

CHAPTER ONE – EXPLORING IDENTITY

1.1 IDENTIFYING SOUTH AFRICANS

In South Africa...the crisis of legitimacy has been replaced by a crisis of identity, which has allowed space for intense debate and the flowing of new creative works by those with their eyes fixed on the post-apartheid culture.

Liz Gunner (1994: 1)

1.1.1 Self as Body

In 2004, Anthony Sher wrote a play¹ about the life of Demetrios Tsafendas, the man who assassinated South African Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd in 1966². The play was called *I.D.*, a title which highlights the anxiety of both protagonist and antagonist, who were – each in their own way – obsessed by a search for identity. Verwoerd codified the system of apartheid as a thesis in the Department of Sociology at the University of Stellenbosch, and he was to spend his life labouring at the task of delineating the precise nature and means of sanctioning the schema he proposed. This was a process which resulted in a formidable structure around a very specific framing of identity in terms of race. As is well known, this despised system of identification lead to a great deal of anger, hatred, pride, jealousy and, ultimately, bloodshed. Eventually, it also lead to the isolation of the South African government from the international community.

Hendrik Verwoerd was not born in South Africa, and Sher suggests that it may have been because he felt himself to be an outsider that he became so obsessed with issues of identity. Demetrios Tsafendas was a mixture of Shangaan, Portuguese, German and Greek ancestry and he spent his life as a displaced person within Verwoerd's system, searching for a place where he might feel he belonged. He was repeatedly rejected

¹ For published plays, the date given is the date of publication. For plays that have not been published, the year given indicates when the work was first performed.

² *I.D.* premiered at the Almeida theatre in London in 2004, and was screened on SABC 3 on July 6 2004 at 22:00.

and ostracised from various communities as he floated uneasily between the cracks of the edifice designed by Verwoerd. The assassin lived in a liminal state, forever in-between, belonging nowhere, never at home. Sher's play suggests that eventually this dissatisfaction crystallised into a firm hatred for the man who had defined Tsafendas as nameless.

Sher's play highlights to what extent questions of identity overshadowed all other concerns of the Afrikaner Nationalist government. When Population Registration Act Number 30 was passed on 7 July, 1950, it stipulated that every inhabitant of South Africa be designated an identity by the "Office for Race Classification"; a classification which was to have far reaching consequences. One's capabilities were seen as determined by the description of one's physical characteristics, such as the texture and colour of one's hair, the size of one's lips, or the way in which a light shone from one's skin³. The question of identity was at the very foundation of the apartheid project and increasingly precise biological and sociological definitions of the population of the country were used not only to describe, but to control the population. In fact, this process might be seen as an apt metaphor for the way in which descriptions of identity are often a form of control exercised by the one formulating the definition.

It is still the case that some or other form of physical description remains the basis of the methods used to construct a legal identity. For example, records such as eye colour, fingerprints, voice, iris, height, scars, dental records and DNA are the forensic tools used to establish the proof of the identity of an individual body. This type of classification of an identity rests on what Paul Ricoeur (1991: 73) defines as "sameness

³ This included the infamous "pencil-in-the-hair-test" in which a pencil was stuck into a person's hair. If it did not fall out, because the curls were too tight, one might then be classified as coloured instead of white.

(Latin *idem...*). In other words, it defines the body as being itself. But the physical identification under apartheid was intent on defining a body not only as "itself", but, more importantly, as part of a collective. In this sense, the body was located and defined as being part of a particular narrative.

The story which apartheid told about the people of South Africa was about hierarchy. It provided a demeaning description of all races other than the so-called "white" race. Of course, many did not accept this story told by the state legislature, and yet, ironically, resistance to the narrative enforced by the laws of the land often became the very means used to shape a sense of identity. In other words, the racial identities themselves were not always challenged as much as the interpretation of the categories created. Much of the interest in the literature written during the apartheid era springs from the exploration of ways in which writers resisted the institutionalisation of their identity, and the ways in which they challenged the monolithic identity structures propagated by the state. And yet, the influence of the apartheid system's description of identity often remained the cornerstone of definitions of identity. This is an issue to which this thesis will repeatedly return – that in order to become free, it may be necessary to liberate ourselves not only from the identities imposed on us in the past, but from the ways in which those identities were structured. I would argue that the means of untangling the strictures of these identities lies in first addressing their creation as signs.

1.1.2 Self as Symbol

If one agrees that a person's identity is more firmly rooted in the ways in which he or she is contextualised in terms of a narrative structure, rather than in a substantive material "essence", then the question arises of which narratives to select out of the myriads of stories being told. As a source of identity, the physical body at least provides a coherent object of investigation which remains, more or less, stable. This is not, however, true of the ways in which the body can be interpreted. Besides defining identity as *idem* (sameness), Ricoeur also refers to identity as *ipse* "as self" (73).

[T]he self does not know itself immediately, but only indirectly, through the detour of cultural signs of all sorts, which articulate the self in symbolic mediations (80).

It is this second form of identity which is of primary interest to this thesis, and I will be examining a number of play texts as "cultural signs" mediating and articulating a semiology of identity. This is in line with current thinking that identities such as gender and race are not biological, but social constructions⁴. Still, the debilitating impact which the social construction of the apartheid identity had on the stories South Africans told about their senses of self is inextricable from the material consequences of the classifications introduced by the system.

But then the story changed. Due to a great many factors and forces – including the resistance movement within South Africa; the Communist insurgence on its borders; the country's increasing isolation by means of the sanctions and embargoes imposed on it; advances in mass media which helped to disseminate an awareness of

⁴ One example of many is laid out in the introduction by Natasha Distiller and Melissa Steyn to *Under Construction: 'Race' and Identity in South Africa Today* (2004: 1-11).

democracy as a norm; as well as any number of unquantifiable forces, such as change in perspective which may have been brought about due to transformations in religious or other ethical configurations – the nationalist government underwent a transformation in 1989 when it gave up resisting the African National Congress. It subsequently unbanned the party, and held a referendum on reform in 1991. According to this referendum, most of the white population of South Africa were sufficiently convinced that democracy provided a more tenable future, and they endorsed the first fully democratic elections held in 1994 which swept the ANC into power where it has remained until today.

This was an extraordinary turn-around. What is perhaps even more remarkable is that this transformation did not occur in isolation, but was similar to other revolutions across the world which occurred at the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century, such as the victory of the Solidarity movement in Poland; the fall of the Berlin wall; and the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union. What was noteworthy about all of these "velvet revolutions"⁵ was the purported transformation, or change in perspective of those in power. In other words, this was not simply the case of one group winning an outright war against those of a different persuasion and capturing their geographic territory. Instead, the terrain captured in these examples was ideological, and much of the impetus for change came from within the ruling governments themselves.

The dissolution of apartheid and the advent of democracy in South Africa created the opportunity for radical re-configurations of identity, and the transformation of structures of identification. The official semiotic description of identity ostensibly

⁵ The term "velvet revolution" was initially used to describe the Czech transformation which brought Vaclav Havel into power, though it is an apt metaphor for many of the other transformations which occurred at this time.

changed completely and South Africa's new constitution categorically outlaws discrimination in terms of race. It may, therefore, come as a surprise to find that fourteen years after "liberation", race still dominates many discussions of identity. For example, at the time of writing, every job application, student registration and request for funding in the arts demands a declaration of race. In many ways there has not been a transformation of descriptions of identity in racial terms, and it is the contention of this thesis that we urgently need to relinquish our desperate clinging to supposedly fixed categories of race, ethnicity, gender, and nationalism and begin to seek out new sources for our identifications.

1.1.3 Transforming Identities

Since the subject of identity is one which is of interest to a number of fields in the humanities, it would be unnecessarily limiting to confine my investigations to theories of literature and drama. Any attempt to come to terms with some of the ways in which the word is being employed today would have to take into account the relevance of the term to a range of disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, sociology and anthropology. I will consequently be taking a multi-disciplinary approach throughout this thesis.

Where many of these fields converge is in their interest in the transformation of identity. However, transformation has not always been considered in a positive light. For example, in the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle sought to distinguish between what he called "differentiae" and essence, claiming that

not every differentia precludes identity, since many different differentiae inhere in things specifically identical, though not in the substance of these nor essentially (1952: 97).

In referring to an essential quality which identifies any particular thing – as opposed to superficial "differentia" – Aristotle refers to a conception of identity which is unchanging. This is the same formulation of identity which Erika Fischer-Lichte notes in eighteenth century Europe. She shows how in *Letter to Monsieur d'Alembert* (1758), Jean-Jacques Rousseau refers to identity as a static concept, and notes that for him "change in identity is out of the question; change can only be experienced and lamented as a falsification of that which is authentic, as a loss of identity" (2002: 1). She goes on, however, to say that in the twentieth century a number of fields in the humanities, including philosophy and anthropology, have developed concepts of identity which "presume change". Fischer-Lichte goes as far as to say that today "without the potential to transgress certain boundaries and cancel out certain existing differences, identity seems almost an impossibility" (2). Similarly, Marvin Carlson draws attention to an essay by Clifford Geertz, called "Blurred Genres", in which Geertz writes that

traditional anthropological concerns with continuous traditions, singular and stable cultures, coherent structures, and stable identities has been largely replaced by a concept of identity and culture as constructed, relational, and in constant flux, with the porous or contested borders replacing centres as the focus of interest, because it is at these borders that meaning is continually being created and negotiated (in Carlson 2003: 206).

There appears to have been a shift in the description of identity. Instead of seeing identity as a product of a history of stable traditions and communal beliefs, it is today often described in terms of the boundaries of value systems. Instead of searching for stability as definitive of an identity, the search has shifted to areas of friction and instability. In *The Mysteries of Identity: A Theme in Modern Literature*, Robert Langbaum writes:

As a term in philosophy *identity* used to apply mainly to the unity of objects, especially through an expanse of time....The word did not take on its current psychological denotation, it did not begin to apply to self, until the unity of self became problematic (1977: 25).

Clearly, contemporary thinking is increasingly suspicious of notions of identity as unchanging and permanent. In South Africa in particular, since the 1994 transformation from a Christian Nationalist government there has been a constitutional shift away from the idea that a ruling party might be capable of representing god-given – and therefore essential – identity structures. And yet, this shift has also created a sense of dis-ease in the loss of clarity concerning the delineation of identities. Many, as I have already indicated, are still trying to hold on to the former categories, while others are trying to patch up a sense of fracture by positing an essential "free" individuality as the basis for a universal identity. Whatever the case may be, the "unity of self" in South African society is problematic, which is perhaps why the issue of identity has become such a prominent concern for so many.

This thesis hopes to examine representations of, and reactions to, the loss or lack of unity of self. I am interested in perceptions of identity in crisis and would also like to explore whether a perception of identity as unstable, uncertain and lacking unity should necessarily result in psychic calamity, or whether this instability might turn out to be an indication of an inherently transformative ability, which might even be regarded as a sign of health. In my investigations into play texts, I will certainly not be seeking to invent or discover a totalising conception of "the" quintessential South African identity⁶. The task of this thesis is not to seek out a new grand narrative

⁶ In trying to define identity in South African theatre, one is reminded of Pat Schwartz's comment about Athol Fugard, namely that he "believes that it is as impossible to categorise 'a South African theatre' as it is to categorise 'a South African'" (1988: 157).

under which to homogenise all heterogeneities, but rather to provide a glimpse into micro-narratives discerned within frameworks realised by some of the plays published during the period under investigation. I am particularly interested in those representations which not only depict transformation, but which are also transformative. These are plays which do not simply seek to represent identities, but to create them. They are plays which not only read culture, but write it.

1.1.4 A Deleuzian Vocabulary

In examining the transformation of identities, it may be useful to make use of Gilles Deleuze's description of definition in terms of lines which demarcate planes (1993: 226-230). These lines can be used to divide large collectives, such as different life-worlds (existing synchronically), as well as different roles within a single life-time (in terms of a diachronic description). On a more precise level, Deleuze describes molecular adjustments used to move lines of segregation, as well as "nomadic lines" which define the flight and flux of planes of identification as they territorialize and de-territorialize areas of influence. Since this thesis is most interested in descriptions of alterations in identity, it seems appropriate to turn, from time to time, to a Deleuzian vocabulary.

Of all Deleuze's innovations in description, the one which is possibly the most significant to this study is his distinction between "arboreal" and "rhizomatic" classification systems. As the name suggests, the "arboreal" relates to the structure of a tree, and in the arborescent schema "ordering is strictly hierarchical, from superior to subordinate" (Stagoll 2005:13). This represents a fairly fixed and static structure in which "lesser" ideas flow into and are supported by a central trunk. This is also the structure of a traditional thesis which begins by setting up variables which it then

consistently applies to specific instances. The trouble with this sort of schema, as Cliff Stagoll indicates, is that "thinking in such a way stifles creativity, leaves superior concepts relatively immune to criticism and tends to close one's mind to the dynamism, particularity and change that is evident in lived experience" (14). In contrast to this is the "rhizomatic" structure, related to the biological form of the rhizome, which is structured like a grass⁷, rather than a tree. Deleuze describes it as follows:

A rhizome as subterranean stem is absolutely different from roots and radicals...any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything else...this is very different from a tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order....A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles. A semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts... (1993: 29-30).

According to this description, there is still a causal relation in the rhizome between past and present understanding, even though this knowledge does not flow along a clearly discernible line. Whereas arborescent epistemological structures require a fixed origin, with a specific starting point and a linear branching out, the rhizome spreads in all directions simultaneously⁸. Deleuze goes on to expand his notion of the rhizome in terms of "multiplicities", saying that, "Multiplicities are rhizomatic....A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions" (30). Furthermore, Verena Conley says that the rhizome

is always a multiplicity; it has no genealogy; it could be taken from different contexts....The rhizome does away with hierarchies. It augments its valences

⁷ Verena Conley says that rhizomes can be compared to "pliable grasses...horizontal and flat" (2005: 234).

⁸ If one were to consider the creation of identities in terms of the metaphor of biological evolution, one might also here contrast structures relating to a ladder with those of a bush. Stephen Jay Gould refers to the first as *anagenesis*, whereas the rhizomatic model relates more closely to Gould's description of evolution as a "bush" characterised by "an elaborate and complex series" of events (1997: 63).

through hybrid connections that consist by virtue of addition, of one thing 'and' another. The rhizome operates in a space without boundaries and defies established categories such as binaries or points that would mark-off and be used to fix positions in extensive space. It ceaselessly connects and reconnects over fissures and gaps, deterritorialises and reterritorialises itself at once (2005: 233).

One way in which a multiplicity can be interpreted is as a unity which contains different parts, such as a wasp and an orchid, which together create an interdependent structure, though one would never be in danger of mistaking the wasp for the orchid. In the same way a posited "national" identity is a type of multiplicity, and yet one would not say that all "South Africans" are the same, as the popular SABC 1 jingle would encourage one to believe. In this way a multiplicity is a unity which exists with multiple interacting parts. Theatre is an excellent example of a multiplicity, in that it exists within numerous relations: between audience and performer; performer and writer; director and performer; advertiser and audience, and so on. Elizabeth Grosz defines a Deleuzian multiplicity as follows:

A multiplicity is not a pluralized notion of identity (identity multiplied by n locations), but is rather an ever-changing, nontotalizable collectivity, an assemblage defined, not by its abiding identity or principle of sameness over time, but through its capacity to undergo permutations and transformations, that is, its dimensionality (1994: 192).

A multiplicity is thus not defined according to its stability, but in terms of its transmutability. If we are to consider the search for identity as a search for a multiplicity, then we must forever give up the notion that we will ever be able to settle on a comprehensive definition of what an identity is. This thesis, for example, will be circling and exploring a number of different aspects relating to the search for identity, and yet, it will not necessarily be able to separate the various components into a particular lineage in order to discover a single essential property definitive of all

identities. The thesis relies, rather, on the conceptual matrix of the rhizome. Instead of approaching identity in terms of binary oppositions such as white/black, male/female, bourgeois/proletarian, (which inevitably runs the risk of resorting to hierarchies), I would prefer to open definitions up to include a multiplicity of possible interpretative schemas, an approach encouraged by the use of a rhizomatic structure⁹.

The rhizome is a structure well suited to the study of identity within a heterogenous society, since Deleuze claims that it is precisely heterogeneous elements which "form a rhizome" (1993: 32), not those which are homogenous. In this sense, the whole of South Africa might be considered a giant rhizome, a vast unity impossible to quantify accurately since it is in constant movement, in various stages of flux defined by flights of fear and attractions of desire. Some elements crystallise while others burst loose – here is a divergence, there a subversion, while "micro-fascisms" are perpetually forming within it. From this point of view, there is no total, grand identity which can be discovered and named, and yet this thesis will from time to time settle on a certain plane and attempt to elaborate a particular type of identity structure. As it does so, it will be trying to examine the emergence of a map which intersects performance with text and charts junctures created by writing and its analysis. These planes are acknowledged as being not only interpretative tools, but also creative devices.

To reiterate – I do not believe it useful to attempt to fix a set of definitive variables defining what identity is. I do not feel that it will be a valuable exercise to create a specific definition beyond the one already introduced which focuses the study on the level of the sign, which can then be applied to the plays under consideration. Instead, this thesis is a perpetual search for different types of identities and I would like to use

⁹ As Felicity J. Colman writes: "The rhizome is a powerful way of thinking without recourse to analogy or binary constructions. To think in terms of the rhizome is to reveal the multiple ways that you might approach any thought, activity, or a concept" (2005: 231).

different approaches for the different texts and planes addressed in this manner. Using multiple entry points and an eclectic array of inter-disciplinary theoretical tools, I mean to approach the issue of identity from numerous sides at once, as a speculative exercise attempting to tease out meanings which may not have been apparent at first glance. In so doing, I hope to show that an opportunity exists in terms of a potential shift in South African identities from those fixed on historical notions of race to categories which are more fluid and less certain.

1.1.5 Aims

Briefly stated, in this thesis I mean to explore some of the ways in which identity has been represented in dramatic texts written in South Africa since 1994. My way into this terrain is by examining representations of identity largely in terms of characterisation (though not excluding aspects of style, narrative construction and inter-textuality) in a selection of plays published in English. Dramatic texts are an ideal location in which to examine transformations of identity, since the theatre operates as an arena of transformation, and I believe that drama is not only able to represent transformation, but also to effect it. Although I will not be able to ignore aspects relating to performance, since this is a thesis in English Literature my primary focus will remain on the play text¹⁰.

The present study is thus rooted in three terrains in contemporary South Africa: configurations of identity (as theory), the theatre (as practice), and selected play-texts

¹⁰ Furthermore, I have chosen to focus on those publications which have had the largest impact. Now it will certainly be a contentious issue to try to define "impact", and there can be no set definition of this. However, I have, for example, only selected publications which have had significant productions, been published by established publishing houses, and which have been accessible to the general public, (that is, texts which can be ordered from book stores). So, for example, from the outset I have excluded self published plays, plays published in readers for school-children, and plays exclusively published in academic journals.

(as demonstrations of the practice of theory). Before moving on to an examination of some of the play texts produced since 1994, I feel it may be of some value to elaborate aspects related to the other two facets of this study. I will begin then with the study of theatre, and then move on to consider some of the potential problems involved in emphasising text over performance, before moving on to a discussion of issues of identity in terms of other disciplines in the humanities – including philosophy, anthropology, sociology and psychology. This rather lengthy introduction will hopefully assist in interpreting the characterizations in the texts under examination.

Throughout the thesis, I would like to keep under consideration the question of what it means to have a fixed, and firmly grounded sense of identity – which might provide one with a sense of rootedness and belonging; and to contrast this with a more flexible identity – which might allow one to be more open to change, but which also runs the risk of being inchoate. Related to this question are the implications of transformation on senses of identity, and whether one requires a clear idea of that which one hopes to transform into.

1.2 DRAMA AND TRANSFORMATION

1.2.1 The Importance of Play

By means of such games as theatre...performances are presented which probe a community's weaknesses, call its leaders to account, desacralize its most cherished values and beliefs, portray its characteristic conflicts and suggest remedies for them, and generally take stock of its current situation in the known "world". Victor Turner (*From Ritual to Theatre: the Human Seriousness of Play*, 1982: 11)

Our everyday world is filled with drama. Besides the proliferation of performances in terms of the representation of fictional characters in media such as movies, television, and radio, there are also the roles mediated by journalists, editors and presenters. Besides computer role-playing games and chat-rooms being accessed with *nom de plumes* (known as "avatars"), there are also the parts being played out in courts of law, and the roles adopted for the ceremonies of diverse religions. Then there are those who assume the roles of therapists and teachers or, on a more intimate plane, are playing the parts of fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, of friends and family. There are also politicians and advertisers who identify us as actors in a consumer's marketplace. Instead of playing a peripheral role in our existence, the dramatic impulse seems to be at the heart of many of the habits and rituals which make us human. Perhaps the traditional theatre environment might be seen as a formalisation of this ordinary, everyday behaviour, this playing out of our daily identities.

The performance of a play is thus both a very ordinary, and a very important cultural marker. Drama offers the opportunity of a shared reality and the space created by a dramatic performance may well constitute one of the last meeting places of a communal "society", where a material experience is shared within a collective. This is an experience which does not happen in the same way in the solitary darkness of the

cinema. As Paul Slabolebszy says: "Film takes you on a journey on your own, alone"¹¹, whereas theatre is a shared experience, the audience being more aware of the visceral reality of the performers on stage, as well as of other audience members.

The performing arts are visible to a group gathered together in a shared space and in this way the theatre is able to assist with a representation of culture and can create contexts of cultural and economic exchange in ways that other art forms can not. So theatre is capable of creating a community and even, possibly, transforming the perceptions of that community. Public performances are sites where the consciousness of a community can be discovered or invented; forged or strengthened. Theatre is what John MacAloon calls a "laboratory for cultural negotiations" (in Carlson 2003: 214). Besides forging a sense of communal identity, theatre also serves an external purpose in promoting – by portraying and defining – a specular cultural identity within an unfamiliar context. This may be in terms of the performance of a South African play in an international arena, but it equally describes a play from Cape Town being performed in Pretoria, such as the plays of Fiona Coyne or The Magnet Theatre, which can be seen in terms of a distinctly "Capetonian" identity.

The performing arts are uniquely situated to locate and reveal identities which have become static and much stand-up comedy (such as that of Pieter Dirk Uys, Marc Lottering and Barry Hilton) relies on an audience's recognition of stereotypes. However, the stage also provides a space where identities can be transformed. When an actor portrays an identity on stage, this could serve as an impetus for people to identify or resonate with the "self" of the character/performer. This could lead to the desire to mimic (or, in some cases, to oppose) the identity portrayed on stage. A

¹¹ This was stated during a public interview between Paul Slabolepzy and Anthony Akerman on 11 April, 2003, Auckland Park during a meeting of the South African Screen Writers' Association (SASWA).

character is able either to draw or to repel the viewer. Going to the theatre is thus an enormously powerful exercise in identity formation, as one's sense of self is pushed and pulled in various directions. Fischer-Lichte puts this into a remarkable perceptive when she writes that

theatre symbolises the human condition of creating identity to the extent to which it makes the distancing of man from himself the condition of its existence (5).

In this sense, the recognition of an identity is only possible when an act of separation has taken place, when the one identifying has been distanced from the one being identified. In a performance space characters are objectified in that they are distanced from the audience observing them, not only in terms of physical space, but also in terms of a metaphorical distance in which identity can be examined and configured¹². In *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor*, Bruce Wilshire puts it like this:

The result of the experiment of theatre is discovery, and we come home to ourselves as we believe we are: beings of inexhaustible particularity as well as [beings having] indefinitely expandable horizons of human concern and identification... (1982: 10).

Theatre is thus a transformative ritual which enables one to produce meaning and which helps one to create modes of identification. One of the very earliest anthropologists to write of ritual as a kind of theatrical event was Arnold van Gennep who in *Rites de Passage* (1908) detailed ways in which cultures carry out or perform

¹² This applies equally to the Naturalistic theatre as well as that, for example, of Augusto Boal, in which an audience is asked to identify with characters. I am using the term "objectified" in its materialistic sense, not in its pejorative sense of showing a lack of concern.

rites which symbolically indicate transformations of identity. Erika Fischer-Lichte describes his definition of these "rites of passage":

They trigger the transforming effects which change the identity of individuals, social groups and entire cultures at times of life crisis....They are bound to a highly symbolic experience of transition or transgression of boundaries... (2002: 3).

In *Performance* (2003), Marvin Carlson describes Victor Turner as the first to use the tools proposed by Van Gennep, the "first to use the concept of Social Drama as a tool for anthropologists" (15). In this sense, the enactment of culture is seen as a performance, as a drama which displays a certain community's perceptions, as well as the workings of its imaginative frameworks. For example, Peter Merrington in "Masques, Monuments, and Masons: The 1910 Pageant of the Union of South Africa" (1997), describes the 1910 celebrations as formative dramatic rituals which created the sense of a new nation out of the Union of South Africa. In a similar vein, Loren Kruger describes the inauguration of Nelson Mandela on 10 May, 1994 as a performance event which symbolically changed and re-interpreted the signifiers of the old system (*The Drama of South Africa: Plays, Pageants and Publics Since 1910*. 1999: 1-4). My aim here is to take this process further, and to draw potentially political implications from performative metaphors, or, more accurately, from the characters and themes created by playwrights in their writing. Since dramatic terminology has been used to describe a political process, perhaps the study of theatre could be a fruitful place to search for representations of the transformation which South Africa is still undergoing.

Victor Turner, in *From Ritual to Theatre: the Human Seriousness of Play* (1982) defines two types of "communitas": one involving the "confrontation of human identities", and the other serving as an "ideological communitas" (47). Theatre is able

to bolster both of these: on the one hand providing a space in which it is safe to be confronted by other, unknown identities; on the other hand creating an ideological realm where agreement and disagreement can be played out. Turner describes theatre as a "liminal" activity. Looking to Van Gennep's rites of passage, Turner emphasises not so much the "set apartness" of performance, but its "in-betweenness" – its function of transition between two states of more settled or more conventional cultural activity (16). He makes the distinction between the "liminal" (which aims at transforming the participant) and the "liminoid" (which seemingly unites disparities in a momentary suspension of belief). For Turner, theatre is "an important means for the intercultural transmission of painfully achieved modalities of experience" (18). He sees the liminoid space of performance as a "hybrid space where cultural styles jostle and collide; where culture wars spawn not new resentment but new cultures" (129). From this point of view, the inauguration on 10 May, which brought together elements of Western and African styles, was an amalgamation of conflicting identities in which the potential for a new South African culture was defined.

In relation to this event, one is reminded of Homi Bhabha's writings on an "in-between space" where the meaning of culture is forged, with the aim of "transforming the conditions of enunciation at the level of the sign" (*The Location of Culture*, 1994: 247). Ironically, as Kruger points out, although African elements were present at this historic inauguration – such as the presence of *izimbongi* (praise singers) – the structure of the ceremony was a replica of the inauguration of a modern Western president from any one of the European nations which colonised Africa. One has to wonder whether the "sign" really changed significantly, or whether the enunciation mimicked the colonialist methodologies and, in effect, camouflaged a "South African" identity in order to make it more palatable for a global arena. This is an important

question – how attempts to create a sense of authenticity have been reconciled with the demands of multi-culturalism in terms of a global context.

Theatre occupies a unique position in being part of a world of "play", while at the same time drawing on representations of serious subjects. It is clearly not reality, and yet it often hopes to represent the real¹³. Marvin Carlson points out that Richard Schechner, amongst others, has drawn attention to this dual nature of the "play frame", in that "a performer is not herself (illusion) but also not not herself (because the play takes place in reality)". So there is a kind of "double consciousness – not me, not not me" (49). Earlier in *Performance*, Carlson also cites Richard Bauman in this regard:

all performance involves a consciousness of doubleness, according to which the actual execution of an action is placed in mental comparison with a potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model of that action (5).

This "doubleness" also comes about because there exists a "close relationship between the self of the performing artist and the self being presented" (50). This is why it may also be necessary in this introduction to explore the ways in which a "self" is constructed in terms of theories proposed by other disciplines in the humanities which also have an interest in the human propensity for "play". For example, Carlson notes that

[Johan] Huizenga considers the development or reinforcement of a community spirit or consciousness, "communitas", to be one of the basic features of play, and suggests that its effects often continue beyond the actual play experience. (22).

¹³ Since our only access to reality occurs in terms of its representations, this provides a powerful link to our perceptions of what is real.

Similarly, Mikhail Bakhtin documents the topsy-turvy world of the carnival as representing:

the place for working out, in a concretely sensuous, half-real and half-play-acted form, a *new mode of interrelationship between individuals*, counterpoised to the all-powerful socio-hierarchical relationships of non-carnival life (in Carlson 23).

In these terms theatre is part of an ulterior and unusual activity which is part of a gratuitous, imaginary world of "play", instead of the "everyday". As Bakhtin has pointed out in his famous analysis of the carnivalesque – in the carnival the rules of the everyday do not apply; hierarchies are inverted, and nothing can be taken seriously. Brian Sutton-Smith also examines the subversive potential of this liminal space and the "disorderly quality of liminal activities" which allows participants to let off steam "from an overdose of order". According to Sutton-Smith, "we have something to *learn* through being disorderly", since novelties "which arise when contingencies in the normative system require it" produce "a *protocultural* system, because it is the precursor of innovative normative forms" which is, ultimately, "the source of new culture" (in Carlson: 19). In this sense the liminal creates a provisional space in which innovations to orders of socialisation may be played out. This is one of the reasons why anthropologists are interested in playfulness, because it occurs on the threshold between formal rituals of daily behaviour, in a liminal space referred to by Turner as "anti-structure". In a sense, play stands removed from the ordinary strictures of society and provides a space outside of the everyday, in order to, as Turner says, "think about... propositions that are not *in* cultural codes but *about* them" (in Carlson: 19).

The theatre can be seen as a representation of a public imagination, as a forum in which a private, subjective enunciation is made communal, and yet what is being

displayed is also some version of a reality with which an audience is able to identify. This does, however, introduce a potential problem into this dynamic: whether or not one should (and if one should, then to what extent) keep the worlds of the imaginative play and pretence separate from the "real" world in which one is obliged to be responsible for one's actions, and in which there are real, material consequences for one's decisions. Turner sees "liminoid" activities as including a range of individual leisure activities which are all outside of what is described as "work", or, in other words, as part of the world of "play". But to what extent can one equate performance (and, consequently, theatrical) practices with "real life"? Is it possible to claim that the world of "play" has an important influence on the world of "work", without imposing unnecessary (if any) restrictions on what play "should" achieve? Is it necessary to separate the "real" from the "imaginary"? If one claims that the imaginary world is similar to – if not commensurate with – the "real" world, one runs the risk of requiring a stringent censorship over imaginative material which is not in line with, say, ethical, national, or political ideals. It was precisely the close correlation between the material and the imaginary worlds which lead to the restrictions imposed on artists during fascist systems in Italy and Germany, and under Communism in the Soviet Union and in China, as well as, of course, under the Afrikaner Nationalist government in South Africa¹⁴. There seems to be a paradoxical situation here: if one acknowledges the importance of "play", then there is the danger of turning it into a very serious enterprise, which would, consequently, stunt its ability to function

¹⁴ Michel de Certeau (1988) claims that the idea that media, literature or performance can have a negative influence over society, dates back to the Enlightenment:

In the eighteenth century, the ideology of the Enlightenment claimed that the book was capable of reforming society....This myth of Education inscribed a theory of consumption in the structures of cultural politics...the conviction that ...the public...is moulded by (verbal or iconic) writing, that it becomes similar to what it receives, and that it is imprinted by and like the text which is imposed on it (166-7).

freely. It is as though, in order to take play seriously, one should not take it too seriously, or else its "playfulness" seizes up!

Due to the urgency of critiquing the apartheid system, performers and playwrights may have felt compelled to address "real" issues about the political realities of South Africa. The only way to "play" with these structures was by satire, such as, for example, in the caricatures created by Guy Willoughby, Robert Kirby, and Pieter-Dirk Uys. There were also plays like *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (Fugard; Ntshona; Kani 1974) and *Woza Albert!* (Ngema; Mtwana; Simon 1983) which were presented as "playful", but which still maintained a socially and politically aware message. In other words, their forms of play were delineated by demarcations of a set of serious principles. After 1994, when the imperative of attacking the injustices of apartheid were no longer necessary, perhaps a turn from the "serious" to the "playful" is a quality one might expect to encounter. Quite possibly, the end of the enormous pressure to be overtly "serious" about the political realities of the country will now have made it possible to examine other aspects of this society. Perhaps the shift from the realm of public politics may have resulted in a move towards an interest in the politics of the self.

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, theatre can be seen as a metaphor of reality. I have provided a few tentative speculations as to why a study of identity in theatre – particularly with reference to its links to play and transformation within a society – may be a useful undertaking. As a meeting place for society, as a representation of the liminal state of play, theatre could serve as a site which is capable of representing cultural transformation. Before I move to a more specific discussion of ways in which identification can take place, it may be relevant briefly to discuss the relation of text to performance, since my main focus in this study will, after all, be the texts of plays

which have been published. The next section provides a discussion of some of the concomitant limitations of the decision to focus on published texts instead of on performance.

1.2.2 Text and Performance

This thesis finds itself caught between the discourses of two disciplines – literature¹⁵ and performance; text and speech. Jacques Derrida (in *Of Grammatology* [1976]), insistently draws attention to a prioritisation of text over orality. All language, he says, "is beginning to let itself be transferred to, or at least summarized under, the name of writing" (6). It is "as if", he says, speech, voice, hearing, sound are "revealed today as the guise or disguise of a primary writing" (7). Writing is no longer merely a "supplement" to speech, but has become the means of understanding the origination of language. In this sense Derrida sees no reason to value *homo loquens* over *homo scriptor* and even performance becomes a type of text, which can be read in terms of its semiotic representation.

Perhaps every reading of a play is, in effect, a performance; and yet the text provides a means by which the ritual of a performance can be re-enacted. Also, it does still seem to be the case that plays which are published survive longer than plays which are not published. As Hauptfleisch indicates in "The (Re)Canonization of South African Theatre" (1996: 115), publication is "[f]undamental to canonization and literary

¹⁵ Drama still forms one of the core genres (alongside poetry and prose) taught by English departments, so the question as to why English published play-texts have been chosen as the principle objects of examination could be answered from a purely administrative point of view, in that this thesis falls within the ambit of a Department of English, and is thus primarily concerned with the exploration of texts which can be reproduced in the classroom for purposes of study.

history...most assuredly so in the case of an ephemeral art form such as theatre". He goes on to make his point even more forcefully:

Ultimately we all perceive the evolution of the theatre in this country in terms of *published* texts, no matter what we all say and write about performance and oral traditions...Eventually everyone seeks a text to read, analyse, discuss and (re-) perform... (115).

And yet, among many writers on theatre, there seems to be a move away from the priority of text to that of performance. Marvin Carlson notes that "[p]lays have been traditionally regarded as stable written objects, their various manifestations in different productions a more or less accidental part of their history, not really essential to understanding". He says that although their broader context has often been interpreted as "literary" (80), perhaps theatrical performance is closer to "the circus, the sideshow, the parade, or even the wrestling match or the political convention" (86), than to literary forms such as novels or poems. Later, Carlson cites Conquergood who sees a shift in ethnography as being from "world as text, to world as performance" (209). Similarly, Richard Schechner's interest in the anthropology of theatre is not in the text so much as in the performance act:

Who performers are, how they achieve their temporary or permanent transformations, what role the audience plays – these are the key questions; not about dramatic literature, but about the living performance event when looked at from the viewpoint of the human beings involved in the performance (1985: 32).

And yet, perhaps a compromise might be reached between seeing either text or performance as foundational. As Steven Connor (1997) points out:

Any theatrical work exemplifies the tension between product and process, for a dramatic work can never exist fully either in its script version, or in an

individual performance of that script. Any script must advertise its incompleteness, its necessity of being embodied in more than mere printed words, while any performance must always refer back to some notional script (142).

It should be borne in mind that although performance itself can be read as a sign system, it is one which is perhaps more difficult to codify. Hauptfleisch asks: "how do you describe, analyze, evaluate and eventually write about or report on the performance?" (11). And yet, theorising on performance (often in terms of the presence of the physical) is a rapidly growing area of academic investigation led by writers such as Marvin Carlson, Richard Poirier, Philip Auslander and others. However, apart from occasional forays in my examination of plays and a few pages in my conclusion, I will not be looking in any detail at theories of performance.

The decision to limit my primary investigations into dramatic texts may seem somewhat conservative, and yet, while acknowledging that a focus on textual narration and characterisation limits the study, it still permits one to draw on a wide range of disciplines. From its earliest beginnings, the study of literature has, after all, maintained an interest in what would later become the concerns of many disciplines in the humanities and one might even describe the discourses of philosophy, history, psychology and sociology as emerging out of an interest in narration, in the telling of stories about how the world has come to be the way it has been understood to be. In this way, I would argue that the study of drama as literature is still a worthwhile enterprise. Still, although the primary focus of the more detailed investigations will remain published texts, I will certainly also explore ways in which text and performance interact and make use of this opportunity to explore the relationship between performativity (the moment of actual embodiment, the moment of negotiation in time and space, the interaction with the instinctive and the accidental) and the formulation and inscription of a text. Although I will return principally to the

textual evidence for my assertions on new South African writing, it will not be possible entirely to disregard the performances of plays which have not been published, nor to ignore theories on how identities come to be performed.

Focusing on texts then as a primary resource is one thing, but why only plays in English? Trying to draw conclusions about South African identities within the limited range of a single language is problematic. Alexander Neville writes in "Mainstreaming by Confluence: The Multilingual Context of Literature in South Africa" that "[i]t becomes impossible...to write about South African literature and then to confine oneself to literary works written in English" (1996: 9). If what Neville says is true, then this thesis attempts the impossible, since it tries to address issues of South African identity while focusing only on a confined and very specific area of textual research into sources in only one language. Post-apartheid theatre is a vast terrain and focusing only on works published in English is a means of limiting the scope of the study in order to make it manageable. Occasionally, however, this line may be blurred and reference will also be made to texts in Afrikaans, Xhosa and Zulu.

1.3 IDENTITY AS PERFORMANCE

1.3.1 Psychological Descriptions of Identity

When defined as an individual, one is separated from the collective, and there is a certain nostalgia in having to relinquish one's sense of association, of "belonging". As Michel Foucault (according to Bhabha) has it: "the most individual are those subjects who are placed on the margins of the social" (1994a: 151). Since individuality is based on difference, it is not impossible to imagine that suffering is a necessary step towards achieving it. Freud, for one, saw melancholia as creating the essential differentiation needed for identity formation, since the ego itself seems to be built upon a series of rejected "object choices", and these rejections are also the source of melancholia (in Carlson 2003: 54). This idea, that melancholia or some form of suffering is needed in order to individuate or to become a unique "self" is echoed in the aphorisms of the cynical philosopher E. M. Cioran, who writes in *Anathemas and Admirations*: "It is not by genius, it is by suffering, by suffering only, that one ceases to be a marionette" (137) and "Melancholy redeems this universe, and yet it is melancholy that separates us from it" (1992: 141)¹⁶.

Jacques Lacan's mirror phase is also concerned with the initial separation of the self from the rest of the world, the identification of a complete being who is not equivalent to his or her surroundings. The theory of identification proposed by Lacan can be employed as a useful explanation of the processes which go into the creation of an identity, particularly with its relations to image and performativity. His by now famous analogy sources the identification of self in two periods of development: the

¹⁶ This may seem to be a somewhat pessimistic view, and yet it casts a new light on philosophies which exhort one simply to "find oneself" in order to be happy, when the act of abstracting oneself from a community may well result in exactly the opposite effect.

"mirror-phase" (when a subject, while still in a pre-linguistic phase, identifies itself with an image of totality which it is able to recognise in a mirror); and within the recognition of the naming of the subject, when he or she becomes aware of his or her situatedness within the symbolic processes of naming (1992: 122-123). During this "mirror phase", the identification of the self with its image is illusory, since the image displays completeness, or an appearance of closure and finality, which the subjective self does not experience.

There is a similarity here to a Freudian model, which depicts the self as a confluence of often contradictory forces, (most explicitly between the Id and the Superego). According to Carlson, Lacan shares Freud's orientation and offers a model of identity formation which denies a fixed identity, but instead sees "identity as socially constructed within the realm of language and social practice" (2003: 51). Lacan's model of identity formation rests on the reassurance of an image of completion. This could be seen as a "theatrical" metaphor in that it relates the sense of self to a visually coherent appearance. It seems that being "real" comes to depend both on visibility and on the ability to be a spectator to one's own contextualisation within a visual field. In this way, one's identity is created both in terms of image and text. Perhaps it is a case of a text (in terms of the cultural context of one's belonging) being used to collate and focus resources and energies (writing, erasing, rewriting, editing, modifying, deleting) in a perpetual longing for the sense of completion presented by an image.

Other psychologists have also developed a model of identification in terms of performative metaphors, an analogy which permits a greater deal of flexibility in the description of a self. These include Erving Goffman, whose book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) remains a seminal contribution to the field. Goffman talks of the implications of performance and role-playing, and the construction of a

social self. Marvin Carlson notes that for Goffman, "the question of whether the "self" being represented is the "true" self or not is a relatively minor concern" (2003: 38). However, Goffman's rather extreme model of an empty self created purely in terms of roles has been critiqued by, amongst others, Bruce Wilshire.

In *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor* (1982), Wilshire uses ideas from the dramatic model proposed in the creation of identity, such as "play, mimetic response, role, display, [and the] recognition of self through others" (xiv), without denying the possibility that an authentic subjective self may exist. Nevertheless, the idea that the identification of the "self" is purely a construction is not new, and views for and against this model run throughout the history of Western thought. Marvin Carlson defines a strain of thinking which considers the idea of the self as primarily a role player as a negative notion (in that roles subvert the "true" self). In this tradition he includes Plato, Friedrich Nietzsche and George Santayana. Also, Jean-Paul Sartre condemns the idea of playing a role as representing "bad faith", which he finds epitomised by the behaviour of tradesmen: "Their condition is wholly one of ceremony. The public demands of them that they realize it as a ceremony" (2003: 39). On the other hand, there is a range of more neutral, or even positive views about the idea of having a deliberately enacted self. For example, there is the view of Robert Park who writes that

the word 'person', in its first meaning, is a mask...one is always, more or less consciously, playing a role. Our very faces are living masks which...tend more and more to conform to the type we are seeking to impersonate...(in Carlson: 41).

It is the view of this thesis, that not only can performative models be used to describe identity, but that dramatic performances can also be seen as an analogy of ways in which new identity structures are created. I will return to this issue of performativity

when discussing various means of shaping gendered identities in the following chapter. While considering more specifically psychological models, I would like to briefly consider a Jungian approach to identity formation, with specific reference to Jung's theory of the shadow and ways in which it might be applied both to drama, as well as to a post-apartheid South African identity.

1.3.2 A Jungian Analysis of Drama

James Hall, amongst others, has noted what he refers to as "the dramatic structure of dreams" (1986):

Most dreams have a dramatic structure, with a beginning problem, complications and developments, and often analysis or solution, followed by a result, a change in the original situation of the dream. Dreams are like personal dramas, staged by and for the dreamer to help the dream-ego move further in the process of individuation. The dramatic structure of dreams faces the ego with situations that are symbolically important (47).

Dreams are referred to by Jungian's as "the royal road to the unconscious" (92) and thus provide an insight into repressed material. Hall also points out another important aspect of the function of dreams, namely that "[d]reams are primarily in the service of individuation, and they accomplish this through compensating distorted or one-sided views held by the waking ego" (107). Also, dreams "provide a viewpoint that is demonstrably more objective than that of either the analyst or the analysand" (102). In this sense, dreams are capable of symbolically objectifying conditions present in the unconscious. This is a quality which dreams share with drama, since I believe that the collective experience of drama is similarly capable of objectifying and representing repressed perspectives.

Jung drew a parallel between myths, fairytales and dreams, saying that "[i]n myths and fairytales, as in dreams, the psyche tells its own story" (1969: 127). Elsewhere he says that "[t]o concern ourselves with dreams is a way of reflecting on ourselves – a way of self-reflection" (1971: 77). And yet, dreams are not only solipsistic, but also revelations about a wider community. Although they are always about the dreamer, they are also about a more extensive identification, since

a dream with a collective meaning is valid in the first place for the dreamer, but it expresses at the same time the fact that his momentary problem is also the problem of other people (68).

One of the most important things which dreams reveal are areas of life which, for one or other reason, have not been integrated into the psyche, which have been pushed out of the light of rational consciousness, which have been repressed. This brings us to a vital part of Jung's analytic method, namely the integration of shadow as a means of transformation and healing.

Jung presented a lecture in 1939 on some of the ways in which identities are able to change by means of transformation and specific processes which the individual undergoes "by participating in a process of transformation which is conceived of as taking place outside the individual" (1972: 49). He goes on to say that for this type of transformation to occur "one has to witness, or take part in some rite of transformation". Jung describes transformative experiences which occur when the individual identifies with a group: "it is the identification of an individual with a number of people who, as a group, have a collective experience of transformation" (59). Transformation in groups seems to occur a lot more easily, since "[i]n the crowd one feels no responsibility, but also no fear" (60), and there is a sense of *participation mystique*, an "unconscious identity" which only lasts while the group is together. And

here Jung refers directly to the theatrical experience, which he calls an "easy" means of sharing and shaping identity:

Supposing, for example, you go to the theatre: glance meets glance, everybody observes everybody else, so that all those who are present are caught up in an invisible web of mutual unconscious relationship. If this condition increases, one literally feels borne along by the universal wave of identity of others... mankind has always formed groups which made collective experiences of transformation – often of ecstatic nature – possible (60).

Within this shared identity, "[t]he group can give the individual a courage, a bearing, and a dignity which may easily get lost in isolation. It can awaken within him the memory of being a man among men" (61). So the individual at times gladly subscribes to a group identity, willingly submerging his or her individuality within the collective. Loren Kruger (1999), Temple Hauptfleisch (1997) and Peter Merrington (1997) have all referred to the theatricality of the events which took place on 10 May 1994 with the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the first democratically elected president of South Africa. This might be described as one of those ceremonies of transformation which Jung describes which assisted in transforming the sense of national identity.

Athol Fugard famously paraphrased the purpose of his writing as being "to bear witness"¹⁷. So, the collective audience of South Africans experienced a shared sense of transformation during the proceedings on the day of the inauguration. Perhaps it should be mentioned, however, that not that many white citizens joined in the celebrations on the lawns of the Union Buildings that day. I distinctly recall how many white people vacated the city centre out of fear during those fateful days. Of

¹⁷ The Market Theatre Artistic Director Malcolm Purkey has mentioned that some people have questioned whether it was Athol Fugard or Barney Simon who first used this description. (Seminar held at Parktonian Hotel, Braamfontein, on 26 May 2007.)

course, one does not know how many people witnessed the events on television from the cloistered surroundings of their living rooms, yet the greatest number of participants were undoubtedly black. It may seem an obvious point to make that the black majority of South Africa welcomed the changes that were brought about, whereas not all of the white citizens of South Africa necessarily shared in their jubilation. Many whites were afraid and resisted change for a number of reasons. They were afraid of seeing their privileges eroded, certainly, but there was also the sense of having lost a war and fearing the retribution from people they had been taught – by authorities in schools, government and often from the pulpit – to consider as their enemy.

Both the inauguration celebrations in 1994 and the TRC process could be read as dramatic transformative experiences to which Jung's descriptions of collective transformative experiences could be applied. I believe that for many whites the black populations formed part of their shadow in that they were pushed out of consciousness. The idea of a collective shadow could very clearly be identified in South Africa during Apartheid. In this sense, not only did black South Africa become the shadow of white South Africa, but white South Africa also became the shadow of black South Africa. Writing from a Western perspective, Jolande Jacobi says that at that time (during the 1960's), "the qualities of the collected shadow [were] imparted...to capitalism or to communism according to one's political beliefs" (1965: 38). As Jung says:

The real existence of an enemy upon whom one can foist off everything evil is an enormous relief to one's conscience. You can then at least say, without hesitation, who the devil is; you are quite certain that the cause of your misfortune is outside, and not in your own attitude (1971: 224).

But psychological health, according to Jung, relies on integration, and it is the integration of the shadow which leads to healing. As Hall repeatedly states, the shadow can only be dissolved through integration. When the shadow personality is in ascendance it "knows" things with certainty and adopts attitudes that may be at variance with the usual sober personality.

The shadow, or indeed any complex, if unrelated to the psyche as a whole, can be just as destructive and even life-threatening as a cancerous cell of the body that has escaped normal integration into the healthy subsystems of the body (35).

Another interesting point is that integration depends on the revelation of the shadow, not on any specific activity. In other words, what is required is an act of perception. This is why literature is so well suited to assisting in the revelation of the shadow, because all that needs to be done, as such, is to see. Jung does not classify neurosis as a "problem", but sees it as arising when one is unable to face and acknowledge that a problem exists. He says that "it would be a serious misunderstanding to confuse the existence of problems with neurosis...the neurotic is ill because he is unconscious of his problems" (1971: 86). In other words, to become conscious of one's problems and of one's shadow would be the first step towards integrating and healing the psyche. The analogy then is that if theatre might be able to reveal the existence of a shadow side to the collective unconscious, then it might succeed in healing society by its acts of revelation. In this sense, the social satires and biting critique of an author such as Mike van Graan would not necessarily "improve" society by overtly instructing an audience to reform; instead, they might permit integration to take place simply by revealing the existence of problems, by making a society aware of them.

In addition to the shadow, there is the persona, which Jacobi defines as follows:

By the 'persona' Jung means that segment of the ego which is concerned with relations to the surrounding world. Its task is to build up a relatively stable facade adapted to the demands of present-day civilization. An elastic persona that 'fits well' belongs to the psychic wardrobe of the adult man, and its lack of rigidity is an indication of psychic maldevelopment. Contrariwise, there is always the danger of identifying with the persona, e.g. the professor with his books, the tenor with his voice, the general with his work. Then one can no longer do anything in the human way, one is glued to one's mask. But if one has no proper persona, one strikes other people as being vague and vacillating and no-one know what to make of such an individual (35).

James Hall describes two forms of anxiety: persona anxiety and shadow anxiety (21). The persona "consists of 'mask', not just in the sense of hiding something, but also in the sense of revealing something – a social or cultural role, for example, as was indicated in the large masks of classical Greek drama" (19). Perhaps anti-apartheid theatre could be characterised as having dealt largely with shadow anxieties, with what was not permitted into consciousness in everyday life. If apartheid created its own specific complexes and neuroses, then the post-apartheid era is possibly involved with a different range of complexes. It is thus possible that one of the predictions one might be able to make is that post-apartheid theatre may be distinguished by its "persona anxiety" in that the neurotic tendencies now concern ways of configuring identity and how to accept newly transformed social roles. The emphasis is now no longer on ways in which to reveal the shadow, but rather, on how to fit into a newly constellated society in which one is required to perform new and often radically different roles.

1.4 SOURCING THE SELF IN THE DESIRE FOR FREEDOM

1.4.1 Frames

Charles Taylor's wide-ranging *Sources of the Self* (1989) provides a thorough historical overview of philosophical conceptions of selfhood. Taylor roots a sense of self within a framework, and makes the claim that if one is to understand a person's sense of identity one has to be aware of the parameters of his or her framing perception of value. Early on in this monumental study, Taylor writes:

I want to defend the strong thesis that doing without a framework is utterly impossible for us; otherwise put, that the horizons within which we live our lives and which make sense of them have to include some strong qualitative discriminations (27).

Taylor roots a sense of identity, then, in an ability to discriminate, or, otherwise stated, to be able to make judgements. An immediate danger when confronted by the idea of judging, is that one might discriminate *against* other people, or insist that one's own judgements are the only correct views¹⁸. Although Taylor defines the self in terms of a framework of values and beliefs, according to him, it is impossible to find a single global framework, and he admits that "frameworks today are problematic":

What is common to them all is the sense that no framework is shared by everyone, can be taken for granted as *the* framework tout court, can sink to the phenomenological status of unquestioned fact (17).

¹⁸ The use of the word "discrimination" is problematic, particularly in a country like South Africa, since the word conjures up our highest ideals (to be a discriminating person) and our lowest (to discriminate against).

Taylor, then, is not necessarily endorsing what Jean-Francois Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition* (1984) refers to as "meta-narratives", since, despite Taylor's anti-postmodern tendencies (to which I will return), he is clearly not sanctioning a universalising framework which encompasses all others. And yet, for Taylor, there appears to be a nostalgia for frameworks which might have been more widely shared, and he notes, for example, that the loss of moral horizons which were taken to be the same for all, is part of Max Weber's definition of disenchantment (12).

For Taylor, the question of a framework is inextricably tied to notions of the "good", since, for him, a framework distinguishes what is deemed desirable or beneficial. Instead of focusing on the borders, margins, and liminal states – to which popular contemporary methodologies might refer – Taylor defines identity in terms of central tenets of belief. He claims that in order to understand a formation of self, one requires "an understanding of what is of crucial importance to us":

To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose (27).

Jürgen Habermas uses the word *Lebenswelt* (life-world) to refer to a construction which seems similar to what Taylor calls a "framework"¹⁹. For Habermas, the process of communication becomes possible when the horizons of two people are able momentarily to forge into a *horizonverschmelzung* (a "melting of horizons"). In this sense, one's identity is made possible by being in relation to others, not in separation from them. In *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984), Habermas writes of

¹⁹ "Communication takes place within a lifeworld that remains at the backs of participants in communication. It is present to them only in the prereflective form of taken-for-granted background assumptions..." (1984: 335).

identity as no longer founded in terms of a cosmic order, nor on an autonomous individuality; but rather in terms of communication (or, to be more precise, what Thomas McCarthy, in his introduction to Habermas's book, describes as "communicatively shared intersubjectivity" [xxi]).

Jean-Francois Lyotard, on the other hand, questions ways in which a "good" is defined. He sees this definition as occurring not on an individual level, but rather in terms of the knowledge produced by a society:

What is a "good" prescriptive or evaluative utterance, a "good" performance in denotative or technical matters? They are all judged to be "good" because they conform to relevant criteria (of justice, beauty, truth, and efficiency respectively) accepted in the social circle of the "knower's" interlocutors. The early philosophers called this mode of legitimating statements opinion. The consensus that permits such knowledge to be circumscribed and makes it possible to distinguish one who knows from one who doesn't (the foreigner, the child) is what constitutes the culture of a people (1984: 19).

So what Taylor sees as definitive of a "self", Lyotard sees as definitive of a collective. (This is a point which will be sustained throughout this thesis – the tension between the individual and the group.) Instead of providing a stable point of identification, the "self" may equally be described in terms of an *heteroglossic* index, as a site of many voices vying for control. Whether or not the self can be circumscribed as a singular entity, or whether it is, as Deleuze maintains, an assemblage, is crucial for further explorations into the ways in which a description of self is used as a critical index of identity. The question of whether the self is able to freely frame its identity, and what the parameters are of freedom are also very important to this perspective.

1.4.2 Freedom

[W]hat is universal in the modern world is the centrality of freedom as a good. (Charles Taylor, 1989: 395).

Perhaps the greatest change in the public ethos of the South African government has been the enthusiastic embracing of the concept of "freedom" as a good. The word has been re-interpreted throughout the history of South Africa (after all, the Voortrekkers also based their movement inland on a search for freedom), but more recently it has designated an urgent meeting place between different cultures and across various ethnic groups. Freedom is not only a frame which South Africans have been able – with some sense of relief – to share with each other, but it is also an ideal (and idealised) common denominator which can be employed in conversations with other countries.

Charles Taylor calls "freedom" a "hyper-good", or, in other words, a good which supersedes all others. It forms part of what might be referred to as a modern myth, with reference to the liberation of the individual. It is possible to consider that this myth played an important role in the impetus which inspired the American struggle for independence from Britain, as well as the revolution of the French citizens against their aristocracy. The ideals of "freedom" also motivated the various impulses leading towards the eventual dissolution of European Colonial Empires after the First World War, and the move towards independence in African states after the Second. It seems that the last centuries have been infused by perpetual struggles for freedom. And possibly the single most important work at the very beginning of this movement towards the enfranchisement of individual liberty is Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract*, which was first published in 1762. In this work, Rousseau searches

for the answer to a single perplexing question about how the collective strength of a group could be used to protect the liberties of the individual, or:

How to find a form of association which will defend the person and the goods of each member with the collective force of all, and under which each individual, while uniting himself with the others, obeys no one but himself, and remains as free as before (2004: 14).

This tension between belonging to a group while expressing and exploring one's freedom as an individual is not necessarily resolved satisfactorily by the democratic process, and throughout this thesis I will be trying to explore a paradox that exists between what Rousseau refers to as the "general will", and the "private will"(19); as well as the contradictory desires for both "civil liberty" and "natural liberty" (21). Rousseau attempts to resolve some of the dilemma's created by these frictions by emphasising the separation of civil and religious matters, and by endorsing the Marquis d' Argenson's maxim that "everyone is perfectly free to do what does not injure others" (165). To greater or lesser degrees, these two principles are still the mainstays of many democratic states.

Perhaps Rousseau's greatest influence on the modern state was more pragmatic than philosophical in that it defined a free society not substantively as "some conception of a good society", but rather "by the procedure of its inauguration" (Taylor. 1989: 86). This aspect of freedom as defined by a civil process is certainly a practical and visible result of certain ideologies; and yet, even though an absolutely crucial aspect of South African identities lies in the agreement about "freedom" being a good, ways in which freedom is defined may differ. Appeals towards freedom can include the desire for emancipation, (whether this be in terms of colonialism, gender, or economic dependence) as well as in terms of sexual freedom and the expression of idiosyncratic, and possibly iconoclastic, views – both "freedom from", and "freedom to".

Charles Taylor notes that Kant stresses a formation of "freedom as self-domination", which distinguishes free actions from those bound by duty (83). Perhaps this distinguishes the Modern Age from the Victorian era in Britain, the shift away from an emphasis on duty towards an emphasis on personal freedom. Rene Descartes considered the somewhat blasphemous notion that freedom is a great virtue because it is a quality we share with God. He wrote:

Now freewill is in itself the noblest thing we can have because it makes us in a certain manner equal to God and exempts us from being his subjects; and through its rightful use is the greatest of all the goods we possess, and further there is nothing that is more our own or that matters more to us. From all this it follows that nothing but freewill can produce our greatest contentments (in Taylor: 147).

In his conclusion to *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor underlines the importance of this hyper-good, claiming that out of all other goods it grants one the greatest sense of meaning. He asserts nothing less than that "[t]he fully significant life is the one which is self chosen" (383). And yet, how does freedom to do as one desires compare to the freedom gained, for example, by mastering one's impulses and desires? This raises a perplexing question concerning configurations of the self, whether or not one is really free to choose one's identity, or whether one is merely in control of the expression of that self. And to what extent is identity created within the act of expression? Can one even speak of an identity existing anterior to its expression? Furthermore, if identity is a matter of belief in a framework of values – which encompasses nothing less than one's worldview, one's *weltanschauung* – to what extent is one in a position to choose that view? An apocryphal anecdote about Max Weber has him saying that although he agrees with the relativity inherent in worldviews, one still cannot step into a worldview as easily as one climbs into a taxi cab.

Jean-Francois Lyotard also sees "freedom" as a key modern "good", or means of legitimation in that it forms one of the "two major versions of the narrative of legitimation" (1984: 31). These narratives, according to Lyotard, are the means by which modern societies define what is true, and they form the basis for decisions concerning which knowledge is deemed to be worth pursuing. The narrative about freedom sees "humanity as the hero of liberty" (31), and is also referred to as concerning the "the emancipation of humanity" (51). As a legitimation of true knowledge, Lyotard claims that "in the context of the narrative of freedom, the State receives its legitimacy not from itself but from the people" (31), and yet, paradoxically, he sees this narrative as a means by which the state attains power over the individual, in the name of "progress":

The State resorts to the narrative of freedom every time it assumes direct control over the training of the "people", under the name of the "nation", in order to point them down the path of progress (32).

"Freedom" can thus paradoxically become a means of legitimising the exercise of power, rather than an expression of the liberty of an individual. This use of the notion of freedom might be seen as a defensive mechanism by a system which fears that it may be disrupted. This is because freedom can also mean the freedom to invent, to be original, and, as Jacques Derrida writes in *Acts of Literature* (1992):

An invention always presupposes some illegality, the breaking of an implicit contract; it inserts a disorder into the peaceful ordering of things, it disregards the proprieties...it unsettles the givens (312).

So this use of freedom as rebellion, as revolution against the totalising ordering of society, will also have to be taken into consideration. Have post-apartheid writers

made use of their freedom by unsettling stable traditions in South Africa, or have they reinforced the reification of past mythologies? What is of particular interest is how freedom has been used to armour collectives established in terms of ethnicity or race against intrusions from other bodies. In other words, newfound freedoms to express cultural identities have sometimes resulted in a willing suspension of personal freedom for the sake of a consolidated communal expression. On the other hand, one might also wonder whether the freedom which liberates one from social constraints is necessarily to one's advantage. For example, the psychotic is also completely detached from others, and suffers and causes suffering as a result of this.

An important point is made by Michael Luntley when he asserts in *Reason, Truth and Self: The Postmodern Reconditioned* (1995) that the Enlightenment sought to identify the "true" self outside of various defining features. Controversially, he claims that the modern self is a "highly abstracted entity...a self stripped bare of its history, gender, class, achievements, values, passions and beliefs" (151). On the other hand, a version which Luntley favours is offered by John Rawls, who "offers a conception of self in which the contours of self are found in real social and historical traditions rather than shaped by abstract demands of rationality" (175). Furthermore:

The contingently framed self is a self of the here and now, in real history and real culture. Its values are part of the ongoing contingently evolving world (224).

Luntley thus endorses a view of seeing the self as part of a process of tradition, as forming part of the community which is constitutive of the self's identity. In other words, the communities to which a self belongs are not merely the adornments or possessions of a self, but formative elements. These reflections on collective and personal freedom will become particularly important in the discussion on ethnicity.

The question of belonging – whether it is to a gender, a nation or a narrative – informs all considerations of identity. But where is the "society" to which one might hope to belong?

1.5 SELF AND SOCIETY

1.5.1 Defining Society

This thesis is concerned precisely with the question of definition; and yet, to create a category, to name a group or to try to define it as an entity inevitably involves some form of generalisation. But how is one to set about trying to define a group, a "mass"? Louis Althusser points out in *Essays on Ideology* (1984):

the masses, considered as a subject, pose very exacting problems of identity and identification. You cannot hold such a 'subject' in your hand, you cannot point to it (80).

Here Althusser is referring to the masses in a Marxist sense, as economic arrangements of power; and yet the same principle applies when speaking about the conceptualisation of any group, whether this is located in terms of language, ethnicity or geography. In the previous section, I approached identity primarily as the psychological description of an individual subject. In the sections before that, I emphasised the capacity of performance to influence communities, and I would like to move this discussion now to ways in which one might go about defining communities as "societies".

I have made the point that both theatre and literature are significant indicators of one's society, and significant means by which one is able to relate to one's identity within a community. A sense of "society", the consciousness of belonging to a group, provides one with an awareness of continuity in terms of shared beliefs, convictions, and ideals which reflect who one believes oneself to be. But whom does one include in the category defined as "us"? Where is "society"? It seems to be a word as difficult

to define as "culture" which Raymond Williams describes as "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (1976: 76). In South Africa, in particular, the conception of a "society" is likely to run into all sorts of difficulties. Besides the many diverse economic categorisations, one is also confronted by many different religions, political beliefs, cultural practices, and so on. When is it appropriate, for example, to locate a so-called "ethnic" identity, without resorting to the troubled site of race? I will be returning to this discussion in more detail in the section on ethnicity as well as in my conclusion, but for now it is interesting to note just how much of an identity can be based on exclusion, which remains a very strong basis for identity. This is the "Other" proposed by post-colonial theory, and it seems many communities make exclusion part of their definition. The danger, of course, lies in the possibility of creating a collective shadow of the other. For example, much was made of a national identity propagated by the U.S.A. during the Cold War as based on its opposition to communism. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, however, something of an impasse occurred in national identity, which the following, frighteningly naïve statement made by George W. Bush on 21 January, 2000 makes clear:

When I was coming up, it was a dangerous world, and you knew exactly who they were. It was us vs. them, and it was clear who "them" was. Today, we are not so sure who the "they" are, but we know they're out there.
(quoted on the frontispiece of *Them* [2002] by Jon Ronson.)

This would be an amusing statement, were it not for Bush's unfortunate "discovery" of an enemy in the form of Muslim fundamentalism and an Axis of Evil in the seven years that have passed since this comment was made. My question, then, is whether or not it is possible to create a sense or description of identity which is not exclusive, or whether all identities are founded on what they are not.

In his essay "Solidarity or Objectivity?" Richard Rorty writes that people are able to make sense of their lives by "telling the story of their contribution to a community" (1996: 573). In the same essay, he makes the controversial claim that "Either we attach a special privilege to our own community, or we pretend an impossible tolerance for every other group" (582). Rorty considers it impossible to be neutral about one's own community, and although he does not seem to be speaking out against tolerance *per se*, he does qualify different degrees of tolerance.

With the enormous advances in communication, transport and international trade, it has become impossible to avoid encountering societies which are radically different from one's own. It is difficult to imagine a world where the idea of being part of a "society" at all was never considered because there were no visible alternatives. The conception of "society" as a unit first had to be invented. In Jonathan Cullers' introduction to Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (1960), he makes an important point, which is that even though it may be true that, as Jeremy Bentham claimed, "society is a fictitious body", the symbolic recognition of this body does have important practical consequences:

What Freud, Saussure and Durkheim seem to have recognised is that the social science could make little progress until society was considered as a reality in itself. A set of institutions which was more than the contingent unification of the spirit or the sum of individual activities (xii).

So it may be useful to speak of a "society", without oversimplifying or generalising the constraints and conditions imposed by the group upon each individual. Yet no identity structure today remains uncontested, whether we divide people according to gender, class, nation, or whether in terms of marginalisation, "otherness" and difference. The question remains whether any definition of identity in terms of a society will not inevitably become reductive. If one considers the demographics

required of the South African national census in categorising people; if one continues dividing people up according to qualities, characteristics and features, one would surely end up only with individuals who have such highly specific definitions which include nobody but the single person described. This is reminiscent of Zeno's observation that space is "infinitely divisible" (1880: 387) in his famous dialogue on "Achilles and Tortoise". If one follows Zeno, then logical talk of divisibility inevitably leads to an absurd quandary in which infinity would have to be passed over before all things which are potentially divisible have been divided. This highlights an interesting problem: if one wishes to describe anything, at which point does one stop dividing?

A convenient way of dividing society up into groups is along economic lines, into such categories as "consumer", "industrialised", "agrarian" and "subsistence". Perhaps no other scale determines to such a large extent which people one identifies with, with whom one is able to communicate. Now that money is no longer tied to a fixed commodity like gold, and has become a purely imaginary enterprise. New stratospheres of symbolic meaning have opened up purely imaginary senses of signification²⁰.

When discussing the economic indicators of different "groups" (or societies), one needs to keep in mind that the GDP per capita in South Africa is around R1390.00 per month²¹ while theatre tickets at present can range from R60.00 to R447.00 (for a recent production of William Kentridge's *Mozart's Magic Flute* in 2007). It is clearly an elect and highly exclusive group of people who can afford to attend the theatre,

²⁰ Surely nothing provides a more purely imaginary symbol than currency – nothing means less in itself, yet nothing means more in terms of its value as exchange.

²¹ "Doing Business: Exploring Economies". *The World Bank*. <<http://www.worldbank.org/http://rru.worldbank.org/DoingBusiness/ExploreEconomies/BusinessClimateSnapshot.aspx?economyid=172>> Accessed 30 January 2005.

not to mention those who are able to study it and who have the time, energy and leisure required for an intimate examination of the implications of identity. Consequently, those able to afford making and attending the theatre under investigation in this thesis undoubtedly fall within the category of "consumer" society, and have links with other such societies in the contemporary Western world and with consumer societies in Japan, Singapore and South Korea, as well as, increasingly, in India and China. Clumsy and problematic though this description may be, it will have to serve as a provisional economic description for the time being.

In summary then, the society about which this thesis is concerned could be described in terms of the intersection of a language (English); a geographic region (South Africa) and an economic sector (consumer). And yet, one of the key features of literature after 1994 is that it seems to be increasingly moving away from the sense of an author as representative of a particular collective. Instead of having to perform a spokesman's role, there has been shift, in many instances, towards representing only the individual self.

1.5.2 The Fragmentation of Collective Identities

Sarah Nuttall defines the pre-liberation era as being representative of the collective rather than individual identities:

The work of liberation was seen as something to be taken on by communities and their representatives....These were political and often racialized communities. Culture making, despite its variety and complexity, became largely instrumentalist and based predominantly on a moral economy. Cultural production was imagined, then, according to prescriptions of community, or a sense of solidarity, or a search for wholeness in the face of fracture. Emphasis was given to shared, or representative, experience (2006: 265-266).

As mentioned previously, for Paul Ricoeur all identity is narrative, since, as Viljoen, Lewis and Van der Merwe explain, "it is narrative that connects the discontinuity of the 'I' to its continuity" (2004: 12). Participating in a continuity often implies being part of a group, communing with others. Consequently, one of the earliest predictions made about the direction which South African theatre would take after apartheid, was that it would become increasingly unshackled from an obsession with collective concerns and that there would be a rise in a more personal, subjective approach²². To an extent, developments have borne out this prediction, and André Brink (1997: 172) and Temple Hauptfleisch (1997: 161-162) have both noticed an increase in more personal plays. Furthermore, Miki Flockemann says that

with the shift in the 1990s it seemed as if there would now be a greater emphasis on the individual voice, and voices exploring and articulating personal, subjective experiences, not speaking as representatives of a group, and where your story isn't always a testimony to a larger community, but it's your individual story (in Solberg 2003: 32).

This sounds similar to what Lyotard suggests in the face of the break-up of grand narratives. He says that since we no longer "have recourse to the grand narrative...the little narrative [*petit récit*] remains the quintessential form of imaginative invention" (1984: 60). The crumbling of the emphasis on a collective identity which is narrated by grand stories of the history of the group, the tribe, the nation may thus be an inevitable part of processes of liberation. Ashraf Jamal, in *Predicaments of Culture* (2005), proposes a heterogeneity which repeatedly appears to be veering back toward notions of the radical individual and the personal freedoms expressed on the margins

²² Eldred D. Jones says that "[t]he dominating influence in South African literature, indeed, in all South African culture, has been apartheid. Its stark polarities of black versus white, oppression versus liberty and poverty versus opulence, have produced a literature of protest which is limiting even in its common necessity...it is a culture whose main feature is exteriority which is reflected in the literature" (2002: vii). For this reason, as mentioned before, one might expect post-apartheid literature to be increasingly interested in the personal.

of popular discourses. He suggests the formation of a wildly individualistic queer identity as an option of disidentifying with the collective. But not everybody has described the break-up of collective identities in a positive light. For example, Chris Weare says that

South African theatre makers do not have an artistic and cultural vision – only individuals and/or groups of people with very personal and/or community agendas. South Africa seems very 'ghettoized'. The complexity of this new emerging nation is so bewildering that it is completely overwhelming people. That is why American cultural imperialism is alive and well in South Africa. For the most part we are still trapped! (in Jamal 2000: 198).

Ironically, then, a fragmentation into more individual parts might lead to a flattening out of group differences under the sway of the hegemony of American cultural domination. In this sense, what is displayed as being "the personal" is often little more than a thinly disguised variation of the Californian Cult of the Personality. So these "individual stories" are often housed in terms of American popular culture.

Ari Sitas describes theatre after democracy as being "at an impasse" for this very reason. He suggests that since 1994, South African theatre has "had neither voice nor vision", saying that it "fragmented into tiny communal cells: plays by women for women, gays and lesbians for gays and lesbians, workers for workers, community members for community members, and so on" (1996: 87). And yet, Sitas also sees this fragmentation as potentially leading to a new source of creative energy:

This fragmentation, frightening at first in a country brimming with narcissistic confidence, has started becoming a source for new energies. Most creativity seems to be the highly charged particles or fragments from the "margins" (1996: 87).

This interest in and emphasis on the marginal can also arise due to what Steven Connor refers to as the "romance of the marginal" (1997: 267), and there is also the danger of sentimentalising marginalisation *per se*. And yet, much of the theatre I will be discussing here might be described as being "marginal". In fact, Owen de Jaager says that "South African theatre is a fringe without a mainstream" (in Solberg 2003: 10).

If there is a mainstream in South African theatre, this might be musical theatre which has seen large audience figures. Keith Bain, for one, points out that "musicals and more commercially viable cabarets, revues and stand-up comedy shows remain the major theatre draw cards" (2003: 149). Some of the successes in recent years include *Grease* (2000), *Cats* (2001), *Chicago* (2004), *Phantom of the Opera* (2004), *The Sound of Music* (2005), *My Fair Lady* (2006), *Hair* (2007) and *Hairspray* (2007). Not all the big musicals are imports and there are also local productions which are enormous commercial successes, such as David Kramer and Taliep Petersen's *Kat and the Kings* (1997), which went on to play on the West End and Broadway; and Packed Houses production of *Soweto Story* (2007), which is based on *West Side Story*.

Nevertheless, besides these money-spinners, there is still an enormous amount of diverse theatre being made in South Africa. Considered geometrically, the more fragmented an object is, the more separate surfaces it is able to maintain. As an analogy, the more fragmented a national theatre is, the larger its margin will be. On the other hand, an extreme individuality could also lead to an extreme self-indulgence, which is not necessarily more interesting than the various propagandas mooted by collectives. For example, in his summation of the 2006 Grahamstown festival, Robert Greig succinctly pinpoints this trend when he states that the festival

was beleaguered by "two types of inauthenticity, one rural and moralising, the other urban and self-indulgent":

The one inauthenticity is of the regional black artists' group that moralises about national issues – and will probably get taxpayers' money to do so. The other is that of the urban white artist whose work is totally rooted in the ego and shows no trace of his surrounds. He or she will not get taxpayers' money because individualism is not part of state culture (2006: 11).

The problem that Greig identifies in what he calls "rural, black" theatre is that it is overwhelmingly issues based, dealing "with ready-made causes and issues like Aids, corruption, abuse of women". He sees this theatre as inauthentic due to the assumption of "the spokesperson's role" which denies "the particularities of self and surroundings" and results in "a moral appeal" and sermonising. On the other hand the "urban white" theatre he criticises is "irredeemably frivolous". Both groups are insistent that what they say is important because they talk of experiences which "are theirs", although neither really gives "a damn about theatre" (11). Fragmentation and marginalisation are thus a guarantee of neither quality nor relevance. Both an entrenched collective identity and the precious individualistic indulgences which may pass for the identifications of a marginal figure can result in Brook's "deadly theatre"²³ – the first because it denies the individual experience; the second because it remains naively unaware of its social context.

²³ In *The Empty Space* (1968), Brook writes of four types of theatre – deadly, holy, rough, immediate. Out of these, the "deadly" – as the name suggests – is the worst: commercialised (9); prostituted (10). This sort of theatre involves embalmed classics (10); an imitation of "externals" (12); and the attempt to preserve performance as history (15). It uses tradition as a barrier to a "living theatre" (16) and is typified by a lack of trust between artists (18). It labours under "conditioned reflexes" (23) and incompetence (29). This is theatre which has not died, but which kills the ideals to which theatre might aspire.

These questions of community (or lack of it) are not unique to South Africa. This is a very interesting era, in which an unimaginably vast range of information is available to many, and yet there is no single platform by means of which to disseminate it. Perhaps there is no public meeting place any more, not in any country in the world. As Richard Schechner says, "Who today dares call 'the public' to the theatre? Who can identify a cause that 'everyone' supports?" (2004: 7). He notes that the extreme individuality of the Internet "spins so many threads that a consensus or public sphere is not possible". Is there still a polis?

This comes down to an important aspect of identification: how many people does one need before one can claim to have identified a group? Earlier, I drew Zeno into the fray, with his famous parable of the tortoise and the hare. But the philosopher from Elea also had another parable, about how to define a "heap". The crux of this analogy is deciding at which point a collection of millet seeds becomes a "heap". If one takes off one seed at a time, the heap is intact, but once one is left with a single seed, this is surely no longer a heap. At which point, then, does it cease to be a heap? At which point is it identifiable as a group which constitutes something extra beyond a collection of its parts?²⁴

²⁴ Zeno's parable is demonstrated in Stephen Fry's novel *The Stars' Tennis Balls* (2000) wherein an old man called Babe is trying to explain to Ned Maddstone the subtle difference between a heap and what is not a heap, using fir cones instead of millet seeds. Babe begins with two fir cones, which Ned agrees is not a heap. Babe continues adding cones until Ned concedes that a heap has, indeed, been reached:

Babe clapped his hands. "A heap of fir cones! Seventeen of the darlings. So Ned Maddstone is telling the world that seventeen is officially a heap?"

"Well..."

"Seventeen fir cones constitutes a heap, but sixteen do not?"

"No, I'm not saying that exactly..."

"There we have a problem. The world is full of heaps..." (181).

Individuality is, admittedly, an untidy concept to bring into a discussion such as this one. Still, according to Charles Taylor, individuality and freedom are two of the strongest values assumed in terms of creating a contemporary sense of "self". Yet "individuality" is not a concept one can easily pin down. For example, can individuality be expressed without resorting to collective descriptions which might resonate with a shared community, or at least with an other? And would one assume that everybody carries with him or her an equal measure of individuality, or is it more a style of personality, which could, for example, be cultivated and expanded? Watered down by overuse, the term slips and slides out of one's grasp. It is a word often implying a range of positive associations (originality, courage, responsibility); and yet, it is also linked to negative connotations (selfishness, alienation, isolation). It would be impossible to have a history of individualism, since, although one might be able to identify general tendencies in specific works – such as contrasting the Romantic poets' preference for individuality with those of, say, the Augustans – the whole point of being an individual is that one is not tied to an institution. This also highlights the contradiction of calling oneself an existentialist, since, if one is genuinely opposed to institutionalisation, one would also reject this label itself.

On the other hand, Gilles Deleuze does not distinguish between individual and collective, saying that "every proper name is collective, every assemblage is already a collective" (1993: 253). In this sense, distinguishing collective from individual identities might not be as urgent a project as it may at first appear to be, since individuals are already collectives of different identities, and collectives are often distinguished by a united ideology. In fact, collectives may turn out to be even more coherently individual than particular people. Also, as Deleuze says, both "[g]roups and individuals contain microfascisms just waiting to crystallize" (32). The question of

flexibility or impermanence of identity will thus not be solved by transposing questions of identity from the collective to the individual or vice versa.

So far then, I have highlighted an emphasis of this thesis on fractured identities which have been described as rhizomatic. I have so far hesitated to invoke the name of Postmodernism, since it can attract a nebulous cluster of differing theoretical devices. However, there is no getting past it, my approach and analysis of identities does emerge from within the sphere of influence of the postmodern. So before this thesis (finally) settles down to an examination of actual texts, I would like to very briefly mention the extent to which depictions of identity – both of self-hood and of society – will be viewed in light of some considerations emphasised by Postmodernism.

1.5.3 Conclusion – Postmodern Paradigms

If the individual self is an illusion, it seems clear to me that the group is also an illusion....And yet the illusion itself can have a certain truth or reality (since it can be defined or named) which must be taken into account, whether it be an illusion of self, of nation, of race, of other groups, of the world.

Eugene Ionesco (*Fragments of a Journal*. 1968: 148)

One of the key requirements in literary studies today involves adopting a position in terms of a theoretical framework, and one is inevitably required to announce this position, or perspective. This springs, most likely, from a growing awareness that the way in which we interpret human behaviour determines to a large extent what we are able to read into it. It seems that naming often comes before discovery, and that identities may be invented (or discovered) in terms of their definition. If this theoretically eclectic introduction has not yet sufficiently revealed its inclinations, then it is now time to declare unequivocally that the approach which has been and

will be used in this thesis is largely drawn from theorists who have been called postmodern.

It may seem more natural when dealing with contemporary South African literature to adopt the apparatus of "post-colonial" studies, since these are the tools which have more often than not been applied to the literatures of African states after their independence. And yet a certain sector of South African society is also part of an international community I have previously described as "consumer". Also, South Africa does not fit quite as neatly into the post-colonial model as other African countries might. Not that long ago, it was a colony of Britain, as so many other countries were, but then its position shifted from that of a colony into first a "Union" and then a limited form of a Republic, (or what has since come to be called a nationalistic "regime", but what might more accurately be described as a "limited democracy"). Clearly South Africa does not represent a cut-and-dried case of a colonial country developing into a post-colony after a war of independence. What it shares with many post-colonial countries, however, is the impulse towards establishing a coherent sense of identity in terms of an opposition to colonialism and an embracing of democracy. And yet this striving after a sense of what it means to be "Proudly South African"²⁵ can also be at odds with the experience of being caught up in a global flow of information. In addition to this, South Africa became democratic in a decade which has been characterised by an unprecedented expansion in communications technology, in terms of cell-phones, the internet and satellite television, which thrust those who could afford these new technologies into a global

²⁵ "Proudly South African" is the brand name of a campaign launched by government, business, labour and community organisations to promote South African companies, products and services.

arena²⁶. And this international situation does seem better suited to postmodern descriptions rather than in terms of being a post-colony. As Renato Ronaldo points out, the postmodern has come to refer to people who "inhabit an interdependent late twentieth century world marked by borrowing and lending across porous national and cultural boundaries" (in Carlson 2003: 206). This also describes the majority of readers of published plays in South Africa. As formerly mentioned, the representations of the characters identified with by these readers form the basis of the limitations imposed on these investigations²⁷.

Postmodernism celebrates the dissolution of identity and the impossibility of fixed notions of self. It describes notions of self as permeable and fluid. Most tellingly, postmodernist discourses deny the possibility of an authentic identity. As Lyotard has it:

A self does not amount to much, but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before. Young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, a person is always located at "nodal points" of specific communication circuits, however tiny these may be. Or better: one is always located at a post through which various kinds of messages pass...[Yet] [n]o one, not even the least privileged among us, is ever entirely powerless over the messages that traverse and position him at the post of sender, addressee, or referent (1984: 15).

This then, is the approach which this thesis will adopt towards the discussion of self which follows. It will be examining characters as representations of experiments in selfhood, experiments in freedom, as the posting of "nodal points" through which the messages and the energy of a South African culture can be forged. I find much of

²⁶ I am reluctant to employ Marshall McLuhan's term of a "global village" since most of the globe does not have access to the new technologies. And yet, it seems that there is certainly some sort of global enclave, or a system of power of international proportions.

²⁷ That is not to say that the identity constructions of those very many millions of South Africans who are illiterate are irrelevant, it is rather realising the limitations of any textual investigation.

what Charles Taylor writes extremely useful, and yet I do not agree with him that the postmodern discourse is not applicable to matters of identity because it does not operate in terms of a "framework". I agree with him that in every description, a frame is present, but I would prefer to draw on the implications of the word "frame" as verb rather than noun, as an indication that it is the process of framing which creates the framework. So my emphasis will be on the processes of creating identity, and not on reaching a final set of conclusions about the variables which create any specific identity. In this way, the variables defined by Taylor are helpful in describing what has gone into the construction of the modern idea of self; and yet, I tend also to agree with Robert Jay Lifton and his description of a "protean self", which Carlson describes as being composed of "fluidity" and which is "reflective of the flux of a postmodern world" (2003: 206). I will return specifically to this sense of postmodern identity in Lifton's description during my discussion on syncretism.

One of the advantages of working within a postmodern paradigm, is that one is able to borrow concepts and terminology from a multitude of other discourses. Over the course of this first chapter, this thesis has tried to grapple with some of the issues concerning identity and the formation of "self" which currently prevail in the humanities by approaching the issue from a range of various disciplines. Often the definitions produced by fields overlap, which is to be expected, since they share an interest in the workings of consciousness, but even if they are not always in agreement, the contradictions between their views often provide interesting areas of investigation.

Moving on to the play texts themselves, I feel that the best way to proceed is to examine different plays from a number of different theoretical positions. The content and style of each work will influence its reception, which is why I will not be

interpreting all of the plays in terms of the same identity configurations. Those reading this thesis hoping to discover a definition of "real" identity as opposed to one which is fraudulent or inauthentic, are bound to be disappointed. For the purposes of this thesis, an identity is a way in which a person or a collective has been framed. In this way an identity represents a temporary point within a matrix of descriptions. Suffice to say, this in no way makes identities whimsical, arbitrary creations. In many instances identity structures have become deeply rooted habitual tendencies kept alive by an individual's insistent faith in the premises on which he or she has founded a classification of himself or herself. In other instances – during apartheid, for example, as described at the beginning of this introduction – powerful state sanctioned identities had very real material consequences for millions of people. There is, however, one thing which all individual and collective identities share. None of them is permanent.

Although I will be focusing on plays written since 1994, this definition of new writing is perhaps not always thematically precise, as some plays preceding this date share similarities with plays within this period. Also, a few of the texts which I will examine were written before 1994; though there are valid reasons for their inclusion, not least of which is the fact that their publication date after 1994 signals the time when they were made more widely available. Having said that, this thesis will certainly also take into account the influence of older plays, in order to indicate appropriately the emergence of a tradition within South African playwriting, and to contrast the new with the old.

In the following chapters, I will examine four different frames from which to examine issues of identity in new South African play texts. First I would like to explore notions of identification in terms of gender. Then I will move on to examine

identities structured in terms of political affiliations, before moving on to the related ideas of nationalism and ethnicity. Finally, I will consider hybrid, or syncretic forms of identity construction. These frames have all been profoundly influenced by the changes which were effected in May 1994, and they could all be considered as tentative forays into and experiments with new-found freedoms.

CHAPTER TWO – GENDERED IDENTITIES

2.1 WHITE MEN IN EXILE: MASCULINE SUBJECT-POSITIONS

2.1.1 Introduction

To speak of masculinity in general, *sui generis*, must be avoided at all costs.
Homi Bhabha. ("Are You a Man or a Mouse?" 2000: 102).

The issue of being defined in terms of a gender has increasingly been problematized by discourses on sexuality and the institutionalisation of feminism in departments of Women's Studies and Gender Studies. It is relatively recently that discussions of gender have become validated as academic discourses, and yet these discourses already hold a considerable amount of sway. In fact, it would be almost impossible today to write on issues concerning the configuration of identity without referring to gender. Curiously, there seems to be a vast discrepancy between the received wisdom on the subject and that offered by academics. To begin with, this chapter will examine a few of the differences between the popular view that biological essentialism determines the characteristics and qualities of gender identity; and the view offered by many academics, which claims that gender constructions are fluid and uncertain creations manufactured by prevailing (and changing) discursive norms. This introductory section will also be looking at the formulation of gender, as distinguished from sex, before considering alternative approaches to establishing a definition of masculinity.

There are a number of reasons why I have chosen to focus on masculinity instead of femininity. For one thing, a number of essays which focus on women have already been written about the contemporary South African stage²⁸; and yet I find no

²⁸ For example: "The Personal is the Political – Gender in the Context of Apartheid South Africa: A Look at Two Women Playwrights" (Loots 1996); "Colonised Bodies: Overcoming Gender Construction

indication that the subject of masculinity has ever been approached in this regard. Also, I have become interested in an interesting reversal which seems to have taken place, in that it seems that the "masculine" is often described today as the negative side of the female positive, a situation which reverses the norms prevalent as little as a century ago. The subject of white South African masculinity is also of interest, because this is an identity construction which has undergone a particularly significant alteration since the advent of democracy. And it is not only white masculinity which has been affected. Robert Morrell points out in his introduction to *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (2001):

South Africa, until recently, was a man's country. Power was exercised publicly and politically by men. In families, both black and white, men made decisions, earned the money, and held power. The law (both customary and modern) supported the presumption of male power and authority and discriminated against women (18).

This moment of transformation is of interest, since it is precisely at the juncture where identities are contested, where they are attacked and defended, that their limitations become more pronounced, that their form is outlined. Perhaps it is only when things change, when identities are destabilised, that one can begin to speak of what they were and what they might become. Since sanctions meant that South Africa was excluded for a long time from international cultural exchanges, it is possible to speculate that gender roles in South Africa may have remained considerably more rigid than in many other countries. For example, Greig Coetzee rather pointedly describes South African men as "fossils" (in Morrell 2001: 3). For many, South Africa has been described as one of the last bastions of male chauvinism; but white men, in particular, have now had to undergo a fundamental shift in terms

of Bodies in Dance and Movement Education in South Africa" (Loots 1995); and "Re-evaluating Otherness, Building for Difference: South African Theatre Beyond the Interregnum" (Blumberg 1995).

of the perception of ideological power invested in them during the apartheid era after the changes made to a status quo which had been maintained for many decades. It would, therefore, be interesting to examine how a loss of ideological legitimation has been portrayed. This loss of legitimation also coincides with what some writers have described as a condition of crisis in masculinity in global arenas²⁹, a subject to which I will return.

The white men in South Africa who had already left secondary school before the momentous changes to the country's constitution began, have, during the course of the past decade, become alienated from the formative conditions of their principle education. I am using the term "exile" in the title of this chapter to indicate this severing. These are men "in exile from" the conditions which formed their sense of masculinity. The term "exile" has also been used to highlight what I read as an irrevocable tie between notions of masculinity and ideals about nationalism. One fairly obvious relation is that the etymology of the word "patriotism" arises from Latin (*pater*, *patr-*, father) and Greek (*patēr*, *patr-*, father), indicating an association between being male and being part of a country. Furthermore, it appears that the plays which best exemplify a masculine identity are also those which describe men in exile.

The position of the exile provides an interesting space in which to examine identity, since the exile lives as an outsider, while bolstering his sense of self by maintaining his identification with a country which has rejected him, or, in the case of a self-imposed exile, which he has rejected. In contrast to the immigrant, then, the exile

²⁹ When I speak of globalisation, I am not referring to an equal exchange of countries and cultures, but rather to the imposition of ideologies from the world's more powerful consumer societies, and in particular, the United States of America. I agree with Rien T. Segers that "globalisation" is most often a form of "Americanisation" (2004: 189).

often deliberately maintains his sense of alienation³⁰. I would like to examine, then, how notions of whiteness, maleness, and nationalism have intersected; and what effect a loss of legitimation has had on depictions of white masculinity.

2.1.2 Biological Essentialism

To what extent are people governed by hormones, chromosomes, DNA and blood type? How decisive is biology? Since Thales of Miletus first insisted that "Everything is water", the search has been on for a single origin and cause of all behaviour. New advances in chemistry and biology (such as the unravelling of DNA in the Human Genome Project) have also recently provided a new impetus for the movement which sees the human body as ultimately determining its destiny. Perhaps Richard Dawkins' view that "we are machines" (2003)³¹ represents the most extreme form of contemporary materialism. As stated in the introduction to this thesis, I am more interested in the interpretation of signs than in the revelation of matter. Nevertheless, this divergence is worth noting, if only because it is so extreme.

It seems that diametrically opposite views on gender are presented by popular and specialised literature on the subject. If one considers the plethora of self-help books available today, one might assume that a biological essentialism in gender role specification has been universally accepted. The current interest in the division of sex roles received an enormous impetus from John Gray's spectacularly successful *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* (1992), and a range of other popular

³⁰ Of course, the state of exile was and is not unique to men, and yet it does seem that the condition of men in exile has been more thoroughly represented in new play texts than that of women.

³¹ Stated on "Dolly" in the DVD *Three Tales* (2003. Nonesuch Records. Music by Steve Reich and visuals by Beryl Korot).

psychology texts endorse very similar ideas³². These texts emphasise innate differences between genders which are attributed to biological causes, and they ultimately argue for an essentialism in terms of gender identities. For example, in *The Essential Difference: The Truth about the Male and Female Brain* (2001), Simon Baron-Cohen spells out his thesis on page one, namely that "[t]he female brain is predominantly hard-wired for empathy. The male brain is predominantly hard-wired for understanding and building systems." Here, the use of words like "hard-wired" designates a fundamental and innate predisposition, and in many of these texts, the argument is made that men and women "naturally" behave in certain ways, and that trying to behave in any way that contests these "natural" dispositions will lead to contradiction and anxiety. And yet it is precisely the construction of the "natural" which troubles gender theorists. As Anna Tripp makes clear:

while essentialists invoke notions of nature and what is 'natural' in order to authorise their positions, others have countered that these notions of 'nature' and 'the natural' are in fact culturally mediated or constructed, historically variable and ideologically motivated (2001: 10).

Elaine Storkey describes a linear progression of ideas on gender, and she defines essentialism as belonging to a "pre-modern" sensibility. By this she means an identification which is comparatively static since it subscribes to a "fixed order, fixed roles, and fixed explanations, reinforced by accepted tradition":

³² These include: Tannen, Deborah. 1991. *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. New York: Ballantine Books; Jessel, David. 1992. *Brain Sex : The Real Difference Between Men and Women*. New York: Delta; Glass, Lillian. 1995. *He Says She Says: Closing the Communication Gap Between the Sexes*. New York: Perigee Books; Baron-Cohen, Simon. 2001. *The Essential Difference: The Truth about the Male and Female Brain*. New York: Perseus Books Group; Pease, Allan and Barbara. 2001. *Why Men Don't Listen and Women Can't Read Maps*. London: Orion; Moir, Anne and Bill. 2003. *Why Men Don't Iron: The Fascinating and Unalterable Differences Between Men and Women*. New York: Citadel Press; Pease, Allan & Barbara. 2004. *Why Men Don't Have a Clue and Women Always Need More Shoes : The Ultimate Guide to the Opposite Sex*. New York: Broadway; Legato, Marianne J. and Tucker, Laura. 2005. *Why Men Never Remember and Women Never Forget*. Emmaus: Rodale Books.

At its heart lies an essentialism, the idea that a certain 'essence' defines the centre of our identity as human beings and as men and women. In gender terms this means that men have certain identifiable, fixed characteristics, and women have other identifiable, fixed characteristics, and that these identifiers are rooted in our very nature (25-6).

Storkey also notes a post-war move away from biological reductionism (38) and notes that biology itself does not rely on a neutral authority, but forms part of a specific ideological interpretation of reality. Perhaps it is the point of theory not to assume that anything is "natural". Only by questioning the idea that phenomena are self-evident are we able to prise our way into assumptions underlying certain discourses.

In contrast to Tripp and Storkey, probably the last prominent academic to propose an essentialist gender identity was Camille Paglia, who became famous in the early nineties with her voluminous study *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (1992). Paglia's book is based almost entirely on the cornerstone of Nietzsche's distinction between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, which he proposed in the first sentence of *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872)³³. Paglia consequently reads the female/feminine as Dionysian and the male/masculine as Apollonian and describes all interaction between genders in terms of this grid. Since her grand statement and the surrounding controversy it attracted, however, she has not been easily assimilated into academic discourses, possibly since she remains a virulent opponent of feminism. On the other hand, she has been active in popular media, and still writes a regular column for the highly influential online magazine Salon (www.salon.com) as well as being a contributing editor of *Interview* magazine. She was also listed with Julia Kristeva and Germaine Greer, when "she was named

³³ "[T]he continuous evolution of art is bound up with the duality of the *Apolline* and the *Dionysian* in much the same way as reproduction depends on there being two sexes which co-exist in a state of perpetual conflict interrupted only occasionally by periods of reconciliation" (1994: 14).

one of the 'Top 100 Public Intellectuals' in the world, in a list compiled jointly by editors of the journals *Foreign Policy* and *The Prospect* (UK)" in September, 2005³⁴. Paglia, however, does not represent the prevailing view disseminated by most academic writing on the issue, which declares that gender is fluid, changing, and inconsistent.

On the contrary, it has almost become a standard practice when writing on gender to begin one's writing with a disclaimer which makes clear that the writer does not subscribe to the belief in essentials. The preamble to many an essay on gender is likely to begin with some sort of statement that gender is a socially conditioned category, that it changes over time, and cannot thus be construed as arising from biology. For example, Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett hasten to point out in their introduction to *The Masculinities Reader* (2001) that

each contributor rejects the idea that men and masculinities are either locked in a genetic combination, or determined by a fixed, unchangeable, biological set of conditions or factors (10).

And in Robert Morrell's discussion in *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (2001), he writes:

Masculinities are fluid and should not be considered as belonging in a fixed way to any group of men. They are socially and historically constructed in a process which involves contestation between rival understandings of what being a man should involve....Masculinities are constantly being protected and defended, are constantly breaking down and being recreated (7).

Perhaps what lies at the heart of the turn against essentialism, what has made it possible to speak about constructions of gender identity at all, was the separation of

³⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camille_Paglia> Accessed 7 February 2006.

"sex" from "gender". When speaking about "sex" (male and female) there is a clear objective, physical biological distinction which can be made; whereas to speak of "gender" (masculine and feminine) implies an altogether different categorisation which is semiotic in nature, and is largely controlled by social constructions. According to Lynne Segal (1990: 66), this crucial split was first introduced by Robert Stoller in 1968 and later popularised by Ann Oakley. Once "gender" was created as a site which did not rely exclusively on sex, debates about how to characterise different genders were able to be nurtured. Nevertheless, the identities to which this thesis refers are all firmly and inescapably lodged within theoretical realms, which Jeff Hearn and David Morgan see as occupying a space diametrically opposed to essentialism. In fact, they state that theory's very *raison d'être* arises from an opposition to what is considered self-evident:

The need to theorize gender, in particular to theorize men and masculinity, arises largely because of the dangers of reification, essentialism, and reductionism that arise when using such categories as 'women' and 'men', 'femininity' and 'masculinity' (8-9).

Similarly, Whitehead and Barrett (2001) claim that "'Masculinity' is not a coherent object about which a generalizing science can be produced" (30). Anna Tripp goes even further in contemplating the difficulty of practising any kind of cultural criticism at all, since "culture is not coherent" (2000: ix). All of our gestures then towards trying to settle on a definition of gender must of necessity be tentative and porous constructions. There are no hard and fast lines in the study of ideas and families of meaning can become vast and diffuse. In addition to this, it should be mentioned that definitions of groups can in no way be taken as reflections of personal, individual experiences, since one's experience of living can not necessarily be quantified and restricted by one's alignment within a category. Briefly stated, there

is no single unifying quality (besides the over-arching name) which could be applied to all individual members of the set called "white men who grew up during apartheid". Instead of searching for foundational qualities on which to build, I will be trying to look for particular displays of masculinity. When I do refer to the category of "masculine", it should be made clear that this is in terms of an imaginary, fictional construction. By this time the reader will have become aware that this thesis is mostly concerned with the description of an imagined collective, with what Elias Canetti calls an "invisible crowd"³⁵ and Benedict Anderson refers to as an "imagined community"³⁶.

I would now like to consider some of the alternative ways of defining gender, and investigate whether or not one could apply these frameworks to the study of masculinity in the selected post-apartheid plays. If essentialist arguments are no longer legitimate, then on which grounds can notions of gender be premised?

2.1.3 Alternative Definitions of Gender

According to R. W. Connell (2001), there are at least four different strategies one could adopt when dealing with definitions of gender: Essentialist, Positivist, Normative, and Semiotic. Briefly stated, for Connell, essentialist strategies are problematic in that different writers apparently "discover" completely different essences. For example, while some people have defined men as essentially

³⁵ In Canetti's astonishing *Crowds and Power* (1981), he posits that men and women operate as a double crowd – mixing together but regarded as separate. For Canetti, "war is the danger of the double crowd" (72-78).

³⁶ Benedict Anderson's phrase refers to nationalism, but it could apply equally well to the category of gender: "it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (1991: 15). I will discuss Anderson's views in more detail in the next section.

"responsible", others would say that "irresponsibility" is an essential feature of a masculine identity. Ultimately, what these definitions do is to tell us more about "the ethos of the claimant than about anything else" (31).

Then one could attempt positivist definitions, which try to quantify ways in which men behave and to provide a sociological answer to the decisions made by men in actual situations. These definitions constitute, for example, the M/F scales adopted by many psychological practices³⁷. One difficulty with this type of definition according to Connell, is that at some point a decision must be made regarding the terms which will be used to investigate the differences between masculinity and femininity; and the selection of the criteria used to differentiate the masculine from the feminine already reveals a point of view. These distinctions, therefore, rely on the very "typifications that are supposedly under investigation in gender research" (32).

A third potential strategy involves normative descriptions, which rely on "what men ought to be" (33). These definitions investigate sex role models, from fashion to the multitude of media representations of men. Unfortunately, these idealisations are hardly ever attained, and Connell asks the crucial question: "What is 'normative' about a norm hardly anyone meets? Are we to say the majority of men are unmasculine?" (33). This is hardly a desirable approach.

³⁷ These are scales used to determine which personality traits are predominantly male (M) and which female (F). For example, Richard A. Lippa refers to a study in which he describes men as predominantly characterised by their relations in terms of "instrumentality", whereas women are qualified as being more "expressive" (2001: 170). M/F scales list qualities and characteristics of either gender which are then tested in a population by means of various exercises. Interestingly, Lippa concludes his study with the proposition that "M and F are at core indefinable and should be banned from the scientific vocabulary" (169).

A fourth definition of masculinity occurs in terms of semiotic processes where systems of meaning are under investigation, principally language. In terms of this approach, one examines particular instances, and tries to avoid generalising about a masculine personality. Instead, the formulation of masculinity in language is analysed, such as, for example, its description in terms of being "not-femininity" (33). This analysis also assists in defining masculinity as a relationship in terms of power (43).

For the purposes of this thesis, the fourth type of definition seems the most feasible, since I will not be dealing with any actual human beings, but rather with their representation as characters in plays, in terms of the experiment of literature. I would be interested in finding points of intersection between the characters created by a number of different playwrights, in terms of their performance of definitions of masculinity. In a sense, this methodology refers to a style of reading, more than an insistence on particular content. In other words, this approach will also take into account mythological and psychological descriptions offered by essentialist modes (if that is what is being represented by a particular writer) while maintaining a sceptical attitude towards norms as revelations of universality.

2.1.4 Pejorative Definitions of Masculinity

It may be relevant to note that what were once considered to be norms of ideal masculine behaviour have drastically changed in the last half century, and many qualities which were previously praised are today lambasted. Whereas the prevailing views on masculinity were forged during the nineteenth century, these views have rapidly been declining since the middle of the twentieth. For example, Anthony Clare, in *On Men: Masculinity in Crisis* (2001), writes that notions of hegemonic masculinity

while forged over a number of centuries, flowered in the nineteenth century, a century of unparalleled male achievement in science, technology, biology, medicine, exploration and imperial expansion (69).

Not only were male achievements praised, but the male perspective was considered the norm. For example, Anna Tripp (2000) points out that:

Masculinity has long and often been represented as the human norm – and conventionally masculine qualities (such as vigour, courage, rationality, authority, mastery, independence) have been seen simultaneously as universal 'human' ideals (11).

But these views have changed, and where accepted as "masculine", these traits are no longer necessarily accepted as desirable. In fact, it is difficult to find theoretical definitions of masculinity today which are phrased in a positive light. Instead, many academic definitions of masculinity seem to be posted in terms of a negative description, and definitions of masculinity are increasingly becoming pejorative. Whitehead and Barrett point out that in terms of masculine role behaviour, "what was appropriate 50 years ago is now 'stigmatised and debased'", and behaviour which typified the male role, such as "aggressive, dominant, emotionally repressed behaviour" is today seen as "(self)-destructive, if not derisible" (2001: 6). They suggest three reasons for this, including,

[firstly]...rampant, soulless consumerism; secondly, women's (feminism's) successful assault on male bastions of privilege; and thirdly, more widespread social and cultural disapproval of traditional displays of masculinity (6).

Whatever the case may be, we have arrived at an historical juncture in which destructive behaviour has become synonymous with descriptions of masculinity. Anthony Clare states that

[v]iolence, sexual abuse of children, illicit drug use, alcohol misuse, gambling are all overwhelmingly male activities. The courts and prisons bulge with men. When it comes to aggression, delinquent behaviour, risk taking and social mayhem, men win gold (3).

One statistic with which it is impossible to argue is that "[m]ost episodes of major violence...are transactions among men" (44). Michael Messner goes as far as to say that performing as "masculine subject":

not only serves men ill emotionally and in their relationships, it can only be sustained and reaffirmed through fraternal groupings, often misogynistic male bonding rituals, rejection of intimacy and an avid denial of the 'Other' – be it women, femininity, or gay sexuality (in Whitehead and Barrett 2001: 10).

And yet, an interesting point which Clare makes is that for all their excesses of power, men are seemingly not necessarily happier than women. For example, they are far more likely to be suicidal and they do not live as long as women in any society in the world (2001: 3). He also refers to the "increasing redundancy of male violence", in the sense that hunting and warfare no longer constitute a necessity for survival for many modern men. Furthermore, "the growing irrelevance of men to reproduction and the expanding self-confidence and assertiveness of women all constitute mighty blows to male confidence" (129).

To be described today as "masculine" is then, in terms of these discourses, nothing short of an insult³⁸. The rare texts which do describe masculinity as a positive quality, rely on essentialist and archetypal definitions. Besides the popular psychology books already mentioned, there have been a few attempts to rehabilitate masculinity and to

³⁸ Again, one must be clear here that this is with reference to a "Western" model of masculinity, and not a universal variation on the theme, since male confidence in, for example, the Arab world, as well as in much of Africa does not appear to be beset by similar uncertainties.

explore a positive male identification. These include views such as that put forward by Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), which presents an image of an archetypal masculinity embedded in the figure of the "Hero"³⁹. There is also Robert Bly's *Iron John* (1999), in which he endorses an essentialist view of a masculinity best expressed in terms of the archetypal "Warrior". However, I feel that these views are less than useful, since by endorsing the hero and the warrior, it would appear that these writers are encouraging exactly the destructive role behaviour which Whitehead, Barret, Clare and Messner describe. To re-iterate: I will be turning to semiotic and performative descriptions in order to reach some sort of conclusion, however tentative, as to ways in which white men have been portrayed in the dramatic texts of post-apartheid South Africa.

2.1.5 Doing Instead of Being

There is another way in which one could describe gender. According to Judith Butler, in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), one's actions and behaviour can be said to constitute one's identity (3). Besides the semiotic approach, this thesis will also be turning to a performative model, which takes as its starting point Friedrich Nietzsche's observation in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, that "there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything" (1967: 45). This performative aspect of identity formation – referred to extensively in chapter one – provides a focal point for this thesis. According to Erving Goffman, gender can be described "in terms of *display*" which is used "to sustain one's self-presentation" as an appropriately gendered person

³⁹ In this seminal work Campbell describes an innate masculinity which is expressed in terms of the figure of a hero who sets out on a mythic quest. After numerous trials, the hero is ultimately initiated into a male order and undergoes the symbolic death of his old identity. When he eventually returns to his society, he has been transformed, having attained the knowledge he needs to save his people.

(in Coleman 1990: 187). And I would agree with Whitehead and Barrett that masculinity is most useful as a term when it describes an action instead of an essence:

since masculinity is something that one 'does' instead of something that one 'has', it would be appropriate to say that men 'do' masculinity in a variety of ways and in a variety of settings, depending on the resources available to them (2001: 18).

Unless extensive use is made of a narrator, we learn almost everything about a character on stage in terms of what he or she does or does not do. To speak can also be an action, as John Austin points out in *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) with his definition of speech acts as statements in which "the uttering of the sentence is, or is part of, the doing of an action" (5). The decisions made by characters in terms of dialogue and action consequently go a long way towards constituting the ways in which we perceive them. By watching characters fulfil their roles on stage, one could also reflect on ways in which masculinity is performed as a role off-stage. Will Coleman, in *Doing Masculinity/Doing Theory* (1990), highlights his preference for the dramaturgical model which

privileges *description* over theoretical/causal analysis. For in this version, persons are seen as acting for *reasons* rather than causes. Persons are seeable as 'doing' masculinity, rather than it being something that is done to them or that happens to them (192).

Trying to discern the performance of masculinities in plays seems, then, to be an entirely appropriate place to seek out these semiotic constructions.

2.2 SEPARATION AND SEXUAL MATURITY IN *THE CAPTAIN'S TIGER* (ATHOL FUGARD)

It seems fitting to begin the analysis of play scripts with two texts by Athol Fugard, South Africa's most celebrated playwright⁴⁰. Since Fugard's debut with *No Good Friday* in 1958, and his international success with *The Blood Knot* in 1961, his voice has become synonymous with a theatre of resistance in South Africa. His willingness to engage in stories concerning all the peoples of South Africa has endeared him to a worldwide audience, and his characters have resonated with many different facets of South African society. That is not to say that he is necessarily universally admired within the country. For example, although Zakes Mda says that he enjoys his work, he also says that he has "vehemently disagreed with him in almost everything he has written". This is largely because, according to Mda, his South Africa "is different from Athol Fugard's South Africa" (1993: 53).

After the tumultuous events of 1990, Fugard has on occasion expressed a mild anxiety about his subject matter. With apartheid dead and buried, he confessed that he sometimes felt "confused" about the themes he would be addressing in his writing. Hilary Burns goes as far as to say that he underwent a "profound identity crisis" (2002: 242). A number of commentators, including Dennis Walder, have noted a change in Fugard's work, in that his post-apartheid plays have tended to elaborate more personal concerns than before⁴¹. Fugard has never called himself a "political" writer,

⁴⁰ Carol Becker refers to him as "South Africa's most famous playwright" (1998: 92). A press statement issued on 4 April 2007 to announce his role as patron of the Arts and Culture Trust <www.act.org.za> states that "Fugard has written a total of 37 plays, many of which have been filmed, with Fugard acting in several....His work has garnered him many prizes in South Africa and abroad, and he has received more than 20 honorary degrees from universities throughout the world. He has also been elected a fellow of the British Royal Society of Literature (1986) and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1988)."

⁴¹ "Fugard seems to have found the space, in the 'post-apartheid' 1990s, to ruminate upon his personal past in a quite detailed, nostalgic way..." (2000: ix).

preferring instead to refer to himself as "intensely regional" (Lewis 1998: 77), and yet, it seems as though the region he has been writing about describes a circle gradually drawing closer and closer to his own personal account of the world. Whereas Fugard said of his *Notebooks* from 1960-1977 that he "made it a point to exclude 'self'" (1983: 8), the vision expressed by his post-1994 works has certainly become more introspective. According to Annette Combrink, in Fugard's most recent writing "there is a strong suggestion of the confessional, which also has the concomitant effect that his work has become increasingly interiorized" (2004: 55). This could be an indication that since the end of apartheid, Fugard feels it unnecessary to represent a collective or attack the marginalisation of certain groups; and yet this shift could also indicate a change in his priorities which have come about as a result of the specific period of his life, as part of growing older. He told Simon Lewis: "with a writer who reaches my age...you turn inward and you rely more and more on your own resources and your provocations in your final phase of your life come from within rather than from without" (78).

Whatever the case may be, whether this turn inward reflects the onset of a new phase of life, or whether it is on account of the burgeoning of democracy, *The Captain's Tiger* (2001) could be considered one of the most autobiographical of Athol Fugard's plays⁴². Keyan Tomaselli calls it the "most personal of Athol Fugard's plays" (1998: 194). It might also be considered one of his most experimental pieces⁴³ in that he strays from his usually realistic settings and employs a variety of non-naturalistic narrative devices, such as portraying himself both as "The Author" and as the young "Tiger". By entering the narrative – a technique he also used in *Valley Song* (1996) –

⁴² Two other Fugard plays which are also clearly autobiographical are *Master Harold and the Boys* (1982) and *Exits and Entrances* (2005).

⁴³ Fugard's earlier experimental pieces are generally considered to be *Dimetos* (1977) and *Orestes* (1990).

Fugard, as author, experiments with postmodern conditions of reflexivity and draws attention to the processes of mediating a narrative construction.

The plot of *The Captain's Tiger* documents a time Fugard spent on the SS Graigaur in 1952 when he was still an aspiring writer. On the ship he was employed as a supernumerary, a role referred to colloquially by the eponym of the title⁴⁴. Tiger recounts his attempt to write his first novel, which was to be based on the character of his courageous mother; and the plot also details his initiation into manhood by means of his first sexual experience with a prostitute in Niigita, Japan.

The young author's relationship with his mother comprises the central conflict of the play, although there is also some interaction with a Swahili mechanic called by the unfortunately rather offensive appellation of "Donkeyman". Donkeyman provides the Author with a sounding board and encouragement. He is the Tiger's first audience. They also begin to learn each other's language. The author's relationship with the memory of his mother, Betty le Roux, remains at the centre of both the play and the novel which Tiger means to write. He says that his novel is going to be "about a beautiful young Afrikaner girl in a white dress in a small Karoo town" (5) and is to be called *Betty Le Roux: The Story of a South African Woman*. In this novel, he will explore "all those secret dreams and ambitions" (17) of her youth. He is going to recreate her life using a photograph he has of her as a starting point:

It's the photograph of you [his mother] when you were a young girl that's hanging in your bedroom. That is going to be my inspiration. I'm going to weave together all the stories you've told me about your life and what you

⁴⁴ "That means I get a shilling a month, a comfortable bunk in the sick bay and three whopping good meals a day, in return for which I have to look after the Captain...clean his cabin, make his bed, do his washing, serve his food...a sort of glorified servant" (4).

wanted to do with it, only this time all those dreams you had are going to come true (5).

Tiger means to rewrite his mother's history with a happy ending, and this is a piece about a son trying to fulfil his mother's dreams. Betty then steps out of her photograph and tries to help the young author with his grand undertaking. She reminds him of his ability to shape reality as a writer and tells him that he is now in a position to reconstruct his memory and to manipulate the very fabric of reality, since a memory can be made true, "[i]f you say so" (8). The young author subsequently becomes very excited by the possibility of creating a world:

Creative authority. That's what you've put your finger on young lady. The freedom and authority of the creative artist to go in any direction his imagination chooses. Theoretically I can do anything I like with you (9).

But this freedom does not occur in a vacuum, and after realising that he can do what he likes with the character of his mother, he adds, "It's a hell of a responsibility you know" (9). Here Fugard appears to be echoing the work of Viktor Frankl, who writes that freedom can only be earned with an increase in responsibility⁴⁵. In the process of his maturation, then, Tiger grapples with the responsibilities inherent in the choices he makes, which applies equally to his creative as well as his sexual development.

Fugard thus creates a fictional character based on the facts of his youth. He re-invents himself and his mother by ascribing different names to these characters, and by toying with notions of truth and fiction, biography and memory. He has created a moving memoir which also grapples with the existentialist question of a character's

⁴⁵ "Freedom is not the last word. Freedom is only part of the story and half of the truth. The positive aspect of freedom is responsibility" (*Man's Search for Meaning*, 1985: 156).

freedom. Betty eventually tells the young Author how to tell her story, and it seems as though she has broken free from him, and that a character he has created is now dictating to him how he should behave.

The central conflict of the play revolves around the dynamics of this intense relationship, and the conversations Tiger/Fugard has with his mother/muse lead to the emergence of a number of interesting issues surrounding notions of masculinity. It does seem like a play of ideas, more than one driven by plot. In fact, a number of reviewers – including Peter Marks⁴⁶, Raeford Daniel⁴⁷ and the unnamed reviewer for the *Weekly Mail and Guardian*⁴⁸ – have suggested that the play might be too static and that it lacks dramatic conflict. Perhaps this is because the conflict is psychological, rather than physical, and the play is, consequently, less visually engaging than it might otherwise have been.

The first real sign of conflict occurs when the young Author disagrees with his muse concerning the issue of sentimentality. When Tiger describes an incident he wants to tell about his early memories of visiting Olive Schreiner's grave on top of a koppie in Cradock and seeing a black eagle, she tells him that it strikes her as "[f]alse, exaggerated, sentimental and improbable" (35). In addition to this, she insists that she wants "to be real" and to have "a real life" (36). Tiger says, "Try to understand that my job as a writer is to make reality dramatic and to do that I have to take liberties" (36). But Betty then warns him that if he tries to manipulate her, she will abandon him.

⁴⁶ "For a seagoing tale, it's a rather stagnant enterprise, choked off in the thin atmosphere of pretty words and worthiness" (1999: 16).

⁴⁷ " [The play has] a ponderous pace interlaced with introspection and intellectual argument....[It] can be taxing on the average attention span" (1997: 25).

⁴⁸ "*The Captain's Tiger* is largely a narrated retrospective monologue, where the intermittent interactions with the other players do little to alleviate what is essentially untheatrical theatre. This stasis and dearth of visual stimulation make the production no more entertaining than a radio drama..." ("Ponderous, Sparsely-staged Documentary Journey with Little Dramatic Variety", 1997: 4).

Tiger takes her threat seriously enough to rewrite the scene, and yet, it is ultimately only by casting away his novel at the end of the play, that he can free himself of her and gain the independence he needs to become a mature writer.

One cannot easily place the masculine and feminine roles in this play into fixed categories. As a young man, Tiger is naive, and a "masculine" maturity is purported to be gained by sexual experience; and yet, it seems that the female characters hold the ultimate power in the play, since his mother, as his muse, presides over his writing. When Betty wants to relate the initial sexual encounter between herself and his father, Tiger suddenly becomes jealous and afraid, since the notion of his mother as an erotic creature frightens him:

TIGER: No! No! No! Hands off! I warn you now, if you start interfering with
that scene

BETTY *ignores him and continues singing.*

BETTY: 'I'll always remember

The rambling rose you wore in your hair ...'

I'm lying there on my bed in my nightgown. It's a warm summer's
night. My young body is hot and sweating, my heart throbbing. His
music is drifting in through the open window. It feels as if he's
caressing me...

TIGER: That does it. I'm putting on the light.

BETTY: You can't. You're powerless. You can't move.

[He tries, he can't.]

Waves of desire are passing over me. I put my hands on my young
breasts...

TIGER *[fingers in his ears]*: I'm not listening. (46)

At first, Tiger blames his concern on the board of censors, but later Betty tells him that "[s]exual desire is a perfectly healthy and normal human drive. You're behaving as if you're scared of it" (47). And it is then that she discovers that he is still a virgin. After laughing, she becomes angry:

You had the nerve, the conceit, the male arrogance to think that in spite of your ignorance about the most basic drive in human nature you could write about me? Tell my story?...If you want my advice, Mr Author; go back and tear up every page of your precious manuscript and start again after you've discovered what it means to hold a woman in your arms (48).

Betty eventually persuades Tiger that his sexual discovery is essential for his ability to understand women. She says:

And stop talking to me about 'we writers'. Before you can even start to think about yourself as one you've got to be a man, which you aren't yet, my boy. (49).

Being a "man" here refers not only to losing his virginity – a designation associated with the rites of passage required to become an adult in many cultures – but also to being a writer. Being able to use his pen to produce a reality out of nothing becomes a sign of manhood, and creativity becomes synonymous with virility. Betty suggests that she initiate Tiger and slips into bed next to him. But he takes fright:

TIGER [*in a panic*]: For God's sake no. Do you realise what you're doing? You're based on my mother. This is as good as incest! (49)

Tiger escapes his mother, and it is then, out of a despondent rebellion that he decides to join Donkeyman in Niigata and pays for a prostitute. While his mother exercises an enormous influence over him, his father – when he is not entirely absent – is described as weak. Even though the Tiger promises: "PS Tell Dad I haven't forgotten him. He'll be getting his own letter very soon" (17), this letter to his father never

materialises. In his *Notebooks* (1983), Fugard describes his own father as weak⁴⁹. The overarching dominance of the maternal influence is thus contrasted by the frailer figure of the father. Betty tells the story of how she met his father and found he was not only physically, but also emotionally, crippled. Disillusionment takes over, and a tragic portrait of what eventually happened to the relationship is conveyed, of how the father faded away, how the mother, burdened with responsibility, went completely grey. Eventually, after presenting a poignant image of his aged parents, Tiger says "I thought I could at least give you one on paper, but even that won't work. I can't make a happy ending out of my Dad." And it is then that he throws his manuscript overboard.

With this rejection of his creative effort, with the failure at trying to reconcile reality and fiction, Tiger achieves another tier of adult masculinity by effecting a separation from his mother and her story. He has attempted to source his identity in terms of his childhood memories, but a more compelling configuration arises in the rejection of those memories. Only by rejecting his mother and overcoming his Oedipal desire can Tiger claim his masculine identity.

Tiger both desires and dreads his mother, his muse. He is inspired by her, but he is also trapped by her, since she is the one in control of his emotions and his creativity. Peter Marks notes that "Fugard duels with his imaginary mother for control of her story, a battle at once Freudian and Pirandellian" (1999: 16)⁵⁰. But what does it mean

⁴⁹ Fugard describes his father as having "a vacuous mind, poring over comic books" (30). Later he describes him as being a "character who deliberately propagates and establishes a public image compounded of cowardice, weakness, dependence" (31). (It should be noted, however, that besides these failings, Fugard also manages to convey a sense of his father's humanity and his portrait of his father in the *Notebooks* is not entirely unsympathetic.)

⁵⁰ The battle is "Pirandellian" since this story demonstrates a struggle between a writer and his characters, as in Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1922).

to try to defy the gods, to reject the mother? Some see this as the ultimate masculine act. Elaine Storkey claims that:

To develop his identity as a man, [a boy] needs to relinquish his bond and attachment to his mother. Because he is different from her, he cannot identify with her. Therefore, a boy's gender identity is created by emotional separation (2001: 80).

Consequently, as adults, "men fear closeness, for it threatens their sense of a separate identity, while women fear isolation and aloneness, for it threatens theirs" (80). Is this part of an essentialist ideology? Or is it part of a certain story about masculinity? It seems that it is a story which has been told by many. For example, Carol Gilligan makes a similar claim that:

Since masculinity is defined through separation while femininity is defined through attachment, male gender identity is threatened by intimacy while female gender identity is threatened by separation (in Storkey 2001: 80).

There is perhaps a danger here in reading this description of masculinity as an immutable property of being male. Yet it could also be read as a narrative which describes a possible way of being. The fact that this particular story about masculinity has been strengthened by repetition makes it a more powerful narrative than other stories, and yet this does not imply that it is necessarily the only story. This distinction which sees men as more individualistic, can be taken even further still, and Lynne Segal, for example, defines "femininity" as an attitude (and an activity) which emphasises the communal in opposition to the Apollonian independence ascribed to masculinity:

The daughter is experienced and loved 'narcissistically' by the mother, as someone just as herself. The girl therefore remains forever more attached to,

and identified with, the mother, more secure in her gender identity, defining herself more in relation to others, with a weaker sense of her own individuality, competence and autonomy than men (1990: 80).

And Luce Irigaray posits that, since a girl is born from a woman,

the little girl finds herself in a relationship of identity and familiarity with the woman who conceived her. The relationship between two subjects is therefore easier for her than for the boy, who has to build it with his mother in terms of difference, using objects...(2000: 96).

According to this view, a boy's relationship, or his means of establishing an identity is in terms of objectification, which might also include the process of writing. To write could even be considered the ultimate act of objectification, of stepping outside of time, outside of reality, in order to reflect on it. Also, in the male rituals of countless cultures, becoming a man involves leaving the women and children to explore often dangerous activities, such as hunting or warfare (or the sports eventually invented to replace these rituals). So the act of leaving his motherland and crossing the seas alone could also be seen as a demonstration of this separation.

In *The Captain's Tiger*, it is possible to discover many paradoxes inherent in the construction of a masculine identity. Is Fugard falling into habitual responses on issues of gender? Possibly. Is his construction of the muse as a beautiful woman perpetuating an ancient mythology? Perhaps. It might even be true that within this specific construction of identity configuration, Fugard does not challenge the received wisdom on the subject of gender. It is possible to see his story as a continuation, and a possible endorsement of this mythology, which reflects the context of his generation.

The Author loves his mother and wants to write for and about her; and yet, in order to become an authentic, individual, masculine writer, he must, paradoxically, reject

her and seek autonomy in the same way that he left his homeland and set off, alone, across the world. The play signals a departure from Fugard's previous fugues on collective concerns and shifts the focus to Fugard himself and his development as a gendered individual in terms of a myth of separation and individuation.

2.3 LANGUAGE AND LAND IN *SORROWS AND REJOICINGS* (ATHOL FUGARD)

In *Sorrows and Rejoicings* (2002) Athol Fugard tells the story of an exiled poet, Dawid Olivier. The play wrestles with ways in which conditions of exile challenge Dawid's sense of himself as an artist and as a man. As indicated earlier, it is the contention of this thesis that configurations of masculinity are closely tied not only to notions of patriotism, but also to ideas (and ideals) of nationalism. Homi Bhaba, for one, emphasises the connection between masculinity and nationalism and writes that he wants "to displace [masculinity] onto another kind of anxious love – *amor patriae* – the nationalist, phallic identification with the service of the nation" (in Tripp 2000: 103). If being part of a nation is equated with masculinity, this could be one of the reasons why those rejected by the state, who are turned into exiles, begin to consider themselves emasculated. I will be arguing in this chapter that it is when Dawid can no longer be of service to the nation, that he begins to feel that he is less than a complete man.

Michael Seidel feels that exile is "a form of modern alienation, a Marxist allegory of separation – separation from worth, from satisfaction, and even from material equity" (1986: xii). Edward Said also argues that exile is part of the human condition specific to the twentieth century, which he calls a severe "contemporary political punishment"⁵¹. Huma Ibrahim goes as far as to employ a new word for the consciousness created by a state of being in exile:

The state of exile is often imposed on a subjectivity torn between a sense of not belonging as well as a desire to belong to one's gender, linguistic group,

⁵¹ Exile is "the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted" (Said in Ibrahim 1996: 12).

community, and nation. The consciousness arising out of this ambivalence is the basis of the exilic consciousness (1996: 2).

In this section, I will be exploring this ambivalence and how a particular protagonist's identity is fixed to his language, his land, and, ultimately, his gender. The severing of Dawid from his homeland reflects not only his sense of belonging to a nation, but also of belonging to a language and a gender.

Sorrows and Rejoicings is set in a farm house in the Karoo at the turn of the millennium. Dawid Olivier has returned home to die, and his story is told in a series of flashbacks comprising mostly of fairly lengthy monologues. During the apartheid era, Dawid's work was banned and he consequently went into exile in England with his wife, Allison. But before he met Allison, he had a romantic relationship with a coloured woman, Marta, with whom he conceived a daughter. Since they could never formalise their union (due to the Immorality Act), he left her and married Allison. In England, Dawid never recovers from the depression caused by his state of exile. He becomes an alcoholic, and eventually contracts leukaemia. The play takes place when he returns one last time to his old home. He meets his daughter, Rebecca, for the first time, and then dies in the presence of Marta, who has been waiting for him these many years.

As a poet in exile, Dawid Olivier represents a group of actual writers who formed a prominent part of South African literature. When J. V. Povey describes one of the most prominent features of the community of poets in exile in the 1970's, he writes that:

More than any other group, [South African poets] constantly revert to the issue of their exile; the haunted investigation of the poet's feeling as he is cut

off from the heritage of his national birth and copes with an environment which (although intellectually free) is alien, and a memory which is always tintured with guilt. (In Goddard and Wessels 1992: 12)

The fictional protagonist of Fugard's play experiences this same alienation and guilt as writers who died in exile, such as Arthur Nortje and Can Themba. He is guilty because he left Marta behind, and because he has ceased to be a productive member of his community. Perhaps what Dawid misses most of all is his language, since this ties him to his identification as an Afrikaner. This is revealed in various ways. For example, during their exile, much is made of the pronunciation of Dawid and Allison's surname (Olivier). Allison likes the English pronunciation of the name, though Dawid hates it and sees it as "an erosion of his Afrikaner identity" (11). Later, during one of the flashbacks, Dawid declares that "your soul speaks with your mother tongue":

Couple of times I went out and just walked aimlessly around London streets speaking in Afrikaans to myself. Non stop! People must have thought me mad. But I was holding onto my soul you see....When I landed in Jo'burg and spoke Afrikaans to the Immigration Officer it was like kissing my grandmother again, or Marta...(44).

The words which Dawid has offered the world in his poems express his filial sense of belonging to South Africa. When Allison learns that Rebecca has burnt Dawid's last South African poems she says

What you turned to ash and smoke out there in the veld was evidence of a man's love, for his country, for his people – for you! Don't reject it. That love was clean and clear and good! It was the best of him (51).

Poetry here becomes the vehicle for the expression of a "man's love", and in destroying it, Rebecca has rejected not only Dawid's work, but the components which

have gone into sustaining his identification at a fundamental level. It is as though she has murdered a critical part of him, and turned away from the last gesture of a desperate love.

In trying to hold on to his language, Dawid wishes to reconstruct his world in terms of a logos. He hopes to stabilise his signification by reciting and recalling the names of places and objects in the language of his mother tongue. By listening intently to Marta's gossip from the village he tries to "cancel out his exile" (19), to erase his bleak memories of London with the trifling details of a small Afrikaans village in the Karoo. Allison realises that he will never stop loving Marta, because, as Allison points out, she is "part of this world that he loved with such passion" (30). Dawid's erotic love for Marta is connected to his love of Afrikaans, and his love for the Karoo. Once Dawid has arrived, he wants Marta to recite the list of goods available in the local store. She says,

one day he asked me to tell him all the things that were on the shelves in the trading store – you know, the tins of pilchards, the packets of mielie meal and sugar, the bottles of methylated spirits, Five Roses Tea, Koo Apricot Jam – and how much they cost, and he just lay there listening to me very hard as if I was telling him something very important. And always in Afrikaans. I had to speak to him in Afrikaans (19).

Similarly, place-names tie Dawid to the land of his birth and signify a location for his identification. When he makes his last journey home, he revels in the place names which lead him home:

Wonderboom, Rietfontein, Heuningspruit – [I] kept saying them over and over, like a mantra, adding the new ones as they came up – Voorspoed, Kromdraai, Verkeerdevlei, Wolwehoek...(15).

In the same way that Lena (in *Boesman and Lena* [1969]) uses a litany of place names to orientate her sense of self⁵², here names reinforce a connection to land and belonging. Dawid not only feels himself alive in this land, but at times he expresses his sense of coherence in terms of *being* the land itself. For example, when he cannot write any more he describes himself as a land bereft of rain:

I'm drought stricken...an officially declared drought stricken area. I watched it happen to the Karoo a couple of times you know. A long, lingering agony as a relentless sun burnt everything to death. Day after day (35).

As in *The Captain's Tiger*, we also find a number of references here to the processes of writing, and many of Dawid's reflections on the practice of literary creation no doubt arise from Fugard's own thoughts on this subject⁵³. Dawid's writing is an expression of his identity – not only of his masculinity, but of his body itself, and his poems become a metaphor for his being. For example, the ink on the page is equated with the blood flowing through his veins. Dawid chooses brown ink because it is "the colour of dry blood...because that is what a writer leaves on the page" (28). His poems have become his body. He has identified himself so wholly with his work, that when he can no longer express himself by means of his poems it is as though he is suffocating, dying. He describes his writer's block in biological terms:

The ink in my fountain pen has clotted and dried up like the blood in a dead man's veins. God knows I've tried to get it flowing again, but if my writing ever had a heart it has stopped beating (34).

⁵² Throughout *Boesman and Lena*, Lena struggles to remember the route they have taken. Finally, Boesman helps her to recall the list of towns they've passed through: "Missiondale to Bethelskop....Then to Kleinskool. Kleinskool to Veeplaas....After that Redhouse...Bethelsdorp, Korsten, Veeplaas, back here a second time" (55). It is only then that she can begin to feel that she understands her situation, when she replies, "Is that the way to was? How I got here?" (55).

⁵³ Of course, one can never completely equate the author of a work with his or her protagonist, and yet there is still a significant relation between the two.

Artistic creation becomes a metaphor not only for procreation, but for the vigour required to sustain being. This existence, this sense of aliveness is strongly slanted towards a masculinist orientation; and the life force in Dawid's veins comes from a very specific location in terms of its masculine instincts. As a failed creative artist, Dawid is defined as a man who has lost his virility. Another story, a dream, reveals the emasculation which he experienced on being banned:

A man, one of the comrades, is in a similar situation – banned and silenced into impotence by the government. There is nothing left for him to do except sit in his comfortable little flat and listen to classical music, read beautiful poetry, and watch the world around him go up in flames on his television set....Me! His sense of uselessness is finally too much for him. He cuts off his testicles, puts them in a box, and posts them to the State President with a little note: 'You took away my manhood, so why not take these as well.' That's when I knew I had to leave (27).

In this dream, the pen is described in terms of procreation, in terms of the dissemination of seeds as ideas. By being banned, Dawid has lost his virility, and his decision to leave arises from a sense of shame (37). The government has castrated him, and once in exile, he is no longer the man he was. We learn, for example, that the reason why Allison and Dawid cannot have children is because he has contracted *pampoentjies* (mumps) and consequently, "his testicles came up as big as cricket balls" (32). He never regains the virility which he loses in exile.

The set of *Sorrows and Rejoicings* is dominated by a massive stinkwood table which anchors the action in the play. Whether Marta is washing it with her tears, or Dawid is standing ranting on top of it, its presence permeates the play. For this reason, it may be worthwhile here to quote the entirety of the story Marta tells about the origins of this table, since it comes to represent a great many things in the course of the development of the plot:

Dawid loved this table. He always said he was going to write a poem about it one day. He explained it all so wonderfully to me one day when I was still a little girl. Once upon a time it was the King of the Knysna forest, the tallest of all the tall trees. Monkeys and beautiful birds lived in it and made their nests in it. Elephants slept underneath it at night. Then, one day, men came with their axes and chopped and chopped and the King of the Forest came crashing down. But that wasn't the end of it because then the carpenter came and gave it a new life by making it into this beautiful table. Now it is the place where the family sits down to say grace and eat the food that God gave them. This is where the family prays. But it hasn't forgotten its life in the green forest. (13-14).

The image of Dawid as "King of the Forest", an erect tall tree, contains connotations which recall Paglia's description of "masculine" qualities which she associates with the Apollonian which seeks the erection of elevation⁵⁴. Though the tree has been cut down and carved up to serve a social function, it still remembers how it used to fulfil the (masculine) roles of protection and sustenance and has come to represent a type of "father figure" in the family home. After the funeral, Marta says that she wants the table to be "shining with love" (39) and she has been meticulously polishing it during all the years of Dawid's exile while she was awaiting his return. The table is not only a symbol of the resilience of memory, but also of the love Marta has nourished and sustained in Dawid's absence. But Dawid is no longer the king of the forest, nor is he the centre of the family home. His daughter, Rebecca has learnt to grow up lying about her father, and she subsequently hates him for having betrayed her and her mother. So Dawid has also failed at his fatherly duty to provide for his child.

The play is suffused with further indications of Dawid's lost masculinity. Wanting to apologise to Allison for his increasing alcoholism, he decides to try to catch a fly in a

⁵⁴ "Both the Apollonian and Judeo-Christian traditions are transcendental. That is, they seek to surmount or transcend..." (1992: 8). And, "[t]he penis is like eye or hand, an extension of self reaching outward" (23).

matchbox as an anniversary present for her, to remind her of the dry Karoo back home. He tells himself: "Gird your loins, Dawid Olivier, and go hunting. Prove to your deeply doubting mate that you are still a man" (33). And yet, even this most trivial quest ends in failure. Finally Dawid must concede, with his beloved Ovid (who also died in exile), that he is "not the man" (36) he was.

The tragedy is firmly centred on the figure of Dawid, and the play serves as an elegy of his emasculation. The three female roles surrounding this figure (Marta, Allison, Rebecca) are used to bring out aspects of Dawid's loss. Some reviewers felt that the significance of these characters as women had been smothered by the over-arching figure of Dawid Olivier as man. The most severe attack was launched by Christina Scott, who attended the American première. She writes that the play is

a preachy history lesson with yet another main character based on the playwright's ego....In the flashbacks of a trio of women – a former lover, an ex-wife and an abandoned daughter – Dawid talks. They don't. He's spotlit. Their faces are in shadow. He moves. They don't. It's like Madame Tussaud's waxworks....These are the women's remembrances and yet they don't feature in them. Dawid hogs all the flashback airtime (2001: 9).

I would agree that this is a play based on Fugard's sense of his own identity as a writer, and I would agree that it remains focused on the character of Dawid. It is unashamedly a play concerned with the definition of masculinity and it does not pretend to be anything else. I would not, however, go as far as to say that the play is misogynistic simply because the female roles are not as fully developed as the male role. Of necessity, a dramatic plotline isolates certain incidents which are selected in order to enhance the dramatic structure, and simply because Ophelia and Gertrude do not get as much stage-time as the protagonist is surely no reason to dismiss *Hamlet*. So I believe that *Sorrows and Rejoicings* as a play of the mind, as a description of the

world seen through the eyes of a poet, does reflect and represent a detailed portrait of male identity, and had Scott looked a little further, she might have found the play to be a critique of this form of identity, and not an endorsement. The fact is that this is a play about the failure of masculinity, something which Scott's hostile review fails to recognise. Dawid's ultimate tragedy is not that he lost his country, his daughter, or his first love; but that he has lost his sense of identity. The situation of the character here is similar to that of Dominee Byleveld in Fugard's earlier work *The Road to Mecca* (1985). Dominee Byleveld also fails at love because he is unable to transform himself, because he is unable to change, and remains trapped by the conservative traditions which reinforce his identity.

In other words, the loss of Dawid's language, land and loves is directly tied to his acute sense of his lost masculinity; and he dies, in part, because he has not been able to adapt, because he cannot relinquish his brittle, masculine self-image and holds fast to what he considers as his essence. It could be argued that Dawid's failure arises as a result of his subscription to this particular construction of what it means to be a man. Had he not invested as much significance in being a hunter, a provider and a virile exponent of his country's culture, then he would, perhaps, not have suffered as greatly and may not have resorted to alcoholism as an escape from his various humiliations. If Dawid had not invested as much in what he believed to be an archetypal identity, then he may have been spared the full extent of this tragedy. In contrast to the tragedies of the ancients, where fate is respected and feared, here Dawid's decline can be seen as at least partially resulting from his incapacity to adapt.

2.4 OUTRIGHT MALE CHAUVINISM IN *A MAN OUT OF THE COUNTRY* (ANTHONY AKERMAN)

Anthony Akerman's second play *A Man Out of the Country* was first produced in 1989, three months before the release of Nelson Mandela. A radio adaptation was broadcast on 2 October 1996, and it was eventually published in 2000 by Wits University Press. It thus traverses the various conditions of change in South Africa. Although it was originally written during the apartheid era, it was also written in exile, and only published after the coming of democracy, conditions which warrant its inclusion within the present discussion. In this section I will particularly be examining ways in which masculinity can be constructed in opposition to whatever is perceived to be its opposite, such as, in this instance, what is described as feminine and homosexual. I will be relying to a large extent on Anthony Clare's description of masculinity in *On Men: Masculinity in Crisis* (2001) in order to unpack the representations of masculinity in the play's male characters.

In *A Man Out of the Country*, the two white male roles present a position so extreme that it could only be referred to as male chauvinism. At the centre of the play is Tristan⁵⁵, who is living in exile in Amsterdam with his Dutch girlfriend Maria. During the course of the play he is visited by his old friend Dean and Dean's wife Chris, a couple who are on their way back to South Africa to farm. A black South African exile, Samson (or Siphon) also joins them for dinner, as well as a gay Argentinean exile, Antonio. Issues of exile are discussed, and Samson strongly objects to Dean and Chris returning to South Africa due to the political climate. At the climax of the play, Tristan's resentment at the fact that Maria is betraying him leads to an acrimonious

⁵⁵ The name is taken from the poem "Tristan da Cunha" by Roy Campbell who is the subject of Akerman's play *Dark Outsider*, published in the same collection. Campbell himself is also depicted as shamelessly chauvinistic.

confrontation and, in a sense, her betrayal mirrors the way in which he feels he has been betrayed by his country.

Tristan is caught between a European liberalism, and his old-fashioned mores about the appropriate (and fairly static) roles he feels men and women should be assigned. During the initial exposition we learn that Maria has referred to him as a "typical male" (4), and he tells Maria (while she is applying her make-up) that she is adopting "that recurrent female predicament: in front of a mirror" (4). In this way, we are immediately introduced to the polarisation of sexual roles which betrays a rather strained view of gender construction. Akerman is quite explicit about this and even has his characters point it out, for example, when Chris describes Tristan as follows:

CHRIS: He's the original male...What's the word?

TRISTAN: Chauvinist?

CHRIS: The other one. Pig! (2002:6)

So the characters in this play display signs of an extreme male chauvinism, giving the impression that white South Africans adhere to a particularly "macho" code of conduct. This code is maintained throughout by Dean and Tristan in terms of their jocular role-playing. As Anthony Clare explains,

When men are in the company of fellow-men, they characteristically cut each other down, mock. Competition, the mark of most male relationships – in business, sport, academic life, romance, social situations – is the antithesis of the domestic, the intimate, the exposed (2001: 205).

At the heart of the play's development lies the friendship between Tristan and Dean, who form a male bond maintained by the display and performance of role-playing scenarios. For example, Tristan and Dean continuously josh each other about their

prohess as lovers, and when Dean stops Tristan from carrying his suitcase he says "No point sending a boy to do a man's job" (2002: 6). Their interaction also involves copious amounts of drinking, and the relation between hard drinking and complying with masculine norms is underlined throughout the play. For example, both Dean and Samson bring Tristan whisky as a gift, and Samson arrives at the dinner party completely drunk. Later, Dean sings a drinking song (26). All of these activities enforce a view of masculinity as being free from constraint, a definition Clare elaborates:

Stereotypical male activities – drinking like a man, fighting like a man, striving to win like a man, dying like a man – involve the assertion of the self against constraint, against control (2001: 205).

In Dean and Chris's interaction, their joking reveals a level of playfulness about their gender roles. Although she does not always obey him, she nevertheless tolerates his sexism:

DEAN: Thing is you got to know how to handle your woman.

He smiles at Chris.

Chris, do us a favour, girl. Get Tristan's present out of the suitcase.

CHRIS *gives him a deadpan look.*

Go on, Chrissy, ease off in the direction of the suitcase and we'll sit here and admire your bum (8).

The camaraderie between Dean and Tristan is further reinforced by sexist jokes, such as when Dean says that his ideal woman is "one who gives six hours of fucking and sucking and then turns into a pizza and six pack". At this interjection Chris grabs him by the testicles and forces him to admit that he's a "chauvinist pig" (11). On the other hand, Chris is not an entirely passive figure in the relationship. For example, she is shown to be sexually aggressive towards Dean when the other guests are out of the

room. In order to maintain his sense of identity "as a man", however, Dean resists her, since it would clearly not do to be perceived as obeying a woman.

Since Antonio is homosexual, he also provides a counter-balance to this display of machismo and defines the limits of this structuring of masculinity as a heterosexual enclave. Dean suggests that Tristan and Antonio cement their reunion by smoking a rugged bottle-neck of *dagga* (marijuana) as a male initiation rite into the ways of the South African male (14). When Antonio objects to the vulgar tone used by Dean and Tristan, Maria says "Hasn't Tristan explained to you how open and honest South Africans are?" (19). There is more than a touch of sarcasm in her tone, and what Maria really means by this show of "honesty" is what she later calls Tristan's "egoistical behaviour". When Antonio mocks his extreme masculinist behaviour, Tristan says "Am I being over-sensitive, or are we being rebuked for macho behaviour?" (24). Overall, there is hardly any genuine resistance to the two white males' inexcusably crude machismo. In fact, their chauvinism seems to be made light of by the playwright in that it is expressed in a playful, tongue-in-cheek fashion.

At times Akerman seems to be conveying the idea that, whereas Dean and Tristan's sexism is perhaps never entirely endorsed (in that the female characters attack it with ridicule and sarcasm), Samson's sexism seems to be acceptable, since it is entrenched in his "culture" as a black man. Samson takes his role as a man very seriously (he tells the others that "You have to be a man" [32]), and his definition resorts to some of the stalwart essentialist qualities already described, such as having a sense of personal responsibility. Samson explains that part of "being a man" means that "you can't hold someone else to ransom for the problems in your own life" (32). This does sound like a very positive statement, until one begins to wonder about the implications this has on what "being a woman" would involve. If these are particular characteristics which

define masculinity as separate from femininity, surely this implies that being "a woman" would mean being dependent on someone else, and not having a similar sense of personal culpability. This depiction of fulfilling a masculine role refers to an entrenchment of men as separate, responsible and independent; as has already been alluded to with reference to Elaine Storkey (2001: 80) and Lynne Segal (1990: 80) in the analysis of *The Captain's Tiger*.

The association of women with land has already been touched on, but in *A Man Out of the Country* this relation becomes particularly prominent. Why does one speak of a "motherland" and "mother nature"? Why does one refer to "virgin" territory? The metaphors extend to the dual meaning of the domination of a country, and the sexual "conquest" of a woman. This association is not unique to the English language, and yet it seems so embedded in English that the implications have become almost invisible. The dead metaphors associating women with land may be embedded within a deep mythological genealogy dating back to agrarian societies, and yet this is not necessarily a good enough reason to maintain and encourage their use.

One of the strongest motifs in *A Man Out of the Country* seems to be an association of one's homeland with a woman, who is possibly a mother figure, but who is also seen as a lover. For example, Tristan makes a pass at Chris by telling her an erotic dream he's had about her. In this dream he associates her with a highly charged sexual representation detailing the lush landscape of Hog's Back (9-10). Maria later enforces this point of view when she says that Tristan "cares for his country more than for me...when he comes to bed I can smell her on him. She's his whore" (25). In this sense, although Tristan feels that he is morally superior to her – because Maria is having an affair – he is being equally unfaithful to her in that he refuses to give himself completely to the Netherlands, and by association, to her.

Tristan's longing for his homeland takes on an erotic quality, in a similar way that Dawid in *Sorrows and Rejoicings* associates South Africa with Marta, his coloured lover. Both relate the condition of exile to impotency, and in being separated from their lovers/land, they have lost their virility and can no longer reproduce themselves; in life, in art. There is a strong sense of the patriotic in this play, and yet, on reflection, this definition is rather similar to the cowboy configurations associated with the North American frontier, and with the stereotyped "Okker" of Australia⁵⁶. In other words, the territorial urgency expressed in this version of masculinity seems to be more about the metaphoric meaning of land than about a particular piece of land itself. Ironically, this marker which is used to particularly tie specific men to a specific geography turns out to associate them strongly with men in other countries, rather than to the people of a particular territory. The sexualisation of land seems to indicate that it has become a signifier cut loose from what it signifies.

I have tried to show that at the heart of this rather extreme – and often unpleasantly chauvinistic – piece lies a sense of masculinity as premised largely on an opposition to the feminine. This distancing occurs at the semiotic level of the sign, and what is *not* masculine must be spurned in order for the identification to be completed. Pleck and Thompson state that early studies into masculine roles reveal that in order to become identified as masculine, "Men should cultivate an independent style of achievement, and they should cultivate incompetency in all feminine activities" (1987: 26). This is a conclusion also reached by Michael Kimmel, namely that "anti-femininity lies at the heart of masculinity" (in Whitehead and Barrett 2001: 23). Anthony Clare puts it as follows:

⁵⁶ There seems to be a relation between the words "okker" (Australian), "okie" (American), and "oke" (South African) in that they all carry the connotation of being a somewhat rugged, ever reliable, working man.

Men repudiate the feminine not only in women but in themselves. As the coloniser despises the colonised for being weak, for having yielded to invasion and conquest in the first place, so men view women's apparent acquiescence with contempt. Such a view demands that any move towards identification with the oppressed, the colonised, be promptly repudiated and stamped out. If a man feels he does not have *it* – masculine strength, masculine bravery, masculine achievement – he is a castrated male. He is a woman...(2001: 205).

Throughout this play, Tristan and Dean try to prove that they are not like women. We are presented with a view of two South African white men who are heavy drinkers, enjoy a good fight, and who are virulently opposed to any type of behaviour which might be construed, even if only accidentally, as feminine. Their dialogue consists of a series of displays of masculine posturing which is clearly demarcated in terms of a machismo premised as being in opposition to both the female character's femininity and Antonio's homosexuality.

These brutal displays of machismo are not presented entirely unproblematically, and I doubt whether Akerman means to present an uncritical appraisal of this form of identity. The subject is, however, one which recurs in his other plays, such as *Dark Outsider* about the male chauvinist poet Roy Campbell, and *Old Boys*, a story of brutalised masculinity and male bonding, drawn from Akerman's experiences at the all-boys school, Michael House. In these plays, masculine identity becomes the primary role, the most important configuration of identity and it does seem as though Akerman's plays offer little by way of critical reflection on the problem of male chauvinism. Instead, his characters respond to their crisis of identity from within the context of their chauvinism itself. One does not get the impression (as one does in *Sorrow and Rejoicings*) that the masculine role identifications of these characters might have anything to do with their crisis.

2.5 SEXUALITY AS HEALING IN *THE BELLS OF AMERSFOORT* (ZAKES MDA)

Zakes Mda first came to the attention of the South African public when he won the Amstel Playwright of the Year in 1978 for *We Shall Sing for the Fatherland* (1980). He has written some thirty plays since then, but after his successful debut as a novelist with *Ways of Dying* (1995), he has become better known as a writer of novels. *The Bells of Amersfoort* (2002) is the last play which he has written to date and at a seminar held at Midrand Graduate Institute in 2002 he indicated that it would most likely be his last play. It was commissioned by De Nieuw Amsterdam Theatergroep in collaboration with the Sibikwa Players and premiered in the Netherlands on 29 March 2002.

The play operates on many different levels and primarily concerns the plight of a black woman (Tami) who has been living in exile in the Netherlands. Even after the demise of apartheid, she cannot seem to shake a lethargy which has come about as the result of a complex relationship of interdependence with her hosts, which includes elements of both gratitude and guilt. She is also hesitant to return to her boyfriend, Luthando, who remained in South Africa and has subsequently been corrupted by his newfound wealth and power in the new dispensation. Tami also turns to drink, like Dawid and Tristan, as a response to her feelings of helplessness and loss in an alien land.

Although Tami is the protagonist of this drama, and although an analysis of her role could result in a substantial discussion on issues of identity, I have decided, instead, to maintain my focus in this chapter on white men estranged from their homeland, and will consequently be discussing a supporting character in the play, Dominee Johan van der Bijl. As it transpires, it was Van der Bijl who stopped the marriage between

Luthando and Tami when he was still a security policeman for the apartheid state. At first Tami doesn't recognise Van der Bijl when she sees him having sex twice a week with a black prostitute in an apartment opposite her own. Only later does she discover his true identity.

Van der Bijl's sexual encounters underscore his own fraught relationships with Europe and Africa. In consorting with a prostitute, Van der Bijl does not feel that he has been unfaithful to his wife, and he claims that "No one can accuse me of infidelity because there has never been any emotional involvement between Heleen and me. No attachment. Just the gratification of the flesh" (137). In a sense, the commitment he feels to his land is here telescoped into the metaphor of commitment to a woman, and his relations with the Netherlands in general appear to be similar to his dealings with the nameless prostitute. He had originally come to Europe in order to establish a sense of his identity in terms of his roots, but ultimately this is a failed project. He says:

They say it is my ancestral home, yet I come as a stranger. Don't think I have not tried to find a connection. To establish my roots, so to say. I have even gone to a village that bears my name. It is far removed from who I am. From what I am. I am of Africa. I do not feel part of this land. Even the soil smells differently (144).

Van der Bijl tries to overcome his racist past as well as to reconnect with Africa by having sex with a black prostitute. His repentance takes a form of ecstasy, and yet, ironically, she has come to represent Europe, and when he is with her his identity as an African is emphasised.

Shane Graham has written eloquently on the ties between landscape and identity in *The Bells of Amersfoort*. If one's identity is tied to a specific land mass, how does

one's sense of self alter when one is removed from that location which one has suffused with meaning? The exile exists in an imaginary space, and yet, are not all countries imaginary spaces? The lines dividing nations are abstract, mental constructions and the signification of a country is a speculative gesture. Graham notes that "what Mda's play reveals is that, if the investment of memory is split between the body and the land, then the two must be joined in order to create a historical memory that is citable or representable..." (2005). In this way the play emphasizes the close links between memory and space/place.

The reception which the play received in South Africa was decidedly mixed. For example, whereas some reviewers found the African elements contrived, others felt that it was too European. For example, Ina Randall of the *EP Herald* mentions the "silly designer African inserts" (2002: 6), and Francois Smith of *Die Burger* also found the "Africanisation" (2002: 4) of the piece to be artificial. On the other hand, according to Sandile Memela, the device of Dominee Van der Bijl "establishes an immediate psychological bond with a white audience", who desires nothing but to be seen as having "repented". In this way the play "liberates white guilt" and "serves as part of a political experiment to massage the white conscience and lull the masses to sleep by reminding them of how far they have come" (2002: 27). Memela feels that the drama deliberately plays to white audiences and tries to alleviate their pangs of conscience. Adrienne Sichel, however, called Johan van der Bijl "a sledgehammer symbol of Christian hypocrisy and denied responsibility" (2002: 9), and clearly did not feel that he was by any means a soporific to white guilt. Whether one sympathises with the character of Van der Bijl, or whether one condemns him, one cannot deny his attempt at a reconciliation within himself, even if it is doomed to failure.

The configuration of masculine identity represented by Van der Bijl is, paradoxically, that of being both white and Africanist. He cannot go back to South Africa, and says, "There is no place for me in Tami Walaza's South Africa. It is a South Africa of anger, bitterness and vengeance" (156). The ramifications of his fraught suspension between what is native and what is foreign confuse his sense of masculinity. The erstwhile concrete categories of nationhood and race have been cut off from their master signified (the system of apartheid), and have become free-floating signifiers, based on economic, sexual and cultural exchanges. The new identity which Van der Bijl forges for himself arises from his capacity as a consumer to purchase a sexual engagement with a black woman. In this sense he is attempting to objectify and purchase reconciliation as a commodity. And yet, this exchange ultimately severs him from the emotional and spiritual rehabilitation he had been hoping to attain.

2.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS ON GENDER

Throughout this section, I have tried to avoid describing masculinity in either normative or pejorative terms. This has not always been possible, since there is no entirely neutral ground from which to speak, and, for example, some sort of indictment of the male chauvinism displayed by the characters in Akerman's text has become evident. Also, I may have favoured the processes of individuation suggested by *The Captain's Tiger* as a possible psychic move towards identification, rooted within a mythological context. Nevertheless, to restate a point made in the introduction to this chapter, it does seem as though it is increasingly difficult to settle on descriptions of masculinity which avoid essentialism, but which are also phrased in a positive (or even a neutral) light.

Ultimately, a potential goal might be a sense of equality, which is, after all, what the early feminists sought. We should, however, bear in mind that, as Elaine Graham reminds us, "difference and equality are also constructs" and that they "emerge from human discourse" (in Storkey 2001: 54). To make the attempt to reach for a sense of gender equality, then, is also dependent on certain prescriptions and subjective value judgements. More importantly, to equalise terms of gender description robs one of the ability to define what each term might mean, since difference is required in order to demarcate definitions. I would like to close this chapter with Jeff Hearn and David Morgan's distinction between two different types of definitions of masculinity:

either masculinity is constructed and sustained by hidden but discoverable forces, discourses, ideologies, structures, and the like...or else it is constructed *bricoleur*-fashion, by the actor, and sustained by conscious monitoring and impression-management (1990: 197).

For the most part, I have tried to examine masculinity in terms of the first of these approaches – to discern ideologies and discourses which have sustained various characterisations of masculine roles. And yet, it is possible that any definition of masculinity which has been approached in these terms will already be outmoded, and that only those acting in the present are able to forge a masculinity monitored by the reactions of an audience. Any definition which is fixed and final is also, by the same token, as good as dead and buried. What masculinity might mean in the present and future is something which could only be determined by the actors involved in the living moment. As Lois McNay points out:

The formation of the subject within language is crucially linked to the ambiguous status of the sign itself...The Subject can only emerge as such within language. At the same time, however, the unstable nature of language means that, at the moment of its appearance, the subject is 'petrified' or reduced to being no more than a signifier...The stabilization of identity is constantly thwarted by the destabilizing effects of the unconscious upon the symbolic order...(2000: 7).

What has also become apparent in this examination of characters representing white masculinity is how fraught this identification has become as a result of the end of apartheid. Each of these characters reveals an uncertainty, a fragility, a vulnerability arising from the cracks, fissures and spaces which have now begin to appear as patriarchy slowly, after its long history, begins to crack open. If there is any binding theme connecting these diverse characters, it might involve the failure of the masculine model as a durable form of identity construction. Perhaps the masculine role can no longer provide a stable, coherent sense of identity, if it ever did.