking economic abuses of power and the sense of entitlement many politicians carried with them on their rise to power, Uys directs laughter towards those who should feel disgraced. As a line from *MacBeki* summarizes, "There's an old saying: the dead will have their revenge. But worse than that is if the living need not seek revenge, because they hold the weapon of bitter shaming laughter" (51). It is precisely this type of shaming laughter that *MacBeki* produces, castigating colonial mimicry while also critiquing those who perpetuate systems of corruption and greed. Uys's farcical handling of this subject outlines the systemic nature of corruption, showing how the crisis is much broader than a single politician.

The play's conclusion advances its satire of broad failures in government by positing Mbeki's replacement, Zuma, may be no better than Mbeki. The final lines, spoken by a character impersonating Mandela, leave the audience with an image of unity by invoking the Rainbow Nation: "Whatever happens, we will all cope in one way or another. Let the Rainbow come back. The terrible hailstorm, at last, is over" (88). However, the ending seems hard to accept in light of the repeated instances of failed leadership throughout *MacBeki*, beginning with Maduba's swift departure, followed by MacBeki's colonial mimicry, and concluding with MacZum's appearance wearing a showerhead.¹⁶ Instead of reading this ending as a triumphant celebration of unity and equality as Maduba's lines lead us to, it should be seen as ironic; equality and unity cannot exist

¹⁶ The showerhead in the final sequence is a reminder of the rape charges brought against Zuma in 2005 during which, as theatre reviewer David Smith recalls, the defendant claimed he reduced his risk of contracting HIV by showering after intercourse with an HIV-positive partner.

when broad corruption and economic violence continue in the nation. Strategically, such an ending seems to encourage South Africans to seek political change at the ballot box.

Concluding my analysis of *MacBeki*, I argue Uys's solution to colonial mimicry is located in the structure of the play itself. In addition to ridiculing government corruption and neocolonialism in South Africa, *MacBeki* is also an important rewriting of Shakespeare in a post-apartheid context. The play occupies a space between Shakespearean drama and African politics. Many scholars note that colonizing European nations, especially England, used Shakespearean texts as guides for language "and a measure of humanity itself" (Loomba and Orkin 1). As a result, Shakespeare's works have been, and continue to be, widely distributed throughout the African continent. David Johnson records that, in the nineteen-thirties, Shakespeare was one of the few elements of English high culture to be widely prized by indigenous African populations; beyond Shakespeare, "English high culture has a minority appeal" (223). A mastery of Shakespeare thus indicates mastery of the English language and, by extension, European high culture. Comparing this historical reality to Uys's play, *MacBeki* attacks the elevation of European culture in the post-colonial moment through its sustained criticism of colonial mimicry. Corrigan expresses a similar view by describing the play as "a subversive rendition that simultaneously exploits the prose and the plot while destabilising or mocking its canonical status" ("To Mock" 27). Uys's use of Shakespeare cannot be viewed as another type of mimicry because his work undoes the cultural hierarchy upon which the system relies.

Using the term "combination" to describe the inspiration behind his play, Uys highlights a deliberate blending of Shakespeare's works with his own political criticism: "By July 2008 I had this new play on paper. It seemed a logical progression as a combination of the best of drama as inspired by William Shakespeare and the worst in politics as signalled by Thabo Mbeki"

(*MacBeki* v). In doing so, *MacBeki* exemplifies the changing role Shakespeare can play in South Africa beyond colonization.¹⁷ Rather than mimicking European dramatic styles and language, or subverting them using ridicule, Uys employs Shakespeare as both a model of good drama and a tool to deride characters fixated on European culture. This opens up a space that draws on both cultures simultaneously to criticize Mandela's, Mbeki's, and Zuma's shortfalls. In this case the syncretic structure of Uys's play creates a new way of viewing South Africa's political circumstances. In an interview with Jonathan Rutherford, Bhabha argues a hybrid crossing between cultural positions produces a "'third space' which enables other positions to emerge" (211). This is how Shakespeare's plot and language work in *MacBeki*, opening a new space from which to criticize the elevation of European culture and knowledge over indigenous forms while also ridiculing the failures of many South African political leaders.

Greig Coetzee's *Happy Natives*

Although Uys is one of the longest-standing and best-known satirists in South Africa, newer playwrights such as Coetzee are also recognized for their use of satire to write back against the ills of the new nation. Michael Billington, a reviewer for *The Guardian*, UK, observes similarities between Coetzee's and Uys's styles. Although Billington points out that it

¹⁷ Praised for using *Macbeth* to attack Mbeki's leadership by Corrigan ("To Mock" 27) and Dunbar-Curran (7), Uys is one of many playwrights in South Africa who have used Shakespeare's works to ferment political opposition. Historically, Mandela, Sisulu, and Govan Mbeki, Thabo Mbeki's father, used the Robben Island Shakespeare to inspire resistance in prison (Folger Shakespeare Library). A more recent example is Yael Farber's *SeZar*, which highlights Mbeki's focus on foreign affairs and accusations he was involved in the murder of Umkhonto we Sizwe leader Chris Hani (Wright 102-3). Even more recently, the Royal Shakespeare Company performed *The Tempest* at the Baxter Theatre in 2009, coinciding with *MacBeki*'s run at UCT. Reviewer Anston Bosman argues "The narrow and outdated allegory into which the Baxter and the RSC [...] shoehorned *The Tempest*" could not accommodate "the pressing questions of South African politics today: greed, corruption, anarchic violence, the threat of autocracy" (116). In contrast, his review praises Uys for setting "recent politics at center stage by appropriating *Macbeth* for his farce *MacBeki*" (116).

“may be premature to talk of a satire boom in South Africa,” he notes that Coetzee’s “sharp-toothed [...] look at the country’s showbiz image and social tensions” has commonalities with Uys’s solo performance in London in 2002. Outlining a number of social tensions in South Africa – particularly anxieties surrounding the collapse of geographical space between groups, sustained racism, and the potential for continuing economic exploitation of the poor – Coetzee’s *Happy Natives* shares a number of thematic concerns with Uys’s *MacBeki*.

For example, both plays highlight the reversal of employment opportunities created by affirmative action policies and BEE by presenting white actors unable to find gainful employment. Coetzee’s and Uys’s works also foreground class divisions by contrasting the opulent way of life of the wealthy with the desperation and anger of the poor. Most significantly, both plays contain neocolonial mimic men seeking power: “at the expense of the economically deprived masses” (Mugo 146). Whereas Uys depicts MacBeki using his foreign education to lead the new South Africa and broker economic deals with businessmen who financially benefitted from apartheid, Coetzee’s Xaba and Mto also offer variations of colonial mimesis. Xaba imitates colonial gestures and language in an effort to broker business deals but Mto’s adoption of colonial aesthetics is rooted in a desire to fit in with his surrounding white-dominated neighbourhood. So while characters such as MacBeki reproduce old power structures in order to gain political power, Coetzee’s play also includes characters such as Mto and Kenneth who feel pressured to perform racial codes of behaviour in order to fit into the new South Africa. Importantly, both plays present mimicry as a danger to the stability of a multicultural post-apartheid South Africa, either by sustaining power imbalances, as in *MacBeki*, or through perpetuating social systems that oppress indigenous culture in *Happy Natives*.

As a satire, *Happy Natives* embraces humour to convey a difficult message about the social and political divisions in the second interregnum. Theatre reviewer Ian Shuttleworth describes the play as “a kind of theatre-in-education piece for grown-ups.” Using theatre – and humour – to educate, *Happy Natives* helps reconcile divisions by spurring conversation around the play’s contentious material. Reviews of the play have been positive, calling it “a muscled and challenging script” although perhaps “a little sterile” (Smart, “Homegrown” 11), a work that “sets out forthrightly to counter the facile ‘rainbow-nation’ notion of South Africa purveyed in much of our exported theatre” (Willoughby, “Theatre Pick” vi), and a “clever, incisive satire showing the gap between attitudes and images of South Africa” (Greig, “Flashes” 10). In a similar vein, Billington proposes the play’s form may suggest important changes more generally in South Africa, reading its satire as “a sign of moral progress.” *Happy Natives* also deploys humour to release tension and open up new perspectives on contemporary and historical crises. BBC theatre critic Jenny Enarsson asserts *Happy Natives* “tells a serious story in a very funny way,” indicating the humour connects South Africa’s traumatic past with its fraught present.

Environmentalists Malcolm Draper, Marja Spierenburg, and Harry Wels argue the play foregrounds how indigenous communities have often been stereotyped as “untouched by modernity,” in contrast with white South Africans who are often conceived of as modern (222). Their essay analyzes a debate about ancestral identity that occurs between Kenneth and Mto to illustrate this point. Theatre scholar Johann van Heerden also briefly describes the play as part of a dramatic tradition that looks at life in the new South Africa from multiple angles and “a variety of cultural groupings” (106). Lastly, the broadest analysis of the play comes from theatre scholar Anton Krueger in *Experiments in Freedom: Explorations of Identity in New South African Drama* and in an article titled “Fashionably Ethnic: Individuality and Heritage in Greig

Coetzee's *Happy Natives*." For Krueger, *Happy Natives* marks a shift in South African drama towards a focus on individualism. What we witness in the play is an emphasis on how identities are formed out of "tradition, function, or indoctrination" ("Fashionably" 43). Krueger perceives the humour in the play as arising from clashes in what is considered "appropriate role-playing behaviour" (52). His paper concludes by arguing individuality may be one of the best strategies to create "a contemporary sense of 'self'" and outlines the need for further research into individualism (55). While this chapter does not directly engage Krueger's discussion of individuality, it does illustrate how tensions between the individual and their surrounding society can produce instances where mimicry emerges as a strategy to aid integration.

Happy Natives first toured internationally at the Edinburgh Festival in August of 2002. Afterwards it appeared at the Soho Theatre, London. Subsequently the play circulated throughout South Africa in 2003, beginning with "the National Arts Festival in June, a season in Cape Town," and a run at the Liberty Theatre on the Square, Johannesburg (Artslink, "Happy Natives"). The play was also published by the University of Natal Press in 2003.¹⁸ Taking this information into account it is clear that while Coetzee crafted the play to include an international audience, the work was widely received in South Africa. The 2009 anthology containing *Happy Natives* also emphasizes the significance of a local South African audience because the supplementary material is written by prominent South African theatre specialists; the anthology's foreword is written by director and producer Mannie Mannim while the introduction is written by Hazel Barnes, a professor of drama at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.¹⁹

¹⁸ Krueger analyzes the earlier publication of *Happy Natives* in his article ("Fashionably" 56).

¹⁹ For Barnes, Coetzee's play is a response to the blind commercialism theatre is often involved in, proving "itself to be the opposite of that commercialism" because of the way the play treats different post-independence crises (xvii). Offering another reading on the location of the play's debut, Krueger proposes its international release may in fact prove that "Kenneth's concerns about the difficulty of making a living from drama in South Africa are shared by Coetzee" (*Experiments* 133). The foreign debut may have been a compromise between these two positions, raising both money and awareness about the condition of the arts in South Africa.

The play uses two actors to perform multiple roles onstage. In doing so the plot follows the social and class movements of a black middle class citizen. Desiring to live as the white middle class does, Mto buys a house in a formerly all-white neighbourhood called Woodlands, an actual suburb in Durban.²⁰ Upon arrival Mto's neighbour, Jimmy, is discovered to be a racist ex-soldier with a post-traumatic stress disorder. He frequently encourages Mto to adopt the culture and behaviours of the neighbourhood in the hope of keeping up appearances. At the same time, Mto takes on a new business venture with an old acquaintance named Kenneth, who has recently returned from London. Struggling to subsist on a private theatre venture, Mto abandons a play about his father's death in the anti-apartheid struggle to join Kenneth in closing a government deal to create a play that showcases South Africa internationally. In the hope of increasing his chances of receiving a grant, Kenneth persuades Mto to incorporate his Zulu culture into the new play. *Happy Natives* comes to a climax when Kenneth is taken off the project and Mto has a falling out with his white neighbour over the latter's treatment of his black domestic worker, Prudence. The play ends with Mto striking a key business deal with a white producer named Chenaye, giving him full artistic license over the project, while Kenneth departs for England in anger. Jimmy remains an estranged neighbour after falling out with Mto, but has learned to respect Prudence, a woman of integrity, compassion, and resourcefulness.

While *MacBeki* targeted a national audience with the potential of influencing political processes – indicated by the important timing of the play's release prior to the national elections – Coetzee's debut at the Edinburgh Festival Assembly Rooms in August 2002 coincides with the playwright's goal of re-presenting South Africa globally. For Coetzee, the play is a reaction to his "growing concern that theatre from Africa presented outside of Africa seemed to follow one

²⁰ A pamphlet produced by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Natal for a conference held on July 10, 1968, defines South Durban as a representation of "the ideal arrangement of segregated residential areas" (10). Within this zone Woodlands is identified as one of the white sectors of the city (11).

of three main themes: ‘wretchedness’, ‘triumph over adversity’ or ‘happy dancing natives’” (244). Producing a play that intentionally engages cliché or stereotypical depictions of contemporary South Africa, Coetzee’s goal is to “peel back the over-simplified veneer and give people a glimpse of the complexity beneath” (244). The play’s title highlights the kinds of colonial-era stereotypes it takes aim at, attacking false views of indigenous South Africans as antiquated and naïve. Even so, productions of Coetzee’s works in places such as London may also have been a way of reaching out to diasporic populations, seeking to increase discussions of reconciliation and integration at an international level.

A blog written by student Murray Wesson in 2003 – a Rhodes Scholar studying law at Oxford University – exemplifies how Coetzee’s play reaches out to diasporic South Africans. In his review of *Happy Natives* Wesson poses a number of questions pertaining to racial integration in his homeland, raising doubts about the inclusion of white citizens in the new South Africa. Specifically, he queries: “How can whites, as a cultural minority, feel themselves to be rooted in South African society? How can they feel themselves to be ‘African,’ if you will? And how can whites live positively and confidently, projecting a genuine future for themselves on the Southern tip of Africa?” As Wesson’s questions indicate, at least for him, Coetzee’s play has spurred critical thinking about the reality of racial integration after apartheid. Moreover, Wesson’s location outside South Africa does not prevent his voice, via his blog, from participating in discussions about *Happy Natives* both inside and outside South Africa. In this manner Coetzee’s play may be said to have sparked discussions, globally and locally, as a way of working through the divisions of the second interregnum.

Nevertheless, Wesson’s commentary on the play manifests many of the problems it purports to address. Wesson’s focus on white integration does not remotely reflect the pressures

Mto faces when integrating into a formerly whites-only suburb in Durban. Failing to identify the similar feelings of alienation that both Mto and Kenneth have in the new South Africa, Wesson's questions problematically focus mainly on the issue of whiteness. In doing so, Wesson does not pay adequate attention to the systemic divisions caused by apartheid's "official government policy of [racial] separateness" (Sheckels 7). As *Happy Natives* epitomizes, divisions continue to fragment all South Africans along economic, geographical, social, ethnic, and political lines.

Critics such as Billington highlight the numerous paradoxes in the play, especially during moments such as Kenneth's confession to Mto that he is "sick of apologising for being the wrong colour" (301), without, as Billington notes, "fully grasping the remark's hideous irony." Krueger uncovers another paradox in the play, positing that, while attempting to "endorse the individual over the collective, the text proves the opposing point of view" (*Experiments* 127). For Krueger, however, "Coetzee is not necessarily blind to the implications of this paradox." He continues: "Comedy finds fertile soil in just such ambiguities, and the humour in the play both emphasises and alleviates the divide between cultures" (127). Focusing on "the divide between cultures" (127), rather than solely investigating the ways whites can "live positively and confidently" in the new South Africa (Wesson), Krueger identifies the play's complex discussion of culture and ethnicity. Incorporating other ethnicities into *Happy Natives* – such as the South African Indian shopkeeper named Patel – the play veers away from presenting South Africa as a nation divided solely along a black and white binary. For example, upon hearing that Mto has moved into a formerly whites-only neighbourhood, Patel responds with apprehension, admitting he is not ready to live in close proximity to white South Africans: "I own a shop in the white area. That's one thing. But to buy a house, I'm not so sure" (267). Patel fears living in the white neighbourhood because "White is white... Like these lighties [youngsters] with no respect"

(267). Patel's view is framed by the divisions that historically fragmented the country. The transition from apartheid into a democracy has not stopped him, and many other characters, from attempting to uphold the geographical partitions established during apartheid, or being forced to because of economic conditions.

Patel's mistrust of white neighbourhoods and their culture is rooted in apartheid's history of racial segregation. His fear of whiteness derives from the normalization of divisions between racial groups that apartheid implemented, both through legal means as well as economic systems of exclusion. Patel's view of Mto's new house as a kind of "upgrading" reflects the way such neighbourhoods were historically rendered financially inaccessible (267). But statements he makes also indicate he has internalized divisions between ethnic identities, a position he briefly summarizes by proclaiming: "White is white. Am I right?" (267). Patel's fear of crossing apartheid boundaries indicate social divisions remain entrenched amongst ethnic groups historically denied access to white neighbourhoods. While Krueger interprets Patel as exceedingly adaptable to social change, the South African Indian's fear of moving into Woodlands reveals the strong determination a character like Mto must have in order to overcome normalized ethnic divisions and class barriers ("Fashionably" 52).

Unlike white characters Chenaye and Jimmy, who are more or less well off in the new South Africa, and Kenneth who continues to fly back and forth to England while largely unemployed, Mto and Prudence constantly face, and often overcome, financial obstacles. Prudence's strategy is to adapt, sharing land and resources with former colonizers in order to grow vegetables that can supplement her finances. For Mto, however, the solution is found in carefully selecting jobs based on the likelihood of financial success; for example, he initially rejects Kenneth's proposal to work on a piece for the government because he is concerned about

loan repayments on his new house (251). While Mto is, as Patel calls it, “upgrading,” his move puts his financial stability at risk (266). Unlike Kenneth who is willing to take risks because he can afford to, Mto must consider his options carefully and pursue the one that will pay the bills in order to move up in society.

Not all indigenous characters in the play face the same economic challenges as Mto though. Xaba, for example, is empowered as a politician tasked with finding a theatre group to market South African culture internationally. His focus on capitalist investment and his language suggest he is also a colonial mimic. Krueger sees Xaba as a mimic because he employs colonial speech patterns, stating that Xaba “adopts a florid, colonial register, repeatedly mimicking stock phrases such as ‘at this particular point in time... so to speak... by and large’” (*Experiments* 126). Just as in Uys’s play, language in *Happy Natives* is one of the primary ways to identify a colonial mimic. Rather than reciting Shakespeare, Xaba takes on colloquial speech patterns of the English-speaking business world. Krueger interprets the portrayal of Xaba as a scathing attack on wealthy black elites: “the play offers an acerbic view of some of the new money in the country by mercilessly ridiculing both the new black elite, (in the form of Xaba), as well as the opportunists hoping to profit from Africanisation, (in the form of Chenaye)” (*Experiments* 125). Although Xaba is powerful as a member of the new class of black politicians, like MacBeki he uses his new position to sustain inequality throughout the nation.

Xaba’s plan to stage a play that is inherently exploitative because it seeks to market indigenous South African culture, “So that South Africa becomes a brand name [...] As familiar to the world as The Lion King” (295). Mto is warned by Xaba that if he chooses to work with the government, he must remember “that we are selling this country to Americans [...] The world, in fact” (295-6). Xaba’s marketing scheme, described by Barnes in the play’s introduction as a

“Western capitalist hard sell,” portrays South Africa as “slick, exciting, sanitised and simplistic” (xvi-xvii). This marketing campaign elides the complex realities – particularly racial and economic – that the impoverished black majority endures. Specifically, Xaba desires a theatre production stripped of political content so that the play depicts South Africa as a stable and investment-friendly nation. Theatre critic Nicholas de Jongh notes that for Xaba, “Truth, of course, comes a poor second to the imperative of selling the country as a success story.” Coetzee’s play opposes the sanitized depiction of South Africa that his character desires throughout *Happy Natives*; instead, Coetzee attempts to capture the complex “truth” rather than produce a work that simply seeks economic profit (De Jongh).

Xaba and Chenaye’s marketing scheme adheres to Ngũgĩ’s definition of neocolonialism because it seeks support from global capitalism while simultaneously oppression the needs of locals (*Writing Against* 12). This is because Xaba believes foreign capital will only invest in South Africa if they mobilize the same old stereotypes. For Xaba, this means presenting the country as apolitical, reduced largely to images of Mandela as “father of the nation” and a wild savannah populated by lions (297). These stereotypes damage South Africa by presenting its culture as a commodity easily consumed by a non-South African audience. Furthermore, they reaffirm outsiders’ incomplete knowledge while eliding important progress made by everyday people like Prudence, who are also constructive agents of change.

Although the location and cast of *Happy Natives*’s debut implies that Coetzee could also be said to be packaging South Africa for global consumption, much like his character Xaba, the complex social and political negotiations teased out in the play suggest otherwise. For example, Mto and Kenneth do not get along perfectly well, but neither do Mto and Prudence. Highlighting the numerous divisions between South Africans, even individuals of the same ethnicity such as

Mto and Prudence who are both Zulu, Coetzee's play rejects Xaba's desire to "give the world a picture of Africa that they recognise and feel familiar with" (297). Instead, expectations are undermined in favour of portraying the complex and constantly-shifting socio-economic realities after Mandela's departure from politics.

Coetzee's portrayal of Xaba as a colonial mimic forewarns of the corruption and entitlement scandals we also see occurring more overtly – and widely – in Uys's play, produced seven years later. Whereas Coetzee provides his audience with the image of a greedy government official, Uys creates a play that explores how structures of governance in South Africa can produce broad cycles of corruption. This difference can possibly be attributed to their different production dates. Coetzee's play comes from the early years of the second interregnum, when the sense of optimism remaining from Mandela's administration was only starting to wane. Comparatively, it is obvious that by the time Uys performed his play in 2009 citizens were growing discontented with corruption charges levelled against Mbeki and Zuma.²¹ Additionally, each of these plays provides insight into the changing forms of mimicry itself. In *Happy Natives*, mimicry is both a mechanism that oppresses Mto under racial codes, but also empowers Xaba as a self-serving businessman, giving him the lingo to cement business deals in a globalized market. In Uys's work, mimicry is solely deployed to accrue power within a neocolonial system. Mimicry's diverse manifestations highlight the broad threat it poses to the post-colony, uniquely adopted by characters from different social strata for divergent reasons.

Coetzee's play highlights the multiple forms of colonial mimicry in post-apartheid South Africa. This is demonstrated in Krueger's interpretation of Xaba as a colonial mimic, but it is possible to extend this form of analysis to include other characters in the play as well. Thus,

²¹ Refer to Friedman's article "An Accidental Advance? South Africa's 2009 Elections" for analysis of voter discontentment ahead of the 2009 national elections.

while Xaba is similar to Uys's MacBeki in that both characters use colonial language and idioms as part of their performance of status and authority to gain power, Mto reveals different reasons for adopting colonial behaviours and habits. His decision to move into a formerly whites-only Durban suburb turns into another form of mimicry. Instead of mimicking colonial idioms to exert influence over others, Mto uses mimicry to gain acceptance in his new community. As interactions with his white neighbour Jimmy – a former soldier – suggest, the easiest way for Mto to integrate into the community is to adopt its surrounding culture and norms. Essentially, Mto is encouraged to mimic the actions of white citizens around him. To understand the power structure he enters when moving into his new suburb, one must understand how the segregation of South African cities under apartheid dictated where blacks and whites could live.

Historian David Welsh provides a thorough explanation of the demarcation of urban space in apartheid South Africa. In his chapter Welsh identifies the Group Areas Act as an important piece of apartheid legislation preventing the formation of mixed-race communities. The act was introduced in 1950 and sought to geographically divide different racial groups by zoning “all towns and villages into areas for the exclusive ownership and/or occupation of particular groups” (239). Allocating prime real estate for white settlement, the Group Areas Act relocated non-white South Africans to the peripheries of towns, villages, and urban centres as “temporary sojourners” (195). Occupying the peripheries of towns and cities, black African labourers resided in “townships,” areas buffered from white regions by physical boundaries such as industrial areas (241). As a result of the Group Areas Act, geographical spaces in cities were closed – mediated and controlled both by the state, but also by vigilant citizens anxious about racial interaction. Coetzee's Jimmy serves as a prime example of this type of citizen.

Urban space was also carefully policed throughout apartheid because of the close proximity between areas designated for different racial groups. The close proximity between urban white areas and peripheral black and South African Asian communities occurred because, as Welsh explains, cities required low-cost labourers in factories and service positions (191). As a result of this economic necessity, “the most desirable plan [was...] to house Africans in a reserve near the town in which they work[ed]” (241). Although the South African government’s adjudication was based primarily on physical features such as appearance and skin tone, Uys notes in an interview that accents, too, signified inclusion or exclusion from a group: “You see, to me apartheid has never been about colour; it’s been about sound. What I mean is that we were educated to sound ethnic [...] Every group has its way of talking [...] I think the one thing that has divided the people in South Africa is the sound of their language” (Lieberfeld and Uys 64). The close ties between accents and identity outlined in Daniel Lieberfeld and Uys’s article exemplify how every aspect of an individual’s social identity could be read in order to determine where he/she belonged. Similar to spatial boundaries, South Africans are attuned to reading and hearing cultural and linguistic differences.

Moving into his new neighbourhood, Mto crosses one of the physical boundaries imposed by apartheid. He enters a neighbourhood where both his behaviour and the appearance of his house are closely monitored by his neighbours. In doing so, Mto is determined to live in the suburb because he has a legal right to do so, even though others, such as Patel, express apprehension about breaking down the geographical boundaries between groups. Patel’s preference to maintain spatial divisions highlights the divergence between new legislation in South Africa and a lack of psychological change amongst the population. Legislation cannot change mindsets. As Blumberg explains, “while an exemplary Constitution can insist on the

prohibition of discrimination with respect to race, class, gender, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation, it cannot effect changes in the mindsets of individuals and the dynamics of communities” (“Reconciling” 140). Highlighting the disjuncture between state legislation and popular opinion, boundary crossing in *Happy Natives* places Mto, a new middle class Zulu, in a space where his gestures, language, and actions are constantly monitored. Although Mto is protected by the law to live where he wants to, the psychological transition of neighbours has been slower than the nation’s legislative progress.

Jimmy epitomizes this divergence as he makes an effort to accept his new black neighbour because he understands the laws of the nation have changed, but he constantly falls back into racially-prejudiced thinking. As Kenneth explains to Mto, Jimmy will only embrace Mto as a neighbour if Mto upholds the codes and customs of Woodlands (263). For Jimmy, this means Mto must adapt to the customs and codes of the whites-only apartheid neighbourhood, not the racially-integrated post-apartheid nation. As Kenneth’s lines summarise, “It’s damage control, broer [brother]. You think white suburbia is lapping you up. Bullshit!... When he has to sell, buyers will think, ‘Well, the guy next door is black, but he mows the lawn, so he must be one of the good ones’” (263). In this context Jimmy’s offer to mow Mto’s lawn so the house appears occupied takes on a more sinister meaning. Jimmy is encouraging Mto to adopt the aesthetic standards of the neighbourhood that were used throughout apartheid.

Attempting to turn Mto into one of the “appropriate objects of a colonialist chain of command, [an] authorized version [...] of otherness” (Bhabha, “Of Mimicry” 129), Jimmy seeks to incorporate Mto into the suburb by converting him into a colonial mimic. If Mto adopts the social codes and culture of the formerly all-white suburb, established during apartheid when it was reserved for white South Africans, Jimmy – and presumably the community he protects –

will accept Mto on the basis of his similarity to white residents. As Jimmy's actions imply, he is willing to live next to a Zulu as long as he's "*Almost the same*" as the other residents of Woodlands (Bhabha, "Of Mimicry" 130). Mto's mimicry allows Jimmy to view him as part of the old colonial system, rather than having to reconfigure the social codes and performances of Woodlands to reflect the racially-integrated reality of the new South Africa.

This reading of Jimmy's relationship with Mto is similar to a warning given by postcolonialist Njabulo Ndebele prior to apartheid's close. Discussing the dangers of racially-integrating the education system without making necessary changes to address the needs of non-white students in 1986, Ndebele warned that apartheid's system of control would not be subverted at all, but rather reinforced. As Ndebele explains:

there have been diverse cultural interests to whom the challenge of the future has involved the need to open up cultural and educational centres to all races. Missing in these admirable acts of goodwill is an accompanying need to alter fundamentally the nature of cultural practice itself. It is almost always assumed that, upon being admitted, the oppressed will certainly like what they find. The opening up of white private schools, for example, is a good illustration of the strategy of containment through absorption. Where there has previously been the absence of freedom, the mere exercise of making facilities available may easily be mistaken for the presence of freedom. That way, a dominant hegemony that has been in existence is left intact as it gains more supporters from among the ranks of the oppressed. (6-7)

Likewise, Mto's admission into Woodlands is largely done without significant changes to the way the suburb functions. Mto is expected to adapt to the status quo by maintaining a well-

groomed lawn (255), abstaining from planting a garden (270), keeping noise levels to a minimum (291), and avoiding Zulu cultural practices such as slaughtering a goat in the suburb (279). Initially conforming to a number of these policies, Mto's move into the neighbourhood does not cause residents to re-evaluate their culture. In fact, in a similar manner to Ndebele's fears about the education system, Mto's inclusion into Woodlands could actually reinforce the dominant hegemony as Woodlands "gains more supporters from the ranks of the oppressed" (8). Jimmy's attempt to include Mto should be viewed as a continuation of apartheid-era social structures under the false pretence that Woodlands has successfully accomplished the transition between apartheid and a free democracy.

Jimmy's actions make it clear he is not ready for change in Woodlands. He first appears in the play with his gun drawn, sneaking up on Mto with "*the stealth and expertise of someone trained in bush warfare*" (252, emphasis in original). Jimmy responds to Mto in this fashion because he immediately assumes that because Mto jumped the fence and is "a stranger" in the community, he must be a thief (254). What is significant about Jimmy's explanation to Mto here is that it contains pauses at pivotal moments during Jimmy's rationalization. The silences in the former soldier's speech often occur around moments of class or race difference. For example, Jimmy's excuse for drawing a gun on Mto cites the close proximity of a squatter camp as the cause for his concern. But a close reading of the passage also reveals a pause that modifies his statement: "The house has been broken into a few times since the Rushbrookes left. I told them I'd keep an eye on the place. There's a squatter camp not far from here. And you are... a stranger, so I thought, you know..." (254). In this passage Jimmy reveals that Mto's difference, the fact he is a stranger, raises concerns that he may be a threat to the neighbourhood. Because jumping the fence is not typical behaviour for a home owner, Jimmy is immediately suspicious

of Mto. But Jimmy's speech here also suggests Mto's race is an issue. The pause in Jimmy's speech between "And you are... a stranger" suggests the former apartheid soldier is choosing his words carefully (254). Taking time to select the term "a stranger" over another term that might connote race, such as black or the racially derogatory "kaffir" which Jimmy later uses in a fight with Prudence and Mto (305), indicates it is not Jimmy's first choice of terms.²² Jimmy chooses "a stranger" because it is politically correct in a post-apartheid context.

The pause I have discussed above is not the only instance where Jimmy's dialogue indicates there is a discrepancy between what he thinks and what he says. Discussing the need to protect the suburb from the squatters, Jimmy laments: "They've been giving us a lot of trouble. And the police, well these days they're all... they just don't really do anything about it. So we've got to look after ourselves. Us... residents" (254). Once again we see a similar instance where Jimmy is choosing his words carefully, trying to hide his racist logic. While Jimmy does not finish the sentence regarding his opinion of South Africa's police force, an audience familiar with affirmative action and hiring policies in the country would assume Jimmy's dialogue omits a reference to race. The transition from a country policed predominantly by white officers to one policed by non-white officers also appears in a salient line from *MacBeki* when the play's only white actor – the Porter – reminds the King that "royal soldiers are usually not available in my ethnic hue" (74). The ethnic reversal of South Africa's police force leaves Jimmy despondent because he believes the police fail to prevent the squatters from looting houses in Woodlands because both are black. Seeking to make every house in the suburb look occupied, Jimmy

²² In South Africa "kaffir" is considered a highly derogatory term to label a black South African; the word has a long history of use. Originating "from the Arabic which implied a 'non-believer'" the term was first used to primarily denote people of Xhosa ethnicity (Jaspan and Nomvete 343). Later on the term was applied broadly to all black South Africans, and eventually came to circulate as "a term of derogation, almost of abuse" (343). As M. A. Jaspan and B. Nomvete's research on the word kaffir as early as 1955 indicates, it has long been used as an insult.

encourages all residents to keep their lawns cut. Allowing Jimmy to mow his lawn indicates Mto is on-board with the policies of the neighbourhood rather than the alternative.

If Mto refuses to cut his lawn he is, as Jimmy sees it, encouraging poor South Africans to infiltrate the boundaries of the suburb to rob and loot. Jimmy makes this argument by positing a house with long grass looks like a “soft target” because uncut “grass makes the place look deserted” (255). Jimmy’s view forces Mto to either agree to have his lawn mowed or else be accused of encouraging subversive acts carried out by destitute outsiders from the nearby squatter camp. Jimmy’s profession as a home security specialist and burglar bar installer is not coincidental; his job reflects his psychological state – maintaining clear divisions between classes and races. As his neighbour, Mto tries to adjust to Jimmy’s mindset.

In contrast to Jimmy’s racist logic, his domestic worker Prudence stands out as a far stronger and more progressive example of the reworking of social codes in the new South Africa. While Prudence first appears in the play calling Kenneth “master,” suggesting she too still uses the language and behaviours of Woodland’s apartheid past, the audience’s view of Prudence changes throughout the performance (268). Our understanding of Prudence, Krueger argues, comes “not as a result of a transformation in herself, but due to the way in which the audience learns about the construction of her identity” (“Fashionably” 49). This change arrives as a response to Jimmy publicly voicing his racist views. In Jimmy’s fight with Mto he deploys the term “kaffir” in an effort to offend both Mto and Prudence (305). This term causes Prudence to react forcefully, revealing previously unseen strengths.

Jimmy’s use of the term is perhaps intended to have the same kind of impact that postcolonialist Frantz Fanon describes in *Black Skin, White Masks* when a child in the metro labels him as Other. Being identified as “a Negro” Fanon outlines how a child’s use of a single

word can level every racist stereotype against him in a manner that negates his humanity (112). It is in this sense that Jimmy uses “kaffir” to deny the agency of those he is arguing with.²³

Prudence’s response to Jimmy’s cutting remark, proclaiming: “Little boy Jimmy never call me kaffir... That is devil talking,” shifts our opinion of her from a submissive domestic labourer to a woman of integrity and strong will (306). Defining Prudence as the “heroine of the play,” Wesson describes her as “caring, generous and morally steadfast.” It is Prudence’s steadfastness that allows her to stand up to Jimmy’s overt racism. Simply by yelling his name the stage directions indicate Prudence’s response shocks Jimmy: “*Startled by the change in her tone, Jimmy turns back*” (305, emphasis in original). It is from this moment forward that the audience views Prudence differently.

Resisting Jimmy’s use of the term kaffir, Prudence claims authority on the basis of her longstanding connection to the land. When Jimmy fires her, Prudence stands up to defend herself by stating: “You do not tell me to go. I am here forty years, I am here to this house. Before you was born, I am here for your father and your mother” (306). Taking this position Prudence’s authority is based on her long history of occupying the land and working for both Jimmy and his parents. Her argument also importantly locates her within the family structure. As she notes, she even raised him from an infant on that property (306). This strategy reconfigures their connection because instead of viewing their relationship as one of employer and employee, which Jimmy does when he fires her, Prudence outlines how she is also a parent figure in his life. As her name suggests, Prudence is the voice of reason for Jimmy, and her reaction subverts his racist comment (306). Prudence’s strong will and sense of self command respect from Jimmy,

²³ Theatre reviewer Peter Feldman notes the cutting wordplay in *Happy Natives*, describing the performance as “stimulating theatre that wields words with rapier-like precision.” The play stimulates audiences by having a white racist character voice terms such as “kaffir” (305).

who subsequently replants her garden in his yard and transforms the landscape into one that is both lawn and garden (308).

If the well-mown lawn is an indicator of Mto's change of thinking when he moves into Woodlands, the new garden Jimmy plants on his property shows new respect for Prudence. The garden goes against everything Jimmy formerly stood for (302), suggesting a change in his mindset, or at the very least a slight move towards accepting other points of view. Jimmy vehemently opposed a garden in his yard because he believed it would encourage the squatters to trespass on his property: "They see a garden in my yard they're going to be sneaking in here whenever I turn my back" (302). As a result of this fear he prevents Prudence from planting a garden for the majority of the play. Only after their argument does Jimmy change his position and moves Prudence's garden onto his property himself, presumably as an act of atonement for his racist outburst.

In another vein, the pressure Jimmy places on Mto to adopt the social codes of Woodlands is effective because Mto initially goes along with Jimmy's policies. Mto willingly yields to the codes of Woodlands by trading a relic from the former occupant's belongings, a London bus post box, to Jimmy in exchange for lawn care services. In this regard Mto is happy to make sacrifices for the sake of inclusion in the community. As he confesses to Kenneth: "If the people around here like keeping their grass short, well then, I'm going to keep mine short as well" (264). However, the politics around short grass in *Happy Natives* go far beyond aesthetics. As Kenneth warns, Mto's decision to maintain a well-cut lawn signifies to the community that he is "one of the good ones," adopting colonial ideals (263). In this case short grass is a sign of Mto's desire for acceptance in Woodlands, but also an indication of obedience to perpetuate an

apartheid-era surveillance of space by maintaining the same codes as were upheld in Woodlands during apartheid.

Ecologist David Tracey explores the history of the well-cut lawn in his book on gardening and urban/suburban culture. For Tracey, the “evolution of the suburban lawn can be traced back to the pastureland set aside around the homes of the upper classes in rural England” (122). Linking the history of suburban lawns back to the colonial centre, Tracey’s discussion also notes the elevated status associated with such landscaping; he argues the English upper classes used grass-covered lawns as status symbols because they offered “the rich an opportunity to display their wealth by leaving good land idle” (122). A similar power dynamic appears in Coetzee’s play because land use is a clear indicator of class divide. In this example Jimmy and Prudence offer divergent views. Prudence’s desire to garden and plant pumpkins and mielies (271) sharply contrasts Jimmy’s middle class opinion that his wealth prevents the need to grow produce: “I can buy vegetables for bugger all from the coolie shop down the road” (281). Mto’s decision to mow his lawn, rather than plant a garden, aligns him with a suburban culture that emulates upper class English traditions. In doing so, he is in agreement with Jimmy’s perspective, arguing: “I buy my vegetables Kenneth, this is the twenty-first century. We’re not still peasants” (272). Mto’s stance suggests he is a mimic man because the use of land around his house early in the play indicates an adoption of white suburban culture. Descriptions of the *Happy Natives* set using few props to “effortlessly convey a whole range of settings” suggest this debate occurs as a dialogue in performance (Enarsson). Mto’s reticence to plant a garden is both an indicator he is adopting the standards of the neighbourhood, but also reflects his position as a young professional who does not have the time or knowledge to plant a garden.

Importantly, Mto's view changes over the course of the play; he transforms from a colonial mimic into a subversive who opposes colonial mimesis. Mto's initial desire to seek inclusion at the cost of his Zulu culture is replaced by a desire to challenge Jimmy's apartheid mindset. As Mto explains to Chenaye at the play's conclusion, Jimmy has not stopped thinking in apartheid terms: "[Jimmy's] on border patrol, for the rest of his life. He's been out there for years, waiting for the barbarians" (309). Mto's dialogue here – a reference to J.M. Coetzee's novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* in which fearful white settlers await annihilation at the hands of a largely ethereal indigenous population – substantiates my argument that Jimmy monitors the spatial and cultural borders of Woodlands using apartheid codes. The transition to a free democracy has moved Jimmy from patrolling South Africa's border with Mozambique to a new frontier, the boundary of his Durban suburb. As one description of the play on a UK website proclaims, "their garden fence in the Durban 'burbs' becomes the new frontline in this biting new satire" (UK Theatre Web). Mto rejects Jimmy's offer of inclusion, indicating Mto has awakened to the reality that Jimmy is seeking to sustain the older codes of Woodlands in order to maintain a clear boundary between the suburb and adjacent squatter settlements.

Identifying the pressure to perform colonial mimicry created by his move into Woodlands, Mto abandons being "One of the good ones" by affirming: "No, not me" (304). In doing so, he no longer "*repeats*" colonial mimesis, but instead "*re-presents*" it in a fashion that subverts colonial mimicry's hierarchy (Bhabha, "Of Mimicry" 128). Repetition is vital to colonial mimicry's power structure because it leaves the system unchallenged. Re-presenting mimicry suggests a new kind of imitation, one that could potentially destabilize the hierarchy upon which colonial mimicry rests. Mto's actions are subversive because instead of operating within colonial mimicry's system of power – imitating colonial language and culture to gain

inclusion in a system he can never fully surmount – Mto uses colonial mimesis strategically to expose white South Africans who continue to operate in apartheid mindsets. Refusing to participate in a system that “‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power” (Bhabha, “Of Mimicry” 126), Mto turns away from simply repeating the system of power and instead re-presents colonial imitation by using it to expose continuing racism in the nation. This occurs with comic effect in the play because Mto leads other characters to unwittingly betray themselves.

Realizing many white South Africans are more comfortable around him when he mimics white South African gestures, Mto redeploys colonial mimesis back against white South Africans. This suggests Mto is able to accomplish the psychological split that MacBeki describes, but fails to accomplish, in Uys’s play: “I can act like them while thinking like me” (15). Being able to act one way while thinking oppositely means Mto can falsely trick others into believing he is a colonial mimic. At the same time this catches characters off guard because the power structure that privileges and maintains white cultural superiority works against former colonizers, revealing their racism. Re-presenting colonial mimicry allows Mto to outwit characters such as Chenaye because he performs colonial codes and behaviours ironically.

Mto’s ability to deceive former colonizers can be seen in a conversation with Chenaye near the end of the play. Discussing her business trip to Zimbabwe, Chenaye laments: “I hope this place doesn’t go the same way [as Zimbabwe]. They could drag us down with them, you know. They’ve just got to get their house in order” (282). Acknowledging the similar social and racial divisions between Chenaye’s euphemism and Jimmy’s us/them logic earlier in the play, Mto responds in a fashion that indicates he agrees with Chenaye’s views: “Ja. They must mow their lawn, hey. Keep the grass neat” (282). Making this statement, Mto falsely leads Chenaye to believe he agrees with her point of view. Interpreting this as a moment of collective humour,

Chenaye believes the joke places them on equal terms: “People say the black sense of humour is different, but it’s just the same, isn’t it” (282). What Chenaye fails to realize is that Mto is ridiculing her problematic views on Zimbabwe.

Although Mto appears to agree with Chenaye’s perspective that Zimbabweans just need to maintain appearances and habits aligned with white British customs, Mto’s rejection of colonial mimicry by the play’s conclusion indicates he is making this comment ironically. The audience has, by this point, seen Mto reject the notion of keeping the grass neat in his confrontation with Jimmy (303-4). Linda Hutcheon’s definition of irony as “making or inferring of **meaning** in addition to and different from what is stated, together with an **attitude** toward both the said and the unsaid” aptly applies to the type of exchange occurring between Mto and Chenaye (11, emphasis in original). Mto is speaking ironically because he does not really believe the crisis in Zimbabwe is caused by the nation’s inability to mimic colonial ideals or, in other terms, “get their house in order” (282). Although Chenaye’s statement is extremely vague, Mto’s rebuttal clarifies what Chenaye implies (282). His reference to keeping the grass neat employs another idiom that expresses a desire for blacks to model themselves after white colonial traditions (263). Responding to Chenaye’s comment using a phrase previously used by Kenneth, Mto makes Chenaye laugh by rephrasing her point (263). This moment is humorous to Chenaye because she realizes that Mto has understood her idiom, although she fails to realize he is using the phrase ironically. Through examples such as the passage above Mto attacks Chenaye’s stereotyped views of black southern Africans. In performance, the theatre audience is privy to the dramatic irony because, unlike Chenaye, they witness Mto’s changing views on lawn-mowing in the play.

A joke is made, as Chenaye acknowledges, but she appears ignorant about the fact that she is being ridiculed. In reality the joke is at her expense because it emphasizes her unconscious racism, making her the target of the joke rather than part of the joke's audience. Billington similarly believes Chenaye is blind to her racist attitude by describing her as "a corporate female producer who goes to night classes in Zulu while retaining all her patronising racist hauteur." In this regard Mto's comment constitutes assailing irony, "wherein irony is seen to operate as the **aggressive** putdown that keeps people in their place" (Hutcheon 53, emphasis in original). This putdown is not meant to modify Chenaye's view, a fictional character, but rather the play's audience who has intimate knowledge of Mto. Moments such as the one highlighted above incorporate the play's audience into the performance because irony always requires an interpreter to decipher the ironist's remarks (Hutcheon 45). This heightens the play's message because, as a work of "theatre-in-education," the audience's involvement enhances their appreciation of situations onstage (Shuttleworth). Chenaye is unable to deduce what Mto is thinking whereas the audience witnesses his transition from colonial mimic at the beginning of the play into a middle class Zulu proud of his ancestry by its end.

Furthermore, role doubling heightens *Happy Natives*'s criticism of mimicry. Because mimicry elevates certain mannerisms and codes of behaviour over others, especially colonial language and idioms over indigenous forms, role switching undermines the hierarchy upon which mimicry relies. Role doubling accomplishes this by outlining mimicry's reliance on performance. In *Happy Natives* there is a disjuncture when an actor switches between Mto and Xaba, or Mto and Prudence. Because some of the play's scenes contain more than two characters, costumes and props cannot be changed significantly due to time constraints. As a result, the most important signifiers for the transition between characters is the way each person

behaves, changes to their voice, and the adoption of a new vocabulary. Like Uys's *MacBeki*, the audience is shown the inner workings of colonial mimicry in order to destabilize its authority. In the case of Coetzee's *Happy Natives*, the audience sees mimicry as a type of performance because the character who plays Xaba transforms into Prudence or Mto before their eyes. This works differently than in Uys's play where the audience witnesses MacBeki's conscious effort to foreground his British education, but never sees him step out of role during performance.

Although both plays paint a somewhat bleak picture of contemporary South Africa, they conclude with images of hope for the future. Mto's plan to produce a play centred on Prudence planting a seed reminds Coetzee's audience that South Africa is still a growing postcolonial nation, a motif also used at the end of Steve Jacobs's film adaptation of J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*. The image Mto describes of a squatter camp filled with pumpkins implies that perhaps, someday, the geographical division between Prudence's garden in Woodlands and the neighbouring squatter camp will be demolished. Unification – both social and geographical – is the way forward. Similarly, Uys's play concludes with the citizens capturing Luthuli Castle, overthrowing the politician who sought to exploit them for personal gain. While MacZum's rise to power certainly draws South Africa's future into question, Uys's play suggests democratic processes and political satire are constructive means to facilitate change. Both plays end with the common people overcoming politicians' grand schemes, suggesting the country's future rests in the hands of citizens. People like Prudence and the "beardless youths" in Polokwane forest may in time replace the iconic – and aging – anti-apartheid heroes from the past (Uys *MacBeki*, 67).

Chapter III

Rethinking Reconciliation beyond the TRC: Motherhood and Private Healing in Fatima Dike's

The Return and Lara Foot Newton's *Reach*

Introduction

Chapter II concluded with the argument that *MacBeki* and *Happy Natives* suggest political agency in South Africa's new democracy rests with its citizenry; Chapter III investigates other ways that people have influenced the transition between apartheid and liberation. In addition to exerting their voice at the polls in the 1994 national election, the general population also played a major role by serving as members or witnesses to the TRC. Also referred to as the Truth Commission, this event was intended to showcase reconciliation and record individual testimonies regarding politically motivated acts of violence from apartheid. Chapter III evaluates how second interregnum drama challenged the way mothers' testimonials of pain and grief were framed at this event.

As examples of post-TRC drama, both Fatima Dike's *The Return* (2009) and Lara Foot Newton's *Reach* (2009) engage central themes from the TRC, including the ideas of reconciliation and witnessing; simultaneously, however, they foreground the limits of the Commission and in so doing gesture towards the unfinished processes of healing and forgiveness in the nation. Further, both playwrights' works shift discussions of reconciliation from the public sphere into the private one. These plays reveal new stories of violence inflicted against mothers and possible strategies to move beyond past trauma. Central to this new process of reconciliation is a shift from forgiveness towards respect. As both plays indicate, mothers' forgiveness is often

limited to addressing past trauma whereas a more complete process of reconciliation also requires propagating a new sense of respect between groups. Respect can help further reconciliation because it demonstrates consideration for the other side's position during transcultural or intergenerational exchanges. This encourages open communication and downplays tension when misunderstandings arise.

While national discourses tended to emphasize the TRC as a moment of collective reconciliation, a public process that used amnesty “as a tool for excavating the truth about the past” and staging reconciliation between apartheid's perpetrators and victims, after the TRC we see representations of mothers as agents capable of establishing reconciliatory processes privately, outside the Commission (Graham, “The Truth” 11). This chapter examines the representation of mother figures as facilitators of reconciliation, thus challenging their deployment, in official TRC proceedings, as passive figures whose sole function was to maintain the memory of their deceased sons or loved ones involved in anti-apartheid struggle. Additionally, it also traces how mothers' personal memories of pain and loss often conflict with state discourse that tends to frame physical resistance to apartheid as heroic and noble. And lastly, this chapter goes on to argue that mothers have a representational power beyond an allegorical symbol as “mother of the nation,” able to express their pain in personal and unique ways that often oppose broad discussions of national suffering at events such as the TRC.

The TRC and Narratives of Motherhood after Independence

South Africa's TRC officially began on July 19, 1995, when the Truth Commission Bill was signed by President Mandela (Krog 15). According to theatre scholar Shane Graham, the

primary objectives of the TRC were to determine the degree, cause, and types of human rights violations committed during apartheid, as well as compile “a report of the Commission’s findings and conclusions” (“The Truth” 11). In addition to recording the various truths about apartheid violence, the TRC also played an important role promoting reconciliation amongst a divided population. For Catherine Cole, the “TRC was a product of a negotiated settlement by which South Africa transitioned from apartheid to nonracial democracy” (“Performance” 172). In this respect, efforts to promote reconciliation helped to stabilize the nation overall. Occurring during a time of significant political change, the TRC became a visual representation in the media of both the horrors of the past as well as an idealized future where victims forgave assailants, and the latter repented transgressions. While documenting atrocities and uncovering truths were paramount objectives for the TRC, its role in aiding the transition from apartheid to democracy through public performances of reconciliation was also a significant feature of the process.

The TRC concluded in 2003 with the final publication of its seven-volume report (Cole, “Performance” 172). In its entirety the Commission sought to “paint the most complete picture of the abuses that occurred between March 1, 1960, and May 10, 1994,” for South Africa’s politicians (Krog vii). The Commission received more than 21,000 victim applications to testify, although only “10% of whom were invited to tell their stories” (Verdoolaege 185). In addition to hearing from victims, applicants for amnesty also participated because the process favoured “conditional amnesty to judicial prosecution” (Verdoolaege 186), a decision that may have helped to prevent civil war. For example, Farber’s introduction to *Molara* (2008) credits participants at the TRC for “find[ing] a way forward for us all” in the midst of “the epic eye of South Africa’s storm” (7). This statement highlights the Commission’s success in having

potentially staved off greater violence; however, the process has also been criticized for constructing a national history that excluded elements not “found” by the Commission (Odom 52), for placing victim and perpetrator’s “accounts of the past into conflict” leading to a “crisis of public memory and collective agency” (Graham, “The Truth” 12), and for its gender inequality (Olckers 61).

From the very outset there were concerns the TRC would not adequately address the needs of women and mothers who would play a prominent role as witnesses. In 1996 Olckers condemned the supposedly gender-neutral position of the TRC because it failed to disrupt masculine narratives, causing the “male norm and the male experience [to] remain the unacknowledged standard or dominant point-of-view” (62). At the time she argued the Commission perpetuated systems of gendered violence because it “stereotyped women’s experience” (64), primarily as “grieving mothers and wives” and often as “vessels of reproduction” (65). This silenced mother’s stories because, especially during the first round of hearings, Commissioners frequently “ignored women’s own suffering and torture in favour of their stories about their husbands and sons” (64). Even though “the vast majority of the [victim] testifiers were women,” the pressure to speak for the deceased rendered many women and mothers’ suffering as secondary (Oboe 61). Often, they were never heard at all.

Samuelson reiterates the visible yet often silenced role mothers held in TRC proceedings by pointing out that the “image of the weeping mother became visual shorthand for the TRC” (163). Such images, frequently used in brief daily summaries of the Commission’s proceedings in newsprint and television reports, became a visual representation of the pain and reconciliation taking place in meeting halls across the country. Used in such a way, the image of the crying mother was at once a representation of loss, but also a co-opted depiction of grief because the

image was often accompanied by only a truncated version of her testimonial, or appeared without any testimonial at all. It is in this manner that many of the mothers at the Commission had their stories reduced to brief summaries of grief and pain.

Noting the prominent interplay between national discourses of truth and reconciliation alongside Christian discourses of mourning and forgiveness at the TRC, Samuelson posits that a majority of mothers who testified were received as a kind of “*Mater Dolorosa* or Mother of Sorrows” (163). Viewed in this light, mothers who spoke in place of missing sons were “able to enter and speak within the public realm while being produced as passive, weeping, secondary victims, and producing national history – the narrative of the sacrificial son – as redemptive” (163). So while the TRC failed to “address the everyday brutalities of apartheid or deconstruct gender formulations,” as theatre scholar Yvette Hutchison notes, it consequently sustained gender violence by stereotyping mothers and shaping their testimonials (148). Mothers’ narratives of suffering were always already constructed, integrated into a state apparatus before mothers even took the stand. Opposing this violence, the plays in this chapter contain instances of trauma and violence that mothers were unable to present at the TRC.

The Return and *Reach* function as examples of post-TRC theatre because their style and approach to reconciliation are different from works that were produced while the TRC was underway. Describing TRC drama in his article “South African Truth and Tragedy: Yael Farber’s *Molora* and Reconciliation Aesthetics,” Glenn Odom argues that “early theatrical productions involving the TRC dealt primarily with sorting out or identifying the immediate issues raised by the commission” (49). For Odom, this is epitomized by the Khulumani Support Group’s “raw presentation of testimonies by torture victims” in *The Story I am about to Tell* and the emphasis on “the impossibility of salvaging the entire truth” in Jane Taylor’s *Ubu and the*

Truth Commission (49). What is immediately apparent in looking at early TRC theatre is the overt way it engages the TRC and its processes – using actual testimonial material, set design that imitates the TRC, or presents clear distinctions between victim and perpetrator.

The use of testimonial material, what artist William Kentridge describes as “found texts” in his “Director’s Note” in *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1998), re-presented actual testimonials on-stage to audiences who were, at the time, bombarded daily with news reports about the TRC (x). This drama essentially brought an event described by many as theatre, to the theatre.²⁴ While plays such as *The Story I am about to Tell* placed real TRC participants on-stage alongside actors (Kentridge xiii), others like *Ubu and the Truth Commission* used puppets to perform victim testimonials in order to circumvent the ethical problem of speaking for victims (xi). The prevalence of these works during the mid-nineteen nineties has led many scholars, including Odom (49), Graham (“The Truth”16), and Blumberg (“South African” 245), to compare them. For Blumberg, TRC theatre from this period tended to “eschew simplistic scenarios such as ‘forgive and forget’” and instead challenged the TRC’s “concepts and their viability” (245). Her article describes a significant turn “in the past decade [as] criticism of the TRC has increased” and people continue to question the amnesty process and “minimal reparations paid to victims” (246).²⁵ Reflecting this trend, dramatic styles have also changed.

Based on the examples in this introduction, Post-TRC drama tends to avoid presenting real testimonials and stages fictional narratives related to healing and forgiveness instead. These works often focus on what the TRC failed to address, either owing to time restraints,

²⁴ For a detailed description of Commissioners and scholarship recounting South Africa’s TRC in theatrical terms see Cole’s “Performance, Transitional Justice, and the Law: South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” particularly page 175.

²⁵ While writing this chapter news broke that Eugene de Kock was granted parole from prison due to good behaviour. Originally “serving two life sentences and 212 years in prison for crimes committed while he headed the apartheid police’s death squad,” he is known as Prime Evil by his opponents (Evans). Events such as this have raised new questions concerning the efficacy of the justice system and the limits of forgiveness after the TRC.

geographical limitations, or social conditions that prevented people from coming forward.²⁶

Plays such as Kani's *Nothing but the Truth* (2002) deal most prominently with the last type of restriction, as the play explores the "conflicts and complexities amongst a group of black characters" who need to be reconciled (Blumberg, "South African" 246). This is especially the case for two brothers who were estranged during apartheid because one covets the other's wife (Kani 48-50). Mda's introduction to the play states that it highlights the failure of political leaders "who focused on reconciliation between blacks and whites, and forgot that there is a dire need for reconciliation among the blacks themselves" ("Introduction" viii). As Blumberg and Mda's comments suggest, post-TRC drama often focuses on the continuation of divisions within the private sphere, rather than the divisions between perpetrator and victim that were widely seen in the public realm of the TRC. As a result, reconciliation in post-TRC drama often occurs domestically, around the kitchen table (*The Return*), the living room couch (*Reach*), or an old wheelbarrow in a secluded forest (*Bush Tale*).²⁷

Kruger argues that recent South African drama is returning to the domestic space as a means "to rediscover intimate spaces buried by the turmoil of the last several decades" ("So What's New?" 51). In doing so she sees drama as moving away from "the political force of anti-apartheid theatre [which] depended on exploding the boundaries between public and private spaces" to discover new performance modes and genres which were previously ignored or dismissed as "emasculating" (51). Within this private realm clear definitions of right and wrong

²⁶ Scholars such as Cole argue performance can help sustain discussions of trauma that the TRC was unable to accommodate due its physical, temporal, and psychological limits: "while South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission was designed to contain and make manageable the effects of atrocity, the magnitude of that atrocity constantly exceeded the Commission's bounds and the domain of performance was called upon to cope with this excess" (*Performing* 158).

²⁷ Another example of what I define as post-TRC drama is Martin Koboekae's *Bush Tale* (2009). The introduction to *Armed Response: Plays from South Africa* describes the play as containing "extremely subtle glimpses of the influence of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The characters try to confront their own personal and cultural memory of white privilege and black trauma as they attempt to discover the meaning of Otherness" (Peimer xii).

are slippery because broad terms such as victim and perpetrator, which were disseminated in state discourse, are undermined by personal relationships. People in the domestic space tend to have names, not labels. In this instance Odom's argument that Farber's *Molora* "presents testimony from both victims and perpetrators and, in doing so, blurs the line between them" is relevant to *The Return* and *Reach* (49). Like *Molora*, the plays in this chapter lack clear categories of victim and perpetrator. In both the murderers are absent. Instead, reconciliation is sought between mothers and witnesses who withheld information about the deceased. And yet the appearance of terms such as reconciliation and witness echo language from the TRC.

Perhaps such drama is searching for new ground rules. In this manner post-TRC drama provides examples of how processes of healing and reconciliation work at a micro level, often between two individuals within the same family, geographical area, or social group. For instance, even *Molora* foregrounds the intra-familial divisions apartheid created by having a daughter confront her mother to accuse the latter of killing her own husband, the victim's father. A South African adaptation of Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, *Molora* shows how family structures were fractured by apartheid violence (Farber 49-51). This theme appears central to post-TRC drama as it also arises in *Nothing but the Truth*, *Reach*, and *The Return*. It is perhaps due to the importance of family life that post-TRC drama often contains mother figures, either as heads of the domestic space, or as links between older and younger generations. Post-TRC drama arises in the second interregnum, roughly after the Commission's conclusion in 2003.

The Return and *Reach* contain many similarities. In addition to being published in the same year, they both depict strong and outspoken mothers who are overcoming grief for a lost son. In each case the young man was murdered during apartheid, but the mothers suffer new pain as additional information comes to light. In both cases the person revealing hidden information is

known to them, outlining ways apartheid violence damaged personal relationships as well. Neither witness is a perpetrator, yet both have caused pain, and perhaps hindered justice, through their silence. Furthermore, both men come forward because indigenous Xhosa traditions encourage them to resolve undisclosed details surrounding the deceased. Both mothers also describe their pain as unique, estranging them from loved ones, and by the conclusion each has adopted a child in surrogate form. In spite of the many similarities between the works, the plays contain mothers from different cultural backgrounds: black Xhosa and white English. This helps to provide different perspectives on the experience of motherhood in multiple cultural groups.

In Dike's work forgiveness for apartheid injustices is paired with an acceptance of indigenous Xhosa customs and beliefs. In this instance reconciliation must fundamentally occur on two levels: forgiveness for historic anti-apartheid actions as well as for contemporary grievances stemming from an erosion of traditional Xhosa beliefs by comrades in exile. In contrast, Foot Newton's *Reach* portrays a white South African mother isolated by grief who also faces land-claim challenges as a result of being a white rural landowner (138). Yet even while paralyzed by grief and at odds with national projects aimed at redistributing land, she is able to heal cross-racial divisions by establishing new family structures and building cross-cultural respect. The portrayal of mothers in each play constitutes a rewriting of the idea of motherhood after the TRC that opens up the narrow roles that mothers were historically afforded at the Commission.

My exploration of motherhood also considers the role humour plays in helping to reclaim motherhood from state discourse; humour in these works operates both as a coping mechanism to deal with past violence, but also as a strategy to assert agency within a society that is still dominated by patriarchy. Humour undermines prejudicial thinking and is useful as a tool to forge

bonds with others, as it does in *Reach*, or to ridicule the inequality of present conditions as it does throughout *The Return*. Witty asides and comic reversal in Dike's play help to subvert patriarchal control within the community. In doing so female characters stand to gain authority and power through their ability to undermine masculine dominance and men's privileged position in cultural customs. As Zoe Parker contends, humour is helping to liberate post-apartheid mindsets from prejudicial and stereotypical thinking, especially that pertaining to women (11). The humour in *The Return* can indeed be read as liberatory because women are able to harness the power of laughter in order to instigate constructive social change. Used by a female character as a tool for empowerment and self-affirmation, humour also purges some of the anger she harbours, thereby helping to bring about collective reconciliation at the play's conclusion.

Like *The Return*, Foot Newton's *Reach* also uses humour to reconcile divisions but, in addition to resolving generational divides, humour helps overcome cultural differences. It assists in forging communities because laughter can help broaden perspectives and overcome prejudices. As South African playwright and scholar Andrew Buckland explains in a personal interview, "laughter is not a voluntary action," but rather a process that can even occur prior to thought itself. The involuntary muscle reaction that produces laughter means a group of strangers laughing at one gesture can uncover an "openness in the human being," allowing him or her to see new perspectives. It is for this reason that Buckland describes humour as "an incredibly important tool in bringing subversive ideas to the surface and allowing them to be in the room and spoken about" in South African theatre. In *Reach* subversion lies in the idea that racial divisions can be undermined through the formation of a familial bond between white and black citizens. Collective humour helps in part to establish a familial relationship, and it is through this

bond that prejudices are destabilized, confessions emerge, and reconciliation eventually realized.

Fatima Dike's *The Return*

Although *The Return* does not make reference to the TRC directly, newspaper reviews highlight its double focus on reconciliation for historic injustices and cultural differences between older and younger generations of South Africans. For some reviewers the play is “an important initiation for those who are not familiar with traditional African cultures” (Dercksen 3), while others interpret it as a work that “reminds audiences, especially younger ones, about the sacrifices, strife and anguish suffered by many during the struggle” (Snyman, “Emotional” 7). Unfolding through “short scenes with a filmic structure,” reviewer Kobus Burger describes the play as “a mini drama-within-a-drama” that explores themes such as crime, traditional values, and exile (9). The play uses its structure to address multiple crises in the nation, suggesting “that the wounds of apartheid have not healed, even in 2008,” and indicating “there is still room for progress” (Khan). In Dike’s opinion progress can be found by “go[ing] back to our roots” in order to learn about “issues of respect and freedom of worship” (*The Return* 12). While generally praised for its focus on intergenerational tensions (Snyman, “Emotional” 7) and the struggle a family goes through “to reconcile amidst things unspoken” (“‘The Return’ Shows” 10), Burger finds fault with the play because it lacks a clear thematic focus and contains a seemingly abrupt reconciliation between mother and step-daughter at its conclusion (9). Although Burger faults the final resolution, other reviews suggest the play’s central theme is reconciliation – of cultural differences, generational divisions, and pain stemming from resisting apartheid.

The Return contains a number of characteristics that Blumberg uses to define second interregnum drama. These include “foreground[ing] gender issues in a patriarchal society” and staging “successful acts of reconciliation” between characters (“Reconciling” 140). Blumberg is one of the few scholars to comment on the play, which she does in her essay “South African Theatre beyond 2000: Theatricalising the Unspeakable.” In this article she records the play caused audiences to laugh “in recognition of the conflict between traditions and contemporary mores” during its run at the 2009 National Arts Festival (249-50). Like the reviews that focus on the play’s central theme of reconciliation, Blumberg describes *The Return* as a work that stages cultural conflict between older and younger generations of the Somdaka family (250).

Although under-researched, *The Return* has toured South Africa and internationally. It was first performed at the fourth “Spring Drama Season of the Artscape New Writing Programme” on November 13, 2008, in Cape Town (Dike 9). Subsequently it ran at the National Arts Festival in July 2009, and at the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, U.S.A, in August 2009 (9). At the American performance Dike was honoured with a Living Legends Award, a reflection of her status as a canonical black female playwright (Brommert 7). The play was also released as a publication in 2009 as part of Cape Town publisher Junkets’s *Play Series*, a collection intended to showcase “new South African plays” and give artists “both recognition and encouragement through exposure in print,” according to the publisher’s advertising pamphlet (Junkets). Most recently, the play appeared at the Women Playwrights International Conference in Stockholm, Sweden, in August of 2012.

The Return is about an apartheid freedom fighter coming home from exile. The work begins with a married couple, Zwelibanzi and Nozizwe Somdaka, discovering that their son Buntu is returning to South Africa with his new American wife, Isis. Buntu ran away from home

during apartheid to join the resistance movement as a teenager and, since then, has been living in exile in the United States. Highly educated after attending Harvard, Buntu returns under the auspices of introducing his wife to the in-laws, and marrying her a second time in an indigenous Xhosa ceremony. Once back in South Africa, Buntu reveals that his journey has another purpose: to uncover the cause of nightmares about his deceased brother Siphso, also a comrade in the resistance movement. Dike's decision to title her play *The Return* is apt because it stages not only a physical return to South Africa for Buntu, but also the return of his deceased brother in his dreams and the return of information previously hidden from Siphso's parents. Furthermore, the apparition's appearance forces a psychological return to a traumatic past for the Somdaka family as they attempt to address cultural divisions created by years in exile and the guilt of failing to properly honour and bury a son killed in the armed struggle against apartheid.

Isis, a cultural outsider, has difficulty adapting to the middle generation's traditional customs; this causes her to disagree openly with Buntu's mother, Nozizwe, over what constitutes respect for household elders. While this falling out seems almost irreconcilable, the pair resolve their disagreement by the play's conclusion. More significantly, *The Return* also contains a crucial reconciliation between Buntu and his parents. His clandestine departure from the family home kept his parents living in a state of fear because they were terrified he had been killed. In addition to the strain exile places on family ties, secrecy surrounding Siphso's involvement in the struggle further estranges Buntu from his parents. They have different information regarding the young man's murder, causing them to remember Siphso differently: Buntu believes Siphso was an apartheid hero who died nobly for the cause, whereas his parents believe he died robbing a bank for personal gain. The play concludes with the Somdaka family reconciling both personal slights

and historical inconsistencies by organizing the young couple's marriage and laying Siphos body to rest in his ancestral township of Langa.

As *The Return* progresses, the connection between reconciling cultural differences and historical violence becomes clear: apartheid violence led children into exile; exile caused many youth to value the exilic host culture over traditional Xhosa beliefs; those returning to South Africa need to be re-indoctrinated into Xhosa culture in order to re-establish familial connections that were fractured by apartheid violence. At the same time those remaining in the country, especially the elders, need to find a balance between inherited traditional beliefs and the new generation of South Africans who view culture in more hybrid terms. As a work that stages reconciliatory acts between its characters, especially mother and son, *The Return* reverses the gendered role of mother-witness from the TRC. Unlike mothers who were often silenced beneath the pressure to speak for the deceased, especially their sons who were killed resisting apartheid, Dike's play presents audiences with a mother figure who is both strong-willed and vocal about her own suffering. Furthermore, Nozizwe does not seek reconciliation between herself and Siphos murderer like mothers at the TRC. Instead, she seeks to heal ties with Buntu, for secretly fleeing into exile, and Isis, whom she blames for eroding Buntu's cultural beliefs.

The play opens with Nozizwe reading a letter in which Buntu announces he is returning home to South Africa after years in exile in the United States. His homecoming immediately raises questions about change after apartheid – personal, cultural, and national. While Nozizwe and Zwelibanzi show confusion over why Buntu does not expect to stay with his parents in Langa – “Cape Town's oldest black township” (“The Return' Shows” 10) – Buntu's return also highlights the political changes since he fled (18). Nozizwe's description of Buntu's return as “a journey to feel out our new country” underscores ways the play takes stock of what has changed,

and what has not, since liberation (19). Both parents look forward to welcoming their son home, but the nation he is returning to still suffers deeply from apartheid violence. This is brought up subtly at the beginning by emphasizing how simple things such as the nation's motorways have not been sufficiently updated to address the needs of black citizens. Lamenting that Buntu's arrival will place him in the midst of rush hour, Zwelibanzi comments that "the number of cars in Cape Town has exploded and this 'city that works for us' is not coping" (23). As Zwelibanzi explains, the overflow of cars is a result of apartheid infrastructure that built roads "just big enough for whites to drive" because city planners "never thought that one day the township people would be able to afford cars" (23). Such comments probe ways that apartheid violence, inflicted even at the level of road works planning, continues to disrupt the domestic lives of the black family in the play.

Although Zwelibanzi eventually lightens his criticism by acknowledging the city is trying to make adjustments but "the engineers just can't seem to get it right," the example still elucidates how lives are afflicted because the nation has not sufficiently addressed the violence of its past (24). Furthermore, Buntu's return home signals another instance where the nation has failed to properly reconcile past transgressions because it uncovers the suppressed anger his parents feel about his involvement in the struggle. Buntu's parents, especially his mother, criticize the young man for fleeing into exile without their permission, causing them psychological trauma because they constantly feared he had been killed (32). Buntu's return after the TRC highlights the need for another kind of reconciliation process, one at a domestic level.

Nozizwe subverts the metanarratives of the TRC because instead of memorializing the kinds of narratives that Samuelson argues were central to the TRC, namely "heroic acts of resistance and their violent suppression" (161), she shows equally great concern for those who

suffered daily because they had loved ones in direct physical danger. This characteristic brings to light divergent views on the anti-apartheid struggle, revealing the kinds of pain and suffering that were silenced beneath the pressure to memorialize the dead. Significantly, Nozizwe goes as far as to blame her own son for causing her pain. Her stance opposes narratives that praised anti-apartheid fighters as heroic because she blames Buntu for inflicting pain upon her. Although she is admittedly happy to see her son return home, she strongly disagrees with his actions during the struggle. Buntu attempts to validate his role in the struggle by arguing his cause was just, but in doing so he only succeeds at raising his mother's anger because he excuses his actions on the basis that they superseded responsibilities to his family. The dichotomy Dike creates in the argument between Buntu and Nozizwe illustrates the extent to which the needs of the nation and the family are often at odds.

The different terminology used by Nozizwe and Buntu captures the opposing views they harbour towards the young man's actions. Describing Buntu as having "disappeared," Nozizwe underscores the lack of knowledge she had concerning her son's whereabouts and his physical condition throughout much of the struggle (32). In contrast, Buntu adopts the more heroic and broadly used term "exile" to describe the years he spent away from home (32). In doing so Buntu is using post-apartheid state-sanctioned terminology to explain, and defend, his unannounced departure from the family home. Rather than acquiesce to Buntu's use of the term exile, which would ultimately acknowledge the political significance of her son's actions, Nozizwe reiterates the pain that his abandonment caused by elaborating on her perspective: "Buntu, you 'disappeared', because you left without telling us" (32). In this instance Nozizwe's response does not allow Buntu to excuse his actions on the basis that secrecy was the best option for all involved. In fact, it is secrecy that has caused Nozizwe great pain. Taking this stance Nozizwe

prevents Buntu from hiding behind the rhetoric of the anti-apartheid movement when excusing his failure to fulfill family responsibilities.

Furthermore, throughout the course of the argument Nozizwe makes the salient case that Buntu's decision to associate with the anti-apartheid movement may have actually heightened the danger to their lives: "Buntu, our lives were in danger the moment you joined the movement. After you left, the Special Branch were in and out of this house daily" (32). Such claims discredit Buntu's belief that secretly going into exile was the best option to protect the entire family. Pointing out the increased frequency of police raids, Nozizwe speaks to the kinds of humiliation and fear forced upon the family as a result of Buntu's actions. Her description also situates the family at the front line of apartheid violence, the home becoming a place of conflict, repeatedly searched by police and military personnel. While Buntu seems to imagine his exile as a noble choice to protect those he loved, his parents, and especially his mother, provide an alternative perspective that emphasizes how his decision only protected himself and the political movement. Such narratives also help to expose how women and mothers, who were typically reduced to the "role of recipient or auxiliary to the liberation struggle" in narratives espoused by anti-apartheid organisations such as the Black Consciousness Movement during apartheid, were themselves on the front line of apartheid opposition, confronting police daily (Kruger, *The Drama* 146). This play opposes apartheid-era narratives that situated women as "spectator[s] waiting for liberation" because Nozizwe illustrates that she was in a position of danger as a result of Buntu's actions (Kruger 146).

Moreover, the play indicates mothers such as Nozizwe were not only exposed to physical dangers at the hands of apartheid police, but also psychological pain as a result of sons' actions. For Nozizwe, the fear that Buntu would be killed or tortured was another form of violence: "If

those bastards in the Defence Force or the Police had captured you... that tore my womb to shreds daily” (32). Explaining her pain in this way, Nozizwe provides a physical representation of the psychological pain she suffered (32). The gendered nature of her metaphor also highlights how difficult her pain is to express and Buntu’s inability to fully understand her position. As Elaine Scarry contends in *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, pain is impossible to fully convey between one individual and another. Scarry summarizes this problem by claiming “to have great pain is to have certainty; to hear that another person has pain is to have doubt” (7). While Scarry is speaking generally about the challenge of explaining pain, Nozizwe’s example also incorporates gender into the equation as the example speaks to a suffering unique to motherhood.

Nozizwe and Zwelibanzi’s anger at the helplessness they felt when their children ran away as freedom fighters is thus directed at both the violent anti-apartheid movement, a group that sent thousands of children to fight a colonial government willing to execute all who opposed it, but also Buntu’s unrelenting belief that he was doing what was best, even at the cost of familial ties. The transgression here is twofold: both of inflicting pain during the struggle because the parents feared their son would perish, but also a cultural transgression because the youth fled without consulting his elders. During the argument Buntu remains certain that he was “doing what was right at the time,” while his parents fight to show him that, perhaps, right and wrong are dependent on what he values – racial freedom versus familial codes of respect (33). Buntu’s assertion that he did the right thing because he did not want to risk his parents’ lives (32) is consistently undermined by his parents’ belief that the cost of violently winning independence may have been too great to bear; Zwelibanzi best summarizes the position of both parents when he explains his view on Buntu’s decision to join the struggle: “You were children fighting a

ruthless system... a system that was happy to slaughter you. Other children had gone, too, but when you went... it was as if the sacrifice was too high, too personal” (34).

The Return breaks new ground because it presents a female protagonist who challenges her son to acknowledge the pain his decisions caused her during apartheid. In doing so it also eschews typical types of reconciliation staged at the TRC, namely between former security forces and victims. And yet judicial processes loom in the background of the play. Describing his mother’s confrontation as an “Interrogation,” Buntu deploys legal terminology to describe events within the domestic space (34). The use of such language indicates Nozizwe is staging her own kind of legal process, cross-examining her son by weighing his decision to join the struggle with the pain it caused the family (32-4). Buntu is right to feel threatened in such a situation because, while the post-apartheid state praises the actions and sacrifices of youth in the anti-apartheid struggle at a national level, the domestic space of the home has different codes and values. Buntu, a name theatre scholar Albert Wertheim translates as Xhosa for “human kind” (86), functions allegorically in *The Return*. Buntu’s blindness to the pain he caused his parents reflects the broad silence inflicted by society upon individuals who were expected to support the collective opposition to apartheid regardless of their personal needs, concerns, or vulnerabilities.

It is Nozizwe’s refusal to locate her pain as secondary to the pain endured by Buntu’s exile that distinguishes her story most from the overarching narratives of the TRC. Nozizwe is not a passive victim; she confronts Buntu and outlines her quarrel with the young man. As she explains, “I wanted to keep my feelings of anger and resentment to myself until later. But the moment you walked through the door today – you know me, mos – I can’t keep quiet about things that bother me” (35). Nozizwe’s immediate and uncontrolled reaction to Buntu’s appearance reflects responses that were indeed seen at the TRC. Significantly though, such

responses were largely suppressed by the Commission and its organizers. In instances where mothers did react with resentment and anger, the Commission tended to actively discourage or silence such behaviour.

One of the preeminent examples of this occurring was in the Human Rights Violation Hearing of the Gugulethu Seven, described by Cole as “a ‘window case’ for the Western Cape” (“Performance” 181). Cole argues the mothers of seven deceased men compromised the TRC’s policies in their reaction to new video evidence showing the aftermath of their sons’ executions. She describes the video screening as a moment when the mothers claimed agency within the Commission, disrupting the screening by throwing a shoe at the perpetrators: “This dramatic action shifted focus from the gruesome details of the video and the impassivity of the perpetrators to the presence of the mothers of the dead who sat several rows behind them” (183). In doing so, the women interjected their own response to the murder, a reaction that contradicted the Commission’s “rules of decorum and rationality” (184). In response to this action the women were ushered out of the room and, as Cole records, their behaviour was subsequently criticized by acting chairperson Dumisa Ntsebeza (184). As a subversive act that challenged the Commission’s integrity, the moment was largely stricken from official records. Cole’s effort to recapture the event highlights its erasure; for instance, the audience’s response to the mothers’ action is largely unavailable because Ntsebeza ordered support staff to stop filming the proceedings, causing transcriptions of the event to end abruptly and dramatically.²⁸

Although the TRC admittedly had a responsibility to guarantee the protection of participants – both victim and perpetrator – the mothers’ largely symbolic action was deemed unacceptable while, as Cole explains, the “passive viewing of a video of murder by the

²⁸ Cole explains the moment thus: “Perhaps betraying the transcriber’s desperation, the record then reads in capital letters: ‘PEOPLE ARE HYSTERICAL – CRYING AND SCREAMING’” (“Performance” 184).

murderers [was] somehow *not* regrettable theatrics” (185, emphasis in original). Making this point, Cole underscores the double standard placed on many mothers at the TRC; their responses were appreciated when they performed the role of passive or grieving victim, but showing anger or a desire for retribution resulted in them being viewed as a threat to the entire process. The mothers’ voices were thus only heard if they performed as grieving victim.

In contrast, Dike’s play presents the voicing of one mother’s anger in order to bring about new kinds of reconciliation. While Burger’s review questions the clarity of Nozizwe’s anger during performance, “Can’t Mama show her anger instead of telling her son she’s angry?” (9), the point still comes across that Nozizwe is unquestionably the angriest of all the characters in the play. In fact at points she is quite cruel; in one case labelling her daughter-in-law a “bitch” (85) and another openly castigating the younger generation for failing to show proper respect (84). However, in the fight between Buntu and Nozizwe, her anger is productive because it sways Isis to support her, causing a shift in Buntu’s thinking (34). As a result, Buntu acknowledges the pain his silence and secrecy caused his parents. And while it is Zwelibanzi, as head of the family, who formally accepts the young man’s apology, Buntu’s recognition of his mother’s pain is evident in the fact that he directs the apology toward her specifically (34).

This apology leads Nozizwe and Zwelibanzi to forgive Buntu, although the play suggests both sides are wrong. While Nozizwe feared what could have happened if “the Defence Force or the private police had captured” Buntu during his flight out of South Africa (32), she fails to recognize that staying home was likely to have been just as dangerous. This is because, as Buntu explains, the state was free “to raid all our homes,” placing his life in jeopardy (32). Likewise, the young man’s belief that he was protecting his parents by secretly running away fails to show adequate respect or consideration for their position. Dike highlights his flaw in her introduction

noting, at another point in the play, Buntu “calls his father names which, if he had grown up here [in South Africa], would have set the community up in arms” (11). Unable to reconcile commitments to the anti-apartheid cause with family responsibilities, Buntu hurt his parents by running away without their blessing (33). Presenting both positions as flawed, *The Return* outlines the impossibility of separating public and private realms during apartheid, as both were contested locations of racial and economic discrimination. This is reaffirmed by examples of everyday violence such as the limited capacity of the nation’s highways (23). Buntu’s decision to leave is a moot point as family life would have been impossible had he stayed. The complexity of the situation is perhaps best encapsulated in Isis’s admission that, “it’s one of those situations where nobody is right and nobody is wrong” (34). And yet taking viewers through the process of reconciliation, *The Return* suggests the private realm is now separate from the public realm because Buntu’s pro-struggle rhetoric does not mend ties with his parents, but rather his apology and re-acceptance of Xhosa culture do.

In addition to the rift between mother and son caused by his disappearance, Buntu must also reconcile his adoption of American culture with traditional Xhosa beliefs. Due to his lengthy exile in America, Buntu has lost ties with his heritage. The divide between Buntu and his Xhosa roots is particularly apparent in moments when he is unable to translate Xhosa for Isis (28-9), when Zwelibanzi questions the authenticity of his circumcision ritual (52-5), and when Buntu is reticent about following proper cultural practices and seeking out a *sangoma* before exhuming his brother’s body (66-7).²⁹ Ceremonies such as Siphos’s reburial and the Xhosa wedding repair the bond between younger and older generations because it allows Buntu to show respect for indigenous traditions. In this way *The Return* locates indigenous culture as one of the potential

²⁹ The introduction to *Fools, Bells and the Habit of Eating* defines *Sangoma* as a “diviner” when describing South African author Credo Mutwa (Amato xiii). An indigenous spiritual leader and healer, the *Sangoma* is often consulted on matters of faith and illness.

ways through which historic and personally felt divisions may be reconciled.

This raises interesting challenges in relation to reconciling older and younger generations with traditional customs, but also the role of mothers in indigenous culture after 1994. As Dike explains in her introduction to *The Return*, independence altered power structures between men and women in traditional Xhosa households. For Dike, “the older generation is upset that Mandela has given women and children rights because the men can’t tell them what to do anymore” (11-2). Although mothers were historically valued in traditional African cultures, praised for their fertility to the point that motherhood “acquired some religious significance,” researcher Laretta Ngcobo contends that mothers paradoxically occupied “a position of centrality which is exercised from the periphery” (142-3). This was due to the fact that mothers were often seen as outsiders in a family, only gaining influence in old age when “empowered to move centrally, to exercise authority and train the younger women in the practiced art of walking the tight-rope” (143). This outside position is reflected in Nozizwe’s exclusion from the Somdaka family kraal as she is always an outsider, “married into the clan, but [...] not born into the clan” (91). And yet even as outsiders, Dike asserts mothers command a great deal of respect in society: “African men have this strange respect for their mothers: if you swear at him using his mother, he will kill you and go to jail smiling” (*The Return* 11). Furthermore, examples in *The Return* such as the public shaming that Bra Ben endures after his wife uncovers his infidelity reveal women’s control over the household; in Bra Ben’s case his wife locks him out of the house with his clothes in a suitcase, causing the township to “have a good laugh that day” as he begged to be forgiven (40). In this way the play suggests ways women and mothers exert agency.

Although many of the decisions in the community are said to be made by uncles and fathers, Nozizwe finds ways to influence their actions so that she exerts authority within the

community. One such example of Nozizwe utilizing her powers of influence occurs when the Somdaka family must overcome hurdles created by other family members wishing to stall Buntu's traditional wedding to Isis. Zwelibanzi's admission that "your great-uncles are going to make life very difficult for us concerning this matter" is of little concern to Nozizwe as she proposes they either ply the elders with bribes, "or we look for other elders" (53). Still operating within the cultural system's generational and gendered hierarchy, Nozizwe seeks available alternatives. Unlike Buntu and Isis who fail to acknowledge the importance of traditional ceremonies and, according to some reviews, see them as "primitive" (Khan), Nozizwe manipulates the system to achieve her personal goals. In this regard traditional customs empower Nozizwe as she can exploit other character's weaknesses and greed to her own ends, exclaiming: "Money, food and booze. I know what my great-uncles like" (53). The effectiveness of this bribery is reiterated by Zwelibanzi who admits: "if you know their weaknesses, they'll come singing your praises, Buntu" (53). The effectiveness of Nozizwe's bribes is apparent because the wedding goes ahead, regardless of the difficulties presented by the older generation of uncles.

As powerful as Zwelibanzi is within the family unit, he is not as skilled at swaying the uncles as Nozizwe. This is perhaps because Zwelibanzi is accustomed to sitting at the top of the family hierarchy, empowered by customs that give him the authority to formally forgive Buntu (34), able to challenge Buntu's manhood (52), and lead wedding negotiations (46). Likewise, Nozizwe's conventional position beneath patriarchal leaders has resulted in her becoming adept at exploiting these systems for gain. Reflective of Nozizwe's importance within the family, the role was given to Nomhle Nkonyeni during its debut in 2008. Nkonyeni is a prominent actress with "half-a-century of experience" who has been honoured with "the award for Woman of the World for spearheading the opening of theatre to black people," as well as six Vita Awards and

“a Naledi Award for Lifetime Achievement in Theatre” (Dercksen 3). Unsurprisingly, a number of reviews focus on the position Nozizwe occupies on-stage, describing her as someone who “pretends to defer to” Zwelibanzi, “but all the time she rules through him” (Snyman, “Emotional” 7). It is in this way that Nozizwe comes across as a resourceful figure who upholds traditional customs for the most part, only subverting those which limit her power.

In addition to exemplifying Nozizwe’s ability to influence the elders, the family debate over how to convince the uncles to endorse Buntu’s wedding reveals ways that Nozizwe uses humour to subvert systems of power. What the audience witnesses in the sequence outlined above is an example of how she pokes fun at other characters that wield power over her in society, expressing anger in ways that do not explicitly lead to confrontation. In this instance Nozizwe directs laughter at the family elders because they are making it difficult for Buntu and Isis to wed. Proclaiming that if the men do not accept her bribes she will “look for new elders,” humour occurs because Nozizwe’s response is a comic contradiction (53). Her comment is humorous because it seems improbable – finding new uncles sounding absurd – but the comment also contradicts other aspects of her character, such as her strong faith in Xhosa customs. While Nozizwe is a character the audience associates with traditional belief systems, for example demanding Buntu seek the guidance of a *sangoma* before exhuming his brother (66-7) and holding on to strict beliefs when others such as Zwelibanzi express the need to adapt (81), her comment indicates she is willing to modify or deviate from customs under particular circumstances. Dike’s double edged portrayal of traditional beliefs – both revering them while exposing their imbedded sexism – also appears in Dike’s *The First South African*. As race theorist Olga Barrios contends, the earlier play contrasts positive aspects of tradition with sexist oppression by portraying a mother who advocates respect for elders alongside a circumcision

ceremony that encourages sons to use violence to gain authority over their mothers (181-2). In *The Return*, Nozizwe's witty quips reveal ways mothers can subvert the authority of patriarchal elders if they abuse their privilege for personal gain, believing the Somdaka family lives "in total luxury" because Buntu fled to the United States (53).

Writing on the important role of stand-up comedy in post-apartheid South Africa, Parker asserts humour helps women to rebalance gender inequalities. For Parker, humour socially elevates female comedians and functions as a tool to critique dominant discourses:

In our society those who initiate humour are held in high esteem. As a result comedians occupy a privileged position in our social world and are able to shape and challenge conventional discourse. As is elaborated in this article, humour and comedy are potentially powerful tools that women could employ in order to subvert images and attitudes in the dominant culture. (11)

It is in a similar sense that Nozizwe's witticisms and turns of phrase should be read as a subversive strategy that can reshape notions of motherhood in recent years. Her constant asides construct a character that is adaptive, capable of turning historic dehumanization into humour and, by extension, social capital. Comments that Nozizwe makes throughout the play such as "Apartheid gave me a Ph.D. in grovelling. You want grovel, hire me" highlight the kind of reworking of her identity she accomplishes through humour (51). This statement speaks to the dehumanization of mothers during apartheid, a historical reality the play underlines, but also turns dehumanization into strength by drawing characters and audience closer to her.

The audience likes her because she makes them laugh, even if that laughter is based on tragedy and historical injustice. And in admiring her character, the audience is also drawn to side with Nozizwe. As Parker explains more generally in stand-up comedy, "Women who take risks

in comedy challenge the audience, both men and women, to redefine their embedded perceptions of women” (22). Throughout *The Return* Nozizwe challenges similar prejudices and structures of power by targeting both apartheid and patriarchal abuses with humour. Reviewers highlight the effectiveness of lines such as “Apartheid gave me a Ph.D. in grovelling” (51), arguing “Dike has a talent for poking fun at apartheid with tact” (Khan). Terms such as “tact” demonstrate how audience members like Atiyyah Khan view the humour in this segment as commendable, building respect and admiration for Dike as well as the character who voices the comment.

As clever and resourceful as Nozizwe is, assisting Buntu in convincing his uncles to support the wedding, there are other examples where she and Zwelibanzi lacked total agency dealing with the apartheid state. Buntu’s return requires him to pay tribute to the deceased at their gravesite and this act reveals a final spectre of apartheid violence in the play: divisive secrets surrounding Siphos death. Joining the struggle shortly after Buntu left for Lesotho, his younger brother was wounded during a bank robbery and died in a Botswana hospital (76). Cadres helped Zwelibanzi return the body to Cape Town but, as penance for being a freedom fighter, government officials forced the family to bury him in Gugulethu. Unable to oppose apartheid laws, Siphos parents interned him outside the ancestral cemetery, compromising Xhosa tradition. In this instance the play once again stages family members’ divergent perspectives on apartheid history, and the psychological damage it inflicts.

The rift between Buntu and his parents in this case revolves around the different perspectives each has towards Siphos death and burial. This results in two opposing perspectives: Buntu remembering Siphos as a hero for robbing a bank so that fellow comrades “could buy ammunition to go on fighting” (79), and his parents’ shame that their son died selfishly robbing a bank for personal gain, “cut down like a mad dog by police bullets” (77).

Buntu's knowledge that the bank robbery was conducted to support the struggle would clear Siphó's name, but he cannot speak because he is guilt ridden that his actions led Siphó to join the struggle (34). In contrast, Buntu's parents are also unable to discuss Siphó's death because they fear their version of events will hurt Buntu's memory of his brother (77). Subsequently, Buntu's fear of facing the truth causes Siphó's ghost to haunt him.

This is an instance where the play models the kind of "TRUTH THROUGH RECONCILIATION" slogan that the TRC fervently espoused (Kentridge ix). It is the family's inability to discuss apartheid violence at a private level that has sustained the continuing divisions between them. Because of internalized guilt and shame, neither party wishes to discuss how their own actions may have caused Siphó's death, or disgraced him in the afterlife. And yet, as the earlier reconciliation that was staged for Buntu's exile suggests, voicing, listening, and understanding the other side's position helps to resolve continuing pain. And strikingly these two acts of reconciliation – for Buntu's exile and Siphó's death – are twinned in the play because one opens, and the other completes, Buntu's return to the family. Also similar to the initial act of reconciliation at the play's opening, in this example both parties have again transgressed.

The circumstances surrounding Siphó's death complicate stereotypical constructions of victimhood by illustrating how characters such as Nozizwe and Zwelibanzi are both victims of apartheid violence, but also culpable of modifying or changing stories to protect their honour under the pretence of moving on. Throughout the play their silence around where Siphó is buried actually heightens Buntu's pain as the young man is continually haunted by Siphó in his dreams, almost nightly (43). Unable to confess her own and Zwelibanzi's failure to exhume and rebury Siphó's body according to indigenous customs, Nozizwe's silence further strains her relationship with Buntu. Although she repeatedly tries to admit her transgression and details around Siphó's

death (42, 45), she ultimately delays the confession, and therefore further reconciliation, until a much later point in the plot. Rather than exhibiting conventional traits associated with victims, such as innocence, passivity, dependence, and remaining inconsolable (Smyth 74), Nozizwe's efforts to confess her failure to Buntu suggest she is an active agent in attempting to voice truths in the domestic space of the Somdaka home.

It is Nozizwe who repeatedly encourages Zwelibanzi to confront Buntu with the truth. Whereas Zwelibanzi largely tries to avoid the past, silencing his wife's protests with a simple "No" or excusing himself for a cigarette when Buntu confronts him on the matter (42), Nozizwe seems to consciously or unconsciously reveal the truth, letting details slip that Siphos may be buried in another township early in the play (42). The solution to the couple's impasse comes through Xhosa tradition when Buntu's admission that he sees his brother in dreams leads the entire family to consult the *sangoma*. Buntu's guilt causes him to lie during the ceremony, an act of disrespect to Xhosa tradition that also furthers his own anguish by delaying the family's reconciliation (70). Yet while this process begins with the *sangoma*'s prediction that "the answers to these problems" lie with Tata and the "truth must be told" by Buntu, it is not resolved until all sides tell their version of the truth around the kitchen table (70).

The ensuing argument reveals the final secrets that have remained hidden since apartheid. In doing so personal grievances are released, Buntu accusing his parents of being ashamed of Siphos actions, and his parents expressing anger over Buntu's silence (76). These missing details prevent the Somdaka family from entertaining the option of appearing at national events of reconciliation such as the TRC because, as Buntu has correctly deduced, his parents' shame about Siphos death caused them to hide it from family and society (76). Furthermore, their version of Siphos actions as self-motivated rather than politically-motivated places their son's

death outside the limits of the Commission, which did not admit “acts of violence with no immediate political motivation” (Odom 55). And yet the play suggests that airing this truth, regardless of the anger that accompanies it, can lead to new kinds of reconciliation. While the TRC curtailed performances of anger, as noted in the case of the Gugulethu Seven, the play suggests the open voicing of anger by characters such as Nozizwe and Buntu is in fact restorative, uncovering truths but also expressing care. As the play’s epigraph from Pope John Paul II suggests, anger can also be an expression of love: “Love is not bedazzlement, a sugary emotion; sometimes it is even anger – if necessary opposition” (14). And it is perhaps through anger that care is shown and respect earned.

This logic reveals how Isis, largely viewed as a cultural and biological outsider for a majority of the play, finds her way into the family fold. Initially welcomed into the house as a “daughter” by Nozizwe (23, 60), Isis is caught throughout the play in a tenuous position between supporting Buntu and gaining favour with his parents. Often aligning herself with the parents, she helps Buntu to see their perspectives (34). And yet as influential as she may be, even Buntu distances her from the family group when he reveals he did not tell her about Siphos ghost in his dreams because “It was a family secret” (78). Broadly describing mother and daughter-in-law relationships in traditional African society Ngcobo posits: “there is the ever present awareness that the two have a lot in common – that they will always be outsiders in the family lineage of their husbands” (147). And such a relationship seems to generally reflect Isis and Nozizwe, who are both barred from entering the Somdaka kraal (91). And yet as much as they have in common, they are often at odds around cultural differences. Nozizwe blames American culture, and by extension Isis, for her son’s disrespect (80), while the latter blames Nozizwe for being cruel (85).

The gap between the two women hinges on the issue of respect. Nozizwe shows

disrespect for Isis by insulting her in Xhosa and Buntu betrays his mother by secretly translating for Isis (84-5). Angry, Isis confronts Nozizwe and requests that, if the latter must insult her, to do so “in English so I can understand” (86). This shows disrespect towards Nozizwe who, as mother of the household, believes she can say whatever she wants to whomever she wants. The same privilege does not apply to younger generations. In this way the play contrasts Nozizwe’s traditional views with Isis’s American customs. Zwelibanzi eventually breaks up the fight by arguing he wants the family “to show a united front when people come to mourn with us” at Siphos’s burial (87-8). It is through this final fight that Nozizwe learns to accept Isis’s difference and again views her as a daughter: “Isis, in you I have a strong daughter. I could not have wished for anyone better to be my son’s wife” (93). Without the confrontation Isis would have missed an opportunity to show strength in a way Nozizwe respects. Likewise, the moment also allows Isis to explain her respect for family beliefs, and that she and Nozizwe “must be able to trust one another” (92). This reconciles their cultural divisions on the basis that respect and trust will overcome current, and future, misunderstandings.

Throughout *The Return* Nozizwe is the agent of change. She speaks openly about her personal traumas, rather than solely focusing on Siphos’s death, and this leads her to actively confront her own failures – such as hiding the truth concerning Siphos’s burial from Buntu. When faced with challenges she resorts either to anger, or humour, in order to overcome obstacles. While reviewer Wilhelm Snyman is critical of the play’s treatment of reconciliation, arguing “Siphos’s death is too easily resolved, and the circumstances of his death could perhaps have brought to light some of the conflicts and contradictions that were also part of the struggle and shaped those who took part in it,” I contend the play explores various conflicts during the struggle by foregrounding the fractured familial relationships caused by apartheid violence

(“Emotional” 7). By the play’s conclusion the family has bonded through the cultural ceremonies and confessions the audience witnesses throughout the play. Buntu’s statement over Siphos new grave, “thank you, my brother, for giving me this opportunity to perform the ritual... when you asked me to clear your name, I really believed I had become your older brother again,” summarizes the importance the play attributes towards younger generations upholding cultural beliefs in order to heal family structures (89). Such rituals reaffirm familial connections at the domestic level and reconcile cultural divisions exacerbated by historic violence and exile.

Lara Foot Newton’s *Reach*

Like *The Return*, *Reach* has been interpreted by a number of reviewers as a work that explores contemporary challenges curtailing reconciliation. For Corrigan the play transports the “audience into a fictional scenario in which anger, fear and pain are replaced by reconciliation and forgiveness,” moving “beyond our society’s present-day circumstances into an imagined place where the effects of crime and the deep fractures in our society have a chance to be healed” (“Foot-Newton’s” 11). Noting the “unsettlingly familiar” way the death in the play is reported, Meersman likens the work to the unusual position occupied by Amy Biehl’s mother who, after confronting her daughter’s murderers at the TRC, began to see them as her children (“Victims” 5).³⁰ Likewise, Robyn Sassen also links *Reach* with real events in South Africa, stating the story feeds “off things that shaded our world in 2006 – the murder of Brett Goldin and Richard Bloom, the drought, the constant power cuts,” and reflects realities that “continue to colour our world.”

³⁰ Biehl was a white American student who was killed in Gugulethu on August 25, 1993. Her case was brought before the TRC and her assailants were granted amnesty at the TRC in 1998 (Harlow 278). Biehl’s family has since established a foundation to encourage reconciliation between racial groups, and to financially support at-risk youth in the townships (Amy Biehl Foundation Trust).

Largely receiving positive reviews, the play is described by Edward Tsumele as “a powerful allegory for our times” (8) and by Adrienne Sichel as a work that “isn’t about glib forgiveness or redemption,” but rather a play that “touches us all where we live” (“Digging” 10). It is likely a result of its topical themes that *Reach* has repeatedly been published in anthologies of South African drama.

Introducing *Reach* in *Armed Response: Plays from South Africa*, Peimer argues that it “is deeply ironic that, after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, both hope and abandonment should emerge as prevalent South African themes” (xv). For Peimer, *Reach* “does not describe this development; rather, it gets inside the very nerve of the tension inherent in these conflicting feelings” (xv). In a similar vein Homann describes the play as a “story of trying to connect, of trying to narrow the divide between differing histories, generations and racial lines in an attempt to accept, acknowledge and reconcile the traumatic past” (*At This Stage* 18). In his introduction to *At This Stage: Plays from Post-Apartheid South Africa* Homann argues the play “is as much a reminder of the need for reconciliation as it is a warning that reconciliation is an ongoing process” (18). He interprets Marion Banning and Solomon Xaba’s bond as verging on familial, noting by the conclusion: “they have become like mother and son” (19). Carrying on from this point, Homann asserts all the plays in his anthology “prioritise the significance of female figures” suggesting “mothers, aunts and grandmothers, often in surrogate roles [...] have inspired our aspirations and instilled our moral sensibilities” (19). This is certainly the case in *Reach* because familial bonds shatter stereotypes in order to foster reconciliation.

For Blumberg, *Reach* is one of two plays that “premiered in 2007, many years after the formal conclusion of the TRC,” and “examine how individuals still need to confront the pain of personal happenings instead of those that were dealt with in public forums” (“South African”

246). Other scholars, such as Hutchison, argue it is about “disavowed or contested subjects in the context of South Africa’s renegotiation of its history, including its gender politics” (160). To date one of the most comprehensive studies of the play is that by Catherine Powell, in her Masters thesis. For Powell, “*Reach* deals with questions of identity, alienation, and belonging” (23) and “explores new ways to heal the wounds left by a continued legacy of violence” (34). She interprets the personal interactions between the play’s characters as a microcosm of the “larger problems of reconciliation and healing in the new South Africa,” arguing reconciliation is achieved through acts of caring (34-5). Focusing on aspects of the play that Powell only briefly addresses, such as the importance of humour in cementing ties and breaking stereotypes, this chapter offers further insight into how reconciliation develops in *Reach*.

First performed in 2007 at the Theaterformen festival in Hanover, Germany, *Reach* is set in the near future, shortly before South Africa is to host the 2010 soccer World Cup. After its debut in Germany the play arrived in South Africa in time for a July run at the 2007 National Arts Festival. After that it appeared at the Baxter Theatre, Cape Town, and eventually moved to The Market Theatre, Johannesburg (Homann, *At This Stage* 31). Near the end of 2007 *Reach* toured extensively in Sweden, staged at theatres in Uppsala, Umeå, and Stockholm (Homann, *At This Stage* 31). It has also been reworked into a new play, *Solomon and Marion* (2013), recently published by Oberon in 2013.

Reach follows the experiences of Marion, a reclusive white South African woman of English origin who lives alone in a Victorian-style cottage on the outskirts of Port Alfred, Eastern Cape. Isolated because she chooses to live between town and township, Marion is barely able to survive on her own because of a debilitating heart condition. The text describes her as having “an infinite need,” cut off from both family and friends (129). Importantly, although

lacking many basic necessities, she has a connection to the space and landscape around her. Marion opposes pleas from estranged family members, the government, and local township residents to move. Even though each party has their own reason for wanting her to vacate the house, Marion remains defiant throughout the play. While her life is primarily occupied with grieving for her murdered son and attempting to reconnect with her daughter who lives in Australia, things change when she discovers Solomon sneaking around her house. He has come to tell his version of events surrounding Marion's son Jonathan's murder, a duty placed on "the last person to see someone alive" in Xhosa culture (161). At first ignorant and distrustful of his intentions, Marion's relationship with Solomon provides the occasion to explore a range of social issues affecting the nation; these include racism, unemployment, violence, the AIDS epidemic, land distribution, and sexism. Responding to these ills, *Reach* posits friendship and a maternal bond as productive tools to reconcile divisions between racial groups.

Capturing and critiquing the build-up of nationalism and optimism generated by South Africa's hosting of the 2010 World Cup, the play uses the sporting event as a backdrop to the serious trauma and fear individuals such as Marion and Solomon are working through. It is in light of this context that I approach the text as a state-of-the-nation play. In doing so this chapter uses Nadine Holdsworth's definition of a state-of-the-nation play as a work that "deploys representations of personal events [...] as a microcosm of the nation-state" (39). Reading *Reach* in this way, Marion's alienation, which she suffers due to her inability to overcome the traumatic loss of her son, is representative of a broader crisis suffered by the many mothers in South Africa who lost children to apartheid violence and were unable to come forward either because of missing information, or their race. Marion's initial response to her son's murder is treated by the media as a kind of symbol of the systemic violence affecting white South Africans.

Because of this treatment she resists participating in national narratives of grief and redemption when new information comes to light about her son's murder at the play's climax. Instead, she opts for a private reconciliatory process in the domestic space.

Marion and Solomon's personal interaction throughout *Reach* illustrates how new kinds of bonds can overcome divisions between groups. Marion's ability to view Solomon as a son helps her overcome the traumatic loss of her own child while, at the same time, providing Solomon – an orphan – with confidence and emotional support in an economic marketplace plagued by unemployment. The bond forged between the two is established through their communication and shared humour. Using laughter as an indicator of mutual understanding, Marion and Solomon exchange comic stories based on cultural and racial difference. In doing so, they reduce the distance between them and forge a constructive relationship.

Solomon's unexpected arrival initially causes Marion to assume he is a burglar. As she has been aware of his presence for a number of days, without establishing direct contact, she assumes he is planning to kill her: "If you are here to murder me, just hurry up and get on with it. I can't wait forever, you know" (132). Marion's reaction to Solomon is based on his outward appearance. His racial difference and mysterious behaviour lead Marion to presume he harbours a malicious purpose. Explaining her first reaction to the young man in a letter to her daughter, Marion identifies her apprehension by admitting: "At first I was suspicious. What was he doing here? What did he want?" (153). As a theatrical device, the letter gives the audience access to Marion's thoughts and details from her past, but also provides her with a coping strategy to avoid facing reality, such as lying to her daughter about having quit smoking (131). Marion's preliminary distrust of Solomon is grounded in her belief that he is "one of those awful tsotsiies,"

a dangerous criminal (153).³¹

Jonathan Kaplan defines “tsotsi” in the introduction to Fugard’s novel *Tsotsi* (2006) as a black youth “entranced by 1940s American gangster films, [who has] adopted their dress-sense along with their contempt for law and order” (ix).³² They are widely associated with brutal violence, gangsterism, and robbery in South Africa. In believing Solomon to be a “tsotsi” Marion exemplifies the mindset that Jamal describes as sustaining South Africa’s psychological imprisonment (*Predicaments* 17). She is unable to overcome her prejudices about Solomon’s difference and, as a result, she fails to trust him, or grasp his intent. At this point in the play the audience is equally ignorant about Solomon’s purpose. This provides the potential for them to make the same negative assumptions regarding the man’s unexplained appearance around the house as Marion does. Describing her uneasy relationship with Solomon, Peimer notes that the play is “located in a very concrete post-apartheid reality” (xv). In this instance Marion’s fear of violence reflects the reality of life in South Africa. The constant fear of violence is widespread and statistics pertaining to crime, and sexual violence in particular, are staggering. For instance, gender theorist Helen Moffett’s study of the correlation between sexual violence and political transition finds the “first ten years of the new [South African] state have seen a dramatic increase in sexual assaults on women, children and men” (132). It is within South Africa’s increasingly violent landscape that one understands Marion’s hesitation as emblematic of a larger population who remain anxious in cross-cultural or cross-racial exchanges.

Cultural theorists such as Jamal propose that fostering a love of difference may help South Africans overcome apartheid divisions and open up new intercultural exchanges in the

³¹ Foot Newton and Clare Stopford, the director of *Reach*’s debut, debated over whether to cast Solomon as a tsotsi. In the original staging he appears wearing formal clothes, although Stopford felt he should have appeared as a tsotsi (151). For an account of the contrasting visions the director and playwright had for Solomon see Stopford’s article “*Mise en Scène* as a Feminine Textual Body: Making Meaning in *Reach*,” pages 151-55.

³² *Tsotsi* was first published in 1980 and reprinted in 2006 with Kaplan’s introduction (Fugard iv).

post-apartheid period. Jamal views love as an act of resistance, “an act that furthers the attempt to rethink – dream and experience – the inherent heterogeneity of the South African cultural imaginary which, until now, has been intuited as symptomatic of a pathology rather than as that which, all the while, was resistant to pathology” (*Predicaments* 24). Jamal’s contribution to current debates on South African nationalism and unification is his insistence that love can reconfigure the material condition of the new South Africa. Arguing that South Africa’s heterogeneous cultural imaginary is “resistant to pathology,” propagating love for the cultural or ethnic differences of fellow citizens can allow South Africans to dissolve Otherness without erasing difference (24). In this sense learning to value ethnic differences means South Africans will enter a hybrid position, a moment that is not based on “radical difference” nor an overwhelming “sameness” that eschews important differences between citizens (24);³³ doing so will free South Africans from apartheid and post-apartheid terminology that has moved from a nationalism based on extreme difference to one founded on an overwhelming sense of sameness, currently ignoring important differences between members of the nation. In this case hybridity is not established through a racially mixed population, but rather a love of difference and heterogeneity itself.

It is in the play’s formation of a mother/son relationship between Marion and Solomon that I see Foot Newton’s *Reach* epitomizing the kind of liberating love that Jamal describes. Although initially divided at the outset of the play, Marion and Solomon grow closer as they overcome their fears of difference and begin to respect, trust, and eventually care for each other. For Powell, “acts of caring” catalyze processes of reconciliation (34). But this is only possible because they share a common connection: Solomon’s grandmother worked for Marion.

³³ Jamal’s discussion of hybridity is based on Bhabha’s theorization of the “hybrid moment,” an “interstitial passage between fixed identifications [which] opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (*The Location* 4).

Overcoming class and cultural stereotypes is an important step in establishing their relationship as both make assumptions about the other's behaviour and intentions from the outset. As much as Marion is afraid of the physical threat Solomon poses when he first arrives at her house, Solomon also makes incorrect assumptions about Marion because of her race: "I thought all white people had groceries" (137). Their first impressions of each other are misguided as we discover Marion is poorer and more frugal than Solomon supposes and that the latter is not there for malicious purposes, but rather to deliver a confession and to come to terms with his involvement in her son's death. Forging a bond between the two is not easy, however, as continuing violence stemming from the unequal distribution of wealth during apartheid haunts both characters' lives.

The emotional connection between the two characters is augmented by the use of humour, which emerges as central to the formation of the pair's friendship; humour provides the medium through which social and cultural exchange can occur. Trading anecdotes and laughter is a way for the two characters to bridge cultural and social differences. For Powell, humour is "a strategy to navigate misconceptions about cultural dimensions" (46). And yet humour in the play goes farther than this because it also actively forges bonds. Reichl and Stein argue shared comic exchanges can produce "communities of laughter" (13). Writing specifically on postcolonial deployments of humour, they argue that, similar to Benedict Anderson's theory that contemporaneous communities can be formed through collective public performances, "unisonance," and shared codes (145), "laughter, too, presupposes shared worlds, shared codes, and shared values... [and] is characterized by both subjectivity and inter-subjectivity" (Reichl and Stein 13). It is in this light that shared humour between Marion and Solomon can also play an important role in revealing the similarities between them.

Marion's initial rejection of Solomon is largely overcome when the visitor identifies himself as the grandchild of Thozama, a former domestic worker who helped raise Marion's children (143). Ironically though, Marion does not initially know who he is talking about because he uses his grandmother's full Xhosa name. This historic link gives Solomon a purpose for being in the house, but Marion remains reluctant to trust him. At numerous points after their initial meeting she continues to abruptly request that he leave when she feels uncomfortable in his presence (133, 139, 146). The play heightens this tension by having Marion uncover contradictions in Solomon's story, such as why he has returned to visit her (139). In this regard Solomon's distant childhood connection with Marion is not enough to overcome her fear that he wants money or bears malicious intent. Instead humour helps ironize Marion's racial suspicion and mistrust of Solomon. The first example of Solomon connecting with Marion on a comic level occurs in his second visit to her home. Debating the limits of what they consider to be "edible" in each of their cultures – English and rural Xhosa – Solomon convinces Marion that he "once ate the eye of a cat," a lie he tells to poke fun at white assumptions about "barbarous" cultural eating habits (136). Solomon laughs when Marion seems to believe him. He finds this moment funny because Marion exposes her stereotyped views of Xhosa culture when she falls for his deception. Solomon's rejoinder to the joke, "We might be savage but we are not that bad," underscores Marion's ignorance of his culture by implying that, to believe such a lie, she must view him as "savage" (136). Solomon's use of the term "savage" implies he is keenly aware of the stereotypes white South Africans like Marion harbour against Xhosas (136).

Numerous postcolonial and humour scholars have theorized the connection between stereotyping and humour. For sociologist Chandler Davidson, stereotypes and humour form an effective way to map internally-held prejudices, especially in his undergraduate classroom (296).

This allows Davidson to discuss tensions around interethnic exchanges with his students, such as how stereotypes pertaining to black masculine sexuality may reflect a white “culturally tabooed desire for interracial sex” or, alternatively, fear “of black retaliation for white oppression” (300). In a more recent article Delia Chiaro argues American-Italian communities respond differently to stereotypes based on their relationship to the homeland. Her conclusions indicate first-generation immigrants carry more favourable attitudes toward stereotypes than later generations (79). In this regard subsequent generations are thought more hostile to stereotypes because they “see such humour as a barrier to being fully accepted as [American] citizens,” whereas the first-generation may be less concerned thanks to close ties with Italy (79-80). As both scholars’ research indicates, stereotypes emerge out of various interethnic exchanges and often reflect fears of violence, internalized prejudices, and crises of integration – both local and national. It is due to such anxieties that ethnic stereotypes typically affirm divisions between groups. Dunphy and Emig, editors of *Hybrid Humour: Comedy in Transcultural Perspectives*, reiterate the divisiveness of stereotypes by describing them as oppositional to hybridity. Basing their argument on Bhabha’s discussion of stereotypes in *The Location of Culture*, they contend: “the stereotype results from a refusal to enter the simultaneously constructive and deconstructive process that is the translation of positions, in other words hybridity – or perhaps more correctly hybridisation” (29). Whereas hybridisation subverts cultural hierarchies by rendering identity categories fluid, stereotypes conversely present identities as static and maintain cultural hierarchies by presenting the Other as threatening or contemptible.

In order to subvert divisions created by stereotyping in *Reach*, Solomon turns to humour as a strategy to close some of the distance between Xhosa culture and Marion’s position. As a response to Marion’s claim: “There is a certain point, my boy, at which cultures will never

collide,” Solomon’s engagement with Marion on a comic level gestures toward a collision between their cultures (135); in other words, humour allows their differences and prejudices to be discussed in a fashion that encourages an equal cultural exchange. Dunphy and Emig’s argument that stereotyping prevents hybridisation does not reflect their overall view on humour, which they believe generally “resembles hybridity structurally in its modification and transfer of positions” (25). This is because humour rests on both a “difference (of positions, assumptions, and expectations),” but also “on similarity” (25). While different perspectives produce the incongruity from which humour often emerges, like Reichl and Stein (13), Dunphy and Emig contend the teller and listener must reach a similar understanding in order to view an exchange as comic (25). In this way Solomon and Marion’s dialogical foregrounding of stereotypes, and the humour contained therein, suggests an act of mutual exchange. Because their humour relies on an understanding of both characters’ positions, responding to prejudices on both sides of the cultural gap by contrasting stereotypes with reality, their laughter signifies a union.

Solomon’s joke about the cat’s eye is important because it unites rather than divides. Although the joke is based on Marion’s view of Solomon as different, the underlying reality is that Marion and Solomon do in fact largely share similar codes of what constitutes good food. As Reichl and Stein posit, “If we do not share the requisite cultural references, a joke or pun might be lost on us” (14). Because Marion and Solomon both identify the moment as comic it can be concluded that they share the same sensibility, neither actually wanting to eat the eye of a cat. *Reach* is thus an appropriate title for the play as its audience witnesses Marion and Solomon attempting to cross cultural divisions and prejudices to form a positive relationship in an otherwise fractured nation. Marion’s acceptance of the moment as comic – “My goodness. A Sense of humor! That’s a luck!” (136) – indicates she is a willing participant in the cultural

exchange. Furthermore, extending from this moment of cohesion, Marion begins to express personal concern for Solomon's well-being. The moment segues into an invitation to join her for tea, where she enquires whether the young man has finished school (136).

Humour based on food preferences heightens the play's exploration of cultural differences between the two characters. Homann argues in his anthology that Foot Newton uses food as one of "the various strategies to help shape the relationship between Marion and Solomon" (*At This Stage* 19). Noting that both characters prefer food that reflect their cultural backgrounds, Marion opting for "Yorkshire pudding, lamb stew, [and] tea" while Solomon prefers "*amanqina* (chicken feet), *umngqusho* (samp and beans), and *atcha* (spicy chutney)," food functions primarily as a means to discuss the pair's differences (19). Reconciling, or at least foregrounding, their differences through food-based humour is thus a powerful act of transcultural communication. As Reichl and Stein posit, "Laughter and humour are [...] 'test cases' not for cultural belonging, but for transcultural competence" (14). Sharing food-based humour is an indicator that Solomon and Marion get along. But also, as Davidson affirms at the end of his article, experiences with ethnic jokes can lead witnesses, in his case students, to "larger theoretical questions about prejudice" (301). In *Reach* ethnic stereotypes raise awareness to the continued prevalence of both visible and invisible stereotyping beyond apartheid.

Another important example of transcultural humour develops during Solomon's explanation of his dismissal from Woolworths. The comic story begins with Solomon derisively laughing at white upper class behaviour but ends with another instance of cohesion. The laughter begins when Marion asks Solomon where he managed to find the paint he is using to restore her house. Solomon's vague response, "Hardware," prompts Marion to dig further (140). Marion's appreciation of the colour, admitting that at least he "borrowed a tasteful colour," causes

Solomon amusement because it reinforces his own stereotypes of white privilege (140). Solomon finds the whole situation comic because he did not select the paint based on colour, but rather on cost: “I just chose the most expensive one. That’s how white people choose, isn’t it?” (141).

Marion’s approval of the colour inadvertently reinforces this stereotype.

Although born in 1990, the year of Mandela’s release from prison, Solomon has adopted the racial prejudices of the apartheid-era. Unsurprisingly, the new generation is also influenced by the cultural and social divisions that fragmented South Africa prior to 1994. As *Reach* exemplifies, the older generation has not yet “overwhelmed, bypassed, or ignored the conditions for its continued oppression,” while the younger generation may have adopted their parents’ and grandparents’ prejudices (Jamal, *Predicaments* 17). But Solomon’s bigotry is particularly unsettling in this case because he no longer has living parents or a grandmother, implying his prejudice is sustained through his relationship with society. It is clear that Solomon fails to recognize Marion’s poverty, presumably because he has been conditioned to view all white South Africans as wealthy and empowered.

Correcting Solomon’s views of whiteness by declaring “I’ve always been very frugal,” Marion rejects the stereotype of white affluence by contradicting it (141). Additionally, Solomon’s assumption is further undermined by Marion’s surroundings; she lacks many of the basic necessities Solomon believes all white people possess, such as groceries or a well-maintained house (137). Admittedly, Solomon’s laughter at white consumerism establishes this as a moment of division because Solomon is laughing at stereotypes of whiteness, placing Marion outside of the joke. Helpfully though, this laughter leads to a conversation where Marion can rebuff the stereotype and also listen to Solomon’s explanation of its origin. In doing so, Marion discovers Solomon formed his negative opinion of white South Africans while working

as an employee at Woolworths. As the story develops we see that Solomon's racial intolerance is a reaction to his own unjust treatment. He is fired because a white customer is rude to him and, although trying his best to help her, she misinterprets his intentions.

Solomon's dismissal from Woolworths is based on racial prejudices that deny the black South African his humanity and culture. Unable to direct a white patron to hollandaise sauce, the customer becomes irate with Solomon and questions whether or not he is actually an employee, proclaiming "this country's going down the drain" (142); what makes this moment significant is that once again differences and misconceptions between English and Xhosa culture are explored through food. The customer's frustration that Solomon is unable to direct her to the sauce ignores his cultural difference and that it is not a staple of his diet. Solomon's failure to locate the item leads to his dismissal because the patron interprets his lack of knowledge as a sign of insolence (142). In doing so, the customer's failure to empathize with Solomon, or the anxiety he experiences in their exchange, illustrates a complete disregard for his culture and identity. This is all the more ironic because it occurs in South Africa, not Europe.

Both Solomon and the white patron are aware of the power she wields. She speaks to his manager and he is "fired the same day" (142). Recounting the circumstances around his dismissal for Marion, collective humour once again indicates both Marion and Solomon understand the social codes of his predicament. Solomon makes the story comic by intentionally insulting the white patron at its conclusion. Aware that the customer believes the transition from apartheid to democracy has caused degradation in the quality of life in South Africa, Solomon offers to help her save money by showing her where she can buy chickens at less than a third of the price she is paying at Woolworths. Solomon's offer is actually a subversive act meant to further infuriate the patron; it does so because it implies she would be interested in saving money

by shopping at another retail outlet frequented by a lower socio-economic class. Woolworths has a very different social status than the “Sparza” Solomon proposes to take her to (142).³⁴

Solomon’s comment is thus an insult because both Solomon and the patron know she will never accept his offer. Solomon’s veiled insult makes Marion laugh and the stage directions note that she continues laughing throughout his explanation (142).

The joke’s target, a character representing white privilege and colonial thinking, is far enough removed from Marion that she, too, can side with Solomon in this occasion of ridicule. This is because Marion views herself as opposed to racism, at one point claiming that she “was even a little involved in the struggle [against apartheid]. Not bravely so, but involved” (137). And while this claim is problematic, Powell describing Marion’s remark as “unintentionally comic” due to its “naïveté” (40), such instances suggest Marion is trying to distance herself from stereotypes of the white racist. The intimacy of Solomon’s joke, shared only between the two characters, heightens its ability to unify. Humour theorist Moira Smith notes that in small groups “joking is much more than a pleasantry to pass the time; it is a key component in the regulation of social life, smoothing interactions, serving as a mechanism of social control, and promoting solidarity” (159). Solomon’s comic anecdote helps to reconcile his earlier stereotyping of whiteness, chiefly the belief that white people only select items based on expense, and smoothes the discomfort between the pair by explaining the origin of his prejudice. Furthermore, listening to this anecdote Marion gains insight into Solomon’s life and the continued racism that has systemically disempowered him.

Blumberg posits the best way for South Africans to reconcile differences in the nation is by shifting people’s perspectives. For her, “sharing, learning, and re-visioning ourselves anew we can value the not-us, without according the designation ‘them’ and build for difference”

³⁴ In Foot Newton’s *Solomon and Marion* she footnotes *Sparza* as meaning “Corner shop” (9).

(“Re-Evaluating” 32). Such transcultural exchange manifests in the comic anecdote Solomon tells Marion about his dismissal; Marion is unaware of the numerous hardships he has faced in his life – including the tragic death of both of his parents to AIDS – so these moments correct her misconceptions. It shifts her opinion of him as a hardened criminal and replaces it with compassion, which is evident in the way she laments the loss of his parents: “That fucking AIDS! God’s sick sense of humor. Why is it that tragedy always strikes the poorer areas?” (144). It also provides new perspectives on her own identity, as Solomon’s revelation implicates Marion as part of his pain, noting she did not loan Thozama money “to aid Solomon’s dying mother” (Powell 51). While this information renders Marion as culpable, Powell notes she quickly “sweeps this knowledge aside” and it remains undeveloped throughout the play (51). Importantly though, conversation builds new views.

Appreciating the subversive act Solomon performs when he offers to show the white patron where she can buy chickens for twelve rand, Marion distances herself from the “*mlungu*” by confessing: “Hollandaise sauce – I’ve always thought it overrated” (142).³⁵ It is through this comic story and others like it, such as Marion’s description of her husband’s large fart and Solomon’s account of Thozama killing and eating a moose, that *Reach* outlines different experiences and perspectives of citizens in the nation. Humour facilitates the exchange because “people who share laughter are co-conspirators in playful rule breaking, and such shared transgression, like other shared guilty pleasures, promotes a feeling of solidarity” (M. Smith 160). In the case of *Reach* the rules being broken in transcultural humour are the social codes of difference and division historically established and continuing to jaundice South Africa’s present moment. More importantly, the bond that develops allows Solomon to make the painful revelation that he witnessed Jonathan’s murder because, as Powell explains, “truth could not

³⁵ Mlungu is a Xhosa term for “white” (Foot Newton, *Reach* 142).

come without intimacy” in the plot (46).

In the wake of this transcultural dialogue both characters begin to care for and empathize with the other’s position. The bond that is formed establishes itself along the lines of mother and child, perhaps because of their respective ages, life experiences, and Marion’s historic ties with Solomon’s grandmother. However, even in forming an affectionate bond, both characters must overcome the barriers of apartheid vocabulary in order to establish a positive relationship. Most explicitly, the tenuousness of this project is seen through Solomon’s misinterpretation of Marion’s endearing reference to him as “my boy” (138). Similar to other moments of cultural exchange in the play, the phrase is first understood as demeaning. Arguing that Marion is calling him “‘my boy’ just like your father called my father,” Solomon exposes the historically racist use of the term (138). In doing so, he identifies the oppressive ways “boy” was traditionally used during apartheid to emphasize the subordinate position of black South African men in society (138). Solomon frames his argument in terms that identify the divergent histories between himself and the Banning family by asserting that Marion’s father may even have used the term derogatorily against members of his own family (138).

For Homann this example helps to contextualize the respective histories of the two characters. *Reach* accomplishes this “by giving them a vocabulary that stems from a conditioning under apartheid” (*At This Stage* 24). In doing so, Homann argues that “Foot Newton constructs a journey of learning for them,” a journey of re-thinking and restructuring that I argue also occurs throughout the pair’s comic transcultural exchanges (24). This process is similar to Blumberg’s appeal for “sharing, learning, and re-visioning ourselves anew” (“Re-Evaluating” 32), and Jamal’s advocacy that South Africans must “attempt to rethink – dream and experience – the inherent heterogeneity” of South Africa (*Predicaments* 24). However, the play goes beyond

simply re-defining oppressive apartheid terminology; it reconstructs this terminology to evoke familial bonds.

Embracing Solomon as “my boy,” Marion genuinely adopts him into her family (138). When the young man challenges her use of the term on the basis of its racist associations, Marion reminds him that the term “can just as well be a term of endearment” (138). Translating the term into Xhosa, “*Nayana wam,*” Solomon admits that it is also what his grandmother called him when she was still alive (139). This confession indicates Solomon is also able to step outside the historically racist use of the term, overcoming its offensive association in favour of constructing a new meaning, one of care and respect. Importantly, Solomon’s acknowledgment that his grandmother Thozama used it as a term of endearment indicates that “my boy” already has a history of use by a surrogate mother in Solomon’s life (139). Orphaned by AIDS at the age of ten, his grandmother Thozama raised him until she passed away from tuberculosis. Making a link between Marion’s use of the term and his own grandmother suggests Solomon begins to envisage Marion as a mother figure.

Likewise, Marion links Solomon with her own lost son. In addition to identifying him as her boy, she admits to seeing a likeness of Jonathan in Solomon’s appearance. The visual connection between Jonathan and Solomon occurs when the latter helps to clean out the garage and comes across Jonathan’s old clothing in a box. Trying on one of Jonathan’s shirts, Solomon causes Marion to discover a resemblance between the two. Marion becomes agitated because, as she explains, “For an instant I saw Jonathan” (154). The connection between the two young men gives Marion and Solomon great distress because it reopens the unresolved pain of Jonathan’s death. For Marion it reawakens gestures associated with motherhood as she dresses Solomon in an “*intimate*” but ultimately “*uncomfortable way*” (154, emphasis in original). For Solomon, the

moment is also painful as it appears to remind him of bearing witness to Jonathan's murder – causing him to sob openly on Marion's shoulder (154); however, this moment also marks an important turning point in their relationship. Marion's comparison of Solomon to Jonathan is the ultimate sign of emotional acceptance from Marion because she maintains a close connection to the deceased boy. This connection is so strong that it has caused the destruction of her marriage and estrangement from her daughter. Associating Solomon with Jonathan is a sign that Marion no longer sees Solomon as Other, but instead views the young Xhosa as part of her family.

Throughout *Reach* Marion places great emphasis on the bond between mother and son. Grieving for seven years she is fixated on her feelings of loss and guilt: "The pain never goes away, Solomon, but it's mine, no one else's. I need it to be mine" (161). Because of this, she enacts a similar kind of role as that accorded to mothers at the TRC. For Marion, grief sustains the memory of Jonathan. Arguing that she needs the pain "to be mine," she reveals how this pain has shaped her sense of identity (161). Similar to Nozizwe, Marion's pain is unique to her and, as such, she relates to it as a part of her. In fact, Marion's statements resemble a testimony presented by Thenjiwe Mtintso at a Special Women's Hearing, quoted in an article by researcher Annalisa Oboe: "I have nursed that pain, I have owned that pain. I seem to refuse to move away from that pain. I seem to gain strength from the fact that it is my pain" (67). Interpreting Mtintso's statements, Oboe argues her identity is "predicated through secret suffering" (67). As such, Mtintso's control over past trauma and the pain it causes her constitutes "subjectivity and strength" (67). While the details surrounding Marion's pain are public, not private, the principle appears to be the same. Both women gain strength by embracing their pain, defining themselves through traumatic experiences and their strength to survive such violence.

Although Marion's pain may be an expression of her agency, her fixation ultimately

destroys the family, as Powell explains, because Marion “refused to grant an equal partnership in her grief” (44). And yet Marion’s explanation to Solomon indicates Frank, her husband, also tried to deny her grief by sending her for electroshock therapy (161). While both were admittedly suffering, and Marion refused to share the pain, the application of electroshock therapy must also be viewed as a violent negation of Marion’s identity. It removed the pain, but as her remarks suggest, this pain is part of who she is and how she defines herself – as the mother of a murdered son. But while mother-witnesses in the TRC were praised as guardians of memory for the deceased, Marion presents an opposing position where grief compromises her integration into the nation.

Unlike women at the TRC who were called upon by political and religious leaders to help consolidate “the national narrative of sacrifice and redemption” by underwriting “the TRC’s goal of reconciliation and nation building,” Marion is abandoned both by the nation and her family (Samuelson 161). The attempt to silence and contain Marion’s grief with electroshock therapy contrasts the national celebration of grief and mourning performed publicly by mothers at the TRC. And this is perhaps a result of her race. Most obviously, Marion’s status as white middle class ultimately provides her with medical support that was not widely available to black mothers during apartheid. But also her son’s death, an act of targeted class killing, does not conform to the heroic narrative of dying in the resistance struggle like this chapter’s other deceased son, Siphso. While Jonathan also opposed apartheid’s racial divisions, as Solomon recalls he brought him sweets as a child (158), the story of his murder only spreads fear in the white community. As a result it is not widely mourned and Marion’s personal opinions are never publicly heard.

Acts of silencing can undermine unification because, as Jaspal K. Singh and Rajendra Chetty explain in *Trauma, Resistance, Reconstruction in Post-1994 South African Writing*,

witnesses whose testimonies are denied often feel excluded from membership in the nation: “If one’s memory and its narration are denied within cultural and social spaces, one cannot successfully belong to a nation, particularly if that memory is of a trauma inflicted by the nation-state” (2). Linking Singh and Chetty’s theory to *Reach*, Marion’s withdrawal from society appears to stem from the denial of her own voice in national discourses surrounding Jonathan’s murder. She is silenced because her voice is replaced by speculative headlines and graphic depictions of the murder scene: “The photos of my boy on the front page. Lying naked in a scrap yard. The speculation: was he gay? Was he involved in drugs?” and the headline “Mother of Murdered Boy Collapses at His Funeral” (160-1). In these accounts Marion does not have a voice because her personal narrative of suffering is displaced by her image. This is strikingly similar to the way that mothers’ testimonials at the TRC were co-opted by the media and reduced to an image that stood in for national suffering and reconciliation.

The singular reference associated with Marion in the media reports is a description of her collapse at Jonathan’s funeral. In this sense the media sensationalizes Jonathan’s murder without accounting for the secondary acts of violence inflicted on the Banning family – his death fracturing ties between Marion and her husband, but also her daughter. Symbolically, the letters Marion writes to Anne represent another effort at reconciliation as she reaches out to connect with her estranged daughter through personal correspondence. It is thus deeply significant that after Solomon breaks his silence and recounts the final moments of Jonathan’s life, honouring Jonathan’s memory according to Xhosa custom and translating “acts of mourning and condolence across cultures” (Powell 48), Marion chooses not to go to the police or media. Making this decision Marion prevents another opportunity for the state to integrate her grief back into its discourse.

While my argument here suggests Marion is rejecting inclusion in the nation, I posit that she is actually refusing national systems of reconciliation from the early years of independence in favour of forming a new space for mothers in the second interregnum. Specifically, Marion's refusal to seek police or media attention is an indication that she no longer wishes to participate in public narratives of loss and forgiveness. Although the death of her son originally became an event of national debate that sought to explain the justification for his murder, it silenced Marion's personal narrative beneath narratives of fear. As the newspaper headlines epitomize, her story of trauma was displaced by media attention on Jonathan's murder (160-1). Opposing this oppression, Marion's discovery of new information comes through an intimate process of reconciliation, one that adopts a similar spirit of truth-telling to South Africa's TRC, but does so in a private, rather than public, realm. In this regard we see that Marion wants knowledge and closure, not justice. She desires to hear the truth and to be heard, but does not wish to share her new information publicly because it would open up old wounds (160).

Solomon's confession that he witnessed Jonathan's murder differs from Foot Newton's later version, *Solomon and Marion*. In her reworking both characters seem darker. For example there are additional references to land claims, further implying Marion benefits from apartheid's unequal distribution of land and wealth, although this theme remains secondary in the plot (26). And in the case of Solomon, he is revealed to be a perpetrator involved in Jonathan's murder. Solomon was the one who stole Jonathan's security code at a bank machine, causing the thieves to target the boy (52). These changes make reconciliation between the pair less likely, but also change the meaning of Solomon's visits – rather than a cultural duty, his visits may only be an effort to absolve himself. In this regard *Reach* is a better model of post-TRC drama because it evades easy labels such as victim and perpetrator. Much like Nozizwe and Buntu from *The*

Return, the decisions Solomon and Marion have made inflict harm on others, but it was not their intention to do so. Unlike *Solomon and Marion* where Marion must decide whether to take Solomon to the police, *Reach* offers an opportunity for Marion to align herself with Solomon as Jonathan's murder has caused both of them great suffering.³⁶

Her refusal to go public with Solomon's testimony also shows a new respect and understanding for Solomon's position. At first agitated by his delay, "So why did you come now? What makes you so brave now," Marion's reticence to go to the police also protects him from the retributive violence that would occur if he identified Jonathan's murderers at a second trial (160). Instead, Marion exemplifies a new way forward in the second interregnum, a process of reconciliation that is personal and private, established along lines that encourage understanding between cultures, classes, and races. Describing the play's progression as similar to developing a photograph, Stopford posits it "starts as a negative, a dark picture, but grows into a scene with redeeming light and colour" (*qtd. in* Thurman). This progression adheres to new South African nationalism's narrative of development toward a brighter future by reconciling the population with its violent past. But importantly, *Reach* reconfigures this narrative in a fashion that locates mother's voices at the centre of reconciling differences, exploring the psychological pain endured by mothers as a result of the physical pain inflicted on children. Significantly, Marion's testimony of Jonathan's death is heard at the play's conclusion and, in doing so, Marion finds peace with the past. Her decision to visit her daughter in Australia epitomizes her commitment to move forward. As does her effort to share her culture with Solomon by cooking a lamb stew, proof the two have reconciled differing food tastes.

The mother/son bond established between them is solidified in the final passages of the play. Although gestures are made throughout *Reach* to imply both view the other in their

³⁶ Solomon blames health problems with his liver on his failure to come forward about Jonathan's murder (161).

respective roles as mother and son, Solomon's closing remarks concretize their relationship. The conclusion does so because it exemplifies Solomon's own effort to re-think and re-define apartheid terminology. In doing so he uses a similar strategy employed by Marion earlier in the play, transforming traditionally oppressive terms into phrases of respect and care. Echoing Marion's point about how "my boy" has multiple meanings beyond its historically racist use (138), Solomon points out that "Mies Marion" can also be a term "Of care. Of caring" (164). In this instance Solomon uses Marion's strategy of redefining apartheid expressions as terms of endearment to liberate a phrase Marion identifies as "old [and] subservient" (164). This action indicates both Solomon and Marion are consciously redefining terminology identified with hatred into gestures of love. The pair's construction of a non-biological cross-racial family suggests that propagating a love of difference, as Jamal suggests, may offer a route to unity that avoids displacing ethnic difference with an overwhelming emphasis on sameness (*Predicaments* 24). The final sequence where Marion agrees to watch the 2010 World Cup with Solomon implies the two have reconciled without being artificially swayed by national narratives espousing unity. Furthermore, this act is not an acceptance of the nation's call to stage performances of unity in its soccer stadiums, but rather a decision that shows respect and curiosity for his personal interests. This is because the two plan to celebrate the event privately in Marion's home, like their earlier reconciliation.

Dike's and Foot Newton's plays exemplify two different strategies that mothers can utilize to overcome historical silencing and contemporary social divisions. While Dike adopts a return to traditional indigenous cultural practices, mediated and shaped by birthright, to reconcile the nation, Foot Newton proposes a new vision for familial structures that supersede the biological family one is born into. Both plays position mothers at the centre of reconciliation in

the second interregnum and indicate that psychological and personal traumas need to be heard, and accepted, before forgiveness and peace can be attained. Most importantly, both plays suggest mothers are no longer simply mother-witnesses in national narratives, but complex subjects still struggling to overcome apartheid atrocities and their own victimization. Humour helps this process by serving as a coping strategy and a way to forge bonds, but also as a means to highlight historic and continuing inequalities.

Chapter IV

Claiming Space for Ethnic Minorities in the Rainbow Nation: Identity and Othering in Ashwin Singh's *To House* and Ntokozo Madlala and Mandisa Haarhoff's *Crush-hopper*

Introduction

Although South Africa's post-apartheid constitution seeks to create a legal system "committed to non-racialism," the material reality in the country is that racism and racial divisions continue to exist (Desai and Vahed 1). Even more problematic is the fact that the destruction of apartheid's system of racial categorization has caused many ethnic groups to experience further crises of identity and exclusion within the new democracy. Ethnic minority communities frequently feel excluded in a nation that is, as Rastogi explains, "still predicated along the black and white binary" (550). Rastogi's assessment highlights the extent to which apartheid-era ethnic and racial divisions still operate on a black-white binary, at the exclusion of other groups in the new democracy (550). This chapter examines the marginalization of South African Indian and coloured populations in the post-apartheid nation by investigating the way playwrights from these communities depict the positions occupied by their members.

While "Indian" was the apartheid racial designation for people of South Asian descent living in South Africa (Altnöder 6), South African Indian is a term that emerged to define this ethnicity. Desai and Vahed use the term Indian South African in their research, although this chapter uses South African Indian because a majority of the South Asian community in South Africa were born in Africa; they are principally South African, connected to India through ancestral ties rather than citizenship or birthplace. While the order of this term is contested,

scholars Krijay Govender and M.S. Prabhakara also use South African Indian, indicating it is commonly used to identify the South African Asian community. Likewise, there are also diverse views on the term “coloured” in present-day South Africa. It was originally used to describe “assimilated colonial blacks” and people of Asian origin in the late eighteenth-eighties, but is now used to denote “a person of mixed racial ancestry rather than one who is black” (Adhikari, “Predicaments” xi, viii). After liberation many have debated whether to continue using this term because of its links to colonization. This debate extends to capitalizing the word, which was standard practice during apartheid. Haarhoff’s decision not to capitalize “coloured” contradicts the current scholarly norm, which uses capitalization to acknowledge the re-organization of this community after independence (Adhikari, *Not White Enough* xv). Similar to Haarhoff, this dissertation does not capitalize coloured unless referring to the apartheid term or quoting from scholarship. This is done out of respect for artists like Haarhoff who use the lower-case spelling to further differentiate the ethnic identity from the apartheid racial category.

Ashwin Singh’s *To House* (2006) and Ntokozo Madlala’s and Mandisa Haarhoff’s *Crush-hopper* (2011) foreground the complex renegotiation of ethnic identities in the new South Africa. This chapter examines the ways in which ethnic minority communities are writing back against historical silencing and national exclusion. Both plays address the numerous social, class, and political challenges faced by individuals who do not fit into the black and white polarity entrenched during apartheid. Seeking a way to encourage a more complex understanding of ethnic diversity, these playwrights portray South African ethnic minority communities as heterogeneous and unstable. Not only are ethnic identities fragmented when taking geographical origins and class into consideration, but generational differences and changing social codes also influence how members from ethnic minority groups self-identify.

Race, Identity, and the Heterogeneity of South African Ethnic Minorities

For the purposes of this chapter I define South African Indian and coloured populations as ethnic identities and not racial groups because, as many scholars and political analysts such as Henry Louis Gates Jr. (5), Fanon (111), Krueger (*Experiments* 206), and Meersman (“The Problem”) have demonstrated, race is a social construction and not a biological classification. As Meersman asserts, “there is no such thing as race. The scientific/biological proof is incontrovertible; race exists only in the sense that it is a pigment of the imagination” (“The Problem”). Frank Salamone’s definition is useful here. For Salamone, “ethnicity is (1) a combination of social identities, (2) a series of statuses, and, finally (3), a social persona” (481). This definition does not rely on a racial categorization based upon skin colour or physical features, but rather social structures that signify inclusion in an ethnic group within a social sphere. This definition is fluid and offers a framework that can help to identify characters in the two plays as representative of broad ethnic communities while also preventing us from reading such individuals as solely defined by these communities in any fixed or homogenizing way. Salamone’s definition of ethnicity also applies to black and white categories. In this regard all ethnic groups must be understood as fluid, influenced by surrounding social and political conditions. As a “combination of social identities” ethnicity is open to constant change, a reality conveyed in *To House* and *Crush-hopper* (481).

Even if one accepts that race does not exist at a biological level, as a social construct it still wields immense power in South African society. The irrefutable influence of race over South African thinking is a result of apartheid’s system of classifying citizens into four major

racial groupings. For whites this system ensured privileges and wealth, whereas for non-whites restrictive laws such as the Group Areas Act, the Immorality Act, and the Passbook Laws curtailed property rights, sexual freedom, and movement. Identifying all citizens according to racial classifications, apartheid labelled people as African, Coloured, White, or Indian (Altnöder 1). These categories, although wholly arbitrary and based on physical appearance, social status, and community opinion, continue to influence South Africans in the present day. As cultural theorist Sonja Altnöder explains,

South Africa has found, and still finds, itself in an ongoing phase of transition from racial oppression to majority rule. These post-apartheid processes of transformation span social, political and cultural reforms; yet, they are inevitably complicated by the deeply entrenched presence of apartheid's intricate mechanics of inclusion and exclusion, which cannot be effortlessly discarded in the sweeping movement of a new beginning. Rather, apartheid's four racial categories, White, African, Coloured and Indian, as well as their intrinsic hierarchies of power, continue to shape everyday life in a manifold of ways. (1)

While Altnöder uses the designation "African" to define black indigenous populations, I employ Rastogi's terminology and refer to this community as black rather than African (537). Altnöder's discussion of "intrinsic hierarchies of power" is precisely where feelings of exclusion and isolation from the nation develop for ethnic minorities (1). Their perceived difference, Otherness, and unique historical experiences marginalize them within post-apartheid national narratives. Although they are citizens of the nation, they are rarely viewed as full members because cultural differences, unique classifications as "racial" outsiders, or divergent histories mean they are located outside a nationalism that imagines the nation as composed of black and white ethnic

groups. Beginning with South African Indians, I will trace the major events and concerns that have shaped these two ethnicities.

The Indian diaspora first arrived in South Africa in 1860 to address the British colony's agricultural needs (Elder 116). Indians were initially brought to the southern coast as indentured labourers for sugar plantations in Natal. As Arlene Elder notes, the majority of the first wave of labourers were Hindu (116). They signed agreements committing them to labour between three and five years – depending on the bond – after which they “could renew their original contract, return to India at government expense, or accept a piece of crownland equal in value to the cost of a return passage” (116). These indentured labourers formed the first community of Indians in South Africa. However, as time passed, they were soon joined by other classes from India. After the initial import of indentured labourers to the colony, a second wave came to the Cape to establish entrepreneurial businesses (116). These Indians were largely of Muslim faith and tended to be of wealthier status, often regarded as “passenger Indians” because they bought passage to South Africa (Landy, Maharaj, and Mainet-Valleix 207). Although both of these groups originated from India, they did not share a common religion or language and came from different regions and classes.

While return passage to India was a possibility, many South African Indians stayed and began to populate the Natal region. The community congregated around urban centres, especially Durban. With the rise of the National Party and the implementation of apartheid in 1948 the relatively heterogeneous South African Indian population found themselves classed under a single designation: Indian. Commenting on the location of South African Indians in 1992, Elder highlights the type of uniform thinking employed by the government throughout apartheid: “Traditional and colonially inspired economic, language, cultural, and class barriers exist among

them, but the South African government generally deals with the Indian community as a homogeneous unit, legally restricting its living areas and employment opportunities” broadly (117). South African Indians were identified as a singular group under apartheid, regardless of class, religious, linguistic, cultural, and political differences. Even more strikingly, while racial injustices and economic limitations were placed upon them throughout apartheid, their position as diasporic members of the commonwealth meant the National Party often encouraged them to repatriate to India (Desai and Vahed 2). In fact, South African Indians were not formally accepted as citizens until 1961 when the National Party grew tired of complaints from India’s government regarding the treatment of the Indian diaspora (Rastogi 539).

Apartheid entrenched the myth of the homogeneous Indian community, an ethnic identity that to this day still has both subtle yet complex indicators of difference and heterogeneity. While certain markers of difference have been largely eroded, for example over ninety-five percent of South African Indians call English a first language (Desai and Vahed 4), divisions still remain. Frederic Landy, Brij Maharaj, and Helene Mainet-Valleix elucidate some of the major changes to the Indian diaspora after successive generations of settlement in South Africa:

In South Africa, an ethnicity which may be called ‘Indianness’ was progressively built by combining many identity patterns, some of which have faded away, while others have been strengthened... What is remarkable, however, is that these identity markers are also mostly factors of heterogeneity inside the ‘Indian’ group. Those having gone are caste and the original class structure. The factors that have remained are region, language, religion and urban spatial segmentation. (206)

Although Landy, Maharaj, and Mainet-Valleix’s assessment differs from Desai and Vahed’s argument that language has diminished as an indicator of difference amongst this population,

both camps agree differences remain. It is possible that mutual feelings of marginalization form one of the principle bonds between this ethnicity's members. As editor Neilesh Bose explains in an introduction to a collection of drama about the South Asian diaspora, past marginalization informs present efforts towards unification for South African Indians: "Today, the South African state celebrates its diversity, but only after a long history of official attempts to repatriate and, at times, curtail the rights of Indians" (5). This ethnicity is heterogeneous, not homogeneous. And it is precisely this type of cultural complexity that *To House* portrays.

Like South African Indian identity, coloured ethnicity is also widely diverse in terms of class structure, cultural customs, and political views. However, while South African Indians claim a diasporic ancestry from a single, although admittedly large, geographical region, coloured identity evokes, as Lueen Conning's *A Coloured Place* (1998) illustrates, a complex history of colonization, diasporic movements, and hybridity. Dividing South Africa's coloured community into two groups, Conning uses the nation's geography to isolate the general differences between those living in and around Cape Town and those located in the eastern province of KwaZulu-Natal: "Cape Coloureds originated from Khoi San, white and Oriental. Natal Coloureds are different in many respects to the bulk of Coloureds in the rest of the country. Their origins can be traced to three groups, Mauritians, St. Helenans [sic] and Euro-Africans" (14). Belying the complex cultural background of this ethnicity, the apartheid designation Coloured was often, and in many cases still is, viewed as a homogeneous racial identity. Unsurprisingly, many South Africans who were labelled Coloured view the term with a mixture of animosity and frustration.

As leading theorist on coloured identity Mohamed Adhikari explains, "The use of the term Coloured is still complicated by a residual politically correct lobby that rejects" its usage in

favour of “a broader black or South African identity” (*Not White Enough* xv). However, Adhikari goes on to point out that, overall, such sentiment is limited (8). One advocate for using different terminology to identify mixed-race South Africans is Ryland Fisher, who views coloured identity as fundamentally linked to apartheid violence: “I still believe that the only definition of ‘coloureds’ is people who could not be fitted into any of the other apartheid-era definitions.” In Fisher’s assessment it seems the term coloured cannot move beyond apartheid usage and yet, as cultural theorist Michele Ruiters posits, in recent years coloured groups are refashioning this identity through grass-roots community movements (111), political organizations (116), and the media (113). Ruiters sees this process as liberatory, but also uncomfortable “because it forces people who have denied a part of themselves to come to terms with painful histories” (111). For artists such as Conning, rethinking coloured identity is a personal process that challenges understandings of community and self.

In an interview about her play Conning expresses her own apprehensions around colouredness and the challenges surrounding its usage:

It’s something I’ve avoided – the issue of Coloured people, and even relating myself to the term Coloured has always been a problem for me. The idea came from having so many strange questions in the new South Africa and South African people asking me what are you, and I would assume they would know the apartheid boxes we came from. But also there’s not one particular face, or type of hair, or skin that you say is Coloured, or can really define us. Also, if you don’t have a typically Coloured accent, it’s hard to tell. (7)

As Conning’s reflection attests, independence brought new identity crises after apartheid markers of race were eroded, but also raised questions of unity amongst a visually heterogeneous

community. Lacking clear physical traits such as hair type, skin, and facial features, it is difficult for her to signal inclusion in this group. Political changes also raise the question of whether she wants to continue to identify with this ethnicity at all. The heterogeneity of coloured appearance reinforces Fisher's argument that the group is composed of members who did not easily fit other racial categories during apartheid. It is the lack of similar traits that, in many ways, defines coloured identity since its conception. Conning's decision to fall back upon "apartheid boxes" to define her ethnicity exposes ways apartheid violence and a shared history of marginalization continue to help define coloured identity (7).

In Ruiters's opinion cohesive bonds amongst this ethnic community persist after independence "because of the shared trauma of forced removals" and spatial marginalization inflicted upon coloureds during apartheid (109). While apartheid marginalization was "central to the relative stability of Coloured identity because of the limitations it placed on their possibilities for independent action" (Adhikari, *Not White Enough* xiii), many in this community continue to feel excluded from the nation. For example, Ruiters explains coloureds "commonly argue that brown does not appear in the rainbow" (106). This slogan expresses coloured feelings of exclusion from national metaphors like the Rainbow Nation used by Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, although other ethnic groups use similar slogans to express frustration with post-apartheid nationalism. The title of Adhikari's book, *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough*, illustrates another example of the coloured population's sense of exemption. The slogan suggests the community's complexion was too dark to be privileged during apartheid, and too light to benefit from post-apartheid affirmative action like BEE. While feelings of exclusion prevail, coloured identity is shifting. So much so that Adhikari notes even capitalizing the term coloured needs careful contextualization as it has moved from being a historical marker of oppression to

an emblem of “the rapid change the identity is experiencing in the postapartheid environment” (xv). This is the kind of change we see in *Crush-hopper*, which traces one individual’s multiple identity shifts.

Although I am focusing on two playwrights who identify with two of the four major “racial” categories under the apartheid system, I do so to illustrate how these writers break down fixed racial categories or dispel stereotypes established during colonization. Race categories under apartheid were predominantly fixed, constructed as homogeneous. And yet racial categories remain institutionalized in state bureaucracy after apartheid, appearing for instance in the 2011 census (Meersman, “The Problem”). Working from within minority positions these playwrights break down clear differences between groups, or reclaim an ethnic identity by refashioning it beyond racially imposed categories. They do this by presenting ethnic communities as heterogeneous, subverting the apartheid notion that race is stable and homogeneous. Furthermore, the plays in this chapter illustrate how fraught the problem of racism is because these ethnicities not only experience racism, but also racially prejudice other groups. As the plays exemplify, ethnic minorities do not fall into categories of black and white, but nor does racism. And yet as ethnic minorities the two groups in this chapter have unique histories of being othered, a position that, drawing on Bhabha’s description of the Other, is often “cited, quoted, [and] framed” by prevailing outsider views (*The Location* 31).

Both plays attack stereotypes that position their characters’ ethnic identities either outside or as marginal to the black and white binary outlined by Rastogi (550). In doing so, both plays portray ethnic minorities as citizens of a heterogeneous nation. In the case of Singh’s *To House* characters such as Sanjay and Kajol forge bonds within, and outside, the South African Indian community, although in most cases these connections open up new fissures. In contrast, *Crush-*

hopper breaks down the black and white binary by embracing coloured ethnicity and self-affirmation as a way to claim space in the present nation. In doing so Haarhoff does not use the term coloured in its conventional sense – as a racial marker – but rather reclaims the term as representative of her ethnicity. This allows her to define herself using new terms, not those of apartheid. She liberates coloured identity from rigid apartheid constructions of race by embracing a hybrid ancestry and multilingualism. For Haarhoff, coloured identity is not so much about race, as it is the experience of marginalization.

Humour in these two plays helps ethnic communities work through both externally and internally held stereotypes. Largely operating in a self-deprecatory style, both works contain humour that produces laughter out of the systemic othering these communities historically endured. For Singh's Durban audience this means laughing back at the false belief that all South African Indians are avaricious and lack empathy for fellow citizens; characters such as Deena are meant to be ridiculed as negative stereotypes of South African Indians, helping subvert the power that racism has in shaping their identity. Similarly, Madlala and Haarhoff produce self-deprecatory humour out of experiences of othering, especially the protagonist's own negation of self. The humour that occurs laughs back at personal efforts to change her identity. In this case the humour in *Crush-hopper* actually stands to reaffirm clear divisions between ethnic identities because it denigrates shifting ethnic positions. As Haarhoff explains in an interview, it is "hilarious that there is this black girl that wants to be white" (Personal Interview). Directing laughter at ethnic mixing allows Haarhoff to establish a third position, coloured. The link between self-deprecatory humour in both works is that it not only attacks racial stereotypes levelled against ethnic minorities by non-members, but it also attacks stereotypes that have

become internalized by minority communities. Laughter in this regard self-regulates by critiquing internally-held views as well as revealing layers of entrenched racism.

The ethnic minority communities at the core of these plays occupy important positions in South African culture and history. The experiences of South African Indians and coloureds are divergent and yet, due to apartheid's system of classification and narratives that continue to divide the nation along a black and white line, feelings of rejection and exclusion are shared by both groups. In many instances they feel under-represented, ignored, or overlooked by dominant racial groups. In the context of my overall project these two plays should be viewed as examples of marginalised voices reclaiming space in the second interregnum. As Blumberg elucidates, theatre after the TRC often featured “previously oppressed and elided minority voices [that] call attention to their positions [in order] to reclaim and validate personal and/or communal identity” (“Reconciling” 140). Blumberg’s comment epitomizes how these plays operate, particularly in Haarhoff’s case. Both works are based on lived-experience and voice personal stories of pain caused by national or community-based acts of othering.

Ashwin Singh’s *To House*

Singh is an excellent example of a writer who is conscious of the challenges facing South African Indians. Not only is he from Durban, an urban centre where the Indian diaspora “make[s] up one quarter of the population” (Landy, Maharaj, and Mainet-Valleix 204), but reviews indicate his play reflects challenges the city faces. According to theatre critic Gisele Turner, *To House* ambitiously “takes Durbanites right into the heart of one of the most pressing issues that we face as a community – how to live together.” For others such as Illa Thompson,

the play is unique because it “feature[s] a kaleidoscope of White, Black and Indian characters” (“Premier”). In another article Thompson hails Singh as one of the many playwrights “finding a particularly vociferous, loud voice with a slew of new productions examining the South African Indian identity,” crediting him with being “politically in-tune with the dynamics of living in a culturally complex city” (“Art Matters”). Focusing on the play’s exploration of personal relationships, Caroline Smart argues the play “defines the new cultural divide” in Durban by presenting competing views on familial bonds between Kajol and Sibusiso (“To House”). While Smart’s review is positive, she is critical of the set’s minimalism but attributes this to budget or time restraints (“To House”). Chris Dunton also faults the dialogue with being “a bit stiff,” but applauds the play’s “neat devices such as the use of pieces of furniture in the multiple set [...] to highlight personal interactions and class differences” (F8). Overall, most reviews praise *To House* for its focus on cross-cultural exchanges after apartheid and discussion of social mobility.

So far scholarly analysis of the play is limited. Charles Fourie’s introduction in *New South African Plays* describes the work as “a clever vehicle to explore the lives of a diverse group of characters, who each come to terms with their own prejudices” (8-9). While characters make small efforts to unify, Fourie argues continuing divisions at the conclusion indicate “a long journey toward the integration of our cultural differences lies ahead” (9). Themis Venturas’s foreword to *Durban Dialogues, Indian Voice* hails the play as an “intelligent work” that foregrounds tensions between old and new orders (9). In doing so, the play “gives us insight into the emotional and intellectual complexity of having to deal with change” (9). Like the plays in the previous chapter, here again new drama configures the domestic space as a location to test national challenges at a micro-level. As literary critic Devarakshanam Betty Govinden’s introduction in the same anthology explains, Singh’s plays are “attentive to the struggle for

survival in the city against the backdrop of the official story of the South African ‘miracle’” (14). Govinden also highlights Singh’s general use of ethnic identities in his plays to create tension, depicting multiple cross-racial relationships to dispel stereotypes (14). Lastly, Shantal Singh also provides a brief analysis of the play in *Durban Dialogues, Indian Voice*. For her, *To House* “exposes the underbelly of society’s discomfort with dealing with cross-cultural relations as it explodes into our living space” (17). In this regard the play foregrounds people’s reticence “to connect beyond superficial engagements,” indicating successful integration is unlikely in the short-term (18).

Prior to its debut *To House* was a finalist at the 2003 Performing Arts Network of South Africa festival for playreading, “South Africa’s foremost playwriting contest” (A. Singh, “To House” 88). After winning this award it appeared at the Catalina Theatre in Durban on March 2, 2005 (Smart “To House”). The play was then published in Aurora Metro Press’s 2006 anthology *New South African Plays*. Subsequently the rights were bought by the Playhouse Company and it was re-staged in Durban from September 5th to the 17th, 2006 (“New Staging” 10). Most recently, *To House* appears in *Durban Dialogues, Indian Voice*, a collection of five of Singh’s plays published in 2014.

To House assesses the limits of unity and integration in the new South Africa. Smart’s review asserts the title can have two meanings, either “‘to accommodate’ or ‘to return home’” (“To House”). It is the earlier term that best connects with the play’s theme, as *To House* portrays a racially diverse group of characters struggling to live together in a suburb called Oaklands. The plot develops when a mixed-race couple – Kajol and Sibusiso – move into the neighbourhood. Their biggest opponents are a white unemployed neighbour named Jason and a young South African Indian lecturer named Sanjay. Jason dislikes Sibusiso because he believes

the new tenant is usurping his power on the executive board of Oaklands, gaining favour from white liberals because they desire to appear politically correct. In response, Jason coerces his niece who is a student at the local university to set Sibusiso, a faculty member, up for a sexual harassment charge. Like Jason, Sanjay believes that Sibusiso is being promoted faster in their law department because he is black. Sanjay blames the unequal distribution of resources after apartheid on affirmative action policies and seeks to destroy Sibusiso's reputation by secretly funding Jason's malicious plan. At the same time, Sanjay is also considering an alternative career as a restaurant owner because he assumes being South African Indian decreases his chances of stable, long-term employment as a professor.

Sibusiso and Kajol's relationship is not only threatened by external forces, but also personal prejudices. The two struggle to adapt to each other's cultural differences and this, in turn, places significant strain on their relationship. Sibusiso dislikes Kajol's close ties with her extended family and this pressure peaks when Kajol's mother needs to find a new place to live. Both parties disagree over how to handle the situation. The argument eventually draws Kajol's wealthy uncle Deena into the debate, a man who also dislikes Sibusiso and motivates Jason to tarnish the black lecturer's reputation. By the end of *To House* Sibusiso has uncovered most of the plots against him; he counters the attacks by destroying Jason's job prospects and his relationship with his niece, by setting out to acquire Sanjay's job, and removing Kajol's family from his life by distancing himself from Kajol. The play's conclusion reveals most characters harbour prejudices that prevent the formation of a unified community in Oaklands, especially Jason and Sibusiso who resolutely hate each other. Sibusiso essentially wins by defeating all who

oppose him and, although falling out of favour with all characters, stands to be elected head of the body corporate, guaranteeing his influence over the larger community.³⁷

Highlighting continuing divisions between ethnic groups, *To House* traces the complex road toward unification for all South Africans, especially those in urban centres such as Durban where multiple ethnic identities compete for the same economic and geographical resources. Importantly, Singh locates the South African Indian community at the centre of this discussion. In doing so, he uses food as a device to foreground social and cultural divisions affecting integration. Food operates as a key marker of inclusion and exclusion because it reflects shared or dissimilar tastes. As Anita Mannur contends in *Culinary Fictions: Food in South Asian Diasporic Culture*, “food is always contingent and conjectural: what food offers [...] is an alternative register through which to theorize gender, sexuality, class, and race” (19). In this regard a study of food in Singh’s *To House* can explore how it both delineates difference, reflecting unique class and cultural positions, but also attempts to break down boundaries between groups by functioning as a commodity of cross-cultural or cross-class exchange. While food emerges in the play as a possible means to unify the neighbourhood, it ultimately proves unsuccessful because racial prejudices are too deeply embedded. This leads to a conclusion that indicates unity in Oaklands will take years, if not generations, to achieve.

At the heart of the divisions in Singh’s play are racial stereotypes that most characters openly, and readily, level against each other. These stereotypes fracture the meaningful efforts at unity that arise in the play. As Singh explains, *To House* explores the conflicting narratives between “a false image” of successful national reconciliation depicted “in the media” and the general population’s “true fears and prejudices” (88). This is the seam that runs throughout the

³⁷ The community titles scheme in *To House* operates using a body corporate. Sanjay, Jason, and Sibusiso own parcels of land but pay fees to the body corporate to maintain and develop the public spaces within the suburb.

play and divides people between what they envision reconciliation to be, and the reality of the divided community. He elucidates further by stating: “I believe there is much to be admired in our evolving democracy, but that true reconciliation between our different cultural denominations requires a deeper and more honest process than what has been forthcoming thus far” (88). Attempting to present a more sincere account of cross-cultural exchange, *To House* shows audiences how supposedly liberated mindsets fall back into prejudicial thinking when people feel they are losing power, wealth, or status. In this sense all the characters desire some level of cohesion within their community but largely fail to unify because of fear, greed, or racism; Sanjay dreams of opening a takeaway where people can gather (109), Sibusiso hopes to lead the board of the community titles scheme (134-5), and even Jason seeks an integrated community like his previous neighbourhood, Redwood (118). However, each character’s self-interest causes them to scheme against the other and renders these dreams impossible. What fragments the suburb, then, is not a rejection of community, but rather the selfish and prejudiced ways the residents interact with each other. Stereotypes based upon ethnic, cultural, and economic differences divide Oaklands at both public and private levels.

For Bhabha, the stereotype “is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated” (*The Location* 66). That is to say, the power colonial discourse exercises over oppressed communities is established and maintained through its ability to label groups as different, and construct those differences as unchangeable and everlasting. Bhabha’s term for this is “fixity,” and is established in terms of racial, historical, or cultural difference (66). As Bhabha goes on to explain, stereotypes based on racial outsidership contain “a paradoxical mode of representation;” they both establish a clear and concise order while also evoking a state of

disorder (66). The colonizer is always at the pinnacle of the cultural hierarchy while those being othered are at the bottom. This process works somewhat differently in *To House* as independence has reversed who is empowered and who is vulnerable in the community. However, ethnic identities such as the South African Indian community must still contend with stereotypes and othering established during colonisation – such as fears they oppose national unity by exploiting other racial groups. The Other is construed as different, socially contemptible, and outside boundaries of regular society. Otherness is thus established on the assumption that one knows the Other's identity, history, and behaviours while at the same time reducing the Other's position to one of silence and negation. As Bhabha contends, “The Other loses its power to signify, to negate, to initiate its historic desire, to establish its own institutional and oppositional discourse” (31). And it is in Bhabha's sense of cultural negation that citizens distance themselves from South African Indians, especially Sanjay.

As one of the leading representatives of the South African Indian community in the play, Sanjay struggles to overcome numerous stereotypes and prejudices levelled against him by members of other ethnic groups, specifically Zulu and white. Although Sibusiso and Jason also level racial and cultural stereotypes against each other throughout the course of the play, it is important to consider *To House* is mindful of who was, and currently is, politically and economically advantaged in South Africa. While Sibusiso describes Jason as a failure because his inability to financially benefit from apartheid suggests his “family must have been pathetic” (134), and Sibusiso is portrayed as empowered after liberation (134-5), Sanjay feels marginalized during both political periods. Sanjay's experiences suggest he occupies a middle position, caught between the reversing power dynamics of black and white ethnicities. The play captures this by decorating Sibusiso and Jason's living rooms in similar fashion, differentiated only by the latter's

coffee table. These lounges appear as one room, “with the coffee table being removed and replaced for the relevant scenes” as described in the stage directions (89). As furniture appears in Sibusiso’s house we deduce his fortunes are on the rise, whereas disappearing furniture in Jason’s living room reflects waning finances. In contrast, we never actually see Sanjay’s house. The play revolves around Sibusiso’s and Jason’s abodes, meaning South African Indians appear either as guests, in Sanjay’s case, temporary love interests in Kajol’s instance, or as outside threats to the social order when Deena arrives. This suggests a particular mobility for South African Indians, but also configures them as outsiders caught precariously between the reversing fortunes of black and white characters. In this case the play’s structure foregrounds the black and white racial binary Rastogi describes continuing after apartheid’s end (550), portraying South African Indians as caught between the two polarities.

Sanjay in particular feels most trapped in this middle position. At one point he describes watching his cousins fight to defend cultural music and a sense of cohesive identity in the townships during apartheid (118), a sign of his own historic oppression, while at another moment he complains affirmative action policies curtail his economic and professional opportunities after independence (97). One of his greatest concerns as a junior lecturer is that he will not be able to publish an article without Sibusiso’s support because “few Indian academics are getting published in law journals these days” (97). His sentiments reflect real doubts from the South African Indian community who, due to their minority status and diasporic history, feel marginalized in South Africa’s colonial and post-colonial moments. This is not to say that this community is solely portrayed as disadvantaged, as both Deena and Kajol are examples of highly successful South African Indians. What the play underscores is that others presume this community is driven by self-interest rather than shared goals, a view that hurts Sanjay most.

Characters tend to view Sanjay as an outsider, rather than as a nationalist. Examples of prejudices he encounters include Sibusiso's dismissive argument that if a career in academia does not work out a wealthy uncle will let him manage his shop (99), as well as Jason's use of the inappropriate term "coolie" when he is angry Sanjay fought his domestic labourer Justus (120).³⁸ In both instances stereotypes about Sanjay's diasporic history and identity rest at the core of why he is perceived as different or suspicious. Occasions such as Jason pointing out that Sanjay's "lotus music" sounds "quite funny sometimes" highlight how ethnicity separates him from the greater community (118). Responding to Sibusiso's comment that he can rely on a wealthy uncle to help him in a time of crisis, Sanjay broadens the impact of the insult by illustrating how it generally attacks the South African Indian community; his response to Sibusiso, that he "should share his views about Indian uncles with Kajol," foregrounds how Sibusiso's view of Sanjay's culture also applies to Sibusiso's live-in partner (99). Ironically, as we later witness, Kajol explodes such beliefs by refusing to accept support from her wealthy uncle Deena after leaving Sibusiso (125).

The treatment of Sanjay as outsider or suspicious reflects a long history of Indians being viewed as secondary members within African nations. This sentiment heightened during decolonization. As postcolonialist Mariam Pirbhai explains in *Mythologies of Migration, Vocabularies of Indenture: Novels of the South Asian Diaspora in Africa, the Caribbean and Asia-Pacific*, many South Asians who moved to Africa both prior to, and during colonization, found themselves "Caught uneasily between a racially divisive European ideology and an emergent pan-African consciousness" when African national movements gained momentum across the continent (67). This tension trapped South Asians as a "proverbial 'middleman' or 'Mr

³⁸ *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature* defines the term coolie as a "denigration" (Donnell and Welsh 285); Jason uses the term in this way to insult Sanjay during the performance.

Brown',” an individual who was assumed to be complicit in colonization because of the financial or personal benefits it afforded them (67). Such ethnic essentialism locates South Asians outside of African national movements, labelling them agents and beneficiaries of colonialism remaining in the post-colony.

Emblematic of the distrust many bear towards South African Indians, Sanjay has few friends in his surrounding community. As Kajol points out, his inability to forge friendships leaves him feeling extremely lonely: “I don’t think Sanjay has many friends... I’m not feeling sorry for him. I’m just saying that, besides his mother, I don’t think he’s close to anyone. I don’t know. He just seems lonely” (113). This loneliness is exacerbated by people’s prejudices, making it hard for Sanjay to form meaningful friendships. For example, his effort to reach out and collaborate on a project with Sibusiso fails when the lecturer decides he would prefer to write the article with another colleague (97). While not stated at the time, Sibusiso’s hidden belief that Sanjay secretly wishes to covet Kajol likely has a bearing on his decision to reject Sanjay’s proposal (110). Sibusiso’s mistrust of Sanjay is not misplaced, as Sanjay is indeed scheming against him. But it is Sibusiso’s rejection of Sanjay’s project that ultimately leads Sanjay to enter into a pact with Jason, who has opposed Sibusiso from the beginning (102-3). In this sense Sanjay’s feelings of loneliness and isolation cause him to adopt the characteristics that form the basis of his exclusion from society. And while this leads him to form a bond with Jason, this connection dissolves when both of their hidden prejudices come to light.

In many ways Sanjay’s personal struggle for acceptance within the community directly reflects the broader crisis of integration within the post-apartheid nation. As Desai and Vahed assert, Indianness in South Africa occupies a contentious space in national narratives because of negative perceptions surrounding South African Indians; these include fears that South African

Indians are uniting with white populations against black South Africans (10), that they are not patriotic members of the nation because of their diasporic history (5), and that they avariciously exploit workers, especially blacks (3).³⁹ Perhaps the most troubling example of anti-South African Indian sentiment is captured in a song by Ngema who labels South African Indians “exploiters of Africans” (Landy, Maharaj, and Mainet-Valleix 213). Desai and Vahed also cite Ngema’s song as a prime example of the animosity aimed at this ethnic minority, a song which called for a decisive physical response from strong Zulus (3). The sentiment expressed by Ngema relates back to Pirbhai’s discussion of the middleman stereotype as South Asians are viewed as financially self-interested shop keepers. According to Pirbhai, stereotypes of “Gujarati merchants amassing commercial strongholds” were common during the influx of South Asian British subjects to the continent (66). Such stereotypes still have currency in South Africa today, as examples such as Ngema’s song and *To House* indicate.

Singh, renowned for his satire, uses the play to attack prejudices levelled against the ethnic minority community while also encouraging South African Indians to laugh at the stereotypes internalized through apartheid oppression and national exclusion. The humour produced is self-deprecating, but hinges on laughing at what South African Indians are falsely believed to be. In Singh’s play the character who best encompasses this role is Deena, a personification of the colonial middleman stereotype. Deena’s behaviour replicates the fears and anxieties encapsulated in the middleman because he is disinterested in national efforts to reconcile and unify citizens. Rather than supporting cohesive community ties, and by extension national unification, Deena encourages Jason to hate Sibusiso by offering him a job if he can

³⁹ In *To House* Deena fulfills the stereotype that South African Indians exploit workers, whereas Sanjay also partially fulfills the fear that South African Indians will collaborate with whites against the country’s black population. In Sanjay’s case his position is complicated because he genuinely seems to desire creating a sense of community, even though his prejudices prevent this dream from becoming a reality.

force the black lecturer out of the community (128). He also helps to end Kajol and Sibusiso's relationship by prematurely revealing Sibusiso's plan to temporarily live apart from Kajol (124). In doing so, Deena exploits historical divisions for his own benefit, as do all male characters in the play. But Deena is perhaps most sinister because he purposefully enters the community to create divisions, whereas the other men quarrel as a result of close proximity to one another and underlying fears that others will usurp their status or power.

Rather than interpreting Deena's appearance as unusual because he reflects negative stereotypes, Singh's decision to incorporate a contentious representation of South African Indians into his play should be interpreted as a sign of the community's health because it can laugh at itself. While Hansen contends self-mockery in South African Indian drama is "deeply ambivalent as it negotiates the slippery terrain of current Indian identity," he notes one possible reading of "the ironic appropriation of the older 'coolie' stereotypes – funny accents, superstition, snobbery and patriarchal control of women – seems to signify a celebration of the successful social mobility away from working-class life" (267-8). Such an assertion is consistent with the role Deena occupies in *To House* because his patriarchal and traditional views sharply contrast Kajol's contemporary views on family structures and leadership, suggesting Singh's play produces humour directed at historically-influenced stereotypes of South African Indians (125). At the same time Deena provides a means of exploring generational conflict within the ethnic community.

He provides comic relief because his patriarchal mindset and traditional views appear out of place alongside Kajol and Sanjay's more progressive and community-minded thinking. For instance when Deena proclaims he is "taking charge of the family again," expecting Kajol to listen to him as head of the family (122), she refuses his financial assistance and instead seeks

Sanjay's help to care for her mother (131). Reviews of the play describe Deena as an "interfering old man" who "provides movement and comedic relief whilst deepening the problems faced by the young Kajol" (Turner). Noting the humour in the performance of Deena, Turner cautions "He is very watchable and entertaining – but look out for the cutting calculating edge that rescues him from becoming the buffoon." The tension created by this character is significant because, were he to become a buffoon, his appearance would lose power. As Northrop Frye explains, the buffoon's function "is to increase the mood of the festivity rather than to contribute to the plot" (175). Deena plays a more significant role than this because his Machiavellian scheming drives the play. For example, his furtive agreement with Jason to trap Sibusiso in a sexual harassment lawsuit instigates much of the play's tension (127-9). It is Deena's malicious behaviour and the way that he undermines Kajol's efforts to support her mother (122), seeks to oust Sibusiso from the neighbourhood (129), and manipulates Jason (128), that make him such a calculated and divisive character. He personifies the fear that South African Indians are manipulative for personal gain.

Constructively, Deena's appearance as an archetypal middleman may help to produce a sense of unity amongst South African Indian audiences while also raising awareness for outsiders. The laughter directed at him suggests that he is not an accurate reflection of the community. More to the point, his appearance may help produce a more concrete sense of community by providing a target to laugh at. Hansen proposes that, due to the heterogeneity of the South African Indian community, self-deprecating humour can help to achieve a sense of unity by encouraging the community to view itself from an outside position: "because the 'community' only seems to exist when it is talked about, or looked upon from the outside, the elusive sense of Indianness has to be tapped from negative stereotypes and from the long

tradition of self-deprecation in community theatre” (267). In this regard characters such as Deena move South African Indian audiences outside because they do not accurately reflect a majority of the community, although some aspects may be relatable. For non-South African Indians Deena fails to confirm prejudices because he appears alongside characters that reflect the community’s diversity, undermining stereotypes of Indianness held by other ethnicities. In this sense self-deprecating humour helps open the community up to outsiders, while reaffirming its boundaries for insiders. Discussing the general fragmentation of South African society, historian and cultural theorist Jared McDonald contends in a personal interview that, for unification to occur, “difference has to become non-threatening, and I think that’s what comedy helps to achieve.” In this fashion humour directed at the middleman stereotype can reduce outsider fears of exploitation because the character is denigrated by the community itself. This explains why Singh was adamant the play first appear in Durban, because of the “multi-cultural theatre-going audience in the city” and the play’s setting in a Durban suburb (“Confrontations” 8).

Within such a political and historical context one gains a sense of the isolation that Sanjay and many other South African Indians feel in their own country. In *To House* characters such as Sanjay are shown to have been historically marginalized by the apartheid government but also threatened by the post-apartheid black majority. His fears are reflective of a broader crisis – beyond his desire for acceptance – in which South African Indians believe they are being overlooked by affirmative action policies (Landy, Maharaj, and Mainet-Valleix 213). Reading Sanjay’s experiences as indicative of the broad challenge of integration facing many South African Indians, his solution offers a resolution to the alienation he experiences. Using food to forge communities Sanjay attempts to break down race and class divisions established by apartheid and integrate South African Indian culture into the mixed race neighbourhood.

Sanjay's fixation on all things culinary results in food becoming one of the important ways that Singh maps inside and outside communities. Dunton captures the important role food occupies in his review of the *New South African Drama* anthology. In it he suggests the play uses "food that's passed around (good cook, bad cook) to highlight personal interactions and class differences" (F8). While his comments on the appearance of food are brief, the point Dunton raises is salient to the play's portrayal of a fragmented neighbourhood. Food is central to understanding different characters' views on culture, community, and national unification because, as food theorist Njeri Githire explains, "taste is intimately bound to mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and not belonging. Shared taste inevitably connotes shared discrimination" (857). It is in this fashion that food works as a device to foreground differences and unified views amongst characters.

The individual most frequently associated with food in the play is Sanjay, the presumed "good cook" in the "good cook, bad cook" binary Dunton establishes in his review (F8). Sanjay employs food to forge connections at all levels of his life. At the public level, it helps the junior lecturer form cohesive bonds with colleagues and students at university (99). At a private level food is a vehicle for establishing bonds with Kajol and Jason. Responding to Kajol's evaluation that Sanjay appears lonely, Sibusiso points out that Sanjay has few friends at work. The one exception is Jenkins, who Sibusiso argues remains loyal to Sanjay because he plies him with *samosas*. This moment leads Kajol to respond with a pun: "you think he's trying to curry favour?" (113). Although this dialogue is largely an aside in the broader context of the play, the moment clearly indicates the differing functions of food in Sibusiso's and Sanjay's lives.

The pair's views on food are at odds. When Sibusiso and Sanjay disagree over co-writing an article, Sibusiso seeks to hurt Sanjay by implying the South African Indian's fixation on food

makes him unproductive: “You’ve worked hard! I [Sibusiso] work eighteen hours a day. While you sit in the canteen talking about your favourite food with students, I’m slogging in my office, or my study” (99). Sibusiso’s rejection of the bond Sanjay forms through food is representative of Sibusiso’s general rejection of any sense of kinship throughout the play. We see from this how Sibusiso views food, eating, and dietary discourse as a waste of time. More to the point, if we view food as a marker of community because “taste is intimately bound to mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion” (Githire 857), Sibusiso’s rejection of the communal discussion of food in the cafeteria exemplifies an individual who sits outside the social community at the university. In this regard both characters’ views on food expose their feelings towards community. While Sanjay embraces his cafeteria talks as a way to forge friendships with students (99), Sibusiso isolates himself from the communal space, preferring to remain alone in his office; Sibusiso desires to lead the academic community as a lecturer yet avoids social exchanges around him. He exemplifies a similar sentiment when he campaigns to govern the body corporate (134-5) while simultaneously planning to ask Kajol to move out because he wants his own space (124).

In Sibusiso’s mind, Sanjay’s food gifts are a kind of bribery that draws people unwillingly in. In fact, hypocritically, he uses food in this way against his own partner (96). Kajol’s response to Sibusiso’s criticism of Sanjay’s food exposes the ethnic basis for his animosity. Asking if Sibusiso means to imply that Sanjay is “curry[ing] favour” with other faculty suggests Kajol does not agree with Sibusiso’s view (113). In fact, her pun identifies Sanjay’s ethnic difference – curry representing the South African Indian community – as a likely reason for Sibusiso’s animosity. While food is the topic of conversation, the subtext is cultural misunderstanding and prejudice. Kajol’s comment is admittedly a subtle remark, but the message is a salient one. Although Sibusiso and Kajol live together as a couple, the ethnic and cultural

differences between them are captured in their divergent views on Sanjay's gifts of food. Kajol's response to Sibusiso's comment highlights the fact that, in this instance, Sibusiso is potentially misunderstanding – or misrepresenting – the cultural significance of food in the South African Indian community.

Sibusiso denounces Sanjay's cooking abilities, not only trying to pass Sanjay's food off as low quality takeaway (110), but also making accusations that Sanjay tries to pass his mother's *rotis* off as his own at faculty social events (110). In contrast to Sibusiso's position outside the food community Sanjay establishes, Kajol indicates she is an insider by sharing similar tastes as Sanjay. Able to detect the subtle distinctions between various types of curries, *rotis*, and *samosas*, Kajol comes to Sanjay's defence when Sibusiso accuses the cook of passing his mother's *rotis* off as his own: "No, he did [cook the *rotis* for the social event]. He's a very good cook... He always gives me something nice after our yoga classes" (110). Also a member of the Indian diaspora, Kajol's appreciation of Sanjay's cooking exemplifies a more discerning sense of taste than Sibusiso. This is likely thanks to her cultural upbringing and the importance of food in defining her ethnic identity. Gastronomic scholar Jon Holtzman affirms that "Ethnic identity forms a central arena in which food is tied to notions of memory," indicating that, for citizens of the diaspora, food plays an important role in sustaining links with other members of an ethnic group, but also the homeland (366).

Although Sanjay and Kajol's shared appreciation and insider knowledge of South African Indian cuisine may suggest a closed community that does not accept outsiders, Jason's appreciation of Sanjay's cooking indicates the community is, conversely, open and accepting: "You know, last week I felt for some samosas. So I went down to *Bobby's*. Hey. Very disappointing. Oily. And too crisp. Can't compare to yours" (108). Jason's comments emphasize

that he, too, can clearly tell the difference between Bobby and Sanjay's cooking. In doing so, Jason and Kajol are both in agreement that Sanjay is the better cook. Initially, Jason's compliment and his ability to discern differences between *samosas* offers hope that food can succeed where national attempts at unity have failed.

Education theorist Barbara Waxman identifies the importance of food at the boundaries between cultures and how an appreciation of food can help break down divisions between ethnic groups. In addition to operating as a link between the diaspora and its homeland, food can also form an important bridge between cultural groups: "Food is clearly a link among generations of immigrants and exiles; those who cook and write about food are 'culture-tenders' and at the same time teach people outside the cultural community about that community's values, rituals, beliefs" (363). As a character renowned for his trans-cultural sharing of *rotis*, *samosas*, and *kebabs*, Sanjay appears to be a type of "culture-tender," sharing the flavours and experiences of the Indian diaspora with non-South African Indians (363). In doing so he attempts to subvert rigid conceptualizations of ethnicity. As characters such as Jason and, presumably, Jenkins begin to develop the heightened appreciation of taste that characters such as Sanjay and Kajol have for *rotis*, *kebabs*, and *samosas*, the hope is difference will gradually be undermined.

Because food often has specific cultural ties, cross-cultural exchanges of food indicate important acts of cultural hybridity. As Githire explains, "if diet is synonymous with culture and citizenship, one of those cultural traits psychologists claim humans learn first, we regularly venture beyond the borders of our accustomed tastes, and our cultural obsession with them" (857). Githire's point is salient to Singh's play because the non-South African Indian characters all indulge in, and in some instances crave, food made by members of the Indian diaspora. This suggests that, for characters such as Jason, craving food with specific cultural ties indicates a

willingness to embrace the codes and tastes of other ethnic communities. The importance of such a cross-cultural exchange is powerful because it stands to change South African Indian curries, *rotis*, and *kebabs* from being markers of alterity to foods that cross historic ethnic and class boundaries to form the basis of newly forged communities, or are normalized as a standard part of the South African diet.

Bhabha's metaphor of a staircase – used to explain hybridity – helps identify how foods from the Indian diaspora could be used to help establish an ethnically hybrid identity in Oakland. The stairwell in Bhabha's text is described as connecting two separate floors. In doing so, the stairwell is a “liminal space, in-between the designations of identity” (*The Location* 4). In Bhabha's example the staircase that connects two spaces in Renee Green's *Sites of Genealogy*, an art exhibit upon which Bhabha builds his theory, also “prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities” (4). The staircase prevents a definite polarity because it continues to maintain an open space for cultural exchange between two different spaces of cultural identity. It is in this same instance that food occupies a middle space in Singh's text. While the staircase is a rigid structure that is part of an art installation, South African Indian food is a cultural product that circulates throughout the community, offering new tastes to non-South African Indians. In doing so, the food and culture of this minority community can be appreciated for its difference without “an assumed or imposed hierarchy” between South African Indian and non-South African Indian identities (Bhabha 4).

And yet while *To House* explores the potential for food to open up new friendships within a divided community, it ultimately fails to overcome the embedded racism held by most characters in the play. Positive cultural exchanges such as Jason viewing Sanjay's cooking as equal in greatness to his prized Johnny Walker Black (100) in the end only reveal a craving for

the food and not those who produce it (119). In fact, while Sanjay views food as an indicator of friendship throughout the play – a view equally shared by Kajol – outsiders such as Jason and Sibusiso largely exploit Sanjay for his cooking. In Sibusiso's case he accepts Sanjay's *rotis* only to claim them as his own when serving them to Kajol (109). In Jason's case he accepts food gifts without adequately repaying the friendship.

Jason demonstrates his failure to acknowledge the connection Sanjay makes between food and friendship when he offers to pay Sanjay to cook for him (117). Such an action would convert a marker of comradeship into a commodity but also raises questions about Jason's commitment to Sanjay. A common enemy aligns the two, but otherwise Jason falls short of reciprocating Sanjay's kindness. This is most apparent when Sanjay proposes the pair open an Indian takeaway restaurant. In Sanjay's mind this is yet another aspect where food can help to bridge ethnic divides by drawing people in for nourishment, but also spurring cross-cultural dialogue. He envisions it as a multicultural space "where people come to experience something different," a welcoming space where "people want to relax and chat" (109). Offering to partner with Jason to create "Oakhill's social meeting place," Sanjay's dream illustrates the clearest example of how his cooking hopes to sustain the dream of the Rainbow Nation (109). Not only would this be a space for citizens of all ethnicities to congregate, it would be a model for multi-ethnic business partnerships.

Jason's flat-out rejection of Sanjay's offer constitutes another way that food promises the hope of unity, only to fail in the face of prejudice. Afraid of rising costs related to his divorce, Jason side-steps the offer (109). In doing so he also expresses a lack of knowledge about Sanjay by claiming: "you have to be certain before you commit yourself to a partnership" and confessing he is unfamiliar with Sanjay's "business acumen" (108). Similar to Sibusiso's earlier

rejection, Jason's refusal to go into business with Sanjay is linked to ethnic stereotypes. Misunderstanding Sanjay's offer, Jason believes Sanjay's dream is to become a shopkeeper (109), evoking the middleman stereotype of the colonial-era entrepreneur. The stage directions note Jason's misinterpretation irritates Sanjay, who must dispel the stereotype in the hope Jason will accept him as "A real businessman" and "Not a[n Indian] shopkeeper" (109). As personal as their friendship appears based on Jason's love of Sanjay's food, this bond breaks down very quickly when issues concerning money and ethnicity arise.

Racism remains the primary division at the play's conclusion as most of the characters fall out with each other. Jason and Sanjay part ways because the latter abuses Justus, Jason's domestic labourer. Sanjay's affirmation that Justus was accosting a young South African Indian couple turns racist when he claims: "Black men think they can just get Indian women," a belief that has likely influenced his opinion of Sibusiso, although never explicitly stated (119). In the ensuing argument Jason orders Sanjay to leave, and he departs with his *rotis* as a sign their friendship has ended (120). Jason's effort to make amends by inviting Sanjay back for food is unsuccessful as the two never appear on-stage together again (126). Similarly, Kajol and Sibusiso's different histories lead to their separation. Sibusiso's desire to have his own space because he was historically prevented from doing so destroys their relationship. Kajol's rejection of his excuse, "Oh please, don't give me that," indicates her own failure to understand how Sibusiso's experiences living in close quarters owing to apartheid restrictions cause him to seek his own space (125). Kajol's belief that people who once lived together should never try to rebuild a failed relationship means that, like Jason and Sanjay, the division here is irreconcilable (131).

The play's final scene contains the most sinister falling out as Sibusiso and Jason square off for control of the body corporate. Neither were friends; however, until this point their animosity remained veiled. This sequence reveals the viciousness of both men as the plots they have orchestrated come to light. Jason's niece betrays him by sleeping with Sibusiso and the latter uses this to provoke Jason, taunting that instead of dating a coloured, "She's graduated to a Black man now" (132). In addition to uncovering, and defusing Jason's plot, Sibusiso reveals he has been searching Jason's past employment records for blemishes. As he has discovered, Jason was fired for internal theft. Going public would violate his ethical code so, like Jason, his hatred remains secret. But he too reveals prejudice by describing his fellow neighbours, people he believes will soon elect him head of the body corporate, as "honkies" (132). This sequence illustrates that while racism and animosity are prevalent in Oaklands, they remain hidden because social codes denounce racism. If either man were to come forward as openly racist, he would automatically lose the election for the head of the body corporate. As a result, they hide their true opinions. Likewise, for Sanjay, his prejudices towards blackness would further ostracize him from the community and colleagues in his department. So it seems these characters suppress public voicing of racism in order to maintain status in their community, exclusively for personal gain. In this sense the play suggests the changing social and political landscape has driven racism underground, causing it to fragment communities in new, and at times unforeseen, ways.

Singh foregrounds the totality of Jason's fall by setting the final scene in Jason's house. While Jason and Sibusiso do not appear in the same scenes throughout the play, injuring each other through schemes and comments made to other characters, the play ends with a direct confrontation. Jason lunges at Sibusiso only to end up on the floor himself (134). Sibusiso

assaults Jason in the struggle, aggravating an old leg injury that causes Jason to miss the election. The physical attack leaves Sibusiso to chair the meeting and assures he will be elected head of the body corporate. In addition to this political success, Sibusiso is also the sole owner of a well-furnished living room by the play's end. This is because Jason loses his recliner to his ex-wife in the divorce settlement. Symbolically, the ending represents the reversal of the pair's fortunes. At the conclusion Sibusiso's future wealth and success seem guaranteed while Jason stands to lose his house, but also his job because Deena will only hire him if he successfully drives Sibusiso out of Oaklands (129).

The only hope for unity at the end of the play is the relationship formed between Sanjay and Kajol. Bringing Kajol a snack, the two essentially carry on from where they left off at the beginning of the play, on a park bench discussing their lives. The major difference is Kajol is now homeless, and needs to find a residence for her mother. Sanjay offers to help Kajol but, as his wording indicates, he frames the offer as limited to their ethnic group: "We are Indians, hey. I mean, we must help" (131). So although Sanjay comes across as the most community oriented character in Oaklands – using both food and the dream of a takeaway to establish bonds – racism succeeds in destroying any hope of cross-cultural ties. The eagerness that black and white characters express for the trans-national flavours brought by the Indian diaspora seems to stop there as racism, animosity, and fear remain. This perhaps contradicts the actual reception of South African Indian food in places like Durban where playwrights such as Coetzee claim foods like "bunny chow" have come to represent the region: "The bunny chow originated in Durban and was a food of the working class but is now eaten across the line. It was also an apartheid meal, created out of necessity when non-whites weren't allowed to sit down in restaurants"

(Chetty 3).⁴⁰ Coetzee's comments, reflecting on the appearance of bunny chow in *Happy Natives*, underscore the movement of South African Indian food from occupying a position outside national discourses to a location that is clearly inside.

And perhaps, like Coetzee's view of bunny chow as representative of the Durban experience, South African Indian drama will continue to help embed this ethnicity in both the landscape and a national identity. Much like Jason's craving of South African Indian food in the play, Bose notes an increased interest in South African Indian drama by outsiders in 2009: "Figures like Ronnie Govender and Kriben Pillay are being noticed in non-Indian contexts, such as by the African practitioner Zakes Mda, the journalist Mark Gevisser, and by the many awards Govender has received from the South African theatre establishment" (367). This interest suggests playwrights such as Singh are speaking both to their South African Indian community, but also other ethnic groups. As illustrated with the humour in *To House*, dispelling stereotypes held both by insiders and outsiders is an important step in moving away from apartheid's legacy in order to explore the new kinds of identities emerging after apartheid. And perhaps most importantly, showing how racism continues to fragment communities beyond a black and white binary helps to map the areas where further work is needed to produce meaningful reconciliation between groups.

Ntokozo Madlala and Mandisa Haarhoff's *Crush-hopper*

Similar to Singh's work, Madlala and Haarhoff's *Crush-Hopper* discusses multiple South African ethnicities: Afrikaans, Xhosa, and coloured. For reviewer and theatre professor Janet van

⁴⁰ Bunny Chow is a Durban dish that typically consists of a mince curry served inside a hollowed-out loaf of bread. It is often served as a street food by vendors or in takeaway restaurants.

Eeden, the play is an effort by her former pupil to “express her identity crisis.” This occurs through a collection of love interests that serve as “the vehicle to travel into her search for identity” (van Eeden). For other reviewers such as Estelle Sinkins, the play reflects Haarhoff’s own “complex experience[s] of multilingualism and multiculturalism” (“It’s the Best” 23). In Sinkins’s opinion the play’s love interests help Haarhoff find “a way to cope with her displacement and [constitute] an escape from her numbing reality” (“Home-grown” 19). Most reviews note the autobiographical dimension of the play. For example, Sinkins’s review cites Haarhoff’s description of the play as “a personal tale of searching for love and identity” (“Tragic-comedy” 11). This aspect is important because, like Conning’s description of her own relationship to coloured identity, Haarhoff’s play constitutes a personal exploration of self.

Crush-hopper’s short run in South Africa owing to Haarhoff’s decision to pursue a PhD in the United States did not hinder the impact of the work. In 2011 it won both a Musho Festival Audience Award for Best Performance and a Standard Bank Ovation Award at the National Arts Festival. These important distinctions testify to Haarhoff’s place in South African theatre as a rising actress and playwright. The play debuted at the Musho Festival held at the Catalina Theatre in January, 2011. Later that year it also played at the Hexagon Theatre at the University of KwaZulu-Natal March 22, 2011, and, again, on March 16, 2012 (Sinkins, “It’s the Best” 23). *Crush-hopper*’s award-winning performance at the National Arts Festival in July of 2011 added momentum for an appearance at the Witness Hilton Arts Festival in September 2011. (Sinkins, “It’s the Best” 23). In addition to South African performances, the play ran at the University of South Florida on January 15, 2012. No official publication for this play exists, but it is available in two digital versions – one attributed to Madlala and Haarhoff, the other solely to Haarhoff. Unless otherwise stated this chapter refers to the 2011 version by both women.

Madlala and Haarhoff's *Crush-hopper* is about a young coloured girl's experiences growing up in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. Haarhoff describes the play as "a one-woman ethnographical narrative that reflects my intercultural identity and perspective of race in contemporary South Africa" (*Story4* 1). The play uses a "multi-modal performance style" that reflects her multicultural and multilingual identity (Haarhoff, *Story4* 1). The work begins with Haarhoff introducing us to the landscape where she grew up and traces her family ancestry from her grandfather's generation up to the present day.⁴¹ Once we have a sense of her distant past, complete with childhood dreams of growing blond hair and marrying a white farmer, the play transitions to descriptions of Haarhoff's experiences at school and the love interests she fosters while meeting new people, in some instances outside her "racial" group. The title of the play refers to the way she jumps from love interest to love interest in search of a romantic ideal. Her first crush is a light-skinned coloured boy named Wendall Paul. A devout Christian, Wendall does not acknowledge her as a person but rather as someone whom he can convert. The death of her grandfather forces Haarhoff to move to the large city of Port Elizabeth where she lives with an abusive aunt. In the city Haarhoff falls for Mahlubi Tom, a Xhosa boy who shares her bus route home. This relationship fails to develop because of a language barrier and Haarhoff's invisibility to the young boy. Her last crush, Damien, fails to materialize into a relationship because Haarhoff becomes more of a caring friend than a love interest. The play ends with Haarhoff revealing some difficult personal truths when she identifies her own prejudices and the way she has historically rejected her coloured identity in favour of adopting white or black cultural codes and notions of beauty.

⁴¹ While Haarhoff discusses her great-grandfather and her grandfather within the play, correspondence with the playwright has confirmed that she uses the two titles interchangeably (Haarhoff, *Re: Translation*).

Haarhoff's play tackles the issue of Otherness and othering of coloured South Africans by showing the immense cultural violence perpetrated by the negation of voice and identity. Described by van Eeden as a "semi-autobiographical story about coming to terms with her mixed heritage," the lack of voice and sense of invisibility Madlala and Haarhoff portray throughout *Crush-hopper* is emblematic of the overall silence surrounding contemporary discussions of coloured identity, not only within the ethnic community but also across the nation. References to silence and invisibility throughout the play epitomize Bhabha's assertion that the "Other loses its power to signify, to negate, to initiate its historic desire, to establish its own institutional and oppositional discourse" because they are silenced by processes of othering (*The Location* 31). Within the play this negation is not only captured in Haarhoff's renegotiation of her own identity – the play working to voice feelings of rejection and confusion experienced by Haarhoff as a child – but also in the way Haarhoff relates to place and space. For example, the landscape and geography further distance her from close familial and social ties while metaphorically representing her unstable position within the nation. Descriptions of her hometown Somerset East as "Sandwiched between Graaf-Reinet and Cradock" evoke her interstitial location in South Africa (4). It is this in-between position that defines Haarhoff's sense of identity growing up as she alternates between whether to identify as black or white.

Haarhoff's constant relocation from school to school, city to city, and household to household reflects the reality that many in this community lack a sense of place or location of origin, especially in the national psyche. For instance, Graham Stuart's newspaper article "Many under Fire for Coloured Remarks" captures the national and geographical instability of South Africa's coloured population. In it he notes that Black Management Forum labour policies in 2011 called for a general relocation of coloured South Africans in the Western Cape to other

regions of the country in order to racially balance labour forces. Stuart quotes the Labour Department's Director General Jimmy Manyi as stating: "There were too many coloured people in the Western Cape." According to Manyi's remarks, the solution to the problem can be found in relocating coloured South Africans to other regions where this ethnicity constitutes a smaller demographic (Stuart). Such debates at a national level, occurring at approximately the same time as *Crush-hopper's* debut, underscore the instability and marginalization many coloureds continue to suffer in the new democracy. Not surprisingly, Haarhoff's geographical shifts in *Crush-hopper* are presented as a strategy for survival, opening up opportunities to progress academically and economically (13), at the cost of weakening ties with her own family.⁴² While not specifically responding to the government's 2011 labour debate, in many ways the play reflects the same type of placelessness and assumed mobility reflected in the government's pressure to relocate vast numbers of coloureds to other parts of the country.

Like Sanjay's challenges in *To House*, Haarhoff's personal experiences also reflect broader challenges of acceptance and integration for coloureds in South Africa. In an interview with van Eeden, Haarhoff asserts that her own personal struggles reflect similar experiences to many of the nation's citizens: "I always work from the notion that whatever private experiences we have as individuals reflect the narrative journey of our nation. I then had to see what the defining aspects of my story were that reflected South Africans at large. That's when I could see what my hopes for my nation and myself were." Focusing on important topics such as reconciliation and integration throughout *Crush-hopper*, Haarhoff's crushes need to be read more seriously as broad instances of rejection or exclusion from various elements of her society.

⁴² Additionally, Haarhoff's reliance on mobility as a survival strategy correlates with the love interests in her life. Hopping between crushes limits the emotional pain she feels when she is overlooked or abandoned by those she likes. Thus the title of the play is a pun because hopping between crushes is similar to her geographical hopping between spaces, and identities, throughout the play.

Haarhoff's failure to forge a meaningful relationship with any of her crushes throughout the play is a manifestation of the ways in which the post-apartheid social landscape remains exceedingly divided. As Haarhoff explains, she was more drawn to boys' whiteness than to their personalities: "I had a story to tell. I had crushes to talk about. And why those crushes? Why those boys? They were white, and I wanted them" (Personal Interview). Her inability to develop these relationships indicates that interracial couplings are still not a norm throughout much of South Africa because prejudices limit social interactions. Unable to connect with those around her, the silence and feelings of invisibility Haarhoff experiences within her personal relationships correlate to the isolation, othering, and sense of exclusion coloureds feel from the nation overall.

The play's descriptions of exchanges between love interests encapsulate the questions of acceptance and understanding that haunt Haarhoff from a young age. At school these questions are configured along the lines of whether or not love interests notice her. Questions such as: "did you only look or did you see did you see did you feel did you? [sic]" explore the painful sense of invisibility Haarhoff experiences as a member of the coloured community (2). The invisibility evoked in the lines "did you only look or did you see" (2) occurs again at a later moment in the play where she wonders whether Tom even sees her: "Did he even see me, did he even hear me" (20)? Questioning whether or not the people she engages with acknowledge her, Haarhoff's comments reflect a character struggling to come to terms not only with her own identity, but also a society unable to relate or identify with her. Paralleling a statement also made by a character in Conning's *A Coloured Place*, "To the majority, Coloured people are just an invisible part of the masses" (11), *Crush-hopper* contains a protagonist who also feels invisible to the greater community around her. However, Haarhoff significantly rejects this silence and negation by seeking to define and celebrate her coloured identity through drama.

Cultural theorist Charles Taylor's article "The Politics of Recognition" identifies the significant psychological and social damage that occurs when a society rejects or excludes an individual's identity. According to Taylor, "a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves" (75). In the instance of South African coloured ethnicity, a "confining or demeaning" understanding of the minority group occurs when the majority of society refuses to accept or acknowledge them (75). The silence around identity highlighted by Conning and Haarhoff emphasizes the exclusion this group feels from society. This trend seems to correlate to South African drama in general as Conning asserts "Very few plays have been written about the Coloured experience," indicating *Crush-hopper* provides a rare glimpse into this ethnic community (7).

Van Eeden's interview with Haarhoff underscores the physical and psychological dangers of non-recognition and the kinds of misunderstandings that can develop out of such circumstances. Addressing questions about her family's response to the play, Haarhoff provides details outlining how seriously her crisis of identity affected her:

My father hasn't seen it, but I was at home when I wrote it and read some of the material to him. He realised the depth of my experiences to the point of understanding why I tried taking my life a year after arriving in Port Elizabeth. He found it difficult to understand and for him my emotional response to the way I have lived is an influence of 'whiteness.' (*qtd. in van Eeden*)

Haarhoff's comment exemplifies her isolation from family and friends because of misconceptions related to her mixed-race identity. Significantly, this misunderstanding is one of the factors that alienate her from her own father, whom she portrays as an aloof Xhosa taxi driver

in the play (14). However, there appears to be more to their estrangement from one another than just her ethnicity because her father also justifies abandoning her on the basis that he was never married to her mother (15). Generally, though, to her black family members Haarhoff's difference is often a source of tension and ridicule.

A significant example of the way Haarhoff's Xhosa family members ostracize her due to her mixed-race status occurs when her aunt Nomilile states: "Hhe o Mandisa bacnga ukuba bangabeelungu – Awungumlungu! Tshona emxolweni" (16). Haarhoff translates this passage as: "Mandisa thinks she's white, you're not white. Get to work" ("Re: Translation"). Such examples illustrate how Haarhoff's extended family mock her mixed-race identity, highlighting her distance from them. Furthermore, in this particular instance Nomilile ridicules Haarhoff using Xhosa at a time when Haarhoff is not fluent with the language. Haarhoff's inability to translate the insult marks yet another way that Nomilile highlights the distance between Haarhoff and her black relatives. Such instances exemplify the kind of othering that denies Haarhoff a sense of inclusion within her extended Xhosa family.

As an act of writing back, Haarhoff's interview with van Eeden also illustrates how *Crush-hopper* can successfully raise awareness about the complex, and often conflicting, pressures placed on coloureds by society at large. Haarhoff's argument that writing the play helped her father understand her crisis of identity elucidates how theatre can help reconcile divisions by voicing the challenges she faces, or has overcome, to members of other ethnic groups (van Eeden). Such a stance implies drama can claim space for South African minorities in the new dispensation. Haarhoff exemplifies such a position when she quotes an interview response given by Lulama Masimini in the play's alternate release: "we might not change the world, as theatre people, but at least we might make people think and consider their actions"

(*qtd. in Haarhoff, Story4 2*).⁴³ Haarhoff's interpretation of this quotation is that drama can help audiences determine "who they are in relation to themselves, each other, and their nation" (2). Turning this lens on herself, her story claims space for coloured ethnicity in terms that move beyond apartheid constructions. My argument here is that Haarhoff defines coloured as an ethnicity that shares experiences of being othered and divided, turning historical negation into a marker of inclusion and cohesion. Madlala and Haarhoff's play implies the shared experience of dislocation and complex ancestral ties of the coloured population can be viewed as unifying characteristics of the group, constituting a celebration of ethnicity that does not rely on a specific appearance or language to identify its members.

Using a semi-autobiographical form is one of the primary ways Haarhoff claims space for coloured ethnicity in the post-apartheid nation. As South African literary scholar Christopher Heywood asserts, autobiography has played an important role in opposing the dehumanization of indigenous South Africans throughout apartheid (129). For Heywood, "Dispossession and displacement have led South Africans into difficulty over recognising themselves in relation to their own and their nation's past. Numerous autobiographical writings, especially where protest formed the underlying motif, overcame guilt and shame in favour of self-recognition" (129). Although Haarhoff is writing outside of apartheid's temporal limits, her play still targets the "Dispossession and displacement" suffered historically by coloured South Africans, and the ways such oppression continues to impact the location of the coloured community (129). Resisting the humiliation and mistreatment conveyed by characters such as Nomilile, *Crush-hopper* constitutes an important act of "self-recognition" (129). Passages where Haarhoff positively identifies as coloured are powerful acts of self-assertion, such as the final paragraph of

⁴³ This quotation originally appears in dramaturge Judith Rudakoff's article "Somewhere, Over the Rainbow: White-Female-Canadian Dramaturge in Cape Town." It is a statement made by Masimini, a playwright Rudakoff interviewed.

the play where she states: “I will embrace the coloured heritage given me by my great-grandfather and celebrate the beauty of the skin that clothes me” (27). Although Heywood’s project focuses specifically on literary forms of autobiography during apartheid, Haarhoff’s play exemplifies how this anti-colonial strategy functions effectively in the context of post-apartheid drama.

As a work that praises the strength and resilience of the coloured identity in the face of marginalization, Haarhoff’s text reflects a recent trend of coloureds reclaiming an identity that was originally forced upon them. Portions of the play detail Haarhoff’s ancestry, situating her identity in relation to multiple cultures. She describes her grandfather as coloured (5), and her great-grandmother (5), aunt Nomilile (12), and father as Xhosa (14). These asides are important because they reclaim a past within the present moment. The silence around coloured identity discussed earlier also extends to a silence around the coloured community’s history. As Conning writes of her own work on coloured ethnicity, “The aim of the play [*A Coloured Place*] is to feed and stimulate the questioning about identity and the significance of where we come from, and why, as Coloured people, we’ve never acknowledged our roots” (7). Detailing her ancestry helps Haarhoff isolate generational differences between first-generation coloureds and her own status as a third-generation coloured growing up in a free democracy; such acts create a genealogy for the coloured community. One of the most significant changes for Haarhoff’s generation is the freedom to choose a partner of any race, one of the major points of interest driving the play’s focus on childhood crushes and relationships.

In some ways Haarhoff’s experiences with love parallel Kajol’s struggle asserting her freedom to choose a partner in *To House*. Pressured by the older generation, particularly Deena, to marry within her ethnic group (121), Kajol’s decision to live with Sibusiso goes against her

older relatives' social order. This exposes the intergenerational tensions around multiracial relationships brought on by independence, but also other tensions around social change. As younger generations assert new rights to ownership, geographical movement, and interracial relationships, divergent views between older and younger groups are inevitable. Love interests in both plays capture such tensions. Theatre reviewer Kate Feldman quotes Haarhoff stating, "You could take the boys out and we'd still have a story, but this allows me to get into a discussion of not just race but also relationships." In this instance relationships are not secondary material to the plot, but rather a primary way for Haarhoff to show challenges surrounding identity negotiation. Not only is her shifting sense of self encapsulated in the types of boys she seeks out, but also the languages she learns in order to communicate with them.

As a girl Haarhoff initially learns Afrikaans with her grandfather, "oupa-grootjie Haarhoff" (5). Using code switching throughout the work as a way to emphasize the contribution Afrikaans has made to her notion of self, Haarhoff initially seeks to adopt the codes of white ethnicity. She "wanted to speak *suiwer* Afrikaans not 'coloured'" (7).⁴⁴ Chiefly using language as a tool to distance herself from coloured identity early on in the play Haarhoff appears to reject this aspect of her identity. She attempts to imitate white cultural codes in order to hide or negate her mixed-race ancestry; this decision is another example of the ways "misrecognition can inflict harm" (Taylor 75) because, in doing so, Haarhoff violently conceals portions of her own identity in favour of privileging specific aspects of her ancestry. Desiring to emphasize her ties with whiteness, Haarhoff exemplifies the same kind of violent splitting or fracturing of identity that her father enacts when he blames her self-harming on whiteness.

Haarhoff's thinking here exemplifies what Ngũgĩ describes as "colonial alienation" (*Decolonising* 17). He defines the term as a "disassociation of the sensibility of that child from

⁴⁴ Sinkins translates *suiwer* as "pure" ("Tragic-comedy" 11).

his [or her] natural and social environment” (17). In *Crush-hopper*, Haarhoff’s desire to be seen as white leads her to denigrate all connections with her Xhosa ancestry throughout the first half of the play. In addition to learning and emulating the language of white Afrikaners, she envisions a future steeped in white culture: “I dreamt that I would marry a tall Afrikaner man with sparkling blue eyes and shining blond hair” (7). Watching the play myself, the moment of greatest discomfort arose when Haarhoff donned a yellow shirt in order to pretend she had blond hair. This act of self-deracination is disheartening to view, but also evokes a kind of ridiculing or self-deprecating humour in performance as she imitates whiteness while subverting the notions of purity and beauty that caused her to fragment her identity.

For van Eeden the yellow wig exemplifies imitation for comic effect: “Her gift for mimicking the various influences on her life turns this piece into a brilliant comedy. The pathos behind her trying so hard to be white, even to the extent of wearing a long-sleeved T-shirt on her head when she is small to pretend she has long hair, cuts deep into our race-conscious society.” As van Eeden’s quotation indicates, there is a tension between humour and sadness here. The action of wearing a yellow wig expresses the violence caused by splitting her identity and denying her black ancestry, while also providing comic relief. Although reviewers such as van Eeden note the brilliance of the comic moment, they also record the pain it evokes by pointing out that witnessing such an act “cuts deep.” In this particular instance Haarhoff’s performance is both comic – due to its use of imitation and the incongruity raised by the spectacle of a black girl attempting to pass as white with a blond wig – but also tragic because it reveals how deeply she rejected her own body.

Haarhoff’s use of self-deprecating humour seems to function as both a coping mechanism through comic relief, but also a warning against maintaining apartheid-era notions of beauty and

purity. The object of ridicule throughout the play is Haarhoff's own prejudices and desires. What the audience is encouraged to laugh at is her dream to pass as white. Interestingly, the target of Haarhoff's humour is similar to other ethnic minorities that historically deployed self-deprecating humour as a means of self-regulation. Writing on Jewish humour in Berlin during the imperial and republican periods Jelavich notes that some Jewish comedians "[made] fun of Jews who were over-eager to assimilate" (28). For Jelavich, such examples of self-deprecating humour represent one of its many functions, namely "self-regulation" of the Jewish community (28). Reading Haarhoff's use of a yellow shirt in a similar sense – symbolizing her childhood wish to assimilate by having blonde hair – Haarhoff's use of comic imitation to produce self-deprecating humour is a powerful act of self-regulation. In addition to laughing back at her split identity, a fissure most apparent in the two names she alternates between: Mandisa and Roeleene (20), Haarhoff's performance also implies the desire to pass as white is taboo. Such a message distances coloureds from being perceived as a community that desires inclusion within a white ethnic category. It does so because Haarhoff's use of self-deprecating humour regulates the boundaries of her ethnic community by directing laughter at those who desire to step-outside the coloured ethnic position. Importantly, Haarhoff's imitation of whiteness also helps to illustrate both the young age at which she began to hate aspects of her own body, but also the strategies used to cope with this hatred. Instead of learning to love herself, she escapes into dreams of being white, marrying a white farmer, and denying her Xhosa background in order to pass as white (6-7).

The negation of her own identity in order to pass as white is highlighted when she explores the factors behind her decision to speak Afrikaans. While many coloureds in South Africa do speak Afrikaans, Haarhoff is careful to explain that the dialect she learned as a child

was not the one associated with the Euro-African coloured community: “I would sit for hours in front of the TV and repeat after the presenter so I would attain perfect pronunciation... I wanted to speak suiwer Afrikaans not ‘coloured’” (7). Haarhoff’s adoption of an Afrikaner accent rather than a coloured accent, and viewing one as superior to the other, causes her to reject portions of her identity, as well as her body.

Madlala and Haarhoff’s assessment of ethnic othering in South Africa goes beyond an exploration of Haarhoff negating her own mixed-race ethnicity. The play also highlights how Haarhoff’s life experiences cause her to reject certain ethnic groups as well, particularly blacks. This is accomplished by tracing Haarhoff’s own violent experiences when living with her aunt Nomilile, a time when she came to view blackness as threatening. Haarhoff’s past affects her view of blackness, relating it with pain and suffering. As she states in the play: “How could I love black when all I knew were orders, curses, crushing remarks that sought to humiliate/subjugate me... I was crushed by these haunting images that darkened my understanding of black” (18). Many of the examples of humiliation and subjugation in the play actually come from the Xhosa side of her family, not from white South Africans ridiculing her for being coloured. While the pressure to pass as white largely occurs through the dolls she plays with, the television shows she watches, and the books she reads, Haarhoff’s hatred of blackness emerges from both her desire to be white and from the extremely personal rejection and degradation she feels from Xhosa relatives because of her mixed race.

It is possible some of the animosity levelled against Haarhoff by Nomilile is a result of the belief that Haarhoff’s hybrid background is an indicator of cultural contamination. Such views are widely documented by Adhikari, who asserts coloured women were often stereotyped as lascivious or easily “sexually exploited” (*Not White Enough* 23). As Adhikari goes on to

explain, many blacks historically shared “negative perceptions of racial hybridity” with whites during apartheid because racial purity was prided on the popular belief “miscegenation breeds weakness” (23-4). It is perhaps in a similar sense that Nomilile views Haarhoff as corrupt, hyper-sexualizing the schoolgirl by calling her a “whore” and assuming she is late returning home because she was out courting boys (18). Nomilile’s ridicule of Haarhoff affects the latter’s view of blackness, causing Haarhoff to associate this aspect of her identity largely with genetic deterioration and shame throughout much of the play. Such violence inevitably leads her to identify more directly with her white ancestry, a trend that began with her desire to speak Afrikaans using the accent of an Afrikaner early in the play (7). Conning also notes a similar circumstance concerning physical traits in this community, “a straighter nose, thinner lips, lighter skin” being seen as beautiful (6).

Haarhoff’s interest in Tom helps her explore the Xhosa side of her identity because it leads her to learn Xhosa. While Haarhoff remains invisible to Tom throughout the play, her discovery of this language marks a turning point in both the play and her life. It is an important moment because language becomes one of the ways she shatters her own fears of blackness. In learning this language she reconnects with black ancestral ties. As Haarhoff explains in the play, “I had found a new love, Xhosaness” (20). Haarhoff’s identification with a cultural background she previously rejected implies language can help her subvert her own othering of blackness. Learning Xhosa becomes a way to identify with her Xhosa relatives and rewrite fears of difference and unfamiliarity surrounding black ethnicity.

Rather than viewing Afrikaans as a tool of oppression in the sense that Ngũgĩ outlines, a “cultural bomb” that destroyed African’s pride in their culture (*Decolonising* 3), Haarhoff uses language as an important marker of her mixed-race identity. Language is not a tool of

oppression, but rather a tool to liberate her mind from static categorizations of identity.

Haarhoff's adoption of Afrikaans language in *Crush-hopper* cannot be read solely as an act of subjugation because a large portion of her identity comes from her Afrikaner ancestry. Thus learning Afrikaans becomes a sign of liberation, rather than oppression, as bilingualism and linguistic hybridity help to shatter static notions of identity based on accents and linguistic capabilities. Haarhoff acknowledges this in an interview with Sinkins by claiming fluency in Afrikaans as a sign of her empowerment and liberation: "I now feel that it's okay to have crushes, that it's okay to be more fluent in Afrikaans than in Xhosa, that it's okay to be loud and not poised" ("The Ties" 18). Able to switch between accents and languages quickly, Haarhoff's multilingualism – evident in the trilingual play – breaks down identity categories that rely on the performance of accents to signify inclusion or exclusion in an ethnic group. It also subverts the cultural hierarchy she adopts early in the play when she learns "suiwer" Afrikaans (7).

For Haarhoff, multilingualism is a necessity for her mixed-race identity if she wishes to sustain familial ties. As she explains in a video interview, even her name embodies two cultures simultaneously, Xhosa and Afrikaans (Solomon). Speaking both languages fluently is essential for Haarhoff to communicate with the different sides of her family who still largely operate in languages associated with their ethnicities: "I mix my languages when I'm at home and everyone else either responds in Xhosa or Afrikaans, depending on which side of the family I'm visiting" (van Eeden). Opposing Ngũgĩ's argument that the colonizer's language, in this instance Afrikaans, can "annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity" (*Decolonising* 3), *Crush-hopper* portrays a coloured ethnicity that does not typically subjugate one language beneath others. The play originally privileged a trilingual reader, alternating frequently between Afrikaans, Xhosa,

and English, although Haarhoff decided to “emphasize the English in her performances,” presumably to reach the widest audience possible (K. Feldman).

It is through her love of language that Haarhoff uncovers a solution to her own racism and the challenge of locating herself within the black and white binary that dominates discussions of ethnicity in South Africa today. Rather than siding with other coloureds who argue a collective South African national identity must replace outmoded racial categories, *Crush-hopper* gives voice to, and demarcates a space for, coloured ethnicity as a major ethnic category in the new South Africa. Importantly, humour helps in this process by establishing boundaries and maintaining clear divisions between other ethnic positions. Breaking the black and white binary that influenced her experiences growing up, Haarhoff endorses a third position, coloured, as important to national discussions of unification. Significantly though, this is not an ethnic identity structured along apartheid’s terms, but rather one chosen by members of the community and adopted, perhaps as Fisher proposes in his internet editorial, in response to “short-sighted politicians who failed to make people who could potentially identify themselves as coloureds feel welcome in the new South Africa.” Choosing to speak the many languages she identifies with, and portraying her story and history as a means of self-affirmation, Haarhoff exemplifies a rethinking of coloured ethnicity that opposes historical silence.

Uncovering a love for a number of widely-spoken South African languages, particularly Xhosa and Afrikaans, is one of the principle ways in which Haarhoff locates herself as a member of the post-apartheid community. In doing so she also connects with her hybrid ancestry and embraces the complex ethnic and cultural elements that make up her identity. By the play’s conclusion she has moved from a character who first idolizes whiteness, then romanticizes blackness, finally coming to a position where she identifies as coloured: “I will embrace the

coloured heritage given me by my great-grandfather and celebrate the beauty of the skin that clothes me” (27). The play concludes with Haarhoff asserting that she “will Love!” in order to overcome both her marginal position in national discourses, but also the Otherness she has ascribed to fellow South Africans (27). Significantly though, while Haarhoff’s assertion that love can help to overcome apartheid divisions echoes Jamal’s assertion that love can counteract apartheid’s “lack of love, a lack so profound, so damaging that no retrospective project of healing can easily – if ever – remedy it” (*Predicaments* 24), Haarhoff posits that a love of self is paramount to any process of reconciliation or healing in the post-colonial period. Her closing remark “I will Love!” stands as a testament that, first and foremost, she will love herself for who and what she is (27). Haarhoff’s conclusion also suggests that many South Africans need to assess their own prejudices, fears, and rejections of self in order to advance a unified nationalism. Structurally, the play reaffirms the individualism of rethinking identity because the one-woman show emphasizes personal experiences over a larger context and set of challenges. While some might see individualism as a challenge to nation-building, and not a solution, Krueger remarks individualism also has positive connotations, such as “originality, courage, and responsibility” (“Fashionably” 55). These attributes reflect the creative way that Haarhoff identifies her own prejudices while creating a play about the unique damage apartheid inflicted against the coloured community.

Analyzing both *To House* and *Crush-hopper* as works that voice the concerns of marginalized ethnicities in second interregnum drama, we can see that both plays exhibit the importance of integrating South African Indian and coloured identities into post-apartheid discussions of reconciliation and unification. Both plays outline the need to address continuing racism and racial divisions still affecting the country. Responding to stereotypes, both plays

underscore the importance of understanding ethnic minority communities as heterogeneous, composed of members who have diverse perspectives on politics, cultural traditions, finance, social norms, and education. What members of these communities do share are similar experiences of being positioned outside the black and white racial binary. It is perhaps unsurprising that self-deprecating humour appears in both – adopted as a means of producing empathy, maintaining boundaries, or reflecting the important function coping humour historically played in sustaining ethnic minorities. Subverting the black and white binary, both playwrights successfully illustrate how ethnic minorities continue to advocate for a greater level of recognition and acceptance. Making this bid, *To House* and *Crush-hopper* present South African Indian and coloured characters as part of heterogeneous groups whose existence in the nation can help foster the kind of cultural and ethnic plurality that terms such as “Rainbow Nation” evoke.

Chapter V

Attempting to Break Cycles of Violence after Apartheid: (Re)Visioning the Nation in Zakes

Mda's *The Bells of Amersfoort* and David Peimer and Martina Griller's *Armed Response*

Introduction

Flockemann uses the term “Hard theatre” to describe *Iago's Last Dance* by Mike van Graan and *The Bells of Amersfoort* (2002) by Zakes Mda (“The Road” 170). For her, these plays are “issue-driven works” that pose “hard questions” about social inequality, corruption, and the HIV/AIDS crisis affecting South Africa (170). While Flockemann's research outlines a number of the broad issues raised by *The Bells of Amersfoort*, hereafter referred to as *The Bells*, her article does not address the play's portrayal of continuing violence in the post-apartheid period. This chapter compares South Africa's legacy of state-sanctioned violence in Mda's *The Bells* and David Peimer and Martina Griller's *Armed Response* (2009).⁴⁵ Both *The Bells* and *Armed Response* indicate that state violence during apartheid has led to cycles of violence after apartheid. Such violence breeds distrust amongst citizens, further dividing people beyond the other challenges outlined in this dissertation.

While the class exploitation, silencing of mothers, and ethnic marginalization mapped and discussed in previous chapters all constitute forms of violence, this concluding chapter focuses upon and analyzes the specificities of the physical and psychological violence visited

⁴⁵ *Armed Response*'s title page solely credits Peimer with the written version of the play (165), as does the “Notes on Contributors” section at the back of the anthology (215), even though the work was co-written for the stage with Griller. While it is not explicitly clear what modifications have been made between the performance and textual editions of the play, all available reviews credit both Peimer and Griller with producing the work, including *Comparative Drama* (“Brief Notices”). Any individual mention of Peimer is to his introduction in the anthology *Armed Response: Plays from South Africa*.

upon all South Africans under an apartheid police state. As *The Bells* and *Armed Response* indicate, apartheid set in motion a system of fear and violence. As a consequence of this conditioning, specific kinds of violence continue to prevail throughout society: violent crime, traumatic flashbacks, and a fixation on personal safety are good examples. This is perhaps most evident in *Armed Response* because the play presents audiences with an economy actually driven by crime, but also occurs in *The Bells* in the form of alcoholism and a post-traumatic stress disorder. What links these plays is their focus on overcoming the continued physical and psychological forms of violence that began during apartheid. As both works epitomize, entrenched systems of violence are dehumanizing regardless of one's class, ethnicity, or gender. However, the plays also show that each group suffers unique trauma based on their different history and experience of apartheid.

State Sanctioned Violence and the Transition between Apartheid and Democracy

As a police state, apartheid was sustained through violence and the perpetuation of fear. This worked differently for different citizens. For non-white South Africans, the state inflicted multiple kinds of violence to sustain authority. These included racial discrimination, economic discrimination, torture, rape, forced exile, limited access to land, and murder. In addition to these overt forms of violence inflicted against those outside the white ruling minority, intricate systems of surveillance and monitoring exercised power through social control. Secrecy was paramount to this process as it meant that victims were never sure what resources, or information, the state possessed. Political scientists Paul N. Edwards and Gabrielle Hecht assert complex systems of surveillance and transportation helped sustain apartheid (625). Viewing apartheid as “a

technopolitical project” that used cutting edge technology as part of its strategy to restrict movements of non-white South Africans, their research illustrates how fingerprint records and passbooks were strategically deployed control mechanisms (625).

Statistics indicate a correlation between the spatial divisions created by the passbook system and the types of violence playing out in post-independence South Africa. As urban geographer Lindsay Bremner explains, “The geography of crime is a geography of vulnerability” (55). What this means is that “areas most disadvantaged or least protected under apartheid” are now regions with the highest rates of crime in the post-apartheid period (55). The historic lack of policing, poverty, and the “political disempowerment” inflicted on these areas during colonization has led them to become “fragmented, disjointed, [and] demeaning places” after independence (55). Bremner highlights townships such as Alexandra, Soweto, and Orange Farm as locations where murder, rape, and assault are common (55). In contrast, areas associated with white affluence such as Sandton have Johannesburg’s highest rates of carjacking (55). What her article reveals is that Johannesburg is still a divided city (62), and attitudes towards crime reflect the social, as well as spatial, positions people occupied during apartheid (57).

The physical control sought by apartheid as it closed off geographical spaces to different groups was matched by the psychological control it sought, as Bremner intimates in her use of the word “demeaning” (55). Establishing feelings of inferiority and shame helped divide people, and maintain divisions after geographical boundaries were demarcated. People were wary of crossing into other areas not only because of laws that restricted movement, but also because of fear and animosity. As Edwards and Hecht note, bureaucratic systems sought to internalize the geographical and social divisions implemented by the state. For example, they describe the passbook as a “clean” attempt at “panoptic surveillance” (626). The state’s use of panopticism

was to entice groups to self-regulate behaviour, motivated by fears that police were constantly watching. Yet the passbook system ultimately failed because forgeries compromised it from outside while administrative backlog brought it down from within (Edwards and Hecht 626). In turn, the downfall of panoptic control was closely tied to increases in physical violence as a means of control. Edwards and Hecht elucidate this relationship by positing that “the *fantasy* of technical control – a fantasy built into vast administrative systems, computers, fingerprint collections, and daily routines of technical activity – became crucial to apartheid ideology, even as increasingly violent police harassment became its sordid reality” (638, emphasis in original). This being the case, the failure of panoptic control systems did not lessen the damage they inflicted on colonized populations, as many suffered deep psychological trauma in a system that sought to instil feelings of isolation and inferiority on non-white citizens.

In his discussion of the panopticon Michel Foucault describes visibility as “a trap” (200). Capturing a subject within a visual field, the victim becomes an object of the system, not its subject. In Foucault’s sense, the victim “is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication” (200). The apartheid government similarly sought to reduce victims to “object[s] of information” by keeping detailed biometric and electronic files on each passbook holder (Foucault 200). While victims were never in control of the collected information, or how this information was used, they were objectified through processes designed to encourage compliance with apartheid’s governance. While not literally occupying a cage in the sense that Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish*, everyday life in apartheid’s police state was at the very least a simulated prison. But for many, including the “over seventeen million blacks” who were arrested for passbook offences, the arbitrary laws of the simulated prison often led to actual confinement (Davenport and Saunders 511).

In contrast, panoptic systems of control were meant to produce a sense of security for white communities. Surveillance was meant to ensure people's safety by tracking, and eliminating, threats to the state. For example, Edwards and Hecht note that in 1978 the Native Affairs Bureau "portrayed black fingerprinting as a way to safeguard the nation from 'foreign Black' invaders" (625). Marketed in this way, whites were encouraged to support these systems out of fear of what would occur if they were no longer in place. The fear of the unknown, or more specifically, the fear of violence from an unknown or unmonitored source kept white populations in a different system of control, but one similarly maintained through fear. However, whereas white communities were conditioned to fear a non-policed state, one lacking social control mechanisms, those oppressed under apartheid were trained to fear both the physical brutality of the state, as well as its detailed databases of biometric and identity information. In essence, white communities were encouraged to fear threats the state could not see, and other groups were encouraged to fear the gaze of the state.

The struggle's shift from peaceful opposition to militarized action after the Soweto Uprising in 1976 meant fears of violence were prevalent amongst both those who supported, and those who opposed apartheid. Casualties on both sides of the conflict grew in the mid-nineteen-eighties as the apartheid government responded by imposing its second state of emergency in a twenty year period. As Rudakoff notes, at the time of independence in the early nineteen-nineties violence was a primary concern for many South Africans, regardless of their race. Illustrating one of the ways in which drama documented these fears, she cites a street performance where artists producing *Vlam I* in 1999 carried "giant sculptures down Cape Town's city mall and asked pedestrians to write their wishes for the new millennium on flags that were attached to the sculptures" (138). According to Rudakoff, responses from two-thirds of the people "asked for an

end to the violence” (138). For whites this sentiment reflects fears of retribution, but other populations also feared violence would erupt from tensions between political groups competing for post-independence power, such as the ANC and Inkatha Freedom Party in Kwazulu-Natal (133).

After apartheid, it appears violence has become a kind of common denominator in a society heavily fragmented by uneven development, education, and economic opportunities. Rudakoff’s article concludes by suggesting the frequency of violence in South Africa has had an impact on everyone: “Avoiding danger and crime, attaining stability, searching for citizenship and a place to belong: these were apparent in the search to define the self for each person I spoke with in Cape Town, young or old, white, black, or colored” (154). *Reach*’s Marion reiterates a similar point when she proclaims: “If we can’t distribute the wealth, then at least we have succeeded in the equal distribution of violence” (160). In this sense violence – especially physical and psychological – relate broadly to all citizens. Their attitudes may vary depending on background and identity, but most people are affected in one way or another.

Although fear of crime and violence are common themes in South African drama, the rise in violent crime after independence has opened up new perspectives on this crisis. For instance, Peimer describes South Africa as becoming “one of the most violent, murderous countries on earth” in the years following Mandela’s presidency and the TRC (xi). The selection of plays in his anthology reflects this turn as works such as Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom and Presley Chweneyagae’s *Relativity: Township Stories*, Xoli Norman’s *Hallelujah!*, Foot Newton’s *Reach*, and *Armed Response* all refer to the prevalence of murder, robbery, and rape in recent years. Like Rudakoff, Peimer sees violence as reconfiguring South African identity. Discussing *Relativity: Township Stories*, Peimer suggests the play reflects “a very South African identity

[that is] burnt into the soul by the extreme violence, racism, and poverty in its collective memory and current reality” (xi). His reference to the way collective memory and reality are intertwined reflects one of the most significant ways that apartheid hurt South Africans: it conditioned people so that violence is inseparable from the ordinary, the everyday. This explains the pain inflicted by Amersfoort’s bells in Mda’s play, but also explains how characters in *Armed Response* see violence in photographs of mundane settings.

Focusing on apartheid’s legacy of violence, Mda’s *The Bells* and Peimer and Griller’s *Armed Response* demonstrate how forms of physical and psychological violence continue to erupt and divide South Africans. They suggest that new strategies are needed to break cycles of violence. While *The Bells* optimistically implies that the capacity to see both victims and perpetrators as human can help to liberate South Africans from continuing physical and psychological violence, *Armed Response* suggests that such a position is improbable, if not impossible, for people still living within the geographical spaces where violence occurred. While physical violence plays out in the streets in *Armed Response*, both plays foreground how psychological trauma from apartheid continues to deeply affect characters’ memories, habits, and personal relationships. In this way systems of oppression remain prevalent long after the formal end of colonization.

Both plays generate humour from serious themes such as murder and torture. In *The Bells* this includes a victim laughing at experiences of loneliness and pain caused by the ringing of bells, but also laughing back at a news reporter’s racist remarks (154). The types of humour that appear in the play shift, but central to the laughter throughout is the appearance of gallows humour produced by a victim of torture. Humour and victimhood are also closely related in *Armed Response* as well. However, in this play humour emerges out of the fear that grips South

Africans. Repetition, caused by paranoia, is comical in this context but it also exposes deeply held anxieties around personal safety and fears of crime. Homann argues South African theatre audiences relate strongly to these concerns, suggesting audience laughter reveals broad anxieties around crime (Personal Interview). Staging these tensions allows them to be discussed. As reviewer Moira de Swardt affirms, “The play has a serious message, but it puts it across in an amusing look at stereotypes.” And perhaps it is in the tension between fear and laughter, or dispossession and humour, which new ways of handling the quickly shifting realities of crime in post-apartheid Johannesburg emerge.

Zakes Mda’s *The Bells of Amersfoort*

Spanning a number of years from apartheid’s end to beyond the TRC, *The Bells* follows the plight of a black Xhosa named Tami Walaza who is exiled from her native Eastern Cape. During apartheid she was arrested, tortured, and forced to flee the country because of her involvement in the struggle against apartheid. We learn that her arrest occurred on the day of her wedding to another comrade, Luthando, preventing the couple from completing their vows and postponing their wedding indefinitely. Living in exile for an extended period, Tami maintains contact with Luthando via correspondence between Holland and South Africa; the letters she writes home catalogue the loneliness and suffering she endures abroad. In exile Tami becomes an alcoholic, drinking to escape the pain caused by the ringing of Amersfoort’s bells, which remind her both of the torture she suffered in a prison cell in the Eastern Cape and also the extreme isolation she feels. Seeking to remedy this, Katja, a member of the Dutch-South Africa Solidarity Movement, tries to integrate Tami into Dutch society by introducing her to her friend

Martijn, hoping they will form a multicultural musical band. Although the band is successful, a confrontation with her former torturer, Johan, leads Tami to realize she must return to South Africa. At her homecoming Tami discovers that her relationship with Luthando is over and the nation she left during apartheid is now being exploited by the comrades who originally fought to liberate it.

Of all the plays in this project *The Bells* has had the most mixed reviews, receiving both acclaim and severe condemnation from South Africans. For critics such as Robert Greig the play stood out for its “sharp observations about the sleek beastliness of the post-liberation bourgeoisie,” although he faults the dance and song sequences with “break[ing] dramatic tension” and is critical of the numerous coincidences in the plot, such as perpetrator and victim meeting in exile (“Technical” 10). Furthermore, Greig dislikes the way “Points of view masquerade as stage characters” (10), a stance held by other reviewers such as Alan Swerdlow who believes characters “become representations of ideas rather than individuals” (4). For Swerdlow the play lacks “a similar grace” that one finds in Mda’s prose, but he commends the staging for its creative use of colour – beginning with “an explosion of colour” and gradually stripping it away to end “in unsubtle but effective black and white” (4). While Sandile Memela’s review is perhaps the most scathing of all, arguing the play confirms “white stereotypes about post-independence Africa” through characters such as Luthando, he acknowledges the play does service by raising awareness of political corruption for “its white, probably European, audience” and criticising black elites who continue “to betray their own” after independence (28). Memela is not alone in trying to identify the intended audience, as most reviewers debate whether the play was meant for South Africans or Europeans. Rafiek Mammon commends the play for “being a collaborative effort between a South African and Dutch theatre group” (3) and Ina

Randall asserts that once she “bypass[ed] the silly designer African inserts and some patchy acting, there was a lot to enjoy,” especially the honest portrayal of loneliness and corruption (6). In Barbara Hollands’s opinion Mda “had an international audience in mind,” resulting in a simplification of South African motifs and culture (4). Debates concerning the intended audience aside, reviewers suggest that the play also raises important questions about the options available to exiles after apartheid (Makube 17), explores the use of terms such as “reconciliation” and “harmony” (Mammon 4), and depicts the way exile produces a “searching look at ideals and reality in South African society today” (Willoughby, “Ideas” i).

Overall, scholars have responded more favourably to *The Bells* than many reviewers. Dorothy Winifred Steele’s Masters Thesis describes the play as “a musical piece” with a “focus on reconciliation and healing” (168). Her project analyzes the tension between the protagonist’s newfound freedom – a result of South Africa’s liberation from apartheid – and her continued oppression caused by her own disillusionment with “the high ideals upheld” by comrades in the struggle (170). Steele’s interpretation of the scarred earth as “an allegory of apartheid’s reign and aftermath” (172) transitions well into Graham’s reading of the play as a work that foregrounds how “memory is split between the body and the land” (“Mapping” 59). For Graham, healing past trauma requires the body and land to be joined in “order to create a historical memory that is citable or representable in *any* of its moments” (59, emphasis in original). Furthermore, he interprets divisions between characters in the play as arising out of “a radical difference in their interactions with – and use of – space” (65). Like Steele (172), Graham also argues characters’ commitments to heal the land constitute an act of reconciliation by offering the play’s perpetrator an “opportunity to earn the forgiveness and reconciliation he seeks” (66-7). While both scholars

use the damaged landscape as a vehicle to explore reconciliation and identity, other scholarship focuses on personal relationships within the play.

Krueger includes a short chapter on *The Bells* in his discussion of white masculinity in his book. Focusing on how sexual relations complicate white masculinity, Krueger interprets sex between Johan and a black female Dutch prostitute as an attempt to “overcome his racist past as well as to reconnect with Africa” (*Experiments* 86). Problematically, his visits with the prostitute project “reconciliation as a commodity,” ultimately preventing the “emotional and spiritual rehabilitation” he seeks (87). For theatre scholar Busuyi Mekusi, *The Bells* speaks to the important role black women played in liberation as well as the post-apartheid “emergence of women as a political force” (“Sameness” 571-2). He reads Holland as a kind of purgatory (572), a place where the protagonist finds “voicedness” by forming a multicultural band that “project[s] African values,” but also through directly confronting her torturer (575). Tami’s battles against characters Mekusi describes as “shades of masculinity” (591) evoke not only the potential for gender equality, but “the possibility of matriarchy triumphing over patriarchy” (592). Mekusi similarly reads the play’s conclusion as reconciliatory, made possible by “the various migratory experiences witnessed within and beyond South Africa” (592). For Flockemann, plays like *The Bells* reflect South African drama’s interest in “the experience of exile,” “home and belonging,” and rethinking South African identity after the millennium (“Translations” 200). Unlike Greig, Flockemann enjoyed the sequences involving Xhosa songs and felt the multicultural connection with a Surinamese musician should have been developed further (202).

The Bells was commissioned by De Nieuw Amsterdam Theatergroep and debuted at the Theatre De Balie in Amsterdam, March 2002, as a joint venture between the Sibikwa Community Theatre troupe and De Nieuw Amsterdam Theatergroep. Rob Amato, the author of

the introduction to *Fools, Bells and the Habit of Eating*, notes the play toured for two months in the Netherlands after its debut (112). A collaborative production, the cast for the European tour was composed of members from both De Nieuw Amsterdam Theatergroep and Sibikwa Community Theatre.⁴⁶ After its 2002 run in Europe, *The Bells* was performed in South Africa at the 2002 National Arts Festival as well as the Baxter Theatre in early July and the Liberty Theatre in Sandton in late July and early August, using its original cast from Amsterdam performances. The play was also published in 2002 in *Fools, Bells and the Habit of Eating*, a collection of Mda's three post-apartheid plays, and re-staged in the Arena Theatre at the University of Cape Town in 2004 (Snyman, "Ideological" 17).

Cycles of violence arise in *The Bells* through the post-traumatic stress Tami suffers as a result of being tortured. Her escape into exile is an effort to evade the physical pain of apartheid, but this fails as her continuing trauma indicates. In addition to the physical and psychological pain torture inflicts on Tami, living in Holland constitutes further suffering because her distance from home enhances isolation and loneliness. In an effort to cope with these hardships, she nostalgically recalls life back home. However, memories of home fragment her psyche as she is caught living between South Africa and Holland. Although painful, Tami's experiences in exile lead to new perspectives regarding her identity, the identity of her torturer, but also South Africa itself. The altered social codes in Amersfoort and her voyeurism provide both Tami and Johan with new views on the other's loneliness and fallibility. As a result they eventually relate to each other in different ways, as people rather than as victim or perpetrator.

From the outset the play's staging emphasizes the internal divisions exile creates by dividing the stage space into three segments. Mda's stage directions describe the acting space as

⁴⁶ The Sibikwa Players are based in Johannesburg, South Africa. The name translates to *Free-Birds* in English. (Flockemann, "Translations" 199).

partitioned into three areas, which “*may even be represented by different levels on the stage*” (114). These divisions are meant to create three separate psychic spaces: “*One represents TAMI Walaza’s present world. The second represents the world she has left behind, which is also the world to which she will return. The third represents the world she will never reach, the world she observes from her window*” (114). These three spaces reflect the different views exile opens up for Tami. As Mekusi explains, “The employment of the three worlds is allegorically representative of the past, present, and future unfolding of the main character, Tami Walaza” (“Sameness” 576). Interpreting the divisions in this way, the structure suggests a fracturing of Tami’s mind and identity. Mammon’s review of the set design also articulates this point as he asserts “using glass as partitioning as well as a reflective surface” illustrates “the two lives of the central character” (3). Glass, in this application, represents the transparent yet impenetrable divisions splitting Tami. These divisions are twofold: both spatial, as indicated by Mammon’s opinion that glass signifies the distance between South Africa and Holland, but also temporal, as indicated by Mekusi’s reading of these spaces as reflective of “past, present, and future” for Tami (576).

In addition to the way stage space suggests the internal contradictions created by Tami’s move abroad, scenes with Luthando and Tami performing side-by-side at the outset also highlight her general detachment from South Africa. In performance Luthando and Tami speak from different spaces, dictating letters to each other across the stage space. While neither character acknowledges the other’s presence, they also contradict each other in terms of what they discuss. Luthando dwells on Tami’s absence, noting he was asked to participate in her brother’s circumcision ceremony “since you could not be there,” whereas Tami focuses on South Africa as a place of wholeness, a location where she was happy, loved, and surrounded with

“grandmothers and grandfathers [...] friends and neighbours” (114-5). Recalling South Africa in this way, Tami’s memory appears more positive than Luthando’s descriptions of day-to-day events. Furthermore, while Tami’s memories are static because she has not been home in years, Luthando’s dialogue emphasizes the changes taking place during Tami’s absence, such as the damage inflicted by rain on the landscape (114), and the local population’s anxieties toward South Africa’s swift social change: “Even we who live in it can no longer recognise it” (120). His emphasis on the strangeness of South Africa’s political climate for those within the country implies that people like Tami, beyond South Africa’s borders, are totally out of touch with the nation’s reality. While researchers such as Flockemann disagree with Tami’s idealization of her homeland, arguing Tami’s memories of South Africa come “across somewhat sentimentally (or even exoticized [sic]) despite the inclusion of Dutch performers in these African memory scenes,” I contend Tami’s memories simulate the kind of nostalgia that many South African exiles likely felt, and in some instances continue to feel, because of distance and alienation from their homeland (“Translations” 202).

Remarking on the kinds of nostalgia exile creates, globalization researcher David Rieff contends that “the patriotism of the immigrant is, despite all appearances, based on the conjuring up of an imaginary homeland” (7). This fictive homeland is a fantasy of the nation produced by the exile. It differs from reality because it is out of touch with the social and political circumstances of the nation: “Back home, the immigrant is mostly aware of the draw-backs of his country – its parlous economy, its corrupt bureaucracy, its desperate sanguinary politics. But in the rich cities of the West, the immigrant is overcome with nostalgia” (7). As Rieff argues, distance cultivates nostalgia because “emotion increases in direct proportion to the distance the

displaced patriot is from his or her beloved country” (7). Tami’s memory of South Africa parallels the experiences of writers and activists historically forced into exile.

An excerpt from Salman Rushdie’s *Imaginary Homelands* explores the impact that exile has on memory. As Rushdie explains, the experience of exile has a tendency to transform the migrant’s memory of the homeland into an imagined reality in order to ease the pain of loss endured by the exile:

It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge – which gives rise to profound uncertainties – that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind. (10)

Within the context of *The Bells*, this is precisely how South Africa is configured in Tami’s mind. However, in the play Tami’s sense of loss is twofold: she is both exiled from the nation, but also prevented from marrying her fiancée, who remains in South Africa while she lives in Holland. Afflicted by both losses Tami imagines South Africa as an idealized homeland full of friends and family, a place of happiness, presumably to ease her pain. The “profound uncertainties” (Rushdie 10) caused by the exile’s distance from the homeland lead Tami to produce the kind of sentimental idealization Flockemann highlights in her article (“Translations” 202). Tami’s dream of the homeland is admittedly out of touch, but Mda is conscious of this and balances Tami’s view with Luthando’s less romanticized experiences.

In addition to exile, Tami's alcoholism reflects another way that past violence continues to (re)violate her in the present. Alcohol is a coping mechanism "to numb the pain" of Amersfoort's bells (118). While nostalgia comes to constitute one form of self-destruction, alcoholism is another; both are forms of internalized apartheid violence. While Katja reads Tami's condition as self-inflicted violence, describing Tami as her "own prisoner" (117), Katja's ignorance of Tami's past and her failure to deduce the significance of Amersfoort's bells until later in the play indicate Katja misses the point. The trauma apartheid inflicted on Tami is so overwhelming, so complete, that it results in self-destructive behaviour well after the state's collapse. Katja's efforts to make Tami see the danger of her drinking by drawing connections between Tami and Katja's own mother, who died of alcoholism, falsely assume Tami is an agent in her continued dehumanization (119). Her loneliness in exile, and the post-traumatic stress disorder that reoccurs with the ringing bells, illustrate her loss of agency as she transforms from someone who once hated alcohol, to someone who relies on alcohol to survive (130).

Laughter is another coping mechanism that Tami adopts at the beginning of the play, closely tied to pain and feelings of powerlessness. She initially underscores this connection by recalling South Africa as a place of pervasive laughter even though people were suffering: "We knew how to laugh, and we laughed. Even when we were in pain" (115). In this regard laughter emerges as oppositional to apartheid violence; it stands as a testament that state-sanctioned violence fails to fully dominate the minds of the oppressed. In many ways such laughter reflects Chinua Achebe's belief that humour resists the dehumanization inflicted by colonization. Laughter humanizes because "humour is quintessentially human" (9). It is in this fashion that Tami's recollection of laughter in South Africa emerges as positive. Laughter not only symbolizes a community opposed to apartheid, but also suggests a particular kind of

psychological liberation. In contrast to the laughter she recalls back home, Tami observes that “everyone wears a sad face” in Holland, even though they are free (115). In this regard Tami’s understanding of “freedom” is not limited to political voice, but also includes emotional health and happiness. This complicates the meaning of the term “freedom” and suggests the oppressed can experience a different kind of liberation by overcoming pain with laughter.

At a personal level Tami often laughs at situations or conditions she has little power over. Examples include her “*laughing at herself*” because, as the stage directions note, she “*feels foolish*” for dancing alone when missing Luthando (116), but also the laughter that precedes her explanation to Luthando that she is “tortured by the bells that come from the second highest tower in the Netherlands” (121). As such, Tami’s laughter constitutes a kind of gallows humour because both instances of laughter revolve around experiences of pain. For bioethicist Katie Watson, gallows humour “treats serious, frightening or painful subject matter in a light or satirical way” (38). This is not limited to joking “about death,” but also includes “making fun of life-threatening, disastrous, or terrifying situations” (38). Tami’s suffering in exile and her post-traumatic stress disorder triggered by Amersfoort’s bells are both cases where laughter emerges out of loss and disempowerment. In both examples the laughter indicates she is viewing her condition from inside and outside simultaneously. Finding humour in the sadness of dancing alone or the contradiction that beautiful bells can cause pain suggests she is capable of perceiving the incongruity between the two perspectives. This is especially the case with the latter example, where the atypical connection between bells and pain produces laughter, suggesting Tami acknowledges how absurd her condition may seem to someone unfamiliar with her past.

Writing on why humour and laughter are often used to respond to “devastating or incomprehensible matters” (40), humour theorist Ted Cohen contends that when “we laugh at a true absurdity, we simultaneously confess that we cannot make sense of it and that we accept it” (41). In Tami’s case, her laughter indicates an acceptance that she is unable to control her anxiety. Incapable of rising above it, she opts instead to laugh at it. And this reflects her victimhood because such examples are hard to laugh with, unless one is also a survivor. However, like Achebe, Cohen argues laughter directed at absurdity humanizes participants: “this laughter is an expression of our humanity, our finite ability to live with what we cannot understand or subdue” (41). In this way Tami uses gallows humour to sustain herself and assert her humanity beyond the dehumanizing experience of torture.

Tami’s post-traumatic stress disorder is the strongest indication in the play of apartheid’s legacy. In performance this is demonstrated by Tami flailing in pain and simulating the physical violence inflicted against her (119). Graham describes these sequences as traumatic “flashbacks,” reflective of trauma theories that hypothesize violence disrupts a victim’s understanding of time (“Mapping” 60). Mekusi similarly describes these sequences as a “reawakening of Tami’s traumatic past” (“Sameness” 587). Both scholars also note the irony encapsulated in the bells. For Graham, the ringing of Amersfoort’s bells to celebrate anti-racism also “remember[s] the existence of racism itself,” represented by Tami’s agony (60). Mekusi similarly interprets the bells as “negative signifiers,” representative of both positive and negative aspects of international efforts to support reconciliation in South Africa (“Sameness” 587).

It is in a similarly ironic sense that Tami admires Holland because she is in the ancestral homeland of the Afrikaner. The cultural and historical differences between the Dutch and the Afrikaners emerge in conversations Tami has with Johan (144-5), as well as in debates she has

with Katja (118). And yet, while most characters in the play affirm the differences between Dutch and Afrikaans identity, there are direct references to Holland's history of colonizing South Africa. At one point in the play Johan reflects that he and Tami "stand at the centre... the very centre... of the land of Jan van Riebeeck" (145). His statement utilizes the same rhetoric employed by postcolonial scholars such as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin to define power structures between the colonies and European nations. In such cases the colonies are described as occupying the periphery (4), while the colonizers are said to occupy the centre (7). In this regard the irony of seeking refuge in Holland, the former "centre" of imperial power, is not lost on her as Johan's reference to van Riebeeck, one of the leaders of Dutch colonization in South Africa, reminds Tami of this reality.

Tami's ongoing trauma in Holland indicates that escape from the homeland is not sufficient to escape apartheid violence. And while still capable of laughing, her gallows humour cannot fully escape the damage inflicted by torture. As her reaction to the bells suggests, trauma can bridge geographical and temporal distances in an instant. Graham argues the stage divisions help to emphasize this slippage by noting that, once Tami has left the stage, the play's directions indicate Tami is "*flung into the second world*" (Mda 146). For Graham, the "effect of this spatial rendering of memory is to dramatise the psychic agony Tami experiences when she hears the bells – she is not merely reminded of the past, she is transported back to the place where trauma happened and forced to relive it" ("Mapping" 61). It is through this staging technique that Mda emphasizes victims' inescapability from past violence.

Tami's inability to resolve her trauma by fleeing to Europe does not mean exile is worthless. Although often painful, it frequently opens up new perspectives. For instance, Rushdie emphasizes some of the benefits of a diasporic existence by arguing it can provide

writers with new views: “If literature is in part the business of finding new angles at which to enter reality, then once again our distance, our long geographical perspective, may provide us with such angles” (15). In *The Bells* exile moves from initially operating as an extension of apartheid violence, to helping Tami resolve her trauma by encouraging victim and perpetrator to see each other in new ways. Their distance from the homeland provides new perspectives because both bond as vulnerable outsiders in Amersfoort. Connecting through their nostalgia for the homeland, exile initiates a process of reconciliation that is eventually fulfilled, as Steele asserts, in their combined commitment to heal South Africa’s wounded landscape (172).

Writing on border crossings as a strategy for anti-colonial resistance, Laura Briggs, Gladys McCormick, and J. T. Way argue: “As much as it belongs to the worlds of free trade agreements and export processing zones, transnationalism belongs to genealogies of anti-imperial and decolonizing thought, ranging from anticolonial Marxism to subaltern studies to Third World feminism and feminisms of color” (628). It is in this fashion – as resistance strategy – that Tami uses exile to escape the violence and humiliation inflicted against her in detainment. Exile helps to decolonize Tami because it allows her to move outside the oppressive racial structures of apartheid South Africa. According to Mammon, “She steps outside her own detached life back in South Africa and has a chance to look in from outside” (3). The benefit of exile is that it creates critical distance, similar to Tami’s use of gallows humour. Emphasizing yet another way that movement across borders “belongs to genealogies of anti-imperial and decolonizing thought,” Tami’s move to Amersfoort facilitates a rethinking of her own identity, and that of her torturer (Briggs et al. 115).

Loneliness forms a common bond between Tami and Johan and exposes their vulnerabilities. Overhearing Tami’s correspondence to Luthando, Johan realizes that, like

himself, Tami also feels deeply isolated in Amersfoort (143). This realization helps to reduce differences between the pair as both begin to empathize with the other. At this point in the play Tami views Johan as a supporter of the apartheid state – and thus a perpetrator – but has not yet recognized him as her former torturer. As reviewer Tiisetso Makube summarizes, “we have two expatriates, each lonely and missing home badly but not knowing what steps and direction to take” (17). Johan’s discovery of Tami’s loneliness also leads them to dispel the misconceptions they hold. Specifically, both believe integration into Dutch society must be easier for the other. Tami believes Johan is more likely to feel at home in Holland because of his Dutch ancestry (144). Whereas Johan assumes integration should be easier for Tami because Holland is aligned with the anti-apartheid struggle (144). These revelations help them realize they both experience feelings of alienation, regardless of ethnicity.

Debates about inclusion naturally lead to discussions of identity and ancestry.

Tami’s belief that Johan should feel at home in Holland is not foolish, as he initially holds the same belief. Describing Johan’s exile as a “journey of spiritual regeneration to Holland,” Mekusi posits Johan “has hitherto been made to believe [Holland] is his root/home” (*Negotiating* 125). This is especially the case when Johan admits he has made efforts to affirm a connection by seeking out a village that shares his name (144). However, as his continuing loneliness proves, labelled a “*buitenlander*,” his efforts at integration are fruitless.⁴⁷ Although the land is his ancestral home, Johan confesses to Tami that, like her, he “come[s] as a stranger” (144). In this sense the isolation Johan experiences in Holland is critical to locating Afrikaners within a post-apartheid South African nationalism. Just as South African Indians are frequently marginalized through assumptions they can easily repatriate to a diasporic homeland, Johan’s inability to fit into Dutch society indicates that his homeland is South Africa. His stay in Holland leads him to

⁴⁷ The play uses “*buitenlander*” to describe Johan’s status as “migrant” (144).

discover he is “an Afrikaner, not a Dutchman” (144). In this way, exile reveals new aspects of Johan’s identity to both himself and Tami.

Like Johan, Tami identifies as an outsider because although Holland is full of people aligned with the struggle, they “don’t really become friends” (144). Tami’s connection to Katja is the closest she comes to befriending a local; however, even this relationship is tenuous. Although Katja makes an effort to care for Tami, bringing her food (116) and trying to help Tami integrate into society by forming a musical band (128), Katja fails to understand Tami beyond a superficial level. Examples such as Katja’s criticism of Tami’s alcoholism, without fully appreciating its cause, or the assumptions she makes about Tami based on black stereotypes, indicate the pair does not share a close connection. Katja’s racial stereotypes about blackness, such as her belief that all black people can sing (132) or play the drum (128), suggest her friendship with Tami and other black characters such as Martijn fail to break misconceptions of blackness. Katja’s assumptions, similar to ones held by Marion in *Reach*, are a continuation of colonial othering amongst white liberals. In the same way that stereotypes establish a wall between Katja and Tami, the latter also maintains her distance from Katja and Dutch society.

Tami rejects Katja’s offers of assistance and friendship in order to prevent herself from integrating into Dutch society. Tami accomplishes this by continuing to drink heavily after Katja tries to get her to quit (118), but also by complaining that Katja’s gifts of food make her feel “like an invalid” (117). This second example reveals how Tami opposes Katja whenever possible because once Katja stops bringing food, Tami reverses her position and protests she has grown accustomed to the gifts and it is “cruel” to stop (124). The personal tensions between them stem from their different perspectives on the treatment of refugees in Holland. While Katja views the work of the Dutch-South Africa Solidarity Movement as positive, Tami accuses the organization

of helping apartheid refugees in order to “salve their consciences” (118). Caught psychologically between Holland and South Africa, Tami prevents herself from connecting with friends around her in the hope of returning home. She resists, or refuses to embrace, her new life in Holland. Mekusi explores this condition by analyzing her memories, arguing she remains “withdrawn” by concentrating “on the preservation of her identity and link with her home in South Africa” (“Sameness” 581). In this case Mekusi interprets Tami’s fond memories of home as a strategy to delineate self and other, comparing “the fragrant world of the home she has fled with her new environment” (581). With regard to Tami and Katja’s relationship, Tami establishes similar divisions. Her adversarial nature and her criticisms of Katja and Dutch culture, expressed in jokes about their food (117), constitute ways she strategically remains outside Dutch society. While at points Katja (124) and Martijn (134) connect with Tami through humour, using jokes to draw her in, Tami also uses humour to resist them: “The English are world famous for their terrible cooking. I think the world forgot about the Dutch. They match the English pound for pound” (117). As a result, she never fully assimilates into Dutch society and resists entering the “third world” she sees outside her window (114).

And yet while Tami intentionally separates herself from her surroundings in Amersfoort, bodily memories of home drive her closer to Johan. As Graham explains, “smell and other forms of bodily memory can transcend the physical divides that exist between the different ‘worlds’” (“Mapping” 62). In this sense the pair bond over a common relationship to South Africa’s landscape. For instance, one of the ways Johan knows he is an outsider in Holland is because “Even the soil smells differently” to him (144), a position Tami “*emphatically*” supports (145, emphasis in original). The priest’s bodily memories of home, and its smells, are similar to Tami’s longing for “ordinary things” such as “the smells ... the rain ... the thunder” (141). In

essence, exile causes the pair to realize how closely tied their identity is to a geographical space, but in the absence of this space they must find new ways to construct a sense of self. One of the ways this occurs is through their memories of home, memories which recall the missing landscape. For Graham, *The Bells* and other works such as Mda's *The Heart of Redness* suggest "identities must be fluid, or else invested in something more stable than the landscape, in the face of rapid and accelerating changes that are rendering many rural spaces unrecognizable" (62). In the context of the play, bodily memory serves this purpose by imaginatively filling in for the missing landscape. Through reminiscing, both positively see the other as South African, and even contribute to the other's memories, such as Tami reminding Johan of the smell of a gravel path when the latter laments Holland's soil does not smell like South African soil (144-5).

However, while bodily memory of the landscape helps them reveal a common South African identity, it actually forms a highly problematic connection. The pair's longing for a common geography seems to intentionally avoid memories of the social and political elements that might fragment their unity. The rain, the thunder, and the smell of the earth are elements not immediately connected to apartheid. This makes friendship easier, but delays addressing the serious realities each must face if they are to be reconciled. One exception to this is Tami's acknowledgement that Johan's interracial relationship with Heleen would be received differently in South Africa. This moment is a reminder of their shared experiences of segregation, memories that separate them from citizens in Holland. Tami's conclusion that "A wholesome boereseun like you cannot have a black wife" epitomizes how, even in exile, and after apartheid's end, racially mixed relationships between South Africans seem strange (137). Furthermore, while bodily memory initially links the pair, divergent memories of sound compromise this bond entirely. For Johan, Amersfoort's bells are a happy reminder of Aliwal North's church and the

summoning of its congregation (145), but for Tami the bells return her to the torture Johan inflicted (147). In this sense bodily memory works when linked to a landscape, but divisions emerge when tied to institutions such as religion. The association between church bells and torture reflects the violence inflicted by Christianity during colonization, especially the close ties between the Dutch Reformed Church and the apartheid police state.⁴⁸ The discovery of divergent memories, ones that implicate Johan as Tami's torturer, fractures ties between them and makes their former closeness seem disturbing.

Discussions of the play stress the importance of moving beyond or outside the nation in order to facilitate new kinds of reconciliation. In his introduction, Amato describes Johan and Tami's reconciliation in Amersfoort as indicative of healing in South Africa as well. As he explains, "The main movement of the play is towards an improbable and yet in many ways convincing further liberation of South Africans in Amersfoort, and by implication, back home" (xix). While the play's central theme is the liberation of South Africans abroad and at home, Mda's work illustrates how processes of reconciliation operate differently outside of the nation. Most obviously, events such as the TRC that were staged in South Africa could not sufficiently integrate victims living abroad. The play underscores this shortfall by having Johan address the TRC and receive forgiveness without Tami's participation (150-1). Due to her exile, Tami feels excluded from national processes of reconciliation, leading her to reject the TRC's tenets in favour of justice: "There can be no reconciliation without justice!" (152). Even by Tami's own admission her desire to seek justice is impossible. She is not able to hold Johan judicially

⁴⁸ Historian Susan Rennie Ritner condemns the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, or Dutch Reformed Church, for encouraging the government to develop "progressively sterner definitions of 'separateness'" during apartheid (17). Her article outlines how the NGK became closely associated with the National Party, until eventually "membership in the two institutions overlapped, gradually fusing the twin pillars of *Volkskerk* and *Volksparty* into an organic *Afrikanerdom*" (20-1). The church supported apartheid on the basis that God created diversity in the world; opposing miscegenation was seen as supporting God's design for "unity in diversity" within South Africa (26).

accountable because he has been granted amnesty by the state (151). Her frustration and anger at being excluded from these processes further isolate her from the new South Africa. For example, when Johan asks her for forgiveness she replies: “You and your government have forgiven each other. I am not part of that forgiveness” (152). Implying there are close ties between the Afrikaner perpetrator and the new South African government, Tami voices ways victims continue to be isolated from political processes as a result of exile.

However, where political systems of reconciliation fail, personal approaches seem to succeed. Johan’s discovery of who Tami is leads him to seek forgiveness, showing up at her apartment under the pretence of helping to recruit neighbours Fritz and Catharina for her multicultural music group. In the absence of the TRC’s Commissioners, the play uses Martijn and Katja as an intervening body to moderate, and hold both parties accountable. While they castigate Johan’s efforts to downplay the damage he inflicted on Tami’s life (149), mocking his excuses with derisive laughter, they also encourage Tami to acknowledge her perpetrator “has paid a high price” for past transgressions (152). In this manner they occupy the role of Commissioners, but as non-South Africans they also challenge national processes of reconciliation. As Martijn suggests, there is a difference between state forgiveness and the personal forgiveness received from a victim: “You confessed to your Truth Commission and they forgave you. But did the person you did all these filthy things to forgive you? From what I saw when she came back after talking to you... after discovering who you really are... she has never forgiven you” (149). Making this statement Martijn encourages Johan to see the unfinished work of forgiveness between himself and Tami, rather than allowing the perpetrator to feel absolved after receiving amnesty from the state (149). Emphasizing the need to continue to strive for reconciliation beyond the TRC, Martijn’s comments are apt because Johan still feels

threatened by retributive anger and violence, even after state redemption (156). While reconciliation does not successfully occur when the pair confronts each other in Amersfoort, exile opens up new perspectives for Tami and Johan. Katja and Martijn aid this process by helping them understand the needs of both victim and perpetrator.

In addition to the way exile helps shift points of view by revealing the pain exile inflicts on the other, voyeurism helps reveal Johan's fallibility and hypocrisy. If, as Foucault claims, "Visibility is a trap," then in Amersfoort's urban landscape Johan is its victim (200). Our first introduction to Johan comes when Tami describes him to Katja as "a good man throughout the week, except at midday on Mondays and Fridays" when he is "naughty" (126). This naughtiness, as Katja soon discovers, involves Johan soliciting a prostitute (127). Tami's constant surveillance of Johan serves two purposes. Initially she takes to voyeurism as another means of coping with loneliness. Playing her trombone in accompaniment to the couple's intercourse, Tami satisfies unfulfilled physical needs while remaining loyal to Luthando. As she explains to her fiancé, "On Mondays and Fridays my trombone finds work, and I get the fulfillment. It works well for all of us. My body remains pure and untouched, waiting just for you. Yet my needs are fulfilled" (135). Moreover, Tami's voyeurism also signifies ways she exercises power over Johan. Specifically, gazing gives Tami power because it allows her to objectify him. Her surveillance collects information and, through this process, constructs Johan's identity. In fact, she first introduces him to Katja as the Dominee because he is dressed as a priest (126). In this sense Tami views Johan as an object she can label, one she knows through watching. Johan's initial ignorance of Tami's voyeurism suggests that he is a victim of her gaze and not a willing participant.

Tami's labelling of Johan as "Dominee" bears a likeness to apartheid systems of panoptic control (126). Much like the passbook system, Tami arbitrarily ascribes a name, identity, and

social position to Johan. Additionally, some of her initial remarks, such as “Very very naughty Mondays and Fridays,” express the intimate knowledge she acquires through voyeurism as well as her judgement of the pair (136). As the stage directions indicate, Johan is “*taken aback*” by this revelation (136). His shock exposes the discomfort he feels when the gaze is symbolically reversed. Furthermore, Johan’s reaction is similar to the three businessmen in *MacBeki*, who are deeply concerned at the thought of surveillance systems being reversed against them. Johan’s description of Tami’s behaviour as “spying” rather than voyeurism recalls terminology linked to state surveillance systems (138). In this case, Tami’s violent reversal of the gaze may be seen to raise awareness of how dehumanizing surveillance was during apartheid, because once she reveals her voyeurism Johan draws his curtains to hide from her sight (142).

Importantly though, in addition to exerting power over a former colonizer, Tami’s voyeurism also brings them closer together. Although her naming of people extends to other characters in the play, such as Heleen, Fritz, and Catharina (126), her particular fascination is with Johan. Their first conversation begins with her admitting she has watched him (136). Thus, while her gaze initially objectifies Johan, the connection it creates leads them to converse. This changes Johan from an object into subject. In conversation he provides further information about his relationship with Heleen, informing Tami she is a prostitute who fulfills his physical needs until he can return to his wife (137). This information reveals his struggles with loneliness, but also exposes his failures. His sexual encounters are hypocritical, an “act of ‘infidelity’ both to his faith and to his race,” according to Mekusi (“Sameness” 585). Like Tami’s drinking, exile causes Johan to compromise his values. These are multiple: as a priest and husband his sexual engagements are the highest act of infidelity, but as a former police inspector he also undermines apartheid laws such as the Immorality Act which forbid interracial relationships. Johan’s

decision to close the curtains after Tami reveals she watches him underscores his discomfort at being exposed as a hypocrite. However, after he discovers she is his victim, he leaves the curtains open in an effort to make amends. Katja interprets the gesture as “a peace offering,” but it also symbolizes a willingness to accept punishment in the form of humiliation by submitting himself to Tami’s gaze (153).

Although surveillance offers Tami a chance to assert agency, it also curtails her power during an interview with a Dutch news reporter. The multicultural band’s success leads Tami to be interviewed by a man who, as she explains, “has internalised all the racist stereotypes of Africa” (154). On this occasion Tami is a victim of the gaze because the presenter expects her to perform stereotypes for the camera. For example, he states she must laugh “Because black people are known as people who laugh” (154). Angered by her objectification during the interview – which occurs off-stage – Tami re-performs the sequence with Martijn to ridicule the reporter’s racism. This reaction is salient to the context of the interview because the news reporter encourages her to laugh in order to show her submission to stereotyping. “While laughter is a virtue and a desirable form of expression,” argues Mekusi, “it is used intriguingly in this case to connote inaction, complacency, and perfidy” (“Sameness” 583). Opposing the submission the news reporter seeks, Tami’s re-performance of the interview with mocking derision directly confronts the view that humour is harmless or apolitical.

In this scene the stage directions describe Tami wearing “a broad, toothy, wide-eyed smile reminiscent of a Coon,” a kind of “mechanical smile that stays in place” throughout the interview (154). References to a “mechanical smile” (154) immediately evoke humour theories such as Bergson’s conceptualization of the automaton, a performance of human actions that are repetitious or predictable and subsequently produce laughter (22). But rather than directing

humour against herself by performing stereotypes of blackness, Tami's performance ridicules the white reporter's stereotypes of Africans by underscoring the inaccuracy of his thinking; her performance caricatures the man because one characteristic is "exaggerated, drawing close attention to it, whereas all other qualities of the one being caricatured are ignored," in this case his racism (Propp 64). This sequence, located between Tami's realization that she must return home and her discovery that she has been healed from the pain of the bells, moves from seriousness to humour and back to seriousness. This indicates that while humour helps her assert agency, it is by no means Tami's only form of power. By this point she is healed of her post-traumatic stress disorder and able to contemplate forgiveness.

Tami is able to reconcile with Johan after her return from Amersfoort because she sees him first as a person and later as her tormentor. This being the case, exile is not the only position from which to enact forgiveness and reconciliation. National events such as the TRC prove that forgiveness and reconciliation can also potentially be achieved within the boundaries of the liberated country, by members who have never travelled abroad. Importantly, the exploration of reconciliation in *The Bells* suggests forgiveness between perpetrator and victim is not limited to national events such as the TRC, or even contained within the geographical boundaries of the country. Returning home reveals the failure of the struggle's lofty goals, as the nation is damaged by soil erosion and corruption. Discovering Luthando has been corrupted by capitalism and bribery, *The Bells* concludes with Tami refusing to become Luthando's mistress, choosing instead to collaborate with Johan to heal the soil degradation in the Qhoboshane Valley.

The portrayal of Luthando at the conclusion of the play produces the same type of ridiculing laughter that Uys uses to critique corruption in *MacBeki*. Luthando appears at the end of *The Bells* driving a toy car made of wire to represent the Mercedes Benz automobile he has

received as a bribe (158-9). The appearance of an adult playing with items that are commonly identified as children's toys is comic because it undercuts the high status Luthando claims to have achieved as a powerful politician. As Mekusi explains, wire art is believed to originate in communities where people lack "resources to buy proper toys" ("Sameness" 580). In this instance the toy becomes a device to parody corrupt leaders by "*revealing an inner flaw*" in Luthando, and by extension the corrupt political system he represents (Propp 60, emphasis in original). The connection between Luthando and actual ANC politicians accused of corruption is established through the car he is driving, an emblem of a high-profile scandal that occurred just prior to the play's publication (Molefe 18). Luthando's complaint that "just because the car is a gift [does not mean] you can take any old colour" is meant to draw contempt but also laughter at his brazen logic. His view is comic because it reverses expectations around corruption; instead of denying he is dishonest, as one might expect, Luthando proposes even corrupt figures like himself must adhere to certain standards. As a result he becomes a target of laughter and ridicule. While Johan and Tami also appear on stage with similar toys, shaped like bicycles rather than cars, their humble attitudes and honesty prevent them from similarly being seen as comic. It is Luthando's concern for appearances, confessing to Tami: "I cannot be seen by my friends even talking to someone on a bicycle," that heighten the incongruity of this moment as he is a spectacle of a man playing with a child's toy (158).

The play concludes with Luthando and Tami unable to reconcile their different political views. Desiring to cash in on his apartheid-era struggle credentials, Luthando co-opts the struggle slogans for his own self-serving goals. When Tami challenges him to uphold their commitment to "work with the people to mend the scars of the past," Luthando selfishly replies: "The people? Who are the people? We are people too, are we not?" (159). Luthando's failure to

uphold struggle-era promises makes way for a new relationship between Tami and Johan, one where they work together to “rebuild the scarred land” (160). This relationship seems unlikely in the play and, for reviewers such as Ralph Goodman, the “unexpected mollification of Mda’s generally scathing tone may mark a gesture towards something like South African nation building” (243). Such reviews imply Mda’s play participates in the project of national unification, as much as it scorns corrupt government agents like Luthando. Ending the play with Tami and Johan riding off together while “*The bells toll. But they are distant*” suggests that although memories of past violence may remain with Tami for life, her commitment to the land and her new view of Johan as a person, not a perpetrator, offer hope for future unity (161).

David Peimer and Martina Griller’s *Armed Response*

In contrast to *The Bells*, *Armed Response*’s short run in Johannesburg means there are fewer reviews of the play. De Swardt argues it tackles “the topical issue of security guards,” distributing “a serious message” through “an amusing look at stereotypes.” Matthew Krouse’s “Theatre Pick of the Week” for the *Mail & Guardian* describes the play as a “cultural component” to the Armed Response conference held in Johannesburg between the 12th and 13th of May, 2006. For him, the play is about a German tourist becoming “acquainted with the rather specific ways we protect ourselves.” Sichel identifies the challenges of such a project by noting it is “pretty audacious to write a play about crime and security in a country where the daily news reports are ferociously dramatic, to say the least” (“Extreme” 3). Sichel also records that the play debuted during a security guard strike in which crime was on the rise. For her this play “borders on brutal farce” where “Banging doors and bedroom shenanigans are replaced by panic buttons,

gunshots, breaking glass” and other ills (3). This being the case, she coins the term “Extreme theatre for extreme times” as a way of explaining *Armed Response* (3). As these reviews indicate, violence and fear of crime rest at the centre of the play.

Peimer’s introduction describes the work as dealing with “existential themes of freedom and fear within the new democracy” (xvi). Such a description bears a likeness to the final lines of *The Bells*, where Tami professes: “It is painful to be free” after years of oppression (161). However, in Peimer’s assessment *Armed Response* underscores “the dilemma of trying to deal with, and distinguish between, valid fear and creeping paranoia” in a country where criminality is widespread (xvi). For Peimer, *Armed Response* and *Reach* are similar because both plays contain themes of “hope and abandonment” in theatre after the TRC (xv). But, while *Reach* concludes on a positive note, *Armed Response* ends by revealing how “Faustian bargains are the reality” in a society beleaguered by violence “and democratic ideals the dream” (Peimer xvi). Although violent crime has traumatised South Africa for years, *Armed Response* exposes how crime and security have become a highly profitable industry in the new South Africa.

Armed Response debuted on May 11, 2006, at the Wits Downstairs Theatre, Johannesburg. The show’s timing corresponded with the Armed Response conference which, as the press release states, was meant “to provoke debate about the privatization of security,” both within South Africa as well as around the world (Artslink “Media Release”). In addition to its short run, the play has had a much broader circulation as a result of being published in an anthology of new South African plays in 2009. The importance of the text in relation to other new works is indicated by Peimer’s decision to name the anthology *Armed Response: Plays from South Africa*, after the play.

The work follows the experiences of Anna, a German photographer exploring Johannesburg for the first time. She has come to South Africa for a photo shoot and moves into a house in an upscale neighbourhood. Almost immediately, she is greeted by Vusi, a representative from Armed Response. He shows up with a contract for Anna to sign because the entire neighbourhood is protected by this security company. Against the advice of both Vusi and her neighbours Lerato and Brenda, Anna refuses to cooperate with the security firm. Believing that the police will protect her and that people have become paranoid, Anna refuses Vusi's numerous efforts to convince her to sign the contract. The play details the various ways in which associates from Armed Response attempt to scare or intimidate Anna. The company uses home invasions (185), violent assaults (191), and even attempted rape (204-5) to control her and the neighbourhood with fear. By the play's conclusion Anna is unsure whom to believe. Doubting Vusi's sincerity as he tries to protect her from the company's thugs, Anna accidentally kills one of Armed Response's agents, Themba, during a showdown between her, Themba, and Vusi. The final sequence uncovers the widespread corruption throughout the play as Paul, the head of Armed Response, shows up and has Vusi arrested by local police for Themba's murder. Anna is given the choice of either signing a contract, or being framed for Themba's murder. She signs the contract and becomes a complicit member of the corrupt system by agreeing to remain silent while Vusi is unjustly charged for murder.

In contrast to the optimism of *The Bells* – the notion that recognising other people's humanity can help break cycles of violence – Peimer and Griller's work presents an alternative view: it is not possible to view the other as human because of the divisions that abound in landscapes controlled by fear and violence. The play uses Anna, an outsider, to ironize normative views on safety and violence in post-apartheid South Africa. Her profession as photographer is

no coincidence as it is through photography that divergent views are revealed and debated by characters in the play. Stepping into a legacy of state violence, Anna is initially critical of the local population's fears and paranoia. However, as the play progresses her failure to uncover her own misconceptions about safety in Johannesburg leads to her entrapment in the very system she seeks to free people from.

While the tension between Anna and her surroundings constitutes the main focus of the play, secondary characters such as Zama and Themba, Armed Response's thugs, illustrate how apartheid created cycles of violence that continue to haunt the post-apartheid cityscape. Contrasting the different perspectives between main-plot and sub-plot, Anna's attempts to explore Johannesburg's edginess for entertainment and to reveal its humanity oppose Zama and Themba's view of the city as a place of violence and danger. In the minds of the latter two, violence is normalized to the point that it has become their job, or more aptly, their profession. Like Tami, Zama and Themba illustrate the ways in which apartheid violence indelibly marked indigenous populations. The plot reveals this history in subtle ways, gesturing towards a violent past without having characters physically re-enact personal histories of violence in the same sense that Tami does in *The Bells*. While *Armed Response* differs from *The Bells* in this way, both works illustrate how objects or people trigger memories of past violence, forcing victims to continually recall traumatic experiences. For Tami, the ringing of Amersfoort's bells transports her through space and time to her torture in Aliwal North. For Zama and Themba, their flashbacks span time more than space because they continue to live in or near locations where physical violence occurred. This aspect opens up one of the critical problems for victims who continue to occupy a landscape filled with crime: failing to escape a topography marked by violence, they remain mentally trapped within it.

In Zama and Themba's case the challenge of breaking cycles of violence is more difficult because their surrounding landscape is overlaid with past violence. For example, when the pair lie in wait to attack Anna in her house, the photographs they discover reveal the presence of violence in everyday locations. One image Zama finds is a street where his son is regularly bullied (184). Another, of his old school, leads him to recall the circumstances of the Soweto Uprising. These photographs of everyday scenery in Soweto reveal the ways that, in the pair's memories, violence is inscribed upon the geography of South Africa. Zama's reflection that, in his day, they "would have burnt the school down if it was pink!" illustrates how easily past violence slips into present day perceptions of space and place (184). Themba's response, "Ours was gray. Still burnt it down" (184), also exposes a problem with Zama's thinking. While schools were burned during apartheid to oppose Afrikaans language education, they were not set ablaze for aesthetic reasons as Zama suggests. He is misusing struggle narratives here to support personal views by arguing the school should be destroyed because of its "*moffie* color" (184).⁴⁹ Ironically, Zama's stance affirms gender inequality rather than standing for equality, a fundamental goal of the anti-apartheid movement. This photograph reveals his problematic views on violence but, like the bells in Amersfoort, also prompts a flashback that combines past and present.

For trauma theorist Cathy Caruth flashbacks are not linked to "the incomprehensibility of one's near death," but rather, "fundamentally and enigmatically, the very attempt *to claim one's own survival*" beyond death (25, emphasis in original). In this sense a flashback is the mind's effort to explain its survival after violence, not an effort to make sense of one's proximity to death. More importantly, there is timelessness to flashbacks as they continue to return past

⁴⁹ The play's footnote translates this term as "effeminate" (184). It is also used as an insult towards gay men, evoking yet another type of violence.

moments to the present. As Caruth explains, “If history is to be understood as the history of trauma, it is a history that is experienced as the endless attempt to assume one’s survival as one’s own” (25). In this regard it may be impossible to temporally escape past violence, as it continually returns in the present. Caruth’s description of flashbacks helps explain why Zama and Themba immediately jump to a violent past when viewing images of Soweto. As it seems, neither is capable of escaping the violence of their past. More to the point, the pair’s profession indicates they believe physical violence is the only viable response to the present.

Zama and Themba best represent cycles of violence in *Armed Response* because their experiences as children are reversed in the present. Once victims of oppression, they now inflict pain as professional thugs hired to commit home invasions to maintain fear amongst Johannesburg’s white middle and upper-classes. The term “professional” has resonance here because the play presents the two as highly skilled criminals. For example, when Brenda is recounting details of an assault, she recalls the pair advised her husband to “keep his legs straight” when they broke them as it was “the best way to break every bone” (192). Their skill is underscored because they, common criminals, instruct Brenda’s husband, a doctor, in the art of breaking bones. This is also a kind of gallows humour because it combines references to pain with comic reversal, the doctor being given advice on anatomy from criminals seeking to harm him. In this instance, it would be humourless if the victim were anyone other than a doctor. The contrast between the two positions – both equally professional but oppositely motivated – is what makes it laughable. And for a South African audience who faces similar dangers daily, laughter at the truly terrifying aspects of Johannesburg’s crime may be cathartic. As Watson explains, gallows humour can provide victims reprieve from their deepest fears: “A joke is a rebellion against oppressive authority, and few authorities are more oppressive than death, illness, and

injury” (40-1). Similar to Uys’s argument that laughter can compartmentalize fear (*Elections 1*), Watson’s stance implies gallows humour may help ease participant’s anxiety, allowing them to focus in stressful environments such as hospital emergency rooms (44). In *Armed Response* such humour may break tensions around discussing personal safety, allowing audiences to focus on other factors such as police failure and corruption which contribute to violent crime.

Although Zama and Themba benefit financially from crime, both ironically fail to perceive how their actions negatively impact their lives. Helping to sustain an economy of crime, their destabilization of Johannesburg victimizes them as well. This occurs differently for both men. In Zama’s case he is unable to see the correlation between himself and schoolyard bullies who prey on his son (173). The bullies, who attack Zama’s son for his lunch, operate on the same system of fear and violence that *Armed Response* uses to extort money from their clients. Zama complains about the school’s failure to intervene without realizing he directly contributes to this cycle by opening up future employment opportunities for these boys. His work helps to sustain an economy of criminality that the bullies can enter once they have honed their skills in the schoolyard. Furthermore, his rejection of counselling for the boys reflects the problematic way he has dealt with his own trauma (203). Regretting that all parents “have to pay 50 rands extra per term” to provide counselling for the bullies, the absurd reality is Zama will finance this cost through crime, further normalizing the criminality he hopes to protect his son from (203).

Themba’s solution to Zama’s problem, to “have all the bullies shot” (184), exemplifies the other way the pair’s thinking leads to their victimization. Using violence to maintain control replicates similar atrocities to those inflicted during apartheid when Themba witnessed the death of Vusi’s sister, Zenande, who was shot photographing police at a protest (174-5). Themba’s preference for violence leads to his own death in the play. In fact, it is his own gun that Anna

uses to shoot him. In this instance Themba's ability to inspire fear is too successful. He creates his own downfall by attempting to rape Anna, an action that leaves her as paranoid and fearful for her life as other residents in Johannesburg (204-5). This circumstance epitomizes how cycles of violence continue to play out in South Africa. The destruction of Themba's school during the Soweto Uprising has led to a life of crime. His criminality transforms him from apartheid victim into post-apartheid perpetrator. And yet, as a result of his ability to instil fear, Themba becomes a victim of the new system he creates. The play heightens this irony by having Themba forget his handgun because he flees in fear at the sound of breaking glass, an action that shows he also feels vulnerable to violence inside the system he helps create (205).

In contrast to Zama and Themba's ability to see violence everywhere in the geography of Johannesburg, Anna's initial exploration of Johannesburg is benign. For her, Johannesburg's crime makes it interesting: "I love cities. Cities with an edge..." (170). Yet her position is naïve, arguing to Vusi that she "know[s] how to handle" herself because she has travelled before (171). As an outsider, Anna offers a different perspective. Throughout the play there is a tension between local views on crime and violence, and Anna's experiences as a tourist. This emerges from the outset of the play where an audio-visual component simulating an in-flight movie introduces the audience to Johannesburg (169). Contrasting images of crime and security with South Africa's wildlife presents two major stereotypes associated with the country, raising the question: is this how locals also see themselves, or just how outsiders view the nation?

In his introduction Peimer asserts that he is "committed to creating new South African theatre, usually with the aim of challenging the status quo, whether it be the devastating effects of apartheid ideology or the current tensions revealed in this brief moment of democratic freedom" (xv). Such statements suggest Peimer writes for an audience intimately familiar with

South Africa's social and political conditions, seeking to facilitate change by producing theatre that challenges common beliefs. Throughout the play Anna's view upsets conventional thinking around safety and security. This is especially the case for middle-class audiences, particularly whites, for whom paranoia around crime such as home invasions is tied to economic imbalances stemming from apartheid (Bremner 56). The staging of the play at 7pm in Braamfontein, a district adjacent to an area associated with crime called Hillbrow, likely meant white audience members driving in from the suburbs had safety concerns on their minds prior to seeing the performance.

Importantly, the clash between inside and outside perspectives on violence is handled in a nuanced manner throughout. Rather than simply creating a binary that might imply outsiders have more clarity on a situation simply because they are less influenced by local fears and prejudices, *Armed Response* balances a naïve outside perspective with an overly-paranoid inside view. As the play indicates, both views are flawed because neither is able to see or understand others beyond stereotypes. Fear and anxiety exacerbate this problem by closing off meaningful connections between people, heightened by the control given to private security companies. Peimer reiterates such a point in his introduction to the collection of plays, asking: "In the context of a recently liberated but barely policed society, how do freedom and fear work in the psyche of individuals and a society caught in the enticing grip of a security-driven business for profit?" (xvi). Outlining the potential failures of such a system, *Armed Response* suggests the problem with crime has more to do with private security and corruption than it does with independent criminals working the streets.

Anna's initial optimism when she arrives in South Africa contrasts with the paranoid thinking of those living around her. Her interest in high-risk urban landscapes leads her to

wander in areas that white South Africans would typically avoid. This raises debates about people's views of places such as Hillbrow. While the name of the inner-city Johannesburg neighbourhood may not resonate widely with outsiders, Hillbrow has a very specific meaning to most South Africans, especially those living in Johannesburg. Historically a trendy neighbourhood with a large student population in the heart of Johannesburg, this district has gained notoriety in recent years as a place of violence and crime, and as a home to Johannesburg's immigrant population. Newspaper columnist Verashni Pillay describes the neighbourhood as a place associated with getting "hijacked, raped and murdered. It's where uncontrolled revellers drop fridges from high-rises on New Year's Eve and the middle class dare not tread." Although Pillay indicates Hillbrow's reputation for danger is turning around, the article acknowledges that as late as 2005 it was still widely seen as a place to avoid because of police corruption and gang violence.

Anna's confidence in her safety, choosing to go alone into the neighbourhood (176), sharply contrasts with Brenda and Lerato's paranoia. Her belief that she should be fine to walk anywhere conflicts with social prejudices related to Hillbrow. Brenda's only explanation for Anna's success is that she was lucky, and as a result she should not "ever do that again, please" (176). It is precisely in the tension of such a moment that Anna's outsider perspective allows white fears to be assessed. Is Hillbrow really as dangerous as everyone immediately assumes? And how can one know if Hillbrow really is so dangerous if, as Pillay's article indicates, it is a place where "the middle class dare not tread"? Conversely, Anna is safer in Hillbrow than she is in her own home.

Armed Response foregrounds the issue of paranoia closing off meaningful exchanges between South Africa's white middle class and impoverished black neighbourhoods by

illustrating the extreme isolation that fear causes. As representatives of wealthy white Johannesburg residents, Brenda and Lerato would prefer to avoid poor areas in order to maintain their personal safety. Their prejudices cause them to create a comically elaborate set of rules in an effort to ensure their personal safety:

BRENDA: You shouldn't go to Hillbrow.

LERATO: Or out at night on your own.

BRENDA: Don't walk anywhere. Drive.

LERATO: Car doors locked, panic button on your key.

BRENDA: Get an electric fence for your house.

LERATO: Make the walls very high.

BRENDA: With sharp spikes on top.

LERATO: Put panic buttons in every room.

BRENDA: Make sure they're linked to a private security company.

LERATO: Keep a gun next to your bed! (177)

As the safety tips indicate, white paranoia can quickly escalate to a level that may seem like exaggeration, but often is not. Recent criminal cases such as the Oscar Pistorius murder trial indicate that narratives of fear and the ostensible need for personal firearms for protection, such as Lerato's advice to keep a gun next to the bed, are commonplace (177).⁵⁰

In the context of *Armed Response*, such an extensive list of safety recommendations makes Brenda and Lerato appear truly paranoid because of Anna's response. Her comment that they make South Africa's streets sound "like a state of war" causes Brenda to acknowledge that

⁵⁰ The death of Jimmy's wife from a self-inflicted gunshot in *Happy Natives* (291-2) as well as the absurdity of Lerato's paranoia in *Armed Response* indicates strategies for responding to crime need to change. Rarely are armed characters portrayed in a redeeming light, as vigilante heroes or saviours on-stage. More often armed white South Africans are portrayed as paranoid, out of touch, and a danger to those around them. Examples of such characters can also be found in Coetzee's *Johnny Boskak is Feeling Funny* and *White Men with Weapons*.

she has “Never thought of it like that” (177). Brenda and Lerato’s performance in this segment is intentionally overstated, described by de Swardt as occurring with an “exaggerated style of contact,” presumably to ridicule the pervasiveness of such thinking. Lerato’s comments at the close of their discussion, noting she has read “about fencing off the whole city” (177), indicate the broad conditioning crime has inflicted on citizens of Johannesburg. But while proposals such as fencing the city seem comically over the top, especially to outsiders such as Anna, reality is not far from fiction. Discussing problems caused by the “increasing privatization of the public realm,” Bremner notes new legislation has increased private owners’ property rights and runs the risk of closing off public spaces throughout middle and upper-class districts of Johannesburg (58). Security firms fuel paranoia by reaffirming many of the prejudices and fears held by whites during apartheid, such as the dread that black South Africans will arm themselves and seek retribution for economic oppression. Such thinking is a legacy of apartheid because it associates certain kinds of violent criminality with black South Africans, justifying the physical division of Johannesburg in order to ensure the safety of white citizens.

One of the strengths of *Armed Response* is that the play does not associate fears related to personal safety solely with South Africa’s white middle and upper-classes. Other characters such as Vusi also fear for Anna’s safety when they find out she has been exploring Hillbrow (180). Such beliefs indicate that fear and paranoia are ubiquitous. Vusi underscores the senselessness of the violence he sees emanating from Hillbrow when he laments: “This continent. Either puts you in a killing rage or merely tosses you in front of a stray bullet” (180). Such sentiment echoes the stereotype of Hillbrow as a place of meaningless violence that Pillay describes. In this respect Vusi is perhaps just as jaded as Brenda and Lerato. Additionally, this is also an instance of

internalized racism because Vusi relates to the neighbourhood according to stereotypes historically attributed to black South Africans.

What is most significant about stereotypes surrounding Hillbrow is that the neighbourhood is directly associated with one particular form of South African migration: an influx of Africans seeking work in Johannesburg. For many, the neighbourhood is dangerous because it is composed of diasporic populations from other regions of Africa. For instance, Brenda and Lerato describe Hillbrow as “full of slimy Nigerians, [and] filthy Zimbabweans” (176). Such attitudes connect the poverty of Hillbrow to communities of migrants. They also exemplify South Africans’ willingness to close themselves off from other Africans, a fear reminiscent of the Native Affairs Bureau’s belief in 1978 that passbooks could control the influx of black “invaders” (Edwards and Hecht 625). The stigma around illegal immigrants has led to xenophobic attacks, such as riots that left sixty dead in May of 2008 (Sharp 1). These murders are often attributed to competition for housing and jobs, but are also linked to assumptions that foreigners increase crime rates (Sharp 1). And as the violence that erupted again in early 2015 proves, murders will continue to occur unless economic shortfalls, and personal prejudices, are dealt with.

Exploring the neighbourhood as an outsider allows Anna to capture images that contradict perceptions of Hillbrow as solely a place of crime and corruption. While those around Anna see Hillbrow as unsafe, her pictures fail to capture its violence, instead exposing its humanity. Acknowledging Hillbrow is “Seething with people. From everywhere. Desperate people,” Anna’s pictures both confirm and deny stereotypes (180). As Brenda’s description of a photograph indicates, the pictures reveal desperation, but not of a violent nature. The photo of a “Tiny baby in a shoebox” exemplifies the kind of economic desperation that exists within the

neighbourhood, but fails to sensationalise its crime rate or presumed violence (176). When asked if anything happened while she was there, Anna answers vaguely that there “was something going on in a street. But it was further down” (180). For Anna, Hillbrow is not a place where she is nearly “hijacked, raped and murdered,” but rather a place of urban exploration that is made exciting by its tension and mixing of cultures (Pillay).

Yet another way that Anna’s optimism contrasts with the everyday concern many South Africans harbour towards personal safety comes when Vusi notices Anna forgot to lock her front door. Noticing the door is unlocked, Vusi assumes it is due to carelessness and subsequently reminds Anna that she must remember to lock up (170). Rather than reaffirming Vusi’s belief, Anna contradicts the typical response by declaring “I like it open” (170). Her belief that a locked door makes her feel she’s “in a prison” exemplifies another divergent perspective on personal safety and routines in South Africa (170). Such examples highlight an internal, seemingly automatic, tendency to operate on routine as a strategy to protect oneself. In doing so, characters’ concerns for personal safety, such as Vusi’s, are portrayed as comic because they occur without conscious realization, and become repetitive. Anna’s opposite reaction to the codes of the neighbourhood indicates a refusal to adopt the paranoia and fears of her neighbours, but this is largely based on ignorance.

Homann notes in a recent interview that South Africans enjoy laughing “at how heavily guarded our houses are, how overly secure they are” (Personal Interview). For him, such instances are comic because they draw attention to a South African fixation on security. Using a scene from Ariel Dorfman’s *Delirium* (2012) as an example, Homann explains that a sequence consisting of a character in a ruined house frantically locking a door multiple times had a specific resonance with his South African audience. While the action is clearly absurd because the man

triggers multiple locks in a door that sits adjacent to a large hole in the building's exterior wall, indicating the building can never be secured, Homann emphasizes the significance of multiple locks as heightening the humour: a "South African audience respond[s] very well to that ridiculousness because they understand the absurdity of what it means to [...] not lock a door once, but to lock it five times" (Personal Interview). In Homann's example, he identifies that it is the routine quality of such actions that creates the humour, not simply the absurdity. Reinforcing this position, Homann explains that a sequence from another play that he directed involving a couple sitting at a table was also comic to South Africans because one of the characters wrapped their handbag around her leg. He attributed the laughter to his audience's appreciation of the character's fear that her bag would be stolen (Personal Interview). In addition to creating humour, these moments draw attention to routine responses to personal safety.

Moments where characters absent-mindedly reveal paranoia and fear become important moments of distancing and realization for the play's audience. Such actions are comic because, as Bergson argues, it is the predictability of a behaviour that renders it comic (22). His description of the automaton as a machine perhaps best exemplifies the kind of loss of control that repetition or predictable behaviour evokes. Plays that utilize automatism have a powerful influence on the audience's reception of a production because they create critical distance. In essence, the automaton draws attention to a performance as performance. Imitation or unconscious repetition "is no longer life, it is automatism established in life and imitating it" (Bergson 22). This distances the audience from viewing circumstances on the stage as real life, instead directing attention to the play's action as an imitation of life. Such imitation thus allows the mundane to become comical because the imitation of real life is highly predictable.

Within *Armed Response* most of the South African characters appear as automatons because of their automatic, and in many cases unconscious, reactions to matters relating to personal safety. Brenda and Lerato become automatons when they recount an excessive list of safety tips for Anna to abide by in Johannesburg, when it is obvious Anna is not overly interested (177). Preceding the list Anna asks the pair why they feel the need to share their horror stories of home invasions with her. Asking such a question suggests Anna is trying to avoid the grim stories which might negatively influence her sense of security and independence. Such a question also indicates that Brenda and Lerato are potentially reinforcing their own fears by constantly retelling stories of violence to each other (177). The pair's recitation of the list of security strategies is automatic and repetitive, sounding off without any consideration for the psychological impact of such an act. Likewise, Vusi's assumption that Anna forgot to lock her door suggests that, for him, the locking of a door must be an automatic action. The absurdity of this, in the context of the play, is that criminals can find their way into any house regardless of the security measures homeowners take. As an outsider to South Africa, Anna heightens the impact of such moments because she exposes the obsession Vusi has with security. While her point of view is out of touch with the realities of Johannesburg, her reaction underscores Vusi's automatic responses to personal safety. His paranoia is even more ironic because he works in the security business but conversely produces fear and instability for the clients that employ him. As it appears, after years of convincing people of their own vulnerability Vusi is left feeling susceptible as well, exemplified by his obsession with the lock.

Foucault's discussion of the panopticon also pertains to the automatism in the play. This is because characters behave in certain ways out of fear that they are being watched. One of the more salient examples of this arises when Brenda admits driving to a mall because she felt she

was being followed (176). Brenda's fears are never verified because she cannot confirm this is the case without confronting the criminals she hopes to avoid. Instead, the deviation from her normal drive indicates paranoia controls her actions. Her fears of an unseen threat reflect Bremner's description of Johannesburg's crime as "fast, armed, anonymous, unexpected and invisible" (55). It is the undetectable nature of Johannesburg's crime that causes Brenda to modify her thinking and actions. "Thanks to its mechanisms of observation," Foucault argues panopticism "gains in efficiency and in the ability to penetrate into men's behaviour" (204). The fear of observation, paired with Brenda's inability to detect an invisible threat, leads her to modify her behaviour.

Bremner's article goes on to explain how the physical layout and aesthetic style of wealthy neighbourhoods heighten white anxieties. These fears, like Brenda's, are tied to fears of visibility and surveillance. According to Bremner, home invasions and car hijackings are "committed under conditions which render the body extremely vulnerable – spacious homes, abandoned during the day, sprawling lawns, thick shrubberies, high walls, empty suburban streets, long driveways, anonymous freeways. What were signs of privilege have become conditions of extreme vulnerability as apartheid's barriers are torn down" (56). The "extreme vulnerability" Bremner describes is heightened by the potential that anyone could be watching (56). The sprawling lawns, long driveways, and other aesthetic details once meant to encourage people to admire the beauty of a building or neighbourhood, are now features that incite fear. Symbols of wealth purposefully draw attention, but have also become "indications of a lucrative haul" post-independence (63).

And yet while *Armed Response* portrays fears of surveillance imprisoning white communities, Anna's profession as photographer also returns the gaze onto other groups and

areas of Johannesburg. Because photographs frame a setting or object, they also isolate objects or places from their greater context. In this regard, Anna's photographs of Hillbrow and Soweto are another form of violence because they construct meaning outside of social context. It is for reasons such as this that Susan Sontag describes photography as "a social rite, a defense against anxiety, and a tool of power" (8). For Sontag photographs help to minimize anxiety because they "help people to take possession of space in which they are insecure" (9). Anna's belief that people exaggerate Johannesburg's crime rates, epitomized by the naïve way she disregards warnings from Brenda, Lerato, and Vusi, suggests that she believes she sees correctly. Sadly, as her photographs indicate, she only sees one aspect of reality. For instance, her photograph of the school in Soweto captures its current condition, but fails to detect the continuing damage the Soweto Uprising and ensuing police retaliation has had on its inhabitants; as Kruger remarks, apartheid created "a 'lost generation' of youth with little education and no prospects [which] has turned not only criminal but violent, matching theft and burglary with apparently gratuitous rape, torture and murder" ("Theatre" 224). And it is precisely these other realities Anna fails to see because she believes going to these places once, and photographing them, reveals their true nature.

Foucault's argument that the victim of panopticism "is seen, but he does not see" resembles Anna's position, who paradoxically should be empowered through gazing (200). Anna looks, but she does not see beyond her narrow-mindedness. And it is her failure to see the whole truth that leads her to mistrust those seeking to help her, such as Vusi. The young man's respect for Anna, based on her fearlessness (174) and similarities with his deceased sister Zenande who was also a photographer (172), cause him to risk his life to protect her from Zama and Themba. Like the photo of the school in Soweto, Anna fails to see the truth behind this relationship, never

realizing he has killed to protect her and is the one who scares Themba off when he comes to rape her (185, 207). Anna's failure to detect the true criminals in the play, or capture them with her camera, suggests that after years of apartheid surveillance criminality has perfected operating clandestinely. Bremner explains one of the ways this may have come about, noting members of covert apartheid units "central to the security apparatus in its most sinister guises," such as Vlakplaas, forged ties with criminal organizations after independence (59).⁵¹ Essentially, those trained in surveillance are now the criminals hiding from it.

Staging the tension between inside and outside perspectives on personal safety in the nation, *Armed Response* shows both perspectives are misguided. Anna's faith in the police force is misplaced throughout the play, yet her affirmation that she can handle her own on the streets is largely presented as correct (171). Likewise, while characters such as Brenda and Lerato seem overly paranoid, their fears are validated by a succession of home invasions, multiple against Anna and a single one against Brenda. Anna's shifting opinions on personal safety proves anyone can be corrupted by the violence, fear, and paranoia spread by private security firms. Beginning the play with confidence and a sense of security, Anna's transition into a character scared for her own safety, indicated by the installation of several sets of burglar bars to the point that she is "fully caged in" by the conclusion (206), suggests people's fears are not incorrect, but perhaps misplaced. As the play makes clear, Anna is right to distrust Armed Response. She ultimately fails, though, because she is not equally critical of the police force.

The corruption and incompetence of South Africa's police force is repeatedly satirized throughout the play. Two events in particular highlight this most clearly: Anna's calls to the police for help, and her treatment when she goes to the police station to report a home invasion.

⁵¹ Vlakplaas also coerced black struggle members to join them, known as *askaris*, and trained them to wage a clandestine war. Many of these men were killed but some survived and have put their surveillance skills and information gathering to other uses, such as Joe Mamasela who compiled a dossier on Vlakplaas itself (Krog 230).

In the first instance Anna's faith in the police force is undermined by repeated failures to connect her to the appropriate precinct. Calling from Johannesburg, her first connection with the police station is through an automated answering machine that asks her to select between options such as: "If you or your loved ones have been hijacked, please dial 1" and "If you or your loved ones have been shot, please dial 2" (186). The slow police response time for dealing with emergencies and the convoluted telephone system Anna is required to use to report a crime directs humour at police failure. Moments such as this are satirical because the humour mixes laughter with disdain for conditions. South African drama theorist Patrick Ebewo defines satire as: "a manner of ridiculing, decrying and denouncing unwanted behaviour in a bid to make people improve and amend their lives" (26). For Ebewo, this comic form is particularly effective in African societies where "shame culture deters people from doing what is wrong" (35). In the context of *Armed Response* police inadequacy is one of the nation's shortfalls under attack, laughable in its inefficiency but also contemptible because people like Anna rely on the police for safety.

At the same time that the police are ridiculed, they are also shown to be tragically underfunded. The police inspector Anna meets to discuss her home invasion initially apologizes that he will not be able to meet with Anna and Brenda due to the large volume of answering machine messages he has to listen to from the night before (193). This suggests that a lack of adequate staffing exacerbates the crisis of Johannesburg's high crime rate, encouraging the audience to sympathize with the target of ridicule, the police inspector. Agreeing with Anna's criticism, the officer admits that the job is killing him (194). Furthermore, the inspector reiterates the inadequacy of the police station to deal with crime by outlining the limited resources at hand: "You call this a station? An old computer, fucked up car, three cops on a bullshit salary and a building that smells of piss" (194). In light of such inadequate resources, the inspector's efforts

are admirable. He seems to have a genuine desire to help people, but ultimately fails because of a lack of support. The police inspector has no means of protecting even himself from crime and, as a result, has become corrupt in order to sustain himself and ensure his safety. Like others in the play, he is also protected by Armed Response (195). Asking Anna for a bribe – helping him secure a position as “Professor of Security Studies at Berlin University” – is both disgraceful, but also understandable given his current condition (195). For him, a lack of funding undermines his desire to police: “Lady, if this was Germany, I’d have a decent salary. Be driving a Mercedes police car with leather seats, air-con, Global Positioning Satellite system – It’d be a pleasure to come out and help you!” (195). The inspector’s response suggests that under-funding prevents him from successfully doing his job, lightening the audience’s ridicule of his failures because they begin to believe he is doing his best under the circumstances.⁵²

Although the police inspector fails at the climax of the play, falsely arresting Vusi for the murder of Themba, by the conclusion both Anna and the audience realize Armed Response agents are the true criminals perpetrating the majority of crimes. Unable to arrest those who protect him (195), the inspector is part of the self-perpetuating system of fear and private security that Anna tries to avoid. However, while most of the other characters maintain the same psychological state throughout the play, only Anna and Vusi’s perspectives are altered. She becomes corrupted by the system she tries to resist, whereas he begins to see himself as part of the problem and tries to help Anna at the end (198). For Sichel, Anna transitions from a “caring visitor” to “an emotionally shattered pawn in a vicious game” (“Extreme” 3). Highlighting the

⁵² The officer’s fight against insurmountable odds is endearing. While he lacks the resources to protect citizens in Johannesburg, he has taken to crossing names off in a phone directory so that at least his supervisor can have monthly updates, and the phone company a current list of customers (194). Furthermore, while he may not be able to respond to a majority of the cases that cross his desk, the inspector makes a concerted effort to listen to every emergency phone call that arrives at his station (193). These actions indicate he cares about his job and is not corrupted in the same way as characters working for Armed Response.

various ways that she has become corrupted, Peimer and Griller indicate that even outsiders can become jaded when they enter a landscape dominated by violence. The play concludes with Anna refusing to risk her own freedom to protect Vusi, who risks his safety by revealing Armed Response's strategies of coercion (208). Anna's decision indicates she is now a part of the system, rather than its opponent. Her abandonment of Vusi at the conclusion suggests that while Vusi is able to shift his thinking and see his own involvement in perpetuating crime, Johannesburg's criminality will kill or silence anyone trying to escape or oppose it.

The Bells and *Armed Response* offer divergent perspectives on how to address the legacy of state-sanctioned violence. *The Bells* presents an optimistic view wherein changing perspectives can help move victim and perpetrator closer together. The play shows exile aids this process by formulating new perspectives on victim and perpetrator. Gallows humour functions as a coping mechanism in this instance, helping to sustain victims of violence until reconciliation or healing can be achieved at a later point. Opposing *The Bells*'s optimism, *Armed Response* suggests apartheid violence is too deeply embedded to be readily dismantled. The lucrative contracts sustained through coercion, fear, and paranoia, mean the police state has carried on after apartheid. Although outsiders such as Anna offer new perspectives on systemic fears, ultimately the system changes her perspective because she is unable to detect the true threat to her safety. In this sense the play ends on a negative note, as paranoia and home invasions remain the norm. Seeing differently ultimately fails, but laughter remains a strategy to break stereotypes and encourage audiences to challenge their own internal prejudices. While neither play offers a clear path forward to resolve the legacy of violence, perhaps this is intentional. Such a broad crisis cannot be solved with one tool or mechanism, but through multiple approaches including further efforts at reconciliation, curtailing corruption, and better inter-ethnic communication.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

Dramatic Criticism beyond the Second Interregnum: Questioning the Limits of the Nation

Summary of Major Themes

As this dissertation demonstrates, South Africa's second interregnum was a period of continual flux, a time when the nation faced serious challenges around integration, stabilization, and redistribution – of land, wealth, and political power. Mandela and his cabinet's leadership filled people with hope at the time of independence, and yet as the broad criticism contained in these plays suggests, many promises remained unfulfilled. Plays such as *MacBeki* and *Happy Natives* clearly indicate that while there was a burgeoning middle and upper class of educated black South Africans, the majority of those economically oppressed during apartheid continued to suffer. A similar critique appears in *To House* when we discover the academic article Sibusiso wants to co-write with Professor Hamilton, rather than with Sanjay, is a document outlining the living conditions of squatters encamped near Oaklands (97). While at points in the play Sibusiso seems concerned with the well-being of the inhabitants squatting in Parklands Road (93-4), his quest for power over the suburb leads one to wonder whether his interest in this community is also self-serving. As with other characters in the play, the outward appearance he projects to the community is often false, making actual views on the impoverished community difficult to surmise. What we do know for certain is that he blames their presence on government failure to deliver on promises (97).

Sibusiso's hidden opinions reflect the broader trends in this dissertation because many of the plays highlight contradictions between people's outward appearances, and inner beliefs. *To*

House engages this theme most directly; but works such as *Reach*, *Happy Natives*, and *Armed Response* also illustrate ways that hidden racial or gender prejudices divide the nation. Racism in these works often remains concealed, typically budding during moments of stress or anxiety. As Singh explains in his “Playwright’s Note” at the outset of *To House*, “People of all races, particularly those in power, present a false image in the media and reflect their true fears and prejudices in their living rooms” (88). Coming to terms with this reality is essential if mindsets are to be changed. In plays such as *Crush-hopper* this also means confronting the prejudices one has withheld from their own consciousness. Seeing Haarhoff’s personal negation of identity exposes how painful, and deeply entrenched, racism is. While Singh, Coetzee, Foot Newton, and Peimer and Griller highlight the prejudices that existed in the nation’s living rooms, Haarhoff shows how such pathological thinking also divides the very minds of citizens.

The foregrounding of racism in these plays is part of a larger crisis facing the post-apartheid state: the need to continue striving for reconciliation and equality between all groups. Reconciliation is a prominent theme in second interregnum drama because of the unfinished work of the TRC. While the Truth Commission played an integral role enacting reconciliation throughout the country and documenting violent histories, it was impossible for the process to incorporate all citizens within its parameters. Although it constituted a massive undertaking, it accounted for very little. Second interregnum drama such as *Reach*, *Nothing but the Truth*, and *The Return* highlight the unfinished processes of the TRC, particularly in terms of dealing with the inter-cultural and inter-generational conflicts created by apartheid. Furthermore, as *The Return* and *The Bells* illustrate, exile created broad divisions within families and communities and this damage has only begun to be addressed in the first twenty years of independence. As exiles, or their children, return home for visits with family or to start a new life, new forms of

reconciliation will occur between biological relations or individuals and society. Drama can help these processes by presenting audiences with less visible forms of reconciliation that sat outside the TRC's mandate or temporal limit.

The trend in second interregnum drama to focus on personal forms of reconciliation in the private sphere also raises awareness of women's roles in the struggle against apartheid and the kinds of trauma they endured as a result. Such works break silences and open up new perspectives on anti-apartheid actions by veering away from heroically depicting freedom fighters and questioning what was lost or sacrificed in the collective struggle to achieve freedom. The emphasis on personal narratives and an exploration of the new domestic space – one no longer infiltrated by the state and its agents on a daily basis – marks a turn away from apartheid-era plays that sought collective opposition to apartheid. The continuing prevalence of sexism (Kruger, "So What's New?" 46), and high rates of sexual violence after independence (Moffett 129), mean drama will continue calling for further gender equality in the future.

The significant contribution from women in this dissertation, comprising five out of the ten playwrights, highlights the prominence of women's writing during these years. This is an important change because theatre scholar Kathy Perkins records that in the nineteen-nineties there were "limited opportunities for black South African women playwrights and performers" (2). She goes on to note that white and black male playwrights made up the majority of published works (2). While the scarcity of black women playwrights in this dissertation reflects a continuing absence of black women's voices in published drama, a trend outlined by both Perkins and Kruger during Mandela's presidency (2; "So What's New?" 53), the body of work from women playwrights in this project suggests some progress is being made towards

rebalancing publication opportunities between genders. However, further effort is needed to balance contributions along race and gender lines simultaneously.

Another notable trend in this dissertation is the silence surrounding the economically disadvantaged. Aside from *Prudence or Solomon*, none of the plays directly portray the personal lives of the poor. The statistics that Schiller provides in Chapter II clearly indicate economic divisions were growing, but while most of the plays contemplate this reality, there are few examples of truly destitute characters having a voice. The squatter communities on the fringes of Oakland in *To House* and Woodlands in *Happy Natives* serve only as backdrops to the tension between newly empowered blacks and white men economically or politically in decline. In *MacBeki* the poor appear as a collective mass, overthrowing the despot in unison. While Uys does provide a few passages from one of the people ousting MacBeki, the play fails to give the character any depth (81-2). It is interesting that playwrights like Singh pointed out there was “an increasing shift towards a class-based conflict” during this period, because the voices of the poor remain largely absent throughout the plays in this project (“To House” 88). Perhaps audiences became desensitized to humanist approaches that, like Fugard’s apartheid-era works *Nongogo* (1993) and *Boesman and Lena* (1974), focus intimately on the indigenous community’s experiences of economic hardship.⁵³ Or perhaps the relegation of the poor to the background of these works places emphasis on groups that need to change their thinking in order to alter conditions – such as white apartheid beneficiaries and newly empowered, and in some cases corrupt, black politicians. This latter position seems more likely as the cost of attending performances in theatres financially excludes many lower-class South Africans, as Graver illustrates in an example from the 1994 National Arts Festival (103).

⁵³ *Nongogo* premiered in 1959 (56) and *Boesman and Lena* debuted in 1969 (166).

The closest the plays in this dissertation come to portraying personal experiences of poverty is Solomon in *Reach*. And while the play offers glimpses into the social and political systems perpetuating black economic apartheid in South Africa, the conclusion is vague about how these systems can be broken down. After developing a mother and son relationship with Marion, Solomon disappears abruptly only to return and announce he has secured a job. But his success is exceptional in an economy with a high rate of unemployment. So while *Reach* succeeds in outlining the conditions that sustained economic imbalances, it could have gone further by raising debates concerning tangible solutions to this crisis. Notably, the play from this period that perhaps tackles this challenge most directly, Omphile Molusi's *Itso seng* (2008), also ends at an impasse. The protagonist's inability to escape the cycle of poverty trapping him leads him to return home to his township life. As a work that "revives the witnessing strategies of the past," *Itso seng* deploys "techniques associated with protest theatre" in an effort to spur audiences into action (Flockemann, "The Road" 164). But precisely what actions are necessary remain less clear; like *Reach*, *Itso seng*'s protagonist is saved from destitution by fortuitously finding a job (51). So while second interregnum drama regularly highlights economic inequality, the collection of plays analyzed here demonstrates concrete resolutions are scarce.

Lastly, the frequent appearance of violence or fear of crime in these plays presents one of the biggest factors curtailing a collective national spirit from emerging. Bremner suitably ends her article on crime and spatial divisions in Johannesburg by outlining two possible futures for the city: one where "visionary leaders [...] instil new public values to which all can aspire and so overcome the divisions of the past," and the other a landscape transformed "into a conglomeration of different and often (but not necessarily) hostile worlds, developing along different lines" (63). While the former is preferable to the latter, she concludes by stating

examples from other countries suggest the second outcome is more likely (63). As producers of culture, playwrights can help to create new public values and break down divisions in Johannesburg's urban landscape.

Beyond using drama to model new social codes in a changing society, the actual location of theatres in Johannesburg may oppose the formation of regional ghettos that Bremner's second outcome forewarns. Theatres such as The Market in Newtown district are situated in areas where urban renewal projects are underway. Its location, "in the space between white and black, affluent and poor, urbane and geopathological" (Kruger, "Theatre" 227), raises hope that it will continue to encourage mixing between people of different classes and races in a city where borders between neighbourhoods are closing down owing to fears of violence and theft. While Kruger is sceptical of this possibility, arguing many of the city's urban theatres have either disappeared or moved to more affluent areas associated with safety, The Market continues to operate fifteen years after she predicted its ability "to survive and revive the inner city seems doubtful" ("Theatre" 229). This is not to say The Market will succeed, but rather that the future of districts such as Newtown remain uncertain as long as theatres and museums remain open and continue to draw local and international audiences, exhibits, conferences, and performances into inner-city areas.

Curtailing violence and the criminality that frequently accompanies it is essential to prevent South African society from increasingly being "fractured into a myriad of exclusive, hostile, intersecting or conflated circles" (Bremner 63). As Chapter V shows, violence and criminality negatively impact all citizens either by inflicting violence on innocent bystanders, or by sustaining systems that result in perpetrators becoming victims themselves. This crisis is exacerbated by government and police corruption as state employees become criminals. It is

extremely telling that the second interregnum's biggest performance of national unity, South Africa's hosting of the 2010 Soccer World Cup, has been darkened by rumours of corruption in recent months. A similar kind of national performance of unity to the 1995 Rugby World Cup, the 2010 soccer championship illustrated to the world that South Africans could work together to organize and host an event of global significance. However, as this scandal plays out there is a danger the 2010 World Cup's legacy may be one of underhanded dealings instead of the celebration of unity it was meant to be. This state of affairs resembles the warnings put forward by *MacBeki* and *The Bells* that corruption posed a direct threat to national unity in this period.

The Role of Humour beyond Apartheid

The plays in this dissertation reveal the important ways humour intersected with political critique in the second interregnum. Moments of laughter played off of the contradictions between unrealistic nationalist visions and a jaundiced material reality. Humour allowed the nation to be criticized without necessarily derailing the goal of nation-building. This is not to say that laughter was universally inclusive, but rather that it played a key role in helping people view the nation, and its diverse citizenry, from new perspectives. Importantly, none of the humour theories or theorists used in this project argues humour occurs solely for amusement. While entertainment may be one element of a comic exchange, it is by no means its sum. Moreover, the various types of humour here signal the complex, and multivalent ways humour and laughter operated in drama from this period.

The various types of humour in this dissertation make it difficult to develop an overarching theory of humour and its use in South African drama. At times humour appears as a

subversive strategy to hold politicians accountable in plays like *MacBeki* or the concluding section of *The Bells*, whereas in other instances humour participates in national efforts to unify the citizenry by producing collective laughter around experiences of cultural exchange, such as in *Reach. To House* and *Crush-hopper* also reveal the contradictory uses of humour amongst ethnic minorities because Singh's self-deprecating humour reflects the South African Indian community's movement away from colonial-era stereotypes and a static construction of identity, whereas humour in Haarhoff's play maintains specific ethnic divisions in order to construct a defined sense of colouredness. As these brief examples indicate, humour in drama from this period was interventionist, but may not always have been subversive. In some cases humour may have helped to maintain the status quo by sustaining clear boundaries, particularly between ethnic identities.

The study of humour is challenging because it opens up a plethora of different meanings depending on the recipient. As Reichl and Stein explain, "Whether we read laughter or humour in a particular text as subversive or not, in fact, whether we identify it as laughter or humour in the first place, is largely a consequence of the way we read, the way we understand postcolonial literatures, and the way in which we know and view the world" (12). As this quotation articulates, the recipient of humour occupies an important role in registering, and interpreting, a comic event. In some instances this dissertation draws on critical reviews to address the challenge of isolating, and explaining, instances of humour. Whereas in other cases humour theories help identify places where playwrights have set up moments of humour in their plays. In rare examples such as *MacBeki*, Uys's introduction outlines the target of his satire, his reasons for writing the play, and even helps to theorize the humour therein.

In all cases this project's examples of humour are interpreted alongside the social or political criticism occurring in the plays. As a result, humour was generally found to highlight, and nuance, the crises affecting post-apartheid South Africa. There are exceptions to this, as one might expect, but the overall veiled criticism or protest embedded in these plays' humour lead to the conclusion that laughter and humour play important roles during times of social upheaval. This stance is also held by Feurle, who wrote in 2005: "the last decade and the horror of the State of Emergency [...] meant a lot of accumulated psychological stress and tension" built up (280). Moving beyond apartheid, she argues *Madam & Eve* provides comic relief for South Africans by "helping people to get rid of emotional strain" (280), but also breaks taboos around uncomfortable subject matter (282) and addresses contradictions between "words and reality" (280). The clever and varied deployments of humour in South Africa's postcolonial period make it a fruitful, and necessary, area for future research. In an interview with Jamal in 2000, writer and actor Peter Hayes posited the challenge for future South African theatre was to "provide work that makes people laugh while challenging perceptions and attitudes" (Jamal, "Stagings" 207). As this project illustrates, drama seems to be making precisely such a change. Humour appears in these works as a catalyst to spur debates, and reflection, on where the country has come from, where it sits, and where it is headed beyond the immediate challenges relating to identity, class, gender, and violence in the present.

Areas for Future Research

Mandela's passing has not brought an immediate change to South African drama. Instead, his burial perhaps signals the beginning of a change. It is extremely telling that, in the year

immediately following the second interregnum, the 2015 National Arts Festival declared a genre, satire, as its artist of the year (National Arts Festival 15). As the programme explains, the festival organizers wanted to recognize satirists as “a pillar of a critical and free society” and people who celebrate “the right for free and fair expression as enshrined in the South African constitution” (15). The major focus on satire at this year’s National Arts Festival extended to Uys as well, who was awarded Featured Arts Icon of the Year (72). His image, as *Evita*, appears on the programme’s cover next to a passage from Section 16 of South Africa’s Constitution, which protects the right to freedom of expression and artistic creativity. As the heavy emphasis on satire and freedom of speech at the 2015 festival indicates, South African drama’s long history of critical intervention carries on after the second interregnum. This being the case, the programme notes that satirists appear to be increasingly under-threat in modern times. References to the terrorist attack on *Charlie Hebdo* in France and a presentation at the festival from Dario Milo, cartoonist Zapiro’s legal defence when Zuma sued him for defamation over an image printed in the *Sunday Times*, illustrate the kinds of dangers satirists face critiquing religion and politics (15). However, shows like Homann and Ralph Lawson’s *A Voice I Cannot Silence*, a “wryly amusing” play about Alan Paton’s life, and James Cairns, et al.’s *Three Blind Mice*, an “Orwellian take on corruption in the South African Police Service,” illustrate many satirists remain undaunted by economic or legal threats (National Arts Festival 76-7).

While satire remains a key genre for voicing criticism in South Africa, the increasingly international debuts of works may shift their messages and themes to ones of global significance. The opening up of South Africa’s borders has made travel more accessible for many playwrights and troupes. And as works and playwrights travel more frequently they will be influenced, and influence, other productions from other regions. The large number of plays released or travelling

abroad gestures toward the global interest in South African drama, and the desire for directors and playwrights to take shows outside the country. Three of the plays in this project, *Happy Natives*, *Reach*, and *The Bells*, even debuted internationally before appearing on local stages in South Africa. The reasons for this trend are varied, but financial stability, interest in depicting South Africa beyond colonial or apartheid stereotypes, and a desire to participate in new global cultural exchanges are some of the justifications that appear in this dissertation.

Another aspect of this globalizing trend is the questions it raises regarding what defines South African experience, or cultural production. Plays such as *The Bells* broach these issues by illustrating ways that imagined communities may sustain an exile's ties with a homeland. But, at the same time, the play also shows how out of touch and inaccurate such connections can be. The play's staging abroad with Dutch and South African actors further challenges what one labels as South African drama. The themes are South African but the staging was seen as catering to international audiences, a point raised by critics such as Hollands (4). The nation's borders will become more and more porous as transportation and communication technology continues to develop, further challenging the very limits of the nation. As Brenda, Vusi, and Lerato's views of Hillbrow in *Armed Response* indicate, flows of people in and out of the city are changing the demographics, and everyday experiences, of some of Johannesburg's densely populated urban districts.

The increasing movement of people across South Africa's borders means the crises this project labels as national in scope can also have an international impact. Events such as the 2015 xenophobic killings of migrant workers in South Africa exemplify how high rates of domestic unemployment and spiralling crime can become international emergencies. The outpouring of criticism from other African nations over the killing of migrant workers, especially Zimbabwe,

also illustrate the fine line South Africa walks between creating a pro-nationalist sentiment and maintaining ties with neighbouring nations. Drama like *The Bells* or *Nothing but the Truth*, which reflect experiences of exile, may be replaced by plays that focus on outsiders' experiences exploring, and integrating, into South Africa. *Armed Response* takes up this strategy, but greater emphasis on the positive cross-cultural exchanges that come from international or transnational exchanges is needed to oppose groups that view migrant workers as direct threats to personal safety and economic security. One such example of this is Uys's *African Times*, which debuted at the 2015 National Arts Festival. The play directly addresses the recent xenophobic killings by depicting a futuristic dystopia where South African fears of migrants have created a police state reminiscent of apartheid. The play's numerous references to Mandela's life encourage audiences to consider political changes over the past two decades, but also remind us that prominent figures such as Graça Machel are also members of the nation's migrant community (67-8).

As one of the key modes of political and social criticism, South African drama will continue to build hope for progress while also operating as a key site of cultural, gender, and ethnic collision. It is clear that the euphoria of the early post-apartheid years has passed, but as the plays in this collection indicate, hope for a unified future still bonds characters. And humour helps in this process by chiding shortfalls, coping with anxieties or feelings of discomfort, but also taking some of the edge off of the seriousness of crises in the post-colony. Future plays will likely have to contend with greater economic disparity, faster and more frequent connection to international markets and resources, and a citizenry that is growing more frustrated with government failures to deliver on promises, and services. References to load shedding in Uys's recent play *Rare and Protected* (2015) exemplify the frustration people feel towards Eskom and its ability to supply electricity to South Africans (9). But more importantly, the work foregrounds

the need to balance modernisation with protecting the natural habitat. While service delivery is needed, especially in rural areas, the play traces what natural resources will be lost if proper planning is not implemented. The elderly protagonist's suicide at the play's conclusion allows her son to go ahead with a ruthless development scheme, suggesting the two competing positions may be impossible to balance (115). Tracing prominent challenges to come, South African drama is a key medium to explore ideas, foster dialogue, and propose resolutions to complex and shifting social and political circumstances. For these reasons drama will continue to remain an important field of scholarship for South African researchers studying the state of the nation and the diverse views held by members from different gender, ethnic, and class positions therein.

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