

SYNOPSIS

Set in the late nineteenth century, Knysna Forest is home to wild elephants and the fiercely independent families of woodcutters, who have coexisted warily but, for the most part peacefully, for generations. Now their future, and the destiny of the forest itself, is threatened by the exploitative greed of the timber merchants and ivory hunters, and the rumours of gold in the far reaches of the Forest's rivers.

Saul Barnard, son of woodcutter Joram Barnard, stands on the deck of the ship called the 'Pictor'. There is urgency in him. Once they have set sail he would be free of everything he had once cared for; the forest, Kate, Old Foot. Behind him, 29 years would die. While still in the harbour the wrinkled Outiniqua – Maska-brought him the news that his brother's son had been gored by an elephant – Old Foot- and that Fred Terblans was going to shoot him. A special relationship existed between Saul and Old foot. He felt that he owed it to Old Foot to save him – the king of elephants – from the humiliation of falling to Terblanche's gun. If someone had to do it, it would have to be him. So with four days left before the ship would sail, Saul left the ship, borrowed a gun from Maska and headed back into the forest to look for his animal brother.

As Saul walked into the forest, it felt as if he was walking backwards into himself. He relives his past. He again remembers being fourteen; butchering the Gallhead, the cutting of the Kalandar, his experiences with Old Foot, Kate, the woodcutters and the wood buyer, Mac Donald, the discovery of Millwood and his years as a gold-digger. At the end, he has to face his fears, the forest, Kate, Old Foot... and come to terms with his past.



05.TEXT ANALYSIS OF '*CIRCLES IN A FOREST*'

5.1 UNIVERSAL STORY

‘Circles in a forest’ were chosen as text for this study as it is both a **South African** and a universal story. In South Africa it is generally wellknown and prescribed for high school language subjects. It presents a segment from the country’s industrial development and gives insight into the **history** of South Africa.

It tackles the ever relevant issue of man’s careless and **greed**-driven **destruction** of natural resources without considering future generations. Jooste, (1986, 3) describes ‘Circles in a Forest’ as a **timeless** story, so **human** that anyone can relate to it. It is a story about Man’s search for worth and **dignity**. It tells about the division between classes and the struggle towards social and economic justice and **equality**. ‘Circles in a Forest’ is also a story of **hope** and the **triumph** of an individual in the face of adversity.

‘Kringe in ‘n Bos’ has been **translated** into English, Portuguese, Dutch, French, Icelandic, Spanish, Hebrew, German, Swedish, Italian, Finnish and Norwegian. It is also available in Braille and on cassette for the visually impaired. Philo Pieterse Productions produced ‘Circles in a Forest’ as a feature film and the stage adaptation of ‘Kringe in ‘n Bos’ was done by Peet van Rensburg.

5.1.1 Relevant Issues

- Relationship between Man and his environment
- Natural resource dependency, exploitation, destruction & protection
- Discrimination, class struggle for social & economic equality
- Eco-fable relevant to architecture

5.2 THE MAIN THEME

5.2.1 The obliteration of nature

The destruction of the **Knysna Forest** and its **elephants** is one of the main themes of ‘Circles in a Forest’. Tracing history it is true that the demand for **wood** during the discovery of **gold** and **diamonds** in the 19th century contributed to the **demise** of parts of the Knysna Forest.

“Where Harrison or his men stopped them today, they felled tomorrow because the Government were putting pressure from the west for more and more wood for railway lines, wood for jetties, wood for harbours, wood for the mines, wood for making wagons that had to take man and his possessions north! Wood for tables, wood for chairs and cupboards and beds! Wood! Wood! Wood!” (Matthee, 1984, 109).

To the woodcutters, the forest was **home**. They believed it belonged to them and that they could **fell trees** and **shoot elephants** as they wished. Any attempt at nature **conservation** was met with severe **resistance**.

“Everybody was shooting, everybody was felling. Harrison’s control was not strict enough; where he warned them off today, they cut open the roof of the forest that should have protected the seedlings tomorrow. Or they shot the cows that should have calved in the spring. Harrison says, the way they’re felling now, there will be little more than fifty years left for the forest...How long for the elephants.” (Matthee, 1984, 109).

5.3 OTHER THEMES

5.3.1 Liberation & boundaries

*“At the age of 29 Saul Barnard had just one overwhelming need – to be free!
He wanted to be free of everything he had once cared for: the forest, the people of the forest, the things of the forest, Kate, Old Foot”* (Matthee, 1984, 13).

5.3.2 The truth versus the lie

“To believe a lie is to betray yourself.To walk past the truth because the path of the untruth is well trodden is just the same. Let him then be guilty of everything, but not that!” (Matthee, 1984, 63).

5.3.3 The bond between human and nature (animal)

“...every time something happens, I find him somewhere in my way.The first time was when my mother died. In between, every time I’ve been in trouble.”

*“Then it is so”, he whispered in awe.
“Old Foot is watching you...”*

“You are the brother of the noblest Bigfoot that ever walked this Forest” (Matthee, 1984, 242).

5.3.4 Circles (circle of life)

Life is a **crooked circle**: *“the woodcutter killed the forest; the wood-buyer killed the woodcutter. Round and round you walked the crooked circle year in year out.The wood-buyer got richer and richer while the hands that held the axes had*

5.4 MILIEU (ENVIRONMENT)

5.4.1 The forest

Muffled, subdued, still, peaceful, dark

The forest is a **unifying** element that has a life-presence and becomes an **antagonist** in the story. The experience of the forest makes a strong onslaught on the **senses** and its **impenetrable** terrain is often made worse by natural elements such as **rain** and **mist**. Jooste, (1986, 3) describes the forest as having a unique, **secretive and mystic beauty**.

“Maska, you used to tell us that the spirits live in the trees” (1986, 240)

At the beginning of the 1800's the Knysna Forest was tremendous and **dense**. The Great Lourie, the Blue buck and the Kalander (Outeniqua yellowwood tree) are icons of the forest.

“...lay like a thick black wall around big island” (Matthee, 1984, 27)

“He would hide in the forest so that nobody would ever find him. Surely God could not have seen down into the forest from up in the sky, even the sun has to struggle to shine to the ground. Only specks of sunlight got through that roof of the tree tops” (Matthee, 1984, 47)

The forest was home to the woodcutters and their families

“By the time it was dark they were back in the forest. It was like a thick blanket closing around your body, warming you

no defence and neither had the forest” (Matthee, 1984, 108-109).

“Elephants have this primeval self-defence tactic to find out whether someone was following him or not. They walked in circles “round and round and round. At some time the elephant must catch up from behind” (Matthee, 1984, 183)

“Saul walks a circle back into his past. “Saul Barnard walks into the forest and it feels like walking backwards into himself” (Matthee, 1984, 1)

5.3.5 Superstitions & myths

Uttering the word ‘elephant’ was forbidden. *“You never say their name in the forest! They will hear you and think you are calling them. You called them ‘bigfeet’ or ‘thicklegs’ or Old people but never by their name”* (Matthee, 1984, 20)

“...the grown-ups taught you another thing about the blue buck: they were different from all the other buck in the forest because their gall was in their heads” (Matthee, 1984, 20)

This belief left Saul feeling uneasy. He looked for the gall in its head but found it in its usual place. *“Either the grown-ups had deliberately lied to him or they believed the lie themselves”* (Matthee, 1984, 40)

against the cold,” (Matthee, 1984, 61)

“They came to know the shrubs of the underbrush: which were medicine and which were not; which berries you could eat and which not.” (Matthee, 1984, 18)

The gold diggers were afraid of the forest

Patterson: *“I’m suffocating! This place is too close round me”* (Matthee, 1984, 147)

“It’s this forest that’s got us confused. It’s killing us. It’s different for you...you don’t hate the forest as we do.” (Matthee, 1984, 233)

“There were times when he really felt sorry for Patteson. It was the first time in his life that he had come across a man who feared the Forest like death itself” (Matthee, 1984, 149)

5.4.2 The woodcutters’ houses

“In some places there were natural openings in the forest like Big Island and there you could find 3-4 families living in makeshift homes of wood and corrugated iron sheets... The grey timber walls are parched like deadwood, the roof sagging to the one side” (Matthee, 1984, 63)

“Woodcutters never made wonderful houses; when the forest became thinned out around them, they just moved to another clearing in the forest. Their houses like most had only two rooms. Old Anro had made himself a lean-to against the outside wall” (Matthee, 1984, 26). While cutting they lived in an almost **nomadic** fashion – moving from tree to tree. They built a shelter and a workplace

where they were cutting. Here they stayed until the wood was ready to be taken to town.

5.4.3 Cripple Bush

“...where diggers’ axes had hacked out everything to make space for the tents and houses, and to provide firewood.” (Matthee, 1984, 109)

5.4.4 Old Foot

“The great terror that walked the forest: the elephant” (Matthee, 1984, 20)

“Where the huge thick tusks bulged from their sockets at the side of his head, they were smooth like butter and yellow. The lower part right down to the rounded tip was stained greenish black at least a hundred pounds of ivory on each side of his head. Under the eye a wet patch stained the rough wrinkled skin dark.” (Matthee, 1984, 29&30)

“Something indescribably majestic about him...” (Matthee, 1984, 30)

5.4.5 Kalander

“...enormous”

“Standing with his feet almost in the water of the Homtini... The most beautiful... Towering above all other trees. Giant roots anchored it to the ground like giant arms. Grey bark hung like dry strips of skin”

“The old man’s beard, moss in its branches hung like thin green hair, waving eerily in the wind.” (Matthee, 1984, 74)

5.4.6 Going to the village

Saul was 14 years old when he first saw Knysna village.

“And nobody ever told him that the village was not in the forest.” (Matthee, 1984, 53)

“They came out of the forest on the eastern side of the town. One moment the forest was still around and above them, the next moment it started thinning out, getting lighter...more sun and then suddenly the world was lying open. Naked. Like someone without a hat. Without a roof. He wanted to turn round and run back to the shady shelter of the forest. The sun was hurting his eyes.” (Matthee, 1984, 54)

5.4.7 Knysna Town

“He stayed behind the wagon when they came to the first houses. Far apart to start with. Then closer together. Square and white, their roofs neatly made of thatch; on top of some houses, another house, with windows and all, was built. The gardens were lush and came right up to the street; there were flowers growing in them that he did not know existed. And the fear that was in him was not the same fear as for bigfeet, it was different, he was surrounded by it, he was in it.” (Matthee, 1984, 55)

5.4.8 Mac Donald’s wood yard and shed

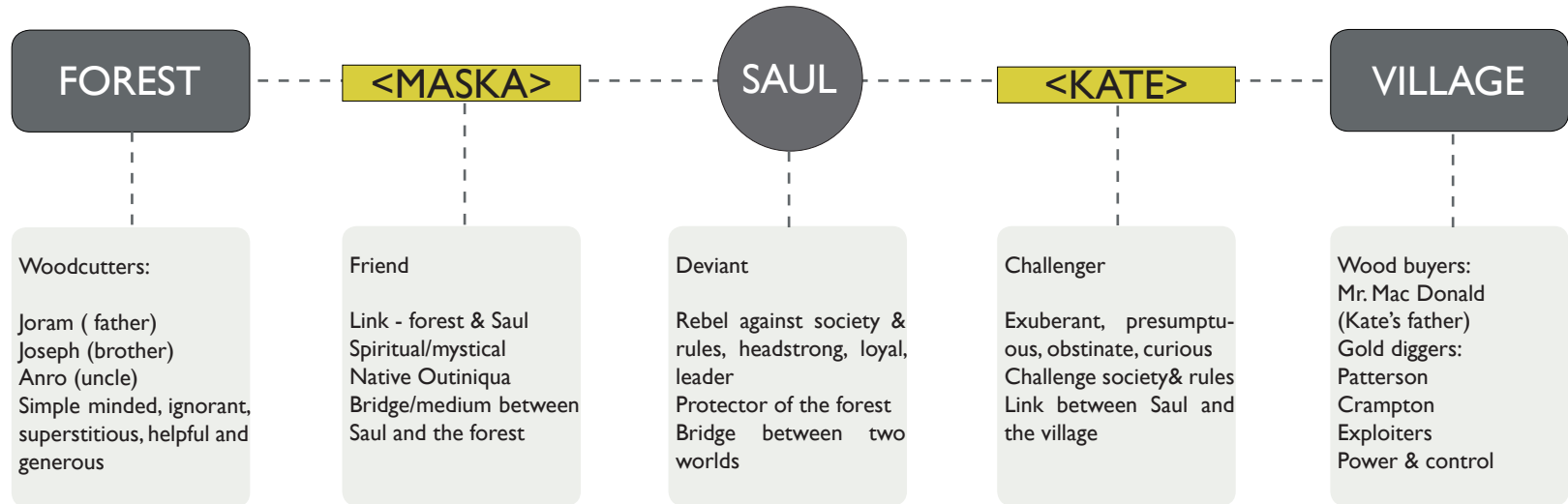
“...enormous. Wood was stacked up everywhere, wood wherever you looked! Mountains of wood. Next to a large shed men were loading some of the wood on other wagons...” (Matthee, 1984, 56)

5.4.9 The Pictor

“450 ton, three masted barque, sails furled, was lying on the starboard side of the wooden jetty” (Matthee, 1984, 11)



5.5 CHARACTERS



5.6 NARRATION & STORY TELLING

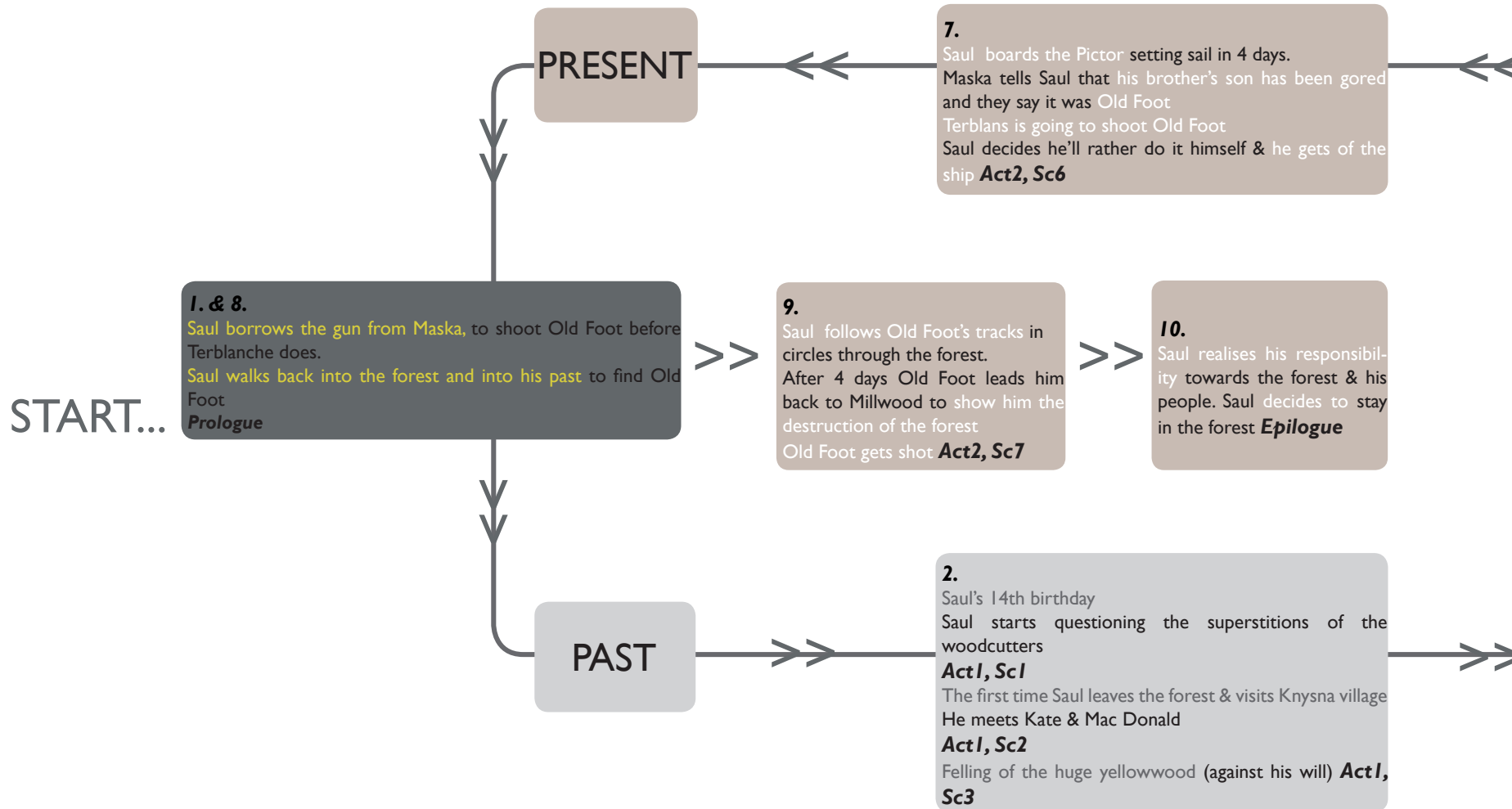
The story is told by a narrator in the third person but through the eyes of Saul. This allows the audience to associate and sympathize with Saul. The non-chronological order of the events and the story-line that weaves between the past and the present gives the audience the opportunity to discover the story.

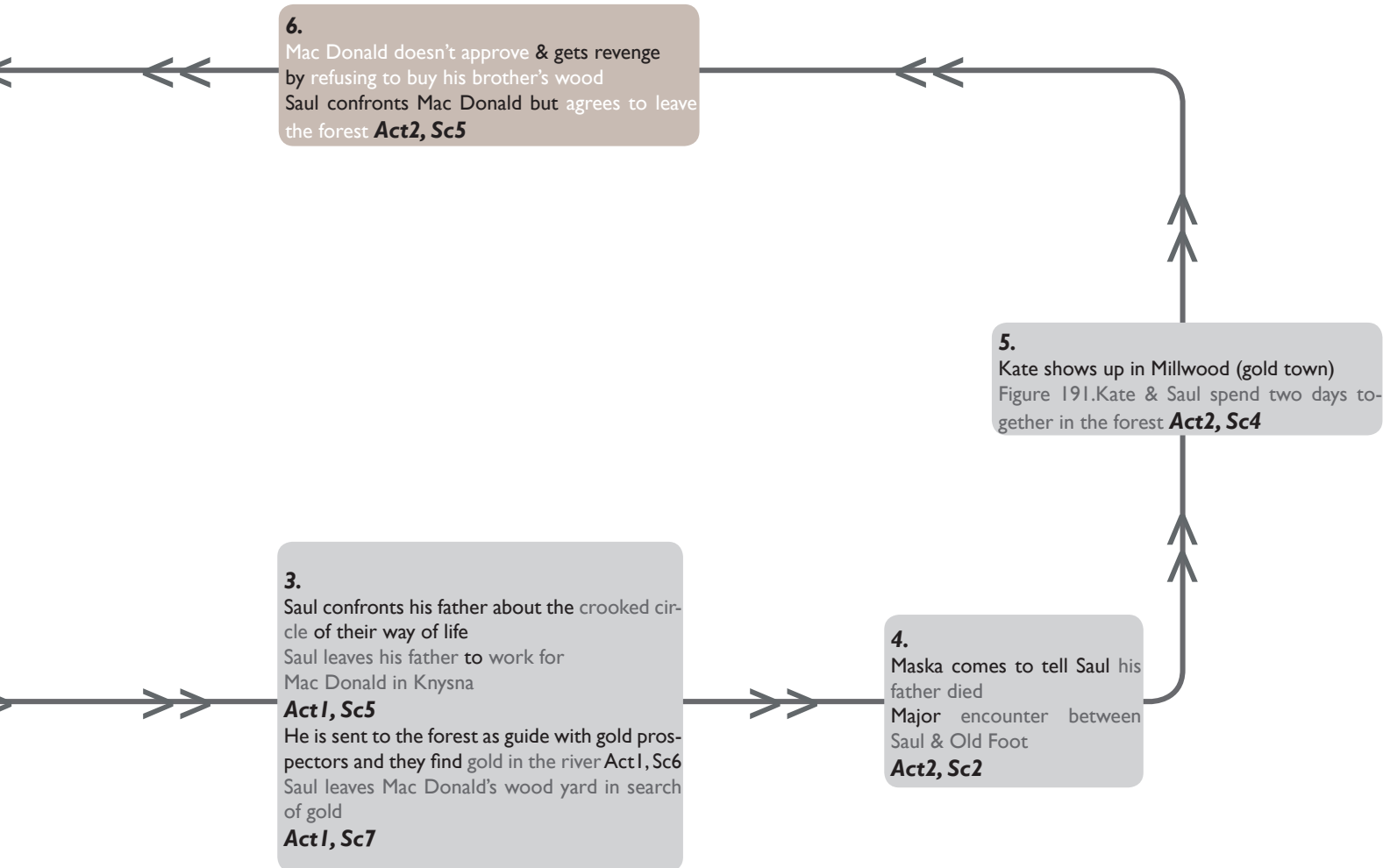
“Wherever there are people, the world over, there are tales...” (Savory, 1982, 171)

The stories of a 'People' is very much part of its life. Fables are told for the purpose of enforcing, or supporting, some point of family discipline, tribal custom or life-lesson. These rely on make-belief and elements of fantasy for their popularity – called magic realism (Gordon, 1995, 9). They uphold conduct that benefits society, individual character and the welfare of the community. They gain a great deal of their power from their skilful exploitation of language (Savory, 1982, 9).

This powerful tradition of the spoken word is called the oral tradition, and Africa is world famous for its rich storehouse of literature composed and handed down in this way (Gordon, 1995, 5).

5.7 STORYLINE_NOT CHRONOLOGICAL_BETWEEN PAST & PRESENT, FOREST & VILLAGE





5.8 STORYBOARD

5.7.1 PROLOGUE

Key events

Saul borrows the gun from Maska, to shoot Old Foot before Terblanche does Saul walks back into the forest and into his past to find Old Foot

Setting

Maska's scanty wooden house in a clearing in the forest
 Maska is sitting by a small fire on one side of the stage
 Saul walks up to him

Mood

Mystic and spiritual, then panic and urgency,

Lighting

Cool, soft and dappled with fine bright rays of violet & white light
 Gets more dappled & darker as Saul walks deeper into the forest
 Spotlight on Saul

Sound Effects

Birds and other forest sounds
 Footsteps - walking on stones
 Sound gets softer as Saul walks deeper into the forest
 Smoke effect at Maska's house

Figure 90. Maska's house (Author,2010).



Figure 91. Saul walking into the forest (Author,2010).



5.7.2 ACT I SCENE 1

Key events

Saul's 14th birthday.
Saul starts questioning the superstitions of the woodcutters

Setting

Cutting shelter.
Joram & Anro on stage. Saul comes in with food in his hands.

Mood

Celebratory , playful, confusion defiance, unease

Lighting

Warm, dappled, scattered white, sharp rays

Sound & Effects

Bird sounds, fire, chopping of tree

5.7.3 ACT I SCENE 2

Key events

The first time Saul leaves the forest to go to Knysna

Setting

Traveling through the forest with the wagon

Mood

Curiosity, excitement

Lighting

Gets whiter & brighter as they walk out of the forest

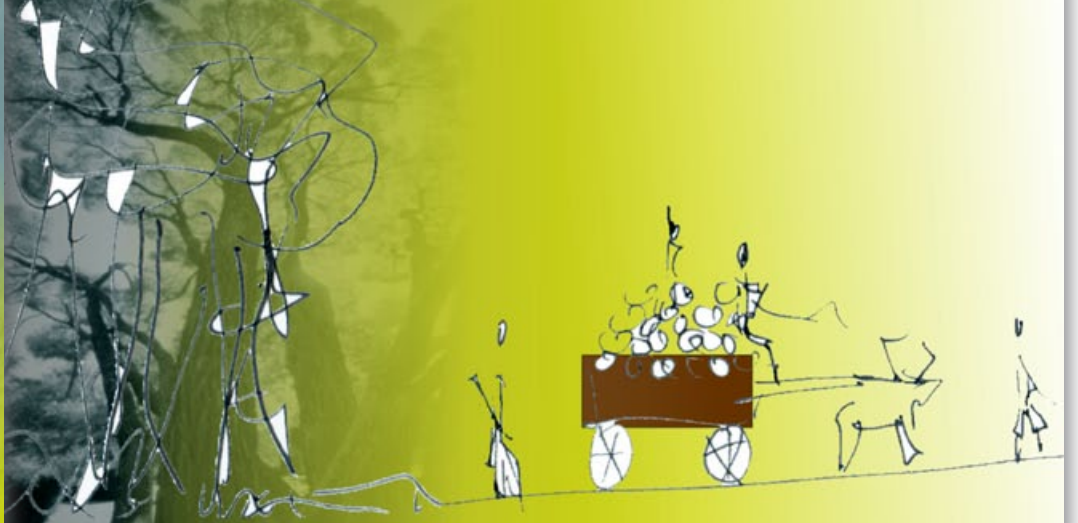
Sound & Effects

Forest sounds fade as they go further out of the forest

Figure 92. Saul & Joram talking about the Gallhead (Author,2010).



Figure 93. Going to the village (Author,2010).



5.7.3 ACT I SCENE 2

Key events

Saul meets Kate & Mac Donald for the first time

Setting

Knysna town

Mac Donald's wood yard & shed

Mood

Exploitation, intimidation & fear

Lighting

Harsh, bright, white & blue

Sound & Effects

Foghorn, distant waves, yard sounds, school bell & children.

Lighting

Light: softer, violet spot on Saul & Kate.

Figure 94. Mac Donald's wood yard & shed (Author,2010).

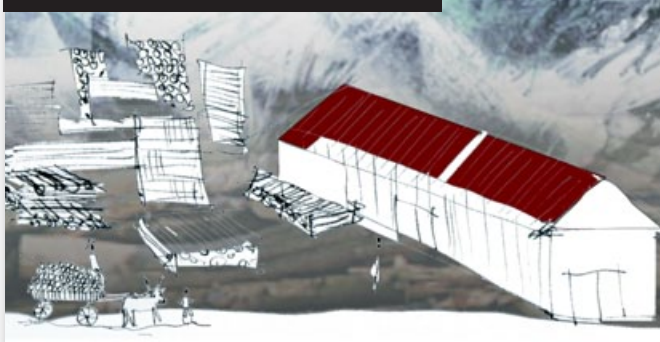


Figure 95. Saul & Kate meet at the wood yard (Author,2010).





Figure 96. Knysna Village (Author,2010).



Figure 97. Felling of the Kalandar tree (Author,2010).

5.7.4 ACT I SCENE 3

Key events

Felling of the huge yellowwood against Saul's will
 Saul raises his concern – that the tree feels
 Joram forces Saul to help cut down the tree
 The tree falls.
 They see signs of Old Foot's presence

Setting

Forest, walking through the under bush, big Kalandar tree, cutting shelter
 Night & daybreak

Mood

Anticipation, amazement, frustration, helplessness, anger & despair

Lighting

Warm amber & green, scattered white rays, dappled effect
 Fades and gets bluer and darker to show the day passing and turning into night
 Spot on tree

Sound Effects

Forest sounds, footsteps walking on forest floor, chopping of the tree, tree crashing to the ground.

5.7.5 ACT I SCENE 5

Key events

Saul confronts his father about the crooked circle of their way of life and the destruction of the forest
Saul leaves his father to work for Mac Donald in Knysna
Anro walks into Old Foot

Setting

Another cutting shelter

Mood

Conflict, tension & anger

Lighting

Dim, somber blue, grey and green with scattered white rays creating a dappled effect

Sound Effects

The far off sound of trees being felled and falling to the ground

Lighting

Harsh, bright, white & blue

Sound & Effects

Foghorn, distant waves & yard sounds

Figure 98. Saul leaving his father (Author,2010).



Figure 99. Saul at the wood yard to work for Mac Donald (Author,2010).



5.7.6 ACT 1 SCENE 6

Key events

Saul is sent to the forest as a guide for gold prospectors. They find gold in the river

Setting

Knysna town, Mac Donald 's wood yard and a stream in the forest

Mood

Curiosity & suspense

Lighting

Village - harsh, bright, blue & white

Forest - dappled blue, amber and white

Sound Effects

Village - Foghorn, waves, yard sounds

Forest - Birds & other forest sounds

Flowing water



Figure 100. Saul panning gold with the prospectors (Author,2010).

5.7.7 ACT 1 SCENE 7

Key events

Saul leaves Mac Donald's wood yard in search of gold

Setting

Knysna town, Mac Donald 's wood yard and a stream in the forest

Mood

Defiance, adventure, and excitement

Lighting

Village - harsh, bright, blue & white

Forest - dappled blue, amber and white

Sound Effects

Village - Foghorn, waves, yard sounds

Forest - Birds & other forest sounds

Flowing water



Figure 101. Saul panning independently (Author,2010).

5.7.8 ACT 2 SCENE 2

Key events

Maska comes to tell Saul his father has died

Saul comes across Oldfoot in the forest

Setting

A stream in the forest

Mood

Sorrowfull & solemn, owe & wonder

Lighting

Village - harsh, bright, blue & white

Forest - dappled blue ,amber and white

Gradually becomes darker & down lighting create somber shadows

Broad ray of light on Oldfoot

Sound & Effects

Forest - Birds & other forest sounds.

Flowing water



Figure 102. Maska telling Saul his father died (Author,2010).



Figure 103. Saul runs into Old Foot (Author,2010).

5.7.9 ACT 2 SCENE 3

Key events

Saul and Kate walks into each other in Millwood (gold town), She confronts him about being swept up in the gold rush and so contributing to the destruction of the forest

Setting

Millwood (gold town)

Mood

Unease, confrontation & frustration

Lighting

Village - harsh, bright, white & blue

Forest - dappled green, amber and white rays

Sound Effects

none



Figure 104. Kate shows up in Millwood (gold town) (Author,2010).

5.7.10 ACT 2 SCENE 4

Key events

Kate asks Saul to show her the forest as he sees it. They spend two days in the forest

Setting

Forest

Mood

Surreal & dreamlike

Lighting

Soft, dappled violet, amber & green – spot on Saul & Kate

Sound Effects

Birds & other forest sounds



Figure 105. Saul runs into Old Foot (Author,2010).

5.7.11 ACT 2 SCENE 5

Key events

Mac Donald doesn't approve of their friendship. He gets revenge by refusing to buy Joseph's, Saul's brother's, wood. Saul confronts Mac Donald but eventually he agrees to leave the forest

Setting

Mac Donald's wood yard

Mood

Tension, confrontation & anger

Lighting

harsh & bright, white & blue, red spot on Mac Donald

Sound & Effects

Foghorn, distant waves & yard sounds



Figure 106. Mac Donald refusing to buy Joseph's wood (Author,2010).

5.7.11 ACT 2 SCENE 6

Key events

Saul boards the 'Pictor', about to set sail in 4 days. Maska comes to tell him that his brother's son has been gored. They blame Old Foot and Terblanche is going to shoot the elephant. Saul decides he'll rather do it himself and gets off the ship

Setting

The deck of the Pictor

Mood

Serious, unsure & urgent

Lighting

Harsh & bright, white & blue

Sound & Effects

Foghorn, waves & seagulls



Figure 107. Saul on board the Pictor (Author,2010).

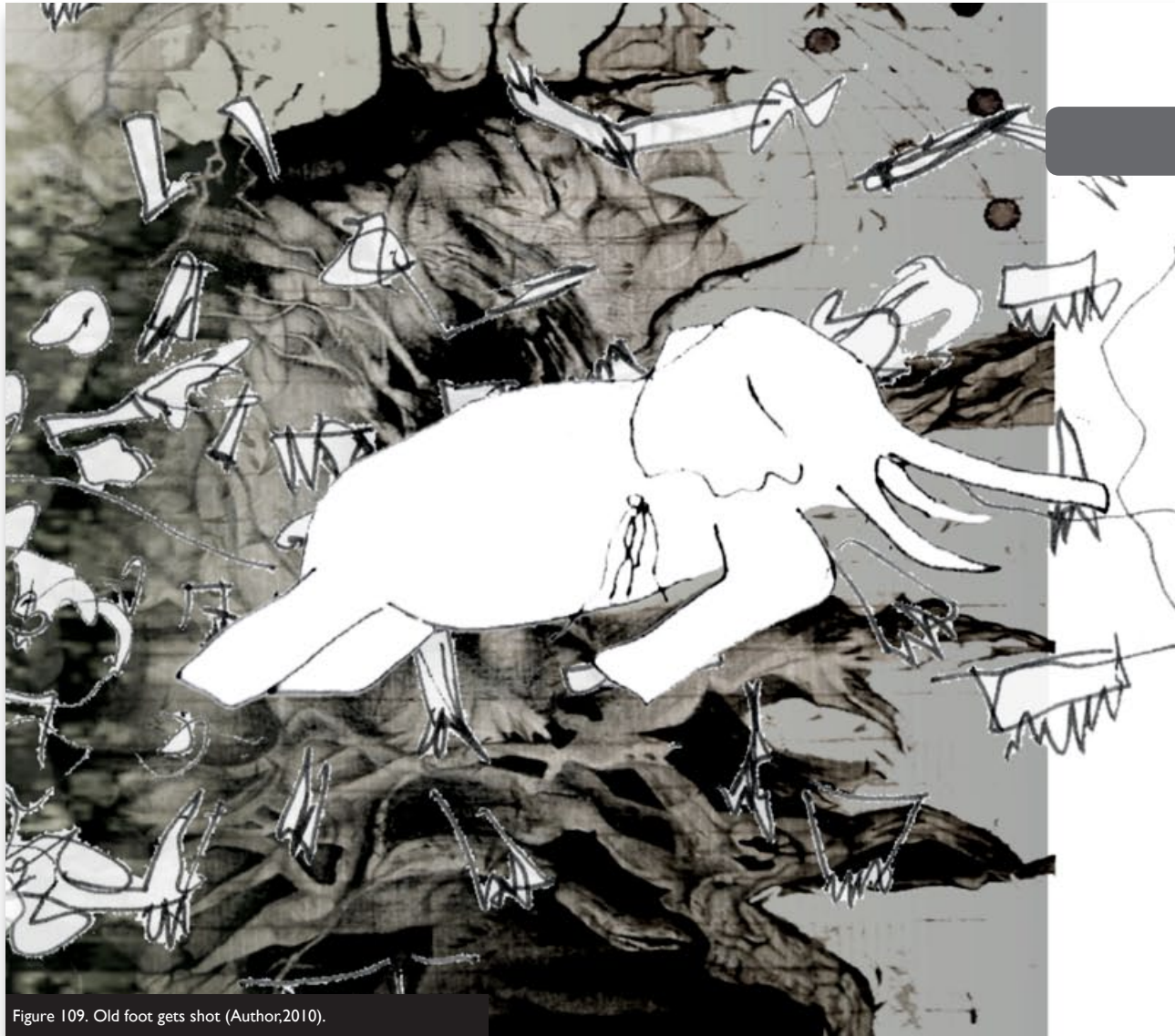
5.7.12 ACT 2 SCENE 7

Saul follows Old Foot's tracks in circles through the forest.

After 4 days Old Foot leads him back to Millwood and shows him the destruction of the forest.



Figure 108. Saul trekking Old Foot in circles through the forest
(Author, 2010).



5.7.13 ACT 2 SCENE 7

Old Foot gets shot by one of the gold diggers.

Figure 109. Old foot gets shot (Author,2010).



Figure 110. Saul & Kate decides to stay in the forest. (Author,2010).

EPILOGUE

Saul realises his responsibility towards the forest & his people.

Saul decide to stay in the forest.