

**WRITING BLACK SISTERS: INTERROGATING THE
CONSTRUCTION BY SELECTED BLACK FEMALE
PLAYWRIGHTS OF PERFORMED BLACK FEMALE
IDENTITIES IN CONTEMPORARY POST-APARTHEID
SOUTH AFRICAN THEATRE**

by

Noxolo Anele Malimba

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work and has been referenced correctly. It is being submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts (Coursework) in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other University and/or academic institution.

.....

NOXOLO MALIMBA (CANDIDATE)

MARCH 2012

I endorse the declaration by the candidate.

.....

LLIANE LOOTS (SUPERVISOR)

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Abstract

Theatre is a political space which often reflects the social, political and personal conditions and consciousness of our society. It is also a place that allows for the speaking of private stories; a space that proffers the construction, re-construction, articulation and re-articulation of identities.

Coloured, Indian and *Bantu*¹ identities were all defined 'black' within the simplistic categorisation of the complex, problematic apartheid² system that perceived individuals as either 'black'³ or 'white'. As much as the apartheid system is one wherein the notion of 'black' shifted, it remained a system in which 'black' was often constructed as a homogeneous category of identity.

In its zenith during the late 1940s, apartheid's 'blacks' referred to the *Bantu* populace. Coloured and Indian identities were therein recognised as not 'white', and so were inadvertently considered 'black'; perhaps just not 'black enough'. Coloured and Indian

¹ This term will be italicised throughout this dissertation, by way of acknowledging its dual meaning. Within South Africa's historical context, „Bantu“ was used as a derogatory term. The land set apart for black Africans during apartheid, known as *Bantustans*, affirms the disparaging nature of this term. Similarly, the belittling connotations of the term are noted in the system of *Bantu* education; a system specifically designed to fit the black African populace for their marginal role within apartheid society. For the purposes of this dissertation, the term „Bantu“ will be used firstly, as a way to distinguish between the three categories of black/ness under exploration, where the term will be used to refer to black African South African identity, and secondly and most importantly, the term will be used as a reclaiming of black African South African identity from its historical derisive connotations. It is also important to note here, that within the isiZulu language, the term simply means „people“.

² During apartheid, there was a simplification of the term „black“. This dissertation recognises that the apartheid stratifications of *Bantu*, Coloured and Indian, under the „logic“ of grouping „like“ together (that is, apartheid's „black“ group), was in itself a false logic, because it did not acknowledge that there exists within each specific racial stratification, different cultural groupings and languages. For example, this dissertation could have expanded the discussion on *Bantu* identity by examining Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho etc identities, the discussion on Coloured identities could have included analyses of Javanese, Malay, Cape etc identities and the discussion on Indian identity could have explored different cultural groupings within Hindu, Muslim, Tamil etc. It is understood that in a post-apartheid context, there exists endless differences and multiplicities within the black identities of *Bantu*, Coloured and Indian. This dissertation therefore offers a terrain in which these myriad black/nesses are explored as fluid and contested.

³ Throughout this dissertation, the racial categorisations of „black“ and „white“ are in lower case „b“ and „w“ respectively, for the political demotion of these terms in a post-apartheid context. This is by way of politically challenging the essentialist thinking that underpinned the racial segregation and inequality primarily embodied by these terms during apartheid. The terms „*Bantu*“, „Coloured“ and „Indian“ shall be in capital „B“, „C“ and „I“ respectively. This is for the purpose of drawing attention to the categories of black/ness in a post-1994 context, whereby each is acknowledged and visible individually, as opposed to being articulated as part of the false logic of a homogeneous black/ness.

identities were therefore located as vague and marginalised identities in a system that while on the one hand did not impose the same fierce oppression as inflicted on the *Bantu*, was also one which on the other hand excluded these groups from enjoying the benefits of being privileged whites. Then came the 1980s which saw a shift in the make-up of black/ness where apartheid ideology was concerned. With the birth of the invidious tricameral system which came to govern South African society until the emergence of a democratic nation in 1994, 'black' was now broken down and defined into its constituent parts: *Bantu*, Coloured and Indian. Although this system seemingly regarded each of these race groups, in that each was now named and thus acknowledged as opposed to simply being defined as the homogeneous category of 'black', it was nonetheless a system that separated and consequently gave rise to unequal power relations not only between 'black' and 'white', but now also within these three distinct black/nesses existing within 'black'.

Navigating the most historically marginalised of identities – the black female – this dissertation examines the construction of black South African female identities in the respective post-1994-produced play texts by six black South African female playwrights: Motshabi Tyelele's *Shwele Bawo* (In Homann, 2009), Bongi Ndaba's unpublished play text *Shaken* (see Appendix A), Lueen Conning-Ndlovu's *A Coloured Place* (In Perkins, 1999), Rehane Abrahams' *What the water gave me* (In Fourie, 2006), Krijay Govender's *Women in Brown* (In Chetty, 2002) and Muthal Naidoo's *Flight from the Mahabarath* (In Perkins, 1999).

This dissertation will in part engage character analyses of *Bantu*, Coloured and Indian female identities as articulated across the six play texts. Each category of black/ness will be explored in its own chapter, where the characters relevant to that particular black/ness shall be examined. This separation of chapters into these categories is by way of highlighting that endless differences in black/ness exist within the label 'black'. While this particular separation of chapters is a perpetuation of apartheid discourse, as was the reality within South Africa's history, and particularly from the emergence of the tricameral system onwards, the final chapter of this dissertation will be an attempt to dissolve these racial categories of black/ness as implemented by and within the legislation of the apartheid legacy. In a post-apartheid South Africa, it is not only *Bantu* women who are 'black', as

Coloured and Indian women now claim 'black'. This dissertation highlights the need to look at difference within similarity and multiplicity in the myriad black South African female identities that comprise the landscape of our contemporary, current and critical post-1994 theatre context, rather than to speak of a 'typical' black South African female identity.

Chapter One: Introduction: Imagining the Community - A black South African Sisterhood of playwrights?

Located within South African history as a precarious state of being, black/ness remains a complex category of race identity and thus one which necessitates extensive negotiations of multiple perspectives, in foregrounding the diverse experiences and myriad identities within. This chapter begins by examining, within the South African platform of post-apartheid theatre-making by black South African female playwrights, through the looking-glass of selected theories and writing, the complexities within this racial grouping. Through examining a selection of six post-1994 play texts by six black South African female playwrights, this chapter begins to unpack 'black/ness' – specifically South African female black/ness – within a post-apartheid South African theatre climate. Through their respective articulations of the complexities and multiplicity of black South African female/ness in a post-1994 context, each of the playwrights under discussion begins to challenge the notion of a 'typical' black female experience and identity, as purported within discourses of apartheid which mostly perceived individuals through the generic racial categories of either 'black' or 'white'.

Although apartheid⁴ was a fixed system of segregation and separation, it was also historically a system which shifted. Navigating post-apartheid black South African female/ness within the particular space of theatre, through the connected variables of race, gender (and class), these six playwrights begin to dissect this category of identity which is historically often assumed homogeneous, and as a collective, move towards subsequently foregrounding the myriad experiences and identities therein.

⁴ Race and racism are not homogeneous discourses; similarly, apartheid is not a homogeneous system and so did not view black/ness as a homogeneous category of identity. The notion of „black/ness“ shifted within the system of apartheid. In the late 1940s, „black“ referred to those of *Bantu* identity; the section of the populace located as the utmost marginalised across all spheres of South African life. Though „non-white“, Coloured and Indian identities were at this time also not considered fully „black“ where apartheid's definition of „black“ was concerned. A shift in the characterisation of black identity occurred in the 1980s, where the formalising of the distinct categories of black/ness across *Bantu*, Coloured and Indian, took place through introduction of the tricameral system. An objectionable product of the apartheid system, the tricameral system grouped the three aforementioned identities into the category „black“, where each would inevitably be situated unequally in terms of power relations. This shift in perceptions of black/ness within apartheid, not only meant that „black“ was situated across the social and political aspects of life as subservient to „white“ overall, but within the latter years of the system, „black/ness“ became a category of identity in which the unequal location of its constituencies (*Bantu*, Coloured and Indian), signified tensions and discrepancies within the category of „black“ identity.

In an attempt to foreground the ‘new’⁵ liberating spaces that the black South African female is occupying within the landscape of current, contemporary post-1994 theatre-making, this chapter begins by identifying the framework in which the six playwrights under discussion articulate Black South African female experiences and identities, as a Third World/South⁶ context (In Mohanty et al, 1991). In her discussions around Third World Feminisms, Mohanty (ibid) subverts the marginalisation and disenfranchisement universally associated with the politicised, colonised term, ‘Third World’. Mohanty (ibid) advocates communities of women in South contexts to navigate politics of race, gender and class to ascribe power and agency to their status as women in Third World contexts; in turn, moving towards the eventual transformation around the politics of Third World feminist identities. The six playwrights under discussion similarly ascribe visibility and a political voice to the historically marginalised black South African female within the theatre landscape of a post-apartheid South context. This chapter will then continue to analyse the interwoven nature of gender, race and class in the articulation of black female identities, as proposed by bell hooks (sic) (1986). hooks (1986: 21) asserts that in order for black women to acknowledge the complexities and diversity of (black) female experience, it is crucial that they call attention to “interlocking systems of sex, race and class” (1986: 21). In other words, hooks (1986) maintains that in order for a paradigm shift to take place in the widespread perception of black female identities, focus needs to be placed on the interconnectedness of these systems of female domination and oppression.

According to Stuart Hall (1996), identities are not only cultural constructs, but that within a singular identity, exists a multiplicity of identities. Following on, this chapter will then appropriate this idea to present articulations of numerous black South African female (performed) identities, whereby past representations of a singular, homogeneous, ‘typical’ black female identity, are challenged. Following discussions around identities, this chapter will then engage the notion of the performance of (gendered) identity, which is articulated

⁵ This refers to spaces that the black South African woman has not historically occupied, such as black women of middle-class standing, black women with access to education and black women with access to language, as signified by their eloquent diction.

⁶ „Third World“ and „South“ are politicised terms used interchangeably by Mohanty (In Mohanty et al, 1991). These terms will similarly be used interchangeably in this dissertation.

by gender theorist, Judith Butler, as performativity⁷. Through the language utilised by each of the six playwrights under discussion in the construction of black South African female/ness in a post-apartheid context, each engages the process of attributing 'new' black South African female identities or social dresses. This chapter will then continue to explore this notion of language further, by not only proposing language as another type of social dress in the performance of black South African female identities, but also exploring language alongside the idea of subalternity⁸; a notion proffered by post-colonial feminist, Gayatri Spivak (In Chakravorty et al, 2006). Drawing from Spivak's critical argument that the subaltern is one without social mobility, and thus one who is metaphorically inaudible, this next part of the chapter will examine the way in which language choices and the use of language, as employed by the six playwrights, becomes a way by which black South African female/ness begins to be released from subaltern status, in a post-1994 context. Recognisable as constituting the epitome of the historically subaltern, the choices of language, as well as use of languages that are employed by the six black female playwrights, become profoundly political, personal and feminist acts. Through particular language choices, each of the six play texts embrace 'new' constructions of Black South African female identities in a post-1994 theatre climate, that affirm the adage coined by 1960s radical feminist, Carol Hanisch and popular within feminist discourse: "the personal is political" (Foley, 1994: 81).

1.1 Gender Awakenings: (black) Female politics in post-apartheid theatre

In a journal article titled *Women in South African Theatre* (Gray, 1990), that under apartheid ideology, Stephen Gray maintains, "race is the cutting edge of discrimination and class its reinforcement" (Gray, 1990: 83). He continues to state that "gender as the third means of dividing and ruling the population had not before enjoyed prominence as a political issue" (ibid). Gray highlights that within apartheid law, class was perceived as secondary to race, with gender considered last, as discourses of domination and oppression. A critique of six

⁷ This term refers to the particular social appearance that is attached to gendered identities. Feminist gender theorist, Lizbeth Goodman, similarly maintains that gender matters in the performance of self (Goodman, 1994).

⁸ This term refers to the lack of social mobility of women, given rise to by the unequal power relations that occur between themselves and their male counterparts, whereby, as women, they are situated inferior to men. This term is also used to mean lack of social recognition. It therefore refers to women's political position of extreme marginality (Chakravorty et al, 2006).

selected works by six black South African female playwrights is therefore by way of foregrounding gender as an equally invidious concern within the oppression and domination of women, and thus a notable political issue. Within a specifically feminist framework, the selection of play texts under discussion also serves to challenge the homogenization that has been historically ascribed to (female) black/ness within theatre-making. By dissecting within a current, contemporary, post-apartheid climate, the types of existing black/ness, namely, Coloured black/ness, Indian black/ness and *Bantu* black/ness, each of the six playwrights not only navigates a myriad of black South African female experiences and hence identities, thus challenging the very notion of a single, 'typical' black South African female identity, but viewing the works as a collective, these playwrights also locate black South African female/ness at the forefront of post-apartheid theatre-making.

Theatre should not be deemed a neutral place, but rather a complex, political space in which narratives are navigated and identities subsequently constructed. Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal eloquently articulates the interconnectedness between theatre and the political in his seminal work titled *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979); a pedagogic work whereby he elaborates on the ways by which theatre can be used as a weapon for the liberation of the oppressed. In the foreword (1979: ix), Boal declares, "All theatre is necessarily political, because all the activities of man are political and theatre is one of them." Writing as black women themselves in post-apartheid South Africa, each of the six playwrights under discussion offers political negotiations of black South African female identities that become profoundly gendered and personal. Not only is theatre therefore political, but it is also a space/place in which private, often unspoken and personal narratives are articulated. The narratives of the play texts under discussion are told against the backdrop of mostly volatile political climates, whereby the real-life identities of the playwrights who tell these stories, are often embedded within the fictive contexts portrayed by constructed characters. The conclusion across each of the plays under discussion is not that the character is necessarily the author herself, but rather that the constructed character has been largely influenced by the author's personal reality. The personal element of the nature of theatre is aptly defined by theatre theorist and philosopher, Antonin Artaud (In Schumacher & Singleton, 1989: xxi), whose view that theatre and life

cannot be separated prompted the statement: “I cannot conceive any work of art as having a separate existence from life itself”. One example of a play text to be discussed in Chapter Three and one which stands as a reflection of the lived experience of its writer is Lueen Conning-Ndlovu’s *A Coloured Place* (In Perkins, 1996). Expressing her concerns around the specific theatre context of post-1990s Britain, Lizbeth Goodman (Goodman & Gay, 2000) states that in some circles, theatre came to be known as merely an art form; not a platform. Of a collection of academic essays, co-edited by Jane de Gay, Goodman (In Goodman & de Gay, 2000: 2) states: “we were charged with the task of finding ways to show that performance is, and always was, a means by which discourses of ideology and politics are communicated and promoted”. Through this assertion, Goodman (In Goodman & Gay, 2000) highlights the inseparability between life and art; between theatre and the personal and political.

The post-1994 context in which each of the six theatrical narratives under discussion in this dissertation is produced, becomes in itself a sort of personal and hence profoundly feminist statement by each of the six playwrights and thus notable as each one’s artistic expression of, and navigation through, contemporary South African black female experiences and identities.

1.2 Black Beginnings: The Historical Situation of black South African identity

Black identity mostly comprised persons perceived within the apartheid state as those to be socially exiled and feared. According to Maylam (2001) who reflects widely around South Africa’s racial order as birthed within the apartheid system, “Blackness came to be seen as threatening – as a threat to physical safety, to property, to health, to job security, and ultimately to white political domination” (Maylam, 2001: 243). Apartheid discourses and legislation were premised on the separation of individuals into either black or white. This era in South Africa’s history perceived white/ness as the hegemonic rule, signifying those socially recognised as superior, while black/ness was synonymous with inferiority, disenfranchisement and little social mobility. In viewing the national community socially, culturally and politically through these markedly monolithic categories, the processes of apartheid often assumed homogeneity in identities; homogeneous in that persons were

identified primarily by virtue of their race and only sometimes by their gender (and class). The hierarchy of identities as purported within South Africa's historical legacy, however, extends beyond this one-dimensional race marker of black and white. As a repressive regime, apartheid law mostly overlooked complexities that exist within black/ness; both in terms of the gender and class relations that existed amongst the black populace itself, and also in terms of the specific types of identities that formed the monolithic rubric of 'black'.

Within historical South African society, *Bantu* identity epitomised marginalisation. The system of apartheid was, nonetheless, not one without imprecision. The reality of the system was that some elite and chosen members of the *Bantu* group benefited in resources during this time in South Africa's history, forming a subsequent middle-class *Bantu* group (Slovo, 1976). Writing about the black middle class during a riotous period in South Africa's history, Slovo (1976: 126) articulates that in the particular case of the black middle strata, "class mobility cannot proceed beyond a certain point; and again, this point is defined in race rather than in economic terms". Slovo reiterates thus: "The objective fate of the Black middle sections is linked much more with that of black workers and peasants than with their equivalent across the colour line." Though some members of the *Bantu* group benefited financially within the system of apartheid, therefore being middle-class occupants, black *Bantu* identity was nevertheless socially recognised as comprising those individuals situated at the extreme end of marginalisation within South Africa's racialised hierarchy, where race transcended class privileges.

Around Coloured identity, Mohamed Adhikari, whose comprehensive writing around racial identity in the South African Coloured community, explores the realities experienced by this group of persons during the contexts of both apartheid and contemporary post-apartheid. Of this group's location within South Africa's former political climate, Adhikari (2005:10) states that "Coloured people experienced the South African racial hierarchy as a three-tiered system in which Coloureds held an intermediate position between the dominant white minority and the large African majority". Adhikari then asserts that "The overall sense one has regarding Coloured identity in the new South Africa is one of fragmentation, uncertainty and confusion" (2005: 186). Adhikari thus illustrates that Coloured identity,

within both historical and contemporary South African climates, proves to be one of complexities.

Anand Singh (2005) similarly articulates the problematic nature of Indian identity within a contemporary post-apartheid context. This is a group that is historically defined as sharing an interstitial space with Coloured identity. Of Indian identity within contemporary post-apartheid South Africa, Singh (2005: 5) asserts:

while affirmative action and Black empowerment is selectively targeting Africans (*Bantu*), it is simultaneously marginalizing previously disadvantaged groups such as Indians and Coloureds - despite them being part of the rubric of “Blacks” during the years of anti-apartheid struggle.

By focusing exclusive attention on Indian identity in a post-apartheid context, Singh (2005) calls into question apartheid policy for having ascribed a homogeneous identity to all who were part of the rubric of “blacks”. He then challenges contemporary post-apartheid policy for sidelining South Africa’s past policy in that current structures are geared towards the empowerment of black *Bantu* persons only, with the exclusion of Indians and Coloureds.

These categories of black/ness thus existed in hierarchical form, where this notion of black/ness was viewed as a spectrum that comprised the privileged black individual (Indian and Coloured) and the significantly marginalised one (*Bantu*). This hierarchy however, comprises complex identities of black/ness in its apparent uniformity. On the one hand, while the *Bantu* group signified socially and economically the most disenfranchised of the categories of black/ness, it is a group that nonetheless occupied an unambiguous location within black South African identity. On the other hand, although both Indian and Coloured politically seemed to be significantly less marginalised groups of black South African identities, both shared an intermediate location within historical South African society and thus became identities marked by uncertainty. The six playwrights under discussion navigate these challenging spaces towards articulating a myriad of historically atypical black South African female/ness within a post-1994 context.

In light of these different types of black/ness, this dissertation will explore each of these three categories of black identity in its own chapter. This separation will be done in relation to the racial classification of the six playwrights, where two play texts will occupy one of the three categories of black identities. In breaking up the plays into the three distinct categories of black identities, the complexities that exist within black/ness are foregrounded. Further, this separation highlights that within a post-apartheid climate, race has emerged as a powerful discourse of exclusion, whereby distinctions and diversity are notable within even the same category of race identity; that is, black/ness. It is also for the reason that black/ness constitutes myriad, complex and shifting identities, that each of these types of black/ness will be negotiated through a variety of theoretical perspectives.

1.3 Why black women and post-1994 theatre?

In his preface to *Green Man Flashing* (In Fourie, 2006), South African playwright and cultural activist Mike van Graan, articulates the perennial question that was posed to theatre-makers post-1994: “What will you write about now that apartheid has gone?” (In Fourie, 2006: 172) The perceived political challenge underpinning this question is that with apartheid over, there is seemingly no need for the writing and performing of contentious social issues. The six women playwrights under discussion answer van Graan’s question/call by engaging the feminist act of interrogating the construction of black South African female identities both personally and politically within theatre-making in a post-apartheid context.

A lack of published play texts by black South African female playwrights has led to a lack of critical, gendered writings around black South African female/ness in theatre-making within the South African landscape. In turn, this lack of published writings around black South African female identities in theatre makes it challenging to chart the transformation that is arguably taking place in the articulations of black South African female identities, between the contexts of historical apartheid and current post-apartheid theatre-making. In 1999, the first ever anthology⁹ of plays to focus exclusively on the lives of black South African women was published. This collection of plays, edited (ironically) by American academic, Kathy A.

⁹ Other anthologies that include post-apartheid works by black South African female playwrights are *New South African plays* (Fourie, 2006) and *At This Stage: Plays from Post-apartheid South Africa* (Homann, 2009).

Perkins, comprises both male and female South African playwrights, in which each writer depicts the lives and experiences of black South African women, thus exploring 'black South African female/ness' within both the apartheid and post-apartheid eras. It is interesting to observe that not only is an anthology aptly titled, *Black South African Women: An Anthology of Plays* (Perkins; 1999), compiled by a non-South African black woman, but also, that of the ten plays in a collection compiled within a post-apartheid climate, only one play written by a female playwright is located within the context of post-apartheid. Exploring the six selected works as a collective, the under-theorisation and under-interrogation of black South African female/ness in the political site of post-apartheid theatre climate, is addressed and navigated.

1.4 Mapping a unified Context: Race, Gender and Class

Within feminist discourse, a large body of work has been written around Western feminisms, in relation to the lesser scholarship around women in developing/South contexts engaging feminist discussion. From the scholarship that exists, Third World¹⁰ women's politics are documented as having emerged from a Eurocentric world (Mani, 1990; Mohanty et al, 1991) that located women in Third World/South contexts at the periphery. This is a world characterised by divisions of gender, sexuality, class and nation, and thus one producing unequal relations within structures of power. In addition to the studies that exist around the history of third world women's engagement with feminism, and with the attempt towards a subsequent re-defining of the centre, post-colonial feminist, Chandra Mohanty, foregrounds the feminist politics of Third World women in the context of the 1990s. Through engaging these politics, Mohanty (Mohanty et al, 1991) foregrounds the under-theorised history, current consciousness and agency that Third World women should continue engaging within feminist discourses. These feminist politics can be appropriated to similarly map the context of South African (black) Third World¹¹ women from the historical to current and contemporary make-up of post-1994 South African theatre-making.

¹⁰Mohanty uses the term in a way which ascribes power and agency, as opposed to the powerlessness and marginality widely ascribed to women within Third World/South contexts.

¹¹South Africa is widely accepted as a „developing“ nation, though not entirely a „First World“ nation. This term, as a description of the South African context, is used here to pick up on Mohanty's political reclaiming of the term (see footnote 8).

Third World feminist discourse is a complex one comprising conflicting histories in it. The multiplicity of histories within this complex category makes it difficult to generalise about “Third World women” (Mohanty et al, 1991: 4). Mohanty therefore analyses this political category by proposing the term “imagined community” (ibid) as a constructed, unifying context for these women. In their diversity, Mohanty recognises racism, sexism, colonialism and capitalism as just some of the struggles and histories that link these women, thus making them a community. While the dynamics of the West/South¹² paradigm separate and allude to the way in which people are located unequally within structures of power, an analysis of “Third World Feminisms” becomes a politic that is constructive, though the women comprising it are often different. Mohanty reiterates that “Third World feminisms” comprise women who are at once a community, signifying similarities and unity between them, yet women who are also diverse within their alliance. Collaborations are not formed based on biology, culture or race; instead, alliances occur where there are common grounds for political struggle.

This notion of political alignment is crucial in understanding feminism as a ‘political position’ (Moi, 1982; Goodman, 1998). Speaking as part of the community of feminist scholars, Mohanty asserts that formation of these communities relies on ‘the way we think about race, class and gender’ (Mohanty et al, 1991: 4). This declaration highlights that shared race, class and gender become non-viable in establishing ‘community’ status among third world women. These variables are not in themselves sufficient in unifying these women. However, it is ways of thinking about their shared struggles and histories within these variables that can allow women of the Third World to not only be politically aligned and thus begin engaging effectively politics of Third World feminisms, but where this unity and political consciousness allows these women, as an ‘imagined community’, to begin exercising agency as non-Western women in Western contexts, through ascribing ‘new’ meaning around the discourses of race, class and gender.

¹² „West“ refers to nations generally perceived as the economic powers of the world and thus the centre of civilisation (for example, the United States of America and the United Kingdom), while the „South“ is commonly ascribed underdeveloped status, with its citizens viewed as constituting the periphery of modern society.

Borrowing from Mohanty's terminology, our contemporary post-apartheid landscape can be referred to as a Third World/South context. Mohanty's (In Mohanty et al, 1991) theoretical viewpoint around third world feminist struggles sees her definition of the term 'Third World' as firstly, inclusive of women across all racial groupings. These communities ultimately constitute women with "divergent histories and social locations, woven together by the political threads of opposition to forms of domination that are not only pervasive but also systemic" (In Mohanty et al, 1991: 4). This is a community of women who may be located differently geographically, who may be of differing racial groups and who may carry different histories, yet who join together to struggle against all forms of domination. Mohanty uses the term as a way of challenging the marginal role often associated with (black) women within 'Third World' contexts and in turn politically reclaiming the role of women within these contexts. Through this reclamation, Mohanty ascribes power and agency to a community of women historically or traditionally described as marginal and powerless; an association of women who engage feminist discourse by calling towards new ways of thinking around the connected variables of race, gender and class.

It is maintained by Mohanty (In Mohanty et al, 1991: 7) that "there is no logical and necessary connection between being 'female' and becoming 'feminist'". That which makes this community of Third World women 'feminist' is a "common context of struggle" (ibid). This is a "common context of struggle against specific exploitative structures and systems" that often persist, manifesting in both historical and contemporary society (ibid). Such is the reality when charting the black female's location within structures of race, gender (and class) from the historical theatre landscape during the apartheid system, to current theatre-making in contemporary, post-apartheid society. Located as significantly marginalised and altogether Othered within historical theatre-making, the black South African female continues to negotiate her voice and the audibility thereof, within contemporary post-apartheid theatre.

As an "imagined community" (Mohanty et al, 1991: 4) of politically aligned (black) feminists, the six playwrights navigate the entwined systems of domination of race, gender and class to (re)negotiate, (re)articulate and (re)construct black South African female identities within

a post-apartheid 'Third World/South' context. As a community, their imagined collectiveness is firstly realised in their status as historically marginalised 'female' and 'black' South Africans. Although different from each other in their comprising identities across the three distinct categories of black/ness under discussion, the six playwrights' political alliance lies in their articulations of black South African female identities within the particular context of contemporary post-1994 theatre; articulations that are politically-charged in that as a collective, they testify to new ways of thinking about and engaging race, gender and class. In light of the historical theatre landscape of South Africa during the context of apartheid, whereby women of colour had a subdued voice pertaining to the production of theatre, these articulations mark the playwrights as profoundly feminist. Within the similarly shared geographic space of our current, contemporary, democratic, post-apartheid South African theatre landscape, each of these women constructs a narrative that locates the black South African woman within new spaces of agency. As a collective, these narratives mark the playwrights as an imagined community of feminist theatre practitioners, who, in their very act of writing narratives around black South African female/ness in a post-1994 climate, not only engage that which is historically contentious, but also call towards a transformation of the contemporary post-apartheid South African theatre landscape, by ascribing visibility and a discernible presence to black South African females.

While Mohanty's definition of feminism is premised on the political alignment of Third World women whose community status is realised in the *way* these women think about race, class and gender, black American feminist and gender scholar, bell hooks (sic) (1986) begins to dissect each of these discourses in their constitution of black feminism. Describing feminism as a transformational politic, hooks (1986) maintains that black women need to engage politics of domination by exploring the interconnectedness of gender, race and class. Similar to Mohanty (In Mohanty et al, 1991) who begins by foregrounding Western feminist discourse in her engagement with Third World feminisms, hooks (1986) begins by constructing a parallel between Western feminisms and the politics of black feminisms, in her discussion of the latter. Highlighting the problematic of counterpart Western feminist thinking, hooks (1986) observes that feminists of the West are of the belief that within feminist discourse, discrepancies are birthed within the field of gender; that for domination

of males over females to be eradicated, females must join in a struggle against the enemy: patriarchy. hooks (1986: 19) reiterates that 'with feminist movement in the West, this has led to the assumption that resisting patriarchal domination is a more legitimate feminist action than resisting racism and other forms of domination'. The implication of such a stance is that the major discourses of race and class are almost made to be secondary. Within historical South Africa, apartheid discourses purported a differing extreme for the black woman, who on the contrary, became significantly compromised in terms of her gender within the apartheid struggle, whereby discourses of apartheid resulted in her struggle against not only the primarily-resisted discourse of racism, but also the equally oppressive structure of sexism. The black South African woman's complex location in history is that which induces the myriad articulations of black South African female/ness within a post-1994 context by the six playwrights. The six playwrights navigate challenging past-bred spaces as occupied by the black South African female, to both re-define black South African female/ness and posit theatre as a useful social, public platform where private and often unspoken stories and subsequently identities, are newly negotiated.

In their articulations of new black South African female identities, the six playwrights challenge the victim-status historically and traditionally associated with (black) females. This is echoed by hooks (1986: 20) who highlights that inasmuch as it is true that differentiations of strong/weak, powerful/powerless have been a central aspect of defining gender globally, "it should not obscure the reality that women can and do participate in politics of domination, as perpetrators as well as victims – that we dominate, that we are dominated". Viewing black South African women as those with the capacity to dominate, allows for the exploration of an alternative paradigm of domination; one in which the black South African woman assumes responsibility for the transformation of self and her society. In a post-1994 climate where race has emerged as a powerful discourse for inclusion and exclusion, the six playwrights offer possibility for the self-creation of identities as articulated through theatre. Through their respective articulations of the complexities of black South African female identities in a post-apartheid context, the community of playwrights construct assertions of agency; each playwright 'perpetrates' new articulations of black South African female identities that begin to resist male domination, emancipating black

South African female/ness from victim-status in a post-1994 context. hooks (1990: 29) reiterates, “part of our struggle for radical black subjectivity is the quest to find ways to construct self and identity that are oppositional and liberatory”. In the context of the six playwrights, each one’s articulation of black South African female/ness post-1994 is both the opposing and challenging of the homogeneity historically affixed to black South African female/ness, as well as liberatory. The playwrights utilise the space/place of theatre to both challenge the assumed homogeneity ascribed to black South African female/ness by apartheid processes, as well as to construct new, alternative and liberatory identities for their female characters in a post-1994 climate, through navigating the “interlocking systems of domination: sex, race and class” (hooks, 1986: 21). The black women articulated in the six play texts collectively explored, highlight the interconnectedness of race and gender, with some reference to class, as categories through which power can be navigated by black female characters in a post-apartheid context.

1.5 Multiple black/ness, Multiple Identities

According to Stuart Hall (1996), there exists within each identity, a multiplicity of identities. Hall (1996) further observes that identities are structured representations. He maintains that identities are cultural constructs that are unstable and changing, altering with contexts. They are fragmented and unified, constantly in the process of transformation. Within their persistent process of changing, Hall (1996) highlights that identities are hence subject to references to the histories that shaped them. Hall (1996: 4) asserts, “identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being [...]”. Through their articulations of black South African female/ness in a post-1994 context, the six playwrights continue to correspond to the history that located this identity at the margins. By (re)constructing black South African female/ness, these six playwrights invoke a re-definition of this category of identity in a new Third world/South context, whereby this identity begins to undergo a process of transformation, from the margins to the centre; from positions of passivity to those of agency.

1.6 Performativity: (Re) Dressing black female/ness post-1994

While Hall (1996) articulates identity as an entity existing in its multiple forms – thus birthing this notion of *identities* - and primarily as a cultural construct, gender theorist Judith Butler articulates the interconnectedness between identity and gender, as framed by feminism. Similar to the argument posed by Hall (1996), Butler (In Salih, 1999) articulates that identities are constructed within culture, but further enunciates it is specifically gender which carries identity. Around her extensive reflections on Butler, Salih (1999: 62) argues that “all bodies are ‘gendered’ from the beginning of their social existence, which means there is no natural body that pre-exists its cultural inscription”. The body is not a neutral entity, but instead, according to Butler, ‘gendered’ (Butler, 1990: 8) and performs a certain identity as influenced by the culture in which it came to exist. The state of the body as gendered lends itself to Butler’s notion of ‘performativity’. In an interview (Osborne & Segal, 1993), Butler distinguishes between ‘performance’ and the ‘performative’; a distinction which is applicable even to the context of theatre. While ‘performance’ merely refers to the subject doing an act or a sequence of acts, ‘performativity’ is a theoretical idea that has notions of gender and identity as central to performance. Within ‘performativity’, gender is noted as a key element that carries with it certain connotations and thus inscribes or purports a certain identity to the performer. ‘Performativity’ thus refers to the way in which gender is metaphorically costumed, or the way in which gender lends itself to this notion of a performed identity.

This dissertation will expand on Butler’s notion of performativity, by arguing that it is not solely the discourse of gender which lends itself to this notion of performed identities, but that race is a similarly significant discourse which also denotes particular performed identities. Just as a garment is worn, this dissertation will propose that race too can be ‘worn’, and this, specifically in a theatrical context where identity is a performance. On the one level, the six play texts under discussion treat the literal dresses worn by the characters as significant and central to these characters’ gendered and racial identities. An example of a play text in which the actual garments of the characters are essential, is Krijay Govender’s *Women in Brown* (In Chetty, 2002), where the saris and power-suits become external garments that immediately identify the women in certain ways. On another level, the six

play texts under discussion are the playwrights' overt explorations of racialised identities, in that each writer not only articulates female/ness, but also black/ness. Returning to the example of *Women in Brown* (In Chetty, 2002), the characters thus 'wear' their Indian/ness, just as they wear their garments. Together with gender, the female characters' performed identities are thus negotiated through the equally weighted discourse of race, which, like the garments these women display, are similarly 'worn'.

The six play texts not only therefore examine gendered identities, but also racialised identities. Within a historical South African theatre landscape, there existed a characteristic social dress for black South African female identity, which was mostly exemplified by victim-status, reticence and oppression. This overall social appearance of black South African female/ness in pre-1994 theatre comprised women who were prompted by the political situation of the day to struggle against domination through mostly engaging protest¹³ theatre. An example of protest theatre produced, directed and performed by a group of black South African women, is the work *You Strike a Woman, You Strike a Rock* (Klotz et al, 1994). According to Loots (1997: 145), this ensemble of black women "were not afraid to voice gendered concerns during a time when it was considered divisive of women to speak of sexism when the 'larger' evil of racism prevailed in society". In resisting the secondary status that was ascribed to their female/ness as black South African *women*, this group not only struggled against domination as black and female, but also began to disrupt the very face of historical theatre, seeking to alter the location of black women therein. Within white, patriarchal, apartheid society, this group engaged the continuing process of inscribing a political, theatrical voice to black South African femaleness, thereby setting in motion a transformation of the social appearance of black South African female identity; a concern which continues to be evident within current, contemporary, post-1994 theatre-making by black women.

¹³ This form of theatre was engaged by the black South African populace during the apartheid era, produced as a form of resistance against the government's oppressive structures.

1.7 Black woman and power: Towards solving a 'subaltern' status

As declared by Hall (1996), identities emerge through difference; through that which is excluded. Hall (1996) observes that not only are identities constructed within culture, but that they are also constructed through the interplay of power and exclusion. Established upon a political ideology which perceived society through race, gender and class distinctions, historical South African theatre was strongly premised on politics of power and exclusion. The theatre landscape constituted the hegemonic white, male voice, wherein the black (*Bantu*) female voice was located at the extreme opposite end of the power spectrum. Maintaining that the constitution of identity is an act of power, Laclau (In Hall, 1996: 5) makes the lucid distinction that 'woman' and 'black' are marked terms, in contrast to the unmarked terms of 'man' and 'white'. By recognising 'white man' as 'unmarked', thus signifying 'human being', while observing 'black female' as 'Other', a striking hierarchy of power is established between these two categories of identities. In naming 'white man' as an identifiable social category, 'black female' automatically becomes an identity constructed through exclusion. Through their respective articulations of black South African female experiences and subsequent identities, the six playwrights contest for the legitimate inclusion of the black South African female voice within the landscape of post-apartheid theatre-creation.

The notion of subalternity is similarly founded on unequal power relations that emerge from divisions of race, gender and class. Within feminist discourse, subalternity exists because men and women are located unequally in the distribution of power (In Chakravorty et al, 2006). According to Spivak (In Chakravorty et al, 2006: 62), "patriarchy always provides certain kinds of access to men". This assertion is one which immediately concretizes the black woman's reticent status within apartheid, as her lack of access to social mobility is affirmed. Subalternity thus implies that for there to be a community that is unheard, there exists one that can be heard. Spivak (1990: 59) argues that in order for the subaltern to be translated from this position of subalternity to status of agency, the question that should not be asked is 'Who should speak?', but rather 'Who will listen?' From this assertion, Spivak (1990) proposes the subaltern as one who has the ability to exercise a degree of political mobilisation by speaking from this position. However, the real demand, according

to Spivak (1990: 60) who speaks from a post-colonial, feminist perspective, “is that when I speak from that position, I should be listened to seriously”. Spivak (ibid) continues to posit a problematic aspect of the process of listening, by arguing that those who listen (the hegemonic voices) “talk about listening to someone ‘speaking as’ something or the other”. Through this process of labelling as they listen, these listeners ascribe homogeneity to the experience of those doing the talking and impose a typical identity upon the marginalised group.

Perhaps the landscape of post-apartheid theatre is one way by which black South African female/ness can begin to be altered from this subaltern status. Articulating black South African female/ness in a post-1994 democratic context, as historically subaltern writers, within the politically-charged space of theatre, the six playwrights almost demand a re-construction of post-apartheid theatre; a theatre which recognises works by and about black South African women. Of her 1986 speech titled ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ Spivak (In Chakravorty et al, 2006: 62) states, “the central concept in the speech was that once a woman performs an act of resistance without an infrastructure that would make us recognise resistance, her resistance is in vain”. The six playwrights engage meaningful acts of resistance, as within the national infrastructure of a democratic, post-apartheid society, their articulations of black South African female/ness within a post-1994 theatre context, located as historically subaltern in status themselves, means their resistance is recognisable; their articulations of new types of black South African female/ness are thus perceptible regardless of how their act of speaking is received by the dominant persons that listen.

1.8 Language: A dress for alternative black South African female/ness

As previously discussed, race can be metaphorically ‘worn’ in the negotiating of performed female identities. Drawing from and continuing with this metaphor, this dissertation will explore language as another type of social dress, in the articulation of black South African female performed identities. As previously articulated, Spivak defines the concept of subalternity as a political or social position; one in which its occupant has “no access to social mobility” (In Chakravorty et al, 2006: 62). In relation to this definition, subalternity is thus a status that can be used to describe the historical positioning of the black South

African woman, as she had a 'voice'¹⁴, yet this 'voice' was greatly limited and scarcely heard. To reiterate, within feminist discourse, subalternity exists because men and women are located unequally in the distribution of power (In Chakravorty et al, 2006). Feminist discourses are therefore concerned with translating the female voice from spaces of passivity and marginalisation, to positions of agency and power. Feminist discourses are also concerned not only with posing the question, 'who should speak', but more crucially, 'who will listen' (Spivak, 1990: 59). Apartheid discourses and legislation silenced the voice of the black woman in her oppression within the systems of race, gender and class. An exploration of language within the texts under discussion is therefore a means of re-awakening the 'voice' of the black woman. Within South Africa's history, apartheid was a sound in itself, in that for example, one either sounded 'Zulu' or sounded 'Afrikaans'. Language choices and uses of languages are thus critical in the construction of 'new', contemporary, gendered identities. Butler (1990) similarly argues that language impacts gender, through which particular performed identities are then realised. In a journal article written in 1994, shortly after the first South African democratic elections, Miki Flockemann (In Goodman, 1999) interrogates South African theatre and the politics of gender therein. Expressing her concerns around the gendered (mis)representation of women in theatre, Flockemann observes that 'women have been represented by men in many South African male plays' and that as a result, female 'types' and stereotypes are replicated (In Goodman, 1999: 43). Through their act of playwriting, where race, class and gender are equally resisted institutions of domination, these six playwrights thus give voice to 'new' types of Black female identities in a 'new' theatre landscape.

¹⁴ I acknowledge the dual-meaning of this term. In relation to Spivak's theory on subalternity, this term is used to mean lack of social mobility and social recognition; it therefore refers to the political position of marginality that is historically linked to black female/ness. In relation to the above-mentioned discussions around language, this term is also used to mean the ways in which choices of language and use of languages allows the black South African woman to speak in performance in particular ways, where her „voice“ refers to the diction she uses, as well as the languages she speaks in performance.

1.9 The Selection¹⁵

The six play texts will be grouped into the categories of black identities under discussion: *Bantu*, Coloured and Indian black/ness. This separation will be done in relation to the racial classification of the six playwrights, where two play texts will occupy one of the three categories of black identities and hence discussed in its own chapter. This group of works has been specifically selected to highlight the particular performance styles and genres of theatre emerging post-1994, produced by women playwrights. As a collective, these play texts are significant in depicting 'new', alternative, complex constructions of black South African female experiences and hence myriad and varied identities in a post-apartheid theatre climate.

The unpublished play by Bongi Ndaba, *Shaken* (see Appendix A), Motshabi Tyelele's *Shwele Bawo* (In Homann, 2009), Lueen Conning's *A Coloured Place* (In Perkins, 1999), Rehane Abrahams' *What the water gave me* (In Fourie, 2006), Krijay Govender's *Women in Brown* (In Chetty, 2002) and Muthal Naidoo's *Flight from the Mahabarath* (In Perkins, 1999), utilise very particular styles that establish these works as important in understanding the types of theatre by women playwrights articulating black female identities in a post-1994 landscape. Both *A Coloured Place* (In Perkins, 1999) and *What the water gave me* (In Fourie, 2006) engage the monologue style, which is confrontational in nature because of the single voice of the writer that is employed; moreover, the writer who is also the sole performer of the work. This performance style also signifies the performing of explicitly individual and private, personal identities. *Women in Brown* (In Chetty, 2002) and *Shwele Bawo* (In Homann, 2009) make use of the performance style where women characters portray a variety of both female and male roles each. This form highlights the female voice as not only a strong, constant presence, but also as the sole agent in the articulation of both female and male identities. Ndaba's unpublished play text, *Shaken* (See Appendix A) similarly employs the performance style of women characters playing multiple roles each, in that four actresses portray seven female characters between them. This play has the

¹⁵ A comprehensive search for relevant play texts was conducted at the Playhouse theatre archives, Market Theatre and through various arts journalists, including Adrienne Sichel. That said, the selection of play texts used in this dissertation chose itself, which leads to the conclusion that there is indeed a gap in play texts written about the experiences and identities of woman of colour in a post-apartheid South African context.

female voice as noticeably predominant in its use of just two male characters, where each one has significantly less dialogue than his female counterparts. Naidoo's *Flight from the Mahabharath* (In Perkins, 1999) articulates South African female identities, focusing particularly on South African Indian femaleness. While this is navigated within dialogue that comprises both male and female characters, there are more female characters than their male counterparts, and so the female voice has precedence.

1.10 Towards dissecting female black/ness in post-1994 South African theatre

This dissertation in part engages character analyses of *Bantu*, Coloured and Indian female identities as articulated across the six play texts. The separation of chapters into these categories is by way of highlighting that endless differences in black/ness exist within the monolith of 'black'. This particular separation of chapters is by way of working with the false consciousness of racial separation as birthed by apartheid discourse, and politically reclaiming this notion of not only Blackness, but female South African black/ness. Similar to Mohanty's political reclaiming of 'Third World' feminist consciousness (In Mohanty et al, 1991), the final chapter of this dissertation encourages power and agency as notions synonymous with black female identities within a post-apartheid South African climate. As was the reality within South Africa's history, the final chapter of this dissertation will be an attempt to dissolve the racial categories of black/ness as implemented by and within the legislation of the apartheid legacy. The initial chapters of this dissertation will 'do' that which was 'done' by apartheid, while the final chapter will propose ways in which to 'undo' the marginalisation and separation 'done' by apartheid. In this final chapter, the proposition will be that as much as differences and specificities in female black/ness are highlighted, through an exploration of the play texts under discussion, all six playwrights are similar in that all are women and all are black. Through exploring these performance texts, this dissertation will not only foreground the black South African woman's new location within positions of power and agency in a contemporary, post-apartheid climate, but also elucidate that engaged as a collective, these play texts demonstrate the transformation currently taking place within the landscape of contemporary post-apartheid theatre-making by black women.

Within the space of theatre, the six playwrights under discussion engage the markedly feminist politics of (re)constructing, (re)articulating and (re)shaping of black South African female identities in a post-apartheid context. As an 'imagined community', these playwrights begin to give voice to a group who mostly bore the brunt of historical discrimination by virtue of their gender, race and even class. While a status of marginality and victimhood was historically ascribed to black South African women through these variables, it is only suitable that new positions of liberation and agency are occupied by the black South African woman, through acknowledging and navigating these self-same variables. Through recognising the interconnectedness of gender, race (and class) in the articulation of new black South African female identities in a post-1994 climate, not only does black female/ness prove nuanced, but the differences across the three types of black identities, are acknowledged and celebrated.

Chapter Two: *Bantu* black/ness

2.1 Introduction

The system of apartheid, as discussed in Chapter One, was premised on separation and segregation; processes that were facilitated through the compartmentalisation of the nation's citizens into distinct racial categories of 'black' and 'white'. Also argued in Chapter one, is the location of *Bantu* identity as the epitome of marginalization and disenfranchisement in South Africa's history. Considerations of gender also become crucial around discussions of *Bantu* identity as the most historically subaltern category (Spivak, 2006), in that a feminist perspective dictates that it is specifically *Bantu female* identity which is situated at the most adverse end of discrimination.

2.2 Race Terminology

Articulating the complexity of South African racial terminology as 'confused and confusing', Barbara Hutmacher (1980: 21) elaborates by stating that the way in which one group is inclined to refer to another, is a reflection of the political situation of the day. Of the apartheid order, she observes that a fanatical Nationalist 'would call those of African descent *kaffirs*', while 'more politely the government insisted on the use of the word 'Bantu' (literally people)' (ibid). She continues to state that the use of this term (*Bantu*) was also later regarded as an insult and thus officially disused and replaced by the generic term 'black'; a term which was used to describe peoples of African descent (that is, *Bantu* peoples only). Hutmacher finally maintains that with the spreading of ideas of the Black Consciousness Movement¹⁶, the term 'black' was ultimately simply used to describe 'all those at the receiving end of apartheid – Africans, Coloureds and Indians: those people whom whites group together as non-whites' (ibid). More than two and a half decades later,

¹⁶ The term „Black Consciousness“ stems from American educator and sociologist, W.E.B du Bois' evaluation of the lies that black Americans were being taught about their race as weak and inferior. In a 1890s climate, he termed this as „double consciousness“, in that America's black populace existed within the contradictory state of being held in contempt by White Americans, while also trying to assimilate themselves into the American social ideals they also shared as American citizens. Du Bois' teachings on „double consciousnesses“ thus reflect the insistence that black people take pride in their black/ness. In a South African context, the term „black Consciousness Movement“ is similarly appropriated as an anti-racist union. An anti-Apartheid movement that emerged in South Africa during the mid-1960s, under the leadership of Steve Biko, the Black Consciousness Movement was premised on raising political consciousness around „black“ identity (that is, *Bantu* black identity) in a context that marginalised peoples classified in this group.

within a post-apartheid climate, confusion and indecision persists around South Africa's racial categories and in particular, the category of 'black'. According to Michael MacDonald (2006: 166), "confusion about what race means is reflected in the double meaning of the word 'black'". He highlights that in the 1970s and 1980s, "the anti-apartheid movement used black in a Bikoist sense", while 'black' as a race category implied by apartheid, "allow[ed] 'Coloureds' and 'Asians' as well as 'Africans' to become 'black'" (MacDonald, 2006: 166). During the apartheid era, 'apartheid's blacks' were thus differentiated from 'Biko's blacks' (ibid). Although use of the term *Bantu* was historically under apartheid perceived as derogatory, this chapter calls towards the political reclamation of this term, particularly within a post-apartheid South African climate. Part of this reclamation is in acknowledging that the correct Zulu translation for the term *Bantu* is simply 'people'. Further, in light of the concerns of this dissertation, as stated in Chapter One, *Bantu* black/ness is explored as just one type of black/ness, whereby the monolith of 'black' is subsequently freed of its historically-affixed homogeneous status. *Bantu* peoples may generally be accepted as 'Africans', as observed by Hutmacher (1980) and alluded to by MacDonald (2006: 166). However, within discussions also including Coloured and Indian identities, this term 'Africans' - as a definition exclusive to *Bantu* identity - may prove contentious, as it could be argued that Coloured and Indian peoples, like the *Bantu*, are equally born of the African continent. This chapter thus examines *Bantu* black/ness; post-1994 *Bantu* female identities as explored in the post-apartheid play texts, *Shwele Bawo*¹⁷ (In Homann, 2009) by South African playwright, Motshabi Tyelele and *Shaken* (See Appendix A), an unpublished play text by South African playwright, Bongi Ndaba.

2.3 About the playwright: Motshabi Tyelele

Born and bred in Johannesburg, Motshabi Tyelele obtained her education in Swaziland and at the University of Cape Town, where she graduated in Speech and Drama studies. According to a newspaper article (Sibiya, 2004: 7), the award-winning actress continued to do voice training at the Royal National Theatre Company in London. In addition to having

¹⁷ This is a phrase in isiXhosa and one which would be spoken as an earnest, piteous exclamation unto God for his intervention in a dire situation. A suitable English translation is *Have mercy God*.

appeared in numerous television shows¹⁸ and theatre productions, Tyelele is becoming established as a playwright, as indicated through the play text under discussion.

Shwele Bawo (In Homann, 2009) had its first trial run at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. In October 2004, *Shwele Bawo* (ibid) then had a three-week run at the Civic Theatre Complex in Johannesburg. Subsequent performances include the play's run at MACUFE¹⁹ (Mangaung African Cultural Festival) in the Free State, as well as a run that took place a year later in August 2006, as part of the Tenth Celebration of the International Women's Art Festival at the *Playhouse* in Durban. In January 2008, *Shwele Bawo* (ibid) had a run at the Liberty Life Theatre on the Square in Johannesburg, and later that year, was performed for the Namibian Women's Summit.²⁰

With its beginnings realized in the playwright's place of birth, the continuing performances of *Shwele Bawo* (ibid), both locally and across the borders, foreground Tyelele's preoccupations around the unjust incarceration of women who allegedly murder their abusive husbands. The feminist concerns underpinning *Shwele Bawo* (ibid) are further signified by the public, women-centred events that form part of the performance history of this play text. Further, the growing performances are indicative of the possibly widespread perception that necessitates the continuous publicizing of this production, particularly within a post-1994 context that is required to recognize the Black female voice as legitimate within public society; a voice that was historically marginalized during apartheid.

¹⁸ Some of the television shows Tyelele has appeared in include *Madam and Eve*, as the character of Eve, and in the children's series *Takalani Sesame* as Ma'Dimpho

¹⁹ This is an annual 10-day cultural festival that showcases the finest of African and international talent, across drama, dance, music and other art forms. This festival is „renowned as South Africa's only „true African festival“ and titled the biggest arts and cultural showcase of its kind on the continent“ (KadmusArts, 2005-2010 [online])

²⁰ This is an event that was established in 2007 as an annual forum for business women and entrepreneurs to network and build capacity. It is premised on bringing together a group of women leaders to discuss the possibility of establishing a women leaders' roundtable which would focus on identifying issues and challenges affecting women entrepreneurs (Namibian Women Summit, 2010 [online])

2.4 About the playwright: Bongi Ndaba

New possible articulations of *Bantu* female/ness within a post-apartheid context are offered by Bongi Ndaba, in her unpublished play text, *Shaken* (See Appendix A), through the protagonist character, Khaya.

Born in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, Ndaba obtained her education at the Durban University of Technology (then Durban Institute of Technology). She continued to study further at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (then University of Natal), where she obtained her Honours in Drama and Performance Studies. Ndaba is a writer, actress and playwright, currently based in the area of Johannesburg. Not only is Ndaba known as an actress, through her lead role in a South African television adaptation of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, but her current position as Head of Story Development in South Africa's well-known daily series, *Generations*²¹, highlights not only her writing capabilities, but also her involvement in the creation of South African narratives.

2.5 Synopsis²² of *Shwele Bawo*

Fully titled *Shwele Bawo: A Grave Injustice!* (In Homann, 2009), Tyelele's performance text explores the social phenomenon of the unjust life imprisonment of women who have been accused for allegedly murdering their abusive husbands. The character of 30-something year old Dikeledi Nkabinde, who speaks from a jail cell, examines the inequality of the South African justice system, that appears to take a patriarchal stance in its incarceration of women who are socially isolated and criminalized for alleged acts of retaliatory violence performed against their abusive spouses.

The play also presents the media, like the justice system, as an institution through which the marginalization of women is similarly perpetuated. The character Dikeledi highlights the

²¹ *Generations* is a well-known South African-produced series that has been broadcast on South African television, from the nation's inception of democracy – in 1994 - until currently. Set against the backdrop of the commercial landscape of the Johannesburg metropolis, the series articulates predominantly *Bantu* male and female middle-class characters within a post-apartheid climate.

²² Short summations of both *Shwele Bawo* (In Homann, 2009) and *Shaken* (unpublished) have been included. This has been done firstly, to highlight the similarities in themes that prompt the comparative discussions to be later navigated of these performance texts and secondly, for the reason that Ndaba's *Shaken* (2008) is an unpublished play text (see Appendix A).

role the media plays in further discriminating against “those voiceless women who never had a chance” (In Homann, 2009: 117); these are women she now speaks for, including the telling of her own story. With a confrontational voice, the character Dikeledi makes the following rejoinder to the media, whose presence is suggested by the ‘cameras’ that ‘*have been clicking all along*’ (In Homann, 2009: 115):

Well, it’s my democratic right to tell our story, too! The story of all those women who’ve kept their anger burning slowly on a back burner. Women with no voice, who now sit in prison for life because of a justice system that doesn’t recognize the difference between a drunk man killing in a barroom brawl and an abused woman who had no other way (In Homann, 2009: 117).

Though the character Dikeledi is visible as a perpetrator in so far as she had calculated to kill her husband, she nonetheless becomes a representative for all those women who not only purposed to murder their husbands, but who ultimately executed their plans. The play has an overall sense of Dikeledi advocating the rights of women who are discriminated against, within patriarchal systems that dominate them: the justice system, media and family.

Having grown into middle-class²³ social standing as evidenced through articulating her past life thus: “I moved from a matchbox house with no electricity, to a seven-bedroom palace [...]” (In Homann, 2009: 118), this social position is proffered as that which almost affords Dikeledi space to not only speak up, but also be heard, even within the confined space that she inhabits. Although the character of Dikeledi speaks for all women, Tyelele navigates this character’s speaking, specifically through middle-class, *Bantu*/ness.

²³ Although the character Dikeledi professes: “I’m a „former member of the high-class society“!” (In Homann, 2009: 117), for the purposes of this chapter in its discussions around class as a key variable in post-1994 articulations of *Bantu* female identities, the protagonist characters’ social positions will be explored as either working class or middle-class. Therefore, although the character Dikeledi deems herself of high-class standing, this chapter will translate this into the social position of middle-class, simply because she occupies a social position more privileged than working class status. Within the framework of this chapter and dissertation overall, working class status is used to define characters whose incomes are generated from manual labour, whereby their wages serve the primary purpose of sustenance, while middle class status is used to define those characters whose lifestyles indicate extravagance and thus access to financial abundance.

2.6 Synopsis of *Shaken*

Shaken (See Appendix A), Ndaba's unpublished play text, explores the life stages of 30-year-old protagonist character, Khaya. Describing this character, Ndaba writes, '*She is in jail so she is not pampered up. When we meet her, Khaya is angry, unapologetic and feels the world has treated her badly*' (Ndaba, 2008: 1). Through interplays between past and present by means of flashback, *Shaken* (See Appendix A) articulates the events surrounding this young woman's current incarceration, which is the result of her assault of the doctor who diagnoses her HIV positive.

The first time Khaya appears in the play is through a present re-enactment of a past event, whereby she is in a hut with a traditional doctor, Tat' uNqetho. With *burning incense in hand* (Ndaba, 2008: 2), a sense of ritual is established. This is juxtaposed against Khaya's modern exterior of *a black classic Chanel suit with red stilettos* (ibid). Within flashbacks of her late grandmother, Nomatebhe, Khaya implores her grandmother to understand that the reason she had to consult a traditional doctor and thus seemingly disregard her Christian upbringing was because of her unbearably sore feet.²⁴ The play continues to explore Khaya as she navigates Christian beliefs and traditional practices.

By means of flashback, the play also portrays the myriad sexual relationships Khaya engages during her university days, including the long-term relationship that is sustained even until her adulthood, with the character Sabatha. In the present, the play then focuses on Khaya within a jail cell. Through interactions with the character, Ingrid, her lawyer, Khaya recounts various events from her days as a young girl in university, including stories of the boys from her village who were infatuated with her, as well as stories of her 6-year-old daughter Mbali, who Khaya reveals was the result of an unplanned pregnancy. Khaya then relates the details of the incident of assault against the doctor who diagnoses her HIV positive.

Throughout the play, Ndaba articulates all the other characters in relation to Khaya. This character remains central to the plot. Although the character Khaya is diagnosed HIV

²⁴ This is the performance text's allusion towards Khaya's ill-health and specifically, her HIV positive status. According to Fan et al (2011: 73), "Some people infected with HIV experience swelling of the peripheral nerves. When they are damaged, they cause burning or stinging sensations, usually in the hands or feet".

positive – a state of health that is still mostly treated as taboo, in that it often attaches presuppositions of risky sexual behaviour to its carrier - Ndaba ascribes a sense of ownership over Khaya. Not only does this protagonist find herself in a situation that was not imposed upon her, but she becomes a representation of agency, in that the past and present events surrounding her life become the result of her own choices. This notion of agency shall be discussed later in the chapter in relation to both performance texts under discussion.

2.7 Public Spaces/Private Stories

Within the specific space/place of theatre, speaking becomes recognizable as a political act. Tyelele and Ndaba construct female *Bantu* protagonists who become representations of action; both in terms of the *Bantu* female's location within post-1994 theatre and in terms of promoting the inclusion of *Bantu* females in the creation and subsequent impacting of our current, contemporary post-1994 theatre landscape. Through (re)articulating the most historically marginalized of identities, or in Spivak's term, the 'subaltern' (Spivak, 2006), each of these playwrights gives voice to *Bantu* female/ness within post-apartheid spaces; both in terms of the physical, public space/place of theatre in which these characters are portrayed and in terms of the fictional spaces/places which the protagonist female characters occupy and from which they speak. As discussed in the first chapter, it is the political nature of the tangible space/place of post-1994 theatre that confers a discernible presence to *Bantu* female/ness, affirms *Bantu* female identities as legitimate identities and altogether locates these narratives as profoundly feminist.

Feminist literary critic Toril Moi cites the argument proposed by fellow feminist academic, Rosalind Coward (Moi, 1982: 207) in which the former similarly maintains that, "It is just not possible to say that women-centred writings have any necessary relationship to feminism". Moi reiterates Coward's assertion by foregrounding the false assumption that "The very fact of describing experience typical of women is a feminist act" (ibid). Moi expounds on this supposition by acknowledging that on the one hand, patriarchal discourses are committed to silencing and repressing the experiences and voices of women; therefore, women writing about experiences typical of women, becomes a way by which these women reclaim and

assert their voices. According to the fitting supposition articulated by both Moi and Coward therefore, the act of describing experiences characteristic of women can therefore not be adequately deemed 'feminist'.

This viewpoint is reiterated and expounded upon by Goodman (1998), who aptly claims that feminism is a political position. In the same vein, Mohanty (Mohanty et al, 1991) observes feminism as the political alignment of a community of women who struggle against systems that dominate them. It is therefore recognition of the historical backdrop of apartheid with its resolute marginalization of the *Bantu* population, together with the platform of the political nature of the space/place of post-1994 theatre, which characterizes the writings in these performance texts – writings that are a reflection of black female experience – as feminist. According to Moi (1982: 207) who reiterates thus:

To believe that common female experience in itself gives rise to a feminist analysis of women's situation, is to be at once politically naïve and theoretically unaware. The fact of having the same experience as somebody else in no way guarantees a common political front [...].

Relevant across all six works under discussion, are the playwrights' common experience as black South African women. It is this similar experience of black/ness and female/ness which connects these playwrights, making them identifiable as an "imagined community" (Mohanty et al, 1991: 4). Their political alignment is deduced through the fact that each articulates black South African female/ness within the political space/place of post-1994 theatre. Articulating alternative black South African female identities within our current, contemporary post-apartheid landscape – furthermore, within the political arena of theatre – marks these playwrights' works as feminist. These six women not only therefore become visible as an 'imagined community' (ibid) of playwrights, but more specifically, an 'imagined community' (ibid) of black South African *feminist* playwrights, articulating alternative black South African female experiences and subsequent identities in a post-apartheid context.

Both Tyelele and Ndaba navigate the most historically marginalized of black female identities in their respective play texts. In a post-1994 theatre context, both playwrights negotiate the black female identity that is historically located as the epitome of subalternity;

thus the identity situated at the subordinate end of the historical power hierarchy. According to Millett (1969: 25), “The essence of politics is power”. Through their articulations of alternative *Bantu* female experiences and identities in a post-apartheid climate, both Tyelele and Ndaba thus engage the feminist, political act of shifting *Bantu* female/ness from positions of powerlessness and overall subalternity, towards spaces that recognize and prompt the listening of utterances by women of *Bantu* identity. Through speaking that is afforded through their growth into middle class status, the characters of Dikeledi and Khaya become visible as “intellectually and culturally active women” (Moi, 1982: 206) and thus embodiments of agency.

Articulating *Bantu* female/ness within exclusively middle class status does not however remain unproblematic. While Tyelele and Ndaba’s primary preoccupation for their respective play texts is perhaps not necessarily to explore in-depth notions of class, embedded within each play text are tensions around *Bantu* women’s class identities. Theatre is a space that has historically been a platform for the disenfranchised and the marginalized. Within the South African context, an example of this purpose of theatre is recognizable in protest²⁵ theatre. However, against the backdrop of the subaltern status which was imposed upon *Bantu* women and from which *Bantu* women have historically had to navigate their identities, and further, within an increasingly class-bound post-apartheid society in which we exist, *Bantu* female/ness is being articulated from middle class social positions, as evidenced in both Tyelele’s and Ndaba’s play texts. The exclusion of *Bantu* working class women in post-apartheid theatre is perhaps by way of emphasizing a new context and affirming the resistance of the historical South African order that altogether subdued the *Bantu* woman’s voice. It is perhaps the attempt by *Bantu* female playwrights to navigate *Bantu* female identities - within the specific context of post-1994 - from a class position (middle class) that altogether resists the subalternity that was historically imposed upon *Bantu* female/ness, wherein this subaltern status was navigated within working class status.

²⁵ This form of theatre was engaged by the black South African populace during the apartheid era, produced as a form of resistance against the government’s oppressive structures.

Access to speak and to be heard therefore seems to be determined by the context within which this speaking is done. For example, in an apartheid context, the character of Zandile in Gcina Mhlophe's *Have You Seen Zandile?* (In Perkins, 1999) is widely recognized as the epitome of marginalization. Gray (1990: 84) reiterates thus: "Zandile is the most oppressed of all South African stage characters – black, female, working-class and a school child as well". However, even within this social standing, this character's voice was heard and resonated both locally and abroad within the particular context in which she was articulated. Played by Mhlophe herself, the character of Zandile earned her the prestigious "1988 Joseph Jefferson Award (Chicago) for Best Actress in *Have You Seen Zandile?*" (In Perkins, 1999: 80-81).

Although both protagonist characters are physically incarcerated either through being accused of murder, as in the case of the character of Dikeledi, or being caught in the very act of physical assault, as in the case of the character of Khaya, these protagonist characters become characterized by actions that are legally controversial. Despite the contentious situations within which these characters are portrayed, they are nonetheless visible as representations of agency, in that these women are not victims of their circumstances, but have acted, and therein are their agency located. In *Shwele Bawo* (In Homann, 2009), the character Dikeledi acts violently against her abusive husband, Solly, in so far as she conspires to murder him; a murder that is ultimately carried out without Dikeledi's knowledge and thus becomes serendipitous on her part. She is subsequently sentenced to life imprisonment for the alleged murder of Solly. The following final monologue spoken by the character Dikeledi becomes her first proclamation of innocence:

So how did I, Dikeledi-Tears Nkabinde, end up here? Well, months after Solly got killed, one of my dear sisters decided to tell her husband what I had planned [...] I had not even thought about the execution of my plan! But God works in mysterious ways! One day, my husband, Solly Nkabinde, got killed! (In Homann, 2009: 137)

In *Shaken* (See Appendix A), the character Khaya describes the incident of her assault of her doctor thus:

I saw Dr. Winslow talking, I couldn't hear but I saw her lips moving, her fingers paging through the paperwork, the same paperwork that contained my verdict [...] Now my hands were itching, I was angry, angry I was there, angry for being me, angry at her for being a doctor and for discovering my verdict...something came over me, suddenly I jumped, leaped off my chair and grabbed her by the throat and strangled her, yet I was still sitting watching my body doing that [...] (Ndaba, 2008:57).

While Dikeledi is imprisoned for the suspected murder of her husband – whereby this character's agency is realized in so far as her plotting to murder Solly is concerned - the character Khaya is caught in the very act of assault. The emotional disorientation that leads to this character's uncontrolled act of violence almost becomes inadequate to exonerate her from the crime. The legal implications that follows the act of assault, despite the emotional and psychological state in which she enacts this violence, thus highlights this character's exercising of agency.

In *Shwele Bawo* (In Homann, 2009) and *Shaken* (See Appendix A) respectively, protagonist females Dikeledi and Khaya speak openly from the platform of theatre, against systems that dominate them. Theatre is both a public and private space; public in that it is publicly accessible and private, in that it affords the navigation of private narratives. Within the illusory world that they occupy, these characters therefore narrate their private stories overtly from the enclosed, private space/place of prison. Although both Tyelele and Ndaba construct protagonist females who are recognizable as similar both in terms of their middle-class social status and the confined space from which each of these women articulates her experiences, both characters are nonetheless different, as each is articulated within distinct conflicting situations. Each play therefore begins to engage articulations that recognize the specificities that exist within *Bantu* female experiences, thus giving rise to subsequent myriad *Bantu* female identities.

Similar in that they are 30-something year old, middle-class *Bantu* females incarcerated within a post-1994 climate, the characters of Dikeledi and Khaya are nonetheless individualized constructions of *Bantu* female characters and hence identities. On the one hand, the character Dikeledi grows into middle-class status; by virtue of her marriage to a wealthy man, she moves beyond working-class living, in that she “moved from a matchbox

house with no electricity to a seven-bedroom palace, with ... every luxury you can think of" (In Homann, 2009: 118). A *Bantu* female, the character of Dikeledi calls towards the reclamation of identities of all women that have been marginalized and abused within systems that espouse patriarchal domination; namely the institution of media, the justice system and the domestic unit. On the other hand, the character of Khaya embodies a middle-class social position, attained through education. Diagnosed HIV positive, the character of Khaya ultimately denounces the victim status she initially carries. Articulating her private narrative as an HIV positive woman, the character of Khaya rejects the victimhood and reticence that is ascribed to *Bantu* women living with this condition. By raising this topic that is generally accepted as sensitive onto the public platform of the theatre, Ndaba could perhaps be offering new possible topics of dialogue for engagement by *Bantu* black women within the face of post-1994 theatre, whereby the framework of current, contemporary theatre includes voices of *Bantu* black women who are liberated from narratives from which, historically, they would have been barred.

The significance of the characters Dikeledi and Khaya, being articulated from the space/place of a jail cell, is that although physically barred, there is a sense of resilience and fortitude that is inculcated through these acts of 'speaking against' from the isolated, confined space/place of a jail cell. Further, these women reject their positions as social outcasts, by speaking within spaces of incarceration; a place designed for the punishment of perpetrators and social outcasts. These women's narratives of personal experiences become infused with power, legitimacy and a sense of authenticity, as these stories are not only acts of agency in that each is spoken from each woman's perspective and in her own words, but are also situated as personal, private accounts. Created ultimately for engagement through performance, play texts offer processes of mediation that are not afforded by any other form of literature. For example, while engaging a novel often requires private, personal readings, theatre on the other hand affords public, communal interpretations of the performance text. Engaging these stories from the platform of post-1994 theatre thus prompts processes of mediation that allow for the analysis of these private, personal narratives as legitimate, authentic and political.

The characters of Dikeledi and Khaya, located as individualized as evidenced in their detailed nature, become deeply feminist articulations by Tyelele and Ndaba, of liberated *Bantu* female identities, through which the experiences that dominate *Bantu* women are foreground; experiences which in turn are used for the advocating of the liberation of this “imagined community” (Mohanty et al, 1991: 4) of women. From a confined, isolated space, both narratives almost become markedly audible and visible as appeals to the audience by these women, to be heard and understood; this specific use of place/space becomes the political reclamation of *Bantu* female voices and identities. Further, although both play texts include myriad *Bantu* female characters respectively, the engagement of protagonists who each portray multiple characters – both male and female - becomes a visibly feminist style engaged by the playwrights. The absent male voice heightens the discernible presence of the female, and almost authenticates her accounts, in that they remain incontestable and non-negotiable.

2.8 Publicly resisting private tensions

Through the portrayal of multiple characters that in one way or another influence the ultimate imprisonment of characters Dikeledi and Khaya, both plays explore each character’s contrasting existence between past and present. While both Dikeledi and Khaya are physically free in their pasts, each of these women is metaphorically imprisoned as indicated by the incidents each narrates of her pasts. Conversely, although both women are physically imprisoned in the present, each is metaphorically free, in that each one is able to give voice to situations that sought to confine her in her respective past. Dikeledi recounts by means of flashback, an incident of physical abuse that took place between herself and her husband, Solly, thus (In Homann, 2009: 120-121):

SOLLY: O ne o itjheikela mang ha o ya toilet? [Who were you parading for when you were going to the toilet?]

DIKELEDI: Neke sa itjheiki, ke the way ke tsamayang ka teng! [I wasn’t parading, that’s how I walk!]

SOLLY: Don’t tell me rubbish, man! Are you flirting with my friends, bitch? Why o ne o shebile [were you looking] James in the eyes when you were talking to him?

DIKELEDI: Solly, you just said I was talking to James! Who was I supposed to look at kante? In my opinion...

SOLLY: O so na le opinion now [Now you have an opinion]? You're getting too big for your boots, neh? [He starts to beat her.]
DIKELEDI: Okay, sorry! Solly, I'm sorry, I won't talk to your friends any more, but you tell them not to talk to me! [More beating.] Oh God, I said I'm sorry!

This dialogue highlights the domination, oppression and victimhood that are imposed upon Dikeledi within the domestic space. Her retorts lead to Solly's increasing agitation and anger, and ultimately to more beatings. Tyelele not only constructs Dikeledi as a character isolated within a patriarchal domestic unit, but foregrounds this isolation also within the context of extended family. In Dikeledi's portrayal of the character GREAT AUNT, Tyelele highlights the participation of family in the perpetuation of patriarchy and female domination and oppression. Tyelele makes this comment markedly in that the family is ironically embodied by a female character, GREAT AUNT, who expresses her viewpoint thus (In Homann, 2009:119):

GREAT AUNT: (to Dikeledi) Ha monna a sa robala hae, ha o mmotse hore o tswa kae, o tla ho jwetsa ha a batla! If he doesn't sleep at home, you ask him nothing; he will tell you if he wants to. When he says A, don't say B! Not good my child, not good. Listen to your husband and don't think hore [that] when you have problems, you'll come running here [...] Monna ngwanaka, ke selepe oa kadimiswa; he is an axe and should be lent and borrowed! Lent and borrowed! Do you hear?

Dikeledi's ostracism from systems that are generally accepted as those which could exist to essentially support her, validate her story and strengthen her appeal; both for freedom, in terms of the fictional incarceration of her character and in advocating freedom for *Bantu* women against systems that dominate and oppress them. Located within a present situation whereby this character publicly and openly expresses private, personal and often unspoken experiences, Dikeledi advocates the liberation of "the many, many women" (In Homann, 2009: 114) she speaks for, from victim-status. Tyelele thus articulates the agency that is currently being embodied by *Bantu* women, to unapologetically give voice to their experiences within the political space/place of theatre; in turn, propagating *Bantu* women's location within spaces of agency in our contemporary, post-apartheid landscape.

On the other hand, Ndaba articulates *Bantu* female/ness through exploring tensions arising within the dichotomy of Christian beliefs and traditional practices. Like Tyelele's

construction of Dikeledi, Ndaba, in her play text *Shaken* (See Appendix A), portrays Khaya as a character navigating her sense of self through these seemingly conflicting worlds of Christianity and tradition. Just as the character Dikeledi has to evade the violence imposed on her by Solly, who almost seeks to educate and discipline her through the physical abuse he inflicts, the character Khaya exercises agency in similarly navigating her identity between systems that seek to educate her; systems which consequently impose an identity of passivity upon her. Through the dialogue of such characters as MaModise and MaDlamini, the village gossipers, Ndaba highlights the tension and inner conflict within Khaya (Ndaba, 2008: 16):

MAMODISE: (to MADLAMINI) A girl who grew up with a Bible in hand now wears inyongo²⁶.

In her play text *Shaken* (See Appendix A), Ndaba foregrounds not only the inner conflict within Khaya between the Christian beliefs that Nomatebhe, her late gogo²⁷ instilled in her and traditional practices that stand in opposition to these Christian beliefs, but she also explores the tensions Khaya is succumbed to, through expectations by culture; expectations she is submitted to, both in her youth and as a middle-class *Bantu* black woman taught within the western system of education. Articulating the character of Khaya during her youth, Ndaba explores cultural expectations for unwed women within *Bantu* culture. Through the scene whereby a young Khaya accompanies her friend from the village, Rhee, for her (Rhee's) *umemulo*²⁸, Ndaba foregrounds cultural beliefs among *Bantu* peoples, which suggest that a young *Bantu* woman's identity is determined by whether she has had sexual intercourse or not. The inner conflict experienced by Khaya is revealed in the re-enacted scene whereby she, along with the other girls in Rhee's *umemulo* entourage, bathe in the river; a necessity in the ritual. Khaya expresses her thoughts thus:

KHAYA: Even Rhee is having sex...why did I have to go and get pregnant? Now everyone will know I'm no longer a virgin. These girls will always be virgins in their parents' eyes (Ndaba, 2008: 60).

²⁶ This refers to bile.

²⁷ Grandmother in isiZulu.

²⁸ A traditional coming-of-age ceremony that is performed for a virgin by her immediate or extended family.

Khaya's fears that she has failed to uphold cultural expectations, are juxtaposed alongside the more lackadaisical attitude of Rhee. The laughter that follows Rhee's open confession whereby she states, "Well, I'm not a mother to any illegitimate child...that makes me a virgin in my father's eyes" (ibid) highlights Khaya as a *Bantu* female who has to navigate her identity within cultural expectations.

Shaken (See Appendix A) also sees Ndaba further enunciating the inner conflict that takes place within Khaya, as a *Bantu* female seeking education at university, together with the traditional practices she later feels she must engage due to ill-health; practices that raise further inner conflict in that once again, they oppose the Christian teachings embedded in her by Nomatebhe.

MAMODISE: (to MADLAMINI) lhee...hee..hee. lyoh! Ntombi...all that expensive degree that Nomatebhe sacrificed so much for is now turned to ashes of burning impepho²⁹...

Khaya's temporary discarding of her western education, to adopt traditional, cultural education – in that she consults a sangoma³⁰, Tat'uNqetho - is highlighted through the stage directions that introduce this character:

Tat' uNqetho enters with burning incense in hand, waving his whisk to blow the smoke all over. He is followed by KHAYA, who drags a huge red suitcase. She is wearing a black classic Chanel suit with red stilettos. She looks nervous. Tat' uNqetho walks in circles, continuing to blow the smoke of incense. Khaya stops, looks around nervously (Appendix A: 2).

The above description of Khaya as 'nervous' within unfamiliar surroundings, further lends itself to Khaya's portrayal as passive and submissive, as she obediently takes heed of a male figure's instructions. Later related in the narrative, is that these red stilettos are identical to those which Khaya uses as the weapon of assault towards the doctor who diagnoses her HIV positive; a sense of Khaya as a violent offender, deserving of the status of social outcast, is foreground. However, at the latter part of the performance text, these red stilettos almost become symbolic of her assertion of agency and liberation. Aware that these red stilettos

²⁹ This term refers to traditional incense.

³⁰ This term refers to a traditional doctor.

could work to her disadvantage on the day of the court appearance, Khaya's insistence on wearing them becomes a metaphorical disrobing of that which leads to her imprisonment. Not only does her final exclamation, "I love them!" (Appendix A: 85), become evident of this character's refutation of victimhood, but she finds liberation through that which was intended to keep her physically confined. This notion of garments as a signifier of Butler's notions of the "performative" (In Osborne & Segal, 1993) shall be discussed in further detail in Chapter Four (Indian black/ness).

2.9 Identities constructed through absence: The absent male voice and the absent working class *Bantu* female

Signifying the feminist, anti-patriarchal stance engaged by Tyelele and Ndaba are the considerable or complete absences of both the male voice and the working class *Bantu* woman in their respective performance texts.

Apartheid law did not provide access for women – particularly *Bantu* women – to speak. However, *Bantu* women did speak. Articulating Foucault's notion of counter-discourse, Moussa and Scapp (1996: 89) maintain the following:

When the formerly voiceless begin to speak a language of their own making – a counterdiscourse – they have begun to resist the power seeking to oppress them. In this very narrow sense, the very act of speaking is political [...].

Reiterating this cogent argument, it can therefore be said that the presence of a discourse designed to subjugate and silence, automatically signifies that there also exists a counter-discourse. The existence of discourses of apartheid that sought to make all platforms inaccessible to *Bantu* women's voices did not mean that these voices did not exist. A significant event in South Africa's history which highlights *Bantu* women's obligation to find alternative ways by which to make their voices heard, thus resisting the status of subalternity which ascribed reticence and marginality to this group, is the legacy of *National Womens Day*³¹. In a post-apartheid context, Tyelele and Ndaba therefore seek to create a

³¹ This day is an annual public holiday in South Africa that commemorates the events surrounding the 9th August 1956, in which a group of women marched to parliament and petitioned against legislation that required

legitimate, political space in which the *Bantu* woman not only speaks, but is also listened to. This notion of being listened to is a central aspect in Spivak's notion of 'subalternity', in that she maintains, "For me, the question 'Who should speak?' is less crucial than 'Who will listen?'" (In Spivak & Harasym, 1990: 59). The public space of theatre in which these playwrights navigate *Bantu* female identities, thus dictates that not only are these narratives visible and accessible, but that they are closely engaged and listened to as personal and political accounts of *Bantu* female experiences and identities, as (re)articulated and (re)constructed within our current, contemporary post-apartheid theatre context.

According to Hall (In Hall & de Gay, 1996: 15) "all identities operate through exclusion". Through exclusion of the male voice, Dikeledi and Khaya are thus effectively further foreground as possibilities for post-apartheid articulations of *Bantu* female identities in the performance texts, *Shwele Bawo* (In Homann, 2009) and *Shaken* (See Appendix A) respectively. The significant or total absence of the male voice becomes a feminist act by both playwrights, in that the female presence becomes exclusively perceptible. Not only is Tyelele's character, Solly, the sole male character, but he is articulated entirely through Dikeledi's perspective and further, presented as the deceased male perpetrator. While Ndaba utilizes more male characters in comparison - being Tat' uNqetho, Sabatha, Diliza and Muzi - all of these male characters are articulated in relation to Khaya; none seems to exist independently of this protagonist female. Through this style and constructions of character, the sense that it is Khaya's narrative being told is asserted. Khaya remains central to the plot, as through her, Ndaba articulates a type of *Bantu* female identity, navigated around other characters. Through the choices Khaya makes, Ndaba navigates theatrical spaces whereby *Bantu* female/ness is encouraged towards ownership of identity.

Class becomes a crucial component in articulations of particular types of *Bantu* female identities within post-1994 South African theatre. Historically located at the adverse end of the discrimination that was incited within processes of apartheid, *Bantu* female/ness is

African persons to carry the "pass"; special identification documents which restricted *Bantu* peoples' freedom of movement during the apartheid era. This march signified the insistence by this group of women that women be acknowledged and heard.

continuously being released from positions of class inferiority. As previously discussed, current, contemporary post-apartheid theatre-making by black South African female playwrights, comprises black women increasingly being articulated within middle-class status. This is evident in both *Shwele Bawo* (In Homann, 2009) and *Shaken* (See Appendix A). According to Kuper (1965: 5), who reflects inequitably around the race and class politics of South Africa during the riotous period of apartheid, particularly in relation to the *Bantu* group,

proletariat might seem more appropriate for all Africans. Color is the main basis for stratification. In some ways, the entire White group is a bourgeoisie in relation to Africans.

Such an assertion establishes the *Bantu* individual within positions of powerlessness and subordination, whereby race becomes the determining factor for social inferiority. As articulations of *Bantu* female characters that speak from middle-class status, both Dikeledi and Khaya subvert the historically-affixed secondary status ascribed to *Bantu* identity and instead become representations of *Bantu* women defined and affirmed within new class positions that oppose apartheid hegemony.

Both Tyelele and Ndaba portray education as the platform through which middle-class status is negotiated. In Tyelele's play text, *Shwele Bawo* (In Homann, 2009), as previously discussed, the character of Dikeledi grows into middle-class status through marrying into wealth. Her middle-class position and sense of agency are further affirmed through self-education, as depicted through not only her knowledge of famous literature, but also through her ability to recite an adapted version of the well-known poem 'Still I Rise' by Maya Angelou (In Homann, 2009: 114-115; 117-118; 138).

Of *Bantu* identity within historical apartheid, Kuper (1965: 5) continues to state the following:

Africans similarly share a common destiny in many essential respects. Neither education nor wealth emancipates them from the indelible racial status. Lack of property combines with political subordination to fix the seal of hereditary inequality.

Against this historically-defined situation, the assumption is that *Bantu* peoples were fixed within subordinate class status that neither wealth nor education could liberate them from. The middle-class status through which Dikeledi and Khaya are identified becomes a platform on which the social and economic mobility of these women is recognized. This social position also almost affords these characters the unspoken privilege to speak up against systems that dominate them and almost grants them permission to be heard. With education being synonymous with accessibility, independence and empowerment, middle class status becomes a necessary outlet through which to navigate *Bantu* female identities within a post-1994 theatre context.

2.10 Women writing their way out

One of the ways in which Tyelele and Ndaba respectively advocate the liberation of *Bantu* women in a post-1994 context, thus resisting the *Bantu* female's historical location within spaces of subalternity, is through explorations of politics of writing in the narratives of *Shwele Bawo* (In Homann, 2009) and *Shaken* (See Appendix A) respectively. Within current, contemporary post-apartheid theatre by *Bantu* women, writing, similarly to education as afore-discussed, becomes visible as an outlet for the vocalizing of injustices, often against systems through which these women were historically and continue to be presently oppressed and marginalized. In *Shwele Bawo* (In Homann, 2009), Dikeledi advocates the rights of all women by speaking up against the media; an institution she criticizes for its documenting of false narratives; moreover, a system she has personally experienced as having imposed, that which is to her, a false identity of her late husband, who would continuously perform clandestine acts of violence both on herself and her daughter. Tyelele's feminist preoccupations emphasize that words carry a power that transcends even space confinements and possess the ability to (re)construct, (re)negotiate and (re)articulate new identities within new theatre contexts. As reiterated by Hall (Hall & du Gay, 1996: 3), "this concept of identity does *not* signal that stable core of the self, unfolding from beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change [...] identical to itself across time."

Dikeledi retorts against the media, regarding their depiction of her late husband, Solly, thus:

You with your words! Yes, your words! You turned my husband into a demi-god, a *nkalang-kata* [big-shot], as he came to be known (In Homann, 2009: 121).

Juxtaposed alongside the media's construction of Dikeledi's husband's identity – an identity enabled through writing – Tyelele's feminist pre-occupations also present, through the character Dikeledi, this self-same political act as liberatory. Speaking about black American and *Bantu* "phenomenal women" (Homann, 2009: 116) she observes as having made a significant contribution in creative writing focused on the empowerment of women, Dikeledi asserts, "I tell you, these great women went through hell. I'm surprised they didn't kill anyone! Hey! Maybe the writing helped cool them down!" (ibid). Tyelele proposes writing as an outlet utilized by black/*Bantu* women, in their struggle against systems that dominate, marginalize and oppress them. As stated previously, the character Dikeledi is introduced reciting an adapted version of black American woman poet, Maya Angelou's 'Still I Rise' (In Homann, 2009: 114-115; 117-118; 138). From the jail cell she occupies, Dikeledi resists the victim-status demanded by the confines of her immediate space; instead, her agency is further noted in her reciting of this well-known poem, with interpolations that narrate her own situation. Inserting her personal narrative into an established piece of writing, Dikeledi creates a framework that recognizes not only her story as a woman oppressed within a post-apartheid, patriarchal society, but also "the story of many, many women" (Homann, 2009: 114). She engages the ardently feminist act of constructing or allegorically writing her own specific *Bantu* female identity, against the backdrop of a piece of writing that articulates a generic female identity.

The politic of writing can be similarly explored through the protagonist, Khaya, in Ndaba's *Shaken* (See Appendix A). Just as *Shwele Bawo* (In Homann, 2009) articulates the notion of constructing identity through the act of writing, Ndaba's play similarly explores writing as a political tool by which a previously constructed identity can be de-constructed, to then be re-constructed and re-shaped into a new identity. Through the play, Ndaba explores the life-stages of the protagonist, Khaya, a young *Bantu* woman and the way in which the casual sexual encounters engaged in her youth result in her ultimate contraction of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Upon discovering her HIV positive status, she physically assaults the doctor who reveals this news to her. This incident leads to her arrest.

Ashamed of her actions and feeling she has disappointed her 6-year-old daughter, Mbali and fiancé, Sabatha, she contemplates whether to write a letter to the latter or not. Proceeding from the narrative that articulates Khaya's ultimate confinement, focus is placed on this letter that she frequently mentions to her lawyer, Ingrid. Khaya's internal conflict is illustrated in her indecisiveness of whether to write the letter explaining her actions to Sabatha, or not. With a markedly tainted identity, Khaya's eventual writing of the letter becomes a way in which she makes the choice to reclaim and redeem her sense of identity. Khaya's sense of pride seems to be a result of more than the mere writing of the letter. Her sense of accomplishment is noted through the words, "Look...I finally wrote it" (Appendix A: 43). The letter becomes a way by which she repudiates a status of victimhood, whereby in explaining her story, she exercises agency afforded her, through the act of writing, and in turn, navigates a self-proclaimed, self-constructed identity.

2.11 Dressing *Bantu* female/ness through language (speaking)

Tyelele and Ndaba navigate new articulations of *Bantu* female/ness not only through particular constructions of place/space, middle-class standing, education and exploring the politics of writing, but also through language. Language becomes a metaphorical garment or social dress that prompts very particular constructions of performed identities. This idea is in relation to Butler's notions around performativity (In Osborne & Segal, 1993), as discussed in Chapter One. The use of multiple languages in both of the performance texts under discussion becomes a component employed by both Tyelele and Ndaba that incites specific constructions of post-apartheid *Bantu* female performed identities. Through the use of multiple languages, the female characters in performance reflect a post-apartheid and multicultural context, embodied by a historically invisible identity: *Bantu* female/ness. This becomes the re-dressing of *Bantu* female/ness from invisibility to perceptibility. Further, the diction utilised in each of these play texts signifies very specific articulations of *Bantu* Black female performed identities.

Tyelele's *Shwele Bawo* (In Homann, 2009) makes use of a combination of SeSotho, isiZulu, isiXhosa, Afrikaans and English. Use of colloquial diction such as *lekker*³² and *tannie*³³ (In Homann, 2009: 115), *nkalang-kata*³⁴ (In Homann, 2009: 121) and *chomza*³⁵ (In Homann, 2009: 130), not only becomes a way in which the play is made accessible across diverse audiences, but alludes to the current, contemporary³⁶ nature of the *Bantu* protagonist female, Dikeledi, and the other characters in the play. The language is therefore specifically reflective of a multi-cultural, multi-lingual, post-apartheid South African climate in which Dikeledi and the other characters in the play are articulated.

Similarly, Ndaba's *Shaken* (See Appendix A) makes use of multi-lingual dialogue, in that dialogue is in isiZulu, isiXhosa and English. Being a play that navigates its characters within large gaps between past and present time, language serves to locate the action within a particular space and time. Slang diction such as *sugar-daddies*, *floozies* and *hottie* (Ndaba, 2008: 24), signify the protagonist, Khaya's past days in university; the informal language thus reflective of the youthfulness that informed the manner in which she and her university friends would speak. Similarly, diction used in the present, becomes a signifier of a more mature, seasoned Khaya.

As previously discussed, class becomes a crucial component in constructions of particular performed identities; language and diction often being a signifier of class. For this reason, working class women and middle class women access language differently. This notion of language as a discourse reflective of a particular class identity shall be discussed in further detail in Chapter Four, wherein specific Indian female identities of distinct class are portrayed through language.

Drawing on the question posed by Spivak in her 1986 speech of the same title – 'Can the subaltern speak?' (In Chakravorty et al, 2006: 62) – as well as articulating social beings

³² This term is used to describe that which is „favourable“ or agreeable“

³³ This term refers to „aunt“.

³⁴ This term refers to one who is a big-shot.

³⁵ This term refers to „friend“.

³⁶ The contemporary nature of the *Bantu* protagonist female and other characters, alludes to both rural and urban, working class and middle class *Bantu* women, therefore alludes even to the multiplicities of and specificities that exist in *Bantu* black/ness.

within positions of subalternity, Amkpa (In Goodman, 2004: 14) expands on Spivak's ideas by proposing a similarly rhetorical question:

Is there a political consciousness, and will, to listen to those voices which are daily reconfiguring their epistemologies and seeking contexts for maximizing their identities, despite their stated oppositions to the hegemony?

Tyelele and Ndaba both seek to re-dress *Bantu* female South African identities within current, contemporary post-apartheid theatre-making. Articulating the black identity that is situated within historical apartheid in positions of subalternity across all spheres of life, both playwrights offer protagonist characters, Dikeledi and Khaya, as new possibilities of *Bantu* female identities, as manifest within the landscape of current, post-1994 theatre-making. Articulating these new performed identities within the political space of post-1994 theatre, both playwrights engage the feminist political consciousness of reconfiguring *Bantu* female identities within post-apartheid theatrical spaces.

Chapter Three: Coloured black/ness

3.1 Introduction

Particular to the South African context and largely dismissed as a social construction of the apartheid regime, the term 'Coloured' has been a strongly contested concept of identity. Conceptualised as neither 'black' nor 'white', Coloured/ness has historically been defined within the politics of mixed race identity and located within the interstice of the two distinct categories of racial identification, 'black' and 'white'. With the primary intent of maintaining segregation and separateness among South African citizens through an over-racialisation around discourses of identities, the apartheid order, within its tricameral system, constructed a category of identity in which individuals of 'mixed race' descent would be located and defined. In identifying citizens into the generic categories of either 'Black' or 'White', the segment of the nation that were of 'mixed race' ancestry, were those generally classified as 'Coloured' and the group which consequently constituted less defined social, cultural and political spaces within South African society.

Reflecting widely around the history of Coloured identity, Adhikari (2009: 8) observes that "in general histories of South Africa, not only are Coloured people marginalised but their historical agency is also effectively denied". The significant exclusion and marginalisation of the Coloured community within the specific history of apartheid, incites continuing articulations and myriad definitions of this group's identity within our current South African landscape. Navigating possibilities around the origination of the term 'Coloured', it still remains that conceptualisations of 'Coloured/ness' prove challenging and must continuously be re-constructed within a contemporary post-apartheid climate; subsequently, for Coloured people to reclaim their historical agency.

3.2 Problematic Conceptualisations around Coloured/ness

The formation of Coloured identities is articulated within the historiography of the Cape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, during the encounter between white British colonists and indigenous peoples, the Khoi and the San, who became dominated as

slaves. Around the history of the foundation of Coloured/ness, Zimitri Erasmus (2001: 22-23) reiterates that “Coloured identities were constructed out of fragmented cultural material available in the contexts of slavery, colonialism and cultural dispossession”. This history embeds the very inception of Coloured/ness within unequal power relations and subsequently prompts the Coloured community to continually engage processes of cultural re-possession in a current South African context.

Within the framework of the Cape’s colonial history, articulating the inherent differences between groups of people through racial classifications is that which informed the structure of social relations. The term ‘mixed race’ was thus a type of conceptualisation of a group of people. However, perceptions around the historical origination of Coloured identities resonate only partly in the colonialists’ imperialist idea of the cataloguing of different groups, including that of a differentiated ‘mixed race’. This is a narrow explanation for the inception of Coloured identities, in that it promotes the perception of ‘Coloured/ness’ as only a racialised identity.

A gendered perspective should also be incorporated in analyses around the origins of Coloured identities within the history of Cape colonialism. The construction of ‘Coloured’ is explained not only through the colonialists’ racial demarcations, but is a social construct that is also traced back to sexual politics, whereby Coloured/ness is recognised as the product of miscegenation, or ‘interracial sex’. Defined by Erasmus (2001: 17) as a “nineteenth century European eugenicist concept referring to ‘race mixture’, specifically between white masters and black female slaves”, the notion of miscegenation imbues Coloured identities with reprehensibility and impurity. In a similar vein, Adhikari maintains that “the term ‘coloured’ denotes in the popular mind a person of mixed racial ancestry rather than one who is black [...]” (In Adhikari, 2009: viii). The implication of this particular viewpoint is that Coloured identity is characterised as diluted and artificial alongside the unadulterated ‘black’.

Whether the origin of the concept of ‘Coloured’ is traced back to the white colonialists’ separation of groups of people - including those of a ‘mixed race’ - as discourses that

informed the racist structure of social relations at the Cape, or whether Coloured/ness is conceptualised as a product of miscegenation, these perceptions are problematic in that both ascribe a marginal, subordinate status to Coloured identities. While the former representation of Coloured identities affixes Coloured/ness to subordination through racism, the latter posits Coloured identities as impure.

Apartheid discourses - similarly typified by white imperialist rule as with the colonial historiography of the Cape - continued to keep alive ideas around racial representations of Coloured identities as interstitial, marginalised and forgotten. Erasmus (2001: 16) maintains that since its inception, Coloured/ness has within the histories of colonialism and apartheid, been labelled a “residual, in-between or ‘lesser’ identity – characterised as ‘lacking’, supplementary, excessive, inferior or simply non-existent”.

Across South Africa’s histories, conceptualisations around Coloured identities have carried negative connotations. Within a post-1994 context, Coloured/ness is in the process of being re-imagined and re-constructed. Ruiters (In Adhikari, 2009: 104-105) asserts that “in post-apartheid South Africa, all identities are in the process of being reconstructed particularly in opposition to their apartheid-era incarnations [...]”. An example of an artist, who engages creative processes of re-constructing Coloured/ness, is Tracey Rose. Belonging to a generation of South African artists who emerged in the late 1990s, Tracey Rose, in performance-based video, live acts and photography, creates work that is both fearlessly personal and political. Classified as ‘Coloured’, the core of Rose’s conceptual framework is formed by her experience of ambiguity and of being ‘in-between’. Within these spaces, Rose begins to challenge perceptions and representations widely perceived of Coloured identities³⁷. Similarly engaging processes of re-constructing Coloured/ness from the historical repression this identity has experienced within its interstitial location in apartheid society, South African female playwrights, Rehane Abrahams and Luen Conning-Ndlovu navigate Coloured female experiences and identities within post-apartheid theatre spaces.

³⁷ An example of Tracey Rose’s work in which she asserts her identity and subjectivity is *Ciao Bella* (Bateman, 2006). In a series of photographs and video projections, Rose executes portraits of 12 female characters, in which she is hidden beneath layers of disguise. Through this work Rose both introduces the audience to existing female archetypes and refracted versions of womanhood, and the work also becomes the artist’s way of inserting her own image and narrative as a Coloured woman within South African society and art history.

Utilising the platform of post-1994 theatre spaces, both Abrahams and Conning-Ndlovu seek to re-articulate and ascribe new definitions around South African Coloured/ness and Coloured female/ness through their respective performance³⁸ texts, *What the water gave me* (In Fourie, 2006) and *A Coloured Place* (In Perkins, 1999). In their respective texts, both playwrights seek to disconnect Coloured/ness from its historically ascribed labels of 'subordinate', 'marginal' and 'forgotten'.

3.3 Intermediate Situation: Not white enough, not black enough (imposed location)

As discussed in Chapter Two, the *Bantu* majority are historically, under apartheid discourse, located at the most extreme end of subalternity, in relation to the hegemonic White minority. The tricameral system of the apartheid government classified *Bantu*, Coloured and Indian persons as non-white, whereby it was the *Bantu* group that were classified by the state as 'African' or 'black'. The inclusion of Indian and Coloured persons within the rubric of 'black' – as argued throughout this dissertation - signifies that a hierarchy existed within the homogeneous race classification of 'black'; that is, although Indians, Coloureds and *Bantu* persons can historically all be classified 'black', each group retained unequal access and privilege within the cultural, political and economic landscape of South African society.

While *Bantu* black/ness is, on the one hand, historically under apartheid discourse, the most marginalised group, thus situated within defined, unambiguous spaces, Adhikari (2005:10) observes that 'Coloured people experienced the South African racial hierarchy as a three-tiered system in which Coloureds held an intermediate position between the dominant white minority and the large African majority'. Constructed under apartheid rule, Coloured identity was doubly-marginalised. Located in between the ruling White minority and the dominated *Bantu* majority, Coloured identity became deprived from occupying similarly defined spaces. Adhikari (2009) observes that with the birth of a democratic government

³⁸ While the texts explored in Chapters One and Two are referred to as „play“ texts, those investigated in this Chapter (Three) shall be described as „performance“ texts. This distinction in terms is formulated to highlight the elements that distinguish these two types of text, in that while the content of a „play“ text refers to that which is conventionally theatrical, with such aspects as dialogue, use of costume and stage properties, a „performance“ text similarly includes the theatrical, but may also comprise additional components such as projections, slide and use of multimedia, audio and elements of ritual and dance.

under the ruling of the *Bantu* majority, Coloured persons enjoyed full citizenship rights. This privilege did not, however, ease the Coloured community's predicament in terms of their identification within apartheid society. Articulating the refrain that has come to be common among South Africa's Coloured community – 'first we were not white enough and now we are not black enough' – Adhikari demonstrates the Coloured community's collective dilemma, in that just as the community was not 'white enough' in relation to the ruling White minority during apartheid, this community is similarly marginalised in a post-1994 context, in that in relation to the ruling *Bantu*, the Coloured community now consider that they are 'not black enough'. This strangely over-racialised debate perpetuates the historically-ascribed interstitial location of Coloured identity, in that within this dispute, Coloured/ness is defined in relation to 'black' or 'white', rather than imagined as a self-governing identity. This dilemma is reiterated by Janette Yarwood (2006: 4) thus:

Since the early days of the Cape, the white population has seen coloureds as not quite white enough. At the same time, due mainly to their comparatively privileged position under apartheid, the coloured population found itself disliked and distrusted by the black population.

This social position, according to Adhikari, translates to Coloured/ness existing within 'a perpetual state of marginality' (Adhikari, 2009: xvi).

3.4 Intermediate Situation: Less than white, better than black (self-defined location)

While apartheid discourses imposed uncertainty and ambiguity upon Coloured identity, the Coloured community nonetheless engaged processes in which it sought to construct its own sense of significance. While the popular refrain "Not white enough, not black enough" is an expression which on the one hand is imposed and thus ascribes a sense of victimhood and passivity to Coloured identity, the assertion "Less than white but better than black" demonstrates the community's agency in attempting to negotiate their sense of identity within their intermediate status. Adhikari (2006: 478) reiterates thus:

Because their assimilationist aspirations were thwarted and their intermediate position gave Coloured people significant privileges relative to Africans, the basic

dynamic behind the assertion of coloured identity [...] was to defend this position of relative privilege. For coloureds, their minority status and political powerlessness [...] engendered fears that they might end up losing that position and be relegated to the status of Africans (Adhikari, 2006: 478).

Aware of the marginal status and political subjection imposed upon Coloured/ness, the Coloured community therefore embraced Coloured identity in so far as it secured them the social status of being superior to Africans, or the *Bantu* group. Although motivated by the ingrained fear that was the result of their interstitial location and subsequent second-class citizenship in South African society, the Coloured community's declaration of being "Less than white but better than black", was nonetheless one by which Coloured people exercised agency in defending their sense of self and according to Adhikari (2009: xiv), "capitalising on the dominant society's perception of them as 'different'".

The historical narrative of Coloured/ness is thus one which is suffused with contestation and struggle; a struggle which this community continues to engage even within a post-1994 climate. Coloureds have constantly been asserting Coloured identity through resistance; on the one hand, resisting white supremacists that imposed an intermediate, thus indistinct, fragmented status on Coloured/ness, and on the other hand, resisting being relegated to the historically subaltern status of the *Bantu*. In defining themselves through resistance, the Coloured community has perhaps not been sufficiently defined as a self-determining identity. Coloured/ness has in South African history been defined in the doubly negative, as 'non-white' and 'non-black'.

In both Conning-Ndlovu and Abrahams' performance texts, Coloured/ness is represented as its own identity; one that is complete and unwavering, with a rightful place in South African society. In their respective performance texts, Abrahams and Conning-Ndlovu break through both these moulds of defining Coloured/ness in relation to 'Black' and 'White', to altogether reclaim Coloured/ness as an identity that occupies its own rightful space within post-apartheid society. Abrahams' and Conning-Ndlovu's respective performance texts not only posit Coloured/ness as a self-defined and self-governing collective identity, but both playwrights also situate the female Coloured as a legitimate, discernible constituent of current, contemporary post-apartheid theatre-making. In her discussions around Third

World Feminisms, Mohanty (In Mohanty et al, 1991: 38) asserts that ‘resistance is encoded in the practices of remembering, and of writing.’ Expanding on this perspective is that resistance is also encoded in the practice of performing. In remembering dominant histories around the oppression, domination and marginalisation of not only the Coloured community, but of Coloured female/ness, as well as through writing new narratives around Coloured/ness and Coloured female identities, both playwrights engage feminist acts of resistance. With each respective performance text negotiating Coloured female experiences and identities in performance, on the public platform of post-apartheid stages, these historical narratives become each playwright’s notably feminist, political act of resistance.

3.5 About the playwright: Rehane Abrahams

Rehane Abrahams is a performance artist from Cape Town, South Africa, as well as a co-founder of The Mothertongue Project, ‘a collective of women performing artists who are interested in exploring the sacred in and through performance’ (In Fourie, 2006: 32). Abrahams’ work is influenced by having grown up in a Coloured-dominated area and her classification by the apartheid government as Cape Malay, is a label that informs her writing, including in her first play to be published, *What the water gave me* (In Fourie, 2006).

Of *What the water gave me* (In Fourie, 2006), Abrahams states that the work is about her ‘connection to the Mothercity, Cape Town and thus intimately connected with [her] relationship to the Sea’ (In Fourie, 2006: 16). She further articulates her belief that ‘theatre can actively be used for healing’ (ibid). With this work, Abrahams sought to put her beliefs in the healing power of theatre to the test, using her experiences of ritual and direct connections with her ancestors, in particular her grandmother. With water associated with “healing, sexuality, fecundity, release and purification” (ibid), Abrahams as the sole performer of the work, uses the body as a point of contact through which the text is spoken; the channel through which these water associations are corporally communicated. Perceiving the body as speaking, there exists a conflation of author and performer. In using her body as a vessel that speaks, Abrahams’ Coloured, female, visceral body is posited as part of the text.

3.6 About the playwright: Lueen Conning-Ndlovu

Actress, poet and writer, Lueen Conning-Ndlovu, was born and raised in Durban, South Africa and was educated in public Coloured schools until the age of fifteen. With no school-based subjects that could develop her creativity and acknowledge her as a serious artist, Conning-Ndlovu grew frustrated with Coloured schools during the 1980s. She later gained admission to a multiracial Catholic convent during the later apartheid era, to which ‘some of her peers felt that she had sold out’ (In Perkins, 1999: 6). Of her integration into multiracial schooling, Conning-Ndlovu states the following:

There was a sense of animosity from friends because I wanted to achieve things they didn’t believe people like us could achieve, and started to go places that many Coloured people didn’t go – like the theatre (ibid).

In 1995, Conning-Ndlovu wrote, directed, performed and stage-managed *U-Voice*, a series of poems and monologues written, directed, performed and stage-managed for the inaugural Playhouse Women’s Arts Festival. She was then commissioned to write her first professional play, *A Coloured Place* (In Perkins, 1999), for the 1996 Womens Arts Festival at the Playhouse in Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal. A multimedia one-person show, *A Coloured Place* (In Perkins, 1999) navigates post-1994 female Colouredness from the perspective of the play’s only character, “a young Coloured woman” (In Perkins, 1999: 9).

3.7 Solo Acts: Performing Female Coloured/ness

Similarly to the play texts discussed in Chapter One, *Shwele Bawo* (In Homann, 2006) and *Shaken* (See Appendix A), the performance texts, *What the water gave me* (In Fourie, 2006) and *A Coloured Place* (In Perkins, 1999) both engage the monologue style. Although the monologue form is not always necessarily confrontational in nature, the way this form is treated in these particular plays is confrontational because of the single, authorial voice of the female writer, who speaks these monologues within the rubric of a one-person performance. Against the backdrop of the uncertain, ambiguous location of Coloured/ness in South African society, both Abrahams’ and Conning-Ndlovu’s articulations not only of Coloured/ness, but of *female* Coloured/ness in a post-apartheid climate, become political and feminist statements by each respective playwright. According to Meyerov (2006: 14),

The hierarchical racialisation of the coloured body according to its proximity to the ideal of 'whiteness' was especially traumatic for the coloured woman, who already 'Othered' by her sexual difference was now further oppressed by her race (Meyerov, 2006: 14).

Each playwright through both writing and performing a work of theatre that foregrounds Coloured female identities, makes the commentary that women within the intercalary ranking of Coloured/ness can be perceived as legitimate makers of art within post-apartheid theatre; as artists whose gender and racial identities can be acknowledged as noteworthy and independent, particularly against the apartheid-bred dichotomy that perceived South African citizens as simply 'Black' or 'White'. In navigating Coloured/ness, both Abrahams and Conning-Ndlovu engage the political act of re-constructing a collective Coloured history. Further, in articulating specifically *female* Coloured/ness, each playwright not only makes a political, feminist statement, but also a personal assertion, in that each engages the re-constructing of *her own* history.

3.8 Multiplicities of Coloured/ness

Both Conning-Ndlovu and Abrahams articulate Coloured female characters and hence identities, through dialogue spoken in English and Afrikaans. With language performing a particular identity, as argued by Butler (1990) around her theory of 'performativity', English and Afrikaans are posited as the two prime apartheid dialects in which Coloured/ness was historically enveloped or dressed. In their re-constructions and re-dressings of Coloured female identities within a post-apartheid context, Conning-Ndlovu and Abrahams utilise these self-same languages in that they are historically identifiable and recognisable where past constructions and metaphorical dresses of Coloured/ness are concerned. Both playwrights' reclaiming of Coloured female/ness becomes effective within a linguistic mould that is familiar, in that it is through these languages which are stereotyped as signifying Coloured identities, that Conning-Ndlovu and Abrahams begin to challenge stereotypes and past representations of Coloured/ness, which from the start, have been embedded within these languages. Although both performance texts use English and Afrikaans, each nonetheless illustrates a different type of Coloured identity. Through diction utilised in the respective performance texts, *What the water gave me* (In Fourie; 2006) and *A Coloured*

Place (In Perkins; 1999), a type of Coloured identity is located within a specific context. This affirms Hall's proposition that within any given cultural identity, exists a multiplicity of identities (In Hall & de Gay, 1996). Though both works articulate Coloured identity through English and Afrikaans dialect, Abrahams does so within the context of Cape Town and Conning does so within the context of Durban³⁹. Of her work, Conning-Ndlovu states:

I decided to interview Coloured people from all walks of life in terms of age, class, levels of education, gender, etc., in the Durban area ... Unfortunately, there are very few highly visible Coloured role models, particularly in Durban (In Perkins, 1999: 7).

Conning's articulations of coloured experience are thus located and focused within the geographical space of Durban. Similarly, of her performance text, Abrahams states the following:

What the water gave me is about my connection with the Mothercity, Cape Town and thus intimately connected with my relationship with the Sea. Cape Town is on a peninsula surrounded by Ocean, the Atlantic on one side and the Indian on the other. The Indian Ocean is particularly meaningful for me and not just because the non-white beach was there, but because it carried stories of where we came from (In Fourie, 2006: 16).

Through Abrahams' description of the specificities of the Cape sea, it is highlighted that her articulations of Coloured/ness are navigated within a space that is meaningful to her in that it carries the historical narrative and origination of her Coloured peoples. As reiterated by Grunebaum and Robins (In Erasmus, 2001: 168), "There is no single coloured experience, nor any single voice that speaks in its name [...] Identity is located, as always, in its multiple and specific sites and contexts". Because both playwrights emerge from different South African contexts, the Coloured identities each portrays are therefore distinct. Both playwrights' works are embedded within each writer's personal connection to the respective geographical, racial and emotional spaces that have influenced each one's unique and distinct understanding and subsequent theatrical interpretations of Coloured/ness. Abrahams continues to state:

³⁹ This dissertation has until now explored Coloured/ness within its location in the context of the Cape. Conning-Ndlovu articulates Coloured identities within the context of South Durban in the town of Wentworth. Multiple Coloured identities are thus navigated and articulated within specific geographical locations.

I believe that theatre can actively be used for healing. With this work, I put those beliefs to the test using my experiences of ritual and what I found to be common [...] I also attempted to work directly with my ancestors (particularly my grandmother) [...] (In Fourie, 2006: 16).

With a similarly markedly personal connection to her play text, *A Coloured Place* (In Perkins, 1999), as indicated by diction through which she includes herself in the concerns of this work, Conning asserts the following:

The aim of the play is to feed and stimulate the questioning about identity and the significance of where we come from, and why as Coloured people, we've never acknowledged *our* roots [...] A Coloured place means that there is a rightful place for Coloured people in South Africa – we do belong somewhere (In Perkins, 1999: 7).

3.9 Healing through the female Coloured body

Abrahams' *What the water gave me* (In Fourie; 2006) negotiates Coloured/ness and femaleness through the playwright's portrayal of four characters - namely 'The Storyteller', 'Taxi Time-Traveller', 'Hip-Hop Head from Heideveld' and 'Little Girl' - each of whom is alternatively known by the elements, 'AIR', 'FIRE', 'EARTH' and 'WATER'. Abrahams' performance text is a representation of the playwright's negotiations around her personal identity. Fourie reiterates that Abrahams' play 'explores the roots of Java slave history in an attempt to manifest her (Abrahams) own struggle toward identity' (In Fourie, 2006: 9). Abrahams articulates her identity thus: "Apart from being not white or black, I was different from the other Coloured kids and different from the other Malay kids" (In Fourie, 2006: 16). In the introduction, Fourie (ibid) highlights the dilemma of Coloured/ness thus:

Coloured identity is almost as mythic a concept as white superiority. The struggle by the Coloured people to establish one, is mired in the inability to fully recognise and acknowledge ancestors brought to these shores in chains by the colonial masters (In Fourie, 2006: 9).

The above statement highlights that the sense of a lack of belonging and subsequently of identity among the Coloured community, is largely the result of the community's unawareness of their ancestors, whose arrival in chains upon South(ern) African shores, both immediately historically identified this community as the oppressed, marginalised Other and inscribed this perpetual marginal status as the obstinate narrative of the

Coloured community. It is healing from this historical identification of Coloured identity that Abrahams attempts to offer within post-apartheid theatre spaces through accessing a mode of performance which as the playwright states, “seemed the most potent means at (her) disposal” (In Fourie, 2006: 16). Through engaging the fluidity of the physical body, Abrahams foregrounds the painful historical narrative of the origins of Coloured people, to then present possibilities for transformation and the social, political and cultural healing from these past memories, as negotiated through the physical.

Demonstrated by Abrahams’ body in the play text *What the water gave me* (In Fourie, 2006) is also a sense of the ritualistic, denoted by stage directions both at the beginning and the end of the performance text. The performer is introduced as follows:

The performer enters as the audience enters the space. She is singing a Yoruba Chant in honour of the Goddess Oshun and is dragging a cloth bundle filled with various props. She carries a long stick, similar to that carried by Indian Sages. As she sings, she circles the ‘medicine wheel’ in a clockwise direction [...] (In Fourie, 2006: 18).

Through invocations and ritualised movement, the sacred is incited. The notion of healing is also demonstrated through a combination of repeated movements and singing, around the ‘medicine wheel’. An element of the sacrosanct is similarly suggested in the final stage directions of the performance text:

The performer picks up a bowl filled with rose petals and sprinkles them on the audience before inviting them on stage to engage in interactive rituals at each of the ‘stations’[...] (In Fourie, 2006: 31).

Through incorporating a ritualistic element to the performance text, Abrahams calls towards healing from memories and histories that have historically inscribed a derisive and disparaging nature to Coloured/ness. In allowing the audience to participate, Abrahams creates a platform whereby Coloured people and Coloured/ness in itself as a category of classification, are not only purged of ingrained negative articulations and definitions, but where Coloured/ness is celebrated as an independent, autonomous identity in a post-apartheid context. Just as Butler (In Salih & Butler, 2004: 110) argues that “the gendered

body is performative”, or in other words, that gender is performed, race is also a discourse that is performed and metaphorically worn as a costume. Just as female/ness is an outward signifier of identity, the Coloured female body can be worn as a costume. Navigated exclusively through the solo Coloured female body, Abrahams similarly advocates, corporally, the acknowledgement and audibility of Coloured female/ness within the landscape of post-1994 theatre-making.

According to Richard Schechner (1985), the actions we engage at such events as weddings, rituals and funerals are performances. Schechner terms these actions “theatrical reality” (1985:117). In his exploration of the particular ‘performance’ of the ritual, Schechner (1985: 125) describes ritual as a type of theatre that affects change in the performer (and subsequently the audience). Schechner states:

I call performances where performers are changed “transformations” and those where performers are returned to their starting places “transportations” – “transportations” because during the performance the performers are “taken somewhere” but at the end, often assisted by others, they are “cooled down” and reenter (sic) ordinary life just about where they went in. The performer goes in from the “ordinary world” to the “performative world”, from one time/space reference to another, from one personality to one or more others (Schechner, 1985: 125).

The above is Schechner’s articulations around characteristics of ritual. Through engaging elements of the ritual in her performance text, Abrahams therefore proffers a “performative world” in which she is transported; psychologically, in that through the corporal movements and gestures she engages, she posits the re-imaginings of Coloured/ness and Coloured female/ness, as well as spiritually, in that there’s an apparent spiritual influence that is integral to her work, as evidenced through the strong ties she claims to have with her ancestors, especially her grandmother. In addition to being transported into another spiritual alertness or reality, enabled through physical movement, the performer would not only consequently be transformed by the end of the performance when she returns to the ‘ordinary world’, but the performer would also have undergone healing; healing being a significant component of ritual. In *What the water gave me* (In Fourie, 2006), it is healing from past constructions of Coloured identities, in which Coloured/ness is equated with narratives of slavery and oppression.

The stage directions of *What the water gave me* (In Fourie, 2006) state the following:

The set is comprised of four 'stations' situated in a circle. Each 'station' is associated with an element and direction thus representing a medicine wheel. There are four characters and each one is connected to a 'station' (In Fourie, 2006: 17).

Each 'station' is therefore a platform on which a type of Coloured experience is portrayed. 'The Storyteller' or 'AIR' navigates Coloured/ness through the mythical. Through the three mythical sisters 'Bowa Mera', 'Bowa Puti' and 'Taki Taki' that comprise the monologues spoken by 'AIR'/'The Storyteller', Abrahams creates a platform on which she navigates the history and navigation of Coloured people. Making reference to the old Javanese stories that her grandmother narrated to her on the origins of the Coloured community, Abrahams, through engaging the mythological, navigates her own sense of Coloured/ness within painful narratives of slavery. Ruiters (In Adhikari, 2009: 111) reiterates, "the process of self-identification has been painful, because it forces people who have denied a part of themselves to come to terms with painful histories".

Another character articulated by Abrahams is 'EARTH'/'Hip Hop Head from Heideveld', who navigates the contentious undertaking of defining Coloured/ness. With colloquial diction comprising poetic rhythms, the character of 'EARTH'/'Hip Hop Head from Heideveld' poses rhetorical questions through which he/she attempts to identify Coloured/ness:

And that's the difference, verstaan jy [do you understand]? Cos why? Neapolitan separated, chocolate, strawberry, vanilla, daai's [that's] coloured. Mixed up, it's caramel. Cos you see, if you mix all the colours in the paint tin, you'll get brown. Caramel. What is caramel, you ask. It's the new flavour. Its mutation, aberration [...] (In Fourie, 2006: 21).

Through the character 'EARTH's rhetorical analyses of descriptions around Coloured/ness, his/her struggle in classifying Coloured/ness is evident. Defining Coloured identity optimistically and unconstructively in that it is at once a state of transformation and an abnormality, the character is confronted with the dilemma of locating him/herself within the hybridism and subsequent complexity often associated with Coloured/ness.

The character of 'FIRE'/'Taxi Time Traveller' similarly navigates painful memories associated with Coloured identity, and more specifically, female Coloured identity. Narrating the violent events that constitute the history of Coloured women who arrived upon South(ern) African shores as slaves, the character 'FIRE'/'Taxi Time Traveller' foregrounds the shared narrative of Coloured women as being one of sexual domination, oppression and marginalisation:

It is dark. The walls threaten me. They say violation is my historical condition being as I am five generations out of slavery and a woman. They are looking for a hole. A hole to put their violence in. Force entry into soft flesh with a word, blow, knife, cock, bullet. It is dark [...] (In Fourie, 2006: 21).

Through the character of 'WATER'/'Little Girl', whose dialogue is centred around the violation of young girl children, by adults, Abrahams' feminist preoccupations are similarly foreground. Not only does this victimisation occur against the backdrop of religion – an institution generally denoting morality – but the perpetrators of these acts of violence are adult males. Through unambiguous imagery, Abrahams reveals “the gruesome realities of sexual violence and abuse, especially against girlchildren [...]” which are a concern she professes to navigate in the performance text (In Fourie, 2006: 16):

Celeste says adults and children don't mix. Adults and children don't mix, don't mix. But Mr. Walters says there's nothing wrong. On a Friday when the big children from Standard One up go to mosque, he chases us and then he catches us. He catches me a lot. And then he makes me sit on his lap and draw [...] He holds me very tight, so I can't get off his lap. And he takes his penis out. And when he's finished, he says, 'Go'. Even if I haven't finished the picture. When I check my panty in the toilet, it's wet and sticky [...] (In Fourie, 2006: 30).

In resisting these acts of violence which were historically imposed upon the enslaved Coloured female body, thus inscribing narratives of domination and disenfranchisement to the Coloured female body, Abrahams uses her Coloured female body within the public platform of theatre – further, a platform in which she is not physically enslaved, but free to speak publically – to facilitate new processes of identification for the Coloured female within a post-apartheid context. Through body movement, Abrahams creates a space/place in which healing, transformation and recovery of both the collective Coloured identity and

Coloured female identity can begin to be engaged. Through this concern, Abrahams posits theatre as transformation. According to Schechner (1985: 4), “either permanently...or temporarily...performers - and sometimes spectators too - are changed by the activity of performing”; performers and spectators being that which constitutes theatre: “No theatre performance functions detached from its audience” (1985: 10). The same process of transformation that is afforded through the ‘performance’ of ritual is that which is also enabled through theatre performance.

With use of Indian Classical dance, Physical Theatre and Storytelling, *What the water gave me* (In Fourie, 2006) is a work of theatre with emphasis on elements of ritual, transformation and the corporal. It is a work that “is speaking the body/the body speaking” (In Fourie, 2006: 17). Being a work that negotiates the body as speaker, *What the water gave me* (In Fourie, 2006) is also therefore largely about the specifically Coloured, female body doing this speaking. Performed by Abrahams, a Coloured female, the performance text thus navigates Coloured female/ness, wherein this identity is proffered as independent and legitimate in its own right, within post-1994 theatre making. In her essay titled *The Laugh of the Medusa*, Cixous articulates the following:

By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display – the ailing or dead figure, which turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time. Write your self. Your body must be heard (Cixous, 1975: 880).

Historically located within the interstice of South African society and inscribed as a residual, lacking and forgotten identity, the visibility and audibility of the Coloured body has historically been confiscated from its bearers. Carrying an identity that is embedded within historical significations of marked complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty – visibly and viscerally Coloured and female – Abrahams’ Coloured female body is both a channel through which healing from these historical significations of Coloured/ness is metaphorically spoken, but can also said to be in Weedon’s theorizing of identity, a “site of struggle” (In McKinney & Norton, 2010: 194). According to Carolyn McKinney and Bonny Norton (2010:

194), "Identity is thus always in process, a site of struggle between competing discourses in which the subject plays an active role". In offering transformation to Coloured/ness, Abrahams' struggle is both in her act of the confronting of painful histories and memories connected to this identity, as well as in her offering of the Coloured female body as a legitimate, visible entity within the landscape of post-apartheid theatre. Within a post-1994 context, Abrahams therefore assumes a role of agency in struggling towards the assertion of not only the historical narrative and origins of the Coloured community, but also of Coloured female/ness, the channel through which this part of Coloured histories and ancestry is navigated. Abrahams' Coloured female body becomes the 'site of struggle' through which Coloured female/ness is transformed from spaces of reticence and ambiguity. Presenting the Coloured female body as alive and speaking and heard – as foreground in Spivak's notion of subalternity - within the context of post-apartheid theatre-making, Abrahams' body thus becomes the location in which Coloured female/ness is healed of invisibility and silence, to be recognised as visible and vocal in a new landscape.

Through the narrative of *What the water gave me* (In Fourie, 2006), Abrahams writes her self through not only writing, but also through movement and dance, whereby she metaphorically inscribes a type of Coloured female identity onto her body; onto her self. Elevated onto the platform of theatre – a public space negotiating private identities - Abrahams' corporal-centred performance text extends beyond being the exclusive writing of her self, to being visible as representative of Coloured female/ness within post-1994 theatre spaces. By reclaiming Coloured female identity on a post-1994 theatre platform, Abrahams proffers the Coloured female body as politically activated, uncensored and as an identity independent in its own right within a post-1994 theatre climate.

3.10 Rightful space/place for female Coloured/ness

A play that "takes a look at the lives of a diverse group of women and their search for identity" (In Perkins, 1999: 5), Lueen Conning-Ndlovu's *A Coloured Place* (In Perkins, 1999) speaks to the history and collective consciousness of the Coloured female community in a post-1994 climate. Conning-Ndlovu maintains that "the aim of the play is to feed and stimulate the questioning about identity and the significance of where we come from, and

why as Coloured people, we've never acknowledged our roots" (In Perkins, 1999: 7). Birthed out of a frustration of Coloured peoples' misrecognition of their heritage, *A Coloured Place* (In Perkins, 1999) is a narrative that asserts there is a rightful place for Coloured people in post-apartheid South Africa. The play thus carries the discourses that in order for Coloured people to recognise their rightful place in current, post-apartheid society, they need to acknowledge their sense of identity through location. Abrahams in her performance text, constructs meaning around Coloured/ness through navigating the collective histories of slavery associated with the Coloured community. Opening with a map of predominantly Coloured communities within the Durban area, Conning-Ndlovu on the other hand, constructs meaning around Coloured/ness, by articulating this group's identity within a particular geographic location. Constituting a combination of dialogue, voice-overs and multimedia images, *A Coloured Place* (In Perkins, 1999) is the assertion of Coloured/ness within the Durban area, as navigated by one character, a young Coloured woman.

In her articulations of Coloured/ness, Conning-Ndlovu asserts that the Coloured community's historical categorization as an indistinct culture, in comparison to "African, Indian, and White communities (who) had distinct cultures and parameters" has bred an identity characterised by escapism (In Perkins, 1999: 7). She continues to maintain that an attempt to define and construct a sense of identity has prompted Coloured people's escape into "alcohol and drug abuse, gangsterism, or denial of their African heritage" (ibid). As reiterated by Erasmus (2001: 17), these activities have in turn led to Coloured identity's association with "immorality, sexual promiscuity, illegitimacy, impurity and unworthiness". As an acknowledgment of these markedly negative connections with Coloured/ness, Conning-Ndlovu's *A Coloured Place* (In Perkins, 1999) begins to encourage the re-imagining and re-claiming of Coloured/ness, in that through the narrative's comprising of protagonists who are all Coloured and all female, Coloured identity is provided a post-1994 theatre platform where the female Coloured voice is exclusive and thus discernible; further, where Coloured female identities are not constructed in comparison to 'black' or 'white', but instead navigated as self-determining identities. Shifting focus from the above disagreeable escapist behaviour that has come to be synonymous with Coloured identity – behaviour that

has been induced within South Africa's history of apartheid, wherein the Coloured community struggled towards negotiating a collective sense of identity – Conning-Ndlovu's performance text seeks to highlight and 'celebrate the potential and rich heritage' of Coloured/ness within a post-apartheid climate (ibid). Further, the playwright's feminist concerns are foreground in that she not only navigates Coloured/ness, but specifically Coloured female experiences and subsequent identities. Through this, Conning-Ndlovu proffers a post-1994 theatre context that necessitates the distinguishable presence of the Coloured female.

With the time of the action simply described as *Contemporary life in a Durban Coloured area* (In Perkins, 1999: 9), Conning-Ndlovu immediately draws attention to the idea that the types of Coloured experiences and hence identities that her play text is to navigate, are those from the Durban area. In this, the playwright locates her personal connection within processes of re-defining Coloured/ness in our current, contemporary post-apartheid context. *A collage of voice-overs accompanied by slides* (ibid) marks the introduction of *A Coloured Place* (In Perkins, 1999), wherein a variety of short scenarios lettered 'A to R' depicting aspects of Coloured life in Durban, are illustrated. The speakers of the dialogue within these settings are referred to by profession; for example, 'Psychologist' and 'White Social Worker' (In Perkins, 1999: 11) or by gender, as with the title 'African Man' (ibid), while other dialogue is introduced by headings such as 'young gangsters talking' and 'young women talking', in which an aspect of Coloured/ness as characteristically portrayed within these social groups, is foreground. The play then continues to articulate detailed conditions around Coloured female identities in seven scenes, whereby monologues spoken by named Coloured female characters foreground historically recognisable and constructed types of Coloured female identities and the circumstances in which these women's sense of self is negotiated.

Hair is a significant political aspect within discourses of not only female identities, but within discourses of race overall. Returning to the Butleresque notion of performativity, hair is a dressing or social garment. Just as the discourse of race can be said to be an external garment or social dress, and thus a political signifier of identity, similarly, hair can be viewed

as a type of social dress, and thus a political discourse significant in the construction and articulation of particular identities. Pertinent in the historical classification of Coloured identities is the politics of hair. This is reiterated by Lee-At Meyerov (2006: 14) thus: “Hair, within the context of apartheid body politics, played a crucial role in the subjugation and marginalisation of the coloured body, inflicting upon it the most humiliating and degrading form of symbolic violence”. As discussed previously, it is specifically the *female* Coloured body that would be subject to the utmost oppression and marginalisation within the politics of Coloured identities. Hair politics is therefore an aspect of Coloured female/ness through which Conning-Ndlovu begins to reclaim this identity.

The politics of hair is that which has inscribed particular social constructions of identities on individuals within historical South Africa. The pencil test, in its dehumanising, deprecating nature, sought to affix individuals into the racial category of ‘Coloured’, based on hair texture. With a pencil inserted into the hair of the outwardly ‘Coloured’ individual, ascertaining the person’s classification as indeed ‘Coloured’ would be based on the pencil remaining in the hair. If the pencil fell out, denoting softer-textured hair, the person would be categorised as ‘white’. This practice was injurious not only in that it imposed racial identities on individuals – moreover, in a demeaning manner - but also in its inevitable division of family members who would be separated by racial categories as a result of different hair textures. In a post-1994 context, Conning-Ndlovu foregrounds the physical characteristic of hair as an attribute that continues to inscribe onto the Coloured female, a sense of pressure to conform.

In scene two through the character Claudia, hair is posited as a facet of Colouredness that the Coloured female has commonly and continuously sought to alter from its innate condition. Through imitating various other voices, the character Claudia narrates that while she had ‘almost stick straight hair’ because of the Indian genes on her father’s side, her sister Charlene inherited “what most people refer to as croes hair, otherwise known as the bushie hair, frizzy hair, peppercorns, a korrelkop, a kroeskop” (In Perkins, 1999: 13). Re-enacting a scene between her sister Charlene and the mother, the character Claudia

dramatizes brusque combing and plaiting of a child's hair (ibid), as she speaks the following dialogue, imitating the mother:

Shame my child. Did God have to give you this unmanageable bush? Dammit! [...]
We'll try and see what we can do about these phutu-plaits; maybe even try a new style or something. You're still too young for us to start straightening it [...] (ibid).

The above dialogue highlights not only the social stigma and disdain associated with non-straight hair, but indicates that this texture of hair is one that requires continuous rectification and manipulation from its natural state. The character Claudia then says of her sister Charlene, "With the aid of rollers, blow drying and swirling she was transformed. She conformed" (In Perkins, 1999: 14). The compliments the latter received almost affirmed in her that she now had the acceptable and 'right' Coloured look. Articulating Coloured identities in post-apartheid South Africa, Erasmus (2001: 13) observes that "hairstyling and texturising were (and still are) key beautification practices in the making of womanhood among young coloured women". Claudia relates her sister's denouncing of an imposed identity and that almost twenty years later, "is beginning the process of rehabilitation. Not only of her hair, but of her being". Imitating Charlene's response to the "Coloured crowd" (In Perkins, 1999: 14) who remark on her non-straight hair, the character Claudia asserts: "There's nothing wrong with being yourself. It's what makes you unique!" (ibid). These words of the unseen character Charlene thus become Conning-Ndlovu's emancipatory incitement to Coloured female/ness, specifically within a post-apartheid landscape; the call towards re-thinking around perceptions of the physical features of the Coloured, female body.

As previously discussed, just as Cixous calls towards reclamation of the female body, wherein the female artist engages processes of self-definition, through metaphorically and in reality, writing her own self, Butler (1990) similarly articulates that the body is the surface on which particular narratives and histories are inscribed. As discussed in Chapter One, Butler (1990: 8) maintains that the body is not a neutral entity, but instead, "gendered" and performs a certain identity as influenced by the culture in which it came to exist. Continuing with this notion of performed identity, or performativity, Butler reiterates that "the body is figured as a surface and the scene of a cultural inscription" (Butler, 1990: 129). Articulating

Butler's ideas around re-iterability, Ahmed et al (2000: 162) state that "identity should be [...] seen as the reiterative effect of phantasmatic identifications performed by regulatory discourses over time". The cultural inscription ascribed onto the body, therefore becomes that particular body's transitory identity; an identity that comes to be seen as the body's identity, through the acts which that body produces repeatedly over time, yet also an identity that could also be altered and re-configured with time. Butler (1988: 519) highlights this notion of gender as a transient identity thus: "[It] is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity, instituted through a stylized repetition of acts."

Through her work's preoccupation which is the re-configuring of Coloured identity, more specifically Coloured female identities within a post-apartheid context, Conning-Ndlovu's play text stimulates recognition of Coloured women as rightful citizens in South African society. Further, because this preoccupation is demonstrated through specifically Coloured female characters, Conning-Ndlovu also inscribes a specific narrative on Coloured female/ness, thus giving voice to the Coloured female body and allowing her to speak rightfully, within the context of post-1994 theatre. The presence of the Coloured female is made further discernible through the portrayal of multiple characters, by one actress. This adapted Butleresque notion that a single Coloured female actor is re-dressed to depict a variety of Coloured female roles becomes synonymous with the notion of the reconstruction or metaphorical re-dressing of performed Coloured female identities in a post-1994 theatre climate.

In articulating the behaviour that becomes a cycle through generations of Coloured families, Conning-Ndlovu continues to explore the negative behaviour generally perceived in relation to Coloured identities. The playwright's feminist concerns are foreground through her construction of Coloured female characters whose narratives articulate violence against women by male perpetrators. At the end of scene four, the character of a 'Coloured Social Worker' observes that Coloured women endure all kinds of abuse and still find something to laugh about. This character then poses the thought, "just imagine how much more powerful they would be in the absence of that abuse" (In Perkins, 1999; 17). In the

following scene, the character of Brenda addresses her invisible mother and questions her mom's continuing in the relationship with Brenda's father amidst his physical abuse. It is revealed that Brenda's mom's mom also endured abuse from her husband. In frustration, the character Brenda shouts at her mother: "Ma, don't sit there like a bladdy statue. You could do it Ma, start looking after yourself, instead of slaving in this fucked up house, just waiting for your next hiding. Ma...?" (In Perkins, 1999: 18). In the same scene, another cycle of a type of abuse is conveyed. The character of the 'Coloured Housewife' articulates a cycle of alcohol abuse that she witnessed along the family line of women of a particular household: "In the twenty years that I lived in that block of flats, I watched the mother, the children then the grandchildren sitting and drinking on that same staircase" (In Perkins, 1999: 19). In confronting through the above dialogue the lives of escape that have historically constituted Coloured experience, Conning-Ndlovu provokes the Coloured community to begin imagining a society without these acts of violence and abuse and the ensuing hopelessness of this adverse behaviour.

Further navigating the stereotypes associated with Coloured identities, *A Coloured Place* (In Perkins, 1999) articulates through the character of Samantha in scene three, the notion that it is Coloured people themselves who consent to embody these historically-embedded social constructs of a 'typical' Coloured/ness. Adhikari (2009: xiii) reiterates thus:

While it may have been the apartheid state that enforced [...] draconian forms of social engineering on the coloured community, it was the victims of these injustices themselves who gave content and meaning to the identity reconfigurations that ensued.

The character Samantha articulates through *provocative dramatisation of each type* (In Perkins, 1999: 15), a variety of classifications of typecast Coloured/ness:

It's obvious that I'm not the nice-and-decent-get-me-to-church-so-I-can-strut-my-fashion-down-the-aisle-to-get-communion-oh-so-innocent-marry-the-boy-next-door-with-a-veil-over-my-face-cos-believe-me-daddy-I'm-still-a-virgin-at-twenty-five-type. My mother is not the babalass-rollers-in-the-street-swear-my-father-for-her-Friday-nite-blue-eye-and-fat-lip-type.

Through the above types as articulated by the character Samantha, Conning-Ndlovu foregrounds that the Coloured community should take the position of agency in the construction and reinforcement of a positive, celebratory collective identity, whereby Coloured/ness will be subsequently freed from connections with adverse, unconstructive lifestyles and hence released from stagnancy and social confinements. This call is aptly confronted within the character Samantha's direct address to the Coloured community:

We betray ourselves. We play the part. We stick to what we know, malicious when one of us chooses a life beyond those confines. It takes courage to change your point of view and unashamedly do what your gut tells you to do (ibid).

In the final scene of the play, the character Tracey speaks directly to the audience who is the imagined Coloured community. In reclaiming Coloured/ness, the character Tracey encourages the Coloured community to be active in sharing their narratives, thus positing Coloured/ness as a recognisable and significant voice. The character enunciates her desire that future Coloured generations should "know of a Coloured place not rotting with division and inertia, but a Coloured place of power and diversity, that they will not be ashamed to call...home" (In Perkins, 1999: 21). Conning-Ndlovu and Abrahams are heard by audiences who are not Coloured and who therefore do not constitute an 'imagined' Coloured community, through their claiming and re-possession of Coloured female identities. Before audiences who are not classified as 'Coloured', the performance texts *What the water gave me* (In Fourie, 2006) and *A Coloured Place* (In Perkins, 1999) not only assert Coloured/ness as a wholesome, unambiguous and distinct category of identity, but are also attempts to reconcile Coloured/ness as an equal category of identity, alongside 'black/ness' and 'white/ness' within the rubric of a multi-racial post-apartheid South African society.

Chapter Four: Indian Black/ness

4.1 Introduction:

Within the context of the racial classification system asserted by the apartheid government, South African Indians have, since this history, been recognised and located as both a racial identity, but also a cultural one. Consideration of the term 'South African Indians' (that is, South African persons of Indian descent), makes it evident that South African peoples of Indian heritage are placed in a contradictory and hence precarious state of being. It is within this contradiction that feelings of insecurity and fear arise, and identification with displacement is realised among this group. Within the invidious tricameral⁴⁰ system of the apartheid government, Indian identity has historically shared an interstitial location with Coloured identity. Although both are situated as intermediary identities, Coloured/ness is navigated internally, while Indian/ness is connected to a remembered external homeland, and is thus Diasporic. In addition to its transitional location in South Africa's history, South African Indian/ness within contemporary post-apartheid society, therefore continues to not only be a racial identity in its navigation within the marginalised status of being neither 'black' (that is, *Bantu*) nor 'white', but also as a cultural identity articulated through reference to the geographic origin of India and to a culture that is characteristically 'Indian'. Ascribed to the geographical place of India, South African Indians comprise a Diasporic community, in that while this population navigates a sense of self and belonging in their immediate post-1994 context within current, contemporary South Africa, the group is simultaneously conscious of an Indian ancestry and tradition which links them to the geographical place of India and with which, through the very term 'Indian', they are widely identified.

Using the particular space of post-1994 theatre, South African playwright Krijay Govender⁴¹, in her seminal play text titled *Women in Brown*⁴² (In Chetty, 2002), explores specifically

⁴⁰ This system refers to the structure of South African governance from 1984 to 1994, whereby there existed unequal apportionment of political power between the white, Coloured, Indian and *Bantu* populace. While the white segment of the population had the dominant political voice, the Indian and Coloured group were given limited voice and the majority *Bantu* population group had no political say-so altogether.

⁴¹ Krijay Govender is one of only two professional female comedians and been rated one of the top three MCs in South Africa (Gwen Gill column, *Sunday Times*). Besides her stand-up career, Govender is an award-winning

South African Indian *female* identities, within the context of post-apartheid South Africa. *Women in Brown* (In Chetty, 2002) is Govender's attempt at asserting South African Indian female/ness as belonging within South African society and post-apartheid theatre making. Recognising Indian identity as a male-dominated discourse which even in a post-1994 context comprises the prevailing culture of Indian women within spaces of reticence, confinement and disenfranchisement, Govender's play text becomes a feminist statement that Indian women should be visible within the public domain. Further, Govender's articulation of South African Indian female identities that seemingly and overtly subscribe to patriarchal ideology makes reference to the Butleresque idea of citationality. According to ideas presented by Butler (1993), gender is citational, in that within the notion of performed identities or performativity, the body cites all its previous performances of gender. Within performativity as citationality, gender is proffered as a body which can perform myriad narratives that make reference to performed identities previously inscribed onto that body. In citing South African Indian female performed identities as they existed - and continue to exist - in spaces of domination and violence, Govender challenges patriarchal notions and stereotypes of South African Indian female/ness and instead, prompts the construction of alternative racial and cultural South African female Indian identities in a post-apartheid, multicultural theatre landscape.

Written in 1996 by South African Indian female playwright, Muthal Naidoo, *Flight from the Mahabarath* (In Perkins, 1999) is a post-apartheid play text that is the playwright's feminist reaction to the sacred and religious text in which it is based, *The Mahabharata*⁴³. Articulating a narrative derived from a text widely accepted as sacred, Naidoo, through her play text *Flight from the Mahabarath* (In Perkins, 1999) delves into potentially contentious and dangerous ground. In offering an alternate interpretation of the original sacred text, Naidoo repudiates the patriarchal discourses through which the women in the epic are

actress, playwright and director on stage and screen.

⁴² This play was written and first performed in 1998, just four years after the inception of a democratic South African society.

⁴³ This is the great Indian epic that is at least 3500 years old and consists of 100 000 stanzas in verse, making it the world's longest epic. This text is widely accepted as the embodiment of the fundamental nature of Indian cultural and religious heritage, laying down values of individual life and society which have shaped the texture of Indian life.

arguably subjected to. While the text *The Mahabharata* is on the one hand arguably patriarchal in nature, it also presents however, on the other hand, the female as mystical goddess central to the fundamental religious aspect of Indian, Hindu tradition. As goddess, one of the roles played by the female in the epic is not only to offer human beings the transcendental experience of a relationship with god, but it is also through this figure that the very elements of life are controlled. Naidoo's play is principally concerned with the re-articulation and reclaiming of South African female identities in a context that is not bound by stifling customs, as opposed to being a narrative that is first and foremost centred on navigating Indian/ness. Indian/ness is however navigated as noted in the introduction of the women characters that enter through the audience *dressed in classical Indian style* (In Perkins, 1999: 116).

Both play texts by Naidoo and Govender, respectively, could be said to be unusual articulations of Indian female/ness, considering the context in which each was written. Both *Women in Brown* (In Chetty, 2002) and *Flight from the Mahabarath* (In Perkins, 1999) were written during the birth of democracy, at a time in post-apartheid South Africa where Indian male playwrights were articulating narrow and sexist representations of South African Indian female/ness. Both play texts can thus be perceived as each playwright's attempt at liberating South African Indian female/ness. Both playwrights explore a South African identity whereby gender is related to a sense of an imagined nationality, whereby the particular race of Indian/ness is complex in that it is recognised within South Africa's history as neither black nor white and whereby these complexities around South African Indian female/ness are navigated within class. Naidoo's and Govender's respective articulations of South African Indian female identities thus become markedly political acts, as they are written at a time when a paradigm shift had just occurred in the political, cultural and social aspects of South African society; a shift which saw South Africa being premised on the newly-established ideals of liberation and equality for individuals, both male and female, of all race groups across all spheres of life.

4.2 The Diaspora Problematic for the South African Indian (woman)

Identification with the geographical location of India as 'home' and thus a place of belonging becomes an act of exclusion where the South African Indian population is concerned. This representation becomes problematic in that it not only prohibits this group from engaging the political, social and cultural processes that have historically located them in the interstice of South African society, but also nullifies the group's efforts in anti-apartheid struggle. Alluding to sentiments held by South African Indian female antiapartheid activist and writer Fatima Meer, Rastogi (2008: 1) reiterates that "identifying as diasporic Indian would necessarily privilege the Indian aspect of South African identity and consequently erase this community's struggle for recognition in South Africa". Acknowledgement as a South African is similarly that which Muthal Naidoo contests for; recognizing her South African identity before her Indian heritage, Naidoo (1997: 31) asserts the following:

In my own attempt to reconcile the diversity of factors that influence my sense of identity and my personal and social interaction, I have rejected the term "Indian" for myself. I was born and raised in South Africa and my life has been influenced by material conditions here rather than those in India. I have a residual culture that originated in India but that is where my "Indianness" begins and ends (Naidoo, 1997: 31).

Moreover, identification with diasporic experience subsequently prohibits this group from navigating an identity that is assertive and visible, particularly within a current, contemporary, multicultural, post-apartheid society. Articulating race discourses as they exist within some African nations, but drawing particular attention to Indian identity within a post-1994 context, Singh (2005: 5) observes that "despite the lessons of the continent's recent history of divided racial relationships, South Africa is going through another period of re-racialisation". He continues to elaborate thus:

While affirmative action and Black empowerment is selectively targeting Africans, it is simultaneously marginalizing previously disadvantaged groups such as Indians and Coloureds – despite them being part of the rubric of "Blacks" during the years of anti-apartheid struggle (Singh, *ibid*).

Of the South African Indian's dilemma, Naidoo (1997: 30) reiterates that "disenfranchised by virtue of race, "Indians" were effectively black, even though apartheid law and racist

consciousness did not include Indians among black people". The Diaspora experience therefore ascribes feelings of ambiguity to South African Indians, in that while they remain affected by the social, cultural and political landscape of their historically racialised South African homeland, they are simultaneously identified as belonging to the geographical location of India; a process that further isolates this group from their immediate South African landscape. In an article articulating the denial, displacement and re-adjustment of the Indian Diaspora in South Africa, Kumar (2003: 401) maintains:

As the Indians, after so much of struggle in South Africa, continue to readjust to the changing social and political environment of South Africa, they need to demonstrate their dual identity of being socially and politically South African and culturally Indian (Kumar, 2003:401).

This twofold existence lends itself to the problematic notion that South African Indians comprise an "imagined community" (Mohanty, 2001: 4) whose rootedness, belonging and identity are situated in the geographic space of India. This notion of the 'imagined' also alludes to an imagined India. Some of those who are classified as Indian may have never physically been to India, therefore their experience of Indian/ness is associated to the geographical space of India which exists for these individuals insofar as it is presumed or imagined.

Diasporic identities are defined by Avtar Brah (In Ashcroft et al, 1996: 444) as "differentiated, heterogeneous contested spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of a common 'we'". In a similar vein, Kuortti (2007: 4) states that "in the context of diaspora there is a parallel imaginative construction of collective identity in the making." Diasporic identities comprise people who come to exist as an imagined collective, through imaginative efforts. These are a group of people, who in their difference and heterogeneity, seek to articulate a communal identity. Articulating the sense of an imagined unity in diversity within the Diaspora, Hall (In Rutherford, 1990: 235) maintains: "The diaspora experience [...] is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lies with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*." This sense of imagining a communal identity, becomes a particularly complex notion for the South African Indian woman, who

simultaneously negotiates her identity within this imagined community of diasporic Indian identities, her identity as a South African whose race historically locates her within the interstices of South African society, and as a female existing within traditionally patriarchal norms.

Returning to the problematic and contradictory definition of one as a “South African Indian”, Govender (2001: 35) attempts to solve this definition by maintaining thus:

Geographically, India and South Africa are separate locations on the map. Many argue that the ‘South African’ part is the geographical definition or location, whilst the *Indian* is a cultural and ancestral definition. The latter could be seen as highly problematic (Govender, 2001: 35).

Continuing in her articulation of the South African Indian’s identity dilemma, Govender (ibid) observes that “the political, economic and social forces operating within a specific environment are responsible for shaping and defining a culture”. South African Indian/ness is thus primarily shaped not by the culture that exists in the geographical space of India, but by the particular Indian culture that exists within the geographical space of South Africa. Articulating the Diaspora, Spivak (1990: 64) reiterates that “diasporic cultures are quite different from the culture that they came from originally”. Culture within the geographical location of India thus becomes a reference point of an original Indian culture for Indians within South Africa, as opposed to being recognised as a substitution for an authentic ‘South African Indian’ culture itself; a culture which can only exist within the geographical space of South Africa. The quintessence of a South African Indian culture and identity thus “stems from the material conditions of living in South Africa” (Naidoo, 1993: 2).

Around the notion of diasporic identities, Spivak (1990: 61) also observes that “the authentic migrant experience is one that comes to us constructed by hegemonic voices; and so one has to tease out what is *not* there”. Spivak (ibid) continues to assert that in order for discrepancies in the representation and articulation of migrant experiences to be solved, one must confront the following issues and questions:

This is what is left out, this is what is covered over; this kind of construction is taking place, this kind of reading is being privileged; and then to ask, What readings are not privileged, what is not there, what questions can't be asked?' (Spivak, 1990: ibid).

The experiences of South African Indian women have historically been subject to construction by the hegemonic voice of the South African Indian male, marking the Indian female as passive, marginalised and mis-represented. Govender (2001) articulates the complex position of the South African Indian woman as someone who encounters this marginalisation through both a sense of not belonging to South Africa (and Africa at large), but also as an individual who is constructed within patriarchal discourses and ideologies perpetuated within Indian culture and specifically, within the private, domestic domain.

4.3 Challenging private spaces and stereotypes

South African Indian women are an “imagined community” (Mohanty et al, 1991: 4) who within the political, economic and social climate of apartheid, have historically experienced fear and insecurity from their racialisation as an intermediate racial group. As South African Indian women, this group also shares experiences of marginalisation, inferiority and objectification within the sphere of a patriarchal culture. These are shared experiences which have prompted theatrical constructions by South African Indian males, of South African females articulated in positions of reticence, confinement and subordination in relation to their male counterparts.

An example of play texts by South African Indian male playwrights wherein the South African Indian female is both nameless and objectified is *The Lahnee's Pleasure*⁴⁴ (2001) by Ronnie Govender and Kriben Pillay's *Looking for Muruga*⁴⁵ (1995). Both play texts exclude female characters and each respective play text is set in the bar, a space that is widely accepted as a typically and predominantly masculinised, where these male characters – a majority of who are Indian in both plays – drink and engage in conversation. The active

⁴⁴ This play was first performed in 1972 with one of the subsequent performances taking place as recently as 2010 (see „Theatre Review: The Lahnee's Pleasure“ by writer Astrid Clark).

⁴⁵ This play was first performed in 1990 and ran for a year between 1990 and 1991, in KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and at the popular Grahamstown Festival. A subsequent performance took place in 1999, where *Looking for Muruga* was invited to play at Hyderabad, South India (see „Professor Kriben Pillay features in Historic Anthology of Plays“).

voice of the Indian male is thus significantly perceptible. In Govender's *The Lahnee's Pleasure* (2001), the Indian male character Mothie, speaks inauspiciously about his daughter, yet rather flatteringly about his son. To the bartender, Sunny, Mothie speaks the following dialogue:

MOTHIE: Disgrace. I tell you Sunny, it's a disgrace...My boy Prem, he's clever fuller. Every time I go home, first thing I ask for is my boy. He listen so nice to me. Yesterday he's hiding...I say son, why you crying and he says...he says he come home lunch time from school...He saw my daughter, Sunny...She was sleeping with one man...When my son told me I got mad. I gave her one punch in the mouth. See here – teeth marks (Govender, 2001: 14).

The character Mothie's daughter is not only discredited whereby her own voice is absent, but she is also nameless, while the character of her brother (who appears in the play) is referred to by name and represented as the ideal boy-child. The unnamed character of the daughter also becomes the victim of a violent act that is portrayed through the character Mothie as merely being a parent's act of discipline, and thus a necessity.

In a dialogue that takes place between the three male characters Johnny, Sunny and Stranger in Govender's *The Lahnee's Pleasure* (2001: 29), the objectification and sexualisation of the Indian female is also visible:

JOHNNY: She's lekker eksê. Crazy pair of legs, long black hair and crazy tits... (Govender, 2001: 29).

In the above dialogue, the female character is again absent, spoken about and exists as the sexualised object of the male gaze. She is the subject matter of the conversation between the male characters insofar as her physical appearance is concerned. The female character's connection to such diction as 'lekker'⁴⁶, 'crazy pair of legs' and 'crazy tits', becomes Govender's articulation of a narrow and sexist representation of the Indian female.

⁴⁶ Afrikaans term whose English translation means „pleasant“ or „agreeable“.

Similarly, in his play *Looking for Muruga* (1995: 28-29), Pillay expresses a narrow construction of the Indian female by her Indian male counterpart. The following dialogue takes place between the male characters Sherwin and Muruga:

MURUGA: I don't know about that. I don't think even the Devil could have made our high-class Indian ladies the way they are.

SHERWIN: Don't you worry, that kind of lady is all over. In Johannesburg they call them kugels.

MURUGA: Same word I use for them. Koodh...

SHERWIN: (*hastily interrupting him*). No, ku-gel, kugel, not the word you're thinking about.

The character Muruga's disapproving opinion of the Indian female is highlighted in his maintaining that the Indian female is iniquitous beyond even the devil. Such a description of the Indian female is defamatory in nature particularly because the Indian female remains absent and thus unable to defend herself. Further in the above dialogue, the stage direction *hastily interrupting him* alludes to a disparaging term that the character Muruga was close to verbalising; a term that is an insolent description of the Indian female.

The play text *Women in Brown* (In Chetty, 2002) is Govender's undertaking as a South African Indian female playwright, to navigate alternative constructions of South African Indian female identities within current, contemporary, post-apartheid theatre. Through the characters Govender writes in her play text, she encourages the South African Indian female voice in articulations of South African Indian female/ness.

In her post-1994 play text *Flight from the Mahabharath*, Naidoo (In Perkins, 1999: 114) similarly challenges the perceptions of writing as a male activity and of the Indian woman as passive and indiscernible. Of the original epic, Naidoo (*ibid*) maintains:

The *Mahabharath* was full of women characters with wonderful potential. I decided to take their lives and do something with them from a feminist point of view. Just take the women out and let them explore who they are and what they want to be [...] (In Perkins, 1999: 114).

In removing the Indian mythical goddesses out of their natural location – that is, in the space where they existed insofar as their role was to serve their male counterparts in the religious epic – to instead ascribe a sense of agency to these women by giving each a story, Naidoo engages the act of re-writing a significant facet of sacred, traditional Indian history. Naidoo re-writes the Indian woman's story into the particular space of post-apartheid South Africa; a liberated and multi-cultural space where the Indian woman can make the choice to escape the restrictive, confining customs that sought to silence and subjugate her through the particular prescribed (domesticated) roles of the epic. Naidoo dislocates the binary of 'woman'; while the Indian woman is traditionally synonymous with the private space and primary roles of subservience and her consequent passivity, Naidoo represents an Indian woman who can choose to be both mother and wife in the domestic space, but also as one with agency and determines the conditions for her own life – in the private space, as well as in the public space. By connecting the Indian woman to these dual roles – unconventional within Indian tradition – Naidoo ascribes an uncensored, liberated nature to Indian female identity and South African female/ness.

Around her observations on the roles that have historically been circumscribed to Indian women under the banner of culture and cultural preservation – constructions which have constituted the theatrical landscape of South African female Indian/ness – Govender (2001: 33) asserts:

The notion of using playwriting and theatre as a way in which the South African *Indian* woman can liberate herself is a notion that is historically foreign. Writing itself is envisaged both historically and culturally as an activity that is a part of the public space and by implication, is primarily a male activity.

In the very acts of writing their play texts *Women in Brown* (In Chetty, 2002) and *Flight from the Mahabharath* (In Perkins, 1999), Govender and Naidoo engage the feminist act of firstly, challenging the dominant perception that views writing as a male activity, and secondly, contend for the insertion, visibility and audibility of South African (Indian) female identities within the public space of post-apartheid theatre.

Emphasising the political nature of the act of writing, Mohanty (In Mohanty et al, 1991: 34) reiterates: "Writing becomes the context through which new political identities are forged. It becomes a space for struggle and contestation about reality itself". Engaging the controversial acts of writing, specifically as Indian South African women – representative of those who have historically been subjected to silence and powerlessness as dictated by the private place in which this identity has been located within 'Indian' tradition and culture – Govender's *Women in Brown* (In Chetty, 2002) and Naidoo's *Flight from the Mahabarath* (In Perkins, 1999) boldly articulate South African Indian female identities within a male-dominated culture. While Naidoo's play text comprises over ten female characters and only two male characters, Govender's play text is similarly profoundly feminist in its use of three named exclusively South African Indian actresses, who portray both female and male characters, together with the Director/god figure who is played by Krijay Govender herself.

4.4 Multiple identities of South African (Indian) female/nesses

A pertinent seminal play text in the articulation of South African Indian female identities, the history of *Women in Brown* (In Chetty, 2002) includes performances at the Standard Bank Grahamstown National Arts Festival in 1998, Women's Festival of the same year and South African Women's Arts Festival also of the same year.

A play within a play, *Women in Brown* (In Chetty, 2002) uses a minimal set of three black blocks used to signify three different performance spaces occupied by the three actresses who play the three female characters and then three male characters in the 'Male Scenes'. In each of the 'Male Scenes', there exists a standard backdrop which consists of transparent saris, behind which the silhouette of dancers can be seen. This is to perhaps communicate that the Indian woman is located in the background socially and culturally, and exists as inferior to her male counterpart. Further, this culturally-inscribed backdrop which alludes to a sense of sensuality and physical allure, foregrounds that the Indian woman has been situated as nameless, voiceless, invisible and restricted, existing insofar as she is sexualised and objectified by the voyeuristic male gaze, within the confines of a culture that is patriarchal. The Director/god figure is seated at the back of the theatre and sometimes participates and controls the action. Her presence is a Brechtian device in that her

commentary not only retains the audience at a critical distance, but also prompts them to acknowledge that that which is being enacted, bears a great degree of verisimilitude where the contemporary experiences and current constructions of South African female Indian identities are concerned. Described as both a director and a god, there is a sense that this character is not only in control of the outcome of the action, but also that she is an all-knowing, all-powerful female figure. The minimalism of the set draws attention to these three meta-narratives and points to the different aspects of South African Indian female identities which unfold within each of the three distinct performance spaces.

Scene one introduces the characters, namely Pritha, a housewife in her late thirties, Mona, a businesswoman in her late twenties and Kammy, an eighteen year old student. The three characters are constructed by Govender as distinct representations of Indian femaleness in contemporary post-apartheid South Africa. Pritha is domesticated. The description of her household responsibilities, which include preparing lunch for her husband Des, cooking, cleaning and scrubbing the verandah, denotes a monotony, repetition and tediousness about her life that she does not challenge because it is the only reality she has ever known. Pritha's monologue in scene four highlights this character's imposed domestication. Pritha's opening line, "I tried again this morning...still only one pink strip. Eh, I'm fed up, eh!" (In Chetty, 2002: 294) signifies the character's desperation to fall pregnant. She also however reveals that she "doesn't mind having no children" (ibid) because of the peace and liberation that comes with it, but also states that "Des loves children" (ibid). There is a sense that the character of Pritha succumbs to the pressure placed on her by her husband and "these people" (ibid) where "if you can't have children, they think something wrong with you and your marriage" (ibid). The character is represented as one who is to play her culturally prescribed role of the Indian wife who can only be perceived by society as proper and whole, once she bears a child; specifically a son so as to "carry the family name" (ibid).

Highlighting the role of the woman in the epic *The Mahabharata*, Shah (1995: 96) observes that "A barren wife was thought to be useless". In Naidoo's *Flight from the Mahabarath* (In Perkins, 1999: 125) the character Ganga challenges marriage and motherhood as the prescribed roles of the (Indian) female. Responding to the marriage proposal from her

suitor Subadhra, the character Ganga asserts: “No, I just don’t want the responsibilities of marriage” (In Perkins, 1999: 125). Exploring perceptions of the Indian woman and the institution of marriage in the narrative of *The Mahabharata*, Shah (1995: 69) maintains that “Not only did woman had (sic) to marry, since only as a wife could woman attain glory in patriarchal society, but it was in this role alone that women could be useful to men [...]”.

In the following dialogue, the character Ganga then continues to defy the role of motherhood (ibid):

GANGA: Children? I am not going to have any children.
SUBADHRA: Don’t you want children?
GANGA: No.
SUBADHRA: But that is unnatural.
GANGA: Why?
SUBADHRA: You are a woman. It is your function.
GANGA: No, not unless I choose it [...].

Unlike the character Ganga who is Naidoo’s articulation of a woman who does not conform to the traditional, ascribed roles of wife and mother, but instead exercises a sense of agency and ownership over her existence, the character of Pritha in *Women in Brown* (In Chetty, 2002) is Govender’s construction of an Indian woman silenced within the confines of tradition, discontented as a wife and feeling devoid of an option where motherhood is concerned. Although both Ganga and Pritha are seemingly different articulations of Indian/ness and female/ness, they are nonetheless both constructions through which Naidoo and Govender reclaim Indian/ness and female/ness. The character Ganga is visible as reclamation of female/ness and Indian/ness through her outward defiance of the roles of wifehood and motherhood set out for her by society as female and Indian, while the character Pritha eventually navigates her domesticated existence to assert her own sense of self (see discussions of scene seven).

Through admiring her husband by asserting “He’s so good” and “He knows so many things” (In Chetty, 2002: 294), the character Pritha inadvertently assumes the role of passive, confined and uneducated wife. Her statements “He says he hates it when I’m not at home”

and “Sometimes, when he comes from work and I’m in the bathroom, he gets so cross” (ibid), are perhaps assertions through which the character attempts to convince herself of her husband’s fondness of her; that which is in fact subordination and oppression masked by apparent affection. In the dialogue “I think he misses me a lot at work, no?” (ibid) the character Pritha consoles herself by excusing her husband’s domineering, abusive behaviour, as his communicating that he was longing for his wife’s presence. This character is patronisingly addressed by her husband as “doll” (ibid), which becomes another signifier of patriarchal domination. A demeaning term of address for a grown woman, Pritha is within the domestic space perceived by her husband as an object; a plaything, something fragile and replaceable. In this scene, there exists the overriding sense that Pritha has accepted her domestication as the outcome of her life, is at a stage where she challenges nothing and because of this, has forfeited her dreams. Underpinning Pritha’s dialogue “Sometimes when I’m by myself, I think of all the things I could have been. I too got dreams, but that’s all they can be – dreams” (ibid), is a sense of loss and subjection.

In scene seven, Pritha, obviously *in pain*, is asked by the Director/god figure if she is ok, to which she shakes her head ‘no’ twice and then nods ‘yes’. Responding to whether she still loves her husband, the character Pritha *starts to shake her head No, then shamefully nods Yes* (In Chetty, 2002: 299). Her eventual nodding is perhaps commentary by the playwright that Indian women remain living shameful lives because of a dependence on their partners, at whose hands they are dominated. In scene nine, the character Pritha, in her outward frustration and anger, screams at the Director/god figure “I’ll kill him... I’ll divorce him” and then shouts “I’ll shoot him” (In Chetty, 2002: 300). After being calmed down by the Director/god figure, the character resolves she is not willing to go to jail “for that rubbish” (ibid). Thereafter, her affirmative line “I know...You want cake...I’ll give you cake” (ibid), accompanied by her act of spitting into the mixing bowl, becomes an act of the reclamation of her independence and sense of self. She uses the very confines and chore-bound nature of her domestic life as a weapon against her husband. This scene sees the character Pritha confronting the reality of her unfulfilled marriage for the first time.

The character Mona is a distinct articulation by Govender of another type of South African female identity. Unlike the initial representation of the character Pritha – passive and understanding – Mona is at first appearance an unconventional Indian woman. She shouts to get attention, tactless in speech and alongside the other two female characters, is the most overtly ‘unculturally’ located non-traditional Indian woman. In her monologue in scene five, Mona challenges the stereotype of the typical Indian woman who is socially constructed as principled, conservative and traditional. She rebels against the status quo by smoking, using offensive language such as “screwing”, “bitch” and “slut” (In Chetty, 2002: 296), has a boyfriend with a western/English name (Neil), like herself, and altogether discards the sanctity of marriage - an institution strongly upheld within traditional Indian custom – by flippantly asserting she will marry Neil because “it’s convenient” (ibid). This character is unapologetic about her non-conformist attitude to Indian traditional practice and highlights her individuality and agency by declaring “Well tough! I’m not going to change – they must deal with it!” (ibid). The word ‘they’ refers to the imagined Indian community who obligate women of Indian identity to certain practices in the name of culture and its preservation. In scene ten, the character Mona *comes in with a sari. She feels it and holds it against her. Then suddenly she squashes it up and throws it aside...She is very upset* (In Chetty, 2002: 301). The ensuing dialogue between her and the Director/god figure sees Mona reading a letter from her boyfriend, in which he is breaking the relationship with her. Alongside the character’s act of squashing and throwing aside of her sari, Mona’s act of burning out with her cigarette the words in the letter which seemingly agitate her, together with her final outburst spoken as she *looks at the men in the audience* and shouts “BASTARDS – all of you!” (In Chetty, 2002: 301), portrays this character’s frustration at Indian tradition and its nature of confining the Indian female and reveals her desire to stifle a tradition through which the Indian female is dominated.

The character Kammy displays innocence, friendliness and a child-like manner upon introduction to her in the first scene. In this scene, the characteristic of the traditionalist arranged-marriage custom of historical Indian/ness is introduced. In scene three, the character Kammy hints that she is no longer a virgin, which is considered taboo in Indian tradition for an unwed woman. Her dialogue “I am their eternal virgin” (In Chetty, 2002:

293), with the accompanying stage direction *spreads legs open [...] [t]hen, mischievous smile* (ibid) displays her agency in that she rebels – although unknowingly to her parents – against a past Indian tradition in the form of arranged marriages, that dictates who she must marry. The character Kammy is a representation of a younger generation of Indian females, whose rebelling against her parent's expectations, are in fact the rebelling against the very culture which inscribes these expectations.

4.5 Language in the articulation of violence

While the above scenes explore three distinct constructions of South African Indian female identities within a patriarchal context, the Male Scenes of *Women in Brown* (In Chetty, 2002) sees Govender using these self-same characters to represent three Indian male characters, with the character of Pritha portraying the male character Siva, the character Mona depicting the male character Suspect and the male character Dino portrayed by the character Kammy. Through Govender's articulation of the male characters in the 'Male Scenes', the playwright highlights the widely perceived stereotypical constructions of South African Indian female identities as formed within patriarchal discourses. In drawing attention to these articulations – often offensive and derogatory as depicted through use of particular diction – Govender calls attention to new performed identities of South African Indian female/ness within post-apartheid theatre; further, identities constructed by the South African Indian female. By having male characters portrayed by female actors, Govender not only makes a direct criticism of the way in which Indian males portray their Indian female counterparts in theatrical roles, but this playwriting choice also becomes a way in which the Indian female takes ownership and agency over her own representation and subsequent identity and voice.

Through use of South African Indian slang, Govender locates representations of South African Indian female/ness within a contemporary South Africa. In foregrounding and placing on the public platform of post-1994 theatre the implicit and explicit violence and domination imposed upon the South African Indian female within the private, domestic space, Govender begins to challenge (mis)representations of South African Indian

female/ness and navigates this through use of current, contemporary, characteristically South African Indian language.

The garment of the sari is one that is significant in the construction of the South African Indian female identities explored in *Women in Brown* (In Chetty, 2002) and shall be explored in further detail. Just as gender is metaphorically costumed, to then lend itself to particular performed identities, as reiterated in Butler's (1999) notion of performativity, the sari becomes an external garment or traditional dress that similarly ascribes particular identities to the Indian female characters who are dressed in it or who are in some way connected to the sari through referring to it. In scene two, against the backdrop of *dancers behind saris who perform beautiful gestures* (In Chetty, 2002: 291), the three actresses now play their male counterparts. The scene is set in the men's toilet. Miming that they are urinating, the male characters are presented as virile beings. Juxtaposed against the silhouette of dancers in the background, Indian female/ness is presented as sensual, passive and for the voyeuristic male gaze, while the identity of her male counterpart is foreground as active and liberated to speak. In the character Siva's dialogue, with use of such diction as "It's hanging lukker!" (ibid) and a stage direction that states *Indicating penis* (ibid), the Indian male is presented as one with sexual confidence and prowess. Together with this sexual innuendo, the line "The bitch was vying lukker" (ibid) is an overtly derogatory reference to the female; one through which she is further objectified and sexualised, as alluded to by the backdrop of dancers. In another Male Scene in scene six, the stage direction states *lights up on dancers behind saris who perform cooking gestures with pots* (In Chetty, 2002: 297). Similarly to the above scene, the Indian woman is presented as voiceless, existent insofar as she is domesticated and sexually-appealing. This scene foregrounds the aspect of violence that takes place within the private space. The character of Siva encourages violence against women who give "lip service" (In Chetty, 2002: 298) and believes in beating 'disobedient' women, as he does his wife. Underpinning this dialogue is possibly criticism towards older Indian men who instil the mindset in the younger generation of Indian men that the solution to resolving domestic conflict is physical abuse. This is evident in the following dialogue between the characters Dino and Siva, whereby the latter justifies domestic abuse:

DINO: Eh uncle, why you slaan your vrou?

SIVA: Mouth lightie, mouth! One thing I can't stand is lip service.

The scene also represents the Indian male's negative response to his female counterpart who pursues career endeavours. The character Suspect says, "You know these char⁴⁷ chicks? They scheme they too wit⁴⁸." Of a "char chick" who "got one two promotions", the character Suspect ridicules "now she schemes she shits ice-cream" (ibid). Through such dialogue, Govender through these constructions posits the contemporary Indian woman's dilemma; while she is in a context that recognises her potential and views her outside of the mould of tradition and culture, the mindsets held by her Indian male counterparts seek to confine her within the role of inferior, subservient and domesticated individual. This aspect of imposed subservience and domesticity is highlighted in Siva's orders to his wife to "bring the bites" (In Chetty, 2002: 299), which culminates into a chilling end where he beats her. The stage directions *Dino and Suspect encourage Siva and cheer him on as he leaves, [and] in the blackout we hear pots banging and Siva hitting his wife* (ibid), highlights not only the violence that is perhaps common within the domestic Indian community, but also the community of Indian males who encourage the perpetuation of this violence. In the final Male Scene titled 'Porno', *lights come up on dancers behind saris, who are performing erotic movements eg. Strippers* (ibid). The three male characters are watching a pornographic movie starring an Indian woman. This scene sees the explicit objectification and sexualisation of the Indian female body. The character Dino proclaims, "She's a disgrace to the Indians man! Which mother would let her daughter do that?" (In Chetty, 2002: 300), which is of course both a verbal violation and a hypocritical statement, in that while this character indulges in the voyeuristic gaze of the Indian porn star, he labels her a disgrace to the community. The Indian woman is thus simultaneously sexualised, objectified, labelled and victimised.

4.6 External garments signify particular performed identities

Just as diction and use of language inscribes particular gendered identities, garments become external signifiers of certain constructed gendered identities. Around her theory of

⁴⁷ Slang word for „Indian“

⁴⁸ Afrikaans word for „white“

performativity, Butler offers an understanding of the ontology of gender, whereby she maintains: “That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality” (Butler, 1990: 208). Therefore, a gendered body performs a particular identity in relation to the acts which constitute it and thus its subsequent identity. Because it has no ontological status, the identity of the gendered body is therefore not fixed. In his theorisation of Butler’s performativity, James Loxley (2007: 141) similarly observes that “clothes, gestures, styles are therefore all merely *expressive* of one’s given gender identity”. According to this assertion firstly, clothes, gestures and styles merely express a gender identity, and do not necessarily represent the essence of that particular identity. Secondly, according to this statement by Loxley (*ibid*), clothes, gestures and styles are merely expressive of one’s *given* gender identity; ‘given’ signifying that this identity is not only pre-arranged, set and particular, but that it can also be challenged, altered and re-constructed. In relation to the characters constructed by Govender in *Women in Brown* (In Chetty, 2002), South African Indian female/ness therefore carries no prescriptive elements or an inscribed essence that cannot be challenged. This is evident in the way in which the sari, which is the external traditional signifier of South African Indian female/ness, is treated by each of the characters.

The sari is represented in both *Women in Brown* (In Chetty, 2002) and *Flight from the Mahabarath* (In Perkins, 1999) as the culturally accepted and acceptable external signifier of all Indian female/ness; while celebratory of Indian culture and traditions, this garment is also however confining and oppressive. In Naidoo’s *Flight from the Mahabarath* (In Perkins, 1999), the stage directions at the beginning of the play text - *The WOMEN come running in, helter-skelter through the audience. They are dressed in classical Indian style with loads of jewelry, hair bound up, tightly draped saris [...]* (In Perkins, 1999; 116) – signify that these women’s identities are initially negotiated and navigated from a point of familiar Indian tradition and culture. In Govender’s play text, each of the three female characters, Pritha, Mona and Kammy, has a distinct relationship with the sari, which becomes the representation of South African Indian female/ness. At the end of the play in scene eleven, the sari is treated differently, according to that which it symbolises for each character. While Kammy in her space feels the sari and puts it on, Pritha in her space starts to fold her

sari and Mona in her space starts to rip hers; each of these acts signifying a particular identity of South African female Indian/ness. For Pritha, expectations her husband and her community have of her as an Indian wife, mark the familiar, routinely life that continues being her reality. The tradition imposed upon this character is that which continues to define her life of confined domesticity. For the character Mona, tradition as it seeks to deprive her of a sense of individuality, therefore becomes something to rebel against and be destroyed; tradition in itself remains for her something that must be challenged. For the character Kammy, who is representational of the youngest generation of South African Indian females in the play, the sari is something that ultimately kills her. Tradition dictates to her and imposes beliefs and values systems that are insincere for her. Indian custom forces her to form ties with someone she feels no connection to, which kills this character emotionally and ultimately, physically. In the ways by which the sari is treated by the three female characters, South African Indian female/ness is ascribed an alternative reality that exists beyond the various acts that comprise the characters' Indian/ness and female/ness. In Naidoo's play text, the sari forms part of the 'cages of custom and tradition' (In Perkins, 1999: 140). At the outset of *Flight from the Mahabharath* (In Perkins, 1999), the women in the play are represented as discarding the confines of tradition and custom. Upon introduction to the women characters, they *pull off various items of clothing and are revealed in shorts and jeans and other non-restrictive forms of dress* (In Perkins, 1999: 117). This introductory act highlights the play's preoccupation with articulating a group of women who do not unquestioningly exist within confining traditions and customs; instead, the play portrays women who have agency and celebrate it.

Conclusion

South Africa's apartheid and recent history is one premised primarily around discourses of race; a position which subsequently dictated the nature of the social, cultural, economic and political landscape of the country. Underpinning its earmarking of South African citizens into racialised pockets of either 'black' or 'white' (and Coloured and Indian), the legacy of apartheid was based on upholding separation and segregation of individuals.

The racial classification system of apartheid posed both a contradiction and a double-problematic. Firstly, during the beginning stages of apartheid, 'black' referred only to *Bantu* identity. However, this self-same system also saw the colluding of 'black' identities as homogeneous, wherein Coloured and Indian identities were by implication also 'black', just not 'black' enough. Through this homogenization of black/ness, this first part of apartheid was therefore premised on silencing all identities essentially seen as 'non-white' or 'black'. During this period, apartheid discourses in effect denied South Africans the opportunity to appreciate the differences and specificities within these distinct race identities of 'black'. Secondly, with the introduction of the tricameral system of governance in the latter years of the apartheid era, 'black' was then divided into invidious categories of 'black' identities'. The tricameral system saw the over-racialisation and over-categorisation of identity; particularly black/ness. Though accounted for as not simply 'black', but as specifically 'Coloured' and 'Indian', these latter categories of black/ness, together with *Bantu* black/ness, would be situated unequally in terms of the power relations that would be at play across all spheres of South African life. In its use of the term 'black', this dissertation has included discussions of *Bantu*, Indian and Coloured identities.

The location of the black female under apartheid ideology is aptly articulated in Stephen Gray's assertion: "Race is the cutting edge of discrimination and class its reinforcement [...] Gender as the third means of dividing and ruling the population had not before enjoyed prominence as a political issue" (Gray, 1990: 83). Discourses of apartheid therefore resulted in the black South African woman's struggle against not only racism, but also sexism. With apartheid being synonymous with white, male, middle class hegemony, this dissertation has sought to underline, in a post-apartheid context, the identity historically located as

subaltern and disenfranchised – the black female – who through the oppression imposed on her by virtue of not only her black/ness (race) and the equally political issue of her female/ness (gender), was also consequently dispossessed of economic rights, power and access, thus historically constituting working class. The theatre landscape of pre-1994 includes black women who occupied positions of marginalisation in the characters they portrayed (as in the play *Have you seen Zandile?* (In Perkins, 1999) by Gcina Mhlophe), and in terms of being makers of art, it's a landscape which comprises black women whose double-oppression within both racism and sexism, saw them engaging protest theatre, which afforded the cultural, political outlet of giving voice to their grievances as a collective of subjugated individuals.

From an articulated feminist theoretical framework, this dissertation has interrogated the construction of black/ness and female/ness by six black South African female playwrights - whereby two playwrights comprise each of the three categories of black/ness - in their respective post-apartheid-produced play texts. Cognisant of the apartheid system's perception of black identity as a homogeneous category of racialisation, this dissertation has therefore explored the notion of Black *identities*, as articulated by Stuart Hall in his theory around the multiplicity of identities (Hall, 1996), and because of its feminist preoccupations, specifically of black *female* identities. The six playwrights under discussion – Bongi Ndaba, Motshabi Tyelele, Lueen Conning-Ndlovu, Rehane Abrahams, Muthal Naidoo and Krijay Govender – are seen to navigate *Bantu*, Coloured and Indian female identities within new spaces. In a post-1994 theatre context, these six playwrights, as a collective or “imagined community” (Mohanty, 1991: 4) of black South African Third World feminist writers, incite perceptibility and visibility to black South African female/ness.

Within her historically designated race classification, each playwright articulates a type of black female/ness that resonates with the specific history, socio-geography and experiences of that particular black/ness. It is for this reason that each of the chapters has dealt separately with *Bantu*, Indian and Coloured female identities. While this separation of chapters is a perpetuation of that which was done by apartheid discourses, in that the apartheid system was similarly asserted on the separation and segregation of individuals of

different race groups, this separation of chapters has been to highlight that specificities and complexities exist within the rubric of black female/ness. This separation of chapters has also been to facilitate the feminist reclamation of each type of black female/ness within its own space. Further, this dissertation has illustrated through a separation of chapters that indeed endless differences do exist within black South African female/ness. However, inasmuch as *Bantu*, Indian and Coloured female identities attained unequal status in terms of political, social and economic access in South African history, apartheid and recent, this dissertation, through its chapters which deal separately with each of the three types of black female identities, has navigated these differences not as separatist or segregationist in nature, but rather in a celebration of difference and multiplicity of identities. In a post-1994 context, the six playwrights whose works have been discussed, are representative of a community of women, who although racially different, are connected firstly in that they are all women and black, and secondly, in their resisting of patriarchal ideologies and discourses where the location of black women in post-apartheid theatre-making is concerned. In navigating the “interlocking systems of race, sex and class” (hooks, 1986: 21), each of the six playwrights in her respective play text, removes the black South African woman from spaces of invisibility, reticence, passivity and subsequent powerlessness, towards spaces of audibility, visibility, agency and subsequent power.

Drawing from the popular feminist adage, “the personal is political” (Foley, 1994: 81), this dissertation has illustrated how the personal histories, geographies, and experiences of the six playwrights have significantly impacted on the constructions of the black South African female identities that each playwright respectively articulates. In exploring the ways by which six black South African female playwrights are utilising the particular space of theatre within a post-apartheid context, and in articulating the identities of a group that was significantly marginalised within South Africa’s historical legacy of apartheid, this dissertation has posited the public space of theatre as a profoundly political space, whose potency affords the construction, re-construction, articulation and re-articulation of identities. By focusing on the most historically marginalised identity, black female/ness, this dissertation has emphasised theatre as a platform that is available for the challenging of this notion of black South African female/ness as ‘subaltern’ (Spivak, 2006); instead, presenting

theatre as a space whereby alternatives in black South African female identities are celebrated within our contemporary post-apartheid context.

In their navigation of alternatives for black South African female identities in a post-1994 context, each of the six playwrights uses language in particular ways. Language becomes integral in the articulation of specific experiences and subsequent identities of black South African female/ness. As stated by Judith Butler, language (and discourse) “do” gender (In Salih, 1999: 64), therefore language choices and uses of language become crucial in the construction of gendered identities. Embedded within Butler’s notion of performativity, a theory in which she observes that particular social appearances are attached to gender, each of the six playwrights construct black South African female characters that have been re-dressed for a post-apartheid context, through not only the garments they physically adorn, but also through language. Through language as it appears in its written, spoken and performed forms, very particular black South African female identities within a post-apartheid context are imagined in performance.

Each of the six playwrights employs language differently in articulating female/ness, a type of black/ness and class. Language is accessed differently by working class women and middle class women. In articulating middle class *Bantu* black/ness, Bongi Ndaba and Motshabi Tyelele in their respective play texts *Shaken* (See Appendix A) and *Shwele Bawo* (In Homann, 2009), use language that is recognisable as both resonantly *Bantu*, in that vernacular such as Zulu, Xhosa and Sesotho are used, but also make use of language that displays eloquence. Secondly, in being articulations of black women with access to education – as with the character of Khaya in *Shaken* (See Appendix A) – or luxurious lifestyles – as with the character of Dikeledi in *Shwele Bawo* (In Homann, 2009) – these *Bantu* women attain a proximity to middle class status. Around Spivak’s (2006) notion of subalternity, defined as the lack of social mobility and social recognition, *Bantu* female/ness as the most historically subaltern of all Black South African identities, is navigated by both Ndaba and Tyelele within middle class standing, which becomes a space in which to reclaim mobility and recognition in *Bantu* female/ness. Both playwrights therefore engage the re-writing of the class history of the *Bantu* black female.

In its exploration of the historically interstitial identity of Coloured, this dissertation has explored the plays *A Coloured Place* (In Perkins, 1999) and *What the water gave me* (In Fourie, 2006) by playwrights Lueen Conning-Ndlovu and Rehane Abrahams respectively. Navigating post-apartheid articulations of Coloured female/ness through colloquial diction and 'typically Coloured' language, both playwrights explore Coloured female/ness within new spaces. While Conning-Ndlovu incites Coloured pride and dignity amongst this race group – whereby she focuses on the Durban, Wentworth Coloured community – Abrahams invokes through the corporal, a Coloured historicity imbued with the memory of slavery, doing so through a recollection of the origination of Coloured people in the Cape. Conning-Ndlovu articulates post-1994 Coloured female/ness through language that almost perpetuates stereotypes around this identity. Through the particular diction spoken by the Coloured female characters she constructs – language which reflects Coloured women of working class status as evidenced in the minimal social access these women have – Conning-Ndlovu deconstructs these stereotypes through this 'typically' Coloured language. Abrahams on the other hand, uses the physical body to speak; her body becomes the language through which Coloured female/ness is navigated, and so becomes a language in itself which transcends class. While Ndaba and Tyelele navigate *Bantu* female/ness through re-writing the history of *Bantu* class status, both Conning-Ndlovu and Abrahams navigate Coloured female/ness particular to specific socio-geographies.

This dissertation has also explored Indian female/ness, which although historically situated with Coloured/ness in the interstices of South African society, Coloured identity is navigated internally, while Indian/ness is diasporic in its association to a remembered external homeland. With Indian identity recognisable as a significantly male-dominated discourse, articulations of Indian female identities by Muthal Naidoo in her play text *Flight from the Mahabarath* (In Perkins, 1999) and Krijay Govender in her play text *Women in Brown* (In Chetty, 2002), become profoundly feminist. While Naidoo engages the contentious act of constructing Indian female characters adapted from a text that is regarded as sacred, *The Mahabharata*, Govender makes public the acts of implicit and explicit violence enacted by male Indians over their female counterparts within the private space. Both playwrights therefore engage the act of resisting traditional Indian custom and patriarchal discourses

that have historically perceived the Indian female as passive and reticent. Through the different access to language that Govender's Indian female characters have, Govender articulates Indian female/ness that occupies both middle class – as in the case of the character Mona – or working class as in the character of Pritha. The characters Naidoo constructs in her play text speak articulately, and are therefore perhaps articulations of middle-class, socially mobile, unrestrained (Indian) women.

In 1999, the first ever anthology of plays to focus exclusively on the lives of black South African women was published. This collection of plays, edited (ironically) by American academic, Kathy A. Perkins, comprises both male and female South African playwrights, in which each writer depicts the lives and experiences of black South African women, thus exploring black South African female/ness within both the apartheid and post-apartheid eras. I found it interesting to observe that not only is an anthology aptly titled, *Black South African Women: An Anthology of Plays* (Perkins, 1999), compiled by a non-South African black woman, but also, that of the ten plays in a collection compiled within a post-apartheid climate, only two plays written by female playwrights are located within the context of post-apartheid. By placing focus on the articulation of black South African female identities by black South African female playwrights within a post-apartheid context, this dissertation is my own academic, theorised collection as it were, of both published and unpublished⁴⁹ play texts by black South African female playwrights. In exploring the ways by which each of the six black South African female playwrights under discussion articulates black South African female/ness, across *Bantu*, Coloured and Indian categories of performed identities, this dissertation has charted the transformation that has indeed taken place in articulations of black South African female identities.

By offering myriad types of black South African female experiences, this dissertation has deconstructed this notion of a homogeneous, typical black South African female identity, but has instead proffered that in a post-apartheid context, there not only exists myriad female black identities, but that their diversity should be acknowledged, perceptible and

⁴⁹ The play text *Shaken* (2008) by Bongani Ndaba is an unpublished play text, for which permission to use has been granted by the playwright. This play text is attached as Appendix A.

celebrated within our current, contemporary, post-apartheid theatre context. Through an analysis of the black female characters across the six South African post-apartheid play texts, this dissertation has filled a gap in the under-theorisation and under-representation of black South African female identities within the particular context of current post-apartheid theatre and is an addition to the lexicon of academic works that charts the ongoing transformation of articulations and constructions of black South African female identities in a post-1994 theatre context.

Across the six play texts under discussion, each respective playwright constructs new articulations of black South African female/ness which not only reclaim that which is historically a socially, politically and economically marginalised state of being, but also prompts the possibility that female/ness (gender) and black/ness (race) could well be inadequate as the primary determining variables of separating individuals, but that in an increasingly democratic society, where historically-manufactured economic disparities between black and white are continuously being repaired through systems that seek to promote equal economic access to all South African citizens, class could well emerge as the dominant and primary variable of classifying individuals. Perhaps the theatre landscape of a more seasoned South African democracy might reflect class (and gender) as the determining variable of establishing and marking difference between black and white, male or female. Be that as it may, even in light of the racial (and class) differentiations which continue to mark our current South African landscape, gender remains the most divisive category of separation.

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Appendix A⁵¹

(SHAKEN)

by
(Bongi Ndaba)

(Fictional)

Revisions by
()

Current Revisions by
(Current Writer, date)

Name: BONGI NDABA
No. 1 Wewer Road, Birch Acres, Kempton Park, 1619
011-393 5397 and 083 381 0045

CHARACTERS:

KHAYA - a 30 yr old woman, not necessarily beautiful, if she is at this moment it's not what one first recognizes. She is in jail so she is not pampered-up. When we meet her, Khaya is angry, unapologetic and feels the world has treated her badly. She is a mother of a 6yr old Mbali, Khaya feels she's disappointed her and taken away from her but is sure her future will be better than hers. Khaya was an only child, grew up mostly with her

⁵¹ For permission to make use of the contents of this play text (Appendix A), you are requested to contact the playwright directly on the aforementioned phone numbers and/or address.

grandmother and she cherishes that aspect of her life, she was a well-brought good girl but then life happened.

INGRID - a 35yr old lawyer, she is appointed to represent Khaya in her case of assault. Ingrid is tough on the outside but fragile inside, helping Khaya is a duty she wants to quickly get over but then she finds her intriguing. She wants to know more about her story when Khaya is willing to share and thinks they have a shot in writing a book, Ingrid is willing to go along with the idea.

THE GOSSIPERS - MaDlamini and MaModise, they are the village gossipers, they know everything and anything about anyone and if they don't they will make it up. They serve to relate some of Khaya's memories in their own gossipy fashion. They are very religious but only because being in church circles gives them a voice and a purpose. They love singing African Christian songs and it is their honor and pride that they sing better than everyone and maybe better than each other too.

INT. TAT'UNQETHO'S HOUSE - OUTSIDE KHAYA'S HUT -
DUSK

As the audience walk in to settle on their seats, Thandiswa Mazwai's Gogo ndicel'iyenza song is playing. GOGO NOMATEBHE, MADLAMINI and MAMODISE, INGRID, DILIZA, SABATHA are already on stage. GOGO is humming or singing softly a gospel chorus, MaModise and MaDlamini are carrying wood on their heads, gossiping but inaudibly. Ingrid is in her lawyer outfit, delivering a closing to the court, which is the audience, also inaudibly. Sabatha's counting vigorously on his calculator and writing the figures down.

LIGHTS OUT

EXT. TAT'UNQETHO'S HOUSE - OUTSIDE KHAYA'S HUT -
DUSK

Tat'uNqetho enters with burning incense in hand, waving his whisk to blow the smoke all over. He is followed by KHAYA, who

drags a huge red suitcase, she is wearing a black classic Chanel suit with red stilettos. She looks nervous. Tat'uNqetho walks in circles, continuing to blow the smoke of incense. Khaya stops, looks around nervously.

KHAYA

They are here, tata.

TAT'UNQETHO

Follow me ntombazane.

Khaya obliges but as she walks she keeps bumping to the other people on stage. She runs to her Gogo, but gogo doesn't pay attention. She goes over to Sabatha, also continues with what he's doing. The intention is that she sees them but they don't see her, they're not there.

KHAYA

Makhulu... you're dead, what are you doing here?

(moves to Sabatha)

Sabatha... Why are you here? Who's with Mbali?

(moves to Ingrid)

I told you not to come, no one is allowed here.

(moves to Diliza)

Stop stalking me...

Then she just looks at the gossipers, scoffs.

TAT'UNQETHO

I said follow me.

Khaya obliges but she's confused by what she sees. Tat'uNqetho moves to the door of the hut. Khaya runs to him.

TAT'UNQETHO

Shoes off...

LIGHTS OUT

INT. TAT'UNQETHO'S HOUSE - KHAYA'S HUT - EVENING

Khaya's by her altar burning incense and softly muttering a chant/prayer to the ancestors. The audience cannot hear what she says. The song plays again - Gogo ndicel'Iyeza... Khaya then takes the incense, opens her suitcase, takes out her clothes one by one, all gorgeous outfits, designer looking outfits, she blows the incense into her clothes. Taking each outfit one by one...

LIGHTS OUT

INT. TAT'UNQETHO'S HOUSE - KHAYA'S HUT

TAT'UNQETHO's now sitting by the altar, Khaya's kneeling on the side. Khaya's clothes still all over the place. Tat'uNqetho's crushing some muti - leaf with a small stone. As he crushes there's singing of the song 'VUMA VUMA' in the background. The song begins softly and then grows and grows. It unsettles Khaya but it seems she's the only one who hears it. Tat'uNqetho continues crushing the leaves and putting them in a bucket with water.

KHAYA

They are still here tata... they haven't gone away...

TAT'UNQETHO

They are here to protect you mntanami.

KHAYA

But their voices tata... they are sad, their singing is sad. They say bad things...

TAT'UNQETHO

Your thoughts are bad my child... but your ancestors are here to protect you.

KHAYA

I've let so many people down tata...
my daughter, my fiancée, my family,
my grandmother, everyone...

TAT'UNQETHO
Stop complaining child and do what
needs to be done.

KHAYA
How tata...? How do I fix this? They
are here to punish me, to remind
me... that's what they say...

TAT'UNQETHO
Your ancestors are here to talk to
you... allow them...

KHAYA
There's too many voices, I don't know
what to make of them.
beat, hopeful)
My lawyer says it could help in
court... it will help her prove that
I lost my mind.

TAT'UNQETHO
You haven't lost your mind. You are
here so we can make you fit for the
court tomorrow. Your lawyer should've
been here too.

KHAYA
She wouldn't understand these things
tata...

The singing grows louder. Khaya tries
to block it by closing her ears with
her hands. Tat'uNqetho does his
sangoma chant as he continues mixes
mutis. A cellphone rings.

Silence. Singing stops, Khaya and
Tat'uNqetho stop. Only the cellphone
sound rings.

TAT'UNQETHO
Switch it off.

KHAYA
It could be Ingrid... she...

TAT'UNQETHO
Switch it off...

KHAYA
Ingrid's my lawyer...

TAT'UNQETHO
Khaya, the reason you have all these problems it's because you never listened.

Beat. Khaya re-considers, switches
cellphone off.

TAT'UNQETHO
You must know that you're not alone now Khaya. You no longer belong to yourself... izinyanya own you... you are not here by mistake.

KHAYA
I let them down. I beat up a doctor...

TAT'UNQETHO
You acted out of anger...

KHAYA
Ingrid says it was shock. That's what she will argue in court.
(beat)
She's in a coma, tata... the doctor, she's in a coma, all because of me.

TAT'UNQETHO
All because you never finished the course of your calling... you left things half-way. You started questioning things...

KHAYA
I was never brought up that way, my grandmother was a Christian...

TAT'UNQETHO
Your grandmother is your ancestor now, she wanted you to honour your calling...

KHAYA

So, she punished me because I couldn't finish?

TAT'UNQETHO

That's why things are going wrong in your life... You didn't finish.

KHAYA

All I wanted was to have a baby, a little brother for Mbali but all the ancestors gave me was HIV...

TAT'UNQETHO

(snaps)

Do not speak ill of the ancestors, they'd never do no such thing.

KHAYA

Then why tata? Why am I'm facing an assault charge now? It could even be a murder charge if Dr Winslow doesn't survive. I beat her up... just because she told me I'm positive... I beat her up. What was that tata? What got into me then? My ancestors... where were they? Why didn't they stop me... protect me? Why? Why?

TAT'UNQETHO

You question too much mntanam. I told you long time ago... never to questions.

KHAYA

All I wanted was a baby, a little brother for Mbali, a son for Sabatha...

Tat'uNqetho pushes the muti-bucket to Khaya.

TAT'UNQETHO

Here... go wash outside...

KHAYA

Are they punishing me?

TAT'UNQETHO

Go!!!

LIGHTS OUT

INT. FIELD OUTSIDE TAT'UNQETHO'S
HOUSE

The stage is dark except from the light hitting the silhouette screen. The singing of 'VUMA VUMA' is back, much clearer but softer. As the singing continues, behind a silhouette screen, Khaya pours the muti all over her body. As the last drop of water hits her body, a figure comes onto the stage, an old woman - GOGO NOMATEBHE, now the singing grows louder. Gogo Nomatebhe is also singing but not as loud as the voices from off-stage. Gogo Nomatebhe settles at a stool by the hut, facing at a distance. The singing continues, Khaya from behind the silhouette is even more unsettled than before. Pulls on her gown and wears it... comes around the screen onto the stage. The singing grows louder, she doesn't want to acknowledge it. Singing grows louder. Khaya shakes her head, grabs the bucket tighter as if it's her armour against an enemy about to attack her. She moves from one corner to the other, pacing, her pacing grows faster as the singing grows louder, she shakes her head trying to 'take out the voices' in there. But the singing doesn't stop. Khaya can't take it anymore...

KHAYA

(screams out loud)

Stop! Stop! Stop! I'm not dead yet!

I'm alive, I'm alive!

The singing stops. Lights up. Long silence. Khaya looks around, trying to listen carefully as if not believing that the singing has stopped. Finally, she is relieved - the singing has stopped. She begins making her way towards the hut but stops when she spots Gogo Nomatebhe. Her heart nearly stops, falls onto her knees.

KHAYA

Ma... makhulu... what are you doing here?

Gogo Nomatebhe doesn't respond, she starts humming the song 'VUMA VUMA', still looking at a distance. Khaya tries to get up but her knees are shaking, her legs can't carry her.

KHAYA

You can't be here makhulu... you're dead. I only burned impempho to call your spirit to be with me... not you in person...

She starts crawling towards Gogo Nomatebhe, slowly.

KHAYA

You've come to take me with you, is that it? Oh, I know... you've come to stop them... the voices... they keep laughing at me makhulu, mocking me...

Still Gogo Nomatebhe is looking at a distance, not saying a word, only humming the song. Then a big laughter (ukughwebula) is heard, Khaya crawls faster to huddle next to Gogo Nomatebhe, she stays by her feet. The laughing is much louder... she holds on to the old woman for dear life.

KHAYA

Shut up! Shut up!

The laughter stops. Khaya's relieved but it is short-lived. Two Women walk on stage, outside the hut, carrying inyandas (firewood) on their heads. It's MaDlamini and MaModise, the Village Gossips, they are laughing so hard, bepansana (**giving each other hi-fives**).

KHAYA

Anti MaDlamini...

The women continue laughing, not acknowledging her presence, it's like they don't see her.

KHAYA

Anti MaModise...

turns to the old woman)

Makhulu... please stop them...

She realizes they can't hear her, she's imagining all this. She runs to the hut, tries to open the door but it doesn't open. She flops on the floor, helpless...

MADLAMINI

Thee MaModise ntombi you missed out... it was a ceremony and a half. Yhoo, I've never seen so many people, you could swear she was now a real sangoma. I ate so much meat I thought I was going to turn into a goat myself.

MAMODISE

(righteously)

I don't eat unholy meat.

MADLAMINI

Wee uyosala like that ke ntombi, me I eat all meat. Holy, unholy, halaal, no halaal... if it's meat and it's free, I eat.

MAMODISE

Wuu, Pastor Nkosi will be so disappointed to hear a mkhokheli of his church speak like that.

MADLAMINI

Well, he didn't seem disappointed when I saw him... he was there himsalofu.

MAMODISE

Hayi bo, you lie! Uyaxoka MaDlamini!

MADLAMINI

He blessed the ceremony...

MAMODISE

Pastor Nkosi blessed a demon ceremony...?

MADLAMINI

He had a Bible and a prayer book in hand...

MAMODISE

(disappointed)

Shwele Thixo... liyabhubha.

MADLAMINI

He said he was doing it because of gogo uNomatebhe, because she was a woman of God and Khaya is her grandchild. And because he's a man of God, a man of God never turns down an opportunity to come share a word of God with people who haven't seen the light... but then he also shared the meat with the people who haven't seen the light...

MAMODISE

(in disbelief)

Hayi ded'apha wena. Pastor Nkosi ate unholy meat?

MADLAMINI

Oh yes he did but he hid himself behind a certain corner but me... and my sharp eyes, I saw him and I made sure that he sees that I see him. He nearly choked ntombi... I said hallelujah tata', he said 'Amen Mkhokheli'... I told him not to worry, I won't tell... I said gwinya baba, swallow, I even passed him the calabash of mqombothi (African beer) to wash it down. I told him I said 'baba, we all fall to sin once in a while that's why we go to church and beat our Bibles as hard as ever asking for God's forgiveness'.

MAMODISE

Thyini MaDlamini, how can you say that to a Pastor?

MADLAMINI

Iyho, if I didn't he would have said it to me. I would be his sermon next Sunday about how people call Jesus, Jesus but at night go and slaughter chickens and goat whilst burning impepho. Haa, who wants that humiliation in front of the congregation... I had to make sure I cover for myself first.

MAMODISE

Iyhoo! Libhubhile izwe (it's the world's demise), Pastors eat unholy meat... gog'uNomatebhe must be turning in her grave watching in disgust of what was happening in her own house.

MADLAMINI

They it is Gog'Nomatebhe's spirit that wanted the ceremony.

MaModise scoffs at this.

MADLAMINI

Nyani! It started with the feet, they say.

MAMODISE

The feet...?

The following dialogue is played between Khaya and the gossipers but Khaya talks to the old woman. MaDlamini and MaModise talk to each other.

MADLAMINI

UKhaya, her feet got swollen nje out of nowhere...

KHAYA

A heathen... that's what they called me, maybe they are right makhulu, you never slaughtered even a chicken. We were a Christian family... but then my feet...

MADLAMINI

... she couldn't walk, she couldn't move, she even had to quit her job.

MAMODISE

With all that money she has, she should've afforded the best doctors...

KHAYA

... the doctors couldn't find what the problem was, it drove me crazy makhulu, I started driving my fiancée crazy...

MADLAMINI

Poor girl, all that high education degree turned into ashes... her fiancée had to look after her.

MAMODISE

Poor Gog'Nomatebhe, all your teachings gone to waste. I heard that the doctors told her they have to operate.

MADLAMINI

Oh, she refused... a doctor's knife on my beautiful feet she said. Maybe that English man she married wanted her to have beautiful feet...

MAMODISE

(disgusted)
Men...!

KHAYA

Sabatha is loving and adorable... Even then makhulu, he loved me...

MAMODISE

They don't like swollen feet! It's ugly.

KHAYA

Swollen feet and all...

MADLAMINI

They say even the specialists she went to couldn't help... they put her in this machine and that machine, they said this and that and gave her this pill and that pill but the feet were still swollen. The Englishman was getting frustrated he was running

out of doctors to send her to and fast running out of money to pay for the specialists...

KHAYA

Tat'omncinci (uncle) uZibuse suggested I see Tat'uNqetho...

MAMODISE

Tat'uNqetho... that priest cum sangoma cum inyanga cum igqirha cum igqwirha cum everything...

KHAYA

I'm sorry makhulu, I had to do something... my feet were getting worse...

MADLAMINI

He was very helpful, he told Khaya, she has a calling... her late grandmother's spirit is sitting on her calling her to do the job of her ancestors.

KHAYA

I never wanted to believe it makhulu but my feet...

MAMODISE

UNomatebhe's spirit is sitting on her? That Nomatebhe who never slaughtered even a chicken in her house, that woman of God who spent her life bringing people to Jesus... Shwele Thixo.

MADLAMINI

You never know what happens in the after life MaModise.

KHAYA

I never knew a thing about slaughtering, sangomas and ancestors... I had to learn fast. So did Sabatha...

MAMODISE

Now she's a sangoma...?

MADLAMINI

No, she's a thwasa...

KHAYA

Sabatha was not in touch with his African roots, which made me love him... you would've loved him too makhulu. Since I grew up in a Christian family, and he grew up in a white neighborhood in England... we had one thing in common... we were both not in touch with our African roots...

MADLAMINI

The girl is not a qualified sangoma yet but on the way there. The ceremony was just to let her ancestors know she's bowing to their demands.

MAMODISE

Just because of swollen feet.

MADLAMINI

Tat'uNqetho put her under a hard training they say...

KHAYA

I was nervous, Sabatha just followed my lead the first day we went to Tat'Nqetho's house. You should've seen him makhulu, when we had to take our shoes off before entering Tat'Nqetho's house, 'it's like the holy place in the Bible, remember Moses? I said to him... he grinned and obliged.

MAMODISE

And the Englishman was by her side?

MADLAMINI

All the way? They say she bewitched him. Umdonsa ngekhala. (**she drags him by the nose**).

MaDlamini and MaModise do their laughter again.

KHAYA

I didn't care what people said,
Sabatha was there with me... sniffing
and coughing as we sat squashed
together on a grass mat engulfed by a
cloud of Tat'uNqetho's impepho,
watching carefully as he flung his
whisks from side to side.

MAMODISE

A girl who grew up with a Bible in
hand now wears inyongo...

KHAYA

I had to pretend like I know what I
was doing makhulu, I shouted
'siyavuma' louder to cover Sabatha's
coughing, I didn't want Tat'uNqetho
feeling like my fiancée was disgusted
by this practise especially after he
was already unimpressed that my
husband-to-be could not hear one word
of Xhosa...

MAMODISE

Bubugwirha bonke obu! (**This is all
witchcraft!**)

KHAYA

At that moment, for the first time
ever since I met Sabatha, I wished he
could know my language...

MAMODISE

Ihee... hee... hee... Iyoh! Ntombi...
all that expensive degree that
Nomatebhe sacrificed so much for is
now turned to ashes of burning
impepho...

MADLAMINI

They say when you get a calling you
can't refuse it...

KHAYA

They say when you get a calling you
can't deny it...

MAMODISE

That does not make sense MaDlamini
ntombi. That child has turned into
nothing but a heathen.

MaDlamini and MaModise laugh as they exit.

KHAYA

They don't know how much Sabatha sacrificed, how much I sacrificed... Sabatha sat and listened attentively to Tat'uNqetho, by the corner of the eye I could see his eyes were full of amazement as he looked around this room and saw all these bottles...

Khaya picks up imaginary bottles, one by one. She speaks as if talking to them, touching them intimately.

KHAYA

They were different shapes and sizes, makhulu. They had muddy, slimy and even sticky liquid inside, Sabatha was confused... He never ran but he grabbed my hand as he spotted a python skin hanging above us, and a dead bird hanging in the corner amongst dried gall-bladder sacs. His heart nearly stopped but he stayed with me. He loved me, he loves me... he loved as we inhaled burning muti from Tat'uNqetho's calabash, both sniffing, sneezing and coughing as Tat'uNqetho read the bones... telling me my ancestors, that you makhulu... that you want me to help people, be a sangoma.

Gog'Nomatebhe gets up, starts humming her song, walks slowly. Khaya follows her, they walk around the stage as if performing a ritual to remove demons.

KHAYA

Makhulu... where are you going? Don't leave me... they will come back... I know I did things you never believed in... but I had to... my feet, they were swollen... I quit my job, Sabatha never questioned, I needed money to buy this goat, that sheep, this chicken and that cow to slaughter, he never said anything but gave to me. I did it for you

makhulu... I didn't like it but I had to. I hated you for making my feet swell so I could hid to the calling...

Gog'Nomatebhe stops, Khaya stops too.

KHAYA

But most of all I hated the fact that the whole of Mvutyana knew what was going on in my life... especially MaDlamini and MaModise...

More laughter from off-stage from MaDlamini and MaModise. Khaya wants to stop it but it continues. She follows the old woman back to the original place, by the hut.

KHAYA

I had to be alright, for Sabatha, for my beautiful Mbali, my daughter... I can't leave them, I can't be away from them... I had to stop, I couldn't do it anymore... I can't be away from Sabatha... not again, not anymore...

She continues till she breaks down and cries...

LIGHTS OUT

EXT. TAT'UNQETHO'S HOUSE - DOORWAY IN KHAYA'S HUT

Gog'Nomatebhe's back on her stoel. Khaya's crumpled on the ground centre stage, sniffing. Two women are now besides her, sitting on chairs, dressed stylishly as university students would dress, with their nice handbags. It's NANDI and TSEKI (**same actresses playing MaModise and MaDlamini**). Tseki is filing her nails and Nandi has a make-up pouch, is busy titivating herself.

TSEKI

Tears don't suit you my friend...

KHAYA
Go away!

TSEKI
Not without you... this is one party
you are not going to miss.

They pull her to her feet and take
out a fresh outfit then dress her.
She's not interested but she knows
better not to fight them.

NANDI
Just cause a black English man dumped
you...

KHAYA
He didn't dump me... his parents
wanted him back in England.

TSEKI
And he didn't offer to take you
with... Mhmmm?

KHAYA
He loves me... he told me that.

NANDI
He also told you not to wait for him,
right?

KHAYA
He was the perfect man to take home
to umakhulu... she'd have loved him.

Khaya cries. Tseki takes out a rolled
dagga, lights it up.

TSEKI
Lucky for you, you've got us. We love
you more.

She puffs and passes to Khaya, she
shakes her head - no, Nandi grabs it
and puffs.

TSEKI
You see girls, no man should ever
make you lose your beauty... did you
forget why you came here.

KHAYA

I came here to get my degree.

NANDI

Well ntombi, if you go on like this you won't get that degree and I won't get the degree either. You know we've missed two assignments already?

KHAYA

Nandi, it's time you wrote your assignments yourself. I don't care about anything right now.

NANDI

You should... I'm not failing just cause you were dumped.

KHAYA

I wasn't dumped, he had to go back home.

NANDI

(mockingly)

And he is going to send you a ticket to join him in England...

Tseki and Nandi burst out laughing.
Khaya is hurt, she grabs the dagga
that's been passed around and smokes.

KHAYA

It wasn't supposed to be like this,
he loved me, he said...

TSEKI

You know what you need, you need to
have some fun...

KHAYA

Sabatha was my fun...

NANDI

Now he's fun in England, you need to
find new fun now.

TSEKI

You need a pill.

NANDI

A rebound pill...

TSEKI

Something that sizzles...

NANDI

Something to kick out your misery...

TSEKI

Something to bring the spark in
you...

NANDI

Something to bring back the va va
vroom...

TSEKI

Something temporal...

NANDI

Something new...

TSEKI

Something fresh...

NANDI

Something wild but sweet...

NANDI

You need a Berocca!

KHAYA

A what?

TSEKI

A rebound pill that will cure you out
of misery.

NANDI

A rebound pill that bounces you
back...

TSEKI

You just need to loosen up, trust me,
I know...

KHAYA

But you're always on a rebound Tseki.

TSEKI

And that's why I'm never frustrated,
never lock myself up in my room
crying over a man and missing my
lectures.

KHAYA

So why have you been doing first year
for the past three years if you don't
miss lectures?

TSEKI

I haven't found the right career yet,
I need to search a little.
(beat, naughtily)
Just like I search hard to find the
right man.

NANDI

Listen to her, she knows what she's
talking about.

KHAYA

Okay, okay, I'm listening... so I
need a pill.

TSEKI

Not just any pill, but a pill to make
you happy all day, all night...

KHAYA

I'm not going to do drugs, Tseki.

KHAYA

I'm not going to do drugs.

NANDI

Who said anything about drugs, you
farm girl? We said a Berocca!! It's a
vitamin... but in this case a male
vitamin...

TSEKI

Like you see on TV... you dissolve
it, it sizzles and you bounce back...
and wa-la... your vuma-vuma...

KHAYA

What?

TSEKI

Just sit back and relax and let sisi
Tseki help you.

They put her on the chair and begin
applying make-up on her.

TSEKI

Tonite when we get to the party...
you loosen up...

NANDI

Forget Sabatha ever existed... look
sexy...

TSEKI

Don't say no to any drink offers...

NANDI

And keep smiling...

TSEKI

And keep dancing... not just any
dance...

NANDI

A sexy dance...

A blast of a kwaito song plays
loudly... 'TSIKI TSIKI' by Mdu
Masilela. The girls gyrate to the
song. After a while the music comes
down... Khaya, now more happier takes
centre stage.

KHAYA

Two weeks later, Tseki, Nandi and I
were the most famous girls in local
clubs, in varsity bashes and every
other bash in town.

Music up. They dance once more. MUZI
(actor who played Tat'uNqetho, now
dressed like a varsity student)
enters, joins in the dancing. Muzi
dances with Khaya till music dies
down again.

KHAYA

I got more attention from every
hottie on campus, single ones and
those with girlfriends... soon I had
girl enemies... Tseki always defended
me...

TSEKI

(shout off to an unseen girl)

Hey, you keep your man on a tight leash... it's not our problem he's loose.

The trio laughs. Tseki pulls Khaya off Muzi.

TSEKI
Khaya, Khaya, Khaya... what are you doing with campus boys? They are losers.

NANDI
Ha-a wena leave her alone, they are a right choice to be a Berocca. You want her to go with one of your sugar-daddies?

TSEKI
At least with sugar-daddies you don't have floozies hating you, calling you bitch.

NANDI
You have their wives hating you.

TSEKI
They don't even know me and sugar-daddies come with the perks.

KHAYA
Just shut up you two, you told me to loosen up but these Beroccas you're on about... none of them can ever make me forget Sabatha...

Music goes up again. More dancing. Tseki and Nandi dance their way out of the stage. Muzi and Khaya now left alone.

KHAYA
And that is how I met Muzi. I liked his lips, he loved mine, he had these red-piercing eyes... they spoke to me, I loosened up...

Khaya dances with Muzi, with dagga spiff in hand and a bottle of beer as well. It is a sexy dance.

KHAYA

Muzi and I danced together for the whole night at one party... he smoked...

(offers her a smoke, she accepts)

I smoked... he drank...

(takes sip from his drink)

I drank... and danced some more.

Soon, Sabatha was faint memory...

The music stops.

LIGHTS OUT

EXT. FIELD OUTSIDE TAT'UNQETHO'S HOUSE

Behind the silhouette, it's Muzi and an actress (Nandi/Tseki - now playing Khaya). They are entangled in an intimate embrace.

In front of the silhouette is Khaya, hearing the voices.

NANDI (NOW AS KHAYA)

(holds her head)

My head... what have I done?

MUZI

You had fun baby... we had fun...

NANDI (NOW AS KHAYA)

(ashamed)

Dear God... I had a one-night stand with a Berocca...

LIGHTS OUT

EXT. FIELD OUTSIDE TAT'UNQETHO'S HOUSE

Muzi and Nandi still behind the silhouette. Khaya still on the ground, watching the action behind the curtain. She hears them but they don't hear her as she relays her thoughts.

MUZI

I think you should stop saying I'm a Berocca now... it's been a month...

KHAYA

At least I was honest about what I needed from him. And he was generous...

NANDI (NOW KHAYA)

That long, huh?

Muzi and Nandi kiss, passionately.

KHAYA

And he was good, I'm now back to being me...I attend my lectures, help Nandi with assignments and do my own, and forgot about the black English man, well, not totally but I wasn't weeping anymore. Nandi was happy for me and for the assignments she was passing, Tseki was proud... I was no longer crying for a man... I had a Be... Muzi...

Behind the silhouette, the kissing stops.

MUZI

Listen babes...

NANDI (NOW KHAYA)

Ja...

MUZI

I got something to tell you...

Nandi (as Khaya) behind silhouette takes poses interpreting what the real Khaya says.

KHAYA

We are having a conversation...? Muzi and I never talked... and I liked it that way... But now he wants to talk...

NANDI (NOW KHAYA)

Yes, babes...

MUZI

Babes, we've been together for a month now.

KHAYA

I hope he's not planning a one month anniversary...

NANDI (NOW KHAYA)

You said that a minute ago.

MUZI

It's been good babes, it's been great.

NANDI (NOW KHAYA)

Ja, babes... it's been great...

MUZI

Then let's not spoil it...

NANDI (NOW KHAYA)

What?

MUZI

Don't get all worked up, babes... I'm just saying, I mean, I know you women, you get someone, get good sex and the next thing poof...

NANDI (NOW KHAYA)

I'm pregnant...

MUZI

I mean damn... who said I wanted to be a father? You got to get rid of it.

NANDI (NOW KHAYA)

What? What right do you have to tell me that? It's my body, you can't tell me what to do, if you don't want it, I can do this on my own...

MUZI

Sure, then... good, do it then, forget about me... nine months go by next thing...

NANDI (NOW KHAYA)

I'm close to giving birth, it's a boy... you got to give your son a name...

MUZI

A-ha, where's doing it all alone?

NANDI (NOW KHAYA)

Okay, you don't want to... I won't beg. Then six months later...

NANDI (NOW KHAYA)

Here you go...

Nandi gives Muzi an envelope. He scans it.

MUZI

Court summons? You're suing me for maintenance? What bullshit is this?

KHAYA

What bullshit was he telling me? I asked.

MUZI

I'm sorry babes... it's just that my mom called last night telling me summons arrived at home... I'm sued for maintenance.

NANDI (NOW KHAYA)

You have a child?

MUZI

I have seven... But you are on a pill, right, babes?

NANDI (NOW KHAYA)

(not very convincing)

Yeah, sure.

LIGHTS OUT

EXT. MVUTYANA VILLAGE

Khaya walking towards her grandmother's house. She walks slowly, not enthusiastic at all,

dragging her suitcase. She puts it down, sits on top of it.

KHAYA

I should've been on a pill... Nandi and Tseki never told me Beroccas could do this.

MaDlamini and MaModise laughter is heard, it's close. Khaya quickly picks up her suitcase rushes to go but it's too late. MaDlamini and MaModise have already seen her.

MADLAMINI

We MaModise... uyangibonisa yini? Isn't that gog'uNomatebhe's favourite grandchild?

MAMODISE

Hayi wuye nenqotho zakhe. It is her... hau, since when is she so fat?

Khaya stops, but her back is towards thew gossipers. MaDlamini and MaModise stop but to get a better view of Khaya.

KHAYA

Yes, I had gained weight... yes, I succumbed to the cravings, yes, the campus nurse had confirmed my worst fear...

(beat, musters politeness, turns to the gossipers)
Molweni bo anti. Ninjani bethunana?

MADLAMINI

Yhuu! Yhuu! Yhuu! We can ask you the same question, Khaya, ntombi.

KHAYA

Well... I'm fine, I'm doing great.

MAMODISE

Of course you are ntombi... look at you. What are they feeding you in that nyuvesi?

KHAYA

Right that moment I wished my morning sickness could attack... so I could puke all over them.

(beat)

Nothing anti. I'm just happy.

MADLAMINI

Oh, yes you must be. Kalokhu when you left here you were sticks mathambo.

MAMODISE

And look at her legs, MaDlamini... polished and smooth... you've become such a flower...

MADLAMINI

A blossoming flower ntombi...

MAMODISE

Oh I see, you eat chicken lickens over there and kentucky's...

MADLAMINI

I hope you're not finishing your grandmother's pennies wasting them on buying ice-cream... that woman lives for you.

KHAYA

I know aunty, I know...

MAMODISE

Look at you... your face, it's polished and smooth like a ripe fruit... mmmmm, still no mkhwenyana (husband)... I'm sure gogo can do with some relief...

KHAYA

No, nothing aunty...

MADLAMINI

But soon, right? With you looking like this, I'm sure a rich, educated guy will snatch you up so soon gogo won't have to spend her pension on you anymore.

MAMODISE

My girl, let me give you advise about men... they will do nothing for you. Only thing they want is...

MaModise makes a sexual gesture.

MADLAMINI

Hayi MaModise, this is a child... innocent...

MAMODISE

That's exactly who they want, the innocent... especially these nebethols (nothings) from here in Mvutyana. I'm sure your gogo expects you to get someone in your level...

MADLAMINI

We expect that too... not these nonentities of Mvutyana. You are our flower, my girl, our hope in this village... you will make us shine... leyimpuqumpu here will do nothing for you.

MAMODISE

Hayi, let's not keep you ntombi... I'm sure your gogo is waiting anxiously for you.

They leave, with their usual laughter.

KHAYA

(to the old woman)

I shouldn't have answered Rhee's phone-call... I should've ignored it. After all she's only a friend from the village... I had new friends now... besides, you never liked her makhulu, you always said there's something about her, something that didn't sit right with you... but she was my friend...

Behind the silhouette one of the actresses now play Rhee, she has a phone conversation with Khaya.

KHAYA

Hello...

RHEE

Wera friend fre...

KHAYA

Rhee...

RHEE

Good news my friend... my father is throwing me a big party this December. A huge 'coming of age' party... umemulo...

KHAYA

Oh?

RHEE

And you are invited.

KHAYA

Rhee, you know in my family doesn't believe in these things...

RHEE

You just say it's a 21st birthday. Your grandmother won't have a problem with a 21st birthday, right?

KHAYA

I guess.

RHEE

So, she doesn't have to know about you being part of the ancestral thing then... okay?

KHAYA

You want me to lie to umakhulu?

RHEE

For me friend frie... imagine how nice it'll be you and I and other girls, in our traditional attires, singing and dancing, showing off what we've got.

KHAYA

Rhee... I never told you this but I'm no longer a virgin.

RHEE

Neither am I. I think that's why my father is rushing this umemulo, he has seen the change in me, I can see he suspects someone has messed with his daughter. But my boobs still look perky. How are yours?

Khaya checks her boobs.

KHAYA
Full...

RHEE
Good. You're going to be one of my izimpelesi friend fre... it's going to be nice.

The phone goes dead.

KHAYA
I wanted to tell you makhulu, I truly did. I wanted to say, I'm pregnant makhulu and the father of the child doesn't know about it.
(beat)
After all he had seven other kids... he didn't need number eight. I was relieved when MaModise and MaDlamini didn't notice I was pregnant, those two don't miss anything. If they did notice, the whole village would've known then you would've been a laughing stalk... I didn't want that. I was happy that you were happy to see me, and when my results came a week later, you were ecstatic and made an announcement at church that your mzikulu passed her first year... you were proud,

They all ululate on stage and then start a church song.

Everyone rejoiced, gogo mentioned, she's struggling to put enough money together for my second year... the church agreed to do a collection, and trust me, our church knew how to make

a collection... the previous year, they bought our pastor a car to thank him for being such a great man. There were more celebrations and gogo was relieved she will get help with the fees... the flower of the village will shine again.

(beat)

That was the worst December holidays of my life... I wasn't me, I was pretending all the time, covering up, I even pretended to be having period pains... just so that everything is normal, the only pains I had were of a guilt conscience. I had to grin and smile when one day I went to get milk at the shops... and there he was, my high school boyfriend... leaning on the walls of the shops, with his friends... smoking... 'merry Christmas, he said. I looked up... it was him, Diliza, still chewing the 'Zulu motto' he loved so much, the same 'Zulu motto' he bought for me to tell me how he loved me. I knew it was the 'Zulu motto' because of the sound it made when he grinded it with his teeth. I tried to ignore him but he continued... 'hey, when a person says 'merry Christmas' you say 'same to you' - what do they teach you in that university of yours, he asked. 'Merry Christamas' I said, sourly and rushed off, I was followed by a long, drawn laughter from Diliza and his friends. 'Losers' I thought, just like MaDlamini and MaModise said, they don't deserve me. But who did? Sabatha? Who left me after he had enough of the African experience? My Berocca with seven kids and mine is eighth? Well, he's no longer my Berocca anymore, anyway... when I got home with the bottle of milk. Rhee was there, chatting to my grandmother... 'hau, why didn't you tell me, gogo asked. Tell you what gogo? That Rhee has invited you to help them with the Christmas songs this weekend at their church. I was

stunned, Rhee had a huge smile on her face that said, aren't you proud of me? She already lied to gogo and she believed her. I wanted to say no gogo, it's umemulo and I know you won't want me to do that. Instead gogo, said... you go child, I'm glad you still connect with your old friends. It's not good to forget your old friends just cause you go to big universities... you go my child and do God's work. God's work, no! I screamed silently but Rhee already pulled me away to go help me pack. And soon we were on our way to her home.

(beat)

I wanted to tell gogo, Rhee lied, I knew that if she found out what is really going on, she would have made me stop being friends with Rhee and right now I wanted that so much. I didn't not want to be friends with her right now, being friends with her costs me to go to her umemulo, where I have to expose my pregnant body in front of the whole village, people might notice my secret, they will start talking. Soon, it wouldn't be seeing gogo Nomatebhe's granddaughter at umemulo but it would be gogo uNomatebhe's pregnant granddaughter... I don't want to go but Rhee has lied and who am I to take her up on lying to gogo when I am a bigger fraud. Rhee looked at me again with a big proud grin... 'wasn't that just clever friend fre...', I had no choice but to say... 'you're genius my friend fre...'. A genius, Rhee quipped with a perplexed look on her face, I see that English man is teaching you big dictionary words and he's keeping you beautiful, look at you, you're a sbutubutwana like a ripe peach'. Oh, not again, I thought... not another person calling me a ripe peach, can't I be an apple or a granadilla. I want to be a granadilla, a granadilla that

no one cares about, that's invisible to everyone's eyes. Yet, I failed to tell Rhee I was no longer with the 'black English man' like my friend Nandi would say... how could I? How could I tell her about the Berocca with seven children and the eighth one on the way which he has no clue about.

THIS IS WHERE SECOND DRAFT ENDS
my 'Oreo' that's what I called him - white inside, dark on the outside... and he called me 'pumpkin'. Mhmmm... I loved it when he called me pumpkin, the first time he said that I called my friend Rhee back home in our little village of Mvutyana...

A modern prison cell, a chair in the middle, two bunk beds on the side. On the wall, there's newspaper clippings with various headlines 'Patient beats doctor to coma', 'Crazy patient beats doctor for HIV diagnosis', 'Doctor in coma... Patient jailed'. KHAYA, is sitting on the chair writing fast on a note-pad on her hand, there's a few squashed papers scattered on the floor. Outside the bars, INGRID, is standing watching with an anxious look on her face.

After a while, Khaya, tears off a page, squashes it and throws it on the floor.

INGRID
So, black Chanel suit and red Nine West stilettos...

KHAYA
On second thoughts, not the red ones... I don't have them anymore.

INGRID
Oh...?

KHAYA
The police took them, for forensic investigation... they said.

INGRID

Of course, how can I forget? The shoe was the assault weapon... so, which ones should I get?

KHAYA
Black... black suit and black shoes.
Perfect colour for mourning...

INGRID
Well...

KHAYA
Well, what?

INGRID
I wouldn't go for stilettos this time.

KHAYA
Why?

INGRID
We're going to apply for bail, you wearing stilettos would draw no sympathy for you.

KHAYA
Stilettos are the only shoes I own.

INGRID
What size are you?

KHAYA
A six. Why?

INGRID
Perfect, I'm a six too.

KHAYA
Forget it. I'm not wearing your stuffy, granny shoes.

INGRID
I don't think you have a choice right now.

KHAYA
I'll walk barefoot to court.

INGRID
Then they'll declare you mad.

INGRID
I have beautiful black court shoes.

KHAYA
(sarcastic)
Court shoes... perfect. Just perfect.

Khaya goes back to her note-pad and writes again. After a while she tears the paper, squashes it again and throws it on the floor.

INGRID
Are you ever going to finish writing one letter?

KHAYA
Not with you standing there, staring at me... it's... I can't think...
(beat)
Stop staring...

INGRID
Maybe I should come back tomorrow.

KHAYA
No! I want Sabatha to have this letter today.

INGRID
He will be in court tomorrow, you can give it to him then... who knows, maybe they'll grant us bail and you can be on your way home.

KHAYA
Who's us? I'm the one seeking bail, not you, you're just a lawyer... a tool to help me get bail... nothing more. I'm in this alone... all alone...

Silence.

INGRID
Maybe you should call him and say everything on his face.

KHAYA

No! I told you... he can't see me like this, looking like yesterday's left-over breakfast.

(beat)

How's he looking?

INGRID

What?

KHAYA

You see him all the time. Does he still shave every morning, does he still look smooth, are his shirts still crisply ironed and does he still have that fresh smell with a touch of minty scent? Are his teeth still have that sparkle each time he smiles?

INGRID

Are you asking me to check-out your fiancée?

KHAYA

Oh please...every woman who has eyes, single or married can't help but check-out Sabatha.

(beat)

So...?

INGRID

Definitely not like left-over breakfast.

Silence. Khaya attempts the writing again but she stops.

KHAYA

We have a maid, you know... I taught her everything... how to cook Sabatha's dinner, how to iron his shirts... just like I used to, she had to learn how to make his coffee... strong with a dash of milk, hot milk, no sugar, she even learned how to fold his socks and hang his ties. I made sure my Sabatha always looked good.

INGRID

The maid made him look good.

KHAYA

I'm a modern wife-to-be, I don't do,
I instruct...

INGRID

Then I'm sure the maid still
remembers the instructions...

KHAYA

I should be there with him and Mbali,
Mbali needs her mother, who is waking
her up for school, who's driving her
to ballet classes and tennis
practice... this is wrong.

INGRID

You've only been here for a short-
while, I'm sure they are coping.

KHAYA

A short-while is a long time when
you're a wife and a mother? Are you a
wife and a mother Ingrid?

INGRID

No. Not yet.

KHAYA

Then we're talking a different
language. What if I'm here for the
rest of my life?

INGRID

Well, let's focus on one thing
first... getting you bail. I'm sure
the judge will be lenient, you've
never had a criminal record before...
not even a traffic fine.

KHAYA

That's course I've only had my
driver's licence for three months...
Sabatha's always driven us
everywhere.

INGRID

Well, that helps.

Silence. Khaya stares at the note-pad
then back at Ingrid.

KHAYA

How does it feel, Ingrid? Being my lawyer?

INGRID

What?

KHAYA

C'mon, every lawyer in town wanted this case... I'm famous, look, look... my name made all the headlines...

Khaya jumps and points at the newspaper clippings hung on the wall.

KHAYA

'Patient beats doctor to a coma', Crazy patient nearly kills doctor for HIV diagnosis' and how about this one... 'Doctor in coma... Patient jailed'... and each and every one of these your name is mentioned... Mdhuli's lawyer, Ingrid Patel says her client is remorseful about the incident but we don't feel a jail sentence could blah blah blah... I never said I was remorseful Ingrid... NEVER!

Silence. Khaya goes back to writing the letter, she scribbles on vigorously.

INGRID

You sure you know what to say now?

KHAYA

Will I ever know what to say to my family?

She tears the page, squashes it and throws on the floor.

LIGHTS OUT:

SCENE 2: VISITOR'S ROOM

A table with two benches on opposite sides sits on centre stage, on stage left and stage right there are two

huts facing opposite each other, one with a grass mat and the other with a stool.

By the table Khaya, sits, still wearing her Chanel suit. Ingrid, slowly places seven different pill containers/bottles.

KHAYA

You are going to be very proud of me.

INGRID

I see you woke up early and waited for me.

KHAYA

No that... we wake up very early in this place and I hardly sleep anyway.
(points at the letters)
Look... I finally wrote it.

INGRID

Sabatha will be in court today.
You'll give it to him yourself.

KHAYA

No! I told him he can't see me like this.

INGRID

I brought your Chanel suit. He helped me find it.

KHAYA

You went through my closet.

INGRID

That's where the suit was.

KHAYA

You went to my closet in my bedroom... no one's been up there except Sabatha and I... and Mbali.

INGRID

It is a nice bedroom.

KHAYA

It is a sacred place... no one goes to my bedroom, it's my space, Sabatha's and I's sanctuary.

INGRID

You didn't tell me that when you asked me to get the suit.

KHAYA

I didn't have to. Sabatha should have.

INGRID

Well, he didn't. What's the big deal.

KHAYA

(snaps)

It is a big deal... strangers just don't walk into other people's bedrooms... that's how it is, that's how it's ever been. He shouldn't have allowed you in our bedroom... he knows I hate it, he knows it's against my beliefs, it's our sacred place... now it's not sacred anymore. It's ruined, everything is ruined... he should have got it himself.

Khaya breaks down and cries, crumpling on the floor. Ingrid is not sure what to do, after a while she helps her up.

INGRID

We need to get to court, you need to change... if we're late, the judge will not have any mercy on you...

KHAYA

I leave home for a short-while, just a short-while and everything about me is out... forgotten, kicked out, wiped out... it only took a short-while...

INGRID

I'm sorry, so sorry... if I knew...

KHAYA

He knew... Sabatha knew...

INGRID

He didn't think then... he's also going through a hard time.

INGRID

Why you? He's never made a mistake like this before. Why you? Why now?

INGRID

We haven't got much time Khaya.

Ingrid pulls her up.

KHAYA

Maybe I don't need bail, maybe I need to stay here, Sabatha's already forgotten about me.

INGRID

No! We are going to that court... you are not going to do this to me. I will dress you myself and drag you there if I have to... do you have any idea how you're needed back home.

(beat)

That little girl, Mbali... when I walk in she looked behind me as if someone was following me. She was hoping it's you... her mother. How do you think she felt when I said, I needed to get a suit... your Chanel suit. And that man, that sweet man... he's breaking, trying to avoid questions, silent ones and verbal ones from curious people, relatives, friends and work colleagues... then he comes home and has to be brave for Mbali when she keeps asking when 'mommy's coming home'... And what do you think the newspapers will say and do to you when you don't pitch in court. They are waiting there like vultures for a snap, a comment but no, you want to sit in your 'little haven' and feel like you've been done wrong? No, Khaya... you do not get to feel like a victim, not when you have people on your side, that little girl and that sweet man... you will be in that court today.

Silence. Ingrid undresses Khaya and puts on her Chanel suit.

LIGHTS OUT

INT. VISITOR'S ROOM

On the table, there's seven bottles of pills, all open and there's a roll of toilet paper. In the background, MaModise and MaDlamini (we don't see them yet) are singing the song 'VUMA VUMA', Khaya is sitting on the bench by the table facing the audience. She carefully un-rolls the toilet paper, takes one piece and carefully places it on the table, she does this again and again and again, carefully placing them on the table. She stops, looks around, then takes one bottle of pills, takes out a tablet and places it in one piece of toilet paper she had just placed on the table, she moves to the next bottle, does the same till she has seven pieces of toilet paper each with a pill on top of it. The song in the background grows louder, Khaya starts moving to it's sound as she hums but then she stops as if remembering something, she gets angry.

KHAYA

(screams)

Stop! Stop! Stop! I'm not dead yet!

I'm alive! I'm alive!

The song is cut abruptly.

KHAYA

I've got these... one orange pill, two white ones, one orange and red capsule, two green ones and a pink one... I like this pink one, I chew it, it's like a sweet... it's sweet, it makes my mouth sweet, I feel sweet... it makes my life sweet...

She chews the pink pill.

KHAYA

(sings, as she chews)

Vuma, vuma, vuma, vuma, vuma, vuma,
usindiswe... vuma, vuma, vuma, vuma,
vuma, vuma usi...

MaModise and MaDlamini enter the stage from the huts on opposite sides, they join in singing the song. After a few beats of singing...

KHAYA

(screams)

Shut up! I said shut up!

MaModise and MaDlamini freeze.

KHAYA

I'm the only one who is allowed to sing... I'm not dead yet, I'm alive!

(beat, smiles)

My grandmother's favourite song, she sang it all the time... when happy, angry or sad... no, not when sad, she was never sad. Angry - yes, happy - most of the time but never sad. Even when my grandfather died, she was never sad, she sang this very same song with that beautiful smile on her lips, neighbors, relatives, friends and enemies came to mourn with us but they were the only ones mourning, my grandmother was smiling and singing 'vuma vuma' as always like nothing had happened. They prayed, they shared words of comfort with us, they shared Bible verses with us but all gogo did was smile and say Malimbela was in a better place. Malimbela, my grandfather... is in a better place? But how do we know my grandfather is in a better place, I thought. I wouldn't dare ask gogo cause it would be disrespectful to disturb a woman sitting on a mourning mattress, with a candle burning beside her but she is smiling, I thought. What kind of mourning is that? Then she started singing...

(sings)

'Vuma vuma, vuma, vuma, vuma, vuma...
(stops)

I hate that song. It says vuma that you're in a better place when you die... but how do we know? And I know what the Bible says but the Bible also says there's also hell... what better place can that be?

(takes a pill)

That's why I have this... I won't die, I shouldn't die, I don't want to die, I can't die... I have to live, I need to live... for Mbali...

She swallows the pill.

KHAYA

Take 7 of these, everyday at 7am and 7pm without fail, time is everything, default is a death-sentence and soon they will be singing 'vuma vuma' on me...

MaModise and MaDlamini look at her with judgement in their eyes.

KHAYA

I will be fine... I have to be, Sabatha got me these... mhmmm... Neviropine... they told Sabatha I needed it just in case I get pregnant, mhmm, pregnant? I might spend my life in jail but...just in case I want to have a baby... that's what they said and he never questioned it, maybe he's a embarrassed, maybe he's been humiliated enough he no longer wants to question. In case I want to get pregnant, Sabatha knows he'll never have unprotected sex with me, if ever we do have sex again ever... he sends Neviropine, just in case I get pregnant... he said they told him. There's always the chance you may forget the condom - negligence, it may burst - carelessness or maybe there's so much passion, wanting,

needing of each other's bodies that
there's no place for a condom...

She glances at MaDlamini and
MaModise.

KHAYA

(to the gossipers)

Ja, say it... I brought it to myself,
I was old enough to know about AIDS,
I was educated enough... a brought-up
well girl, knowledgable enough,
clever enough, smart, intelligent...
I should have known better, if you
know better you don't make mistakes,
stupid mistakes...

(beat, to herself)

I knew better, I made a mistake, a
love mistake, a passion mistake, I
should have known better... yet I was
stupid, consumed by love, by
passion.. like my grandmother always
said, a girl does not sit with her
legs opened, I should have kept them
closed forever...

MaDlamini starts a 'traditional
sangoma song and dances to it'
(Ngangingabizwanga,
ngabon'ukulandela). She starts slowly
and gradually gets to it, grows
louder and louder as she does the
'sangoma dance' then she beats the
tin by the hut as a drum as she
dances. Khaya does the 'sangoma
drumming' on the table.

Khaya excitedly mimes dialing a
phone. MaDlamini (now playing Rhee)
in one of the huts picks up.

KHAYA

Wera Rhee, my friend...

RHEE

Khaya my friend is that you? I
thought you'd forget us the minute
you step into the gates of the
university.

KHAYA

I can forget everyone else but not you my friend... my friend you should be here, university is fun, you'd love it.

RHEE

Haa wena, I wouldn't, I repeated matric twice till I gave up... people like me don't do university... so, what is the fun. The big books?

KHAYA

Ja... that and also you meet new people, fun people...

RHEE

(curious)

Jaa...

KHAYA

I've met a someone Rhee, he is so beautiful...

RHEE

Hayi wena, a man is never beautiful... handsome yes, but not beautiful, I may have failed matric but that I know.

KHAYA

Well, this one is... his name is Sabatha and he only speaks English.

RHEE

Yhoo ntombi, you went to university and the first thing you did is get yourself a man, a white man?

KHAYA

Not white, he's black like us but speaks English, you see he grew up in England...

RHEE

And what about Diliza here back home?

KHAYA

Sabatha calls me pumpkin.

RHEE

Diliza still thinks you're coming back to him. He's even got a new job in Sugar Bush Supermarket, he told me he's saving to pay lobola for you.

KHAYA

Hayi suka, Diliza would never afford lobola.

RHEE

Well, that's why he's found a job.

KHAYA

Rhee, who's side are you on my friend? Sabatha calls me 'pumpkin'... what does Diliza call me except standing by the corner by the supermarket and whistling at me.

RHEE

So, you love a man who calls you 'pumpkin' - he calls you food Khaya.

KHAYA

Yes... but in an affectionate way.

RHEE

A what way?

KHAYA

He even has an accent. The English accent. His English sounds different than the one Mr Harris from Sugar Bush speaks... it has an accent, I love it.

RHEE

Ihhee... what has this man done to you? You don't sound like yourself.

KHAYA

I don't know... maybe I've picked up his accent. I call him 'oreo' - he's white inside and black outside, it's cute.

RHEE

Hee?

KHAYA

Rhee my friend, I have to go... I have a date, he's taking me out to a sushi bar, I don't even know what sushi is but he said I'll enjoy it... I wish you were here my friend, you'd be so happy for me And if you see Diliza, tell him to forget about me. I eat sushi now, not the little 'zulu mottos' he used to buy me - no. Bye friend fre...!

Khaya ends the call, Rhee is left puzzled.

LIGHTS OUT

Scene 2: VISITOR'S ROOM

Khaya takes out letters, quite a few of them, smiles as she spreads them across the table. Just then Ingrid enters, carrying a suit-cover and a box of shoes.

KHAYA
What are these for?

INGRID
Your ARVs. Sabatha brought them to court.

KHAYA
I don't want them.

INGRID
If you allowed him to visit, you would tell him that yourself.

KHAYA
Then you tell him.

INGRID
That... I will not do.

KHAYA
Don't I have to do tests before I take these?

INGRID
Sabatha said that would take time... he organized to get these, he was

worried the stress will make you weak.

Silence.

INGRID

You take these an hour after breakfast and an hour after dinner.

KHAYA

I can read Ingrid, I'm sure there's instructions on the bottles.

INGRID

I have to tell you, Sabatha insisted I do.

KHAYA

You pass on his messages but you can't pass mine... I'm your client here, not him.

INGRID

(ignores her comment)

You take two D4Ts, two Bactrims, one Centrum...

KHAYA

He refused me bail.

INGRID

... one 3TCS, two of these multi-vitamins, Sabatha says they're not part of the medication...

KHAYA

The judge is using me as an example.

INGRID

... but you need them. And there's Neviropine, Sabatha is not sure why they gave him this cause you're not pregnant but they said... they will boost your immune system, he said...

KHAYA

He wanted to send out a message out there...

INGRID

Sabatha is worried what they'll be feeding you in here... he said to tell you to eat...

KHAYA

I'm an example...

INGRID

He said never take these on an empty stomach.

KHAYA

You think I'll make headlines tomorrow?

INGRID

I'm sure they'll write something on the bail hearing.

KHAYA

And you will make a comment.

INGRID

They will approach me - yes. You want anything specific for me to say?

KHAYA

Yes... tell them, I'm still me... I haven't changed, I may be an example but I'm still me...

Silence.

wanted to do tests... she thought it would be a good idea, since I've been ill for quite some time... it would a good idea that I do a full check-up, a physical, blood tests and everything... I agreed, after all Sabatha was excited, I was excited for him... blood was drawn, I was put through every check-up Dr Winslow thought was necessary... then... a few days later, she called me in... Sabatha is out of town, I said, maybe we should wait. Dr Winslow insisted, I come on my own. I did. I went there on my own... I walked in her offices, no hugs... Dr Winslow who loved hugging and blowing kisses at me, suddenly she was serious almost stern and a glint of concern on her face.

She tries to master a smile... a hesitant one, I thought... I smiled back as she ushered me to a seat. I sat, she sat... and immediately engrossed herself in paperwork in front of her... is my womb ready, doctor, I asked. She looked up at me, grinned at me... first things first, she said, something came up from your tests. My heart skipped a beat, I can't give Sabatha a child, I thought. Is my womb damages, deformed, my eggs weak, I asked. None of that, she said then with a face full of sadness... she said it, in one short sentence she gave me my verdict... 'I'm sorry Khaya, you are HIV positive'. My mind froze, I could feel it turning into ice, I felt the crackling of that ice coming down my neck, to my chest down to my waist, I held tight to my stomach but the freezing didn't stop, it went down my groin area to my hips, my thighs, my legs till it locked my ankles and stiffened my feet... I felt dead but my eyes could see. I saw Dr Winslow talking, I couldn't hear but I saw her lips moving, her fingers paging through the paperwork, the same paperwork that contained my verdict, suddenly I felt hot all over, my body tensed up, my mind had bad thoughts, what is this? This can't be, it has to be a lie... now I could hear Dr Winslow, saying something about having to do blood tests, put me on medication and that I should take some time to think this over but have to inform Sabatha, he is your fiancée after all and we encourage honesty to partners especially now that you two plan to marry and have a child... he has to know? Now my hands were itching, I was angry, angry I was there, angry for being me, angry at her for being a doctor and for discovering my verdict... something came over me, suddenly I jumped, leaped off my chair and grabbed her

by the throat and strangled her yet I was still sitting watching my body doing that... I guess my spirit was still sitting on that chair contemplating my future but my body was all over her, kicking her, screaming at her, swearing... grabbed the little stethoscope hanging on her neck and bashed her with it till blood came oozing out her forehead, I didn't stop... I didn't stop, I wanted to but I didn't... then I remembered I had the perfect tool, my shoes, my Nine West stilettos, I snatched it off my foot and banged her more as I screamed even more... I didn't stop, I wanted to but I didn't... till the secretary came rushing in and shoved me off Dr Winslow... are you mad, the secretary screamed at me as I coiled to the corner, crying thinking, now I'm HIV positive and mad...

Silence.

KHAYA

I wrote letters last night... seven letters... one to Sabatha, one for Mbali, one for Diliza, my high school boyfriend... the other three to ex-boyfriends and the last one for Mbali's father... I don't even know where he is in these four corners of the world, and that is a long, long letter...

INGRID

Mbali's not Sabatha's child.

KHAYA

Not biological. Mbali was a product of me and my university Berocca.

INGRID

A what...?

Khaya, now fully dressed, gets up.

KHAYA

It was after a month of weeping and not attending lectures after Sabatha left the country to go back to England. His adoptive parents felt he's had enough of the African experience. I never cried like that in my life, I swore it was the last time I cried for a man and yes, I can proudly say... I never did cry for any man after that, though my eyes would burn sometimes itching to shed a tear when I got betrayed or hurt but I kept to my promise.

(beat)

But getting back to the Berocca, I was hurting, sad, Sabatha, my love had left... I couldn't even see him off at the airport, there was no promise that we would see each other again... he just had to go back to England, like his parents wanted, to start his life. I locked myself in my room, crying, went from one toilet paper roll to the next, sniffing and crying, forgot about lectures, forgot about my friends, forgot about food, forgot about life, forgot to live... till my two best friends came to the rescue. Tseki and Nandi, they banged on my door till I couldn't ignore them. When they came in, they found me looking like a shadow of myself...

MaDlamini and MaModise play Tseki and Nandi now.

She answers the phone.

MaDlamini and MaModise start singing a song... 'ubab'otho angemule, he ha he... ngiyasesab'isidwaba'. They sing and do the traditional dance, Khaya reluctantly joins in. The singing fades down.

KHAYA

This was a group of girls at 3 in the morning walking down to the river, as

per custom... Rhee told me, as her 'izimpelesis we had to go and bath in the river. Thank goodness it's summer, I thought and thank goodness it's dark, I won't have to be naked in front of everyone... in case someone notices. These rural girls have a sharp eye, nothing misses them. One obstacles overcome, I sighed. I joined in the fun... the girls loved this, it was my first experience... coming from a Christian family, I was clueless and Rhee was eager to teach me, she took pride in it.

They sing even more, the same 'umemulo' song. The song fades down.

KHAYA

At the river it was like I'm with Nandi and Tseki again. The girls were laughing and the talk was all about boys as we dipped ourselves in the cold waters of the river. Some were congratulating Rhee, saying after this she has the licence to have a boyfriend. She already has a man, says another, phela I know what happens when you go to the barracks Rhee. More laughter... I gathered through the girly talk, the giggling and the laughing that Rhee had found herself a nice policeman, new in the area and he lives in the police barracks just outside our village. 'But I'm still a virgin' Rhee said laughing... that comment was booed from all-round... 'well, I'm not a mother to any illegitimate child... that makes me a virgin in my father's eyes'... more laughter. I felt like an outsider, I joined in the laughing but my face wasn't laughing... I thanked God again for the darkness, no one will see how much of shame I had all over my face. Even Rhee is having sex... 'why did I have to go and get pregnant, now everyone will know I'm no longer a virgin. These

girls will always be virgins in their parent's eyes, except me'. An hour went by of this girl-talk, hopes of getting the right man and marrying him were shared, hopes of motherhood... I was quiet, quiet till... 'and how are the educated city boys Khaya? Asked one girl. Suddenly, there was silence... I looked around, I could only see shadows, the dawn was starting to crack, I couldn't see the faces but I could see there was people, I couldn't see their eyes but I felt them on me... I was naked, I realized, will they see, will they notice... everyone was waiting for me to answer, silence... more silence... only sound was of the water running over the rocks, I looked around again... someone must talk but only a bird chirped and I could hear a rooster cockerel in the distance. Someone must say something... they're waiting for me, I realized... I laughed, a nervous laugh but they interpreted it as a girlish giggle. Huu ntombi, did we remind you of someone? Said another. That moment a glimpse of memory came flushing to me, I saw Sabatha, the tender moments I spent with him. 'Tell them Khaya my friend fre... tell them you have an English man' - 'what'? They all screamed in unison... 'yes, she does'... continued Rhee, 'he calls her pumpkin'... he's black but grew up in England' 'Oh, like those exile people...' said another. 'No, this was has white parents' Rhee proudly corrected. 'Black but with white parents, kanti what happens in the cities'. 'Tell them Khaya, his parents got him from black parents... why am I telling your story Khaya? You tell them. 'You've told them all there is to tell Rhee, I said lamely. 'He can't speak one Zulu word... only English' More laughter, this time it was not girly but questioning mixed

with curious. 'How is he going to pay lobola ntombi... in English' more laughter... that moment I got out of water, how do I tell them Sabatha will not be paying any lobola, that he won't be calling me 'pumpkin' anymore. I wanted to tell them but I couldn't, I wanted to come clean but I couldn't... the lie continued. I've never hated being Rhee's friend like I did at that moment.

The 'umemulo' song is sung again, the girls dancing.

KHAYA

This was Rhee's day... all eyes were on her, I was glad... I was invisible. We wore our short cow-hide skirts, hung lots of beads around our necks, our breasts exposed, everyone commented about my boobs... silently with their looks and some verbally. I even got a compliment... 'I wish I had perky and full boobs like yours' said one woman, married and with children. 'Oh, my child enjoy them whilst they're still there... once you have these... she said as she pointed to one of her children... 'all hangs loose'. Suddenly I looked at my breasts, not thinking of who notices them but imagined them hanging loose and it wasn't a pretty sight. My thoughts were interrupted as Rhee's father proudly stepped out to the centre stage of the yard, did a robust celebratory dance, called out to his ancestors and praised his daughter. Told everyone Rhee was a good girl, never gave him headaches, he was sure he will make a nice, young man proud to be his wife one day. He stated as he glanced towards the young man standing on one side... that whoever wants his daughter must be ready to pay, Rhee is intombi nto (**real virgin**), and he will charge as much as Rhee is worth' How do we lie to our parents, I thought... but who

was I to judge, I'm the biggest liar
in this place right now.

More singing of the 'umemulo' song.
They dance till...

LIGHTS OUT:

INT. VISITOR'S ROOM

Ingrid paces, glances at her watch...
paces again. She looks around, sits,
gets up and paces again. Finally,
Khaya appears.

KHAYA
I was hoping you'll give up and
leave.

INGRID
This is no time to play games.

KHAYA
These days, I don't like visitors.

INGRID
I'm not a visitor... I'm your lawyer.

KHAYA
Especially... you.

Silence. Ingrid takes out his note-
book and pen... she settles.

INGRID
They've set your court date.

KHAYA
Aah...

INGRID
I think I've got a strategy, a way to
make the judge have sympathy on you.

KHAYA
Is Dr Winslow still in a coma?

INGRID
She's recovered... still in ICU but
not dead. Which is good... at least
you're not up for murder.

KHAYA
(sad)
I nearly killed her.

INGRID
We'll argue temporal insanity.

KHAYA
I was not thinking...

INGRID
Right. I've gathered a few
psychologists who can verify how
stress and shock can drive one insane
momentarily.

KHAYA
I was angry...

INGRID
And stressed...

KHAYA
She said sorry... you're HIV
positive, I wanted to ask her what
she was sorry about.

INGRID
Sabatha and I were talking... we
decided that I also raise how close
you were to Dr Winslow.

KHAYA
I was the one who had AIDS... why did
she have to say sorry.

INGRID
You were friends with Dr Winslow,
right? You did meet for coffee and
you invited her over for dinner at
your house with her husband, right?

KHAYA
Sorry wasn't going to change things.

INGRID
Khaya, are you okay?

KHAYA
I had a dream last night. At first I
thought it was a nightmare cause I

woke up with a sweat but when I went back to sleep... it came back again, that's when I realized it was just a dream.

INGRID

Can we talk about the case? Sabatha will want to know if you're ready for it.

KHAYA

In the dream... it was my grandmother, she was beautiful...

INGRID

Are you sure you're fine?

KHAYA

Smiling like she used to... I was sad but not her, she never was sad, she didn't know how but she could be angry... and in the dream, she was very angry and she had a sjambok...

INGRID

Khaya... are you eating the food I bring?

KHAYA

I never saw such a big sjambok in my life...

INGRID

Sabatha and I... we feel you need to eat well, that's why we send good food to you...

KHAYA

She hit me... my grandmother never hit me whilst she was alive, shouted at me - yes but never hit me...

INGRID

Are you taking your pills?

KHAYA

I tried to stop her but I couldn't, I kept thinking how can such an old, frail woman overpower me but she did... I tried to scream but I had no voice to scream... I ask for

forgiveness but my voice failed me...
she never uttered a word, she only
hit me till my body could not move...

INGRID
You had a nightmare.

KHAYA
It was a dream... I woke up tired,
I'm tired Ingrid... I have no more
strength...

INGRID
You're not giving up?

KHAYA
The little ounce of strength I had,
my grandmother finished it... with a
sjambok...

INGRID
You can't... for yourself, your
daughter, she misses you, she wants
you back home... you know she prays
for you...

KHAYA
I pray for her too.

INGRID
She keeps the two ceramic ducks you
bought for her... she prays next to
them.

KHAYA
I'm tired...

INGRID
Don't you want to be out of here? Be
with her?

KHAYA
Maybe I'm better off here. Not even
my friends care to visit me
anymore...

INGRID
They were told you never wanted
visitors.

KHAYA

Not even a phonecall...

INGRID
Sabatha and I think you should forget
about them.

KHAYA
Ingrid...

INGRID
Ja...

KHAYA
What's this 'Sabatha and I'?

INGRID
What?

KHAYA
You heard me. Is there something I
need to know.

INGRID
Khaya please...

Khaya grabs Ingrid's both hands.

KHAYA
First you went to my bedroom, my
sacred space...

INGRID
Khaya stop being childish...

KHAYA
Now it's 'Sabatha and I', 'Sabatha
and I'...

INGRID
What are you talking about?

KHAYA
There's only one person who says
'Sabatha and I'... that's me... only.

INGRID
You're suspicious for nothing.

KHAYA
I may be tired but I won't be
forgotten... not that easily Ingrid.

INGRID
I talk to him all the time...on your
behalf...

KHAYA
What do you talk about?

INGRID
About you... the case.

KHAYA
What else do you talk about?

INGRID
That's about it.

KHAYA
Does he cry on your shoulder and
regret ever meeting me?

INGRID
You're being paranoid.

KHAYA
Did he tell you our plans for the
future?

INGRID
We never get personal.

KHAYA
Does he tell you we had big plans...
for us, Mbali, our new baby... that
we never got to conceive... did he
tell you the big wedding we were
going to have and our honeymoon in
the Caribbean? We were even going to
build and decorate our house... we
already bought a plot, you know...
now that's a 'Sabatha and I'...

INGRID
I'm sorry... I'll never say those
words again...

KHAYA
There's that word again - sorry - you
see, I'm sorry too that there'll be
no baby, no big wedding, no honeymoon
in the Caribbean... I'm even sorry, I
won't get to live in that house we

were planning to build and decorate... we even had pictures, you see... art collection from all Sabatha and I's travels... our 'top billing house' I called it... you know why I called it that, Ingrid?

INGRID

No.

KHAYA

Because it was going to be on Top Billing, one Thursday night on SABC 3... it would even feature in their magazine... Top Billing magazine, that costs R24,95 and only a few can afford it let alone understand it.

Khaya sits on top of the table,
strikes a pose.

KHAYA

This would be me... on my couch next to Ursula Stapelfeldt... or even better... next to Michael Mol... on the cover and everyone will want to buy that magazine cause they saw my house the previous Thursday night... when Michael Mol describes the location they are at, which is my house... 'Surprise and intrigue are the first things that spring to mind when you walk to Sabatha and Khaya Larson's humble home

(acts as presenter)

The Larson's home is a picture of natural and modern engineering with the touch of African and Eastern touches which expresses their lifestyles...

(back to self)

Then 'Sabatha and I' would appear from upstairs down our cascading stairs, Michael Mol would look up at us smiling as he leans against our large hand-crafted wooden table. As we come down, he would continue...

(back to presenting)

The stone-tile is gratifying, and the concrete and stone give skin to the

walls of this absorbing design with a depth that gives a cinematic feel touched by a little splash and dash of the greenery which enhances the lifestyle of the Larsons...

(back to self)

By the time he finishes that, Sabatha and I will already be standing right next to Michael Mol with big smiles plastered on our faces as we move to sit on our long overly-cushioned couch where our little poodle is lying comfortably... now that's my 'top-billing house', Sabatha and I dreamt of... not me sitting on this bench, behind these dreary walls, watching you as you feel pity for me...

INGRID

I think I should come back tomorrow...

LIGHTS OUT

INT. PRISON CELL

Khaya is sitting on the chair,
staring in space.

KHAYA

I never said goodbye to my grandmother... after Rhee's umemulo, it was Christmas and New Year's day... people celebrated, I was at home, out of choice, I was still trying to make my growing belly invisible... no one noticed, not my grandmother, not my friends, relatives, not even MaDlamini and MaModise... but just before midnight on New Year's Eve... there was a knock at home, my grandmother's house... we opened and there he was... Diliza! I wanted to be angry but then he could be there cause his mother sent him to my grandmother, I thought. But I was irritated... 'gogo' he said... 'you have a beautiful daughter', he's a bit

tipsy, I noticed... 'not only beautiful but educated too, she'll make us proud here, make you proud, me proud, everybody proud. Gogo and I just sat there silently not knowing how to respond... 'happy New Year' he said, 'that's all I came to say'... with that, he was out the door leaving gogo and I pondering. By twelve midnight gogo prayed, I mumbled then we slept. Days after that went slowly but I was proud of myself when the holidays were over and no one noticed I was pregnant. They noticed I got fat but not pregnant. I was excited to go see my friends Nandi and Tseki again, I was excited I was going to be away from Mvutyana... back on campus Nandi was there but no Tseki... she failed and her parents got tired of paying for her career-finding mission again. It was an adjustment but soon we moved on, I moved on too... buried myself in books and forgot about Berocca, thankfully he also didn't come back... didn't know the reason and didn't care. My belly was growing, I started visiting the nurse on campus, I accepted the fact that I was going to be a mother... we'll figure it out, said Nandi, like she knew what she was talking about. I even met Thabo, the nerd... he worked at the library and I spent all my time there, studying, we ended up studying together, he was an accounting genius, I was struggling and he helped me... well, helped me in every way. Thabo and I got close, so close we spent nights on each other's rooms on alternative nights. He didn't mind my growing belly, I thought, he never asked, I never explained. It was our silent arrangement. Then one night after studying with Thabo, the call came... a call from Mvutyana...

MaModise and MaDlamini start a funeral song. 'Vuma vuma'.

KHAYA

That song again... I hated it as I sat there on the mattress mourning my dead grandmother and hating that everyone who came to say goodbye to her left with a story to tell. 'Did you see her granddaughter, she came back pregnant', that's what they talked about as they left the house, they didn't talk about the pain and sadness the family was going through for losing gogo. I hated them for that, I hated that gogo died and I had to be exposed, I hated myself for being pregnant. The day of the funeral came... I was numb from the stares and whispering around me but my heart was sore... sore that I never had time to tell gogo of my secret, now it's for everyone to talk about but not her... I never had a chance to be by her deathbed and confess my sins...

The funeral song again.

KHAYA

After the funeral, as people walked off to eat the prepared food... I sat by the kraal facing the backyard of the house, staring at the direction where my gogo's grave was... then I had a voice...

MADLAMINI

I paid R200, you know...

KHAYA

I didn't look up, I knew it was MaDlamini...

MADLAMINI

I thought you know, I respect gogo Nomatebhe... she's a good woman of God and I was hoping you'll be the beam of light in Mvutyana and be a role model to our children... so I took my last R200 and I paid when they made collection for you to go back to university...

KHAYA

You want me to pay it back aunty?

MADLAMINI

Ihee... don't be rude child. Will you pay each and every person in this village who contributed. Anyway, it was my ten percent to God... I'm blessed

KHAYA

I'm sorry...

MADLAMINI

I'm not the one you should be apologizing to... that woman lying there, you should have apologized to her... you know she saved every cent of her pension for you...

KHAYA

I know... I was going to tell her.

MADLAMINI

Mhmmm... too late... I hope the father of that child will at least pay lobola. Then maybe Gogo would be happy where she is.

MaDlamini walks off.

KHAYA

With that she was gone. She was right, I thought... gogo saved her pension ever since I can remember. She spent very little... I used to go with her to the supermarket in town where she got her pension, it was a distance but walking with gogo... we never felt the distance. I even missed school just to go with her to get her pension and she would buy a chicken, a frozen chicken and we would have roast that evening. On our walks she always told me how she was saving for me... told me there was life out there for me to see but I needed education, higher education she used to say... gogo invested for me and now this is how I thank her.
(beat)

I sat there till the sun came down... when it was dark, I approached gogo's grave. I didn't know what to say... we never spoke to the dead in my family... but I had to do this... 'gogo, it's me... Khaya, I shouldn't be doing this gogo cause this not what you taught me, you never spoke to the dead but gogo this is exceptional, right now you don't feel dead to me, gogo I made a mistake, I should have come back with a degree but I'm with child... but I promise you gogo I will bring back that degree, I will make you proud, you won't feel you wasted your money on me.

(beat)

And that's exactly what I did. The following day I went back to varsity, buried myself in books I didn't even know I was in labour till my water broke. Nandi was beside me, we caught a cab to hospital, she paid with her money... I had nothing for the baby but to my surprise, Nandi bought a few cheap clothes and a day later before I was discharged Tseki arrived, bubbly as ever, she was like mother Christmas, she had loads of goodies for the baby... told us she has a job as a receptionist at her sugar-daddy's company and her salary does not reflect a mere receptionist. We were happy to see her, it was our little re-union, I had a baby girl... I named her Mbali... flower. That's what I was supposed to be in Mvutyana, a flower... a beam of hope. And yes, I went back to Mvutyana, my uncle and his wife accepted my fatherless illegitimate child... 'I'm doing this for your grandmother' said uncle, 'I know she wouldn't have thrown this baby away'. I was grateful someone was going to take care of Mbali whilst I finish my studies even though he reminded me every minute when I called that I should hasten up my studies, he won't

be feeding this fatherless illegitimate child forever. My second year results were excellent I even got myself a bursary for my last year, I was glad that I won't have to owe everyone one who put their last cents on the collection bowl for my last year. I was happy the company offered me a part-time job whilst studying, so when I graduated I had a position in the company as a junior auditor. I dated a few guys but nothing serious, I was a mother now, I had to behave like one, I thought. When Mbali turned two years old I fetched her from my uncles house and stayed with her in my rented townhouse. A year later I was promoted... thanks to BEE, I was now junior manager. I travelled a lot, I hired a maid, I had car-allowance, I started with my driving lessons... then one day sitting at a restaurant with Nandi, who was still moving from one job to the next and with Tseki, still an overly-paid receptionist... there he was, sitting at a table opposite ours with a few guys. I froze... but my lips moved... 'Sabatha'... I whispered... Tseki and Nandi were confused, I pointed to where he was, they turned, he noticed, he was also shocked, he approached, I smiled...

MaDlamini and MaModise now play Nandi and Tseki.

TSEKI

Drop that smile right now ntombi, he doesn't deserve it.

NANDI

Don't look so available.

KHAYA

But I am available, I thought. He was here, right in front of me... I pinched myself, was I dreaming but I wasn't, he was here, hugging me... we

held each other for long. Till Tseki cleared his throat... Sabatha greeted my friends, told us he is back working for a British bank which is buying a few companies in the country, I couldn't speak, I just listened, he gave me his number, asked for mine... I didn't even hear that... Tseki intervened and took the number for me. And then he said it 'hope to see you soon, pumpkin'. He still remembers, my heart skipped two beats as I watched him walking away to join his friends, I'm still his pumpkin, I said to myself quietly...

TSEKI
He has no right to call you 'pumpkin'.

KHAYA
He's still my 'oreo' too.

NANDI
Shame ntombi, he hurt you.

TSEKI
He dumped you.

NANDI
He left you high and dry.

TSEKI
The snob.

NANDI
No phone call, no nothing.

TSEKI
Not even a lousy e-mail.

NANDI
Who does he think he is?

TSEKI
Remember the time you were miserable because of him.

NANDI
Remember those tears, who was there for you? Not him...

TSEKI/NANDI

But Berocca...!

TSEKI

Does he really think you'll just take him back?

Silence.

KHAYA

Two weeks later I was in Sabatha's arms... I was his 'pumpkin' again and he was my 'oreo' and this time it's for real, he told me. Tseki and Nandi had no choice but to warm up to him and they did... especially when he proposed.

Tseki and Nandi start ululating.

Khaya stretches out her ring finger.

TSEKI

How many carats, ntombi?

KHAYA

I don't know, all I know is that it's a diamond and it's on my finger.

NANDI

And I'm the maid of honour.

TSEKI

No, I am... you're the bridesmaid...

NANDI

No, I am... I said it first.

TSEKI

Don't be selfish Nandi, maid of honour is the closest thing for me to being a bride... being 'makhwapheni' (**mistress**) there's no hope I'll ever be a bride.

KHAYA

Okay... I'll have two maid of honours. It's going to be a big wedding...

NANDI

A huge one... better than Princess Diana's.

TSEKI

Is it going to be in England?

KHAYA

We haven't discussed that.

NANDI

Tell us soon ntombi, I need to apply for passport.

TSEKI/NANDI

We're going to have an English wedding... we're going to have an English wedding...

Tseki and Nandi chant as they move off.

KHAYA

Sabatha paid full lobola, he didn't mind that I had a daughter... in fact him and Mbali got along so well. My uncle was happy that my illegitimate child was no longer fatherless. 'You did good mshana', he said as he gobbled the last sip of brandy that Sabatha bought for him. 'I always knew that you'll find the right man... he may be too white for my liking but he's a good man', he said lifting the brandy bottle and pouring another double tot. 'You, you were born for greater things and this man is it', he said proudly. I was happy he was happy, I wasn't sure if it was the brandy talking or him but I was happy. 'I'm keeping a bull in the kraal, a big fat one... it will only be slaughtered for your wedding' he continued. My uncle felt like a king that day, I felt like a princess and people of Mvutyana treated me like royalty. They were proud of me again, I was no longer the cheap girl who went to university and came back pregnant, I was now 'gogo Nomatebhe's granddaughter who is marrying a black English man', Sabatha was not only my

fiancee, he was a fiancee to everyone at Mvutiyana. Even Diliza was happy for me, in his own way... 'I knew it... I saw it... I knew you'll forget me' he said, 'but you found the right one, I mean I drive a truck at Sugar Bush, he's big businessmen, I live with my mother, he lives in the city doing city things, we were not meant for each other'. I thought that was sweet... 'happy valentines' he said. What? It's not the fourteenth of February, I said to him. 'I know', he said slowly, 'but when you love someone and you marry them it must always be happy valentines' with that he walked away. As for MaDlamini and MaModise... they had a lot to say...

Tseki and Nandi are now MaDlamini and MaModise.

MADLAMINI

You must never forget us ntombi when you live over the seas.

MAMODISE

Impela... don't forget your uncle, I mean the man looked after your fatherless child.

KHAYA

Now he has a father.

MADLAMINI

Mhmmm... stepfather, but anyway who cares... even MaModise here, he has choice assorted...

MAMODISE

Hayi bo...!

MADLAMINI

Hayi wena MaModise everybody knows. Anyway Khaya is a grown up now, she will understand... phela all MaModise's children have different fathers, all six of them.

MAMODISE

She's right you know... at least your fatherless child has a father now... not those nonentities who left me each time I got pregnant... you are lucky to have a man who takes you with mistakes and all.

MADLAMINI

Very lucky, I must add. I think it's your grandmother...

KHAYA

My grandmother?

MADLAMINI

She has blessed you with the right man... wherever she is.

MAMODISE

Hayi wena MaDlamini stop teaching the girl heathen mentality. I think it's God... He always had a plan for you.

MADLAMINI

Anyway... congratulations ntombi and do not disappoint us in those foreign countries... you must respect your husband...

MAMODISE

Cook for him...

MADLAMINI

Iron his clothes...

MAMODISE

Tell him, he's your king everyday.

MADLAMINI

Make him your king everyday.

MAMODISE

And make sure he gets everything he wants.

MADLAMINI

Even in the bedroom.

MADLAMINI

Especially in the bedroom.

They laugh as they walk off.

LIGHTS OUT

INT. VISITOR'S ROOM

Khaya is going through her pills...

On the table, there's seven bottles of pills, all open and there's a roll of toilet paper. In the background, MaModise and MaDlamini are singing the song 'VUMA VUMA', Khaya is sitting on the bench by the table facing the audience. She carefully un-rolls the toilet paper, takes one piece and carefully places it on the table, she does this again and again and again, carefully placing them on the table. She stops, looks around, then takes one bottle of pills, takes out a tablet and places it in one piece of toilet paper she had just placed on the table, she moves to the next bottle, does the same till she has seven pieces of toilet paper each with a pill on top of it. The song in the background grows louder, Khaya starts moving to it's sound as she hums.

KHAYA

Sabatha wanted to get married soon, I took time... months passed then a year, people in Mvutiyana started asking... 'kanti when is this wedding', I didn't care I had Sabatha, we had moved in together. I wanted to plan my wedding very well, I wanted it to be the day I'll never forget. Tseki and Nandi were getting impatient. 'Girl, I'm getting fat now, I can't keep this figure forever you know' Tseki complained. 'Sbusiso and I want to have a baby' Nandi told me. She had found a new man and settled down. I wanted it to be right... my career was going well, there was always something to push the my big day further... till Sabatha wanted us to have a baby, I didn't argue, maybe we should do

that. I know he wanted his own... after all Mbali was not his but he was wonderful with her. Then it came... the day Dr Winslow said it 'I'm sorry, you're HIV positive'. I did it, I did it with all my power, I beat her up... not for me, for all the people who were going to be disappointed, hurt, let down, angered, torn apart just because of those words. I wanted her to say... it was a joke, I wanted to wake up and realize it was just a nightmare but no, it wasn't... it was real... now I'm living the nightmare, not the nightmare of being HIV positive but of being here. Not knowing my future... depending on these...

Ingrid enters with a suit-cover and a box of shoes.

INGRID
Sabatha is waiting in court, he said you should wear this.

Ingrid takes out a smart bright coloured suit.

KHAYA
My Christian Dior suit...

Ingrid takes out a pair of stilettos.

KHAYA
Red stilettos? New?

INGRID
He bought them. He said you don't wear anything except stilettos.

KHAYA
He knows me well. But is it a good idea... they look exactly like the ones I used...

Khaya puts them on. Takes a few steps...

KHAYA

Sabatha has always had good taste...
I guess that's why he's with me.

She takes a look at the shoes.

KHAYA
I love them!