EXPERIMENTS IN FREEDOM:
REPRESENTATIONS OF IDENTITY IN NEW SOUTH AFRICAN DRAMA

An investigation into identity formations in some post-apartheid play-texts

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Dedicated to all of those who keep dedicating their lives to this strange ancient ritual.
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Thanks to my friends for continually reminding me not to take myself too seriously; and thanks, of course, to my wife, Louise, for all her support and all her love.
This thesis examines ways in which identities have been represented in new South African play texts. It begins by exploring various ways in which identity has been described from various philosophical, psychological and anthropological perspectives. In particular, the thesis describes its methodology in terms of Gilles Deleuze's definition of "rhizomatic" structures. The introduction also elaborates ways in which drama is uniquely suited to represent – as well as to effect – transformations of identity.

The thesis then moves on to an examination of specific texts in terms of four broad areas of investigation – gender, political affiliation, ethnicity and syncretism. In these chapters a number of play texts are investigated from different points of view. Firstly, in a chapter on gender, the thesis focuses specifically on issues of masculinity and exile in plays by Athol Fugard, Anthony Akerman and Zakes Mda. This chapter explores orientations of the masculine which have become embedded within notions of nationalism and patriotism.

In terms of political affiliations, the thesis looks at what Loren Kruger has called "post-anti-apartheid theatre" (2002: 233) and considers the trend away from protest theatre. With reference to the plays of Mike van Graan it also examines new forms of protest theatre. This chapter also explores plays which were inspired by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and looks in more detail at *Ubu and the Truth Commission* by Jane Taylor.

When considering ethnicities, the thesis reflects on how identity in terms of an ethnic collective is most often premised on laws of exclusion, and on the construction of what Benedict Anderson refers to as an "imagined community" (1991: 15). Representations of ethnic identities are then analysed in *Happy Natives* by Greig Coetzee.

Syncretism seems to present a preferable description of how South African identities can be constructed and the thesis then elaborates attempts to forge a new identity in terms of amalgamation and a creative fusion of cultural resources, with particular reference to the plays of Brett Bailey and Reza de Wet.

In the conclusion of this thesis, the thorny issue of racial identities is considered, and in particular the trope of the "rainbow nation", which many writers regard as a problematic blanketing description which cancels out difference. Instead, Ashraf Jamal’s "radical syncretism", which does not seek to subsume heterogeneous identities, is suggested as a viable means of approaching definitions of identity.
The final chapter also briefly touches on the development of physical theatre in South Africa and describes how the body can be used as a tool for transformation, relying principally on the writings of Mark Fleishman and Eugenio Barba in this regard. Finally, again resorting to a Deleuzian vocabulary which describes identity as constructed in terms of lines operating on particular planes, the thesis considers whether it may not be more beneficial in the post-apartheid context to favour paradoxical processes which relinquish identities, instead of those which attempt to consolidate them.

KEYWORDS:
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