A South African *Romeo and Juliet*: Gender Identity in Minky Schlesinger's *Gugu and Andile*

CHANDRÉ BOTHA AND CHRIS BROODRYK

ABSTRACT

This article examines how gender identity is represented in a filmic adaptation of Shakespeare's play text *Romeo and Juliet* within South Africa's postcolonial context, thereby positioning identity politics as crucial in the decolonial project. This article focuses on Minky Schlesinger's South African adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* titled *Gugu and Andile* (2009). Schlesinger's film is compared to Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968) and Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (1996) to comparatively contextualise and sharpen an analysis of gender identity in Schlesinger's film. In our analysis of the selected films we examine the *mise-en-scène* in each film to establish how the films comment on, subvert or maintain certain gender identities.

Introduction

This article examines how postcolonial gender identity is represented in Minky Schlesinger's South African adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Gugu and Andile* (2009). In this examination, Schlesinger's film is compared to Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968) and Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (1996). The similarities and differences that arise from such a comparison are helpful in making sense of *Gugu and Andile*'s postcolonial gender politics. Finally, this article frames *Gugu and Andile* within the postcolonial and the decolonial context to make sense of its gender identity politics. Specifically, we emphasise how Shakespeare informs notions of gender identity and how postcolonial studies serve as a framework in which to locate relevant discourses on Shakespeare and South Africa.

In her discussion of Shakespeare adaptations such as Franco Zeffirelli's *Hamlet* (1990) and Akira Kurosawa's *Ran* (1985), Kathy Howlett focuses on the films' framing, which she explains as "how the arrangement of objects within the cinematic frame interprets the Shakespeare story according to a dynamic of space existing between the camera and the objects it surveys".[1] Similarly, we focus on the selected films' use of *mise-en-scène* in representing gender identity. *Mise-en-scène* is defined as "all the elements placed in front of the camera to be photographed: the settings and props, lighting, costumes and makeup, and figure behaviour."[2]

---

1   Kathy M. Howlett, *Framing Shakespeare on Film* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), pp.3, 5.

2   David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2008), p.479.

In this article we argue that, despite obvious differences in language and spatiotemporal setting, Zeffirelli's realistic adaptation and Schlesinger's political version offer similarities in their representations of gender identity that contrast with Luhrmann's film. Where Luhrmann's film comments on and subverts notions of traditional gender identity and experiments with homoeroticism, Schlesinger's film returns to traditional representations of gender identity, with the exception of the single moment where Schlesinger's Juliet finally subverts expected gender norms in her death. Irene Lara foregrounds the importance of re-narrating and re-listening to stories to create non-binary literature within decolonial studies.[3] In this sense, *Gugu and Andile* uses Shakespeare's love story to comment on some of the political tensions that flared up during South Africa's transition to democracy.

Postcolonial productions of Shakespeare tend to move the plot to a specific spatiotemporal context. This is demonstrated by Samoan playwright Justine Semei-Barton's 1992 production of *Romeo and Juliet* in New Zealand.[4] It is also demonstrated by the Korean *Romeo and Juliet* directed by O T'ae-sok and Janet Suzman's South African adaptation of *Othello*.[5] The story of Romeo and Juliet is relocated spatiotemporally, but the political issues of the era are not addressed. Turning to film, this article concludes that although *Gugu and Andile*'s representation of gender identity is problematic, it does in some ways succeed as a commentary on political change in South Africa. Insofar as Schlesinger set her adaptation against the backdrop of political intrigue in Thokoza, Gauteng in 1993, we suggest that *Gugu and Andile* is a postcolonial film working towards a larger decolonial project in which Shakespeare's body of work is re-historicised to reflect critically on various contemporary, contextually diverse politics. Our positioning of the film in this way occurs irrespective of whether Schlesinger intended for the film to be received as such.

Shakespeare, politics and postcolonial theory

Postcolonial theory is part of various theories which explore subjectivities and identities that are both multi-layered and complex, bringing together conceptual strands from Marxism, gender studies and post-structuralism.[6] Postcolonial theory, then, attempts to critique colonial discursive practices which are considered 'common sense' or any justification of colonial economic, political, education or social practices.[7] As Michael Chapman notes, "postcolonialism identifies its priorities not as literary, but as political or ideological".[8]

For Radha Hegde, postcolonial theory implies cultural decolonisation which necessitates a problematisation of culture and cultural representation.[9] Walter Mignolo claims that decolonial studies presupposes a de-linking, both politically and epistemically, from imperial knowledge.[10] Both postcolonial and decolonial studies have been successful in challenging historiographical traditions and insular historical narratives originating from Europe.

Writers for *Drum* magazine in the 1950s used Shakespeare to enhance their descriptions of township cultures, and Sol T. Plaatje's contribution to the prominence of Shakespeare in South Africa is well-documented.[11] As Chapman notes, Plaatje found in Shakespeare a "humanising foil to

---

3 Irene Lara, "Goddess of the Américas in the decolonial imaginary: Beyond the virtuous virgin/pagan puta dichotomy," *Feminist Studies* 34. 1/2 (2008): 99.

4 Michael Neill, "Post-colonial Shakespeare? Writing away from the centre", in *Post-colonial Shakespeares,* ed. Ania Loomba & Martin Orkin (London: Routledge, 1998), pp.164–185.

5 Richard Burt, "Mobilizing foreign Shakespeares in media, in Shakespeare," in *Hollywood, Asia and cyberspace,* ed. Alexander C.Y. Huang & Charles S. Ross (USA: Purdue University Press, 2009), pp.170–171.

6 David Murphy, "Africans Filming Africa: Questioning Theories of an Authentic African Cinema," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 13. 2 (2000): 247.

7 Natasha Distiller, *South Africa, Shakespeare and post-colonial culture* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), p.6.

8 Michael Chapman, "Postcolonialism: a literary turn," *English in Africa* 33. 2 (2006): 7.

9 Radha S. Hegde, "A view from elsewhere: locating difference and the politics of representation from a transnational feminist perspective," *Communication Theory* 8 (1998): 282.

10 Walter D Mignolo, "Epistemic disobedience, independent thought and de-colonial Freedom," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26. 7–8 (2009): 20.

11 Brian Willan, "Whose Shakespeare? Early black South African engagement with Shakespeare," *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* 24 (2012): 3; Distiller, Natasha. "South African Shakespeare: a model for understanding cultural transformation?," *Shakespeare in South Africa* 15 (2003): 22.

dehumanising politics".[12] It is thus Chapman's description of the particular value that Plaatje had for Shakespeare's work that best describes *Gugu and Andile*'s position as part of the decolonial project of speaking to, and speaking back to, the politics of the Western canon.[13] Reflecting on the "Colonial Shakespeare" conference held in Grahamstown in June 2003, Natasha Distiller notes that part of the fascination of studying Shakespeare in a South African context is in the ways in which his plays can be used in cultural resistance to oppressive practices such as colonialism.[14] Given Shakespeare's literary eminence across various Western cultures, South Africa, a former British colony, contributes actively to theatrical, academic and editorial activities pertaining to Shakespeare.[15] As such, Shakespeare's place in a post-apartheid South Africa with regard to entertainment and curricula is still debated.[16] Discussing Shakespeare's historical presence in South Africa during the 1950s, David Johnson explains that Shakespeare was emblematic of English culture, "symbolizing a contradictory cluster of values that, on the one hand, purport to be entirely opposed to apartheid, and, on the other, fit quite comfortably within the apartheid education system".[17] According to Denis Salter there is a tendency to naturalise Shakespeare in countries with a history of colonial rule, specifically in South Africa, as timeless, genius and "universal".[18]

Here, we are reminded of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's wry recollection in *Decolonising the Mind* that "William Shakespeare and Jesus Christ had brought light to darkest Africa".[19] In Salter's view Shakespearean texts provide postcolonial performers in these contexts with un-problematised, unmediated points of access to Eurocentric cultural narratives.[20] Richard Burt claims that intercultural theatre regularly offers adaptations of Shakespearean plays, relocating the original text to an indigenous spatiotemporal context, using indigenous techniques.[21] This emphasis on the indigenous (such as the indigenous languages of isiZulu and iziXhosa) is demonstrated in the film *Gugu and Andile* where the spatiotemporal context is changed to the political tensions between the African National Congress (ANC) and its "staunch adversary", the "former Zulu cultural organisation that became the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)"[22] in the build-up to the first democratic elections, and the use of local archive footage. For Ruby Cheung and David Fleming, cinema is grounded in the ideologies and politics of the

12   Michael Chapman, "To be a coconut? Thoughts provoked by Natasha Distiller's Shakespeare and the coconuts: on post-apartheid South African culture," *Critical Arts* 28. 2 (2014): 175.

13   Postcolonial adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* have a historical presence in South Africa that long precedes Schlesinger's *Gugu and Andile*. RL Peteni's 1976 novel *Hill of Fools*, for instance, demonstrates how *Romeo and Juliet* was reworked for an African context before *Gugu and Andile*.

14   Distiller, Natasha. ""Colonial Shakespeare": report on the Shakespeare Society of Southern Africa's tri-annual Shakespeare congress," *South African Theatre Journal* 17. 1 (2003): 256.

15   Jane Wilkinson, ""The sayings of Tsikinya-Chaka": Shakespeare in South Africa," *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africae l'Oriente* 54. 2 (1999): 225.

16   See, for example, Wilkinson, "The sayings of Tsikinya-Chaka," 226–227. In popular media, Samuel Ravengai (2015) makes the case for the transposing of Shakespeare in a South African context as a way to negotiate negative identities in and of the African continent, while Chris Thurman (2016) has explored where it is that Shakespeare 'fits' the South African secondary or tertiary educational contexts. In her study on Shakespeare and the South African educational system, Frances Ringwood (2014:9) summarises the tensions around the propriety of Shakespeare in South Africa as follows: "[a]t one extreme, the further study of 'Shakespeare' is endorsed by educators on the basis of his humanity and universalism, while at the other, his work is seen as a vehicle for purveying the evils of neocolonialism and racist exploitation".

17   David Johnson, *Shakespeare and South Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p.173.

18   Denis Salter, "Acting Shakespeare in postcolonial space," in *Shakespeare, Theory and Performance,* ed. James C, Bulman (New York: Routledge, 2003), 117. More recently, see *South African Essays on 'Universal' Shakespeare*, ed. Chris Thurman (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014). This book addresses the notion of the universal Shakespeare. As Tony Voss (2015) notes in his book review, the idea of the global is a more rooted, fact-based notion than the still contentious idea of the universal.

19   Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1986), p.91.

20   Salter, "Acting Shakespeare," p.117.

21   Burt, "Mobilizing foreign Shakespeares", pp.170–171.

22   Jacqueline M. Klopp and Elke Zuern, "The politics of violence in democratization: lessons from Kenya and South Africa," *Comparative Politics,* 39. 2 (2007): 135.

spatiotemporal context when a film is made.[23] These ideologies, politics and spatiotemporal contexts all inform the different adaptations of Shakespearean texts, and how gender identity is represented within these contexts. As we will discuss, the *mise-en-scène* as visual coding of gender identity, however, remains similar to the styles used by Zeffirelli in Italy in 1968.

According to Charles Areni, Pamela Kiecker and Kay Palan, gender identity represents how the individual perceives the presence of both feminine and masculine personality traits.[24] Virginia Johnson, Robert Kolodny and William Masters describe gender identity as an individual's personal sense of either being female or male.[25] Our understanding of gender identity is located at the intersection of Erving Goffman, Michel Foucault and Judith Butler's research on identity, power and gender. A sociologist, Goffman theorised notions of the self and identity, as well as the manner in which the individual displays and stylises themselves to construct a specific identity (Kathy Howlett, mentioned above, also uses the work of Erving Goffman to critically read Richard Loncraine's *Richard III*).[26] Goffman's notions on the performance of identity pre-empted Butler's theory and publications on the performativity of gender identity from the mid-1980s with *Variations on Sex and Gender* through to the early 2000s with *Gender Trouble* (2006). Foucault's work has been important in the examination of gender identity as he emphasises the importance of difference in his discourse on identity.[27] In the 1980s Foucault theorised that power relations are made possible by the ways in which different identities are positioned in communities and societal structures.[28] When examining power relations inherited from oppressive and exploitative systems such as patriarchy and colonialism, these power relations should be considered as a perpetual negotiation between past and present.[29] According to Foucault, the policing and institutionalised control of identity is a form of subjugation.[30] Within such a disciplinary society, identities are bordered and positioned as fixed. These fixed identities prevent individuals from moving beyond fixed boundaries.[31] Regarding the articulation and assertion of identity as a form of power, Foucault uses the example of male power over females, and the power of parents over children.

Reflecting on the fluidity of gender identity, Butler maintains that gender identity is not an inner substance or an intractable depth, and it is the parodic repetition of gender that exposes this very illusion.[32] For Butler the performativity of gender is politically enforced, and the act of gender opens itself up to splitting, self-criticism and self-parody.[33] At the intersection of postcolonialism and feminism, "*[w]oman* becomes a metaphor for cultural purity and authenticity resulting in the manipulation of the material conditions of women's lives", especially in representations of a woman untainted by Western influences.[34]

Zeffirelli, Luhrmann and Schlesinger: The realist, postmodernist and postcolonial trajectory of *Romeo and Juliet*

Distiller affirms the continuing centrality of Shakespeare's plays in and beyond the Western literary canon as evidenced by African writers who write about Shakespeare and acknowledge his influence in

23 Ruby Cheung and David H. Fleming, *Cinema, Identities and Beyond* (United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), pp.2–3.

24 Charles S. Areni, Pamela Kiecker and Kay M. Palan, "Reexamining masculinity, femininity, and gender identity scales," *Marketing Letters* 10. 4 (1999): 363–377.

25 Virginia E. Johnson, Robert C. Kolodny and William H Masters, *On Sex and Human Loving* (London: Papermac, 1992).

26 Howlett, *Framing Shakespeare on Film*, p.15.

27 Thomas Flynn, "Foucault's mapping of history," in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault,* ed. Gary Gutting (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.45.

28 Michel Foucault, "The subject and power," *Critical Inquiry* 8. 4 (1982): 777–795.

29 Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p.1.

30 Clare O'Farrell, "Key Concepts," Michel Foucault.com, http://www.michel-foucault.com/concepts/ (accessed 16 July 2013).

31 Clare O'Farrell, "Key Concepts," Michel Foucault.com, http://www.michel-foucault.com/concepts/ (accessed 16 July 2013).

32 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p.200.

33 Butler, *Gender Trouble,* p.200.

34 Radha S. Hegde, "A view from elsewhere," p.281.

their work.[35] Mark Houlahan regards postcolonial theatre performances of Shakespearean plays with anxiety due to the relationship between the text and the postcolonial performer, specifically those of "English" Shakespeare, or whether they will they be able to unsettle Shakespeare's prior frame.[36] When discussing postcolonial productions of Shakespeare in a filmic context, Kevin J. Wetmore questions whether any production of Shakespeare without Shakespeare's text is still Shakespeare. The question of what constitutes a Shakespearean play if it is stripped of its original dialogue is important; given the significance of language, Wetmore argues that Shakespeare is foreign even in Europe due to the distance of four centuries since Shakespeare wrote his plays.[37] Because of this distance, for Wetmore, postcolonial adaptations of Shakespeare transform the original text and imbue it with specific tensions. According to Michael Olsson, cultural communities in South Africa are finding locally-appropriate ways in which to construct Shakespeare for their own ends.[38] *Gugu and Andile* re-envisions the Romeo and Juliet narrative within a South African socio-political context by re-historicising Shakespeare's play, which in turn allows the viewer to read South African history as well as Shakespeare's play in a different way.

The earliest of the three adaptations addressed in this article is Italian born Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968). Zeffirelli retains Shakespeare's setting and period; he even filmed on location in Verona, Italy.[39] The film displays, in Chris Palmer's account, a sense of double realism with an emphasis on the body, as well as the brutality of the film's social and historical setting.[40] With the use of strong visual leitmotifs (such as flowers) ideas or symbols from the play are visualised instead of verbalised, allowing for much dialogue to be cut.[41] Zeffirelli's adaptation demonstrates how a film can "visualize Shakespeare's verbalizations", using Shakespeare's imagery to set up visual tropes.[42] In particular, Anthony Davies praises the film's credible visualisation of adolescent love, which underscores the film's claims to realism.[43]

Luhrmann's 1996 adaptation, titled *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet,* was filmed in Los Angeles and Mexico. This vivid adaptation moves Shakespeare's story to mid-1990s California. According to Loehlin, intertextuality is one of the most important aesthetic devices in Luhrmann's film, and it is intertextuality which positions this film as postmodern cinema.[44] The quick-paced editing and the colour pallet used for the film mark it as postmodern cinema. Postmodern cinema favours plurality in cultural expression and such films are known for a sense of formal subversion, an emphasis on existential content, and high levels of spectacle.[45] While the film explicitly acknowledges and references Shakespeare's text, this adaptation is rooted in the popular culture of its time, as demonstrated by Luhrmann's musical selection of bands such as Garbage and Everclear.[46] Luhrmann's film also demonstrates fluid identities via his androgynous Romeo and Juliet and Romeo's relationship with Mercutio (made even more explicit when Mercutio arrives in drag at the Capulet Ball). The film's deference to consumer culture, typical

35 Distiller, *South Africa, Shakespeare,* p.41.

36 Mark Houlahan, "Romeo and Tusi: An eclectically musical Samoan/Māori Romeo and Juliet from Aotearoa/New Zealand," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 19. 3 (2009): 284.

37 K J. Wetmore, "Samritechak and Intercultural Shakespeare in Cambodia," in *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia, and Cyberspace,* ed. Alexander C.Y. Huang & Chalres S. Ross (USA: Purdue University Press, 2009), p.170.

38 Michael R. Olsson, "All the world's a stage: Making sense of Shakespeare," *Proceedings of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 47. 1 (2010).

39 Anthony Davies, *Filming Shakespeare's Plays: the Adaptations of Laurence Olivier, Orson Welles, Peter Brook and Akira Kurosawa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.14.

40 Chris Palmer, "'What tongue shall smooth they name?' Recent films of *Romeo and Juliet*," *The Cambridge Quarterly* 32. 1 (2003): 66.

41 Palmer, "What tongue shall smooth", pp.63–64.

42 Kenneth S. Rothwell, *A History of Shakespeare on Screen: a Century of Film and Television* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.135.

43 Davies, *Filming Shakespeare's Plays*, p.168.

44 James N. Loehlin, ""These violent delights have violent ends"; Baz Luhrmann's millennial Shakespeare," In *Shakespeare, Film, Fin de Siècle,* ed. Mark T Burnett and Ramona Wray (London and New York: Macmillan St Martins Press, 2000), p.126.

45 Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard, *A world in Chaos: Social Crisis and the Rise of Postmodern Cinema* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), pp.16, 37.

46 Rothwell, *A History of Shakespeare on Screen*, p.241.

of postmodern cinema, is demonstrated by its reproduction of images and the overproduction of signs, such as its luminous religious imagery. For the reasons discussed above, this adaptation has come to be seen as the quintessential global Shakespeare.[47] Anthony Guneratne views the film's commercialised aesthetics as typical of smaller national cinemas (in this case, Australian cinema) using multiculturalism to accomplish transnational appeal while retaining an 'Australianness' in, for instance, how the film borrows from the "fetishistic zeal of Sydney's cosmopolitan Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras".[48] As Rothwell describes it, Luhrmann's film offers a Shakespeare in which "[r]omance has given way to actuality".[49] This shift from the ideal to the real is further exemplified in the clear politics of *Gugu and Andile.*

Gugu and Andile was originally filmed as part of a commissioned television series, *Shakespeare in Mzansi* (2005–2013)*,* which called for South African adaptations of Shakespearean scripts. Although Schlesinger's film is also set in the mid-1990s, her adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet, Gugu and Andile,* is very different to Luhrmann's film. Schlesinger's *Romeo and Juliet* takes place in the township Thokoza in 1993, the year before South Africa's first democratic elections. In *Gugu and Andile*, feuding families are replaced with political parties caught in a power struggle for electoral dominance. In the film, political affiliation is based on tribal and linguistic identity.

There is an ambiguity to *Gugu and Andile* as far as its representation of gender identity and its political contexts are concerned. In the next sections we address this ambiguity by framing it as follows: *Gugu and Andile's* representation of gender identities shifts from traditional gender binaries to allowing greater activity and agency for Juliet. For the most part, Schlesinger's film struggles to visually reposition the black protagonists and their life-worlds in a way that differs from established 'canonical' norms and conventions of *Romeo and Juliet* adaptations such as Zeffirelli's adaptation. However, the death scene provides a crucial reprieve: here, the film demonstrates its political insistence by offering a Juliet character who comes into an embodied political consciousness.

To demonstrate this representation of traditional gender binaries and the eventual shift towards female agency, we examine the following scenes: Act 2 Scene 2 (the balcony scene) and the closing scene of the films depicting the characters' deaths.[50] As we will show, Schlesinger's film is committed to a rather faithful retelling of Shakespeare's story in which the political tensions of 1993 South Africa shaped and determined the fates of individual characters. The protagonists of *Gugu and Andile* are not star cross'd lovers as much as they are caught in a larger power struggle, one that claims both their lives.

The balcony scene: Act 2 Scene 2

Zeffirelli uses the traditional staging of the 'balcony scene' with Juliet atop a balcony and Romeo below. While in the Capulet garden Romeo sees the light from Juliet's balcony before he sees her. Juliet runs her finger over the stones in a childlike manner. Her displays of childlike behaviour are juxtaposed with the tight bodice of her low-cut dress. Zeffirelli focuses on the physical attraction Romeo and Juliet have for each other, and Zeffirelli's use of close-ups shows how they seek each other out with their eyes.[51] The use of close-ups also allows for the audience to recognise their passion and in so doing side with them against the population of Verona. Both through the staging and by focusing on their eyes, Zeffirelli alludes to Romeo and Juliet's inexperience, naiveté and innocence.[52]

---

47   Anthony R. Guneratne, *Shakespeare, Film Studies, and the Visual Cultures of Modernity* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), p.240.

48   Guneratne, *Shakespeare, Film Studies, and the Visual Cultures of Modernity,* pp.245–246.

49   Rothwell, *A History of Shakespeare on Screen*, p.244.

50   The different films end in different ways, using and cutting different parts of Shakespeare's text, in order to motivate Juliet's suicide. Most notably, the priest functions in different ways, by either removing him entirely, or cutting his text in the closing scenes of the three films. In Zeffirelli's film Friar Lawrence finds Juliet after Romeo has killed himself, and tries to make her leave with him. To create urgency in Luhrmann's film, Father Lawrence is shown attempting to send a letter to Romeo and does not appear in the mausoleum at all. In Schlesinger's film the priest only appears after the deaths of Gugu and Andile, and his dialogue at the end of the film replaces the Prince's text that both Luhrmann and Zeffirelli used in their films.

51   Jennifer L. Martin, "Tights vs. Tattoos: Filmic interpretations of "Romeo and Juliet"," *The English Journal* 92. 1 (2002): p.42.

52   Martin, "Tights vs Tattoos", p.42.

Juliet is trapped within the female, domestic sphere, and Romeo in the public space, unable to physically reach her, each in accordance with their gender roles.[53] Juliet is physically located above Romeo, who looks up to speak to her. This staging literally puts Juliet on a pedestal. A specific power relation exists between Romeo and Juliet, wherein Juliet remains almost mythological and unattainable. Juliet is consistently shot from below, even in her close ups, while the camera on Romeo is either at his eye-level or from above, as if from Juliet's point of view. Juliet is shot and lit as if she was an angelic figure above Romeo, which emphasises her sexual purity[54] and serves to further mythologise her. This is a colonially 'appropriate' Juliet who functions in the domestic sphere, and is visually celebrated while in her domestic sphere.

In Luhrmann's idiosyncratic vision, Juliet enters the scene in the garden, so that she and Romeo are physically and visually on the same level. The two characters interact as equals. The power relations between the two characters change entirely as Juliet moves down to face Romeo during their dialogue. For Zubarev, the balcony serves as an architectural annex which outlines and elevates the lovers.[55] Through this elevation, Romeo and Juliet are not connected to any notions of domesticity.[56]

In *Romeo + Juliet* the two main characters are illuminated by light reflected from the water, and there is a sense that they transcend the realities of their socio-political circumstances. Juliet is still dressed in the white angel dress she wore to the Capulet costume party, and Romeo still wears his chainmail. The visual imagery of the angel and knight meeting in water also suggests their purity and the nobility of their actions which separates them from the violence, destruction and hate between their respective communities. Their costumes are reminiscent of an almost chivalric idealism which cannot be sustained in the multicultural and postmodern world of Verona Beach.[57] Despite their generally androgynous bodies, which do not display any obvious gender coding, the costumes serve to bind the characters into very specific gender binaries, and thereby specific power relations. According to Susan Sainato, knights are specifically gendered due to their link to the male combat arena.[58] Sainato describes knights as typically defending those weaker than themselves, specifically females.[59] A visual hierarchy of the knight as defender of the weaker female is immediately created when Romeo and Juliet initially meet, thereby demonstrating the Foucauldian assertion that identity can be used to exercise power over other individuals.[60] Romeo is visually represented as a knight, and therefore exerts power over Juliet. When the two characters are plunged into the water, the costumes are no longer visible, and these visual metaphors are no longer visible. The balance of power and subjugation is thereby completely destabilised.

The water allows for escape, but also for enclosure[61] as it symbolically washes them clean.[62] This symbolic aspect of purity is absent from Zeffirelli's filmic adaptation;[63] Zeffirelli offers a purity of moral

---

53   Nancy S. Reinhardt discusses notions of female and male spaces, as well as domestic and public spaces, with regards to the history of theatrical staging in "New directions for feminist criticism in theatre and the related arts" published in *An Interdisciplinary Journal* 64. 4 (1981):361–387.

54   In the context of these films, sexual purity refers to a sense of innocence which is physical, as well as social and political.

55   Vera Zubarev, "Nature vs. Civilization: A Review Article of Films by Luhrmann," *CLCWeb Comparative Literature and Culture* 11, no. 2 (2009). http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1480.

56   Zubarev, "Nature vs. Civilization," p.6.

57   Mackenzie Stewart-Peschka, "*William Shakespeare's "Star-Crossed Lovers" in Hollywood: Love, Youth, and Sexuality in Baz Luhrmann's and Franco Zeffirelli's Film Adaptations of Romeo and Juliet,"* University of Colorado. http://scholar.colorado.edu/ (accessed 31 March 2014).

58   Susan B. Sainato, "Not Your Typical Knight: The Emerging On-Screen Defender," in *The Medieval Hero on Screen: Representations from Beowulf to Buffy,* ed. Martha W. Driver and Sid Ray (USA: Farland and company, 2004), 136.

59   Sainato, "Not Your Typical Knight," p.134.

60   Clare O'Farrell, "Key Concepts," Michael Foucault.com, http://www.michel-foucault.com/concepts/ (accessed 16 July 2013).

61   Courtney Lehmann, "Strictly Shakespeare? Dead letters, ghostly fathers, and the cultural no. pathology of authorship in Baz Luhrmann's "William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet"," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52. 2 (2001): 213.

62   Charles S. Ross, "Underwater women in Shakespeare on film," in *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia and Cyberspace,* ed. Alexander C.Y. Huang and Charles S. Ross (USA: Purdue University Press, 2009), p.44.

63   Martin, "Tights vs. Tattoos", p.45.

character and conviction, but does not communicate this purity in as striking a symbolic manner as Luhrmann does.

Luhrmann is also very specific about the camera work he uses in this scene. Slow-motion isolates Romeo and Juliet from a world set in real-time filled with feuding families and death.[64] The camera follows Romeo in real-time as he leaves the costume party and as he moves behind Juliet to surprise her. Once Romeo and Juliet have fallen into the pool Luhrmann uses slow-motion to focus the viewer's attention on their hair, hands, legs and the light as they are in the water.[65] The use of slow-motion in the water gives the scene a sensuality and expresses Romeo and Juliet's nearly overwhelming adolescent sexuality.[66]

Luhrmann's film is reflexive, often reminding the audience that they are watching a film. This reflexivity serves to separate Romeo and Juliet's worlds from that of their families and communities.[67] Cinematically, such reflexivity is understood as *mise-en-abyme* in which a film calls attention to itself by interrupting its own seamlessness,[68] often by including a play or film in the film itself. Schlesinger's film has a similar reflexivity, specifically when Gugu and her classmates are being read and taught the story of *Romeo and Juliet* in class. In *Romeo and Juliet* the rose is an important metaphor, and Schlesinger explicitly visually references the rose in a way similar to the flower leitmotif used by Zeffirelli. In Schlesinger's version of the balcony scene, Andile places two pink roses on Gugu's doorstep, and he sees her through the window. Here the rose is a visual metaphor for Juliet's speech in Shakespeare's original play text, and the lines are cut from the film.

In Schlesinger's version of the balcony scene the characters are also on the same physical and visual level, similar to Luhrmann's film, but here the characters' interaction takes place through the security barred window of Gugu's house. The presence of the window through which they communicate indicates that Juliet is once again trapped in the domestic sphere, while the bars also suggest an outside threat. In our reading of *Gugu and Andile* as a decolonial film, Gugu is physically disempowered and her agency in the interaction with Andile is removed. The security bars which separate the two characters are reminiscent of prison bars, as each is held captive by their respective communities. The burglar bars in the window are a constant reminder of the time and setting of the film, and reinforce notions of conflict and violence in their surroundings. When in the window the camera shoots Gugu from below as Zeffirelli shot his Juliet, but when she moves to the front door the camera again shoots her at eye level. When Andile sees Gugu through the window she is wearing a pink dress, and her hair is done up in such a manner to create a halo effect with the lighting and white lace curtain behind her. This scene is almost entirely devoid of dialogue. Instead, Andile places his hand upon the glass of the window pane, and Gugu does the same while the two look at each other through the glass. This visualisation evokes Shakespeare's text (1.5.92–99):

> ROMEO [To JULIET]
> If I profane with my unworthiest hand
> This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this;
> My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
> To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.
>
> JULIET
> Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
> Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
> For saints have hands that pilgrim's hands do touch
> And palm to palm is holy palmer's kiss.

64 Mary Lindroth, "The prince and the newscaster: Baz Luhrmann updates Shakespeare for a Y2K audience", *Studies in Popular Culture* 22, 3 no. (2000): 63.

65 Lindroth, "The prince and the newscaster", p.63.

66 Ross, "Underwater Women in Shakespeare," pp.44–45.

67 Lindroth, "The prince and the newscaster", p.63.

68 Anna Kornbluh, ""Making it": Reading *Boogie Nights* and *Blow* as economics of surplus and sentiment," in *Understanding Film: Marxist Perspectives*, ed. Mike Wayne (London: Pluto Press, 2005), p.131.

Gugu and Andile's interaction through the glass parallels their lives: Gugu and Andile are physically close to each other, but there are political and familial forces such as their parents keeping them apart. The reference to this dialogue is also made explicit in a subsequent scene where Gugu is in an English class. In class, the teacher reads the above quoted passage from a *Romeo and Juliet* textbook. The cut dialogue is also further explained as the teacher asks the class what exactly the scene means. In the interaction of Gugu and Andile through the window the meaning of the dialogue is carried over. As soon as Andile leaves (they both know it will cost them their lives if they are seen together) Gugu exits the house to pick up the roses he left for her. As Gugu smells the roses she says his name. Using Andile's name emphasises Andile's identity as a Xhosa male outside of Gugu's Zulu heritage. The use of Andile's name also echoes Juliet's speech in Shakespeare's play wherein she claims that Romeo's name, as a Montague, means nothing to her:

> JULIET
> What's in a name? That which we call a rose
> By any other name would smell as sweet;
> So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
> Retain the dear perfection which he owes
> Without that title.
>   (2.2.11–15)

Closing scenes: The politics of death

In Zeffirelli's film, violin music emphasises how beautiful Juliet is when Romeo enters the tomb and sees her. The soft lighting and close-up shots make the scene nostalgically necrophilic, as the audience knows that Juliet is not dead, and that Romeo is about to kill himself. Michael Best discusses the moment of Juliet's awakening and Romeo's death in Zeffirelli's film.[69] This section starts with a tight close-up on Juliet's hands, and in so doing segments her as she attempts to orientate herself by feeling and exploring her surroundings with her fingers. In Zeffirelli's film Romeo and Juliet are made beautiful in their deaths.[70] Zeffirelli glorifies and idealises their deaths as Romeo and Juliet are carried on a platform, still dressed in their wedding attire.[71]

This idealisation of Romeo and Juliet – of their deaths – serves an ideological function. According to Goldberg this "marriage" of the corpses attempts to serve the purpose marriage usually does in comedy, which is to provide social, heteronormative order.[72] After Romeo and Juliet's deaths, the resolution between the two families is made overt,[73] and the audience has little doubt that the families have resolved their political differences. The families' new-found amity is confirmed by using the Prince's closing lines in voice-over while the audience is shown the Capulets and Montagues walking together. Significantly, neither Lady Capulet nor Lady Montague are part of this reconciliation. The reconciliation that occurs at the end of the text remains a *gendered* reconciliation which occurs between the patriarchs.

Unlike in Zeffirelli's film, Luhrmann utilises reflexivity in this scene as well – making the audience aware that they are watching a film – to separate Romeo and Juliet from their surroundings.[74] The audience is shown flashing images of Romeo and Juliet, as their bodies lie in their candle lit tomb. The lighting signifies the innocence and purity of their union and idealises their death as Zeffirelli idealised Romeo and Juliet's deaths in his earlier film. Luhrmann's film does not provide the viewer with any clear resolution pertaining to the families' political fates, and we do not know if the feuding families resolved or strengthened their feuds after the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. In Luhrmann's version Romeo and Juliet are carried out of the tomb in body bags. The prince repeats twice, and with great anger that "All are punished". The remainder of the Prince's lines (5.3.321–26) are said by a television news reporter:

---

69   Michael Best, "The Text of Performance and the Performance of Text in the Electronic Edition", *Computers and the Humanities* 36, no. 3 (2002): 277.

70   Martin, "Tights vs. Tattoos", p.46.

71   Martin, "Tights vs. Tattoos", pp.43–46.

72   Johnathan Goldberg, *Queering the Renaissance* (USA: Duke University Press, 1994), p.219.

73   Martin, "Tights vs. Tattoos", p.43.

74   Lindroth, "The prince and the newscaster", p.63.

> A glooming peace this morning with it brings
> The sun for sorrow will not show his head.
> Go hence, to have more talk of these sad things
> Some shall be pardoned and some punished.
> For never was a story of more woe
> Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.

For the citizens of Verona Beach Romeo and Juliet's deaths are merely a spectacle which has ended, as reality has nothing left to broadcast. As in Zeffirelli's film, neither Lady Capulet nor Lady Montague is included in any of the final images of the film.

By contrast, *Gugu and Andile* downplays the spectacle of death in favour of the political significance of these characters' passing. Gugu and Andile's deaths are not mediated by television and other screens, but are witnessed by different communities and factions. In the film, the violent conflict between the warring ANC and IFP factions have reached a climax. Gugu intends to stop the violence between their communities in order for her and Andile to be together. In her attempt to put a stop to the conflict, Andile sees her for the first time since going into hiding, and runs across an open field towards her to try and stop her as he knows Gugu intends to confront the politically active, and violent, members of her community. Andile realises that Gugu's actions are potentially suicidal. Claiming an increased sense of agency, Gugu attempts to change her circumstances; she does not merely attempt to escape her circumstances as her predecessors tried in the above adaptations. According to Irene Lara, a decolonial feminist approach attempts to heal internalisations and challenge colonialism and other oppressions without committing these same oppressions.[75] In Schlesinger's film Gugu demonstrates this feminist decolonial approach by attempting to change and heal her community by resisting the patriarchal and colonially shaped forces which aim to destabilise her community. By trying to quell the warring factions in Thokoza, *Gugu and Andile* produces a Juliet character who is represented as being the most socio-politically aware of the Juliets portrayed in all three films.

As the two embrace, Andile is shot by members of his own political-cultural group and he dies in Gugu's arms. The camera cuts between the points of view of the men who shoot Andile, and close ups of Gugu in her grief. After Andile dies in her arms Gugu stands up in the field and tells the men to shoot her. She, too, is then shot and killed. The film emphasises the fact that both Gugu and Andile are killed by members of their own community, communities that have become political factions caught in a territorial power struggle. In Schlesinger's ending the two protagonists sacrifice themselves for each other, deviating from the conventional suicides in both Zeffirelli and Luhrmann's adaptations. Gugu and Andile's deaths also happen in the public sphere, in full view of all present for the conflict. In Zeffirelli and Luhrmann's films the deaths of Romeo and Juliet happen inside the Capulet family mausoleum, which emphasises the private and personal nature of their deaths. Schlesinger publicises the deaths of her protagonists by placing them in a field in the middle of the day.

The priest arrives too late to stop Gugu and Andile and is nearly shot himself while running to their bodies. Echoing Shylock's speech in *The Merchant of Venice,* the priest says that they are all of the same flesh and the same blood. Looking at Gugu and Andile's bodies the priest claims: "All they wanted to do was love each other. Love!" Again here, the idea of traditional romantic heteronormative love between Gugu and Andile is one of the film's most prominent themes. The last shot is of Gugu and Andile, both dressed in black as Gugu's body lies over Andile's at the priest's feet. This is almost a role reversal of expected gendered binaries, where Gugu's body is positioned almost as a protector over Andile's body, instead of depicting the male as the protector of the female. The film then closes with: "In 1994, South Africa pulled back from the brink of civil war and a democratic government was voted in. Peace returned to Thokoza."

The ending of *Gugu and Andile*, featuring the priest's words and using footage from archival news and documentary material, suggests that the apartheid government, to a certain degree, is responsible for the war between the two political-cultural factions and ultimately, therefore, for Gugu and Andile's deaths. The use of archival footage emphasises that the already-present tensions between the warring political factions are exacerbated by the white minority rule of the time. During the period between 1990 and 1993 clashes between ANC supporters and IFP supporters were common. This conflict between

---

75 Lara, "Goddess of the Americas", p.88.

the traditionally Xhosa and Zulu parties was fuelled by the apartheid state security apparatus as the National Party (NP) supported the IFP's open brandishing of weapons.[76] Thousands of people died in these conflicts, notably in Thokoza in May 1993. With reference to how *Gugu and Andile* can be read in a politically progressive context, to decolonise is to re-engage the function and mechanisms of black-on-black violence between the Xhosa-led ANC and Zulu-led IFP as a series of conflicts that were at least in part orchestrated by the white minority government. As Nandita Sharma and Cynthia Wright explain, "[b]y understanding *colonialism* as the theft of the commons, the agents of decolonization as the *commoners*, and decolonization as the gaining of a *global commons*, we will gain a clearer sense of *when* we were colonised, *who* colonized us, and *how* to decolonize ourselves and our relationships" (emphasis in original).[77] The notion of "black-on-black" violence refers to how, against the backdrop of imminent political transition from apartheid to democracy, political rivalries became intertwined with ethnic rivalries.[78] In 1995, IFP-dominated KwaZulu-Natal lacked socio-economic infrastructure as well as central government funding.[79] Conflicts between the IFP and ANC "restricted who participated at meetings responsible for shaping integrated development plans", implying that as an opposition party, the IFP could "exploit its position locally".[80] In the decade before South Africa's democratic elections in 1994, the conflict between the ANC and IFP in Kwazulu-Natal alone cost approximately 10,000 lives.[81]

It was only in mid-1996 that leaders of the IFP and ANC declared their political conflict was resolved.[82] The ending also states that peace did not return to Thokoza as a result of Gugu and Andile's deaths, as it does in Zeffirelli's film. Gugu and Andile are collateral damage in a war between their cultures, and their deaths do not immediately change the political climate of Thokoza. As stated at the end of *Gugu and Andile*, peace returned only after the elections in 1994; the deaths of two young lovers – and activists – alone do not change the local political landscape, but may inspire political change. The intermittent use of news footage in *Gugu and Andile* serves to add a sense of archival authenticity to the film.

Conclusion

The analyses of Act 2 Scene 2 and the closing scenes of the respective films demonstrate how Schlesinger's film is more aligned with Zeffirelli's traditionalist adaptation when examining *mise-en-scène* than with Luhrmann's postmodern, hyperkinetic vision. Schlesinger's reworking of *Romeo and Juliet* into *Gugu and Andile* is therefore closer to the Western canon of Zeffirelli in 1960s Europe than Luhrmann's postmodern 1990s adaptation. As Schlesinger said in an interview with Tinashe Mushakavanhu, "[o]ur intention was to remain faithful to Shakespeare's themes."[83]

We have observed in *Gugu and Andile* a representation of traditional systems of gender representation; note how Schlesinger describes Gugu simply as "a sweet and innocent 16-year old."[84] In *Gugu and Andile*, the representation of gender identity remains traditional and more congruent with Zeffirelli's film than Luhrmann's film. According to Goffman individuals willingly present their

---

76 Nicky Falkof, *The End of Whiteness: Satanism & Family Murder in Late Apartheid South Africa* (Auckland Park: Jacana, 2016), p.4.

77 Nandita Sharma and Cynthia Wright, "Decolonizing resistance, challenging colonial states," *Social Justice* 35. 3 (2008–09): 133.

78 M. Lawrence Thotse and J.E.H. Grobler, "Standpoints on 'black-on-black' vs 'third force' violence during South Africa's transitional negotiations (1990–1994)," *Historia* 48. 2 (2003): 143.

79 Yvonne G. Muthien, and Meshak M. Khosa, "'The kingdom, the Volkstaat and the new South Africa': drawing South Africa's new regional boundaries," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21. 2 (1995): 319.

80 Ragnhild Louise Muriaan, "The ANC and power concentration in South Africa: does local democracy allow for power-sharing?," *Democratization* 18. 5 (2011): 1079.

81 Pelser, André and Chris de Kock. "Violence in South Africa: a note on some trends in the 1990s," *Acta Criminologica* 13. 1 (2000): 82.

82 Padraig O'Malley "The heart of hope", The Nelson Mandela Foundation. https://www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/, (accessed 21 February 2017).

83 Tinashe Mushakavanhu, "Shakespeare in Mzansi: a South African perspective, The SLQ interview with Minky Schlesinger," *Sentinel Literary Quarterly* 4. 1 (2010). http://sentinelquarterly.com/ (accessed 18 June 2017).

84 Mushakavanhu, "Shakespeare in Mzansi, *Sentinel Literary Quarterly*. http://sentinelquarterly.com/ (accessed 18 June 2017).

community's notions of femininity and masculinity.[85] Schlesinger does not problematise or challenge traditional representations of gender identity.

The small moments which destabilise traditional notions of gender identity in *Gugu and Andile* do little to question gender binaries in the film as a whole. Gugu's reprisal is at the ending of the film, when she breaks from the female domesticity and docility suggested earlier in the film in attempting to stop the political violence. Finally, Gugu, and not Andile, drives the plot with her actions. She tries to protect Andile so that he can return home safely from exile. Admittedly, Gugu's decision to help Andile is somewhat impulsive. Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet are portrayed as impulsive in their actions, while Luhrmann's Romeo and Juliet are portrayed as mature. Gugu and Andile are again portrayed as being immature and impulsive, acting without thinking about the consequences of their actions. Gugu naively believes that she will be able to stop the violence in the town of Thokoza, and that will allow her and Andile to be together, despite knowing from the outset that a relationship between them is taboo. Gugu and Andile are both aware of the violence in their communities, and that their love will not be accepted.

Zeffirelli and Schlesinger maintain a fidelity to their characters' heterosexual romance, while Luhrmann questions notions of love and heteronormativity in his film. Where Luhrmann actively androgenises both of his characters, both Zeffirelli and Schlesinger attempt to show the beauty and femininity of their Juliets and the masculinity of their Romeos. Zeffirelli and Schlesinger's films persistently code their protagonists according to their genders both visually and in the narrative, whereas Luhrmann androgenises both his characters, destabilising and liberating gender identities. Gugu and Andile as characters do not destabilise notions of gender identity as Luhrmann's Romeo and Juliet do, but they do question notions of group identity and identity politics within a specific historical moment in pre-democratic South Africa.

While *Gugu and Andile* is closely aligned with Zeffirelli's adaptation, there are specific moments which frame *Gugu and Andile* as specifically postcolonial and decolonial. From a postcolonial perspective, Salter explains that there is an assumed, naturalised relationship between Shakespeare and countries which were once colonised by British imperialist forces.[86] Richard Burt notes that postcolonial productions of Shakespeare often only move the plot to a specific spatiotemporal context.[87] *Gugu and Andile* is set in South Africa in 1993, but without addressing the ideological or aesthetic issues of Shakespeare in colonised countries. The political climate provides a context and background to the narrative. While apartheid did not introduce patriarchy and all forms of oppression to South Africa in 1948, it did provide an inhumane social policy which worked towards racial division, and even division between black social groups as seen in *Gugu and Andile*. While apartheid invented neither patriarchy nor inter-factional fighting, it did exacerbate, exploit and capitalise on political instability such as the tensions between the ANC and IFP. Helen Moffett argues that apartheid compounded already fraught dynamics of race and gender: "This is not to suggest that women in pre-apartheid or even pre-colonial South Africa were not policed or controlled or lived free from the fear of patriarchal violence", but to emphasise how race supersedes gender issues in much of post-apartheid discourse.[88] Almost by social design, women's political space fails to undermine the various related forms of patriarchy in South African society.[89]

According to Lara, part of decolonising imagery is working against dichotomizing binaries. Central to Lara's study is the binary between accepted and unaccepted female sexuality and behaviours.[90] In *Gugu and Andile*'s *mise-en-scène*, as demonstrated, Gugu is continually visually framed (and confined) as the feminine virgin. Both her costume, and how she is consistently framed in domestic spaces, reinforce her image as the feminine virgin. The virgin testing that is required of her also serves to reinforce what is

---

85 Erving Goffman, "Gender Advertisements," *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication* 3. 2 (1976): 8.

86 Salter, "Acting Shakespeare," p.117.

87 Burt, "Mobilizing foreign Shakespeares," pp.170–171.

88 Helen Moffett, "'These women, they force us to rape them': rape as narrative of social control in post-apartheid South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 32. 1 (2006): 139.

89 Moffett, "These women, they force us to rape them," p.142.

90 Lara, "Goddess of the Americas," p.99.

deemed acceptable female sexual behaviour. Gugu is not the "empowered black feminine presence" that Enwezor called for in the representation of South Africa.[91]

Within decolonial studies, Lara links female sexuality to their bodies and their spiritually to challenge Christian-based thinking, which links males to spirituality and females only to their bodies.[92] This emphasis on sexuality and spirituality challenges western androcentric constructions of femininity and feminine beauty. To some degree Gugu challenges these notions of female divinity by having sex with Andile, when she knows that she will be forced to undergo a virginity test. Visually, Gugu remains, however, coded as a feminine virgin. It is only in the closing scene that Gugu starts to break this binary. This is reminiscent of female characters in Shakespearean plays such as *The Merchant of Venice, As You Like it, The Two Gentleman of Verona* and *Twelfth Night.* In each of these plays, certain female characters dress themselves as male in order to drive the plot by taking an active role in their fates, instead of a submissive one.[93] Similarly, Gugu must masculinise herself to finally claim political agency in a world where her political existence has been determined by faction fighting and white minority rule.

Can Themba suggested that Shakespeare's Venice would eventually – inevitably – institute racist legislation; for Themba, racism would be unavoidable in a place politically dominated by whiteness. Themba claimed Shakespeare to interrogate African experiences of apartheid,[94] and Schlesinger re-historicises *Romeo and Juliet* to similar ends. As a re-historicisation of Shakespeare's play, *Gugu and Andile* invites a response from a postcolonial, decolonial perspective. Particularly, a decolonial reading of *Gugu and Andile* provokes a shift from Gugu beyond the status of victim. Gugu moves beyond being a victim in the final scene by taking her life into her own hands, and Andile attempts to find a peaceful resolution between the warring factions of Thokoza. Given the political ramifications that would follow their deaths, the final actions of both the characters can be framed as decolonial: not only have the characters committed towards peace between their political parties, but this peace also signals the resistance of black political activity against third force interference which promoted the occurrence of black-on-black violence. The ending presents a final, powerful isolated moment of political potency in a film that is otherwise too reminiscent of Zeffirelli's idealised, nearly apolitical adaptation. In *Gugu and Andile*, gender identity is informed by the film's postcolonial and decolonial contexts: postcolonial in the sense that the events in the film take place during a period of political transition and imminent social emancipation, and decolonial in the way that the film re-historicises Shakespeare's play to foreground the power struggles of the time.

---

91 Okwui Enwezor, "Reframing the black subject: Ideology and fantasy in contemporary South African representation," *Third Text* 11. 40 (1997): 36.

92 Lara, "Goddess of the Americas," p.108.

93 Lucie Johnová, "Patterns of Crossdressing in Shakespeare's Comedies," Charles University, http://www.phil.muni.cz/angl/thepes/thepes_02_09.pdf (accessed 6 June 2017).

94 Distiller, Natasha. "South African Shakespeare: a model for understanding cultural transformation?" *Shakespeare in South Africa* 15 (2003): 25–26.

Chandré Botha (botha.chandre@gmail.com) is an actress and writer who has performed in various fringe theatre productions and short films. She won the award for best production at the State Theatre's Youth Xpressions Festival for her physical theatre production *Today's Youth Tomorrow,* which she directed and choreographed. After graduating with a degree in drama and film studies with an additional major in English literature Chandré completed her BA (Honours) specializing in acting, directing and digital media. She completed her Master's Degree at the University of Pretoria. Her dissertation was on Minky's Schlesinger's filmic adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* to a South African context focusing on the representation of gender in the film. She has taught film studies, acting and vocal performance at different tertiary institutions in Gauteng.

Chris Broodryk (chris.broodryk@up.ac.za) teaches Drama and Film Studies at the Drama Department of the University of Pretoria, and obtained his PhD in Film Studies at the University of Cape Town. He has delivered conference papers on South African and Afrikaans cinema at national and international conferences, and has published articles and book chapters on performing masculinity, the failures of evangelical film-making, Jung and film, and the politics of Afrikaans cinema. His research interests include the intersections between film, theology and cinema, as well as social media and self-representation in the context of the Digital Humanities. He is currently working on a monograph interrogating the political impotence of contemporary Afrikaans cinema.