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Crossing Borders:
Intercultural Drama and Theatre
at the Turn of the Millennium
Contemporary Drama in English

Crossing Borders: Intercultural Drama and Theatre at the Turn of the Millennium

Papers given on the occasion of the ninth annual conference of the German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English

Edited for the society by Bernhard Reitz and Alyce von Rothkirch

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# Table of Contents

**Bernhard Reitz and Alyce von Rothkirch**  
Crossing Borders: The 9th CDE Annual Conference at Bad Alexandersbad, November 2 - 5, 2000 .......................................................... 7

**Jane Turner**  
The ‘Third’ Spectator .............................................................. 11

**Angelika E.C. Keil**  
Postcolonial Identities: a Plurality of Experiences .................. 17

**Stephanie Kramer**  
Postcolonial Experience and Intercultural Communication in Hanif Kureishi’s *Borderline* (1981) and Ayub Khan-Din’s *East is East* (1996) ......................................................... 25

**Mark Berninger**  
The Absence of the Intercultural? – The History of Anglo-Indian Relations in Ayub Khan-Din’s *Last Dance at Dum Dum* and Tom Stoppard’s *Indian Ink* ......................................................... 39

**Christian Schlothe**  
Satire and Sociology: The Performing Powers of Meera Syal and Anna Deavere Smith ................................................................. 49

**Nóvid Mortan**  
Creating a Multicultural Space in Theatre: *Bahar Noktası* – Can Yücel’s Creative Translation of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* ................... 61

**Edith Hallberg**  
Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* Crossing Borders: Violence and Reconciliation in Welcome Msomi’s *Umabatha* ........................................... 75

**Heiko Stahl**  
“I won’t answer to the name Caliban” – *Négritude* and the Master Narrative in Aimé Césaire’s *A Tempest* ........................................... 89
BEATE NEUMEIER
Towards an Intercultural Theatre? Variations on Shakespeare’s
The Tempest ................................................................. 101

ULRIKE HATTEMER
Reading and Rewriting Shakespeare – the Anglo-Jewish Take on
the Bard ........................................................................... 115

JOSÉ RAMÓN PRADO PÉREZ
Interculturalism, Subversion and the Quest for Identity in Chicano
Theatre ............................................................................. 131

ALYCE VON ROTHKIRCH
A Welsh National Theatre? Welsh Drama in English before the
Second World War ........................................................... 141

ANNETTE PANKRATZ
Greek to Us? Appropriations of Myths in Contemporary British
and Irish Drama ................................................................ 151

STEFANI BRUSBERG-KIERMEIER
Re-writing Seneca: Sarah Kane’s Phaedra’s Love ......................... 165

HEINER ZIMMERMANN
Theatrical Transgression in Totalitarian and Democratic Societies:
Shakespeare as a Trojan Horse and the Scandal of Sarah Kane ........ 173

STUART MARLOW
Pushing at the Limits of Representation: South African and Northern
Irish Challenges to Accepted Notions of Dramatic Discourse .......... 183

Contributors ........................................................................ 195

Index .................................................................................. 199
In 2000, CDE had to deviate from holding its annual conference in early summer. However, more than 50 international conveners were not deterred from coming to Bad Alexandersbad, an idyllic mountain resort near Bayreuth, as late as November. This year’s conference theme “Crossing Borders: Intercultural Drama and Theatre at the Turn of the Millennium” attracted once more the fertile and vivacious mixture of theatre practitioners, scholars and students for which the CDE conferences have become known.

The key-note lecture which launched the conference was given by Alby James who currently serves as Head of Screenwriting at Leeds Metropolitain University. In his encompassing talk on “The Essence of Drama,” Alby James drew on the manifold experiences which he had gained during his years at the Royal Court Theatre, with his own group, the Temba Theatre, and from working with such distinguished directors as Peter Brook, Adrian Noble, and Trevor Nunn. Covering nearly half a century of theatre and drama in Britain, Alby brought into focus the decisive stages of development as well as the current problems of writing and working for the stage.

Aspects of practical theatre work were further explored by Niamh Dowling and Jane Turner, both from Manchester Metropolitan University. Niamh Dowling, who works for the university’s School of Theatre, discussed in “Three Sisters of Africa” intercultural theatre productions which she had realized together with British and African actors in several African countries. Her talk gave a fascinating and intriguing insight into the diverging modes of acting and perceiving and into the problems of developing an intercultural, shared basis for performance. In her paper “The Third Spectator”, Jane Turner, who teaches at the university’s Department of Contemporary Arts, brought together the theoretical concepts outlined in Homi Bhabha’s “The Third Space,” Eugenio Barba’s ideas of a “third theatre” that exists between the commercial stage and the theatre of the avant-garde, and the results of her own research of Balinese theatre. There, the “third spectator” is an acknowledged formative force which contributes to shaping and relating the diverging cultural influences which are constituent to the multicultural Balinese theatre.

No less encompassing than the theatre practitioners’ approaches was the scope of the other papers given. However, it was elucidating to see that at the turn of the millennium Shakespeare’s influence on drama in English has not waned. The papers which explored Shakespeare within intercultural contexts were numerous. Nüvid Mortan (Eskisehir) provided insights into the difficulties of “Translating Shakespeare in a Turkish Context,” while Edith Hallberg (Dresden) in “Shakespeare’s Macbeth Crossing Borders” analyzed the adaptations by Welcome Msomi from South Africa.
BERNARD REITZ AND ALYCE VON ROTHKIRCH

and Dev Virahsawmy from Mauritius. In “Rewriting Shakespeare – the Anglo-Jewish Take on the Bard,” Ulrike Hattemer (Mainz) discussed the re-writing thematizing of Jewish characters and themes in Shakespeare by Bernard Kops and Arnold Wesker, while Heiner Zimmermann (Heidelberg), in “Theatrical Transgression in Totalitarian and Liberal Societies: Shakespeare as a Trojan Horse and the Scandal of Sarah Kane,” related the subversive potential of Shakespeare’s theatre to the provocative plays of Sarah Kane. By drawing on such divergent productions of The Tempest as Peter Brook’s and the Indian Keli company’s, Beate Neumeier (Köln) revealed the intercultural potential of the Bard’s late play. Heiko Stahl (Mainz) enhanced this point in his paper on “Négritude and the Master Narrative in Aimé Césaire’s Tempest.”

Intercultural theatre and drama beyond the influence of Shakespeare was discussed in a number of equally impressive papers. A diachronical approach that focused on classical influences, thus complementing the papers on the intercultural relevance of Shakespeare, was chosen by Annette Pankratz (Passau) in “Greek to Us? Appropriations of Myths in Plays by Howard Barker, Timberlake Wertenbaker, Sarah Kane, Maureen Duffy, and Sarah Daniels,” and by Stefani Brusberg-Kirmeier (Berlin) in “Re-writing Seneca: Sarah Kane’s Phaedra’s Love.”

Synchronic, though not at all a-historic relationships were explored on an even wider scale. British playwriting as “writing back” was the topic of Stephanie Kramer’s (Giessen) talk on “Post-colonial Experience and Intercultural Communication in Hanif Kureishi’s Borderline and Ayub Khan-Din’s East is East,” while Mark Berninger (Mainz) in “The Absence of the Intercultural? Theatrical Exploration of Anglo-Indian History in Contemporary British Drama” scrutinized both the critical and the intercultural potential of the so-far extant British intercultural drama. The issue of British cultural hegemony was inquired into from a different perspective by Alyce von Rothkirch (Mainz) who analyzed the formative influences on Welsh drama in her paper “A Welsh National Theatre? Welsh Drama in English Before the Second World War.” A comparable approach which also focused on problems which minorities have to cope with was pursued by José Ramón Prado Pérez (Castellón) who gave a paper on “Interculturalism, Subversion, and the Quest for Identity in Chicano Theatre.”

The British-centred perspective was also broadened by Christiane Schlote (Berlin) in “Goodness Gracious Me: Looking Beyond Stereotypes of Race and Gender in the Work of Meera Syal and Anna Deavere Smith,” a paper which argues that both the British-Indian and the African-American women playwrights and performers employ “representational satire” as a means of breaking up stereotypes. Issues relating to the representational dimension of fictional mediation were likewise addressed by Stuart Marlow (Stuttgart) in “Dramatic Art and Political Violence: South African and Northern Irish Case Studies,” and the search for identity as a key concern of the playwrights and plays mentioned was further explored by Angelika Keil (Chemnitz) in “Post-colonial Identities: A Plurality of Experiences,” a paper which focussed on the work of Alemseged Tesfai and Athol Fugard.

In view of all these encompassing approaches, it was not for the first time that the conveners of CDE wished that there had been more time for discussion. Lively debates
were carried on over meals as well as during the conveners' excursion to Bayreuth. To the surprise of many who associated Bayreuth with Wagner only, this city also is proud of a much older and unquestionably much more beautiful theatre than the “barn,” the Margravial Opera House, which dates back to the mid-eighteenth century when Princess Wilhelmine, the sister of Prussia's king Frederick II, succeeded in inviting the best minds of her age to her remote court.

After this excursion into theatre history the conveners were entertained by the Berlin TU English Drama Group, directed by Peter Zenzinger. The committed and highly applauded ensemble performed two short plays, David Ives's *Words, Words, Words* and Tom Stoppard's *Fifteen-Minute Hamlet*, as well as a Glasgow street ballad. This lively diversion from the strains of continuing intellectual debate was preceded by the award of CDE's first dissertation prize. It was given to Stepanie Kramer (Giessen) for her doctoral thesis *Fiktionale Biographien: (Re-)Visionen und (Re-)Konstruktionen weiblicher Lebensentwürfe in Dramen britischer Autorinnen seit 1970 – Ein Beitrag zur Typologie und Entwicklung des historischen Dramas*, published as vol. 6 of CDE Studies (WVT, Trier).

Bad Alexandersbad, the 9th annual conference, ascertained once more that within less than a decade CDE has become an internationally acknowledged forum for the exchange of ideas on drama in English. The organizers of the conference and editors of this volume want to express their gratitude to all those who have contributed. Very special thanks are once more due to the British Council which has supported CDE from its very beginning, as well as to Mark Berninger, Miriam Forster, Ulrike Hatterner, Christoph Rose, Heiko Stahl, Katrin Thomas and Julia Touché who shouldered both the organizational and the editorial commitments eagerly and with dedication.

Bernhard Reitz

Alyce van Rothkirch
The 'Third' Spectator

I have spent some time researching performance work in Bali. My research journey has led me through many stages of understanding and misunderstanding and any knowledge that I have gained has always been based on experience. The experience of seeing, being present and actively engaged in a process of making sense of something very removed from what had been familiar to me. What was it that created the interest for me – was it the exotic appeal, the sense of ancient spirituality that imbued the performances or was it the actuality – the fact that I was absorbed in something so unfamiliar? When the research developed into the territory of interculturalism it was this engagement with the unfamiliar that was the foremost area of interest. I applauded performance work that was crossing boundaries, projects that involved performers with diverse skills and cultural backgrounds working and experimenting with making new work – but all the time I wondered where the spectator was being positioned. It seemed to me that this new genre of performance created an ideal opportunity to resituate the spectator – a spectator, who in the west has been tamed, controlled and moved further and further away from the performance space.

If as Maria Irene Fornes says, “we get narcissistic pleasure in reviewing what we know. We go to the theatre to see ourselves on stage. We lose interest in that which is unlike us” (Dolan 435) – how do practitioners from diverse performance practices go about creating work that specifically draws on symbols and signifiers that are outside of a spectators field of reference? And how does the spectator engage with the work on a level other then that of admiring the spectacle or the virtuosic skill of a performer?

This paper will outline two approaches to intercultural work and the spectator. The first approach explores some of the political implications of intercultural work and the second proposes a 'third' spectatorial position – as I have called it. I am going to talk to two examples: Eugenio Barba’s Island of Labyrinths, and The Other Telling to illustrate and explore the political and spectatorial possibilities of intercultural work.

A particular danger that appears to be effecting intercultural performance is the stress on the visual spectacle of the event – this could be argued as a feature of the postmodern in contemporary performance. We are as Herbert Blau says seduced by the image of theatre – a theatre where the mirror mirror’s the mirror image. Spectacle has become the universal category in which the world is seen (as Barthes would argue). Postmodern work that merely mines the past nostalgically – mirrors the mirror – has been further commented on by Hal Foster in his use of the two terms resistance and reactionary to describe different and opposing approaches to postmodern work.
Hal Foster defines the terms thus:

A postmodernism of resistance, then, arises as a counter-practice not only to the official culture of modernism but also to the 'false normativity' of a reactionary postmodernism. In opposition (but not only in opposition), a resistant postmodernism is concerned with a critical deconstruction of tradition, not an instrumental pastiche of pop- or pseudo-historical forms, with a critique of origins, not a return to them. In short, it seeks to question rather than exploit cultural codes, to explore rather than conceal social and political affiliations. (Foster x)

If we accept the notion that we are never outside of representation then we need to acknowledge the political aspects of representation in performance and, as Philip Auslander comments, be weary of being seduced by the representations we should be critiquing. This notion of seduction for me is an essential element to be considered in intercultural performance. It is this resistant, or oppositional postmodernism, that is of particular interest here.

The Other Telling is the first example I am going to use. It is a dance/theatre piece danced and choreographed by Uni Krishna and Neil Fisher in 1994. Three elements work together in The Other Telling: a danced score, a pre-recorded musical score and a sung/spoken score performed by a narrator figure. The events that are seen are broadly narratively structured over three nights on a cruise ship, two nights are in the ballroom and one is out on deck. The two dancers meet, they exchange civilities, they carouse, they argue, they part.

The performance set out to explore identity and as an example of intercultural work, I would argue explores the issues associated with cultural and gender identity in a politicised frame. Identity is explored as: Contested, Transgressive and Ambiguous.

Contested: in that the cultural identities are played out and, unlike the music and narrator's positions that reflect a cross-culturally resolved space, the dancers contest is left unresolved.

Transgressive: in that the representations of gender that are played out go beyond the socially normative constructs that society accepts.

Ambigious: in that the demarcations of space and identity are uncertain, and that much of the performance takes on a double/plurality of meanings.

The issues of cultural, gender and self/other identity are played out in the fictional space of the performance. These issues have not been resolved by society or in performance and, as Hal Foster says, postmodernism does not mark an "end to ideology" (ix); it is therefore the continuing responsibility of performance practitioners that these issues remain part of political debates.

With respect to intercultural and contemporary performance, there is a distinction between the reactionary practice of what Susan Leigh Foster refers to as, merely mining the forms of the past nostalgically (47) – in this instance we may rephrase the reference to "merely mining the forms of the cultural other nostalgically" – that is, offering a situation with no context, comment or alternative, and the resistive practice,
which also offers no alternative, but by the deconstruction of established codes and conventions reveals a political and politicised context.

The Narrator figure, in *The Other Telling* frames the event: he both begins the performance and concludes it. The figure is a composite of cultural codes drawn from both England and India: he wears a bowler hat and also the pantaloon style pants traditionally worn by Indian men. The costume represents crudely stereotypical aspects from the two cultures; it is a parody of both and as such is theatricalised as ‘other’ and aids the fictionalising of the space as ‘other.’ He interrupts the space, the action and the personal narratives being played out. He stands for the most part on a plinth at the back, a model of intercultural fusion. He is the teller of two stories that become so merged that they become indistinct and indistinguishable: whose narrative belongs to whom? Whereas, on one level, the two dancers represent a possible meeting of two cultures, the narrator represents this as possible. This possible intercultural position is also replicated in the musical score where the sounds of Victor Sylvester and traditional Indian music have been sampled to create a score where cultural traces are still discernible but no one sound is privileged over another. The dialogue between the two dancers exists between the narrator and the sound score. The two dancers are involved in particular narratives recounted by the narrator but frequently the coherence of their personal stories is fragmented and abstracted in the vocal presentation.

The nuances and personal detail inflected in the dance vocabularies each uses is in the abstract and therefore beyond a clearly accessible reading level for many of the audience – but also each other. The cultural identity of each performer exists in what they wear, how they respond and behave towards each other and in their particular dance vocabulary. It is fragmented and dislocated. It is the relationship of the two very different performance behaviours that reveals the constructed nature of all our behaviour. Behaviour is inculturated but appears and is experienced as a natural acquisition. It is only revealed as socially and culturally constructed when set against another very different behaviour. The setting of the cruise ship allows both performers a decontextualised but dislocated space to meet – but even here it is not possible.

The music and vocal scores can be hybridised, as they are alienated from the personal and visual presence of the two performers. It is the actual presence of the two performers struggling to find a mutual understanding or sharing in that time and in that space that remains problematic – is it that these two cultures cannot meet or these two particular men?

The question at the end is whether the fusion vocal and musical score’s actually obfuscates and denies the political issues of the colonial past and present racial conflicts that continue to exist on the streets of Britain. The icon of the narrator has not been changed but remains unaffected by the events, his score is set and sets himself apart; a voyeur of the play between the two dancers. For the two dancers, although in this time and space they cannot find a point of contact, either physically or culturally, the experience will have left traces that may lead to a different future. The relationship between these two aspects constitutes the political interplay of the piece.
Having perhaps rather elaborately explored a political approach to reading an intercultural piece, I now intend to address the second point: the proposition for a ‘third’ spectator.

The notion of the ‘third’ spectator is derived in part from ‘third theatre’: a term coined by Eugenio Barba and applied to his company Odin Teatret (Watson): the ethnographer as ‘third person,’ a term used by anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup, and also from Homi Bhabha’s ‘third space’: described as a spatial movement of cultural representations. It also draws upon the idea of the participant/observer in ritual theory, a both/and position that in this instance is being applied to the spectatorial experience of intercultural performance.

Eugenio Barba’s use of the term third theatre describes a theatre that is between the commercial and the avant-garde, between one place and another, a “floating island” that is not entrenched in any one social, cultural or political ideology. Hastrup’s use of the third person is also in the context of being in-between. She describes it as an “experience of estrangement . . . a temporary shift of identity” (51). The anthropologist must be reflexive regarding her sense of self in the different worlds or cultures she inhabits or occupies. She must be both reflexively subject and object of the experiences of fieldwork. The need to define a position that is between one state or place and another can also be applied to the notion of intercultural performance. What is intercultural performance if not a genre that is culturally resituated performance, in-between one place and another? And if intercultural performance demands a new spatial identity then what about the spectator’s position?

The notion of the third spectatorial position also draws on Homi Bhabha’s idea of the ‘third space.’ Bhabha’s third space or “time-lag” is “an iterative, interrogative space produced in an interruptive overlap between symbol and sign” (59). He explains that in each symbolic structure there is a gap, an interruption that, he says, is “not so much a closure as a liminal interrogation ‘without’ words of the culturally given traditional boundaries of knowledge” (59). It is as a result of these gaps that it is possible to either reinstate cultural differences or intervene to relocate culturally fixed understandings (60).

The theatre space is not and cannot be a cultural free zone but can be constructed as a space that facilitates a third position to be occupied by the spectator. Eugenio Barba in writing about the spectator defined the third spectator as one who is the director’s alter ego. “S/he must be able to recognise in each fragment, in each detail, in each microaction, an erratic relic of her/his knowledge, saturated with information, but endowed with a new energy which elicits unusual mental associations” and later “[o]nly in this way can this third spectator face the events of the performance, passing from recognition to knowledge, from the information of an experience to the experience of an experience” (100).

In talking about the work of Odin Teatret he observes that the spectator is not there to discover the ‘real meaning’ but should be positioned to ask questions about meaning – he adds “[t]he performance is the beginning of a longer experience” (98).
As I see it, the third position is created by the interactive participant observer, a both/and position; a position that allows the spectator to be both inside and outside the event. Like carnival, intercultural performance can be a liminal playful space working against the constraints of institutional theatre spaces – a space where we can step off the pavement and be in the action. But the spectator needs to be challenged, the environment needs to be made unfamiliar and the spectator given the opportunity to experience the experience not merely witness the experience. Why is it that so often we the spectators are still sat in rows looking up to the stage?

If the spatial relationship between the spectator and the performance is unchallenged and familiar then the familiar viewing position will be adopted. It is all too easy for the spectator attending a theatrical event like Barba’s *The Island of Labyrinths* to be seduced by the exotic visual images and sounds and view the event as no more than spectacle. The performance, on the one hand, does no more than reaffirm a sense of Eastern ‘otherness’ without addressing issues of cultural positioning. On the other hand it is possible to disrupt the familiar viewing position and by doing so enable the spectator to ask questions, place the spectator in the “liminal interrogation” without “words of the culturally given traditional boundaries of knowledge” (59), as Homi Bhabha said.

It is this aspect of the third space: the gap opened up as a result of disparate cultural symbols overlapping within the same fictional frame, that allows the relocation of culturally fixed meanings that is particularly relevant to intercultural performance.

It is evident in both the first example, *The Other Telling*, and in the *The Island of Labyrinths* by Eugenio Barba that the collision of cultural performances has the potential to open up the boundaries of cultural knowledge thus creating hybrid work and new cultural understandings. However, as Homi Bhabha suggests, it can also reinstate cultural difference, which for intercultural performance would only be one step towards creating new understandings. *The Other Telling* foregrounds the issue of creating new knowledge as being unresolved but Barba’s piece does not appear to offer a clearly politicised agenda.

It does not necessarily follow, as we can see from the two examples, that all contemporary performance that plays with cultural signs and performance practices is intercultural and challenges cultural understanding. As Foster would argue, reactionary postmodern performance is potentially more dangerous as it does no more than reaffirm established cultural understandings.

The performers that Barba works with at the International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA) sessions are invited from cultures that perform within clearly codified forms, they are highly skilled practitioners and the research experiments that they are involved in as part of ISTA are exciting and often revealing. The culmination of the ISTA sessions is a performance that involves each of the ‘artistic staff participating in a Theatrum Mundi ensemble.

Images from the performance show that the performers retain their own visual and gestural codification but their narratives are woven together into a particular laby-
rinthine fiction by Barba. The result on one level is a disparate array of colours and sounds and gestures, the dynamic flow is dissonant, fleetingly harmonious, a battleground, a carnival, chaos striving for order. It is exciting but it is arguable whether it enables the spectator to transcend cultural boundaries or whether the performers manifest themselves only in terms of their exhibitness. The spectator is, in most instances, seated in a large auditorium looking into a proscenium stage picture – no change for us then!

My contention is that interculturalism can and should accommodate both a political and an experiential position for the spectator, that it can contribute to a counter-practice of resistant postmodernism. For this, the spectator’s perspective/position must be altered in order that the performance and performers are not merely affirmed as “obscure objects of desire” whose cultures continue to be mined nostalgically reaffirming a western sense of familiar supremacy. Although work that challenges the dominant cognitive position of the spectator is to be celebrated, the work can also be informed by a resistive political agenda where representation is critiqued to reveal the fictions of representation.

Works Cited

The focus of my study will be on male experiences and male identities in two African plays, namely Alemseged Tesfai's *The Other War* and Athol Fugard’s *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*. In this paper I will argue that the two plays I have chosen for my analysis depict male individuals stuck in an area of conflict defined by demasculinization and remasculinization. By demasculinization I mean that the character's male identity is decomposed either by himself or by others. Thus he cannot live up to the ideal of masculinity as perceived by his environment and/or himself. Remasculinization, on the other hand, is the design of, or at least the attempt to design, a (new) masculinity after the destruction or decomposition of the former male identity.

Tesfai's play takes place during the 30-year-guerilla war between Ethiopia and Eritrea while Fugard's play depicts the conflict between the white and the black man -- I use this phrase since no woman ever enters the stage -- during apartheid in South Africa. For better understanding I will give a short survey of what happens in each play. *In The Other War*, Assefa, an Ethiopian, moves with his wife and children into the house of his mother-in-law Letiyesus, who is Eritrean and whose son Mika-el, has left the house to become a freedom fighter. Soon we realize the growing conflict between the following two groups: on one side there are Letiyesus, her granddaughter Solomie, and her son Mika-el, who is absent throughout the whole play. On the other side there are Assefa, his wife Astier, who is pro-Ethiopian although Eritrean herself, and their toddler Kitaw, who is rejected by his grandmother Letiyesus. In the beginning Assefa takes on a mask of politeness towards his mother-in-law but the conflict finally escalates. Assefa becomes increasingly violent and threatens Letiyesus and Solomie. Therefore, the woman and the girl leave the house taking Kitaw with them. When Assefa learns what happened he first threatens to kill Astier but then decides to leave her. Astier is left alone in total despair.

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1 Tesfai’s play is the first Eritrean play to be published (1984) and the first to be translated into English.

2 *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* is a workshop production devised by John Kani, Winston Ntshona, and Athol Fugard who was also the director of its first performance in 1972 in Cape Town.

3 Eritrea had been an Italian Colony (1890-1941) and was annexed to Ethiopia by the UN in 1952 but remained an autonomous province. Ethiopia abolished Eritrea’s autonomy in 1962, which triggered Eritrea's fight for independence. Eritrea was finally granted independence in 1993. Since 1998 there has been a border war between Eritrea and Ethiopia. The ongoing fights which have lasted for many decades now have an enormous impact on the people and the economy of one of the poorest countries in Africa.
In Fugard’s play, which offers a complex structure of plays and stories within the play on different levels, we have Styles who had been a plant worker, then became a photographer and opened his own photographic studio. He tells the audience his own story at the plant and how he opened the studio, as well as some examples of how he took pictures of different clients. Then he has to interrupt his soliloquy, since a man enters his studio who wants to take a picture. While the picture is taken, the scene freezes and we see the man writing a letter to his wife, a letter which contains his recent past. The story he has to tell is mostly performed on the stage. The audience thus learns that the man, who originally had no permission to stay and work in the town, but was supposed to be transferred back to his homeland, used to be called Sizwe (12), but then took over the identity of a stranger he and his friend Buntu found dead in the street. Thus “Sizwe Bansi is dead” and is now called Robert Zwelinzima.

Despite of the different backgrounds of the two plays both depict the impact the history of a tribe, race or nation has on the individual man, since history – and this is what the two plays stress – is made up by the experiences of individuals, even of ordinary people which – as Styles claims – are never mentioned in history books. This is why Styles creates a different kind of history. He re-writes history by fixing the ordinary man’s identity on photographs. He, too, puts down history on paper to save it for future generations, but the difference is that his client designs his (male) identity himself and tells his-(s)story himself and from his point of view.

Both plays point out that identity and thus masculinity do not only consist of an essential and inherent aspect. They also highlight, that identity and masculinity are constructed. Tesfai strikingly underlines this by depicting Letiyesus as rejecting her grandson Kitaw just because he was fathered by an Ethiopian. In Fugard’s play, too, the body plays an important part in the construction of (male) identity and thus at the same time becomes an identity marker. Identity, here, is inscribed in the black man’s skin which is – as Sizwe claims – synonymous with trouble (Sizwe 43). The colour of his skin is even more decisive than his other corporeal masculinity markers: that he is circumcised and has wife and children. These traditional masculinity markers have lost their function since they are covered by race markers, which leads to the demasculinization of the black man by the white man, who thus fashions himself as the real man.

Another hint at the constructedness of (male) identity is given by the passbook which is “omnipresent” in Fugard’s play and the most important identity marker. It is one of the white man’s most important means of oppression and reminds the reader of the “big book” which Buntu mentions when he imitates a preacher talking about the

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4 The stage directions call Sizwe just “MAN” which indicates that Sizwe represents the black man in general.

5 Athol Fugard, “Sizwe Bansi is Dead”, *Statements: Three Plays* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986) 2-44. In the following the play is referred to as *Sizwe*.

6 All three markers are hints at the sexual aspect of masculinity. The circumcision, in addition, implies the religious aspect of identity.
"big day" (Sizwe 41). Thus, the passbook politics become the new religion which designates the white man as its God. Consequently, the anthropomorphism of the passbook, about which Buntu says: "if that book says go, you go" (Sizwe 24), is not surprising but underlines the constructedness of (male) identity.

The identity constructed in this passbook is mostly made up by the black man’s native identification number (N.I. number), he – as Buntu says hinting at the implied dehumanization – has to burn into his head (Sizwe 39) like a cow’s brand and the prescribed place where he is allowed to stay – which often is just his allocated homeland – and we know that the homelands were set in the barren parts of South Africa, which hardly offered any jobs or the opportunity to live on one’s own piece of land.

Another important aspect of the black man’s identity constructed by the passbook and connected with place is his work permit in case he has one at all. But even if he is allowed to stay in town and work for the white man, his absence from his family has an enormous impact on his role as father and husband, since he will usually only be able to visit his family once a year. Thus he cannot be with them when he is needed, he cannot look after them nor protect them. As a consequence, the black man cannot live up to the ideal of a caring husband and father, and many families split up. How frequently this happens is indicated by Styles who is surprised and pleased at the same time when he learns that the picture he has to take of Sizwe is for his client’s wife.

While the black man used to be the authority before the white man intruded, he is now dehumanized by the white man who degrades him to become a mere number and as rightless as a child. Thus again, he is stripped of his masculinity by the white man who, consequently, calls him “boy.”

In addition to the passbook each black man has to carry with him all the time there seems to exist a so-called record card for each black man in Fugard’s play which is kept by the white authorities. This record card obviously contains all information about the black person in question, so that even losing one’s passbook or throwing it away will not help to gain a new identity. Interestingly, Fugard stresses that this record card is pink. Although I have not been able to find out yet whether it actually was that colour, I wonder whether Fugard knows what Alexander Schauss, the director of the American Institute for Biosocial Research in Tacoma, Washington, found out: that “[e]ven if a person tries to be angry or aggressive in the presence of pink, he can’t. The heart muscles can’t race fast enough...” So, the reader might get the impression that the white man intends to prevent the black man from being aggressive or antagonistic, whenever he is faced with his record card.

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7 The research was carried out among prisoners.
9 Whether it would work in reality is questionable. Not so much because the weakening effect of pink is only temporary, since being confronted with the record card also takes only a short time.
Although both playwrights Fugard and Tesfai depict the construction of (male) identity as leading to dehumanization there is an important difference between Tesfai’s and Fugard’s play. While Fugard’s focus is on heteronomous construction which leads to the dehumanization and thus demasculinization of the oppressed black man, Tesfai concentrates on male self-fashioning according to an abstract ideal of masculinity additionally fuelled by the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia. In his play men “dehumanize” themselves by striving to become ‘real men,’ ‘real’ military heroes — the utmost ideal of masculinity. This ideal includes physical and psychological violence not only against men and other fighters, but also against women and children, even against members of their own families. It also includes sexual harassment and an increased misogynist behaviour legitimized by war necessity and military position, e.g. at the checkpoints, as Letiyesus points out:

Mbwa! I left this morning but because of all these checkpoints it took all day. Oh, what a terrible life ... and those men at the checkpoints! Tell me, are they human beings, or animals? Shameless people! (Grabbing her breasts and imitating their voices and gestures.) What have we got here, huh? What have you hidden here? They wouldn’t spare anyone, even old women. (263) [38]

By depicting the mixture of violence, sexuality, fear, power and oppression Tesfai points out that the more these men strive for this ideal of masculinity the more they become beasts, as if to say: the more a man, the more a beast. Thus men are frequently called lions (264) vultures (283) or donkeys in his play (278).

That Tesfai disapproves of this male self-fashioning is highlighted by his male protagonist’s development: the more Assefa attempts to fashion himself as a real man the more his male authority is weakened, the stronger his two female antagonists Letiyesus and Solomie become. Unfortunately, his demasculinization seems to be heightened by his people’s growing political and military weakness. There are several suggestions in the text which suggest that the Ethiopians are going to be defeated by the Eritreans, although in 1984 Tesfai could not know that Eritrea would gain independence in 1993. The most striking examples are the changing banners put up in the house by Assefa and Astier which are mentioned in the stage direction at the beginning of act two, three and four and which announce the ongoing campaigns. Each new banner, especially the last one (286), seems to imply the failure of the previous campaign.

Nevertheless, the more Assefa realizes his “galloping” demasculinization the more he tries to remasculinize himself by becoming increasingly authoritative and violent. When his corporeal masculinity markers are no longer of any use to him, because they are decomposed by the two females, but also by the fact that the Ethiopian military heroes have to withdraw, he instead — and please excuse this stereotypical

But the question remains whether a small record card will have the same effect as a whole room painted pink as was the case in the research conducted by Schauss. And we have to remember that the research was carried out in the United States, not in Africa.

10 Alemseged Tesfai, "The Other War", Contemporary African Plays, ed. Martin Banham and Jane Plastow. (London: Methuen, 1999) 261-301. In the following the play is referred to as War.
Postcolonial Identities: a Plurality of Experiences

Freudian reference - uses his pistol in order to threaten his antagonists and to reinforce his male authority, a behaviour which is supposed to serve his remasculinization.

But Assefa in vain attempts to remasculinize himself. In the end he is defeated by his female antagonists: they decompose his masculinity by taking away his son on their flight, and by replacing the name Assefa has given him, namely Kitaw, which means ‘punish them’ (268), by the name Awet, which means ‘victory’ (295). All his male pride and all his hope for an Ethiopian victory had been concentrated on Kitaw. That is why he once said to Letiyesus: “I, Assefa, planted my seed in your own daughter’s womb. Kitaw was born . . . . My roots are firmly planted in Eritrea and no power can ever pull them up . . . . Eritrea no longer belongs to the Mika-els, it belongs to us, . . . . to the Kitaws” (291). Thus, ‘The Other War’ is going on in – as Letiyesus phrases it – “our daughters’ wombs” (291). This shows how essential the corporeal, to be more precise the sexual aspect of male masculinity is for Assefa.

Fugard’s play, in contrast to Tesfai’s, depicts a successful striving for remasculinization. I will now explain the different stages of this remasculinization. The starting point is – as I have already said – Sizwe’s situation at the beginning of the play, when his (male) identity is a mere construction by the white man who demasculinizes and dehumanizes the black man in order to fashion himself as the real man representing power, authority, wealth and superiority while the black man is reduced to become a mere toot for increasing white wealth and power. The black man, as presented in Fugard’s play, is stripped of his masculinity, potency and dignity, he is left in poverty, inferiority and failure, which makes it most difficult for him to develop any self-confidence and male pride. The black man is no longer the owner of his time, even of his life, because – as Styles says – he has to sell his time to his white employer. Here, it becomes most obvious how tightly interwoven race and class are and that the black man is degraded to become the white man’s property.

But Sizwe does not even have a work permit or the permission to leave his homeland. He is endorsed to King William’s Town, “a dirty place [with] too many people” (Sizwe 27) in the south of the country. Therefore, he is threatened by the most humiliating and even life-threatening consequences in case he is apprehended, e.g., in a raid, of which he once became a victim. Fugard stresses the humiliation by pointing out that the white police did not even care that Sizwe was just in his pants when he was taken away (23).

11 The importance of renaming will also be pointed out further down when Sizwe’s remasculinization will be examined. In Tesfai’s play, the name “Kitaw” seems to express the Ethiopian’s anger and aggressiveness to punish the Eritreans who dare to strive for independence. The name “Awet” may imply the Eritreans’ determination never to stop fighting unless they are granted independence.

12 How much he is hurt is revealed by his attempts to look for compensation in torturing his wife first by threatening to kill her and then by leaving her completely alone and desperate.

13 The blacks who are caught outside their prescribed homelands are often kicked out of the crowded trains when transferred back (Sizwe 37).
Place seems to be one of the most important aspects of masculinity in Fugard's play emphasized – among many other aspects – by the fact that Sizwe’s remasculinization starts at a specific place, a pub with the speaking name Sky's, which he visits with Buntu. Sizwe, indeed, feels 'like in heaven.' For a short time he gets to know what masculinity could be like: dignity and pride – "A most wonderful place" (29), "I’m not just Sizwe no more. He might have walked in, but Mr Bansi walked out!" (30)

But this first enthusiasm is followed by a state of disorientation and insecurity concerning his identity (31) symbolized by his inability to find his way back to Buntu's home. He must admit that he, "Mr Bansi[,] is lost . . ." (31). So, Sizwe says to himself: "You are a country fool! Leading Mr Buntu and Mr Bansi astray. You think you know this place New Brighton? You know nothing!" (32). As the quotation reveals, Sizwe now speaks of himself in the third person singular and addresses himself in the second person singular, which indicates that he dissociates himself from himself while his allocated and heteronomous (male) identity is gradually deconstructed. As this marks the point when his masculinity begins to be reconstructed, we can say that the dissociation is a crucial stage in the process of remasculinization.¹⁴

When Sizwe is totally disoriented, Buntu takes over (32) and finally persuades Sizwe to assume the heteronomously constructed identity of Robert Zwelinzima, whom they find dead in the street and whose passbook contains the permits Sizwe needs. Buntu and Sizwe thus 'play' with the constructedness of identity by turning the white man's weapon, i.e. the construction of the black man's identity by the passbook, against the white man himself (38).

Thus, an important mechanism of the process of remasculinization is not only re-writing history as discussed at the beginning when I talked about Styles's photographs, but also re-naming, which, too, I have already mentioned when I spoke of Kitaw who becomes Awet.¹⁵ In Fugard's play, Sizwe becomes Robert, although Sizwe first vehemently refuses to give up his name (36), since he feels that by doing so he will lose his male identity. His fear is highlighted by the total lack of orientation he suffers and which is expressed by his desperate question: "Who am I?" (37). Nevertheless, after having adopted the new name, he finds out that he is still himself. Thus, he learns that names are mere identity markers, that his name is not synonymous with his (male) identity.¹⁶

¹⁴ Sizwe also, for the first time, criticizes the white man, i.e. he starts to dismantle the obviously internalized superiority of the white man ("[P]ut a man in a pondok and call that Independence? . . . " (31); "They never told us it would be like that when they introduced it [the passbook]. They said: Book of Life! Your friend! You'll never get lost! They told us lies" (33).

¹⁵ Letiyesus, too, turns the oppressor's weapon against himself.

¹⁶ Buntu demonstrates that not just re-naming but also re-organizing discourse is important. Thus, he re-defines the term 'pride': he claims that a black man who keeps his name for his male pride but at the same time "lick[s] [the white man's] arse" (43) and allows him to call him 'boy' or 'kaffir' just "bluff[s] [himself] that he is a man" (43). Buntu also finds a new definition for the term
But Fugard also points out that identity and masculinity are social practices. Thus Buntu sets off to familiarize Sizwe with his new male identity by using role-playing. By doing so he a) intends to encourage Sizwe and to demonstrate to him that he is able to practice Robert's identity, and b) to make sure that Sizwe will not say the wrong thing when checked by the white man. This role-playing comprises Sizwe-Robert at pay time, at the sales house being able to buy a new suit, at church being a respected member of the congregation, and - being checked by the police.

At the end of the play we see a remasculinized and rehumanized man now called Robert Zwelinzima finishing a letter to his wife. Fugard’s play thus offers a small glimpse of hope, even if Sizwe’s new male identity may be only temporary. Both Buntu and Sizwe know that the remasculinization will only be successful as long as Sizwe can stay out of trouble, which for a black man under white oppression will be most difficult (43).

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"ghost". He points out that the black man is a ghost since he is a living dead person, emasculintized and dehumanized by the white oppressor (38).
In her essay on postcolonial drama Mary Dahl points out new developments in black British drama and emphasizes the lack of attention critics have paid to this work. She does so with the help of the following vivid metaphor: “The empire is striking back, and - although some are reluctant to take the call - it’s phoning from home” (Dahl 39). There has been a thorough discussion about plays and performance theatre by authors who write about the former colonies and still live there or who migrated to Great Britain, but primarily deal in their work with life back home.1

However, from the beginning of the eighties onwards the second generation of immigrants who were born in Britain has come of age and dramatizes postcolonial life in the metropolis. Although these dramatists have to cope with a number of problems similar to those of their parents, such as violence, discrimination, racism and poverty, they are also confronted with different issues such as “the erosion of cultural traditions, the conflicts between first- and second-generation immigrants, the pull of assimilation” (Dahl 39) and problems of intercultural understanding.2

In an analysis of postcolonial drama answers to the following questions should be given: How do black British authors relate to and subvert the self/other dichotomy which was employed in imperial narratives to characterize the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized? How do they stage the life of ethnic minorities in British society? What alternative identities do they offer in reply to generic representations of a coloured person in traditional British drama; and what dramatic forms do they use? I will answer these questions by looking at the work of two Anglo-Asian playwrights with ancestry from Pakistan: Hanif Kureishi’s Borderline and Ayub Khan-Din’s East is East.3

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1 See for example King and the volume edited by Fischer-Lichte et al.
2 Cf. Kureishi’s comment on the situation of Pakistanis in Great Britain: “Trotz weißer Wut und einiger Gesetze zum Zusammenleben der Rassen werden Pakistanis auf allen Gebieten diskriminiert” (Kureishi 37).
3 These two men are no strangers to each other: Khan-Din appeared in the Hanif Kureishi films My Beautiful Laundrette and Sammy and Rosie Get Laid. Apart from this, he also acted in the Southampton production of Borderline. Joseph underlines the necessity of including films to adequately characterize Anglo-Asian dramatic art: “[I]t is no longer possible to adequately address the production, reception and development of theatre, particularly those of marginalized groups, without sufficiently relating that development to television and cinema. These cultural formations are contingent and disparate and linked through the cross-overs of actors, directors, playwrights and tech-
The questions I have just raised lead me to the following assumptions: As far as the discussion about the concept of alterity in postcolonial writing is concerned, I will underline the statements made by Fludernik and Goetsch among others, who draw attention to the passe-partout character of the term hybridity. Bhabha argues that hybridization has taken the place of depictions of the colonized as other who is unable to assume the role as self: “Hybridity comes to function as a key concept of cultural diversity in which racist ‘impurity’ has been reinscribed as subversive multiplicity and as progressive . . . agency” (Fludernik 1998b: 21). Bhabha replaces the self/other opposition by a Third space from which migrants negotiate different values and contribute to further intercultural understanding:

It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew. (Bhabha 37)

Diasporic identity thus also attains a provisional and unstable dimension. Still, in most of the plays migrants do not take over this cosmopolitan intellectual attitude, as cultural instability remains a problem for them.

According to Bhabha, cultural hybridity is coupled with stylistic hybridity to counter traditional representations. However, this concept does not seem to be helpful to adequately describe contemporary black British drama because—particularly as far as formal aspects are concerned—what might appear to be an outdated Western realistic mode seems to prevail.

Instead of talking about hybridity, I will take a close look at the diverse intercultural and intracultural encounters dramatized in the two plays: How do Kureishi and Khan-Din arrive at creating a complex picture of interpersonal relations and ambivalent identities? Regarding formal aspects, neither can there be observed a fusion of Western and Asian theatre traditions nor straight realism. Both authors fall back on ambivalence and/or stark irony and thus problematize simplistic representations.


5 See his essay “Funktionen der ‘Hybridität’ in der postkolonialen Theorie.”

6 See also most recently Sommer (manuscript l. 2).

7 Cf. “The power of the postcolonial translation of modernity rests in its performative, deformative structure that does not simply revalue the contents of a cultural tradition, or transpose values ‘cross-culturally’. The cultural inheritance of slavery or colonialism is brought before modernity not to resolve its historic differences into a new totality . . . . It is to introduce another locus of inscription and intervention, another hybrid, ‘inappropriate’ enunciative site, through that temporal split—or time-lag—that I have opened up . . . for the signification of postcolonial agency” (Bhabha 241-42).
In order to prevent the pitfall of declaring my individual and current perspective as superior to contemporary and Anglo-Asian responses, I will include reviews of the plays’ first production. Moreover, I will refer to the cultural and political situation of the time the plays were staged. This is especially important when I discuss the plays’ apparently conservative aesthetic form.

Hanif Kureishi and Ayub Khan-Din are both of mixed-race origin with an English mother and a Pakistani father. Nevertheless, Kureishi only stages conflicts arising between immigrants, their second generation offspring and the white British majority, thus emphasizing a multicultural aspect of British society, while Khan-Din goes one step further as he focuses on the conflicts in a mixed-race family with children who already biologically speaking defy any claim of racial purity.

Kureishi’s *Borderline* traces the life of Amina, a daughter of Pakistani parents, who is torn between obedience towards her parents and the freedom her English education has opened up to her. Behind her parents’ back she has a boyfriend but agrees to an arranged marriage in order not to let them down. With the help of friends, who actively oppose racial discrimination, and the white reporter Susan, who interviews Asians to make a radio programme about their situation in British society, Amina gradually gets politicized. She rethink her relation towards her boyfriend as well as towards English people in general. At the end of the play after her father’s death, she decides to remain in England and to get to know more English people. 8

In *East is East* Khan-Din dramatizes life in Salford in the 1970s while back home Pakistan and India are at war: He shows the life of six children whose Pakistani father wants to educate them according to his Muslim belief, while their English working-class mother is caught in the middle and can’t satisfy anyone of them. An open conflict breaks out when George intends to arrange marriages for two of his sons with Pakistani women.

On the one hand, both playwrights stress the fact that cultural purity is no more than a fantasy although the question of belonging turns up again and again. On the other hand, they do not negate cultural differences either. In the two plays the self/other dichotomy is first evoked by various characters. Then it is surmounted to varying degrees with the help of different strategies.

A number of characters underline cultural differences when they state their diverging values: The father figure in both plays demands the children’s total obedience, whereas the children claim their right of free choice. Other topics raised in the dialogues include in both plays traditional versus Western clothing, arranged versus love marriages and in addition to this in *East is East* the insistence on circumcision versus its refusal, polygamy versus monogamy and Islamic versus Catholic belief. Diverging values are not only articulated, often the characters’ double standard is revealed or with

8 Cf. Amina: “We hardly know any English people. And my father said some good things which I want to understand” (*Borderline* 167).
the help of exaggerations a whole scene becomes ironical. This is even more striking in East is East than in Kureishi’s play.

Cultural differences are moreover underlined when Pakistani characters in Borderline report incidents of racism and articulate stereotypes: Amjad was hit by his neighbours; men exposed themselves before his wife Banoo (Borderline 124); someone spat at Ravi on the street (134) and a Gujarati boy is reported to have been shot with an airgun (140). The cruelty of these incidents is lessened, however, as they are only rendered indirectly. Moreover, when the act of violence against the boy is commented by a Pakistani character with the following words: “There’s nothing like a bullet in the brain to raise consciousness” (140), the highly tragical incident gets an ironical twist.

Secondly, a number of characters evoke stereotypes about Indian or about English people: Susan, for example, the only white character, renders her encounter with Indian people during her stay in India by emphasizing their helpfulness and the ruthlessness with which they pursued any inattentiveness towards her.9 Haroon on the other hand generalizes the English character and draws a negative picture by saying: “The English get bad hearts because they have rotten souls and bad consciences” (98); and according to Anil English women are “stuck-up, cold, racist, common . . . .” (109). But Kureishi does not simply enforce prejudices. Anil, for example, only draws such a negative picture of English girls, because he does not want to make Ravi suspicious: Ravi should not know that he has an English girlfriend, while his wife back in India still hopes for him to return.

In East is East it is George who warns his boys not to get involved with English girls: “They not good, go with other men, drink alcohol, no look after” (East is East 55). His double standard is revealed when one of his sons asks him why on earth he has married an English woman himself if they are so terrible (55). Furthermore, George also draws a sharp line between Indians and Pakistanis, because the action takes place while the two states are at war.10 Here it is Ella who subverts George’s statements and the good picture he draws of Pakistani people. When George asks her: “Why you telLing people Pakistani do digusting thing?” (50) Ella replies that she saw on TV how they murdered their own brothers with Korans in their hands. Consequently, while cultural differences are stressed by some of the characters, generalizations are exposed as wrong by means of irony or by revealing some of the characters’ own hypocrisy.

The question I posed about the way these dramatists stage the life of the Asian minority in British society can be answered with the help of a continuum with separatism at one end and assimilation as the second extreme: Although Kureishi concentrates more on the Asian community, both authors draw a very differentiated picture of

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9 Cf. Susan’s remark: “If your tea’s cold and you complain some poor boy is kicked out of a job . . . . It’s difficult not to find yourself becoming some kind of fatuous aristocrat” (101).

10 The war is mediated in the play through TV reports and radio news.
the minorities' positions in British society and their living together. By staging intercultural as well as intracultural encounters Kureishi engages himself "in foregrounding the tensions and cracks of cultural exchange" (Joseph 36-7). Kureishi and Khan-Din take over the role of cultural translators by interpreting in their plays one side (i.e. the Asians'/or the Anglo-Asians' side) to the other (i.e. the dominantly white middle class English audience). But apart from this, translation and mediation also takes place on the level of action.

*Borderline* dramatizes a number of intercultural encounters. Most of them, however, are not shown on stage because they either took place before the action starts or, as it is the case with the fascist meeting, they will occur after the end of the play when the Asian youth front is going to confront a group of fascists. Thus, peaceful encounters and intercultural communication take precedence over discriminatory practices, but these are not negated either.

In *Borderline* direct intercultural encounters are limited to those between the white reporter Susan and different members of the Asian community. Apart from this in the Royal Court production the director Max Stafford-Clark made use of cross-race casting as well as of multiple-role playing.

Amjad, Anwar and Haroon don't appreciate that Susan tries to mediate between them and the white British majority. Susan wants to help the Asian community by reporting about acts of discrimination in a radio programme. In some respects Susan’s wish to mediate fails. Although the reasons for their behaviour differ, Amjad, Anwar and Haroon all reject her help. On the other hand Amina, Banoo as well as Yasmin react positively and change their opinion about Susan. Amina becomes Susan’s friend. Banoo begins to trust her and Yasmin admits in the end that Susan means well (cf. *Borderline* 141). All in all, Susan can be seen as a mediator because she cares for the Asian community. She is not only interested in them to get a good story. This becomes evident on a number of occasions, for example, when she turns off the tape because Banoo tells her confidentially about her fears and the sexual harassment she has to endure (cf. 124). Finally, Susan abstains from using the internal conflicts within the Asian organization against the group (cf. 150), as she does not make them public.

In spite of their relative absence on stage in terms of characters, white people are insofar present as in the first production cross-race casting was used: Three Asian and four white British actors and actresses took over the roles. This "makes white culture present at all times even as the play represents Asians struggling to live productively within and against it" (Dahl 45). Another effect of this racial impersonation is to emphasize that the barriers of race are less rigid than those of attitude.

Intracultural encounters are much more frequent than intercultural encounters in *Borderline*. Thus, Kureishi stresses the inner borders and problems within the Asian community. He further breaks down binary oppositions, since the Asians are shown as

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11 Apart from this, both authors certainly also had the Asian community in their mind, as they hoped to attract Asians to the Royal Court.
a very heterogeneous group. On the one hand, Kureishi dramatizes acts of solidarity between Asians, as Anwar and Haroon help Ravi, the illegal immigrant. On the other hand, solidarity is not universal, since Kureishi also includes scenes of betrayal and exploitation. Ravi is reported to the police by his former friend, Anil, who wants to get rid of him. At the Indian restaurant Ravi has to work overtime and gets paid very little. Besides underlining the diversity of Asian people, this strategy also points to another dimension: “Pakistani exploitation of Pakistani is predicated on the differential status British immigration has constructed. The oppressed do the work of the oppressors” (43).

In *East is East* one cannot simply distinguish between intercultural and intracultural encounters, because of the mixed-race family the play focuses on. Annie, Ella’s best friend, is “the play’s only link to the wider, whiter world outside” (Smith 381). She treats the children as if she were their aunt. Racial differences are of no relevance between Annie and the Khan family.

Instead confrontations occur between the children and their Pakistani father and also between Ella and George. Ella and the children have to cope with divided loyalties. Ella is torn between her love for her husband and for her children, when George makes decisions she cannot agree with because of her different cultural upbringing. The children stick together against their father when he hits Ella but they quarrel as soon as they are on their own.

Different characters take over the role of the mediator in *East is East*: Ella negotiates between her children and their father. She loves her husband and respects George by agreeing to let her boys be circumcised. But she rebels against his decision of arranging marriages for his sons by telling them in advance about their father’s plans. Annie mediates between Ella and George as well as between George and Sajit. She is the one who talks to Sajit and persuades him to undergo the circumcision (cf. 6). In *East is East* Khan-Din exposes a network of social and family relations and reveals that cultural differences as well as the family’s peaceful living together have to be negotiated on a daily basis.

As the examples I have just mentioned show, Kureishi and Khan-Din revise the traditional representation of coloured people in British theatre both in quantitative and in qualitative respects. Whereas in the past Asian characters often “were devoid of ethnic and class definition, and positioned as [exotic] object rather than subject, always framed in the text’s periphery” (Joseph 15-16), Kureishi and Khan-Din put a range of Asian characters centre stage and refrain from homogenizing this ethnic group.12

12 Cf. Kureishi’s comment on the traditional representation of Pakistani characters as ugly, stupid and subhuman (Kureishi 14) and Modood: “[O]nly about half of the South Asians in Britain are Muslim, and not all Muslims are equally committed to a Muslim identity (which is certainly open to a number of interpretations). Some Pakistanis see their cultural heritage and Pakistani identity as being inseparable from – and hence not of lesser value than – their Muslim lifestyle. Some valorize only their Punjabi or North Indian cultural identity, while others valorize their common past struggle against British imperialism” (Modood 158).
Kureishi opts for ambivalence to show the characters' difficulties in coming to terms with life in a multicultural city such as London: Amina has an affair with Haroon, thus offending Pakistani customs, but she agrees to an arranged marriage with Farouk to please her father. Haroon is against direct political action. He wants to help ethnic minorities by becoming a lawyer and subverting the system from within. Then, he is the first one to throw a chair into his father's window because he exploits his Indian employees. Anwar has an affair with Susan but protests against her political involvement with the Asian community in Southall.

Khan-Din dramatizes the characters' divided and shifting loyalties, as the intercultural conflicts are coupled with family ties. Furthermore, the characters' behaviour depends on the individual situation: The children stick together against their father, but they have different ideas about the relationship between father and son.

To sum up one could say that both authors try to present a wide spectrum of perspectives which remain divergent until the end, although I'd like to qualify this by stressing that heteroglossia is very pronounced in Borderline, whereas Khan-Din directs his sympathy more towards the younger generation. In East is East the perspectives range from separatism in the case of George - and to some extent his son Maneer - to assimilation into the dominant culture in the case of Tariq. However, George is not presented as a one-dimensional tyrant either. We are invited to understand the motives for his behaviour without having to excuse it: George is not irrational but "the threat to their Muslim identity in Pakistan means that George and his generation are even more tyrannical at home" (Sierz 226). Moreover, by representing Asian and mixed-race characters Khan-Din dissolves the simple opposition between an English perspective and an Asian one.

As far as formal aspects are concerned, I have mentioned at the beginning that at first sight the two plays seem to be very realistic instead of introducing syncretic or hybrid forms to counter traditional representations. According to Nemi Chandra Jain's description of the new indigenous theatre idiom in India, formal elements of Indian drama include an imaginative, non-realistic treatment of time and space, ... mixture of the realistic and the fantastic, the human and the non-human, use of poetry, song, music, dance, ritualistic elements and various other forms of stylized speech, gesture and movement, making the actor an instrument of scenic design, of scenic change and other imaginative approaches to setting, use of masks, ... myth, legend, folktale and ritual in the dramatic structure, creating prototypes or social rather than individualized characters . . . . (Jain 206)

13 According to Shuttleworth in East is East "[n]o one person is in possession of more than a piece of the solution, if there is a solution" (Shuttleworth 1509).

14 The character of George is much more convincing and three-dimensional in the film than in the play.

15 According to Fludemik, syncretism emphasizes "peaceful coexistence rather than uneasy and agonistic self-splitting" and "points in the direction of multiculturalist scenarios" (Fludemik 1998b: 19).
After the discussion of Kureishi’s and Khan-Din’s dramatization of Asian and Anglo-Asian identities it has become obvious that neither Jain’s indigenous theatre idiom nor the term ‘realist theatre’ suffices to describe these two plays. Kureishi uses a number of realistic elements, but he also falls back on ambivalence and employs cross-race casting. Consequently, the representations are highly artificial. This has also consequences regarding the use of language. The standard code is subverted when British actors speak the parts of Indian characters, because “the accent cannot for an instant be thought anything but mimicry” (Arnory 592).

George in Khan-Din’s play is the only character who replaces standard English with ‘english’, a variety which indicates a sense of difference from the center’s claim of authority. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin see this use of language as a subversive strategy of linguistic assertion. George uses ‘english’ while “trying to reject the particular way of structuring the world it seems to offer” (48). His use of language could perhaps be seen as a hybrid element in the play.

Another means of subverting simplistic realistic representations is the use of comedy. Instances of all three types of comedy – comedy of character, of situation and of language – can be found in one of the two plays. Irony creates a distance from tragic experience and at times disturbs the dramatic illusion. Sometimes it also helps to elucidate discrepancies between the Pakistani and the British culture.

In Kureishi’s play Ravi is the most comical character. His naivety is stressed again and again. He does not realize for example that his old Indian friend Anil is living together with his English girlfriend Valerie: In order to prevent that Ravi talks about his wife in front of Valerie, Anil tells Ravi that she is his social worker. Ravi in turn describes Valerie to Susan by saying: “The social worker goes to work. She’s a shop assistant” (Borderline 120). Situational irony can be observed in the scene between Ravi and Susan, who lets him live in her apartment because he has nowhere to go: “Susan, I am Indian. / Susan: Yes. / Ravi: You are English, please - undress! . . . / Susan: I do understand about frustration. But I can’t compensate for the Empire on my own” (121-122).

16 This does not mean, however, that there are no Anglo-Asian playwrights using syncretic forms. See for example Afshan Malik’s Sufar, which was first produced by Made in Wales in 1996. The play dramatizes the protagonist’s journey back into the past. With the help of two spiritual guides Ismaat meets her parents – who were killed in a car accident at the beginning of the play – in a timeless place and relives her troubled relationship with them. Again the protagonist’s problems of finding an identity after leaving Pakistan in early childhood are at the centre of the play, but Malik makes use of a non-realistic form and includes dance, Indian film songs, masks as well as hybrid language (some of the characters speak a mixture of Welsh and Urdu).

17 Kureishi still uses (at least in the written text) more or less standard English.

18 Cf. Ashcroft et al.: “post-colonial writing abrogates the privileged centrality of ‘English’ by using language to signify difference while employing a sameness which allows it to be understood. It does this by employing language variance, the ‘part’ of a wider cultural whole, which assists in the work of language seizure whilst being neither transmuted nor overwhelmed by its adopted vehicle” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 51).
In the reviews to the production of *East is East* the critics commented on the high amount of irony in the play by pointing out the "comedy of character" (Darvell 132) in *East is East*, by calling it a "knockabout comedy" (cf. Spencer 1508) or a "farce" (Hanks 131). Similar to Kureishi, Khan-Din doesn’t deal with postcolonial experience in a tragical way. He often employs exaggerations to evoke a comic effect. Tariq for example stresses his unwillingness to be reminded of his ethnical background when he says: “I don’t see why I should go and meet more relatives, I’m related to half of Bradford as it is” (*East is East* 11). Khan-Din goes even further than Kureishi in this respect, because in *East is East* some of the characters also laugh about themselves. Ella laughs after having accused her husband of being mean. Moreover, quarrels between George and Ella sometimes have the quality of a game because they often end in laughter (cf. 6–7, 8, 9). Irony also functions as a means of subverting George’s authority in the play, when the children make fun of him.

If one takes into account the context of the situation of Asian drama in Britain at the beginning of the 80s and at the end of the 90s, *Borderline* is in formal respects more daring than *East is East*, whereas Khan-Din’s play is so in content. According to Joseph, Asian or Anglo-Asian playwrights – even if they wanted to – did not really have the chance to introduce non-realistic dramatic forms in the eighties. They had little access to representation. Asian experience could only be put on stage if the project followed “fairly conservative aesthetic strategies in order that the largest common audience could be reached and not overwhelm the potential audience with the less palatable sides of the history of Empire” (Joseph 38).

Even though *Borderline* is fairly conventional seen from today’s perspective, a look at the audiences’ responses proves that the first production was very controversial indeed. There were riots accompanying the production, which was part of the Asian Festival at the Royal Court Theatre in 1981: The National Union of Asian Students had called for a boycott of the week long event (cf. Carne 590). Reasons for this objection were “the presence of white actors in the Joint Stock company playing Asians and a suspicion of the playwright’s critical view of the older immigrant generation” (Coveney 590). Many reviewers criticized the play because according to them it shows a squat of characters and refuses to issue political prescriptions. The reviews of *East is East* in 1996/97 and of the film version in 1999 on the other hand are unanimously positive. There isn’t a set answer for this. Perhaps this could be a sign of an increasing self-confidence of Asian and Anglo-Asian people in Britain. Another answer may be that the white British audience is not offended by this play/film, because most of the

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19 Finally the meeting between the Khan family and the father of the future brides has according to Billington “a touch of Marx Brothers madness” (1507).

20 For further examples see the children’s behaviour before George enters the chip shop (11) or George’s antipathy to the Indian doctor (35).

21 Meenah mimicks him (11). Tariq says that their father looks more like Charlie Chaplin than Errol Flynn.
children are shown while they try to embrace an English way of living instead of questioning it.

To sum up one could say that Kureishi and Khan-Din revise the self/other dichotomy and replace it with a wide spectrum of very differentiated and ambiguous Asian and Anglo-Asian characters. The fact that they do not enforce stereotypes is finally also stressed, when one looks more closely at the plays’ respective title or more precisely at the relationship between the title and the play’s content. Both titles evoke associations which need to be revised at the end of the play at the latest. *Borderline* has many facets. The familiar geographical border between white British people and the Asian minority living in Southall is only one of the title’s implications: In this case Amina’s father and her family are punished for having crossed a borderline, as they are faced with racial assaults after having moved to a mainly white living area. But apart from this other imagined borders gain importance, i.e. the borderline between London-born Asians and those who remember another way of life and the faint line where integration is in danger of becoming loss of identity. Kureishi dramatizes the second generation’s position in a kind of racial no man’s land. He pays a lot of attention to the intersections and discontinuities between the terms self/other, inside/outside or home/exile and emphasizes the necessity to cross borders. 22

_East is East_ is the beginning of a quotation by the colonial writer Rudyard Kipling: “Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet till Earth and Sky stand presently at God’s great judgement seat” (*Sixty Poems* 97). Contrary to the message of this quotation the binary opposition between the East and West is broken down in the play. Khan-Din rejects the concept of cultural purity. George’s East is not the same as Mr Shah’s. 23 Apart from this the East is not shown as a homogeneous entity, as there are TV and radio reports about the war between India and Pakistan in the play. Moreover, the children and the mother of the Khan family are the living proof against separatism and of a multi- and transcultural life in the West. 24

Kureishi dramatizes multicultural life by pointing out cultural differences between the white British majority and the Asian community as well as differences within the Asian group. Khan-Din argues more from a transcultural point of view, stressing constant border crossings and negotiations of cultural positions. Most of the children in the Khan family are likely to agree with the author’s motto: “Take the best and leave

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22 Egerer argues in a similar direction, when she characterizes the meaning of the trope of the border in postcolonial novels: “direction does not matter so much as mobility itself” (Egerer 43). She thus indicates that the moment of transit is also very important and not only the territory on each side.

23 Mr Shah is the father of the two Pakistani women with whom George wants to arrange marriages.

24 The theatre critic Benedict Nightingale counters Kipling’s words with a very poignant comment: “Well, the two [i.e. the East and the West] have met increasingly often in this country, sometimes even within the same person’s veins” (Nightingale 1508).
the rest of each culture” (Olden 2).25 However, it is difficult to put this motto into prac­
tice as the children in East is East live through many conflicts.

If there is hybridization in the two plays at all, then this applies perhaps most to the value systems. The second generation of immigrants in particular struggles to find a way of living that does not offend their parents, while taking into account their post­
colonial experience in Great Britain.

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25 This development from a multicultural to a transcultural perspective has been elaborated by Som­
mer in his dissertation on the contemporary intercultural novel in Great Britain (cf. 46 manuscript).


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The Absence of the Intercultural? – The History of Anglo-Indian Relations in Ayub Khan-Din’s *Last Dance at Dum Dum* and Tom Stoppard’s *Indian Ink*

A great deal of expectation might be aroused for plays which deal with the historical aspects of Anglo-Indian relations from a British perspective. The movement towards an intercultural theatre has earned wide acclaim as one of the most important forces in contemporary theatre. Productions of directors like Peter Brook, Ariane Mnouchkine, Richard Schechner and Eugenio Barba have been received with great interest as central events in European theatrical life. Yet, these directors have also drawn ferocious attacks from postcolonial critics who have sensed that intercultural theatre continues the structures of colonial exploitation because “it often involves the parasitical activity of taking that which seems useful and unique from a culture and leaving the host culture with little except the dubious opportunity to seem to have been associated with a powerful and influential nation” (Gilbert and Tompkins 10). Peter Brook as the chief exponent of intercultural theatre is accused of “mining ‘exotic’ – usually ‘third world’ – cultures for theatrical raw materials” (ibid.). Even when an equal exchange between cultures is achieved, intercultural theatre still is accused of being irresponsibly unpolitical and devoted to Western universalism.

Of course, this has to be seen against the background of the sometimes very heated and often very political debate about postcolonialism, as inspired by Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. Like the high tide of novels by authors from countries of the former British Empire (and especially from India), a wave of postcolonial drama has reached European stages. The history of colonial intrusion, of indigenous resistance

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1 “Intercultural theatre” has been defined by Patrice Pavis as a performance which “creates hybrid forms drawing upon a more or less conscious and voluntary mixing of performance traditions traceable to distinct cultural areas. The hybridization is very often such that the original forms can no longer be distinguished” (8).

2 Pavis also acknowledges the problem (“the universal [can be] a dangerous and self-deceptive vision, denying the voice of the other in an attempt to transcend it” 79) but defends the universalist approach of Brook and others: “[T]here is an unhappy paradox here. By calling into question Western universalism, in order to give greater respect to cultural differences and their relativity, one comes to lose all sense of value and to level all cultural practices” (12).

3 Said’s theory and the political debate connected with it are, in turn, attacked by critics who defend Brook and Mnouchkine in saying that they “have gone beyond the simplistic debate about Orientalism . . . From a Eurocentric point of view, one might say that they have both avoided the pitfalls of a certain hypocritical and moralistic ‘political correctness’” (Pavis 79).
and ultimately of decolonisation features strongly in most of these plays, as history is generally seen as one of the most important means of constructing identity. As India has played a key-role in British colonialism, it might well be assumed that Anglo-Indian history would feature strongly in plays on British stages. Considering the abundance of plays in the last two decades engaging with historical problems, a vision of an ideal postcolonial/intercultural drama dealing with Anglo-Indian history from a British perspective could be conjured up.

The ideal play would incorporate postcolonial theory insofar as it would understand performance as a means of politics. It would battle neo-colonialism and would strengthen regional confidence, maybe in connection with the related issues of class and gender. It would thus be bent on dismantling imperialist perspectives and would re-narrate colonial history with a focus on hitherto marginalised groups. In doing so, the play would maybe even use native Indian languages instead of English (at least in parts). On a formal level, the play would work against the dominance of Western theatrical traditions by breaking the conventions of stage realism in employing alternative dramatic forms, possibly inspired by Indian theatrical traditions. In short — it would firmly resist colonial discourse and the dominance of the metropolis or colonial centre.

But this imagined ideal play would also include elements of intercultural theatre in the attempt to create a hybrid mixture of theatrical forms and narratives, creating something similar to Brook’s *Mahabharata*, but with a more concrete focus on colonial history. The ideal play would thus also be an example of cultural exchange on an equal basis at “the precise intersection of the two cultures and the two theatrical forms” (Pavis 4). In combining the battling approaches of intercultural theatre and postcolonialism, it would satisfy both the wish for political change and the utopian vision of world-wide intercultural communication on an equal basis.

Even if this means asking for quite a lot, it might be expected that there would be several playwrights at least aiming in this direction. Instead, the scarcity of plays that suit the context envisioned shows a discrepancy between theoretical work and actual playwriting. Of the few plays which address the issue of Anglo-Indian colonial history

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4 “Historical recuperation is one of the crucial aims and effects of many post-colonial plays, which frequently tell the other side of the conquering whites’ story in order to contest the official version of history that is preserved in imperial texts” (Gilbert and Tompkins 12). From a postcolonial perspective, interculturalism and postmodernism, on the other hand, “intersect at the point of the ahistorical, acultural synthesis that can also be perceived as neo-colonial” (10).

5 A good example would be the discussion of Anglo-Irish history in British and Irish plays like *Romans in Britain* by Howard Brenton, *Translations* and *Making History* by Brian Friel, and *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* by Frank McGuinness, to name but a few.

6 This would be according to the definition of “postcolonialism” by Gilbert/Tompkins, which states that postcolonialism “engages with, resists, and seeks to dismantle the effects of colonialism in the material, historical, cultural-political, pedagogical, discursive and textual domains” (2).
on the British stage, two plays by very influential playwrights might serve as an illustration: Indian Ink by Tom Stoppard and Last Dance at Dum Dum by Ayub Khan-Din. Both plays were produced quite recently at major London theatres (Indian Ink at the Aldwych in 1995 and Last Dance at Dum Dum at the Ambassadors in 1999).

Both plays are nothing like the imagined play I have sketched above. As far as the content of the plays is concerned, they ignore the political thrust of postcolonialism. Instead of presenting Indians firmly rooted in their own culture or as suffering under the dominance of a foreign culture, the plays show Indians attracted and fascinated by the benefits and qualities of Western culture. The plays do not undermine this cultural inequality. Instead of acknowledging and strengthening native culture in opposition to colonial discourse, they seem to confirm colonial perspectives in that they show sympathy for colonial nostalgia and do not abstain from the use of stereotypes.

A look at the theatrical form reveals that neither play incorporates Indian theatrical traditions. Last Dance at Dum Dum nowhere abandons the rules of Western stage realism. The setting is thoroughly realistic (which does not necessarily mean "very close to the reality of India"): a decaying colonial bungalow in the Calcutta suburb of Dum Dum. The set is the veranda and the walled garden of the house. The outside world is "off-stage." The stage shows only a limited space set aside from the offstage world of modern India, which is only present in the characteristic street sounds ("constant cars and bus horns, the cries of vendors and cawing of crows" Khan-Din 5), which are used as a very commonplace "Geräuschkulisse" or "audible back-cloth." This is a classic example of a closed setting as in a well-made play, here with a garden instead of the infamous drawing room. Throughout the play there is no change in setting. Unity of place is as well observed as unity of time. The dramatic action is reduced to a few days, and there is no break in chronological sequence.

The plot of Last Dance at Dum Dum centres almost exclusively on a group of ageing Anglo-Indians who live in the bungalow. Their life is dominated by decaying colonial grandeur, reminiscence and a proud "keeping up of appearances." But this mellow picture is threatened by violent riots outside the garden walls. Hindu nationalists fight in the streets with Muslims, students and other enemies. The "Jai Hind" movement is embodied by Mr Chakravatty, a neighbour who holds party meetings be-

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7 The impact of Stoppard's and Khan-Din's plays can be measured, apart from other indicators like box-office sales, by the interest of the film industry in their work. Khan-Din's play East is East (see also Stephanie Kramer's article in this book) has just been made into a highly successful film, and Stoppard has even received an Oscar for his script for Shakespeare in Love.

8 Even the fact that Indian Ink shows a British female writer attracted to Indian culture does not indicate an equal exchange as this might be seen as a typical instance of exoticism in the sense that the Orient is "revered as a symbol of Otherness upon which the fantasies, fears and desires of Western artists and the public could be stimulatingly presented" (Carlson 82).

9 "Anglo-Indians" is here used as a term to describe an ethnic minority of India in the sense of the official definition in the Indian constitution. An Anglo-Indian is "a person whose father or any other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent but who is domiciled within the territory of India" ("Introduction" to Last Dance, n.p.).
hind the jasmine-covered wall that separates his garden of from the Anglo-Indians: “Suddenly, we hear harsh, taped, martial music come from the house next door. A large orange flag rises up the flagpole to the cries of ‘Jai Hind’ from the people next door” (5). This is the opening action of the play and sets the pace for what is to happen later on. Chakravatty threatens to take over the garden because the Anglo-Indians owe him a considerable amount of money. He plans to convert the garden – now a venue for the Anglo-Indian’s colonial-style garden parties – into a shrine of Krishna, thus turning it into a religious (and nationalist) monument. The conflict reaches its peak when Chakravatty holds a party rally in town on the same evening as when the Anglo-Indians light the lanterns for their customary garden dance. Chakravatty’s meeting is attacked by infuriated students. Several party members get killed and Chakravatty only just escapes to his house and then over the garden wall. The Anglo-Indians decide to give him shelter and arm themselves against the raging mob, but when the students set Chakravatty’s house on fire, he climbs back to fight them and gets killed. In the same moment, Muriel Marsh, one of the Anglo-Indians who had long been suffering from a brain tumour, collapses and dies.

As can be seen from this synopsis, the plot has a strong melodramatic character. The play ends with the tragic last dance of the Anglo-Indians and with a typical melodramatic element, a double death. At the same time, the play follows the pattern of analytic drama, as the past of the Anglo-Indians and their various personal histories are revealed step by step.

A search for underlying structures proves very fruitful in this play, especially when the process of guiding the audience’s sympathy is put under scrutiny. The text makes quite clear who is to be seen negatively and who positively. Obviously, Last Dance at Dum Dum aims at producing sympathy for the Anglo-Indians, as their nostalgic clinging to the colonial past, which is at first mainly a source of mild comedy, becomes understandable against the background of their personal histories. In contrast to Mr Chakravatty, they appear as the heroes of the play, because Chakravatty is drawn as a stereotypical caricature of an Indian – a fat, greedy business-man who hides his unscrupulous aims behind a mask of oriental rhetoric:

CHAKRA . . . (He pumps himself up with pride) My members and I have discovered that our Lord Krishna tumbling across some rocks and from this spot grew a tree in this very garden or where the garden now stands. So we have to reclaim it, it is sacred to us, and we intend to build a Temple in celebration of that event. (42/43)

This receives the following dry answer:

Of your Lord Krishna stubbing his foot on a boulder? Well I’m no geological expert Mr Chakravatty, but it does seem much rockier on your side of the fence. Perhaps he stubbed it there. (43)

Apart from having the audience laughing and on their side here, the Anglo-Indians also appear as linguistically superior. Chakravatty not only speaks with a thick Indian accent, his behaviour is also different from that of the Anglo-Indians. He is a coward, which stands in contrast to the noble actions of the Anglo-Indians, who prove their
heroism when they arm themselves (albeit quite ineffectively) against the mob and display (stereo)typical British humanism and ‘stiff upper lip’ in giving shelter to Chakravatty.

LYDIA. Perhaps we should get you a drink.
JONES. I’ll get it. Brandy. (65)

CHAKRA. I have money you know, I can pay you, just allow me to stay here till morning.
DAPHNE. Mr Chakravatty, we don’t want your money, you can stay as long as you like. (66)

BERTIE. . . . I wouldn’t put a dog out on a night like this, nobody’s safe. I don’t agree with his politics . . . but there are limits . . . we’re not like him, are we – think, it’s not the way we were brought up to behave. (67)

It is telling that Chakravatty overcomes his fear when his house is set on fire. Although he asserts “I am ready to die for my beliefs” and “I would defend my religion to my last breath” (69), his property is the only thing he is prepared to die for, not his political or religious convictions. Thus his death appears as a piece of poetic justice.

Chakravatty’s counterpart is Lydia, the only English character in the play. In contrast to Chakravatty, she is drawn extremely positively. She is friendly towards the Anglo-Indians even when she is insulted. Although Muriel fears that the English woman might be arrogant (“I’m having no bloody English woman, Burrah mem-sahib-ing me again: It was bad enough when they ruled the bloody place” 23), Lydia turns out to be nothing like a mem-sahib. She considers herself more Indian than English (“India’s my home, I’ve lived more of my life here than I have lived in England” 31). She expertly helps Muriel through one of her epileptic fits (“MURIEL. Just my luck. Life saved by a bloody English woman!” 35) and, most important of all, she is the one who effectively frustrates Mr Chakravatty’s plans for the garden by “accidentally” pouring a drink over the contract the Anglo-Indians are about to sign. This action stands in contrast of the ineffective opposition of Muriel, which consists merely of insults and attacking Chakravatty with an umbrella. The other Anglo-Indians muster little or no resistance against the take-over. A well-established constellation is constructed: the vicious natives against the capable, rational and effective English and the ineffectual, emotional, and fatalistic, but nevertheless likeable Anglo-Indians.

The sympathy for the Anglo-Indians is increased by the situation they have to face, which is similar to, for example, the experiences of Indian/Pakistani immigrants in Britain. Instead of being a dominant class, the Anglo-Indians are a threatened minority. They are even confronted with open racism. When he is asked what the doctors say about Muriel’s illness, her husband Bertie replies:

BERTIE. What do doctors know? She shouldn’t be walking according to them. One little sod said it was a problem ‘inherent in people of mixed blood.’
JONES. What did you say to that?

BERTIE. Say? I didn’t say anything. I did what any Anglo-Indian in my place would have done. I slapped his bloody face.
BERTIE smiles at this, so does MR JONES. (17)
In what is probably an intended analogy to the description of colonised people in post-colonial drama, the culture of the Anglo-Indians (represented by the garden dance) is shown as endangered and silenced by the majority (Hindu) culture.

Compared to this, Tom Stoppard’s *Indian Ink* appears more moderate, less biased and less direct. The play’s structure is similar to Stoppard’s *Arcadia*; both plays work on two time-levels, as scenes from an historical past interact with scenes situated in present-day surroundings. The scenes often overlap and comment on each other.

In *Indian Ink*, the ‘historical past’-level narrates the story of the visit of an English poet, Flora Crewe, to India in 1930. She has been invited to give a series of lectures on ‘Literary Life in London.’ In Jummapur she meets the local painter Nirad Das, who wishes to paint her portrait. While the picture is being painted, the two develop an intimate and ultimately sexual relationship. Nirad Das abandons his first portrait and paints a second, this time a nude picture. At the same time, Flora gets acquainted with the Rajah of Jummapur and with Captain Durance, a junior official at the Residency, who proposes marriage to her. In the end, Flora leaves for the Himalayas but dies soon afterwards. More than fifty years later (and this is shown in the parallel ‘present-day’ scenes), Flora’s younger sister Eleanor is visited first by Eldon Pike (an American scholar and would-be biographer of Flora) and then by Anish Das, the son of Nirad Das. While Pike goes to India to unravel the juicy details of Flora’s biography, Anish Das and Eleanor piece together the story of his father and her sister. They decide to keep the secret.

As is to be expected of Stoppard, the play is highly intertextual. It contains various references to Western literature, most notably to E. M. Forster, Emily Eden and Rudyard Kipling. But, like *Last Dance at Dum Dum*, it does not allude to Indian drama in any way, although it contains references to Indian mythology, poetics and painting. A fusion of Indian and British culture, as envisioned by the theorists of intercultural drama, is only indirectly present in Flora and Nirad’s discussions about poetry and about the differences between Indian and British painting. The pictures painted by Nirad Das in the course of the play present an intercultural exchange and mixture of cultures which the play as a whole does not attempt. Stoppard sticks to Western theatrical and literary traditions and, most importantly, to his own style. Postcolonial critics might see in Stoppard’s play exactly the kind of playful, indirect and non-political

10 Nirad’s first portrait of Flora is described by her sister as “fairly ghastly, like an Indian cinema poster” (10). Flora complains about this portrait: “Can’t you paint me without thinking of Rossetti or Millais? Especially without thinking of Holman Hunt” (44). Nirad Das replies: “I like the Pre-Raphaelites because they tell stories. That is my tradition, too. I am Rajastani. Our art is narrative art” (44). About his second portrait he says himself: “A good joke, is it not? A Rajaput miniature, by Nirad Das! . . . A quite witty pastiche—” (73).

11 The playful character of Stoppard’s approach towards the cultural mix of India and England is best encapsulated in the Anglo-Indian word-game between Flora and Nirad Das:

*FLORA:* While having tiffin on the verandah of my bungalow I spilled kedgeree on my dungarees and had to go to the gymkhana in my pyjamas looking like a coolie.
The Absence of the Intercultural?

approach towards colonial history which makes a distinction between postcolonial writing and postmodern writing necessary:

While time frames of both post-colonialism and post-modernism generally intersect, and postmodern literary devices are often found in post-colonial texts, the two cannot be equated. Part of postmodernism's brief is the dismantling of the often unwritten but frequently invoked rules of genre, authority, and value ... post-colonial texts embrace a more specifically political aim: that of continued destabilisation of the cultural and political authority of imperialism. (Gilbert/Tompkins 3)

But what must be most irritating in the postcolonial context is that Stoppard describes a dominance of Western culture. The Indians in Indian Ink are infatuated by Western culture:

DILIP: (Cheerfully) ... Fifty years of Independence and we are still hypnotised! Jackets and ties must be worn! English-model public schools for the children of the elite, and the voice of Bush House is heard in the land. Gandhi would fast again, I think. Only, this time he'd die. (60)

As can be seen from the stage direction “cheerfully,” this is not an embittered critique of neo-colonialism. Not much seems to have changed since the 1930s when Flora observed of her Indian audience:

[I]t’s so moving, they read the New Statesman and the TLS as if they were the Bible in parts, well I don’t mean the Bible but you know what I mean, and they know who wrote what about whom; it’s like children with their faces jammed to the railings of an unattainable park. (6)

Should Stoppard’s play (and Last Dance at Dum Dum) thus be dismissed as an example of incurable reactionism, as a proof of the persistence of colonial attitudes? Do the two plays show an ignorance of Indian matters, which results from a necessarily biased British perspective? Even if, following a strict postmodern reading, one could arrive at

DAS: I was buying chutney in the bazaar when a thug escaped from the choky and killed a boxwallah for his loot, creating a hullabaloo and landing himself in the mulligatawny.

FLORA: [went doolally at the durbar and was sent back to Blighty in a dooley feeling rather dikki with a cup of char and a chit for a chotapeg.

DAS: Yes, and the burra sahib who looked so pukka in his topee sent a coolie to the memshib –

FLORA: No, no. You can’t have memsahib and sahib, that’s cheating – and anyway I’ve already said coolie.

DAS: I concede, Miss Crewe. You are Hobson-Jobson champion. (18/19)

The question of language as a indicator of cultural exchange and colonial dominance is naturally central to postcolonial criticism. “Like his/her version of history, the coloniser’s language has assumed a position of dominance which must be interrogated and dismantled as part of the decolonising project” (Gilbert and Tompkins 12). Stoppard’s language game must therefore appear doubly irritating, since it not only approaches the political matter in a playful way, but it also inverts the usual structure in examining the influence of the language of the colonised on the language of the coloniser.

12 See also footnote 4.
such a conclusion, I cannot entirely subscribe to this. I think the plays make a valid point in questioning dogmatic postcolonial theory and in dismissing "intercultural" philanthropy and the insistence on cultural equality.

The plays can be seen as an attempt to make simplified judgements complex again. Nowhere does this become more clear than where the plays interrogate the use or abuse of history and historical key terms. One scene in *Last Dance at Dum Dum* deals with the removal of a statue of Lord Mayo, a British colonial official:

LYDIA. Now remind me Violet, which one was he?
VIOLET quotes from the statue.
LYDIA. Oh, I remember him. Stabbed by a Pathan in the Andamans.
MR CHAKRA VATTY manages to hold his temper . . .
CHAKRA. Fortunately we 'Indians' are no longer mourning or indignant to the political assassination of an oppressor. And since we have been independent from the British for 35 years, I think it is high time that he was knocked off his perch. (47)

The scene exhibits the battling viewpoints on colonial history. Violet and Chakravatty both take a 'political' view of the past. Violet heavily relies on colonial perspective and discourse as she quotes from the statue. Throughout the play, her extreme Britishness is the target of (admittedly friendly) ridicule. For her, the dismantling of the statue is "an act of postcolonial hooliganism" (48). Chakravatty, on the other hand, argues from a postcolonial perspective when he calls for resistance to colonial and neo-colonial oppression. Yet his position is undermined by his abuse of postcolonial arguments for purely nationalist and personal ends:

We may even replace the statue of Gandhi as well. The youth of our country should be seeing positive images of a stronger Hindustan, a martial Hindustan. One that will stand against all her enemies, both foreign and domestic. (48)

A similar case is Chakravatty's abuse of religion and postcolonial catch-phrases concerning the take-over of the garden: "[W]e're discovering an identity, which has been squashed for hundreds of years. This garden is part of that identity" (43). His racist remarks about the lower castes reveal his true character, "[t]onight showed that we cannot treat these people as fellow citizens, they can't enjoy the same rights as we do . . . they're filth from the lowest castes" (68). This stands in stark contrast to his mystification of the death of his friends (which is not far from Violet's view of Lord Mayo's death): "Tonight they became martyrs. They blessed the ground with their blood" (68).

The Englishwoman Lydia's reaction to the "statue incident" underlines the point Khan-Din seems to make. Her approach is commonsensical instead of dogmatic. She doesn't have the martyr/oppressor at her fingertips for rhetorical purposes. When reminded about the person, she remembers details instead of political discourse.
Stoppard makes a similar point, but shows less obvious partiality. He questions prefixed convictions when he uses key-words like “Macaulay.” Although the name invokes, in this context, Macaulay’s infamous sentence “that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia”\(^{13}\), Stoppard makes Nirad Das say:

\[\text{DAS: ... I would like to write like Macaulay.}\\
\text{FLORA: Oh dear.}\\
\text{DAS: I have to thank Lord Macaulay for English you know. It was his idea when he was in the government of India that English should be taught to us all. He wanted to supply the East India Company with clerks, but he was sowing dragon’s teeth. Instead of babus he produced lawyers, journalists, civil servants, he produced Gandhi! We have so many, many languages, you know, that English is the only language the nationalists can communicate in! That’s a very good joke on Macaulay, don’t you think? (19)\]

It becomes obvious that Stoppard does indeed present a complex view of Anglo-Indian history, one which is not dominated by political conviction but by an interest in the paradoxes which the conflicting views present. The approach of Stoppard (and of Khan-Din) is probably best encapsulated in the following quotation:

\[\text{ANISH: ... In Jumnapur we were ‘loyal’ as you would say, we had been loyal to the British right through the first War of Independence.}\\
\text{MRS SWAN: The ...? What war was that?}\\
\text{ANISH: The Rising of 1857}^{14}.\\
\text{MRS SWAN: Oh, you mean the Mutiny. What did you call it?}\\
\text{ANISH: Dear Mrs Swan, Imperial history is merely ... no, no – I promise you I didn’t come to give you a history lesson. (Indian Ink 17)}\]

The lecture which is bound to follow about imperial terminology and the need to change it is stopped in its tracks. Like Anish Das, Stoppard doesn’t give a history lesson in the sense of teaching “the right view.” Instead, he playfully examines the various links and twists of Anglo-Indian relations and history.

\[\text{MRS SWAN: You spotted it. In India we had pictures of coaching inns and foxhunting, and now I’ve landed up in Shepperton I’ve got elephants and prayer wheels cluttering up the window ledges, and the tea-tray is Nepalese brass. One could make a comment about human nature but have a slice of Battenburg instead. (Indian Ink 24)}\]


\(^{14}\)The significance of this date for the shared history of Britain and India cannot be overestimated: “There can be no doubt ... that one of the most significant ideological turning-points ... came with the Indian ‘Mutiny’ of 1857. For the rest of the century this was seen as a great moral turning-point, a defining moment of empire when it faced its greatest test and survived” (MacKenzie 42). In the 19th century, the historical events surrounding the ‘Mutiny’ and especially the ‘Siege of Lucknow’ were turned into an imperial myth which served to justify British rule in India (see Nunning). Consequently, the ‘Mutiny’ has become one of the key examples of postcolonial revisionism of colonial history, even from a British perspective, as in James G. Farrell’s novel The Siege of Krishnapur.
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Significantly and ironically enough the works I will be discussing would probably not have seen the light of day if it weren't for the dire conditions their writers encountered while actually trying to work in the profession of their first choice as actresses. Though a generation apart and different in nationality and cultural heritage the stories of the Indian-British Meera Syal (born 1964) and the African-American Anna Deavere Smith (born 1951) still sound remarkably alike. Syal who studied English and Drama at Manchester University recalls of her early ambitions to be an actress that the only visible Asian woman in the media, who could act as her role model at the time, was a "barely literate woman wearing a sari, in the sitcom Mind Your Language – who spent most of her limited screen time knitting and saying golly gosh" (Meera Syal). In auditions she was usually asked to portray the stereotypical roles of victims of arranged marriages, downtrodden shopkeeper’s wives or harassed NHS doctors. Smith’s experiences in mid 1970s New York were equally frustrating. Both artists were forced to realise early on that in order to work in their fields they would have to create work for themselves. So, as Sydne Mahone puts it, "rather than die on the vine as actors, they took up the pen for artistic survival” (xxix).

Calling their ensuing careers mere “artistic survival,” however, would be a gross understatement. Both women have been achieving a high measure of acclaim not only in one but in several fields. Apart from her credits as an actress and a novelist Syal is the co-writer and performer of the award-winning Anglo-Asian sketch show Goodness Gracious Me. Smith’s achievements range from her acting activities on Broadway and Off-Broadway to her TV and film appearances. Her activities as an author and performer are demonstrated most successfully in a series of works called On the Road: A Search for American Character. One of the pieces called Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights, Brooklyn and Other Identities and the Anglo-Indian show Goodness Gracious Me will be the focus of this paper.

In view of this conference’s theme and at the same time in exasperation with some of the notions of postcolonial theory such as its – as the cultural theorist San Juan (1998) notes – undue emphasis on the indeterminacy of language and its valorisation of cultural differences as an end in itself, I would like to look at Syal’s and Smith’s work bearing in mind the following two questions: first, in what way can theatre (and for that matter art in general) help in bringing about an intercultural identity that is – as the anthropologist Constantin von Barloewen puts it – “informed by its cognitive, affective, and behavioral flexibility so that it can be constantly reconciled with new

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CHRISTIANE SCHLOTE

cultures.” And second, in what way can the artistic manifestations of a particular region (in this case metropolitan London and New York) be seen as reflections of their respective societies at large.

One of the trademarks of British culture has been its special brand of humour immortalised in its many popular and well-loved comedy classics such as Monty Python, Not the Nine o’Clock News, Fawlty Towers, or Yes, Minister. Despite the British people’s obvious love of these shows, however, it took some time to convince the BBC TV commissioners of Goodness Gracious Me’s potential to win over not only ethnic but mainstream audiences. By staging a live performance called Peter Sellers Is Dead (the American equivalent to this ironic use of a stereotypical representation of a people would be the title of an anthology of Asian-American literature called Charlie Chan Is Dead published in 1993 by the Filipino-American artist Jessica Hagedorn) however, the all-Indian-British cast managed to convince the BBC’s commissioners and the first all-Asian sit-com ever to air on British television and now called Goodness Gracious Me was born. After having been tested as a series on Radio Four in 1996 the television version was broadcast a year later on BBC 2 and it toured the country in a version for the stage in 1999.

After having attracted an audience number of over four million from across all racial boundaries Goodness Gracious Me is now seen as a flagship for British-Asian comedy. Such an exposed position comes almost inevitably with the much debated ‘burden of representation.’ With still only few images of the Indian-British community apart from ‘curry and corner shops’ around, the question of who should produce which images remains unanswered. The experiences of ethnic communities on both sides of the Atlantic, however, are amazingly similar. In her semi-autobiographical novel, Anita and Me, Syal writes of the life of an Indian family in a mining village in the British Midlands: “According to the newspapers and television, we simply did not exist. If a brown or black face ever did appear on TV, it stopped us all in our tracks. ‘Daljit! Quick!’ papa would call, and we would crowd round and coo over the walk-on in some detective series, some long-suffering actor in a gaudy costume with a goodness-gracious-me accent . . . and welcome him into our home like a long-lost relative” (Syal 165). The Tony Award-winning Asian-American actor R.D. Wong recounts the same experience: “When we were growing up, when an Asian person came on TV, somebody would say: ‘Come quick! Come into the living room. There’s an Asian person on TV.’ And everybody would run and go, with this bizarre fascination: ‘Oh wow, look at that. That’s amazing’” (Southgate 53f.).

But not only is this problem amplified by the mass media. It is also – as stated by the editors of the latest Companion to Postcolonial Studies – a trend within postcolonial studies itself where contemporary writers are valued “‘as if’ they represented the long histories of their colonized societies. So Salman Rushdie is India and Rigoberta Menchú is Latin America.” According to the editors “postcolonial studies only suffers by this reification of the Western craze for otherness” (Schwarz 15). Once again, a comparison with the first Asian-American sit-com called All-American Girl reveals some interesting parallels. In portraying the history of the show which evolved in 1994
Satire and Sociology

out of the stand-up comedy act of the young Korean-American comic Margaret Cho, Martha Southgate observes "every time a new culture is admitted to this shiny world [of TV], it's a form of validation. This cultural moment happened for African-Americans with the extraordinary success of "The Cosby Show." A lot of people connected with "All-American Girl" and a lot of people outside of it are hoping, with some trepidation, that the show can do the same for the Asian-American community." When pitching an earlier idea for an Asian-American sit-com the show's co-executive producer was turned away with a remark similar to the BBC's first reaction towards GGM, "But where are we going to find five funny Asians?" (Southgate 54)

The British response to such an incredulous remark is the cast of Goodness Gracious Me consisting of the four stand-up comedians and actors Meera Syal, Nina Wadia, Kulvinder Ghir and Sanjeev Bhaskar. Syal, Gupta and Ghir had already worked together on The Real McCoy, the BBC's first attempt at launching a black comedy series. Since The Real McCoy was based on the experience of Afro-Caribbeans, however, the Indian-British performers wanted to create their own show. The script is written by different writing teams but largely by the four actors as well as Sharat Sardana and Richard Pinto. In trying to introduce a more heterogeneous image of Indian-British culture the Goodness Gracious Me team tries to subvert, rather than resort to common stereotypes. At an 'Asian Inspiration Event' at Cambridge University last year Syal and Bhaskar emphasised the importance to start with comedy and stereotypes as indispensable tools and worry about political and social implications later. But even though the cast might emphasise Goodness Gracious Me's first priority as "making people laugh," the question, recently posed by The Guardian, of whether the show's success is a sign that British society has changed or whether Goodness Gracious Me is just very funny, is, indeed, a central one. Before examining this question any further, however, I shall try to give an impression of the nature of the show as best possible within the confinement of a paper. In order to be able to look at the variety of the show's material in closer detail I have divided the sketches roughly into the following three segments: First, sketches of a 'universal' nature, second, sketches parodying TV, movie and popular culture formats and third, 'reversal' sketches, mocking English as well as Indian and Indian-British society.

The 'universal' sketches are represented by regular stock characters that are drawn from an Indian-British experience but are universally appealing. For example, there is Mr 'Everything comes from India' who tries to convince his fellow-citizens of the Indian origin of English literature and language. There are also a number of 'Parent-Child'-sketches which mostly live of the clash between the older generations with their traditional (i.e., Indian or Pakistani) and the younger generations with their modern (i.e., cosmopolitan) views and lifestyles. The family-sketches are dominated by what Salman Rushdie in his novel Midnight's Children describes as "melodrama piling upon melodrama" (Rushdie 188). Rushdie's "wailing women" return in these sketches as overanxious wives, mothers, mothers-in-law and aunts. Whether the family goes out for a drive or a picnic, the smallest incident is enough to turn the whole endeavour into a melodrama - exhausting for the people involved but highly entertaining for the
audience. As in one sketch where the parents welcome their son home from work with a tray of tea obviously laid out for a special visitor. Their son sees through their plan immediately and tells them: “No, not another one of these setups. You know I’m not interested in an arranged marriage” whereupon the parents answer: “We’ve taken your view into consideration. We’re not going to force you into anything. All we ask for is compromise. For you to have a little respect for the traditional ways. So then, if you won’t have an arranged marriage, at least consider an arranged shag.”

In another sketch Muslim parents are confronted with their son’s conversion to Judaism. Once again the sketch is very viewer-friendly, especially to a Western audience, in that it points out the generational differences within a Muslim Indian-British family by showing the son as a Woody Allen-lookalike, complete with corduroy jacket, black-rimmed glasses and tousled hair who tries to convince his despairing parents:

I thought you’d be pleased to see me happy through spirituality. Unlike most young men of my generation who find happiness through pornography and drugs, which I’d been tempted to use had we not been related to every pharmacist and news agent from here to Nuremberg. And we still have so much in common. Jews don’t eat pork. You say halal, we say kosher. You say salam, I say shalom. Jews and Muslims are both circumcised. Haven’t you ever noticed the uncanny resemblance between a rabbi and a Muslim cleric? The long beard, the glasses, the robes, never picking up the cheque? Don’t you see, it’s almost the same.

Apart from being very entertaining and accessible since similar conflicts occur in most other communities, these sketches also convey their intercultural information – in this case about Indian Muslims, a group the sociologist Tariq Modood sees especially targeted as he believes “Muslimphobia to be at the heart of contemporary British and European cultural racism” (163) – without being openly pedagogic or preachy. These jokes on the whole do not require a specific cultural background of their viewers in order to be understood. They do not depend on the characters being Indian, British or any other specific nationality but on their being recognisable types – grossly overdrawn for comic effect – who can be found to varying degrees in every society.

The second segment of sketches taken together appears like an alternative prime time TV programme. Modelled on the typical nocturnal fare offered by British and American TV stations, Goodness Gracious Me offers spoofs of series, movies, entertainment magazines and commercials in their shows. On the one hand, they renew old-fashioned comic formats simply by substituting former British characters with Indian-British ones. On the other hand, they mainly draw elements from popular culture such as Syal’s portrayal of ‘Smita Smitten, the Showbiz Kitten,’ the extravagant, over-the-top host of a Bollywood gossip show (“Coughing up those precious furballs of showbiz gossip onto the dowdy carpet of your dull little lives”) and the Techno-Bangra ‘Kiss My-Chuddie-Boys’ whose MTV-like act, ironically enough, even as a parody became popular throughout Britain immediately after its first broadcast. Featuring Bhaskar and Ghir as the Indian-British equivalent of black American rappers their video incorporates all the insignia of MTV culture known and popular worldwide. In fact, one of the shots in the video is emblematic of Goodness Gracious Me’s strategy of mixing elements of Indian, British and other cultures: it shows sari-clad Syal and
Wadia dancing on the banks of the Thames with the Tower Bridge in the background, intoning an Indian song when Bhaskar and Gir dressed in typical hiphop streetwear burst between them rapping “Work on your karma and when your uncle says, ‘Do your studies,’ we say ‘Uncle, kiss my chuddies.’”

A common element of all these sketches is that they are constructed to poke fun at both, Indian and British society. The third segment of sketches, however, is more heavily geared towards exposing racist elements within British culture. Goodness Gracious Me’s producer Anil Gupta calls the kind of jokes directly aimed at an English audience “reversal jokes” and explains: “The reversal jokes were Anglo-Saxon-friendly jokes. Jokes we knew white people would understand. They were entry-level sketches” (“Mirth of a Nation”). To avoid being directly confrontational Goodness Gracious Me’s writers smartly couch their intentions in sketches almost too hilarious to provoke any serious offence. The most popular sketch of this category is the already classic ‘Going Out For An English’ from which the following extract is taken. The scene: A Friday night in Bombay. A group of young Indian people around a table at the ‘Bernie Inn.’

Nitin: How come every Friday night we end up in the ‘Bernie Inn’?
Sanjeev: Cause that’s what you do, innit? You go out, you get tanked up on lassis and you go for an English.
Nina: And anyway, I love English food.
Kulvinder: Get off. You just fancy the waiter.

Laughter and cheers from around the table.
Meera: Shut up. He’s coming, he’s coming.

Waiter enters.
Sanjeev: Here we go. Alright, mite. We’re ready to order now.
Nina: Hasn’t he got lovely pale skin, it’s really nice and pasty, isn’t it.
Meera: And you know what they say about white men, don’t you?
Nitin: Alright, alright, what are we having?
Sanjeev: Right, James, first up we’ll have, what ten, twelve ...
Others: Make it twelve.
Sanjeev: Twelve bread rolls and also bring us a dish of that fancy stuff.
Nitin: Butter.
Sanjeev: Yes, butter as well. OK, main course, what’s everyone want?
Kulvinder: What is the blandest thing on the menu?

Waiter: The scampi is particularly bland, sir.
Kulvinder: And that’s totally tasteless, yeah? Right, I’ll have that. And bring a knife and fork.

Everyone cheers and whistles.
Sanjeev: Yeah, well, I have the same as him, right, except I’m also going to have a prawn cocktail. What are you having, Nina?
Nina: Could I just have the chicken curry.
Nitin: Nina, come on, it’s an English restaurant. You got to have something English.
Nina: Oh, Nitin, you know I don’t like it too bland.
Kulvinder: Well, have something that is just a bit bland. Hey, James, what have you got that is not totally tasteless?

Waiter: The steak and kidney pie is only a little bit ...
Kulvinder: There you go, steak and kidney pie \(\text{[pronounced: 'pee']\}.\) Have that, Nina.
Nina: No, no, you know what it does to me. Blocks me right up. I won’t go to the toilet for a week.
Sanjeev: Exactly, yaar, that’s the point of having an English, innit.
Sanjeev: OK, ok, so that’s two scampis \(\text{[pronounced: 'scampies']\},\) one Cod le Mornay \(\text{[pronounced: 'codly morny']\},\) and a steak and kidney pie \(\text{[pronounced: 'pee']\}.\) And chips?
Nitin: Four chips.
Nina: No, I want two.
Nitin: No, four, four ...
Sanjeev: So that’ll be 24 plates of chips.
Waiter: I think, you might have ordered too much, sir.
Kulvinder: What do you mean too much food. Who bloody asked you?
Nitin: Just bring us the bloody food or I’ll do a moonie.

The rowdy, aggressive and paternalistic behaviour of the Indian group of dinner guests mirrors the behaviour of some British guests ‘going for an Indian’ and their display of rude and abusive attitudes towards the staff and owners of Indian restaurants in Britain. The same kind of everyday racism is exposed in a parody of British travel shows. In India’s “favourite travel show” called ‘Backpacks’ the Indian host accompanies five students from New Delhi travelling around England for a year. Their adventures ironically mirror the most typical stories usually told by Western travellers exploring India. Hence, the students complain about inefficient English trains (“The English train system is a bit primitive. I mean, you never know how long you have to wait”) and are shocked when they encounter “so many beggars” – in this case mainly buskers in London’s Covent Garden. They advice viewers neither to buy from street vendors (“It’s not safe. Avoid the meat completely”) nor to forget their jabs before setting off because “[y]ou can’t come to England and not expect to get the flu” and they recommend that “to see the real England, you have to go to the villages. I’ve spent a week travelling around a place called Surrey and it was a different world absolutely. There was a small village called Guildford and you know, there were some people there who’ve never even seen a brown face.”

By turning the experiences of Indian-British people upside down and thereby mirroring white English people’s behaviour within their own context and, furthermore, by refusing to portray themselves as helpless victims the writers of *Goodness Gracious Me* work against the two principal mechanisms Paul Gilroy identified as pushing ‘race’ “outside of history and into the realm of natural, inevitable events”: the idea of blacks as a series of problems and their definition as forever victims (11). On a more aggressive note *Goodness Gracious Me* also holds up the mirror to their own community in pointing out, for example, the futility of total assimilation as in the sketches featuring the couples Dinesh and Shashi Kapoor and Sanjit and Veena Rabindranath who insist on being called Dennis and Charlotte Cooper and St. John and Vanessa Robinson. Inevitably, the show has also attracted criticism from parts of the Asian community who felt that at times the show was mocking religious symbols of the Hindu faith or that it gave the English the opportunity to laugh at the Indian-British community without thinking about it. The playwright Ayub Khan Din once responded to a similar criticism
that it wasn't his job to show Asians in a good light or a bad light but to get inside them (Nathan 18).

Apart from *Goodness Gracious Me*’s engagement in critical parody, the often audacious way in which it approaches especially confrontational issues such as gender, ethnicity or class outside and *within* their communities is also a clear indication of the group’s socialization as first-generation Indian-British. By having been born and/or raised in Britain their relationship with Britain as well as with India is fundamentally different than that of their parents. The writers and performers of *Goodness Gracious Me* share this experience with other hyphenated groups around the world and it is that which accounts for what I have called the ‘universal’ quality of their sketches. As Lisa Schiffman explains in her personal narrative *generation j*: “My own Jewish identity was impossible to map. We were a generation of Jews who grew up with television, with Barbie, with rhinoplasty as a way of life. Assimilation wasn’t something we strove for; it was the condition into which we were born. We could talk without using our hands. When we used the word schlepp, it sounded American” (4).

Similarly, the performers and writers of *Goodness Gracious Me*, even though their material is drawn from their immediate surroundings, are influenced by a variety of sources which are not at all limited to an Indian-British environment. Popular culture elements from Britain, India and elsewhere are some of the most important pillars of their sketch constructions. A recurring formula is the use of British TV and Indian movie formats as well as a combination of the two. In this respect John Storey’s observations about British rap artists can also be applied to *Goodness Gracious Me*: “They engage in postmodernist pla(y)giarism, not as an end in itself, but to construct compelling critiques of the everyday racism of British society. Their intertextual play of quotations is not the result of aesthetic exhaustion, but the telling combination of found fragments from a cultural repertoire which by and large denies their existence. These are not the fragments of modernism stored against aesthetic ruin, but fragments combined to damn those who have sought to deny them a voice within British culture” (175).

Voicing the concerns of those affected by everyday racism in American society is also the primary goal of the second artist I would like to present. The renowned drama critic Robert Brustein calls her a gifted actress and mimic but also a sensitive sociologist. Indeed, onstage, Anna Deavere Smith breaks the boundaries between the arts and social sciences. Even though Smith seems to be worlds apart from Syal and her fellow-actors in tone, focus, and cultural references Smith also chose a format which would enable her to offer the audience a more differentiated perspective of urban conflicts and challenges such as the Crown Heights riots in New York in 1991 or the Los Angeles riots in 1992. Smith uses an innovative combination of investigative reporting, acting and technology such as documentary film and video to present the many different points of view of those involved in urban upheaval. She started interviewing people caught in sudden and violent situations such as the Crown Heights and Los Angeles riots and reconveying each individual’s words almost religiously onstage including people’s gestures and silences. Smith traces her fascination with people and words
back to her own childhood and adolescence when her grandfather told her that if one says a word often enough, the word becomes you, and you become the word. Her interest in the speech of regular people is based on her desire to do something “that had to do with listening to people and trying to cause peace” (Clines C6). In her one-woman show *Fires in the Mirror* Smith put her thoughts to the test. And she managed to convince audiences and critics alike with her balanced and compassionate portrayal of the harsh, complex and often contradictory opinions and personalities of a selection of people involved in the Crown Heights riots.

As in her later piece *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* in which Smith portrays 46 points of view, *Fires in the Mirror* operates on Smith’s strength of capturing 29 voices without being judgmental. Before having a closer look at some of these points of views let me briefly sketch out the background of the Crown Heights riots. Apart from Williamsburg and Borough Park Crown Heights is one of three distinct Hasidic Jewish enclaves in Brooklyn, New York. Densely populated the pious Hasidic community often live on the same streets as the other dominant communities of the district: African and Caribbean American people. The Crown Heights riots began on August 19, 1991, when one of the cars in a three-car procession carrying the spiritual leader of the Lubavitcher Hasidic community ran a red light, hit another car, swerved onto the sidewalk and killed Gavin Cato, a seven-year-old boy from Guyana and also injured his cousin Angela. After rumours spread that a Hasidic-run ambulance helped the driver and the passengers but not the children, confrontations between members of the black communities and the Lubavitcher community ensued. On the same evening a group of young black men stabbed Yankel Rosenbaum, a 29-year-old Hasidic scholar from Australia who happened to be in Brooklyn at the time. Four days of violence, burning and looting followed. The black community charged that the Lubavitchers have enjoyed preferential treatment from the police and other city agencies whereas the Jewish community charged the black community with anti-Semitism.

After months of conversations and conducting interviews Smith tried to portray people from all sides of the conflict: from black activists such as Al Sharpton and Sonny Carson to Rabbi Joseph Spielman, an anonymous Lubavitcher Woman and the brother of Yankel Rosenbaum as well as the father of the slain boy. Trying to capture each character in his or her particular rhythm and cadence of language and gesture, Smith starts transcending both negative and positive imagery as, for example, seen by the juxtaposition of the accounts of the accident as recalled by Rabbi Joseph Spielman and by an Anonymous Young Black Man.

**Rabbi Joseph Spielman:**

A car driven by an individual — a Hasidic individual — went through the intersection, was hit by another car, thereby causing it to go onto the sidewalk. The driver . . . steered at the building, so as to get out of the way of the people . . . . But regrettably one child was killed, and another child was wounded. Um, seeing what happened, he jumped out of the car and, realizing there may be a child under the car, he tried to physically lift the car from the child. Well, as he was doing this the Afro-Americans were beating him already. He was beaten so much had needed stitches in the scalp and the face, fifteen or sixteen stitches. (Smith 67f.)
Anonymous Young Black Man:
He broke the stop light, they never get arrested. First he hit a car, right, then tore a whole front fender off the car, and then we was like Oh my god, man, look at the kids. And he was actin' like he was dyin'. Wan nothin wrong with him, wan nothing wrong with him. They say that we beat up on that man that he had to have stitches because of us. You don't come out of an accident like that unmarked, without a scratch. The most he got from us was slapped by a little kid. (Smith 81f.)

Even though, as Smith recalls, one major audience concern voiced was whether she was creating caricatures or stereotypes by, for example, being “easier” on the Jewish or “easier” on the Black community, according to Smith these judgements can also be seen as “indications of the uneasiness we have about seeing difference displayed” (xxxvii). Unlike TV news bites her method of probing deeper into urban racial and class conflicts does not yield ready-made answers. On the contrary, as one critic’s impression after having seen the whole play proves: “As the performer evoked one speaker after another to persuade us of the rightness of his or her point of view, any preconceptions about the controversial incident quickly crumbled, and we were left wanting to know more, ask more, hear more about the extraordinarily complicated emotions and beliefs of the people caught in the middle of longstanding cultural fears” (Robinson 20).

Returning to the questions of the beginning of this paper, perhaps it is exactly this process of the ‘crumbling of preconceptions’ which Goodness Gracious Me and Fires in the Mirror might be able to induce. Not more but also not less. Even though both, Syal and Smith, see themselves as dramatic artists and social activists (Syal is, for example, a supporter of the Southall Community Drug Education Project and Smith is the Founder and Director of the Institute on the Arts & Civic Dialogue in Cambridge, MA), Goodness Gracious Me as well as Fires in the Mirror cannot be counted as pieces of, by and for a specific community. Hence the traces they might leave within one specific community — if any at all — will be minimal. Shows such as Goodness Gracious Me will not reduce the ever increasing number of racial incidents in Britain (interestingly enough, however, the police are using Goodness Gracious Me-videos as part of their training) or the unproportional low income level of Pakistani and Bangladeshi households. Nor did a show such as Fires in the Mirror do anything to help prevent the shooting of four Lubavitch students in 1994 by a Lebanese national and renewed social upheavals in Crown Heights. Nevertheless, since both shows have also been taken up enthusiastically by all kinds of audiences outside of their respective countries they could be seen as transcending interculturalism and revealing a certain transcultural potential.
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Creating a Multicultural Space in Theatre: Bahar Noktast – Can Yücel’s Creative Translation of A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Like André Gide (Heylen 77), Can Yücel was also ‘fascinated’ by Shakespeare:

Today world poetry has reached a stage where it has realized that all it knows is insignificant compared to what it will never get to know. From this cognitive fulcrum we are thrust back to Shakespeare. Shakespeare is our master. (qtd. in Tas 6, my translation)

From Shakespeare he translated The Tempest (Fortuna 1991), Hamlet (1992), and A Midsummer Night’s Dream which proved to be very successful when it was put on stage in Istanbul in 1981. The success this particular translation of A Midsummer Night’s Dream had with the Turkish audience was mainly due to Yücel’s brilliant cultural transfers and his competent “modernization and naturalization of [its] linguistic context” (qtd. in Alvarez and Vidal 56) making Shakespeare ‘our compatriot’ (Çapan 18). Yücel’s creativity as a poet, his multilingual and multicultural competence, his Joycean talent for introducing neologisms and “the ease [for him] of thinking in both languages [English and Turkish] simultaneously” (Can Yücel, “Can Yücel ile Soylesi” 14) enabled him to convey the humour of a comedy written four hundred years ago in England to the Turkish public towards the end of the twentieth century.

The Poet as Translator

The interview with Can Yücel, published in the Turkish translation journal, by Metis Çeviri, gives us a professional’s point of view. George Brandes’s assessment of Shakespeare as “for the first time rising to the full height of his genius” in A Midsummer Night’s Dream” not as yet in its dramatic elements . . . but rather in the rich and incomparable lyric poetry with which he embroiders a thin dramatic canvas . . .” (164) makes Can Yücel’s ideas on the translation of poetry as relevant as his ideas on the translation of dramatic texts:

My concept of translation is more less as follows: I want to translate not the literal or the alphabetical or the verbal aspect of the word but the gist of poetry i.e., whatever it is that is essentially poetic. I pay attention to the transference of that into Turkish. (11, my translation and emphasis)

Answering a question on the controversies related to the translation of literature he expounds on this issue:

I consider this to be of utmost importance. I am, of course, concerned with the transference of the particles of the matter, the particles of the whole; or else, I don’t see translation as throwing this out, putting that in. What is at stake is keeping in mind the totality of the work in the
transference of the parts. If a poem is truly poetic (this seems to be an absurd way of putting it but some poems are merely written in verse; they are not poetry). If it is poetry then I would like to preserve all the rhymes to convey the poetic event without disrupting the visual plan of the poem. If one approaches poetry as is done in some academic circles as if it were a sort of the Bible, then the poetic flavour is lost altogether. I am afraid of making the same mistake. That is why I chose this path in translation. I may be considered an extremist in practice but to me what is done is correct. What is correct is to translate the whole poem instead of translating just the word or its meaning. (11-12, my translation)

The translator, he says, must know the source language and culture well. Otherwise, the outcome in the target language will be “wrong translation” (15).

Born in Istanbul in 1926, Can Yücel studied Classical Philology at Ankara University and Cambridge. He lived in Paris and London working at the Turkish Broadcasting Department of BBC while in London. He was the son of the first Minister of Culture of the Turkish Republic, Hasan Ali Yücel, who had a very active role in the educational and cultural reforms of the newly founded nation as the Head of the Project of Village Institutes that sprinkled the seeds of a widespread scientific education throughout the country. The theatre and the opera became state institutions during his period of service. His most prestigious endeavour as the Minister of Culture, however, was the founding of the Translation Office within the Ministry. Intellectuals and scholars assembled in this office to translate the Great Works of Western Literature in a spirit of Humanistic Enlightenment that Hasan Ali Yücel advocated in the ‘Introduction’ that appeared in each book published:

In order to feel and understand the spirit of humanism, the first step to be taken is the appropriation of works of art which provide the most concrete expression of human beings. Among works of art literature is the richest in expression because it is richest in thought. If a nation can have access to the literatures of other nations in her own language, she can enhance her intelligence and her capacity for understanding in line with those works of literature. This is why we consider translation to be an important instrument for the upholding of our civilisation. (H. A. Yücel n.p., my translation).

Further in the ‘Introduction,’ Hasan Ali Yücel stresses the importance of carrying such a translation activity systematically and with utmost care, thanking the Turkish intellectuals of the time for contributing their knowledge and labour generously to this arduous task. The date was June 23, 1941.

Can Yücel’s first translated poem Narcissus by Ovidius, from its Latin original, was published in Tercüme Dergisi (Translation Journal) which was founded in such an intellectual climate. It was first published in 1942 when he was only sixteen. He says that when Nurullah Ataç, the renowned critic of Turkish literature and culture, told him to retranslate the poem, he did so and had it later republished next to the first one to show the difference between his understanding of the poem in two different periods of his life.

He confirms the fact that the works he translated had an influence on his own writing:
When I read a poem I have written I say ‘Now this is Apollinaire,’ ‘This is T.S. Eliot,’ ‘This is Edgar Allan Poe.’ That is, I do not consider writing poetry to be a solitary endeavour. I believe that everything is interrelated. I think that poetry is history. For that reason I say that this poem is complementary of that one. I do not say that I write unique poetry. I write various poems. Of course I do have a personal strain; my idiosyncrasies, my own sad, peculiar strain. But each poem should have a ‘follower’ of its own as in jazz. The roles of translation and the translator are important in this respect. It seems more appropriate to learn world poetry by heart instead of being imprisoned within the confines of Turkish poetry only, to see the matter as a whole, as history. For instance, people tend to forget that Nâzım Hikmet’s greatest merit as a poet lies in his knowing Russian poetry by heart. (12, my translation)

A prolific translator, Can Yücel strongly believes that the translation of the masterworks of world literature enriches ‘the literary polysystem’ of the target culture. His translations ranging from the ancient Greek and Roman poets, Gorky, Lorca and Shakespeare to Bertolt Brecht, Peter Weiss and Tennessee Williams testify to this.

It is not his own choice, says Can Yücel, that determines which text or author he shall translate. He translates a text he is commissioned to: ‘Once I used to translate two, three plays a year. Now, nobody asks for it so I do not translate plays anymore. I have at home some 2500 pages of Brecht waiting to be translated’ (12, my translation). Criticising the private sector for paying the translators inadequately, Can Yücel comments that for this reason it is difficult to engage competent translators in the business: “As the determining factor in the market economy is to make money quickly, sometimes a text is given to two or three different incompetent college graduates, for instance, who translate haphazardly” (13).

Although he words them differently, his ideas on language, literature, translation and culture can be linked to Jiří Levy’s concept that the “understanding of the artistic value in its totality . . . goes far beyond the comprehension of the linguistic means and artistic motives taken separately” (Levy 2). According to Levy, this ‘comprehensive’ understanding of the source text comes down to an understanding of the artistic reality expressed in it” (2). Creative translation calls for such an understanding. In different wording than Can Yücel’s, Levý gives us a similar point of view:

*Der Hauptunterschied zwischen dem schöpferischen und dem mechanischen Übersetzer besteht darin, daß sich der schöpferische Übersetzer auf dem Wege vom Original zur Übersetzung die Wirklichkeit, von der er schreibt, vorstellt, daß er also über den Text hinaus zu den Gestalten, Situationen und Ideen vordringt, während der unschöpferische Übersetzer den Text nur mechanisch aufnimmt und lediglich Wörter übersetzt.* (2)

Can Yücel’s awareness of his ideological position as a poet and translator in the society he is working in reminds one of Itamar Even-Zohar’s ‘polysystem theory’ (cf. Even-Zohar 45-51). His own poems and translations testify to Wolfgang Iser’s concept of ‘mutuality’ in the translatability of cultures (301) and mainly to George Steiner’s view that:

*The associative mechanism has profound consequences for the theory of language and of translation. Because every speech form and symbolic code is open to contingencies of memory and of new experience, semantic values are necessarily affected by individual and/or historical-social factors.* (171)
My aim in this paper will be mainly to show how Can Yücel's creative translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* provides an excellent example for Oséki-Depré's remark that "whether you like it or not, every act of translation . . . is already a conscious or unconscious 'thought' about translation, either corresponding to an existing option or creating the option that it is setting up" (qtd. in Hewson and Martin 6).

**A Short History of Translations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Turkish**

In his article "Shakespeare in Turkey," dated 1965, Professor Vahit Turhan attests to Shakespeare's wide recognition in the Turkish 'literary polysystem' (Even-Zohar 46):

> There has been no lack of incentive for translating Shakespeare into Turkish. On the contrary, I should say too much of it. The Ministry of Education has a series of western classics in which Shakespeare appears in full, the more important plays such as Hamlet, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet and a few others have had several revised versions in prose and in verse. Since the middle of the thirties, the municipal theaters in Istanbul have been opening their curtains each season with a new play from Shakespeare, always trying to be up-to-date with the text. (qtd. in Akbulut 53)

The Turkish philologist and literary translator Ayşe Nihal Akbulut summarises Turkish translations of the play done for the stage as follows:

> The first translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the theatre was done in 1936. It was put on stage in 1950 by Karl Ebert in the State Theatre and in 1963 by David Pursley in the Municipality Theatre respectively . . . . [Another translation] by Mehmed Sukru Erden was announced on the back cover of his last series of translations from Shakespeare as forthcoming along with *As You Like It*, *Othello* and *Much Ado About Nothing* in 1938. This translation was published in 1954 by the Istanbul Municipality Theatre and the play based on it was put on stage in the 1954-1955 Theatre Season under the direction of Max Meinecke . . . . There is a considerable lapse of time before the play is translated again: The 1981 translation by Can Yücel and the 1987 translation by Bülent Bozkurt. (51-52, my translation)

**A Midsummer Night's Dream**

As Eugene A. Nida stated:

> [E]ven more important than what takes place inside the translator's brain is what takes place in the total cultural framework in which the communication occurs. Moreover, in an attempt to describe these interlingual and intercultural factors we must reckon with the differences of time . . . and differences of culture. There are always cultural differences between societies widely separated in time, and there are radically different degrees of cultural diversity in contemporary societies. (qtd. in Akbulut 6)

As Shakespeare's milieu is distanced from Can Yücel's both culturally and in time, the attempt at the translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a doubly challenging one. In *After Babel* George Steiner points out the obstacles met in the editing of Shakespeare's plays due to lexical and syntactic aspects that make 'a comprehensive reading'
very difficult: “Any thorough reading of a text out of the past of one’s own language and literature is a manifold act of interpretation” (17). Thus, understanding is the first step in any attempt at translation. Furthermore, as Steiner also says, since “Shakespearean and Elizabethan dramatic conventions, and ... the large context of early seventeenth century speech habits” (5) were different, it is difficult to catch ‘the period flavour’ (11) of Shakespeare’s plays in our time. Can Yuçel manages to catch this ‘period flavour’ in his translation successfully by giving a parallel ‘period flavour’ in Turkish culture through his masterful use of Ottoman Turkish, archaisms; the ‘kol oyunu’ tradition in Turkish theatre that he employs in the interlude as well as the domestication strategy or ‘localisation’ that he brilliantly puts into effect to make the play understandable to the contemporary Turkish audience.

According to Anna Scolnicov, “[t]heatre [is] itself a means of translating, of changing an alien, incomprehensible and therefore frightening experience into an understandable one, a unique machinery for overcoming these differences and reaching out towards other cultures” (2). However, as Brigitte Schultze points out: “The dual context of dramatic language - oral communication with its markers of spontaneity and situation and literature with its time-bound aesthetic codes is yet [another] permanent challenge for translators” (189). The key concept ‘Theatrical Potential,’ introduced by the Bulgarian philologist and translator Sophia Totzeva, points out another challenge the translator of a dramatic text has to overcome – namely to keep in mind when translating “the capacity of dramatic texts to generate ‘theatre texts’” (178); in other words, that “drama is ... an extremely open and complex medium of communication – more precisely ... two open and complex media of communication” (179).

Can Yuçel’s own views on the translation of drama show how much he keeps this ‘theatre text’ and the specific target-audience in mind as he translates. The domestication strategy he uses, i.e. the cultural transfers he makes, renders his ‘adaptation’ of A Midsummer Night’s Dream a brilliantly workable theatre text. He was, in fact, criticised for using the domestication strategy in his translation of Brecht’s Schweyk in the Second World War. Prof. Zehra İpşiroğlu of Istanbul University said that when he ‘rewrote’ the play, using Turkish slangs and allusions to the contemporary Turkish socio-political and economic situation, the subtleties that Brecht used to create the ‘Verfremdungseffekt’, i.e. the parodies of Biblical passages, the allusions to classical works of Western literature and the idiomatic expressions got lost (Can Yuçel, “Can Yuçel ile Soylesi” 15).

Can Yuçel’s answer to this criticism was that he translated exactly as Brecht would want any translator to do: “It is more difficult to translate for the theatre than to translate poetry, he said, “because in the theatre the receptor cannot go back and reread in order to understand what he/she has missed (5). As a translator, Can Yuçel is aware of his responsibility as a “cultural mediator” (Leppihalme 19) and his role as a “decision-maker” (19) in “translating for the stage” (Pavis 136):

In theatre you are in direct contact with an audience who watch and listen. You are in a situation where they cannot miss anything; they are going to applaud in the end only if they do understand. So, in theatre there is greater stress. How would an audience unaware of Brecht’s
allusions understand Brecht? Does a Turkish audience know German literary history well enough that we can base our translation on that? Then I feel that I have to resort to some tricks so that I can render the main contradictions and the main theme of awakening that Brecht sought to convey. When I use these devices, I do exactly what Brecht wants to be done. I am not writing in German so to which audience am I to give the references Brecht used? . . . that Shakespeare used? . . . More important is for the actor to understand; if he doesn’t understand, he cannot act it out. You cannot expect the actor to be erudite in world literature. You have to provide him with some tools . . . . Theatre is not something you do not understand. We are not playing games here. Theatre is serious business . . . When I translated Peter Weiss’s Der Lusitaneischen Popanz, I used American English colloquialisms. I added some thirty pages to the text. Peter Weiss, himself, was happy with it. [Brecht and Weiss] write to hit the mark so I have to give that in translation. (Can Yücel, “Can Yücel ile Soylesai” 15-16, my translation)

In his review of the play’s performance in 1981, in Istanbul at Tepebaşi Deneme Sahnesi (Tepebaşı Experimental Stage), the Turkish Shakespeare scholar and poet Prof. Cevat Çapan comments on the spectacular success it had. Çapan compares this particular performance with the other one running at the same time in The State Theatre:

The Istanbul State Theatre has put on A Midsummer Night’s Dream with Nurettin Seviri’s translation and asked an English director, David Conville, to direct it. Although the translation was meticulously done, Seviri tried to remain faithful to Shakespeare’s word rather than to his gist so when he particularly tried to maintain in verse form all that Shakespeare wrote in verse, parts of the translation read ludicrous. The director, apart from his lack of Turkish, has not shown any effort whatsoever to find out the theatre language most appropriate for the Turkish audience to understand the play. (Gösteri 18, my translation)

In this case the cultural border was not crossed, the bridge not built. In Schultze’s terms, the translation of the dramatic text provided no ‘highways’ or ‘byways,’ but ended up in a ‘blind alley’ (Scolnicov 177). Cevat Çapan continues:

Başar Sabuncu, the director of the version translated by Can Yücel, however, was as successful as Giorgio Strehler, Antoine Vitez, Peter Stein and Peter Brook were. These directors were all successful not only because of their analyses of the theatrical traditions the plays they directed belonged to but also because of their success in establishing the right connections between these traditions and the contemporary realities of their own societies. This performance shows us how vitally important it is for the writer (or the translator), the director, the players and the stage technicians to co-operate and how brilliant the result can be when they harmoniously do so. (Gösteri 19, my translation)

My own reminiscence of the performance is that ‘the ethereal delicateness’ (MND 163) of Shakespeare’s play was masterfully conveyed through both the poetic language used by the translator, the brilliant staging accomplished and the perfect acting of the actors and the actresses – the ‘Theatrical Potential’ was fully realised. The minuteness of Shakespeare’s fairies, for instance, was exactly conveyed in their minuteness. They were not just small as fairies usually are but ‘minute’ and ‘airy’ as Shakespeare made his fairies to be (Horwood 15).

As Horwood points out: “The play is called A Midsummer Night’s Dream not because the action takes place on Midsummer Night . . . but because it was the time, according to superstition, when strange things happened . . . fantastic happenings that
have the unreal quality of a dream” (Horwood 119). Can Yücel changes the title to Bahar Noktasi (Spring Turn), evoking a season of love and daydreaming, focusing on the trans-cultural element of love the play is about. Spring is indeed the season of “the lovers, full of joy and mirth . . . joy, and fresh days of love . . .” (MND 5.1.103).

**Cultural Changes in Spring Turn**

“Bless thee Bottom! Bless thee! Thou art translated” exclaims Quince in Act III, Scene I of the play upon seeing Bottom with an ass-head. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* the magic of the fairies has the power to ‘translate’ humans and other things from one shape to another. Shakespeare, too, with a magic touch ‘translated’ some aspects of the story he took from sources as diverse as Chaucer’s *Knight’s Tale*, North’s translation of Plutarch’s *Life of Theseus* and Reginald Scot’s *Discovery of Witchcraft* (Horwood 12-13). He did not refrain from giving the anachronistic title of Duke to Theseus, the Prince of Athens. He paid homage to the people of Warwickshire by making Puck also “the Robin Goodfellow of the people, a more domestic fairy given to practical jokes, who twitches stools away from old women, and labors in the dairy” (15). Instead of Diana, he chose to use the epithet Titania given to the fairy in Ovid’s *Metamorphosis* (15).

Shakespeare used three sources in the play: Greek myths, medieval English folklore and allusions to his own period. As late Turkish scholar Aksit Göktürk summarizes:

> [I]n order to understand this world beyond the text, one has to start with analyzing the sound patterns, the way words are used, the syntactical and semantic structures within the text establishing their functional interrelationships, and then go on analysing its communicative and structural aspects on the macro-level to find the method most suitable for conveying the work in its totality, as an act of communication. (Göktürk 153, my translation)

In his rendering of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in Turkish, Can Yücel takes all these aspects into consideration. He succeeds in converging the poetry of the text on the micro-level through his use of ploces, isocolons, alliteration, assonance, rhythm and rhyme. Can Yücel transforms most of the dramatic text into prose except for some dialogues of the fairies and artisans. Due to his masterly use of all the poetic conventions and figures of speech some of which are mentioned above, the prose is highly poetic. As the focus of the paper is the creation of intercultural space in theatre mainly through cultural transfer, suffice it to give an example for Can Yücel’s use of such poetic devices in order to render the poetic effect, from Hermia’s dialogue with Theseus in the first scene of the play:

HERMIYA. Özür dilerim, efendim, başımlı babalı oksüzü. Nerden geliyor bu çüret bana, bilmem, buzurunuzda böyle dilli düşük kesilmem. Lakin, affiniza mağuren, sorabilir miyim ne gelecek başıma, Dimitri’ye varmamakta direktirsem?

TEZEUS. Ya öleceksin tezelden, ya da vazgeçeceksin erkek denen cinselden. Onun için Hermiya, düşün, taşın! Danış o genç yaşına! Demek istiyorum ki danış kanının dolaşmasına! Daya-
nabilecek misin bakalım, emrine uymazsan beylerin, dayanabilecek misin yaşamına rahibelerin? Bir manastırdı, dar bir hocrede log, uysarken doşekte, doşünün ve düşünün yarısı boş... Düzdüğün, düzildüğün bütün bumbuz ve kını bir aya o kılınmış sesinle okuduğun mayalanmış bir maya! Boyle bir hac yoluna, kanının donduğu ruh olan kız oğlan kuzu üç tepsi nur indirir ya tanır, sen yine inan bana, yavrum zeker diye bir dikenin üstünde bekar, ömür tüketen gülbeseğer, İsparta'da imbiklenen gülyasına hasret çeker. (BN 1.1.10)

Even for those who do not know Turkish, the visual effect of the words on the page will hint at the musical effect the sounds will create on the stage when they are spoken. Shakespeare's play on words, his use of puns and blunders to create a comic effect, is also masterfully rendered by Can Yücel because his own poetry is full of such word play. A striking example would be his short satirical poem on the political corruption in Turkey, calling Hamlet for help:

**Shakespeare Üzre**
Türkiye'nin Manimarkasında bişeyler kokuyor
Kimine göre tuz, kimine göre et,
Hamlet!
Hamleeeeet! (Yücel 18)

The pun ‘Manimarka’ evokes associations of manipulation of big firms (marka: brand) as well as ‘money market’ in English. We can approximately translate the poem as follows:

**On Shakespeare**

Somethin’ smells rotten in the ‘Manimarka’ of Turkey
Some say salt, some meat,
Hamlet!
Hamleeeeet!

A striking example from *Bahar Noktasi* (*Spring Turn*) for a witty transfer of a blunder is from the dialogue between Quince and Flute:

**QUINCE.** Yea, and the best person, too; and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.
**FLUTE.** You must say, ‘paragon’: a paramour is, God Bless us! A thing of naught (MND 4.2.11-14).

In Can Yücel’s version, ‘paramour’ and ‘paragon’ are transferred as ‘assolis’ and ‘kazsolist.’ Although the thematic reference to ‘paramour’ is lost in translation, considering the whole text, this is not a noteworthy loss because Can Yücel achieves to render the humour by introducing another blunder in Turkish. He plays on the word ‘assolist’ (the top singer at Turkish ‘gazino’) rhyming it with ‘kaz’ which, in slang, means ‘not refined.’ Thus, in Bahar Noktasi he puts into effect the two functions introduced by Vermeer in his concept of “translation [as] ... a crosscultural transfer” (qtd. in Snell-Hornby 82) namely, the “Funktionskonstanz” (unchanged function) of Shakespeare’s play i.e., to make the audience laugh, and the “Funktionsveränderung” (changed function, whereby the text is adapted to meet specified needs in the target culture) (82).
Creating a Multicultural Space in Theatre

As Hanna Scolnicov says: "The problem of the transference of plays from culture to culture is seen not just as a question of translating the text, but of conveying its meaning and adapting it to its new cultural environment so as to create new meanings" (1). In order to ‘adapt’ Shakespeare’s play to his contemporaries, Can Yücel, accordingly, makes some changes in ‘the cultural environment’ by domesticating the setting, replacing some characters’ names with Turkish ones and by alluding to various aspects of Turkish culture such as ‘the rose oil’ perfume commonly used in Anatolia, classical Turkish music, and literature, music and life in the Ottoman Serai among others. Even the universal theme of love is given a Turkish context through changes in language. Yücel uses daily and local talk rich in colloquialisms, slangs, sayings, idiomatic expressions and neologisms “in order to achieve the multiple resonance of the original” (Gentzler 140). His creativity as a poet is at work in his rendering of “the lyrical expression of moods and feelings” (MND 9) and the poetic imagery of the nature and the moon for which Keats admired the play so much (178).

Can Yücel sometimes leaves out allusions that could be unfamiliar to the Turkish audience. One such omission occurs in the translation of Act I, Scene I, where Hermia promises Lysander to meet him “in the wood”:

By the simplicity of Venus’s doves,
By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,
And by that fire which burn’d the Carthage queen,
When the false Trojan under sail was seen (1.2.41-42)

Can Yücel leaves out the allusion to Dido’s burning herself to death when Aeneas deserts her. He only gives the essence of Hermia’s words which, when translated back into English, read: “If I fail to come here tomorrow night, skipping on the tips of my pink toes, consider me dead, then” (BN 1.1.12). Hermia will meet Lysander in the same wood: “Where [he] did meet [her] once with Helena / To do observance to a morn of May” (MND 1.1.166-167).

In Can Yücel’s text, the first of May, the spring festivity Shakespeare refers to, is changed to Hidrellez celebrated traditionally in Anatolia, the Balkans, Central Asia and Azerbaijan, on the eve of the fifth of May and the next day. According to the Islamic calendar, this date is the equivalent of the twenty-third of April, also considered sacred by Christians and celebrated as the holy day of Hagia Yorgi by the Orthodox and the holy day of Saint Georges by the Catholics. It is believed that on this holy eve, when Hizir (also known as Hidir) and Ilyas (Elijah) meet, wishes come true. Hizir, Moses’s instructor according to the Koran (Kehf 60-82), is considered holy and immortal because he drank from the Water of Life. According to folk belief, Hizir is considered to be a godsend who arrives at the right moment to help people in need (AnaBritannica 14, 25). Accordingly, Hidrellez (the day of Hızır and Ilyas) has a richer association of meaning for the Turkish audience at this point in the play than Shakespeare’s reference to May Day in the original, because it implies that the lovers’ desire to elope will realise.
Like Shakespeare himself, who plays freely with the original names of the story that he uses as a source for his play, Can Yücel changes the names of the characters to Turkish ones with multiple resonance. Some of the Greek names are kept as they are in the original but spelled as they would be pronounced in Turkish:

- Tezeus – Theseus
- Ipolita – Hippolyta
- Hermiya – Hermia
- Dimitri – Demetrius
- Filostrata – Philostrate
- Eleni – Helena

The others are given Turkish equivalents:

- Iskender – Lysander
- Ege – Egeus

Can Yücel changes the names of the fairies to Turkish. Oberon becomes Babaron, carrying the association of ‘Baba,’ the Turkish word for ‘father.’ The word, however, also means the head of the Turkish Mafia in colloquial usage. Babaron certainly talks like a minor ‘çete başı’ (chief of gang) throughout the play, and Cin (Puck) addresses him exactly like that at the beginning of Act 2 (BN 2.1.44). Titania becomes Müzeeyyen, an old-fashioned woman’s name with flirtatious overtones.

The names of Quince, Snug, Bottom, Flute, Snout and Starveling become in turn Testere, Mengene, Örêke, Körük, Teneke and Yüksük, each name related respectively to the particular trade of each artisan. By another masterful touch, Can Yücel gives the artisans nicknames Anatolian Greeks call each other by. Bottom’s nickname changes from Nick to Niko; Teneke (Snout) is also Mavridis and Testere (Quince) is called Petraki among his friends.

In the ‘Interlude,’ Can Yücel makes use of the rich tradition of ‘kol oyunu,’ plays put on by “Esnaf-i Şube de-bâzân,” trade guilds of artisans also called ‘kol’ meaning ‘group.’ These performances, which later developed into a popular form of Turkish theatre called ‘Ortaoyunu,’ were considered to be the first examples of comedies (Kudret 99). Forms of entertainment, similar to the clowns’ interlude in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, were put on at circumcision ceremonies and weddings, especially at the Ottoman Serai (Kudret 1-108). In the plays actors played the roles of women just as was the case on the Elizabethan stage. With a brilliant tour de force, Can Yücel makes Körük (Flute) allude to ‘Zenne,’ the stereotypical woman character of ‘Ortaoyunu’: “Zenneye çıkaramaçaksan beni, diğ mi ille! Peksiy bu Sakallar n’olacak, ağda mı yapacağız yani” (BN 1.2.16). The translation back into English reads: “You must perforce give me the role of Zenne! How, then do you expect me to get rid of this beard? Shall I make epilation?” (my translation)

The theme is love; the season is spring and the city of love is, of course, Istanbul. It is at Salacak, a beautiful district of Istanbul by the sea that Cupid aims his ‘fiery shaft’ (MND 2.1.55) at “Mehlika Sultan swinging in full moon . . .” (BN 1.3.22). Shakespeare lets the shaft fall:
Creating a Multicultural Space in Theatre

OBERON . . . upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it, Love-in-idleness (MND 2.1. 55).

In Bahar Noktasi, the flower blushes and turns purple: “Turks have called it violet since then” (1.3.22, my translation).

Helena thinks, that, for Demetrius, Hermia’s “tongue’s sweet air” is “[m]ore tuneable than lark to shepherd’s ear” (MND 1.1.184). Can Yücel replaces the ‘lark’ with ‘bul-bül’ ['nightingale'] famous both in Divan literature and Turkish folk literature as a bird that sings all night long out of his love for the rose.

As can also be understood from the nicknames mentioned above, Anatolia, has always been multicultural. Turkey has a rich cultural heritage; it is at the crossroad of cultures in the true sense of the term. Accordingly, when Can Yücel domesticates, he can keep some of the allusions to Greek mythology such as Cupid and suggest that Mendelssohn’s Wedding March be played in between the two acts. After all, Anatolia is the home of this mythology as well as the home of a myriad of cultures dynamically interrelated. Hence, Istanbul is also referred to as ‘Konstantaniyye,’ Can Yücel’s coinage for Constantinople, the capitol of an empire that lasted for a thousand years. Müzeyyen blames Babaron of escaping there from ‘Peristan,’ “disguised as a priest to avoid her” (BN 1.3.19, my translation). ‘Peristan’ is another neologism meaning ‘the land of the fairies;’ so Babaron goes from one dream-like world that lives in the imagination to another one evoking all the dream-like associations of Istanbul in the past and now.

Can Yücel’s use of anachronism in the play adds to the comedy. When Babaron reproaches Müzeyyen for having made love to Tezeus, Müzeyyen says “this is more then jealousy” advising him to “see a Jewish doctor called Furoyt” and have his neurosis (“nevroz”) cured.

In conclusion, I would like to say that “the subtle ironist” and “the sensitive lyricist” of contemporary Turkish poetry (Çapan, “Contemporary Turkish Poetry” 7), gives us in Bahar Noktasi an “adaptation” that is highly poetic as well as highly dramatic. “Without even a Shakespeare dictionary at his disposal,” (Metis Ceviri 18), Can Yücel overcomes the greatest ‘culture bump’ (Leppihalme viii) in his creative translation of A Midsummer Night’s Dream into Turkish, i.e. to make the Turkish audience laugh just as Shakespeare made the Elizabethan audience laugh four hundred years ago. If humour, comedy and satire require the touch of genius, at this point surely do the two poets meet.

Can Yücel renders powerfully what Mavrikakis finds ‘untranslatable’: “le jeu de mots” (qtd. in Quillard 23), lending his words, in their rhythmical eloquence, to be enacted on the stage as ‘verbo-corps’ or ‘language embodied’ (Pavis 157). Ideologically a revolutionary, he achieves this by “transforming the language of the target text through strong, forceful translation which experiments with and tampers with conventional usage” (Broeck qtd. in Gentzler 172), employing what Jacques Derrida calls in Des Tours de Babel an ‘abusive’ translational strategy: “[pursuing] the double move of
both violating and sustaining the principles of [language] usage" (172). Like Wieland, who succeeds in preserving basic elements of Shakespearean theatrical potential – syntactic rhythms, rhetoric, deviations from lexical norms... in his translations of King Lear (Schultze 185), Can Yücel, too, succeeds in preserving 'Shakespearean theatrical potential' in Bahar Noktasi. The wizard of translation, he demystifies and respects Shakespeare at the same time bringing him home to us.

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Creating a Multicultural Space in Theatre


EDITH HALLBERG

Shakespeare’s Macbeth Crossing Borders: Violence and Reconciliation in Welcome Msomi’s UMabatha

In a letter addressed to Welcome Msomi in February, 1996 President Mandela not only offered his thanks and support to the writer and producer of the show, but also expressed his belief that “audiences everywhere will be spellbound by UMabatha – The Zulu Macbeth.” In Mandela’s opinion, this “kaleidoscope of spectacle and action illustrates vividly “the universality of ambition, greed and fear,” and he emphasizes the dramatic potential of the play, in which “the similarities between Shakespeare’s Macbeth and our own Shaka become a glaring reminder that the world is philosophically a very small place” (qtd. in Program of UMabatha – The Zulu Macbeth). Indeed, audiences in South Africa as well as in England and in the United States were spellbound by the international tour of 1997. It opened the flood-gates to many reviews of the production but hardly elicited any response from scholars or literary critics.

In Mandela’s comment, two concepts stand out: thanks to ‘universality’ and ‘globalization’ it should be possible to construe a connection between Shakespeare and Shaka, between (the fictional) Macbeth and Mabatha, between eleventh century Scotland and South Africa of the late twentieth century, with early seventeenth century England and nineteenth century Zululand serving, so to speak, as stepping stones in between different periods and places, times and locations.

From my own critical perspective and in the context of several other modern adaptations of Shakespeare’s Macbeth, I will argue that Msomi’s play can be seen as a site of opposing but co-existing tendencies. Msomi strikes a balance between the local and the universal: based on an assumption of universality, he claims similarities between characters, places and events of eleventh century Scotland and early nineteenth century Zululand while at the same time celebrating a very specific tradition, language and local customs from a contemporary perspective.

As Msomi does not believe in cultural boundaries, he parallels Shakespeare’s Macbeth with the story of the South African King Shaka, who ruled a vast empire in

1 I am indebted to Dr. Annette Pankratz, Prof. E. F. Kotze, Welcome Msomi, Naadia Davis, the Salzburg Seminar and Alby James for providing me with research material: my thanks to them, and to Professor Böker.

2 Similarly, Nadine Gordimer stresses the affinity between Shakespeare’s Macbeth as a paradigm of universal power struggle and Msomi’s play that brings to life “the form in which this [power struggle] has manifested itself in our country and history” (qtd. in Msomi, UMabatha, back cover).

3 The subject of this paper is an “offshoot” of my current research for a doctoral thesis on the topic of “Modern Adaptations of Shakespeare’s Macbeth.”
the Eastern part of South Africa in pre-colonial times. As Msomi said in an interview, “[w]hen we look at music, stories and different events, it all begins to become one universal story. That is how I looked at it — it all made perfect sense” (qtd. in Pacio). In order to be able to defy cultural boundaries he re-claims territory by composing his play in Zulu, an indigenous language, for — according to postcolonial theory — language is indeed place. The author’s own English translation, used for supratitles in some performances abroad, was not published until 1996 when it came out as a performance script by Skotaville, a black-run company.

Msomi, who distances himself from political commitment in his theater work, refuses to admit any obvious similarities between the protagonists of his play and “real life” figures. Writing a play with a Macbeth-plot and Zulu characters and customs, he is interested in the preservation of the Zulu heritage, a preservation that goes hand in hand with cultural reconciliation in his country. Nevertheless, text and production are of a suggestive quality so that in some cases the similarities between the fictitious characters of the play and authentic personalities or events cease to be purely coincidental. Shifting meanings are, in this case, constructed at the moment of each single performance. The success of the show may be related to the oscillation of meaning in the context of different productions.

The career of UMabatha is not only the history of a theater production; it also provides an insight into the intricate, lateral and interlinked relationship between power and subversion. Written and first produced in 1969 (cf. Msomi, “Preface”) during the heyday of Apartheid as a sign of opposition and a gesture of “resistance” towards the white racist regime, Msomi composed the play in Zulu making use of Zulu culture, and he put up the show without support of the white authorities. Not only was the play’s first (amateur and practically fundless) staging such a success that the audience demanded more performances. After this success Msomi received an offer of the very institution that had initially turned him away, the Drama Department of the University of Natal. During Apartheid it was regarded as a resistance piece at home and as the production of an oppressed ethnic group in performances abroad (the show came to the United Kingdom and Italy in 1972); the political implications might have been as

4 According to Ashcroft, “[i]n the development of contemporary theory, one of the key areas in which the post-colonial is distinguished from the postmodern is in the development of the concept of ‘place.’ As with many postmodern theorists, the post-colonial confirms that the subject is a function of language and that the access to a notion of reality and of the position of the subject in it is also a construction of the language. But place is also a construction of language. We could even go as far as to say that place is language and inextricable from the construction of the subject” (cf. Ashcroft 165).

5 Zulu is and has been the language of the majority of the population in that part of the country but nevertheless according to the cultural policy of the day everything should be written in English (cf. Msomi, Lecture given at the Salzburg Seminar, Session 374: “Shakespeare Around the Globe.” Salzburg, Schloß Leopoldskron. 23 Feb. to Mar. 1, 2000. 25 Feb. 2000. Msomi was invited by the Salzburg Seminar as the special guest to their annual meeting in 2000.
The revival in the 1990s was brought about by the initiative of Nelson Mandela. He had met Msomi in New York in 1991, where the playwright and theater producer had lived in exile from the early seventies until 1993. Mandela had been familiar with Msomi's play since his time as a political prisoner. The post-Apartheid revival of the production took place in 1995, a year after Mandela's election for President. At the 1994 Inauguration Ceremony, planned and organized by Welcome Msomi, who had been a communications adviser to the African National Congress in the 1994 elections (cf. Revzin B2), the newly elected President embraced the leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party Buthelezi, his long-time political enemy, under standing ovations of the audience while in KwaZulu-Natal the battle between the two parties was still going on. The post-Apartheid comeback at the prestigious Johannesburg Civic Theatre in 1995 was attended by Mandela and the Zulu king (cf. Pacio). This was followed by an international tour to London's new Globe Theatre, to the United States and Canada.

After the end of Apartheid the situation has changed completely. The play, formerly representing the culture of the oppressed, has become a manifestation of those who won the struggle, who now represent one of the mainstream culture(s). For an international audience the exotic aspect may still be there, but "the other" is no longer really "the other." Now, there is rather a multiplicity of meanings: for some this play might be proof of the predominance, after all, of British culture; for others an artistic manifestation of a post-colonial identity; a success story of a writer once in exile and now honored by the Head of State; the end of Apartheid, black culture having taken center stage in a once "for whites only" theater; a celebration of Zulu culture; the expression of an ongoing, never-ending struggle for power; or even a vision of a society beyond all conflicts. There seems to be a new "palimpsest of meanings" which includes the Scottish Macbeth; the Elizabethan Macbeth; the Macbeth as we have come to know him in our own literary upbringing in the West; the historical Zulu leader Shaka, contemporary of Napoleon; the archetype of the contemporary warlord or gang leader of any modern society where streetfight may be an indicator of social discontent.

My argument is two-fold. First, I would like to show that in UMabatha it is difficult to separate contextual and historical layers from one another. The boundaries between the colonial, the post-colonial, the Shakespearean, the literary and the politically-charged components become blurred. It is a play where everything is possible semantically. One can no longer observe a binary opposition between "pretext" and "adaptation," or an "imperial" identity clashing with a "colonial" identity. Rather, all of these components have been interacting with one another, are mutually interdependent, and endless associations are present simultaneously, a state that could be de-

6 Reflecting his own experiences in exile, the South African writer-director Anthony Akerman says, "[t]he semiotics of theatre can read differently for audiences in different countries" (92).
scribed by means of the term "rhizome" borrowed from Ashcroft; in other words, the play can be seen as a site for various interacting discourses.\footnote{Based on Ashcroft's concept of the rhizome referring to the relationship of language and place, I use "rhizome" in order to define the relationship between literature and place. I am following his rejection of any reduction of "the complex way in which history is embedded in place" to a binary conflict between colonizer and colonized. "For both the African and the Australian place is a palimpsest in which the imperial order of language continues to be written and rewritten. . . . Colonial space is a palimpsest, a kind of parchment on which successive generations have inscribed and reinscribed the process of history." Ashcroft's metaphor of the rhizome for describing post-colonial social formations is even more appropriate than the widely used term "hybridity" because – as in the botanical term for a root system which spreads across the ground – it expresses an ever-growing and therefore more dynamic process rather than the finished product of hybridization. The term was first used by Deleuze and Guattari in psychoanalysis (cf. Ashcroft 169-71). The concept of the "rhizome" is also used e.g. by Fernando de Toro, "Post-Modern Fiction and Theatricality: Simulation, Deconstruction, and Rhizomatic Writing," Canadian Review of Comparative Literature CRCL 21.3 (Sept. 1994): 417-43, and Alicia Juarrero, "From Modern Roots to Postmodern Rhizomes," Diogenes [Paris] 163.413 (1993): 27-43.}

Second, I would like to argue that using the plot of a tragedy by Shakespeare, whose works may not be "universal" but have been made so in the history of colonization, is a strategy which allows Msomi to communicate with his audience(s) in various ways. Zulus are likely to appreciate a play that makes use of their own language, history and customs; at the same time non-speakers of Zulu do not necessarily have to feel excluded because of (a) the physical spectacle and its erotic appeal, the sheer exuberance of colors, sound and movement\footnote{The fact that the mise-en-scène relies heavily on music, chant and rhythmical movement makes the show controversial. According to Barney Simon, what makes South African theatre so "appealing [is] its passion, its concern for human rights, its concern for human dignity, its energy that comes with passionate concern" (Davis and Fuchs 238). More critical voices, however, point out that musical productions could promote and maintain racial stereotype, e.g. John Kani, the first black Executive Director of Johannesburg's Market Theatre, who is critical of musicals because supposedly they show what "the master," or more concretely an overseas promoter, wants to see (cf. "Woza Afrika" 1995) while failing to represent the harsh realities of everyday conflicts and strife. The fundamental question remains, in the words of Astrid Roemer, whether literature's only concern should be the "registration of processes and documentation of reality" (241), or whether it will produce truth as existential. According to Roemer, "[i]f literature can at least be a medium to exercise influence on consciousness, then our literature will be a powerful medium only if it shows an extremely recognizable affinity with what is specific and particular in the Surinamese consciousness" (242); the author here refers to Surinam, but the basic assumption about the potential of literature for helping peoples to regain self-respect and dignity (cf. 242) should also be applicable to other formerly colonized spaces.}, and (b) the Macbeth-plot which adopts, exactly because of its high degree of familiarity among diverse audiences, the function of linking the individual scenes, in which Zulu culture is being displayed, through a familiar narrative.

"There was no attempt to slavishly follow Macbeth," Msomi said in an interview, "but it was always promoted as the "Zulu Macbeth" for English audiences who needed a point of reference." Written during the time of Apartheid, the play was not meant as a
political statement, but rather as a way “to expose the rich culture and rich music” of his Zulu heritage:

I knew what people would learn from *Umabatha* was greed, that when you take something from people that doesn’t belong to you, you will suffer. White audiences could enjoy the spectacle and the music, while the black audiences could look at the system they lived in.9

Structurally Msomi is following Shakespeare relatively closely. The protagonists are made to closely resemble the familiar Shakespearean characters; in the Zuluized versions of the names, the models are transparent: Duncan is visible in Dangane; Macbeth in Mabatha; Banquo in Bhangane; Macduff in Mafudu. Lady Macbeth is Kamadonsela; the various Scottish noblemen (Lennox and Angus) re-appear as the Zulu Linolo and Angano. There are no counterparts for the Siwards and Seyton as there are no counterparts for the scenes involving them. The dialogue accompanying the battle bringing the tyrant down is considerably shortened. The Porter, who adds a comic element in Shakespeare, has an equivalent in Msimbithi – equally comical – who is also a messenger. The English and Scottish doctors in Shakespeare have an equivalent in the “Inyanga” (Zulu herbal doctor); and the Scottish Witches in the characters of the “Isangomas 1, 2 and 3,” but with an important difference: in Zulu culture they are not agents of evil (cf. Msomi, Salzburg Seminar lecture).

In intertextual terms the changes are: cuts, concentrations, condensations, slight changes in order and/or arrangement of the dialog, and transposition into a different time and a different cultural context, namely the clan warfare of nineteenth century Zululand. Msomi blends the authentic Zulu leader Shaka, born in 1787, who united individual tribes and established a vast and powerful empire during his rule from 1816 to 1828, and the Scottish Macbeth into Mabatha10. England, the place where the opposition against the tyrannical ruler gathers and finds support, has an African equivalent in Swaziland.

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9 from: Teleconference organized at Binghamton University, arranged as part of semester-long exploration of global perspectives around the theme “Africa, Shakespeare and Global Perspectives” http://inside.binghamton.edu/September-October/30Oct97/Umabatha.html. Al Tricomi, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies, praised this event as one of the achievements of globalization: “The interactive broadcast brought together two continents in a global village.”

Msomi is not the first to suggest a connection between Macbeth and Shaka. Pointing out that the famous Zulu leader was under the influence of his ambitious wife Pampata, his greatest admirer and supporter from their youth, who prophesied his greatness at their first meeting, Ritter’s biography of Shaka unmistakably evokes the Macbeth story (cf. 35) and creates a Zulu version of the prototype of the overly ambitious power-couple. Moreover, prophecies of a “magnificent future” were expressed by a “sorcerer” during the ceremony of the making of Shaka’s legendary assegai (cf. Ritter 43). Shaka’s death as the consequence of a conspiracy by his relatives evokes scenes from Macbeth and Julius Caesar.

Violence in UMabatha provides a cognate. It helps to understand the action of the story even in a performance that does not make use of supra-titles or synchronization. According to Msomi, “[y]ou know from the scenes of violence the story of a king and how this king dies . . . This is not a modernized version of Macbeth . . . When you watch UMabatha, you will laugh” (Pacio). In spite of the parallels to Shakespeare’s sinister play, in UMabatha the element of joyous exuberance prevails.

In contrast, but not in contradiction, to moments of joy or easy-going humor, violence has an important structural and semiotic function. In order to grasp the ambiguous role of violence, the following analysis zooms in on two crucial scenes. First, that of the murder of King Dangane (the Duncan counterpart). Second, the final scene where the followers of Dangane take revenge and kill Mabatha.

In Shakespeare’s Macbeth, the Duncan murder-plot is dominated by images of a nature out of joint, of the un-naturalness of the world after a horrible murder, and of general, cosmic disorder: “Confusion now hath made his masterpiece!/ Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope! The Lord’s anointed temple, and stole thence/ The life o’ the building!” II.3.62-65 (Macduff). In Msomi’s play, the imagery does not so much express a universe out of joint rather than a standstill or an end of all life and nature. Mafudu says in response to Mabatha’s feigned ignorance of the murder: “All is destroyed! Our whole land! And life itself is dead” (Act 2, Scene 5, 36). In Macbeth, Macduff’s speech, evoking utter disharmony and the metaphysical implications of killing a king, has no equivalent in UMabatha; in Mabatha’s speeches, the emphasis is on the death of nature and the end of fertility: “Before, our life was fruitful, now it is an empty calabash./ The beer that was real beer is no more,” and (addressing Dangane’s two sons), “[y]ou are nothing./ The tree which gave you shade and comfort has been hacked down” (Act 2, Scene V, 36). The scene ends, as in Macbeth, in Mabatha’s “confession” that he has killed the supposed murderers, the two drunken guards, Ka-
madonsela fainting, Bhangane, Mafudu and the rest meeting beneath the great tree and the sons of the murdered king, Makhiwane and Donebane fleeing, because they are afraid of further attacks, one "to the East," the other to Swaziland (Act 2, Scene V, 37).

In *Umabatha*, the entire community — including those absent — is immediately made present at such a moment of horrible disaster when Mafudu (Macduff) shouts, "Awake! Awake! All who sleep! Shout this terrible news through the land!/ Beat the drum!" In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the death announced is first a private concern: the bereaved individuals are first named and addressed ("Murder and treason!/ Banquo and Donalbain! Malcolm! awake!", Macduff, II.3.69-71). In the Zulu context, a killing of such dimensions transcends the personal. It represents a public concern.

In *Umabatha*, there is no equivalent for the following scene in Shakespeare, II.4., in which the themes of disruption, upheaval, distrust and dissent are discussed by the Old Man, Rosse and Macduff. In this scene, in which Macduff says he will not go to Scone to the crowning but Rosse will, Macduff's metaphor of "old" and "new" robes alludes to a turning point in time (II.4.35-38), implying the end of the good time under the rightful ruler, and the beginning Macbeth's tyrannical rule, the age of darkness and cruelty. In Shakespeare's tragedy, life will not return until Macbeth is slain by Malcolm. Macduff mentions that the King's body will be carried to Colme-kill, the historical burial site of the Scottish kings (II.4.33-35).

In contrast to Duncan's quick disappearance in Shakespeare, Msomi adds the funeral scene of Dangane-Mdangazeli, displaying chant, dance, wailing, and traditional Zulu funeral songs, which takes all of one sentence in the stage direction (Act 3, Scene 1, 41) but goes on for a full nine minutes. The funeral ceremony of the Zulu King includes rhythmical movements in full warrior regalia, authentic songs and chants. Lifted by the warrior-dancers over their heads, the body is displayed to everybody present in the scene as well as beyond-stage. In such a transgression of the space of the stage, a link is established between play and audience; the boundary between the purely fictional and the non-fictional disappears.

The choreography of the funeral scene includes two typical formations: uninterrupted lines or rows of warriors moving in synchrony; and the closed circle. These patterns suggest a sense of protection, strength and, in more abstract terms, of belonging, of life and continuity. Tradition and ceremony function as a refuge or as a healing factor in times of crisis. The dead Dangane ceases to be an individual. He is transformed into a symbol of unity and of the possibility of continuation and rebirth. Death does not bring about the dreaded ultimate crisis of the universe but is part of an ongoing cycle.

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13 In some observations by the Old Man the unnaturalness of events is underlined: "but this sore night! Hath trifled former knowings" (II.4.3-4), and "'Tis unnatural,/ Even like the deed that's done" (II.4.10f).

14 This scene is so emotionally intense that the actress who played the role of Kamadonsela fell into a trance during one of the performances at the London Globe Theatre and had to be replaced (cf. Msomi, Salzburg Seminar lecture).
Says Msomi, who spent part of his childhood among the Zulu royal family (cf. Salzburg Seminar lecture), to whom he is related: “In [the] Zulu culture, we celebrate the death of a king, the ritual. We celebrate the deeds and contributions in life, and we remember the funny moments that were part of that individual” (Pacio).

The burial ceremony for Dangane is immediately followed by the ritual of praise-singing for Mabatha, which signifies that the collective mourning of the funeral ceremony is followed by a new beginning. While the new King Mabatha is celebrated, the movements of the actors in the background indicate that life and daily activities have returned to the community (cf. Act 3, Scene 1, 41).

The final two scenes of Macbeth (V.8 and V.9) are merged in one in UMabatha, Act 5, Scene 4. “Drums and chanting” and a “war dance” build a ritual frame for the final encounter between Mafudu and Mabatha, the tyrant who has killed his family. But Mafudu does not take revenge only for the personal harm Mabatha has inflicted upon him (in wiping out his family) but, in contrast to Shakespeare’s version, plays out his role as collective avenger of the entire community whom Mabatha’s excessive greed and violence have reduced to the bare minimum of existence. In Shakespeare, it is Macbeth’s failure that is epitomized in the sentence, “my soul is too much charged/ With blood of thine already” (V.8.5f). In Msomi’s version, the words “Mabatha, your hands are steeped in blood/ Of thousands of our people in KwaZulu/ That you have sent to our ancestors./ Your calabash of greed/ Has left thousands without kraals/ Without food, without hope . . . . . You, Mabatha, have destroyed/ The spirit of tranquillity,/ The bones of the innocent speak to me./ They say that the vicious dog must die./ Your time has come, Mabatha!” (Act 5, Scene 4, 71) are an overture to Mafudu’s attack on Mabatha. In this scene, modern overtones are most obvious. Taking sides against any sort of power abuse and exploitation, no matter on which side, Msomi is far from being apolitical here.

The dialogue about Mafudu’s unnatural birth is shortened and there is no discussion about whether the “juggling fiends” should be trusted. When Donebane is killed by Mabatha, another future rival is eliminated. Mabatha is killed by Mafudu. Dangane’s son Makhiwane (Malcolm) takes the royal leopard skin away from the dying Mabatha and becomes the new king. He praises the achievements of his followers as a group, extending equal gratitude to all15, and calls back all refugees at once (“All those loyal warriors who fled . . . / Can return and live in peace,” Act 5, Scene 4, 72). A sense of community and harmony is evoked. According to the final words of Makhiwane, the spear, instrument and symbol of violence, “has broken” (Act 5, Scene 4, 72). The play ends in the rhythmical incantation of “Makhiwane, son of Mdangazeli” three times repeated, drums and chant celebrating the new king. At the very end of the performance, when the king’s spear is stuck in the ground in a spotlight on the otherwise dark stage, this spear becomes an ambiguous signifier for warriorhood, strength, and achievement.

15 In Shakespeare’s tragedy, there is a potential for future rivalry when Malcolm, after Macbeth has been killed, announces his intent to honor and reward his supporters individually.
In *UMabatha* violence, symbolized in the Zulu spear, plays an ambiguous role. It is a given in the power play of everyday life, and it is a part of the rituals and ceremonies which help to overcome anxieties and feelings of aggression and of revenge, thereby producing a community-building effect.

According to Doreen Mazibuko, a field worker with the Market Laboratory, who developed a theater-in-education project related to the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, “[p]resently our country South Africa is dying of violence” (223). It is not surprising that in a country where violence continues unabated even after the disappearance of the Apartheid system, violence takes center stage due to the opposition between divergent political organizations and political beliefs and backgrounds.

In particular Natal, of which Msomi is a native and which coincides with the place of action of *UMabatha*, has been the site of ongoing conflict. Publications such as *Patterns of Violence: Case Studies of Conflict in Natal*, edited by Anthony Minnaar (1992), demonstrate how much violence still permeates contemporary everyday life. In particular Gavin Woods, in his chapter on “Natal Violence: A Contemporary Analysis of Underlying Dynamics,” explains the reasons for a variety of violence that increased in the second half of the 1980’s, especially in urban areas but also in smaller town communities, and reached a peak in 1990. The tensions may have political causes but originate in social factors such as the urbanization process, unemployment, overcrowding, poor living standards, poverty, lack of community and the disintegration of the family model. Among the urban black population especially the initial euphoria of the political changes in South Africa has cooled down. All-pervasive political competition is stated as the result of underlying feelings of discontent, insecurity and disorientation typical for times of change. Apart from primarily socio-economic problems, a variety of interrelated factors including political organizations (ANC and Inkatha) and so-called third forces (South African Police Force SAP, and groups from the right side of the South African political spectrum) have obstructed the way to peace in Natal (cf. Woods 37-48). Seen in this context, theater displaying a form of violence that is sublimated in rituals and ceremonies might help to overcome anxieties and the ensuing feelings of aggression and revenge. An awareness of a shared tradition and ancestry may result in group identification, i.e. community-building.

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16 The clan fights of the time of Shaka and his descendants were followed, in the nineteenth century, by the Anglo-Boer wars.

Rather than dramatizing the techniques of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission begun in early 1996, in an attempt to cope with the violence of the past, *UMabatha* transcends the activities of the TRC in that it presupposes an already accomplished reconciliation. In its acknowledgment of various conflicting sources in the cultural and socio-economic make-up of South African post-colonial society, it moves beyond the extremes of either a romanticizing embrace of the pre-colonial state, or the total ideological rejection of all things colonial. Leading away from the cycle of oppression, violence, and redemption, the play expresses a different self-image, one that obliterates the victim state of passive suffering and accepts the injuries received no matter during which historical period moving towards a full embrace of the present condition in full recognition of the violent experiences of the past and their role in the formation of the present identity. Self-confidence, however, only makes sense when it goes hand in hand with an individual as well as a collective awareness of tradition, in other words, memory.

Msomi wants, as he says, to “go to the more rural areas of Africa among other countries to share this culture and history. I believe when a nation loses its soul, it loses its foundation. People lose something about themselves” (Pacio). Speaking of his experiences in New York Msomi remarks: “Our culture was more appreciated there than here – perhaps taken for granted because people grew up with it. It dawned on me what we had was something rich and that it needed to be marketed and preserved” (Kobokoane 48). Preserving a local identity implies not its mystification as a place of undisturbed bliss vis-à-vis the violent intrusion of the colonizers but the acknowledgment of a violent past even before the colonial contact. Soyinka speaks of a "straining toward a reharmonization with the past" (62) – for “[a] people who do not preserve their memory are a people who have forfeited their history” (58).

Msomi shows that an agenda of searching for one’s “true selves” implies a process of constant re-creation of the past, its acceptance without self-consciousness, and its preservation.

In this respect, the *Zulu-Macbeth* is essentially different from other twentieth century adaptations of *Macbeth*. To give a few examples: Barbara Garson created a science fiction satire rallying against the power abuse in the entire political party spectrum and against American involvement in the Vietnam War (*MacBird!*). Eugène

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18 Jane Taylor's *UBU and the Truth Commission* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1998), which is discussed by Geoffrey V. Davis in "Addressing the Silences of the Past: The Legacy of Race in Contemporary South African Theatre." *Race and Religion in Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English: Papers given on the Occasion of the Seventh Annual Conference of the German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English*. Ed. Bernhard Reitz (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1999) 119-134, dramatizes the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is based on Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* (1896), which in turn is a grim and surreal parody of the greed for power of Shakespeare’s Macbeth.

19 Sasani, Msomi’s entertainment company’s business concept is to “carry on ideas to market the richness of our culture both here and overseas, much like Hollywood has marketed America to the rest of the world” (Kobokoane 48).
Shakespeare’s Macbeth Crossing Borders

Ionesco evoked an absurd vision of forever-continuing battles for power under the impression of the events of May 1968 in Paris and world-wide (*Macbet*). Tom Stoppard “in cahoots with” Pavel Kohout, re-created the restricted and humiliated way of life of actors under a Communist regime. Howard Brenton projected a dystopian vision of a totalitarian Socialist regime possibly and hypothetically replacing the British government à la Thatcher in *Thirteenth Night*.

At the end of the twentieth century, the century of World Wars and genocide, Msomi’s *UMabatha* does not “call to arms” like the *Macbeth*-adaptations mentioned above. His transformation of violence into the semiotics of ritual and ceremony can be interpreted as a gesture of reconciliation. The conciliatory undercurrent of Msomi’s play manifests itself most clearly when compared to the endings of some other contemporary *Macbeth*-adaptations. In Stoppard’s *Cahoot’s Macbeth*, a perverted because literal closure is offered when a wall is being built after the inspector representing state power tried to interrupt the actors’ private performance. In Brenton’s *Thirteenth Night*, not a “dream play” but a “nightmare-play within the play,” the main characters are physically as well as mentally injured and, while the question of the legitimacy of violence as a means for changing politics remains open, a stone is lifted and ready to be, or not to be, thrown. The political satire *Zeneral Makbef* by the Indian Mauritian Dev Virahsawmy about a former colony that is, after independence, still in the military, political, financial and cultural clutches of two superpowers, ends in havoc: when, after a failed attempt at non-alignment, the little island is attacked by war planes of both rivaling nations (“Yankidolla” and “Rusputik”) hell breaks loose.

In *UMabatha*, closure is achieved by various strategies. “Mabatha fights Donebane and slays him” (stage direction Act 5, Scene 4, 70). This eliminates the possibility of future rivalry between the two sons of the former king. Mafudu then enters and kills Mabatha saying, “[t]his is your day to meet your ancestors” (Act 5, Scene 4, 72). Therefore, in contrast to Shakespeare’s Macbeth, Mabatha dying at the hands of his enemies has not forfeited his spiritual well-being but will be reunited with his ancestors, which means that his metaphysical existence is not jeopardized. Even after his defeat at the hands of a stronger opponent, his dignity remains unharmed. Being joined with the tribal ancestors, Mabatha will be accepted as part of the past. He becomes part of the process of history-making and part of the collective memory. It is only on this condition that a complex figure like the historical Shaka — his achievements as well as his greed for power and cruelty — can be resuscitated from the Zulu tribal past and be restored to a contemporary audience’s consciousness.

*UMabatha* gives artistic expression to the “dispossessed” without deploring the act of dispossession or whatever has been taken away. The achievement of *UMabatha* consists in putting the focus on the rich heritage of the Zulus that is still there, that neither a discriminating regime nor cultural imperialism could take away from them — a sense of family and community, dignity, tradition, history.

Black people’s history does not commence with the arrival of white people. Black people’s identity is not defined by their victimization under apartheid, by the majority populace’s
EDITH HALLBERG

relation to the minority. Black identity must be approached on its own merit, for if we are not understood despite apartheid, we will not be understood after apartheid, says Jerry Mofokeng, resident director at the Market Theatre, on the issue of South African “Theatre for Export” (87). According to a review of Umabatha in the Wall Street Journal, “transposition and sharing of cultures after too many decades of vicious separation is precisely what South Africa is now about. What better way to highlight both the problems and vast opportunity of such a transition than to mix Shakespeare and a bit of chaos and stand back?” (Revzin B2) It is the transcendence of ideological and cultural boundaries that provides a foundation for self-confidence.

In the keynote address of the Color of Violence Conference (Santa Cruz), violence has been characterized as “one of those words that is a powerful ideological conductor, one whose meaning constantly mutates” (Davis). I have tried to show that in Umabatha, ritualized forms of violence may work towards self-representation and possibly towards reconciliation if they draw from authentic tribal ceremonies and customs. Using Ashcroft’s concept of the “rhizome,” one can say that “the binaries and hierarchies of an imperial epistemology” are contested by the Zulu-Macbeth. Umabatha transcends binary oppositions such as “colonial” and “post-colonial” in that it denies the existence of a “single tap root of power” (169f) in society by showing that both power and subversion are not linear and dialectic, but erratic and interlinked.

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In postcolonial discourse it seems almost impossible not to mention Caliban and William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* in one context or another. There is a host of postcolonial interpretations of Shakespeare’s *Tempest* and I will not go into the subject in detail here. Moreover, there is also a number of texts inspired by or based upon the bard’s original. In the revolutionary year of 1848, William and Robert Broughs wrote and staged in England their play *The Enchanted Isle*, capturing the spirit of uprising of that period in time. Here, the republican character Caliban makes use of the anti-slavery slogan: ‘Am I not a man and a brother’ (cf. Griffiths 163). In 1878, Ernest Renan published his philosophical drama, *Caliban, suite de La Tempête*, as a sequel to the bard’s original *Tempest*. Here, the “former slave dethrones Prospero and in his turn becomes master” (Smith 393).

Ironically, many postcolonial writers also surrender to the temptation to use motifs from *The Tempest*-master text in their own works in order to process colonial and postcolonial experiences – George Lamming, C.L.R. James, Derek Walcott, Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Roberto Fernández Retamar, and Aimé Césaire in the Caribbean, Nkem Nwankwo, John Pepper Clark, David Wallace, and Ngugi wa Thiong’o, in Africa. One may also want to include Toni Morrison and her novel *Tar Baby* (1981) in this list. This postcolonial intertextuality lacks distance to the master narrative of Europe – on the one hand. On the other hand, however, it also bespeaks a subversive form of resistance to literary colonization. Colonial others, silenced before, speak up in a period of decolonization, and take the text in possession. The most recent postcolonial rewriting – at least that I am aware of – is Dev Virahsawmy’s play *Toufann* (1991/1995), which has been translated from Mauritian French Creole into English

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1. Cf. Beate Neumeier’s essay in this volume. For detailed analyses see also Brown, Greenblatt, Islam, Kermode, and Vaughan & Vaughan.
3. The title of this version of variation on the theme of *The Tempest*, by the way, does without any form of article, definite or indefinite – it is neither a nor the tempest, it just is.
and staged in London by Michael and Nisha Walling in December 1999.4 “Toufann,”
by the way, is the Bhojpuri word for cyclone. So here we are, again halfway around
the globe, with yet another appropriation of the bard’s Tempest.5 This time, it is located
in cyberspace and Prospero becomes the computer wizard. The dramatis personae can
be considered a William Shakespeare all-star cast. There’s Kordelia, Lerwa Lir,
Polonious, and Yago, to name but a few. Later, I will briefly return to this play.

Let me turn to Aime Cesaire, Une Tempête, and négritude. Cesaire was born in
1913 on the island of Martinique in the French Antilles. In the 1930s he went to Paris
in order to study and then return to the colony he came from as a ‘useful’ and ‘dutiful’
colonial subject. He did, however, come into contact with other intellectuals from other
French colonies: for instance Léon Damas from Guyana and Léopold Sédar Senghor,
who later became president of the independent Senegal. In 1934, they founded L’Étudiant Noir / The Black Student (cf. Jahn, Geschichte 222), a newspaper which
was considered “instrumental in providing a forum for interaction between blacks of
the Antilles and those of Africa,” as literary historian Janis Pallister put it (qtd. in
Friedman).

In this student newspaper, and in Césaire’s book-length poem, Cahier d’un retour
au pays natal / Notebook of a return to the Native Land (1938/1939), the term and the
concept of négritude was formulated for the first time. “Jean Paul Sartre has defined
négritude as ‘being-in-the-world-Black’” (Kesteloot 32), and the Kongolese scholar
Lilyan Kesteloot adds that “négritude can be defined more simply: it is on one level the
Black man’s own way of thinking, acting, living, and creating.” (Kesteloot 33). The
black woman does not really have a part in this movement, but I will return to this
point later. In an 1969 interview, Césaire states that “the movement of négritude / blackness
is a movement which affirms the solidarity of blacks from what I call the
Diaspora with the African world” (Beloux; my translation). By Diaspora he means
African Americans, Africans from the Antilles, i.e. the Caribbean, and Africans in
Europe. Janheinz Jahn concludes that négritude is the collective personality of black
Africans,6 and that it rejected the French colonial policy of cultural assimilation.

From 1946 until 1956, Césaire was elected a member of the French national assembly
and, on the ticket of the communist party, he became mayor of Fort de France,
the capital of Martinique. There, he also taught at the Lycée Schoelcher, where Frantz
Fanon and Edouard Glissant were among his students (cf. Davis 2). As head of a

4 However, as one Mauritian critic remarked, the “production that was seen in the Africa Centre
from 26 November to 19 December [1999] was what may be called an English version, rather than
a translation, of Toufann” (Mauritian International), because many Creole phrases and specific
allusions to Mauritian issues proved impossible to translate.

5 Virahsawmy might have been influenced by Philip Crispin’s English translation of Aime Cesaire’s
French West Indian version of The Tempest (cf. Mauritian International). In the context of this
paper, however, I use Richard Miller’s translation for the Ubu Repertory Theater, New York.

6 See Jahn, Einleitung 6-7, and Jahn, Geschichte 230-45 for a comprehensive definition of négritude.
commission, Césaire was responsible for the acknowledgment of the Antilles as overseas departments of France (Départements d'Outre Mer – D.O.M.), therefore the French colonies in America became integral parts of the French Republic and were no longer dependent areas without rights or representation. Ironically, Césaire supported the very thing on a political level which he constantly fought on a cultural level: assimilation, and he “has been severely criticized for missing the opportunity to make Martinique independent” (Porter 360) – notably by Raphaël Confiant and indirectly by Edouard Glissant (cf. Porter 177). In the 1960s, Césaire advocated an autonomous federation comprising the overseas departments in the Caribbean, including French Guyana (cf. Porter 361), probably along the lines of the Federation of the West Indies, former British colonies that gained their independence 1959 through 1961. To this end he used political and cultural means, because he agreed with Senghor, who saw politics as just one aspect of culture (cf. Jahn, Geschichte 222; cf. Kesteloot 92). In 1993, a few months prior to his eightieth birthday, Césaire took his leave from active politics (cf. Davis 183).

Césaire’s dramatic work, in the 1950s and 60s, is rooted in a perspective that cannot be reduced to one continent. Again, négritude speaks through his African and Caribbean characters, or, as Pierre Laville put it, “l’œuvre dramatique d’Aimé Césaire se définit dans une perspective pluri-continentale, sous le commun dénominateur de la Négritude” (Laville 240). Césaire’s first three plays, And the Dogs Were Silent (1956), The Tragedy of King Christophe (1963), and A Season in the Congo (1965), deal with revolutionary leaders who fight against colonialism, however unsuccessfully (cf. Friedman, Porter 361).

Aimé Césaire’s fourth play Une Tempête / A Tempest, first performed in 1969 in Paris, then in 1970 in New York City by the Ubu Repertory Theater, shares with Shakespeare’s The Tempest various topics – master and slave, power and oppression, rightful government and alternative concepts of organizing a state – but, due to a change of perspective, seeks to deconstruct the master narrative and wants to establish a counter-narrative. The master-slave relationship becomes the main plot, the shipwrecked Europeans move to the background. Allusions and parallels to the civil rights movement in the United States are intended, but Césaire calls for the creation of yet a new “brave new world” in a wider postcolonial framework.

Césaire chose to call his play A Tempest, thus indicating that there are many more to come, this one is only one among others. There are many more rebellions to come and there are many more texts dealing with rebellion waiting impatiently in the wings. In terms of intertextuality, with the death of the author (Barthes) in mind, and given the synchronicity of all texts, A Tempest and The Tempest exist at the same time, subvert each other and communicate with each other. Whilst A Tempest emphasizes that there cannot be just one, i.e., The Tempest, the master-text, The Tempest, on the other hand, upholds the gold-standard of literature, in which the brand name Shakespeare still seems to carry the highest possible value. So the two texts, together with others, compete for the same audiences at the same time.
Jonathan Miller's 1970 revival of Shakespeare's *Tempest* supposedly for the first time featured black actors in the roles of Ariel and Caliban (cf. Griffiths 177), but by that time Césaire's "Adaptation pour un théâtre nègre / Adaptation for a Black Theater" (subtitle) had already been put on stage in French and English. The subject was in the air at a time of massive changes in the structure of the European colonial empires, a time when many colonies gained or had recently gained their so-called 'independence.'

Césaire's Prospero is downright angry and not as sophisticated as Shakespeare's Prospero. Caliban and Prospero share the same level of elegance in their discourse (cf. Porter 364). In this context, "Caliban is both Césaire's mouthpiece and the embodiment of the concept of 'Négritude'" (Zabus 41), whereas Prospero embodies the arbitrary tyrant-colonizer. In general, the topics are addressed in a very direct and unmasked way – no beating about the bush. The audience does not really have to wonder about secret plans some of the characters might have, but that is also true for the bard's text. Moreover, Césaire's direct way of addressing issues also has its humorous aspects – on the level of a Punch and Judy show: name-calling, enhancing of supposed physical deformations, and the like (cf. *AT* 14 et passim). Laurence Porter speaks of "a sort of Sängerkrieg" (Porter 364). 8

In 1950, nineteen years before he wrote *Une Tempête*, Césaire wrote in *Discours sur le Colonialisme*: "J'entends la tempête – I hear the tempest. They're talking to me about progress, about 'fulfilments,' about healed illnesses, about the standard of living being raised amongst themselves" (Césaire, *Discours* 19, my translation). But he does not believe in these placating remarks. He can hear a storm building up in 1950, and the tempest Césaire hears is, therefore, the storm of uproar and rebellion, the wind of change, if you forgive me this hackneyed expression. The wind, according to the boatswain, "doesn't give a fuck more about the King than he does about you or me. . . . His Majesty, the Wind! And right now, he's in control and we're all his subjects" (*AT* 5). Once the storm of rebellion is loose, there is no telling what will happen. Uncontrolled violence can destroy everything and everybody.

Caliban, the subaltern, speaks in Aimé Césaire's *Une Tempête*; and he rejects, first of all, the name given to him, with all its well-known connotations: "j'ai décidé que je ne serai plus Caliban" (*UT* 27). He does not want to be Caliban any longer. Miller's translation, the one used by the Ubu Repertory Theater in the New York production, reads: "I don't want to be called Caliban any longer" (*AT* 17, my emphasis). 9

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7 For brevity's sake, I will use the following abbreviations for primary texts. *TT* for *The Tempest* (Shakespeare), *UT* for *Une Tempête* (Césaire), and *AT* for *A Tempest*, Miller's English translation of Césaire's play.

8 Helpful for a comparative analysis of the two *Tempests* is a table comparing the shares of lines the various characters have: Prospero *TT* 30%, *UT* 22%; Caliban *TT* 8%, *UT* 19%; Ariel *TT* 9%, *UT* 10%. Interestingly enough, Prospero keeps his dominance even in Césaire's text, although diminished considerably. Caliban becomes almost Prospero's equal in terms of 'speaking-time,' whereas Ariel's share remains more or less unchanged. The two slaves combined, however, supersede their master in *Une Tempête* (cf. Bonneau 15-17, 59). The major reason for this shift can be seen in the different emphasis Césaire chose for his play.
The French lines encompass much more, not just the name. Caliban rejects everything that’s connected with this colonial identity called ‘Caliban.’ Later, he reduces his statement, for the better understanding of Prospero, to the mere name: “I’m telling you that from now on I won’t answer to the name Caliban” (AT 17) – a name given to him by Prospero, the European colonizer. In the end, he does not answer to the name of Caliban, but he reacts nevertheless when Prospero calls for him: he sings his song of freedom.

Caliban no longer is Shakespeare’s “savage and deformed slave,” neither is he Montaigne’s ‘noble savage,’ but rather a spokesman for négritude. He is a trickster and a militant black hero (cf. Smith 387). This notion becomes clear when we look at the obvious connection many critics have commented on: between Césaire’s Caliban and Malcolm X and between Césaire’s Ariel and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Caliban demands that Prospero call him ‘X’: “Call me X. That would be best. Like a man without a name. Or, to be more precise, a man whose name has been stolen. [...] You’ve stolen everything from me, even my identity! Uhuru!” (AT 18). ‘Uhuru’ is Swahili for ‘freedom,’ which Prospero labels as Caliban’s native tongue. In the following line Prospero addresses Ariel as “Mon cher Ariel (UT 29) / My dear Ariel” and makes sure that he also sees that “Caliban is the enemy” (AT 18). Ariel dutifully carries out all orders given by his master (maître). In fact, the two names, Caliban and Ariel, stand as tropes for the diverging concepts propagated, for example, by these two leaders of the African American Civil Rights movement. Earlier, Octave Mannoni, Frantz Fanon, Philip Mason, and Roberto Fernández Retamar also made use of these psychological prototypes in their respective work, and embedded them in the broader context of decolonization.

Caliban represents militant, violent uprising; Ariel symbolizes nonviolent protest and peaceful negotiations. Like the Reverend King, he ‘has a dream’ of brotherly love between black and white, whereas Caliban prefers death to humiliation and injustice (cf. AT 26). Others before and after X and King, inside and outside the United States, can be classified accordingly: those who preach radical change and those who favor incremental steps towards mutual understanding. Ariel, like King, has a dream (cf. AT 26) and does not believe in violence (cf. AT 25). Caliban refers to this attitude as “Uncle Tom patience” (AT 24). Nevertheless, Ariel is rewarded: he receives his freedom from Prospero, (cf. AT 66) but this freedom can be taken back – Prospero orders

9 For a detailed analysis of the name ‘Caliban’ see Dayan.

10 Cf. Nixon 190, 193; cf. also Vaughan & Vaughan, Shakespeare’s Caliban 156. Octave Mannoni, Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization (1950); Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks (1952); Philip Mason, Prospero’s Magic: Some Thoughts on Class and Race (1962), and Fernández Retamar, Caliban and other Essays (1971).

11 As an interesting parallel to Césaire’s Une Tempête (1969) / A Tempest (1970), The Observer wrote about Jonathan Miller’s production of Shakespeare’s Tempest (1970): “Ariel you’d say is Uncle Tom, Caliban the black rebel. . . . uhuru has begun.” (Observer 21 June 1970; qtd. in Griffiths 178).
Ariel to go and adds, “[b]efore I change my mind!” \(\text{(AT 67)}\). Caliban remains defiant and is confident that time is on his side and the natural course of events will see to his freedom. The plants, the animals, the sea, even the wind, i.e. the tempest, are on Caliban’s side. Unlike Ariel, he is not interested in peace, but in unconditional freedom. Caliban’s very first word in the play is “Uhuru!” \(\text{(AT 13)}\) – ‘freedom.’ Despite all their differences, Ariel and Caliban address each other as “brother,” \(\text{(AT 27)}\) thus also rejecting the names given to them and reducing the epithet to a term of connectedness.

Interestingly enough, Césaire makes a point about changing the *dramatis personae* insofar as he deliberately makes Ariel a “mulatto slave” and Caliban a “black slave,”\(^{12}\) thus insinuating that the Africans of a lighter skin color have not only been assimilated to a higher degree, but that their loyalty to the ‘Black cause’ must be doubted – a part of Césaire’s play I find somewhat problematic. In his stage directions, Césaire seems to take out some of the potential dynamite: each of the randomly entering actors “chooses for himself a mask at his leisure” \(\text{(AT 1)}\), emphasizing that anybody could be in that particular role of a lieutenant to the colonizer – the question of shades of color becomes a superficial one \(\text{(cf. Porter 365)}\). Nevertheless, a certain ambiguity remains.

By the way, women, like Miranda or Sycorax, play a minor role in Prospero’s and Caliban’s power games. This statement is true for Shakespeare, but also for the postcolonial playwright Aimé Césaire. In Dev Virahsawmy’s *Toufann-Tempest*, however, the power relations shift toward the end. Kordelia (Miranda) sabotages her father’s plans by refusing to marry her intended. She decides that Kalibann is far better suited to be her husband and the king who is to govern the island along with her as queen. Kalibann maybe isn’t “rwayal” (royal), but he is “imen” (humane). For Kordelia, “satchiman” (sentiment) is more important than “zot politichick” (politics) \(\text{(Toufann 22)}\). Thus, the male-dominated form of colonialism is put to an end.\(^{13}\)

But now back to Césaire’s *Tempest*. Together with Jean-Marie Serreau\(^{14}\) and his multinational theatre company, Césaire created a “Théâtre de la Tempête” \(\text{(Livingston 195)}\), a writing-back, or rather, acting-back, of the Empire to the centre. Césaire and Serreau were aware of the role of theatre as an essential means of communication and education, especially in Africa, in the era of decolonization. Thus, they wanted to

\(^{12}\) A few years later, Brathwaite picks up these metaphorical interpretations of Prospero, Ariel, and Caliban in his essay “Caliban, Ariel, and Unprospero in the Conflict of Creolization,” a text about the 1831-32 Jamaican slave-revolt: For Brathwaite, Prospero stands for “the slave-owner, Ariel the partially assimilated mulatto, and Caliban the rebel slave” \(\text{(Vaughan & Vaughan, Shakespeare’s Caliban 157)}\).

\(^{13}\) It is, however, the white woman who makes the decisions here. On a different level, however, Virahsawmy is more consistent than Césaire. Twenty years after Césaire, Virahsawmy actually did write in his own language – Kreol. He no longer adheres to the rules of “Francophonie,” i.e., the rule established and upheld by the former colonizer.

\(^{14}\) In the process of creating his plays, Césaire worked closely together with Serreau. They talked, discussed, and worked together, and the director initiated changes as the text was written. Moreover, Césaire experimented with his ideas in scenic work. \(\text{(cf. Laville 255)}\).
use the means of theatre to further the process of decolonization in the francophone colonies. Originally, the play was conceived for performance in Tunesia in 1969 (cf. Livingston 192). In a discussion with Serreau and students, Cesaire said in 1967:

Je fais du théâtre pour pays sous-développés, parce que je suis originaire d'un d'eux... Mon théâtre doit jouer un rôle social. Le théâtre remplira sa fonction sociale, non seulement en faisant voir, mais aussi en faisant comprendre et prendre conscience. Cela rejoint les idées de Brecht. Mon théâtre a une fonction critique, il doit inciter le public à juger (Césaire in a discussion with Serreau and students in Jouy-en-Josas, 6 November 1967, qtd. in Laville 240).

I create theater for underdeveloped countries, because I have my origin in one of them... My theater should play a social role. Theater fulfills its social function not only by making people see, but also by making them understand and gain awareness. That is in keeping with Brecht’s ideas. My theater has a critical function, it should stimulate the public to make judgments. (my translation)

Césaire thinks that the theater should evoke the invention of the future. “Theater is, in Africa at any rate, an essential communicative art. Therefore, it must be directly comprehensible by the people.” At the same time, he also insists that art – including his art – is universal, therefore the topics he uses appeal to a universal public (cf. Laville 240).

So there is this universal artistic side, there is also a philosophical side, but most importantly, with *A Tempest*, Césaire wanted to write a piece of literature that would be an appeal for revolt. And the best way of finding out whether or not he succeeded is by submitting it to public approval (cf. Bonneau 58). Which is what happened in Paris in November of 1969, when *Une Tempête* was first performed. Together with the critic Gilles Sandoir, Richard Bonneau wonders at which audience the piece is directed, and they come to the conclusion that it is not an “appel à la révolution” (Bonneau 58), because the European, especially Shakespearean, reference system renders the play incomprehensible to a public it should be addressing, i.e., one that is still colonized. If this were the case, there would be no necessity whatsoever (“n’a aucune nécessité,” Bonneau 58) for this play. Bonneau, however, had had the opportunity to see the play together with an audience from Côte d’Ivoire / Ivory Coast, “which showed itself extremely receptive and has proved in a striking way that it felt concerned by the appeal” (Bonneau, my translation 58).

In the UK, *Une Tempête* premiered some 30 years later, in September 1998, at the Gate Theatre in Notting Hill, with a new translation by Philip Crispin (cf. Scorer 295). Mick Gordon’s production was a success with London’s theatre critics. Michael Billington suggested that “far from being reductively didactic,” the play “lends Shakespeare’s myth all kinds of extra resonance” (13). The *Times Literary Supplement* acknowledged “a remarkable theatrical event” and referred to Césaire’s *Tempest* as “not simply a new reading of Shakespeare but an original play of astonishing power” (22). By the way, this production was staged 28 years after Césaire’s play had premiered in

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15 Aimé Césaire, 6 November 1967, qtd. in Laville 239-40 (my translation). Cf. also Livingston 183. For a description of African theatrical tradition within an oral culture see Abrahams.
New York at Ubu Repertory in the translation of Richard Miller, and of course 28 years after Jonathan Miller’s 1970 production of Shakespeare’s Tempest. By then, the theatre-going public was quite used to seeing black actors in the roles of Caliban and Ariel. In the 1998 production of Une Tempête, the incitement to revolt does not seem to play a role at all. Critics comment on historical parallels (cf. Marlowe), on the play’s stylishness (cf. Taylor), or its “fascinating ideological debate” (Billington 238).

Lilyan Kesteloot claims that “Black writers did not want to push their peoples toward an unplanned insurrection. The mission of those Aimé Césaire calls ‘men of culture’ . . . was to ‘prepare a good decolonization and not just any kind of decolonization!’” (Kesteloot 16). I cannot completely agree with her: Violence certainly is an option for Césaire, although not his first choice. The American Black Power movement echoes through his play. Caliban is never physically violent on stage. This role is left to Prospero. Caliban seems to develop a sense for patience – he knows his time will come. However, he never withdraws his conviction that violence is a legitimate means for gaining your freedom; he merely changes his strategy. Which strategy ever lead to ‘good decolonization,’ as Césaire calls it, remains a question too difficult to be answered, if we look at the so-called decolonized African continent of today in terms of periphery and center. Decolonization created a state of turmoil in almost every single one of the former colonies. In his preface to Frantz Fanon’s The Wretched of the Earth, Jean-Paul Sartre thought of decolonization as “the period when ‘the machine [went] into reverse.”16 You cannot, however, go back to the precolonial state of pristine innocence. The past becomes an integral part of the formation of the future, or, in the words of George Lamming, “Calibari’s history . . . belongs entirely to the future” (qtd. in Nixon 195).

Unlike Shakespeare’s Prospero, Césaire’s colonizer stays on the island, alone with Caliban, to uphold civilization, as he seems to think: “I shall protect civilization!” (AT 75), but actually he is not willing to let go of his power. On the island, in the colony, Prospero, the colonizer, is the prime ruler; at home, he would be only one duke or citizen among many others, serving a more powerful ruler (cf. Nixon 191). Moreover, Prospero needs the other to define himself; “he has become enslaved to his slave, which is to say, dependent on him for his own sense of identity,” (Porter 369) as Porter put it. But the same is true for Caliban: only in the end he realizes that killing Prospero will not solve his problems. Although he is not interested in peace, but rather in freedom, he realizes that one does not really go without the other. He certainly does not become a compliant ‘Ariel’ in the end, but he has reached a certain independence of thinking.

Whereas Shakespeare is said to be speaking through his Prospero, Césaire clearly can be identified with his Caliban, although he “insisted that he saw himself in both Caliban and Ariel” (Porter 372; cf. Smith 396). In the course of the play, Une Tempête seems to shift from a ‘how-to-play’ for rebellion à la Fanon to a description of the cur-

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rent and the future state of colonialism. "We are propagators of souls at the cutting edge of history, indeed, creators of a new consciousness," Césaire proudly proclaims (qtd. in Kesteloot 16). In terms of his educational goal, Césaire gives out the message that violence might be the wrong strategy in the process of decolonization; Caliban seems to learn as much during the play, if not from Ariel, he certainly learns it from his confrontations with Prospero. Morally, Caliban does not want to sink as low as his colonizer, therefore he refrains from using direct and utter violence. Passive resistance seems to become the new strategy Césaire is propagating in his educational play. Education, then, leads to emancipation – a mental liberation must precede a political one (cf. Porter 375). Nevertheless, a certain ambiguity about revolt and violence remains.

Caliban’s first word on stage was "Uhuru!"; the final words of the play are also Caliban’s: "La liberté ôhe, la liberté! / freedom hi-day, freedom hi-day!!" (UT 92, AT 75) Or, with the words of a soul-funk song: “Free your mind and the rest will follow!”

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Secondary Sources


Towards an Intercultural Theatre? Variations on Shakespeare's The Tempest

Shakespeare's The Tempest seems to be "an obvious choice to investigate intercultural issues" (Kennedy 1995, 56). Set in the context of Early Modern travel, Shakespeare's most complex play about cultural relations links ideas about Old World and New World, about traveller and magician to issues of legitimacy and usurpation, dominance and resistance (cf. Barker/Hume 198). According to Dennis Kennedy "Prospero, immigrant and hegemon, . . . is the earliest representation in Western drama of the doubled colonial subject, the governor who becomes defined by the governed, the conquistador who cannot escape his need for the aborigine" (56). But apart from "the play's imbrication into this discourse of colonialism" (Barker/Hume 198), Shakespeare's text is also a tale of and about wonder and magic, reconciliation and universal harmony.

For a long time stage productions have either centred on issues of colonialism and its implicit power relations, or have foregrounded the magic vision of universal harmony and its conciliatory efforts. Accordingly, Prospero has been shown either as a powerful and vengeful, angry and embittered exploiter or as a generous and benevolent magician/poet. Similarly, Ariel and Caliban have a long stage history as airy spirit and earthy cannibal. Both have been read either as reluctant prisoners or as emotional dependants of Prospero. Consequently, the interpretations of the play's end range from a pessimistic notion of ongoing discord to a celebration of utopian reconciliation.

In the text, however, politics and magic are inextricably conjoined: Prospero's colonised natives belong to the supernatural world. They are spirits (Ariel) and 'monsters' (Caliban). At the same time the colonial master Prospero is himself an exiled refugee, distanced from the old world of power. The Tempest stages the intricate linkage of power politics and romance, of a bleak outlook on human communication and a utopian hope for mutual understanding and forgiveness, exploring and questioning the binary logic of self/other, master/slave, culture/nature, natural/supernatural. It is precisely this reciprocity of the cultural encounter written into the Shakespearean text which seems to render the play an ideal testing-ground for a theatre concerned with "intercultural exchanges within theatre practice" (Pavis 1996, 1).

In the introductory chapter to his Intercultural Performance Reader, Patrice Pavis concedes the historical linkage between cultural exchange and cultural appropriation involving "the dichotomy between dominant and dominated, between majority and minority," concluding that "from there it is only a small step to seeing interculturalism as an ethnocentric strategy of Western culture to reconquer alien symbolic goods by submitting them to a dominant codification" (Pavis 1996, 4). Instead of taking this step, however, Pavis (and others) insist on an acknowledgement of the irrevocable
mutuality of cultural influence, on the interdependence of cultures drawing on theories of alterity which define the opposition of familiar/foreign, universal/particular not as radical opposition but rather as a continuum (cf. Marvin Carlson 82-3).

At the same time theoreticians of intercultural theatre are anxious to point out not only the chances but also the dangers and limitations of this new brand of theatre. Patrice Pavis has used the image of an intercultural hour-glass, “designed to be turned upside-down” (Pavis 1992, 1-23), to describe the process of intercultural exchange in the theatre, where “a whole series of filters [are used] that keep only a few elements of the source culture, selected according to very precise norms” (Pavis 1996, 16). This foregrounds the fact that the goals of the adaptors are always aesthetic and ideological, conscious and unconscious.

More pessimistically, Dennis Kennedy has described the dangers of a new form of cultural imperialism implicit in even the most well-intentioned “United Nations of drama,” as he calls Peter Brook’s intercultural theatre (57). When imported forms of theatre are taken out of context, the danger of a levelling of cultural difference in favour of an “anything goes”-mentality is difficult to avoid (Kennedy 63). When the intercultural endeavour produces a “Disneyland culture [offering] samples of all products, provided that they are sufficiently standardised, easily accessible to, and consumable by the majority” (Pavis 1996, 13), then the intercultural exchange has given way to a “flattening out” of all discernible individual cultural traits.

However, in the theatre such a “flattening out” of differences is much more difficult than in other media, not least because of the presence and immediacy of the communal spatio-temporal theatrical experience. Nevertheless the concept of an intercultural theatre “which is situated at the precise intersection of... cultures and... theatrical forms” (Pavis 1996, 4), opening up the possibility of a “third space” (Homi Bhabha) between cultures, remains an ideal construct against which each particular production and its specific spatial and temporal location has to be measured. In this context Chris Balme has drawn attention to the inevitable difference between an intercultural theatre of the West and a syncretic post-colonial theatre as indigenous theatre: “While even the most serious Western experiments in intercultural theatre are never entirely free of the scent of theatrical exoticism or orientalism (in Said’s sense of the term), exponents of syncretic theatre are by definition situated at the other end of the power continuum... The essential difference lies in the fact that the processes of mixing take place on different political ground” (271). Since my own concern here is with three experimental approaches to an English Renaissance text which were all directed by Europeans (opening in Europe), I will use the term intercultural theatre in this sense as an attempt to open up a limited Western perspective.

Patrice Pavis has defined a number of parameters for an analysis of intercultural theatre, including the use of actors, the inscription of culture on and through the body, the relation of performance to the text, the manner in which the production shows cultures on stage, and the ways in which the spectator is positioned (1993, 270-89). The positioning of the spectator in particular would have to be central for an analysis of the possibilities of a third space in-between cultures. Some of the questions involved
Towards an Intercultural Theatre?

in such an endeavour will be raised in the following remarks about three intercultural productions of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* by Peter Brook (1990), Karin Beier (1997) and by Pit Holzwarth's bremer shakespeare company and Annette Leday's Kathakali Dance Company (2000).

1. Peter Brook, *La Tempête* (UA Zürich, 1990):
   Cross-Cultural Harmony and Transcultural Utopia

Peter Brook has been on the forefront of an intercultural theatre for a very long time. In a BBC-Interview about a decade ago, Brook has described his own development as a director from an emphasis on stage imagery, to an emphasis on the actors opening up his/her own imagery as a human being, to an emphasis on the relation between actor and audience as a space of contact. This indicates both, a change in focus and a continuity of his concept of a visual theatre "as a space of discovery" (Brook 1990, 5; cf. also Brook 1968). Since 1970 Brook has toured the world with his multi-ethnic Paris-based theatre company (*Centre International de Créations Théâtrales*) exploring the possibilities of opening up a third space in-between cultures, a space conveying a "sense of the sacred . . . beyond the surface of everyday life" using "different languages and different forms of theatre" (Brook 1991). In this sense Brook takes up Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in order to rediscover the invisible world (cf. Brook 5) of this "most complex, most unreal play" (Brook 1991).

1.1 Setting

In order to evoke this invisible world the performance space in Brook's version of the play is "spartan, even ascetic" (Williams 74). The stage is covered with red sand, the acting area set off as a quadrangle covered with white sand. A small marble rock is positioned in the background. The visual simplicity is further emphasized when bamboo poles serve as masts, as waves, as sinking ship, and later as forest jungle, as cage for the captured Ferdinand, or as dome at Ferdinannd's and Miranda's union (cf. Williams 75 and Kennedy 58). At the end this stage seen as a "page" is wiped clean of its 'writing' in an instant . . . [when] an actor-spirit quietly rakes the sand, reconfiguring the zero-degree that was our starting-point" (Williams 75). Throughout the performance three musicians with Oriental-African string and percussion instruments are in full view of the audience, accompanying and commenting the proceedings on stage.

Critics have almost unanimously commented upon the wonderful magic and strength, the fluidity and transience of this visual theatre (Williams 75). For Patrice Pavis "the entire production was steeped in concrete thought. Nothing was said or thought which was not also signified by a visual or tactile materiality of signs: sand, light, musical and vocal decor" (Pavis 1993, 277).
1.2 Actors

The casting “literally challenged any vision of 'black and white' in the play” (Pavis 1993, 278), “deliberately upset[ting] standard political interpretations” (Kennedy 58). Brook’s African Prospero (Sotigui Kouyaté) had an African brother (Mamadou Dioume), an Indian daughter (Shantala Shivalingappa), an African Ariel (Bakary Sangaré) and a German Caliban (David Bennent). Gonzalo was Japanese (Yoshi Oida), Sebastian was French (Jean-Paul Denizon). On the one hand this use of difference(s) can be read as a means to “disrupt and sabotage the received signifying conventions” in favour of a “fluidity and indeterminacy of suggestion, rather than determinate reference” (Williams 76), as part of Brook’s intention to tell “a marvelous tale. [A tale told by the actors] ... from their own separate perspectives” (Pavis 1993, 278).

At the same time this strategy to “work through diversified actors who already incarnate the other. . . . [T]o stage the foreign directly through miscellaneous global bodies,” has been read as indicative not only of Brook’s supposed “blindness against” the issue of colonialism, but also of Brook’s own orientalism, his essentialising an unspecified East as magic other (Kennedy 56-7).

1.3 Representation of cultures

Brook’s production of The Tempest shows traces of a large variety of cultures. Brook uses “Korean masks, a Zen garden, the rather Indian cut of the African bubus.” He presents Miranda as “the bride in white . . . , Stephano and Trinculo . . . with Neapolitan gestures.” He associates Ariel with the “angel of Annunciation in a white gown” (Pavis 1993, 280). These allusions however, never serve a mimetic function. According to Pavis “the actors represented neither their original cultures nor a context which had to be identified in order to situate the fable. The large number of cultural allusions warned against any unilateral reading! At the same time the allusions revealed an underlying common ground, universalising the conflicts and the human relationships” (Pavis 1993, 279). In the context of such a reading, Jean-Claude Carrière’s French version of the play is part of the intention of making the text foreign, part of an overall distancing effect necessary for the creation of Brook’s utopian island, which should “not be inscribed with a determined cultural context” (Pavis 1993, 279).

At the same time it can be argued that an unspecified African otherness is used as a basis for the representation of the marvelous. Prospero is evoking his magic with stones, he arranges magic circles, he holds an amulet over Miranda’s head, while she is closing her eyes, reliving her childhood. This can be seen as part of a decisive “cultural dislocation” (Kennedy) on which Brook’s intercultural theatre is based, and as indicative of a concomitant tendency to orientalise the other.
Towards an Intercultural Theatre?

1.4 Spectator Position

While virtually all critics agree on Brook's production of *La Tempête* as "a speculation on the potential for global harmony" (Kennedy 58), "a universal reconciliation among peoples" (Pavis 1993, 276), their evaluations of this endeavor range from a celebration of Brook's creation of a "space of transcultural community" (Williams 76) to a devastating criticism of "the message" of Brook's theatre as "little different from that of global capitalism" (Kennedy 59).

In view of these radically different readings an analysis of the positioning of the implied (and the real) spectator is of decisive importance. According to David Williams the spectator of Brook's *La Tempête* is invited "to participate interactively," "as co-creator" in a performance designed as "an action for meaning(s) to be constructed" (Williams 76). Dennis Kennedy seems to describe the same phenomenon, though from a different perspective less optimistically, when he sees the spectator of *La Tempête* in a "somewhat awkward position" facing a familiar play made foreign, and consequently being "abducted into a brave new world unknown on our maps, a postmodern land without borders" (58).

This critical divide in evaluation is linked to the question whether and how the spectator is invited to fill in the interpretative gaps left open in the performance. Is the implied spectator firmly guided through the performance to embrace the potential for transcultural communication, or is he/she forced into an awareness of the shortcomings of his/her own perceptions?

Significantly Brook's vision of harmony is presented within a utopian space set off against the spectator's own space of cultural experiences and preconceptions. Attempting to make sense of, to locate the cultural differences used in the play within his/her own frame of reference the spectator is confronted with the limitations of his/her own reading. In this context it may be decisive that received cultural associations seem to be subverted and affirmed at the same time, as the heated critical debate has shown. Brook's intercultural experiment succeeds as long as the "awkward position" (Kennedy) of the spectator prevails and remains linked to the production's resistance to closure.


In many respects the German director Karin Beier's approach to *The Tempest* can be read as a counterpart to Peter Brook's vision of the play. Whereas Brook investigates the potential of transcultural communication and universal harmony with his multi-ethnic actors' group, Karin Beier uses a multi-lingual approach to evoke a vision of intercultural non-communication and discord. In contradistinction to Peter Brook's almost timeless version, Beier's production is set in a historically specified present, staged as a pessimistic (political) statement on the state of the European union. Conse-
sequently Beier strips the play from most of its magic, whereas Brook’s interpretation centres on the magic of the play.

Following a production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream, The Tempest* became Beier’s second production in which she worked with a corporation of fourteen European theatres, casting actors from the different countries each speaking their own language. The emphasis in Beier’s production of the play is thus inevitably (and more radically than in Brook’s version) transferred from the text into body, gesture, and movement. The world of images clearly dominates the world of the text.

2.1 Setting

Beier’s stage design, created by Florian Etti, consists of a slanting disk, ascending towards the back, signifying the deck of the ship, the island, as well as the world disk. This minimalist setting, however, is not destined to create an atmosphere of magic, but to evoke a rather flat, unspiritual world, when it aptly reveals itself as a (rhetorical) congress platform at the opening of the play. In this parodic opening scene the empty phrases about hopes for a golden age of communal understanding and universal harmony in the new millennium expressed by the European congress delegates in a kind of Euro-pidgin (of English, French, Italian and German fragments) turn into growing discord about the subsidy-decisive question whether to define the tomato as fruit or as vegetable. Only then Beier’s babylonic *Tempest* is unleashed.

2.2. Actors

In this production of *The Tempest* Prospero and Miranda speak Roumanian (Marius Astilean, Anca Sigartu), Ferdinand Polish, Gonzalo French, Alonso Finnish, and Caliban middle-high-German (Wolfgang Maria Bauer), while Ariel is completely speechless, reduced to singing musical sounds of suffering (Swiss-German Karin Pfammatter). Ariel thus is presented as a kind of “tortured angel,” whereas Caliban appears as a sympathetic but doomed representative of the past, who rather than attempting rape has to ward off Miranda’s sexual advances (Preuß 1997, 27). The shipwrecked court is clad in uniform raincoats. At the end Prospero tears pages from his magic book, before he goes off to leave Caliban to decipher the book left to him, and to attempt to appropriate its power. Beier stages the loss of utopia. Unity, understanding and communication can only be presented ironically as propaganda of the bureaucratic officials of a Europe that underneath (this gloss of propaganda) is hopelessly in discord.
2.3 Representation of Cultures

Beier's production raises questions about the applicability of a multi-lingual approach for a politically oriented intercultural theatre. Foregrounding the political impact implies a concentration on the cultural differences presented in the play. Beier's multi-lingual cast sets out to deconstruct hierarchies within European power politics by the complementary strategies of centring marginalised European languages (Roumanian, Polish, Finnish) and by marginalising and defamiliarising central ones (like Caliban's German).

Thus in one sense cultural differences are emphasized and specified, covering a wide range within the hierarchical opposition of the familiar and the foreign, as in each country to which the production travels, only bits and pieces of the text are understood, varying according to the audience's linguistic competence. At the same time, however, such a multi-lingual approach implies the necessity of devising easily recognizable, cross-culturally discernible signs of cultural difference. Thus, the consequences of this approach may consist in either unintelligibility or in a reliance on cultural clichés and stereotypes.

Though generally celebrated for its images Beier's multi-lingual theatre has been criticised for both its incomprehensibility and its reputed affinity to cliché and caricature. In a similar manner, Beier's earlier production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* had not only been acclaimed for evoking compelling images, but had also been criticised for reproducing, rather than subverting national clichés and cultural stereotypes (Preußer 1995, 208). The critical reception of her *The Tempest* has even more insistently concentrated on the production's dangers of disintegrating into successive cabaret sketches (Preußer 1997, 28).

In a multi-lingual theatre by necessity body-language has to replace verbal communication to a large extent. This strategy works where feelings are concerned, as for instance in the picturing of Ferdinand and Miranda falling in love without verbal communication. Politics, however, in contradistinction to love, needs -- as many critics have remarked -- language, the discursive act, the battle of words for communication. Otherwise, rather than foregrounding the complex mechanisms of intercultural communication (or non-communication), the achieved effect consists in the bleak vision of a babylonic confusion without evoking much interest in the individual voices.

2.4 Spectator Position

The positioning of the spectator is thus decisive for Beier's attempt at fusing the multi-lingual with the political. For an unsettling awareness of the political dimension of the play both traps (would) have to be avoided, the reduction of the performance to multi-lingual incomprehensibility as well as that to an overcoding of stereotypical cultural and national markers. As soon as the spectators are thrown back on their own languages and cultural contexts on the one hand, and on the clichés of other cultural
contexts on the other, the defamiliarising effect of the variety of languages used, tends to give way to the familiarity of easily recognizable stereotypes.

Rather than evoking the spectator's unease, unsettling the audience's preconceptions, this strategy tends to invite a rather complacent understanding of a seemingly enlightened audience (placed in a superior position). Moreover, the production invites a hierarchisation within the audience, as the staging can be interpreted to be composed as a literary test of knowledge about Shakespeare's text and as a kind of foreign language test. But even the spectator unable to decipher the details, will recognize the spectacle as a statement about a European discord, he/she has always known about anyway. Consequently, the spectator can laugh at the spectacle of discord, rather than being disconcerted him/herself. As long as the production concentrates on the phenomenon of difference and discord as such, rather than on its specifications, the spectator's own stereotypes are not endangered. Thus, the disconcerting implications of making sense of oneself and the other in the context of intercultural contact, are replaced by the uncontroversial (and even reassuring) message of mutual non-understanding. Rather than evoking unease about this lack of understanding and an emphasis on the need for listening to and communicating with each other this comes dangerously close to reproducing the stage effect of not listening to each other within the audience.


Rather than being based on Brook's multi-ethnic company, or Beier's multi-lingual approach, the production of The Tempest by the bremer shakespeare company (directed by Pit Holzwarth) in cooperation with the Indian Kathakali dance company (directed by Annette Leday) attempts to create a dialogue between two specific culturally different theatre forms. The originators of this endeavour are anxious to point out that the aim of the production is not the amalgamation of two theatrical forms, but the meeting of two aesthetics, or in other words: the aim is to be different together (“nicht die Verschmelzung von zwei unterschiedlichen Theaterformen ist das Ziel der Inszenierung, sondern vielmehr die Begegnung zweier Ästhetiken”, “gemeinsam verschieden sein können”, “Der Sturm”).

Pit Holzwarth reads The Tempest as a play about turning around and starting anew (“Stück der Umkehr und des Neubeginns” Der Sturm), in which Prospero renounces – through his contact with the spirits of the island – the Faustian desire for knowledge and power and its destructive implications. (“Prospero . . . hat den faustischen Erkenntnis- der letztlich ein Herrschaftsanspruch ist, bis an Grenzen getrieben und die Destruktivität dieses Wegs erkannt . . . . Er verzichtet nicht nur auf seine Wissenschat, sondern auch auf seine Macht die Menschen zu kontrollieren und zu manipulieren. Die Begegnung mit Ariel, seinen verschiedenen Geistern und Metamorphosen haben ihn nachhaltig verändert. Er entsagt seinem Rachedurst und Kopfkrieg. Prospero kehrt um und geht in die Welt zurück.” Der Sturm).
Towards an Intercultural Theatre?

In their attempt at a dialogue of cultures and theatrical forms instead of their amalgamation or fusion, Pit Holzwarth and Annette Leday try to open up rather than flatten out the play's inherent contradictions and tensions addressing questions of difference and power as well as of (the search for) harmony and love. Consequently, they are faced with the difficulty to deal with issues of power and reconciliation, of colonial hierarchy and (inter)cultural dialogue, resisting a reproduction of the old binaries in favour of embracing differences.

3.1 Setting

According to the playbill, the play is set at the height of colonialism. Again, the stage is bare. A proscenium arch serves as a kind of bridge leading into the audience, a bridge significantly used by Miranda (in her attempt to bridge the opposite worlds). In its use of props assembled from different historical periods the production suggests a postcolonial persistence of colonial issues.

Significantly, the text, in this case the German translation by Rainer Iwersen, is spoken by the actors of the bremer shakespeare company only, whereas the magic of the island, Ariel (Sadanam Bhassi) and the spirits (Sadanam Manikandan, Kalamandalam Manoj Kumar, Sadanam Krishnadasan, Kalamandalam Unnikrishnan Nair) is evoked by Kathakali dance and music. In this context Ariel appears as a silent spirit using signs. Prospero, in turn, throughout appears as an interpreter of signs. Thus in this production magic is associated with the visual and aural and is set off from a verbal aesthetics.

This emphasis on different sign systems and on the implications of (mutual) deciphering is heightened by Kalam being painted onto one side of the stage (Kalamandalam Haridas Kurup) during the course of the performance: As part of a ritual art form (from Kerala in the south of India), encompassing song, dance and percussion, Kalam is a design painted with powders of different colours, and erased immediately after its completion (cf. Der Sturm). This can be read as part of the production's “fluidity and indeterminacy of suggestion” (which David Williams detected in Peter Brook’s use of sand as part of the stage design), as well as with reference to the fluidity and transience of the (intercultural) encounter on stage.

3.2 Actors

The play opens on an Indian dancer blowing on a shell-like pipe, and a pantomime of dancers signifying the waves turning into the storm, merging into an image of slaves rowing the ship into an image of their rebellion. So, from the start there is an obvious attempt to deal with colonial issues and power relations in intercultural drama. Accordingly, the actors of the bremer shakespeare company act as western intruders on a
magical eastern island. The opening scene evokes this relation with a powerful image, but it also alludes to the cliché of the affinity of the culturally other and nature.

The island presented is dominated by a Prospero (Eric Roßbander) who represents a blend of repression and promise. Consequently, he is clad in a black suit and coat wearing a magic coat in peacock design on top of it. Thus, the appropriate (cliché) associations of the colonial master gone native, like Kurtz in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, are evoked and ironised at the same time.

Miranda (Susanne Hohne), the representative of a younger generation, appears as an orientalised bare-footed hippie girl in a navel free top and black trousers, wearing a pseudo-oriental chain together with an earring in the form of a Christian cross, flowers in her hair, an Indian caste mark on her forehead. This agglomeration of bits and pieces taken from different cultures ironically signifies the fashionable mock-hybridity of contemporary western society. But at the same time Miranda seems to represent most visibly a hope for understanding, as she is the only one who can dance with the spirits, and in the end can go off to find her own future.

The very skinny white, bare-footed and bare-chested Caliban of this production (Robert Brandt) appears in a leopard coat and black trousers, and a bald head with a snake tattooed onto it, wearing earrings. Rather than acting as a coerced and deformed colonial subject, Caliban serves as a kind of contrastive companion piece to Miranda, as both are in a sense subject to Prospero’s (parental) authority. Caliban is Prospero’s “other child,” the degenerated white slave descending from a history of repression, who has developed a rather (sado)masochistic relation to his master(s) which renders him incapable of freeing himself.

Ferdinand (Peter Lüchinger) in a white suit and gloves, wearing glasses, is the rather anaemic, academic version of the cultivated Westerner overwhelmed by an unabashedly sexual Miranda, who symbolically bites his glove, undresses his hand, and later wears his glove herself in a highly sexualised manner.

All the other shipwrecked men are staged as caricatures, as cliché versions of a history of Western domination, which is apparent from their costumes form the start: Prospero’s malicious brother Antonio (Martin Schwanda) appears as a sheriff in a black coat and hat, shirt and trousers, wearing braces. Sebastian (Christian Dieterle) as colonial traveller-adventurer wears a jabot, together with a black suit and a leopard-skin. Alonso, the King of Naples (Peter Lüchinger), represents the Christian colonial ruler, wearing a crown, a brown coat, black trousers, brown street shoes and a vest. Repeatedly he is presented toying with a Christian rosary. Finally, Gonzalo, the old counsellor (Robert Brandt), appears as a mixture between aristocrat and waiter, clad in a black suit, neck tie, walking-stick, and white vest.
3.3 Representation of Cultures

The language used in this production is the language of the coloniser. In fact, language representing the symbolic order, is opposed to music and dance of the spirits. Moreover, the modern translation by Rainer Iwersen emphasizes the aspect of caricature and cliché, when for instance the telling of the past journey of the shipwrecked to Africa is presented not only as the history of colonisation, but also with reference to contemporary capitalism and to current political events in Germany. Key words like “Bankgeschäfte,” “Waschanlage” are certain to evoke the laughter intended – at least of a contemporary German audience.

It can be argued that by keeping the text to the bremer shakespeare company actors and setting it off from the Kathakali dancers representing the spirits of the island, the hierarchical opposition of the two worlds is kept intact. The Shakespearean text remains the master text which does not allow an inscription of otherness. The dancers serve as the marginalised foil of the Shakespearean centre. They represent an exotic otherness constructed for the palate of a Western audience relishing ‘a tasty oriental Shakespeare.’ The dialogue between cultures, according to such a reading, is a sham.

On the other hand, the production foregrounds an awareness of this dilemma. Significantly, it is Prospero who erases the Kalam painting at the end with a bunch of yellow flowers. But although he does pull all the strings, Prospero seems decisively weakened in this production. Instead of the magician Prospero, the magic spirits are foregrounded. Prospero may be the verbal director of events, the master of Ariel and his spirits, but the dancers seem to possess an independent power of their own, a power, which Prospero has little access to. Prospero is presented as a limited interpreter of their signs, almost an apprentice of their art, rather than their omnipotent master. Acknowledging his limitations in the end Prospero relinquishes his magic coat and releases them all (“lasse alle frei: sollen sie selber sein”, personal notes).

Miranda goes off to play her own story (“die eigene Geschichte spielen”, personal notes), significantly without being united to Ferdinand who is a non-entity. Increasingly throughout the play, Miranda has been able to dance alongside the spirits, thus representing an – albeit small – aspect of hope for intercultural understanding. The production takes pains to emphasize this contact not as imitative appropriation but in a dialogic sense. Thus, Miranda does not attempt to imitate Kathakali, but rather tries to find her own movements along with the music.

All of this can of course again be interpreted as a camouflage of the old power structure still at work. But the suggestive power of dance (of gestures and movements) and music in the performance cannot be denied. The attempt to picture the magic reveals the power of images. It centres otherness without words. In the contest between the power of images and the power of words, the dancers succeed and Prospero has to acknowledge his defeat.
Thus in the end, this production foregrounds both the possibilities and the limitations of the experiments in intercultural theatre discussed here: attempting to transcend boundaries, while at the same time still being caught in the binary logic of Western thought.

3.4 Spectator Position

The spectator position in the three productions discussed here is linked to different strategies of defamiliarisation, and consequently to questions about the cultural context in which the performance takes place. In Peter Brook’s multi-ethnic Tempest the unsettling of preconceived ideas is generated by a defamiliarisation of the Shakespearean text through the images created by the actors via movements, gestures, sounds, and music. Brook’s international theatre touring the globe sets out to evoke difference in every cultural setting. Even if different associations and stages of foreignness will prevail in different countries, the transcultural impact of his (utopian) Tempest and its political implications will be understood.

In Karin Beier’s multi-lingual attempt at defamiliarising The Tempest for European audiences, the unsettling effect depends upon (different) stages of familiarity with the Shakespearean text and with the languages involved in the endeavour. If, however, ultimately the impact seems to be not on intercultural difference, but on difference as discord, then the all-too-easy understanding of the audience defeats the intended political effect.

In the coproduction of the bremer shakespeare company and the Kathakali Dance Company defamiliarisation (and a concomitant spectator position of unease) is created by juxtaposing the Shakespearean text verbally at the centre of the performance and the Kathakali dance tradition visually-aurally at the centre of the performance. Thus from different cultural perspectives the different cultural hierarchies of centre and periphery are upheld and subverted at the same time. The coproduction is an attempt at squaring the circle: emphasizing the colonial issues while at the same time pleading for intercultural understanding. But as long as the spectator’s unease prevails over an easy understanding, the experiment has not failed.

4. Conclusion

This discussion of three variants of a European-based intercultural theatre has shown at least three decisive aspects:

1. Intercultural theatre is inevitably political. Even if denied in its production, intercultural theatre is entangled in the old debate about a supposedly inherent opposition between politics and aesthetics.
Towards an Intercultural Theatre?

2. Intercultural theatre centres on the implied and the real spectator, depending (for its success) on the unsettling of the spectator’s preconceptions, and on the impossibility to close interpretative gaps (in the performance).

3. Despite all controversy, intercultural theatre will proceed (in Peter Brook’s words) in its “discovery of relationships” towards a “third culture” which is “the culture of links” (Brook 1996, 63-66).

Works Cited


ULRIKE HATTEMER

Reading and Rewriting Shakespeare – The Anglo-Jewish Take on the Bard

The 1990s have been marked by a new interest in Anglo-Jewish literature. With Bryan Cheyette’s anthology of Jewish Writing in Britain and Ireland and Beate Neurneier’s assessment of Jewish literature and culture in Great Britain and the USA after 1945, Anglo-Jewish novelists, poets and playwrights are increasingly recognised as distinct Anglo-Jewish voices within British literature. One important strategy of Anglo-Jewish writing in general has been the re-writing of classical British texts (cf. Cheyette xxix), and also William Shakespeare, the icon of English drama, has been a literary touchstone used by Anglo-Jewish writers to define their place within the British dramatic tradition. Writers such as Bernard Kops in The Hamlet of Stepney Green (1958) and Arnold Wesker in Shylock (1976) have taken on the challenge of reading and reworking Shakespearean plays from an Anglo-Jewish perspective.

Kops and Wesker both belong to a generation of Jewish writers who grew up in the Jewish East End of London during World War II (Reitz 27-28). The world behind Kops’ The Hamlet of Stepney Green is similar to the one informing The Wesker Trilogy, both authors re-creating in their plays the close-knit Eastern European Jewish immigrant community of the East End of their youth (cf. Cheyette xxviii-xxix). Despite the authors’ similar background, however, the two works represent two distinct phases in Anglo-Jewish writing. While the 1950s reflected in Kops’ The Hamlet of Stepney Green were historically still close to the Holocaust and characterized by a careful silence on the issue of anti-Semitism among the Anglo-Jewish community, the 1970s, when Shylock was first performed, saw a group of more outspoken authors, such as Wesker and Brian Glanville, who were more critical of the Jewish community and at the same time acutely aware of the ever-present threat of anti-Semitism. While Kops in his 1958 play does not seem to view anti-Semitism as a problem anymore, Wesker’s Shylock is a wake-up call to his fellow Jews to speak out against anti-Semitism in any form.

The different situations in which these authors write are reflected in the way they deal with the Shakespearean text, and the aim of this paper is to explore why and to what effect these two Anglo-Jewish writers have worked with the Shakespearean plays in question, what kind of plays resulted from these experiments and in how far they reflect the social and historical contexts in which they were written.

The increasing interest in Anglo-Jewish plays has led to Oberon’s re-publication of Bernard Kops’ play The Hamlet of Stepney Green in 1999, and Fromm International has published a new book by Arnold Wesker on the stage history and background of his play Shylock: The Birth of Shylock and the Death of Zero Mostel in the same year.

*The Hamlet of Stepney Green*, subtitled “a sad comedy with some songs,” was first presented by the Meadow Players at the Playhouse in Oxford in May 1958, where it was directed by Frank Hauser. It was Kops’ debut as a successful playwright and transferred to the Lyric Opera House, Hammersmith in July 1958. One year later, it ran for 166 performances at the Cricket Theatre, New York (cf. Baker 229). The text version my interpretation is based on is that of the first production as published by Oberon.

Structurally as well as plot-wise the play differs greatly from the Shakespearean model quoted in the title. The setting is not the court of Denmark but the Jewish milieu of the London East End. *The Hamlet of Stepney Green* focuses not on the problems of Denmark’s royal family and the question of regicide but on 65-year-old lower-middle-class Sam Levy who dies in his garden in Stepney Green in the 1950s. The play unravels the problems of Sam’s family, revealing that his wife Bessie has an affair with Solly Segal, a friend of the family whose daughter Hava is unhappily in love with Sam’s son David. The father-son conflict at the heart of the play has its origin in David’s suffering from his parents’ dysfunctional marriage and his refusal to take over his father’s herring-business. The son’s revolt against his father’s wishes and the prospect of a dreary future as a herring salesman is acted out in his mad-Hamlet impersonation.

As the subtitle indicates, *The Hamlet of Stepney Green* is not a tragedy but a comedy, mixing elements from the musical and the conventional drawing-room play. Being a collage of musical songs and text, the songs serve to characterise the protagonists, to foreshadow events, and to emphasise central motifs within the play. Kops has a group of children functioning as a chorus. Their songs begin and end the play and are interspersed throughout the three acts, summing up and interpreting the action and indicating leitmotifs. While Shakespeare’s tragedy ends with the death of the main protagonist, this “sad comedy,” telling of love and death within a family and at the same time of the death of the East End, still follows the conventions of comedy featuring, for instance, a triangular relationship, a number of misunderstandings among the characters and an ending in love and marriage.

*The Hamlet of Stepney Green* is a hymn to the Jewish East End of London, its life-assertion and warmth. However, at the time in which this play is set, the fifties, the East End life that is evoked is already a thing of the past. It does not exist anymore as the docklands and most buildings were destroyed during World War II, and the inhabitants were relocated to other parts of the city. This fact is hinted at in the stage directions at the beginning of the play, where the Levys’ garden is described as an “oasis . . . surrounded by a great area of bomb damage” (*The Hamlet* 81). The whole setting is characterized by a certain warmth, “as if Van Gogh and Chagall had collaborated on this urban scene” (*The Hamlet* 81). This is not Wesker’s East End kitchen.
setting from *Chicken Soup with Barley*, but a more symbolic place, an almost mythic idyll in the middle of death and destruction.

The East End milieu is characterized through references to the solidarity of the socialist-communist milieu, the use of Yiddish terms that evoke Eastern European culture, and Jewish religious rites that are not instances of religious fervour but part of the rather secular life in the East End. With Segal’s statement that he is a Communist, following “the greatest comrade . . . Izzy Cohen . . . a furrier . . . in Commercial Street” (cf. *The Hamlet* 105), Kops introduces and also caricatures the motif of the East End’s socialist-communist community. Sam’s daughter Lottie is a member of the Communist party (cf. *The Hamlet* 87), and David’s provocative statement “I am a blackguard” is taken up by Segal, who alludes to the 1930s’ anti-Mosley demonstrations in the East End when the socialist Jewish workers defeated the fascist blackshirts (*The Hamlet* 102).

Another element characterizing the Jewish East End is the Yiddish language that is used occasionally by Sam but also by David and which calls up the East End’s Eastern European culture. For instance, when Sam dies he starts to talk to his dead mother in Yiddish and sings the popular Yiddish cradlesong “rhozinkes mit mandlen” (cf. Kops 109). Also, in David’s parody of Shakespeare’s “to be or not to be” speech, Kops takes up a Yiddish version of *Hamlet* as it may have been presented in Yiddish adaptations of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in the East End’s Yiddish theatres.

The East End’s Jewish culture is also alluded to in the prayer scenes which hint at the characters’ Jewish religious background. None of the characters is especially religious. The rituals are simply part of the life in the East End, and without ceremony the three upwardly mobile businessmen, Mr Green, Mr Black and Mr White are called to join in the prayers of the shiva. All men – except David⁴ – say kaddish for Sam, who interpolates his own prayer into the kaddish. Sam is sceptical towards Jewish religious tradition and questions the logic and trustworthiness of the biblical story of Cain, but the way he swiftly names and then drops the topic, and with it the Talmud, the Apocrypha and the Kaballa, shows that they have no meaning for him or the others, and David turns the conversation into a nonsense story: “my mother’s got a Kaballa in the oven” (*The Hamlet* 103). In his last words, however, Sam calls out “Shema Yisroel –

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2 The stage directions indicate that it is either sung in Russian or in Yiddish, but the text Kops provides is Yiddish. Cf. also the text provided by Daniel Kempin and Dimitry Reznik, “rhozinkes mit mandlen” *Benskhaft* (Wiesbaden: Melisma Musik, 1998) no. 14. According to Kempin, this popular Eastern European cradlesong for many Eastern European Jews has come to represent Eastern European Yiddish culture as such. Cf. Kempin, “Textbook” *Benskhaft* 22.

3 The Yiddish theatre had its heyday in London from the 1880s to the 1930s. According to Pamela Fletcher Jones the last East End Yiddish theatre, the Grand Palace in Commercial Road, closed down in 1970. Cf. Fletcher Jones 160-162.

4 According to orthodox Jewish tradition David – as the only son – would have been expected to say kaddish for his father.
Ulrike Hattemer

Dead Mother keep me warm" (The Hamlet 110), ultimately defining himself as part of the ‘chosen people,’ despite his religious doubts. 5

Last not least, the East End myth is captured in the Jewish lower-middle-class characters presented on stage: the poor but also wise and warm-hearted main character Sam, an immigrant from Russia who has made his way in London as a pickled-herring seller of Wentworth Street, his nagging and energetic wife Bessie, retired Solly Segal, who lives off the money his son sends him from America, foolish Mrs Stone and Mr Stone, a taxi driver.

With David, Lottie and Hava Kops presents the next generation, who have been born and raised in the London East End. To them Yiddish and Jewish traditions are matters associated with their parents’ lives, not their own. Lottie has married a gentile, and David makes fun of Yiddish and Jewish traditions. Their future is unclear as they have to leave their parents’ homes in the East End behind and need to look for a new place to start their own families as Hava indicates at the end of the play (The Hamlet 157). While their parents had a home in a Jewish milieu which helped them stay together in spite of their constant disputes, Kops hints at the fact that their children, who think of moving to the North of London, to Golders Green, will have to rely on their mutual love and their ability to form a stable and lasting relationship.

In the context of Hava’s plans for the future, Kops takes up the contemporary discussion about the newly founded State of Israel and its meaning for Diaspora Jews. After the successful Sinai Campaign of November 1956, when Israel invaded the Gaza strip and the Sinai peninsula, Israeli immigration figures rose and many Diaspora Jews asked themselves whether they, too, should migrate to this ‘Homeland of the Jews’ (cf. Gilbert 332). Hava’s explanation that she has been to Israel and lived in a Kibbuz but made the decision not to emigrate because she feels at home in England and does not want to live in Israel, as she is not a pioneer has to be seen in this context (The Hamlet 82). Despite the fact that the Jewish East End no longer exists, Kops makes clear that in his opinion the future of British Jews lies in England.

In his East End story, Kops is not interested in a faithful representation of the original Hamlet text or the philosophical questions of the Hamlet tragedy. Although Hamlet plays a central role in his play as it provides a plot pattern following which David can act out his aggression, there is little critical or even structural engagement with the original Shakespearean play. Kops does not so much wish to comment on Hamlet as to develop his East End myth as an image of hope for the future of Anglo-Jewry.

Kops takes up some of the main elements from Shakespeare’s play, such as the motif of the father who dies in the garden and returns as a ghost to set things right, the hasty remarriage of the mother, the son acting mad because he suffers from his mother’s second marriage, and the Ophelia-like character of the young woman who is

5 Although it is true that Kops propagates conservative values, I cannot agree with Stadtfeld when he states that Kops has created a Jewish orthodox setting in this play (cf. Stadtfeld 226, 231).
Reading and Rewriting Shakespeare

hopelessly in love with the son. However, Kops’ main character is not young Ham­
et/David but Sam, the “king of herrings” who directs the action even after his death. Sam’s ghost is different from the ghost of Hamlet’s father as he does not seek revenge but successfully negotiates love and peace within his family. In The Hamlet of Stepney Green it is not the widow’s second husband, who plans to poison the king, but it is David/Hamlet himself who in his anger and confusion wants to poison everybody, himself included. Finally, the comedy’s happy ending where David/Hamlet suddenly falls in love with Hava and decides to live a compromise between his father’s and his own wishes is very much in contrast to Shakespeare’s dramatic ending.

Interpreting Hamlet as a prototypical ‘angry young man,’ whose madness enables him to take revenge on a society that does not grant him happiness, Kops takes up Hamlet’s madness as the basic pattern which David, the mad “prince of herrings” (The Hamlet 129), follows in his own struggle to come to terms with his father’s death and his mother’s early re-marriage. The Hamlet story thus functions as a medium that helps David to interpret and cope with his own situation, and at the same time as a game between father and son that helps to bridge the gap between the two, enabling Sam to talk to and understand his son. Playing along, Sam is able to win his son’s trust and to work out a reconciliation between David and his mother and step-father as well as David’s marriage to Hava.

Kops’ Hamlet is a frustrated British Jewish adolescent looking for his place in the world, and David’s teddy boy dress underlines the angry young man and rebel theme, giving his Hamlet impersonation a decidedly 1950s edge. His self-stylisation as an anti-Semite – calling himself “blackshirt” and identifying with the teddy boy youth culture which was frequently associated with anti-Semitic views (cf. “The Velvet Collar”) – illustrates his insecurity and the aimlessness of his protest, which is not taken seriously by his parents.

When Kops quotes directly from Hamlet he does so to support the comedy of the play. The audience is expected to recognize the puns as David ridicules and exploits the clash of Shakespearean elevated style with East End Yinglish. For instance, David cites and garbles the famous “to be or not to be” passage, intermingling Yiddish and English nonsense passages, mocking both the English original as well as the Yiddish version he must have heard in one of the Yiddish theatres in the East End:

To be or not to bloody well be, believe me, that is the question! Whether it is besser to ne a bisle meshuga — or to take alms for the sake of Allah. To kick the bucket or to take forty winks... To take forty vinks no more and by All Abracadabra to end the sourous and the hire purchase, please God by you... 

6 John Osborne’s Look Back in Anger had its premiere in 1956.

7 As Stadtfeld notes, Kops consciously deconstructs the heroic Hamlet figure thus commenting on the majority of the 1950s and ’60s Hamlet adaptations that stylize Hamlet as a heroic ‘angry young man’. Cf. Stadtfeld 226-227.
These are the consumer goods for the frum yids. To kick the bucket, to take a nap at the racetrack – ah! there’s the snag, for on that slip of paper what names were written – blown away by the wind – blown away etcetera, you should live so long. (The Hamlet 128)

David’s rendering of the original passage is guided by sound associations. Where Shakespeare’s sentence reads: “Or to take arms against a sea of troubles” (3.1.59), Wesker’s Hamlet says “or to take alms for the sake of Allah.” He translates the English words “to die” and “to sleep” into East End street language and introduces a favourite pastime activity of the East End community: betting on the horse races. Sam takes up this motif during the séance when he spells out the name of a race horse and the time when it will run as a race tip (cf. The Hamlet 140). Posing as Hamlet, David mocks and distances himself from Shakespeare as the icon of the dominant culture admired by his father. Sam admonishes his son that Shakespeare is “a different kettle of fish” (The Hamlet 130), and the ‘angry young man’ responds accordingly and makes fun of the bard and his authority. In his mock soliloquy David describes and criticises the life his father has led as boring and senseless, and thus emphasises that he sees his future elsewhere – in crooning. The “consumer goods of the frum yids” are not for him.

This criticism, however, is not carried through as David’s love and prospective marriage to Hava simply let him forget his anger. All of a sudden – and not convincingly – David gives up his dreams of living a different life, of becoming a star for the life of a crooning herring salesman. Similarly, Sam’s last advice to his family, to enjoy their lives as “the world is a wedding,” appears to be overly optimistic and simplistic (The Hamlet 157). Although Kops acknowledges the historical death of the East End, the aim of the Hamlet of Stepney Green is to assert the strength of the Jewish East End community to survive beyond the German blitz and into an uncertain future on the merits of strong family ties and mutual love. The tension between the reality of destruction and the place of mutual love he portrays in the ending is never convincingly resolved within the play (cf. also Dace 363 and Reitz 33).

To Kops, fascist anti-Semitism also seems to be a thing of the past. Although at the beginning of Act One, Sam is surprised that he survived the war, the threat of the H-Bomb, bacteria, rockets and the gas of the Holocaust, these threats do not seem to be part of his world anymore (cf. The Hamlet 84). This optimism becomes clear when Sam ridicules his wife’s spiritualist séance by pretending to be Hitler’s ghost at the end of Act Two (cf. The Hamlet 139; Reitz 33). Bessie’s reaction is to ignore him, and Segal’s suggestion that “[m]aybe he just wants to apologize” shows that in the 1950s Kops felt that the war being over and Hitler dead, the threat of persecution and anti-Semitism was not a problem anymore.

In The Hamlet of Stepney Green, Kops acknowledges Shakespeare’s position as a great writer and presents him above all as a genius and a reference point with which Jews also can identify. The way Kops deals with Hamlet is a comment on its timelessness and the fact that, as a work of genius, it speaks to all generations in some way or other. Mining Hamlet for motifs he can use in his East End story, Kops illustrates the potential of Shakespeare’s play to function as a cultural link, being a text a large num-

120
Reading and Rewriting Shakespeare

A number of people can be expected to know at least in very rough terms and which can be adapted to different cultural settings. He thus defines the English cultural icon as something Jews can participate in – a reassuring signal to a minority who face an uncertain future after the experience of anti-Semitic persecution, the Holocaust and the destruction of the London East End. At a time when Anglo-Jewry is confronted with a new choice in the form of the State of Israel he opts for staying in Britain.


Wesker’s way of dealing with Shakespeare’s original in his play *Shylock* differs fundamentally from Kops’ approach in the 1950s. In *Shylock*, Wesker contends with a long-standing tradition of open anti-Semitism in British literature. He is aware of the influence Shakespeare’s *Shylock* exerts on the public image of the Jew and critically confronts him as an essentially anti-Semitic representation. His motivation to write the play is his “growing sense of responsibility towards the image of the Jew,” as he recalls in a diary entry in 1974 (Wesker, *The Birth* 4). In writing *Shylock*, Wesker asserts his own Jewish identity and that of his fellow Jews by voicing his anger at a complacent Anglo-Jewish community and showing the British non-Jewish majority that there is more to be known about Jews than that they are greedy and in the money-lending business.

*Shylock* had its world premiere at the Royal Dramaten Theatre in Stockholm on September 8, 1976, and received enthusiastic reviews. It was directed by Staphan Roos (cf. Wesker, *The Birth* 57). The New York premiere was on November 16, 1977 and received mixed reviews. The *New York Times* critic condemned it as “stimulating but only sometimes successful” (qtd. in Wesker, *The Birth* 336) and the play folded after four performances. The British premiere took place at the Birmingham Rep on September 12, 1978.

The first draft of *Shylock* was written in 1975, and for more than 20 years Arnold Wesker has been engaged in this play, working on the text, restructuring and cutting it. The version that resulted from a London Workshop on the play conducted in 1990 is the 10th draft and is – according to Wesker – the final text version and the version my analysis is based on (cf. Wesker, *The Birth* 365).

Wesker makes clear in his preface to *Shylock* that his attitude towards Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* is ambivalent. On the one hand, he admires Shakespeare as a great writer and poet and does not believe that he had anti-Semitic “intentions.” On the other hand, he finds himself unable to watch *The Merchant of Venice* without “seething at his portrait of a Jew,” as the “effects” of the play are anti-Semitic (Wesker, Preface 177, Wesker’s emphasis). Wesker feels that the Holocaust as the experience of the ultimate victimization of the Jews is part of the collective history of the Jews and that it influences his response to the play:

I revere Shakespeare, am proud to write in his shadow, the world is inconceivable without him and I would passionately defend the right of anyone anywhere to present and teach this play
ULRIKE HATTEMER

[The Merchant of Venice]. But nothing will make me admire it, nor has anyone persuaded me the Holocaust is irrelevant to my responses. Try though I do to listen only to the poet’s lines, yet I find myself seething at his portrait of a Jew, unable to pretend this is simply another Shakespearean character through whom he is exploring greed, or whatever. (Wesker, Preface 177)

According to Wesker the so-called “defence of Shylock” in the lines “[h]ath not a Jew eyes . . . , if you prick us do we not bleed?” only heightens the dramatic impact and “[dignifies] the anti-semitism” (Wesker, Preface 178). He fears that the play “confirms and feeds those whose anti-Semitism is latent, dormant.” (Wesker, Preface 179). To him, one proof of this effect of The Merchant of Venice is that “Shylock has entered the language. To be called it is to be insulted for being mean like a Jew” (Wesker, Preface 182).

Wesker notes that in Shakespeare’s Shylock he does not recognise a single Jew he knows (Wesker, Preface 179). His play is meant to be a more convincing, authentic version of the story of Shylock, the Jew, and the Christian merchant Antonio. Having intensively researched the historical background of his play, Wesker claims that it “offers . . . a new set of evidence from which a theatre public may choose” (Wesker, Preface 183).

Wesker’s main source is Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice, and Wesker retains most of the characters and the basic sequence of events. Only minor characters are left out, such as the Princes of Morocco and Arragon, Launcelot Gobbo and his father, Salerio, Solanio and the servants. Wesker introduces new Jewish characters such as Rivka, Shylock’s older sister, and a maid who is also the singer in the end, adding another female element to the Jewish family. Solomon Usque, a Portuguese writer, Roderigues da Cunha, an architect, Rebecca da Mendes, the daughter of a well-known banker and Moses da Castelazzo, a painter, illustrate the Jews’ cultural genius.

Although the basic conflict surrounding the bond and also the love plot and the choosing of the caskets are retained by Wesker, by reworking the play around his Jewish characters, he ends up with a new play. As in Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice, his Shylock also tells the story of a deep friendship, but not the friendship between young Antonio and Bassanio but between Shylock Kollner, a bibliophile Jew living in the Jewish Ghetto of Venice in 1563 and his merchant friend Antonio who are both in their mid-sixties. The frame of the narrative is similar to Shakespeare’s: Antonio wishes to lend his godson Bassanio the money to be able to propose to Portia, and as Antonio’s money is invested in one ship load that is still at sea he has to ask Shylock to lend him the money.

While the frame and some of the scenes seem very much the same as Shakespeare’s, the argument upon which Wesker’s play is built is very different from the original. Wesker’s Shylock wants to give his friend the money without any securities, but Venetian law does not allow a Christian to borrow money from a Jew without drawing up a bond which

Antonio: [m] ust name the sums borrowed, specify the collateral, name the day, the hour to be paid, and –
Together [Shylock and Antonio]: [b]e witnessed by three Venetians, two patricians and one citizen, and then registered. (Wesker, “Shylock” 211)

Because law-abiding Antonio insists that the law has to be adhered to Shylock naively draws up a nonsensical bond about a pound of Antonio’s flesh, to mock the – in his opinion – absurd Venetian law. The reason why the bond develops into a life-threatening affair for both thus lies not in Shylock’s greed but in his naivety and in the Venetian anti-Semitic laws and attitudes.

As Antonio’s ship does not return, Shylock’s sister Rivka explains to her brother that he cannot simply ask the court to bend the law and relieve him of the bond. If he did he would be setting a precedent and hurting the situation of his Jewish friends of the ghetto whose safety and prosperity depend on the law and the guarantee that it cannot be bent (“Shylock” 238-239). Aware that they cannot do anything else without hurting others, Antonio and Shylock decide they have to go through with the bond. With both their lives at stake they find themselves in court: Antonio being afraid of bleeding to death while losing a pound of his flesh, Shylock knowing that extracting the flesh is punishable as murder under Venetian law.

This court scene is formally close to the Shakespearean original. Here we find the same characters as in The Merchant of Venice, and Wesker directly quotes the passage in which Shakespeare’s Shylock defends his humanity (“hath not a Jew . . . .” The Merchant 3.1.52-53). The situation, however, is a completely different one than in Shakespeare’s play, and Wesker lets the quoted passage be spoken not by Shylock, but by the anti-Semite Lorenzo. Shylock’s reaction (Shylock: No, no, NO! I will not have it . . . . I do not want apologies for my humanity. Plead for me no special pleas. I will not have my humanity mocked and apologized for (“Shylock” 255) illustrates Wesker’s interpretation of the passage as a “so-called defence” which only “[dignifies the play’s] anti-Semitism” (Wesker, Preface 178). When Portia finally saves Antonio through her interpretation of the law, Wesker’s Shylock does not tear his hair in rage but thanks God that his friend is saved (cf. “Shylock” 265).8

In his Preface Wesker reveals that he writes for two audiences: firstly, he tries to reach a non-Jewish audience in order to rectify the negative image of the Jews that Shakespeare’s play has planted in their minds. In his reworking of the play around a positive Shylock figure he tries to give his audience a more accurate idea of the living conditions of the Jews in the Venetian “Ghetto Nuovo” in the 16th century. Referring to the strict closing hours of the ghetto, the yellow hat Jews had to wear in order to be recognised as Jews and the special laws that codified the money lending business, Wesker paints a vivid picture of the discrimination and the prejudices against the Jews that accompanied their lives in the ghetto. The audience learns about their economical and political role as money-lenders and their exploitation by the state of Venice, but also about their intellectual pursuits and their “wide-ranging talents” (“Shylock” 190).

8 This was actually the first scene Wesker envisioned, and he worked the play around this, in his opinion, more authentic reaction of Shylock. Cf. Wesker, Introduction. The Birth xvi.
This wish to educate the audience has also been criticized as one of the weaknesses of this play. Wesker's didacticism is too heavy and he includes too much information into this rather text-laden and top-heavy play.

Secondly, Wesker wants to hold up a mirror to the Anglo-Jewish community of his time. With the image of the truth-loving, energetic Shylock, who is always ready to defend his human dignity against anti-Semitic slurs, Wesker implicitly criticises the majority of English Jews, who, he feels, are too subdued, not proud enough of themselves and their heritage, and too ready to defend anti-Semitism for the sake of a deceptive peace (cf. Wesker, Preface 177). Writing after the Holocaust, Wesker introduces the motif of the Jewish survivor and — implicitly speaking to his Anglo-Jewish contemporaries — he has Antonio distinguish two types of survivors: the defiant ones whom he calls "honourable," and the 'creepy' ones, who act like "chameleons," blending with everyone to avoid everyone's sting" ("Shylock" 204).

Another warning in the direction of contemporary Anglo-Jewry can be found in a short exchange between Shylock and Usque on the situation of the Jews in England. Shylock is looking for a rare manuscript in which an author "complains about his life in England and the indifference of its wealthy Jews to intellectual and literary activities" ("Shylock" 203). Usque's answer "[p]erhaps that accounts for the massacre of London" sounds like an admonition of his Jewish audience not to neglect these fields ("Shylock" 203; Wesker's emphasis). Wesker stresses the motif of the importance of learning and literature as pursuits that potentially have the power to "save" the Jews, if not the world, as Antonio claims when he praises Shylock's book collection (cf. "Shylock" 195).

Wesker's aim is to present the Jews in a positive light, and they are almost too good and intelligent to be true. Shylock's benevolence and generosity, his love of freedom and his constant defence of human dignity earn him the sympathy of the audience. The only serious shortcoming in Shylock's character is his naivety and school-boy mentality when it comes to his daughter's needs and the laws of Venice.

Wesker first and foremost identifies the Jews in his play with their rich heritage of Jewish learning, their religion and the fact that they are bound together by a common history of suffering. Shylock's love of books and Jewish learning are developed

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9 Wesker's didacticism seems to have its roots in his optimism and trust in the possibility to 'enlighten' people and to have them revert their prejudices if confronted with humanist tenets and alternatives in a conservative-realist play. Also the characters' one-dimensionality, and the aesthetic conventionality of the play, especially in the context of the Holocaust motifs, have been criticized. Cf., for instance, Winkgens 160-163.

10 Wesker seems to wish to include every topical debate in his play, for instance he also discusses issues such as female emancipation — which was topical in the 1970s but seems anachronistic in the 16th century setting. Cf., e.g., Jessica's defence of her own sphere and her power to decide for herself in "Shylock" 221-222. Cf. also Winkgens 155.

11 As Reitz notes, it is not the Jew who is greedy for money, but the non-Jewish Venetian aristocrats. Shylock's "wahrer Reichtum sind nicht seine Dukaten, sondern die Bücher" (Reitz 36).
into important leitmotifs within the play and contrasted with the anti-Jewish Christians' general ignorance.

The very first scene of the play is composed as a celebration of Jewish learning as Shylock reads out the titles, authors, places and dates of writing of some of his manuscripts. Beginning with "A Guide to the Perplexed" by Maimonides, Wesker places his Shylock in the tradition of Jewish learning, citing one of the greatest Jewish scholars and theologians. Written in Cairo during the twelfth century, the manuscript evokes one of the early Diaspora centres of learning and thus the theme of Jewish learning and the Jewish geniuses living all over the world.12

The second manuscript mentioned is that of a Hebrew/Hebrew Dictionary produced in England. It not only introduces the motif of knowledge of the Hebrew language as a prerequisite for true learning, but also firmly roots the Jews in England. It proves that there have been Jewish scholars living and working on the island around the same time as Maimonides lived. The third manuscript Shylock reads out is characterised as being "Anglo-Jewish" and also originates in the twelfth century. Being a legal deed it foreshadows the play's central conflict, and as Shylock praises the author, a Jewish businessman, for his "mastery of Talmudic Law" and his "wide-ranging talents," he links up his own aspirations as a Jewish businessman with the tradition of Jewish learning that includes the genius of Maimonides.

Apart from the tradition of Jewish learning, Wesker identifies Jewishness with being religious. As Winkgens notes, Shylock's attitude towards Judaism is marked by enlightenment scepticism (cf. Winkgens 153), yet in his conversation with Antonio Shylock exclaims "Religious! It's the condition of being Jewish, like pimples with adolescence, who can help it? Even those of us who don't believe in God have dark suspicions that he believes in us" ("Shylock" 195). And at the end of the speech he notes "What can I do? I'm chosen. I must be religious" ("Shylock" 195; Wesker's emphasis). The motif of the Jews as a chosen people is taken up and inverted by Lorenzo when he explains that they are no longer chosen but doomed as a people. While Shakespeare's Shylock is baptised at the end, Wesker does not let the doge decree that Shylock has to become a Christian. He rather comes up with a very Jewish solution for Shylock, namely to go on a last pilgrimage to Jerusalem, thus linking Shylock with the place that symbolises the origins of his people and their history.

Wesker's statement, however, is not a plea for a Jewish emigration to Israel, but rather a pessimistic comment on the present and future situation of the Jews. With this ending Wesker not only indicates that he does not believe that the Jews will ever be able to live in peace in a Diaspora situation, but he also positions himself within the Israel debate of the mid-1970s. Israel's situation surrounded by hostile Arab states had proved to be highly insecure and constantly threatened. While the Six Day War in June 1967 against Syria, Egypt, and Jordan ended with an overwhelming victory for Israel, the Yom Kippur War of 1973 was a traumatic experience for Israel and sympathetic

12 "A guide to the perplexed" is also a hint at what the play is supposed to be to the audience: a guide to the real image of the Jew.
Jews all over the world who witnessed how precarious the situation of the State of Israel really was and how close it came to being annihilated. The crisis leading up to the Six Day War had shown that, despite the commitment of France, America and Britain in the War of Independence, Israel could not always be sure of active support from the western powers (cf. Gilbert 382). Wesker’s presentation of Israel as the only safe haven for prosecuted Jews has to be seen in this context, supporting the view that the State of Israel has to be preserved by all means.

Wesker identifies the Jews as a community of suffering. His story about people in the Venetian ghetto in the 16th century cannot be fully understood and interpreted without paying attention to its implications for and explanations of the situation of the Jews after the Shoah. He describes the Jews in Venice as a minority suffering from anti-Semitic laws and attitudes, and presents the Shylock-Antonio relationship against the backdrop of the burning of Jews in Portugal (cf. “Shylock” Act I, scene 4). In Shylock’s anger about the Christians’ book burnings Wesker establishes a parallel to the burning of the Jews and again stresses their identification with learning and books. Towards the end of the play, when Shylock leaves Venice as a bitter man, the sad Sephardic song “Adiós querida,” ‘Goodbye, my love,’ again links up the characters’ experiences with the experience of the Spanish Inquisition and at the same time with the experiences of loss and disillusionment Jews all over the world had to live through in the past centuries (“Shylock” 259).

Also Wesker’s attempt to find an answer to the question why the Jews have always been the target of anti-Jewish prejudices and violence has to be seen against the background of the Shoah. He argues in religious as well as psychological terms. In Act I, Shylock notes half-mockingly that the Jews’ belief in themselves as a chosen people has made them “unbearable to live with” for other nations (“Shylock” 196). This motif is taken up and further developed by Jessica in her explanation of the gentiles’ hatred of the Jews:

Jessica: We draw from men their desperate hates. Poisons rise in our presence, idiocies blossom, and anger, and incredible lapses of humanity. That is my doom! to know that secret: that at any time, for any reason, men are capable of such demented acts.

So I regard a stranger with dread, reproach, fear. Forever vigilant. That’s difficult for him to bear, to be looked at like that, for no reason, to be thought guilty before the act, to be known for the beast in one, the devil in the making. Who can forgive eyes that have such knowledge in them. (“Shylock” 246)

Jessica’s speech takes up the cue of the survivor and connects it to the motif of the Holocaust survivor who stands witness to history’s “incredible lapses of humanity.” She offers a psychological explanation for these “lapses” in the Jews’ experience of victimization and their thus gained superior knowledge of the human character, which again makes them unbearable to live with. With her question “[w]ho can forgive eyes that have such knowledge in them?” Wesker even introduces an element of compassion towards the aggressors, almost excusing their behaviour as a part of fallible human nature. Wesker thus ends on a pessimistic note, describing the situation of the
Jews in the Diaspora as one that cannot really be improved as long as human nature is what it is.

Although Wesker acknowledges the genius of Shakespeare, he criticizes *The Merchant of Venice* as an anti-Semitic play that is especially dangerous because of Shakespeare’s abilities as a playwright. *Shylock* is an attempt to counteract the Shakespearean negative stereotype, and a call to the members of the Anglo-Jewish community to speak out against any form of anti-Semitism, even if it comes in the disguise of high-brow literature. ‘Writing back’ at the English dominant culture, he demonstrates the rich cultural heritage of the Jews. The play’s criticism is not aimed at Shakespeare as an anti-Semitic author but at the text itself and the general reaction of the Anglo-Jewish community to the anti-Semitic discourse in which they find themselves.

3. Conclusion

Both, Kops and Wesker, acknowledge Shakespeare’s position as a great writer, yet while Kops presents him, above all, as a reassuring reference point Jews can identify with, Wesker is more critical in his way of dealing with the English cultural icon. His *Shylock* is an attempt to work against the Shakespearean Shylock stereotype, and a call to the members of the Anglo-Jewish community to speak out against anti-Semitism.

Kops as well as Wesker write for contemporary audiences, commenting in their plays on the situation of British Jews at the time when the plays were written. Both texts reflect, directly or indirectly, the experiences and effects of the Holocaust, comment on the role of Israel plays for Diaspora Jews, and voice their author’s worries about the future of British Jewry. The different ways in which these issues are dealt with reflect the different times of writing and the writers’ diverse assessments of the situation of the Anglo-Jewish community.

Both writers believe in Anglo-Jewry’s place in Britain, but while Kops does not seem to worry about anti-Semitism, the fear of being discriminated against and stigmatised as Jews through a negative image such as Shylock’s is the very motivation for Wesker to write his play. In the 1950s Kops did neither foresee the continuing threat of anti-Semitism nor that the East End itself would be completely torn down and replaced by modern glass and steel high-rise office buildings. In the middle of the ruins of a post-World War II East End, Kops offers a wedding as a symbol of life and of the East End as a community of love unified by a common fate (cf. *The Hamlet* 157), suggesting that in people’s love and trust the idea and essence of the East End will survive. While Kops is thus able to develop a Yiddish/Jewish parody of Hamlet, transforming the elements of a tragedy into a comedy, albeit with some sad songs, Wesker takes on one of Shakespeare’s comedies and the result is a tragedy.

After the destruction of the East End, Kops sees Anglo-Jewry facing an uncertain future. The people he describes have started to build their lives anew from the rubble of World War II, and their children are looking for better lives. Creating the East End myth as a spiritual home of the Jews in England, Kops’ play aims to reassure Anglo-
Jewry of their own future, nostalgically pointing to the strength of the pre-War close-knit community as an ideal that can still function as a guide and source of communal feeling after the war.

His reworking of Hamlet is subordinated to this aim and he follows the original Hamlet only loosely, taking up certain motifs of the plot and alluding to popular text passages, but always tailoring them to his East End story. Referring to a topical motif of youth rebellion he interprets Hamlet as the prototypical “angry young man” and uses the Hamlet plot as a pattern that enables the two central characters Sam and David to communicate. As part of the comedy, Shakespeare’s Hamlet functions as a well-known subtext to his play that guarantees Kops laughs as his audience can be expected to roughly know if not the whole text then at least some central passages.

In contrast to Kops, Wesker follows the basic structure of The Merchant of Venice rather closely in his attempt to produce a new play about a more positive Jewish figure. Taking a minor character and turning him into the central character of the play, Wesker comments on Shakespeare’s perspective and offers an alternative. His didactic aim is to undo some of the damage the potent Shylock figure has done to the popular image of the Jew, to educate the audience about 16th-century Jewish life in the ‘Ghetto Nuovo,’ and to wake up his Anglo-Jewish audiences to the reality of anti-Semitism and the need to speak out against it.

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13 According to Kops The Hamlet of Stepney Green was written in the same year John Osborne’s Look Back in Anger had its premiere. Cf. Stadtfeld 220.


When discussing identity Stuart Hall states:

Though they [identities] seem to invoke an origin in a historical past with which they continue to correspond, actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation. (Hall 4)

Hall’s approach to identity rests on the concept of flux and process and the fact that identity has to be conceived in a constructivist manner rather than an essentialist one, if it is not to enter the contradiction of appropriation by dominant notions of a unified and coherent self. The idea of identity in the process of construction allows for a positive attitude in relation to change and future prospects, while creating the necessary space for critical distance and revision from within.

Hall’s description seems appropriate to describe the Chicano experience. Questions such as ‘where we came from’ or ‘who we are’ would be problematic for a heterogeneous community composed of first, second and third generation Mexican immigrants, Californians, Mexican Americans, legal and illegal, etc., whose arrival at the notion of ‘chicanismo’ is too different and diverse to be pinned down to a homogeneous cluster of features. The Chicano roots lie as much in their Mexican heritage as in the USA one, as the mixture of the Spanish and English language would indicate. Moreover, the recovery of their Mexican origins presents a mixture of elements that evoke those roots in hybrid forms potentially imbued with a strong critical component against their conditions of living as part of the whole American community.

It could be argued that Chicano theatre underwent an early phase of identity seeking and building in the 1960s and 1970s, inspired by the civil rights movement and the various social and political protests in California in those years: César Chavez’s demands and demonstrations to obtain equal rights for the Mexican-American farmers influenced Luis Valdez, trained theatrically in the Berkeley atmosphere and founder of Teatro Campesino. The 1960s provided the broth for revolutionary actions that propitiated the appearance of a distinctive political Chicano theatre concerned with finding a voice and a space for this movement in the social and cultural milieu. Once the term and figure of the Chicano became established features of resistance and self-affirmation in political terms, through the creation and expression of the idea of community, Chicano theatre moved on in the 1980s, a social and political conservative period, towards issues of representation within the wider context of mainstream American cul-
The following passage from Valdez’s *Acto Los Vendidos* may illustrate the first stage mentioned above:

MEXICAN-AMERICAN: Mr. Congressman, Mr. Chairman, members of the board, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen. (SANCHO and SECRETARY applauded.) Please, please. I come before you as a Mexican-American to tell you about the problems of the Mexican. The problems of the Mexican stem from one thing and one thing only: he’s stupid. He’s uneducated. He needs to stay in school. He needs to be ambitious, forward-looking, harder-working. He needs to think American, American, American, American, American! God bless America! God bless America! God bless America! (He goes out of control. SANCHO snaps frantically and the MEXICAN-AMERICAN finally slumps forward, bending at the waist.) (Valdez 49)

The term Mexican-American designates origin or provenance but does not carry any political implication in terms of commitment to a community. The Mexican-American, made into a stereotype and an abstract category by denying him a name, rejects his own self in favour of the American one, adopting uncritically the myths and philosophy of Anglo culture, mainly individualism in its association with capitalism. Thus, he is barred from making any attempt at finding a community, while he becomes an isolated individual easily incorporated by the system. At surface level the extract is straightforward parody and overt criticism of the people who forget part of their own heritage: ‘Vendido’ is Spanish for ‘sell-out.’ At a deeper level, though, the text reveals the ideological contradictions of a system that preaches individualism but stops certain individuals from obtaining it. This is achieved by denying those individuals a choice or by categorising them into the official construct provided for them by the system. Remaining a stereotype, whether Mexican, American or Mexican-American, helps prevent the acquisition of a real identity and the capacity for political action and protest.

The passage illustrates the concern of early Chicano theatre with the idea of identity and self-esteem, pointing out a dialectic tension between the two, at times antagonistic, cultural sources of the Chicanos. Later works, more concerned with representation, seek a balance towards the synthesis of the two terms, previously regarded as irreconcilable, while problematizing the nature of such a fusion of elements. It would be the case of the ensemble Culture Clash, as the following extract from their work *A Bowl of Beings* shows:

(Richard lets out a primal scream. Dramatic music is heard under the following monologue.)

RICHARD: I’m crazy, I’m a crazy motherfucker, I’m loco in the cabeza. I’m your postmodern Mexican Hamburger Helper. Brothers and sisters run, run for the hills – have you heard Madonna wants to play Frida Kahlo in a movie, man. I finally find myself a hero and she’s gonna fuck it all up for me – I hope they let a Chicano play Trotsky at least. What the fuck are you looking at up there? Haven’t you ever seen a multicultural nightmare coming unglued right before your very eyes, man? ‘Cause I’m Spanish, I’m Indian – American Indian, a “Dances With Wolves” kind of Indian – ahhh! (Montoya, Salinas, Sigüenza 93-94)

The fragment clearly shows the self-conscious type of comedy that is being proposed. The audience is addressed directly, creating a connection and complicity with them, but, at the same time, shattering their expectations with the combination of shocking moments and overtly comic passages. In performance this monologue is delivered in a
crescendo that starts in comedy to end up with the anguish of the performer/character, until the next sketch breaks the uncomfortable feeling created in the audience. At other stages in the performance the complicity of comedy is broken with open critiques to, and a tone of reproach against the Chicano movement and their failure to instill any effective political commitment. This monologue would illustrate the shift towards the problematization of identity undergone by Chicano theatre in the 1980s and 1990s. The issue of misrepresentation appears explicitly in the allusion to Madonna, reminding us indirectly of the film version of *Evita*, which she starred; equally, *Dances with Wolves* would constitute a Hollywood misrepresentation of a minority, the Native Americans, through the appropriation of their space in order to render it sanitised and safe, thus, drowning the political potential into the friendly exotic. In terms of self-identity, mixing references to film, Madonna and mainstream American popular culture with the political concerns of the Chicanos becomes a powerful way of describing the confusion derived from the parted identity of this community.

*Zoot Suit* by Luis Valdez constitutes an interesting case of the importance of representation for Chicano theatre. The play, based on a real event, is conceived as documentary political theatre, using techniques from the living Newspaper in order to ridicule the institution of the press. The facts have their counterpart in the fiction created about the main characters’ lives, where we can see and feel the true nature of Chicanos as people with feelings and worries, in contrast with the cold analytical way in which the facts are presented by the official versions of the press and law: the trial is conducted by the press, which becomes both prosecutor and jury in order to condemn the Chicanos. Valdez resorts to parodic and ironic intertextuality by consciously subverting the Broadway musical, more specifically *West Side Story*. The piece incorporates a narrator who becomes the main character’s and the play’s conscience, and acts as a foil for the action in a Brechtian way, avoiding the easy identification between the audience and the stage. The narrator/character represents the pachuco, a stereotype from the past in a play that unfolds a current conflict of the 1980s, namely, the danger of integration and assimilation by the Chicanos, as well as the alternatives to violent action. These themes are illustrated through contrast and comparison with the real events of the 1940s that are recreated in the play. The ambivalent figure of the pachuco, standing alone and naked on the stage, without his distinctive zoot suit fashionable clothes and what they represent, constitutes a powerful symbol of past and present attitudes, which eventually can be reduced to the person as victim, once he is stripped of all cultural conditionings. The anachronistic structure of the play provides critical commentary through Brechtian montage to whatever happens on stage, as do the songs, which break the narrative logic, becoming a counterpoint to the action. Additionally, the narrator figure was taken up by Edward James Olmos, a charismatic figure in the Chicano world due to his committed position in the defence of the Chicanos. The strategy deployed in the play consists in using a series of dramatic devices borrowed from the tradition of political theatre and applying them to a Chicano theme. *Zoot Suit* does not draw on techniques derived from popular cultural forms of the traditional Mexican theatre, such as the ‘carpa’ (circus tent), the pageant or the carnivalesque street performance. This might be the reason why the play transferred to
Broadway, where it had a successful run with mainstream audiences and later on was made into a film directed by Valdez himself.

The play closes outlining different endings in imitation of documentary films, which provide a number of choices, not only of Henry Reyna, the protagonist, but for the whole Chicano community:

PRESS: Henry Reyna went back to prison in 1947 for robbery and assault with a deadly weapon. While incarcerated, he killed another inmate and he wasn’t released until 1955, when he got into hard drugs. He died of the trauma of his life in 1972.

PACHUCO: That’s the way you see it, ese. But there’s other way to end this story.

RUDY: Henry Reyna went to Korea in 1950. He was shipped across in a destroyer and defended the 38th Parallel until he was killed at Inchon in 1952, being posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

ALICE: Henry Reyna married Della in 1948 and they have five kids, three of them now going to the University, speaking calo and calling themselves Chicanos. (Zoot Suit 94)

These possible outcomes present the audience with an alternative history and perspective from the Chicano point of view that involves integration but not naturalisation. The perspective given by the Press demonises the Chicano. Rudy’s version implies becoming American, which ends up in death, physically and symbolically. It is Alice’s ending that does not lead to destruction and death but to the positive integration of the new generations, by presenting Henry’s legacy as another step in the attainment of a Chicano conscience.

The official version of the establishment is challenged by voicing the suppressed history of the Chicanos: in this specific example, their contribution to the nation and the war. The play shows vividly how the Chicanos are misrepresented by the media and the law as the stereotypes of gang fighting and trouble making. The generation gap conflict is articulated in political terms in the play: parents are uncritical outsiders to the system while belonging to it; whereas their children accept the system as their own, which makes them militant and critical towards the injustices that they suffer from that very system. Such would be a key conflict that most Chicano theatre deals with: the contradictions of a system that incorporates the Mexican-American, but which denies them their existence in equal terms to that of other citizens. The paradox that the Chicano community must face is that in order to find their own space within the American system, they have to assert and stress their difference in a process of negotiation with the dominant culture so as to avoid overt rejection or suppression. Jorge A. Huerta puts it as follows:

Ultimately, there are few dramatic works by Chicano playwrights or theater groups that are not in some way an assertion of a cultural or political identity... the ideal characters exhibit a political awareness that suggests an active substitute to assimilation. Though the works vary in form and content, they all agree that Chicanos must take action against social injustice inside and outside the barrio as they seek their true identity. (47)

It should be added that sometimes the characters are portrayed in the process of acquiring such a political awareness, as is the case of Henry Reyna, the main character in
Zoot Suit, who undergoes such a character development when he experiences the disillusionment with the American system and, ultimately, the American dream and myth. The fact that his defender is an Anglo woman, with whom he falls in love, acts as a powerful symbol of the hybridity of his culture. On the one hand, it challenges the prejudices of the Mexican culture against women; on the other, it punctuates Henry’s process of rage and rejection, followed by assimilation, and final self-acceptance and discovery in a parallel way to the development of their unsuccessful love affair.

The ensemble Culture Clash, formed by three Hispanic comedians addresses the issues of self-representation, representation by others, and identity from the perspective of comedy. Theirs is an approach that is more easily traceable to the riotous carnivalesque performances of popular culture. Their use of comedy is frontally political. Humour serves as a way of distancing the audience towards a critical attitude, which encompasses enjoyment and outspoken political intervention. Their shows are devised as a series of sketches dealing with the topical issues of Chicano life, where humour demystifies tragedy and promotes affirmative attitudes in the audience.

Criticism is not simply directed towards society but becomes self-criticism as positive assessment as well through the parody of the stereotypical representations of the Latino. In one sketch parodying Julio Iglesias, they stage the ambivalence of the Chicano dilemma: on the one hand, these popular and influential figures exploit the Latino stereotype for commercial reasons, contributing to the misrepresentation of the Latino, instigated by the official culture; on the other hand, they can serve, unwillingly, as a springboard for other Latinos to emerge, acting as the spokespersons for a community with no previous presence in the social and cultural milieu. In a similar vein, Culture Clash produce a sketch parodying the way Latinos dance. The sketch in question presents a critical attitude and an alternative to the stereotypical representation of the Latino community created from the outside. In an extremely comic way, the group depict the different varieties of salsa dancing, thus, symbolically signifying that the Latino community is not monolithic, but formed by different groups and nationalities, with sometimes conflicting attitudes, views, and needs. In a carnivalesque manner, using just the body of the actor, the stereotype is re-enacted and reinterpreted simultaneously: salsa dancing may act as a catalyst for Latinos, while asserting their multiplicity within the context of such a unifying element. In fact, the conceptual construction of the sketch resembles too closely the image of the salad bowl and its dressing, often used to describe American society, not to interpret this comic act ironically.

Another vignette provides, in mime, the story of a man from Salvador who migrates to Los Angeles, encountering living conditions there as bad or worse as the ones he had left at home. This act is performed with a mixture of humour and despair that leaves the audience in the middle ground, laughing at the comic output, while acknowledging the problematic reality of the story. Since Salinas, the performer, comes from Salvador, it could be argued that the autobiographical and political treatment of the sketch may have been borrowed from the feminist movement and its slogan 'the personal is political.' Culture Clash confronts cultures in order to find, if not a synthesis, a place in-between which would justify existence. Such a goal is pursued by the
combination and parody of the American icons of popular culture and those of the Mexican heritage as filtered through the Chicano culture. Comedy is for them not merely an entertainment but an attitude towards life, that they try to transmit to the audience, as the use of autobiographical material shows. Thus, comedy as transgression and critical commentary, and physical performance as both medium and message, become the space in-between where Chicano culture stands.

Ricardo Salinas's words would constitute an accurate summary of the group's work and approach to the theatre event:

The thing about Culture Clash, I think we caught the coattail of the movimiento, and we borrowed from it. But at the same time, we also borrowed from a whole new urban reality, MTV reality, a political reality that was happening in our era, the whole yuppie issue. We kind of adopted the whole enchilada ... Part of the comedy that comes from our group is through the old traditions, too. Not only from the Chicano teatro, but from the carpas, which was the Mexican vaudeville of our time. (Salinas)

The following quotation by Bhabha (35) would illustrate the process by which the Chicano movement has adopted the founding myth of Aztlan (the mythical Mexican origin for the Chicanos, dating back to pre-Hispanic times) as their point of reference for resistance and self-affirmation:

The enunciation of cultural difference problematizes the binary division of past and present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and its authoritative address. It is the problem of how, in signifying the present, something comes to be repeated, relocated and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of a pastness that is not necessarily a faithful sign of historical memory but a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic.

Chicanos recover a mental space that never existed and transform such a mythical past into the site of actual struggle. Similarly, Gloria Anzaldúa argues that the concept of hybridity constitutes a defining characteristic of the Chicano culture, specifically in the description of the Atzlan: “A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary ... People who inhabit both realities ... are forced to live in the interface between the two” (37).

In the play Rancho Hollywood writer Carlos Morton seems to adopt compositional and theatrical strategies that would corroborate Bhabha’s and Anzaldúa’s assumptions in practice. Morton conflates historical past and present through the body of the actors, who move from one character to another, with no apparent transition, shifting from actors to fictional characters in enacting the history of California, i.e., their own history. Rancho Hollywood employs metatheatre in order to show the misrepresentations of the Chicano experience and history by the mainstream American film industry. The collapse of the categories reality/fiction, past/present, actor/character takes place both at the conceptual level and the theatrical one, suggesting that the only possibility of recovering the past is through fragments that combine reality and fiction, fact and myth. The changes in the point of view and perspective about a certain reality, depending on the moment and the character that experiences it, become crucial in order to challenge a compact and unifying picture of the events, which would be as
Interculturalism, Subversion and the Quest for Identity in Chicano Theatre

dangerous as the Manichean world view held by the fictional director of the film. The opening of the piece is typical of the misconceptions and misrepresentations effected by the Hollywood industry in connivance with certain ideologies close to the power structures:

DIRECTOR: That’s good, Ronnie, but I need more of an accent. Say “dis” instead of “this” and “wan” instead of “want.” And throw in a few “oles.” Zoom in on a close-up on “ole.”
RAMONA: Dis cun nut go on. I wan heem to take me away. Ole!
DIRECTOR: Wonderful! I love it! Remember, this is nineteenth-century California, just before the Gold Rush, when all those gay caballeros and sexy senoritas were dancing fandangos until dawn. Now then, what’s missing?
CAMERAMAN: You forgot the peon.
DIRECTOR: Of course, where is my sleepy peon? (Enter Joaquin.) There you are. Oh, I love your outfit, it’s so ... I don’t know ... native. (Rancho Hollywood 5)

It is against such unitary and monolithic ideological constructs that the play fights by using a fragmentary and almost chaotic dramatic structure, which would reveal the complexity even of stereotypes and the ideological bias behind them. When the actors revolt against the director for his arbitrariness, partiality and lack of rigour in the presentation of California history and its ethnic groups, his answer is: “JED: Please, please! You’re all taking this much too seriously. After all, it’s only make believe!” (Rancho Hollywood 38).

And Joaquin, one of the actors, replies:
JOAQUIN: Jed, thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for the creation of such memorable stereotypes, for the advancement of collective inferiority complexes, for the maligning and desecration of our cultures and for the loss, theft, and distortion of our history. (Rancho Hollywood 38)

Despite this protest speech, the ending of the play suffers a twist and the younger generation of actors embrace the system in order to further their careers. The older characters, who become the audience for the recently released film, act as the conscience of the play and regret the loss of historical memory concerning the achievements, through political activism, in the 1960s and 1970s, now taken for granted by the new generations. The punch line at the end is that the white Anglo director, with all his prejudices, but made famous by the Hollywood industry, decides to run for president.

Bhabha articulates the way stereotypes operate in colonial discourse:

[1]It is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation; produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed.

The first quoted passage from Rancho Hollywood would indicate the stasis with which power, as embodied in the film director, burdens the stereotype. The subsequent movement in the play, however, where fully-formed characters are substituted by actors enacting characters who, in turn, undergo all sorts of transformations in the fictional presentation of Californian history, illustrates how stereotypes are reutilized and
subverted in order to show the ideological mechanisms at work in the process of representation. The static conception of the stereotype is thus transformed into a dynamic one, allowing for a political reading that goes beyond the Manichean division between good and evil.

Most Chicano theatre moves away from the classical realist narrative techniques of naturalist theatre. In *Rancho Hollywood*, the director's cry that what he is doing is innocent make-believe is challenged by the fact that the audience is reminded at all times that they are seeing a highly politicised fictional account. The conflation of the notions of time, space and character, plus the sophisticated structure of fiction-within-fiction levels, point to the nature of the show as a construct. Furthermore, these techniques are directed towards signaling the importance of fiction and fictional representation as the actual cause of the problems and marginalization of the Chicano community.

The departure from realism constitutes a political act in itself, since realism would have sanctioned a particular slice of Mexican life as the only actual life. Belsey argues that classical realist texts lead to closure, or as Said puts it in relation to the notion of orientalism:

Philosophically, then, the kind of language, thought, and vision that I have been calling orientalism very generally is a form or radical realism; anyone employing orientalism, which is the habit for dealing with questions, objects, qualities and regions deemed Oriental, will designate, name, point to, fix, what he is talking or thinking about with a word or phrase, which then is considered either to have acquired, or more simply to be, reality . . . The tense they employ is the timeless eternal; they convey an impression of repetition and strength . . . For all these functions it is frequently enough to use the simple copula is. (72)

Valdez, *Culture Clash* and Morton show on stage the agent and creator of the reality that Said is referring to, i.e., the media, film and TV. In the plays analysed above, such institutions are presented in the process of fixing reality through the various repressive discursive practices of the stereotype and the appeal to truth. The discourses of power enter into dialogue and conflict with the structural devices of the play in question, thus, undermining the narrative logic of the performance and the realist discourses identified with it. These plays bare the device at the intellectual and the compositional level in order to provide the audience with the possibility of dissident readings, by stressing the fictionality of the show. In that respect, the signifiers are never allowed to settle and adopt a single signified or definitive meaning.

A good summary of how Chicano theatre is approached by practitioners would be Danny de la Paz's words:

I certainly don't think that people should be doing things in the theatre that are safe and quaint . . . I want to go to the theatre to be challenged. I don't want to go to be entertained . . . Just make them think. If you're a Chicano, you have a cultural responsibility . . . If they're offended, then you're doing your job. That's how I feel about it . . . They're not there to appease people.
Interculturalism, Subversion and the Quest for Identity in Chicano Theatre

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At the beginning of this paper, I would like to assert that the Welsh nation as such and thus its definition of the 'national' are indissolubly tied to Britain as a whole. A Welsh identity, therefore, is a hybrid construction, or as Dai Smith writes: "Wales is a singular noun but a plural experience" (36) – and a significant part of that plural experience is British. This might sound very obvious, but it is a difficult and even brave assertion to make in a small country which is constantly overshadowed by its neighbour – a neighbour, one might add, who all too often regards Wales as a remote part of England. In order to stay on the map of Britain, it seems politically necessary to stress difference, and this makes hybridity such a disturbing term to use in connection with Welsh history and identity.

Nevertheless, the hybrid nature of Welsh history and identity needs to be acknowledged. Wales's close ties with England are a consequence of what Dai Smith terms the 'success story' of English colonialism:

[T]he manner in which Wales developed from the late eighteenth century meant that in politics, economics and culture the country was knitted closer and closer into a 'British' fabric of government and society. The very success of that tale prevents any quick disentanglement of the threads of 'Welshness' and 'Britishness', no matter how ardently some of the Welsh may desire this. The mainstream experience of the 'modern inhabitants of Wales' - has been about multi-faceted tension and not its dissolution. (37)

Welsh history, culture and literature can only be seen in conjunction with British history, culture and literature. Essentialist notions of Welsh history and literature as separate from Britain may make short-term political sense but they do not reflect the living reality of the people of Wales nor do they do justice to Welsh writers, especially those who write in English.

My main thesis in this paper is that the Welsh National Drama Movement of 1914 and 1934 was formed with such a hybrid and inclusive definition of the nation in mind. M. Wynn Thomas writes that "one of its most striking features" had been "its bicultural and bilingual character" (1). After a successful start in 1914, the movement was stopped by the beginning of the Great War. A second attempt at reviving the movement in 1934 was unsuccessful and further attempts were abandoned because of the start of the Second World War. I believe that, apart from its disastrous timing, the Welsh National Drama Movement did not stand a chance in the changed cultural climate after the Great War. By 1934, the two linguistic communities in Welsh society had polarized to such an extent that the definition of what 'national' meant had
changed significantly – making the National Drama Movement redundant in the process.

I. The History of the Welsh National Drama Movement

Before the inception of the Welsh National Drama Movement, there was not much Welsh theatre to speak of. There were a number of travelling theatre companies, but very few of them were Welsh. The puritan spirit of Welsh Nonconformism prevented the creation of a national theatre in Wales. The theatre historian Cecil Price notes that there had been a few plays about Wales written by Welsh writers, but that

[t]hese were, really, perfunctory attempts to please an audience by ‘localising’ the entertainment in the old way. They did not express a spirit or a way of life peculiar to this country. It was unlikely that they would ever do so while most Welshmen were actively opposed to the playhouse as the resort of the Devil, the home of lies, the centre of English and French wickedness. (Price, “Towards” 12)

And yet, Welsh reluctance towards the theatre and the detrimental influences of a “life of insincerity, of make-believe, of emotional dissipation, of travelling in mixed companies away from home” (Jones 256), which the Nonconformist establishment ascribed to actresses and actors, was slowly overcome by the nationalist spirit. From around 1900, Welsh Nonconformism was gradually becoming politicised. “Churches and ministers actively supported the Liberal Party . . . . The relationship between the Nonconformists and the Liberals was often complex, but usually intimate” (Evans 37). The stage suddenly seemed a very desirable vehicle to represent the national spirit. “At the Bangor National Eisteddfod of 1902, Lloyd George spoke eloquently of the need for a school of Welsh drama. A play formed part of the official National Eisteddfod programme for the first time in 1906” (Price, The Professional Theatre 16). Efforts at creating a Welsh national drama are noticeable from 1910 (ibid.). Lord Howard de Walden who settled in Denbighshire in 1912 can be said to have been the motor of the Welsh National Drama Movement. “He encouraged a higher standard of play-writing through the spirit of competition and set about forming theatre companies to give aspiring actors and directors greater opportunities and security” (Coyne 1). He began by offering a prize at the National Eisteddfod for the best plays for a professional company in either language. In 1912, this prize was won by J.O. Francis for Change. Thus, plays in English were included in the definition of a ‘national’ drama from the beginning. Price’s comment is telling:

Properly speaking, this term [school of Welsh drama] would be restricted to plays in Welsh but, in actual fact, it was used to cover all the efforts made in English and Welsh to interpret through the medium of the theatre the peculiar outlook and manner of life in Wales. (Price 16)

Contrary to Ireland, whose Abbey theatre was successful in producing national plays in the English language, Welsh identity had mostly been expressed in the Welsh language, especially as far as literature was concerned. From the time of the Tudors, English had been the official language of Wales – the language of law and business. Welsh
had remained the language of culture, history, and Welsh expression of identity (cf. Bogdanor 6-7). This division was consciously reinforced by the English crown: soon after English was made the only official language of Wales, Elizabeth I commissioned the translation of the Bible into Welsh. In the 20th century, large-scale immigration from Ireland and England resulted in a rapid anglicization process\(^1\) and new possibilities for education of the middle and working classes changed the fabric of Welsh society and with it its potential for cultural expression (cf. Mathias 71-72). Professional serious drama being relatively new to Wales, Lord de Walden’s prize offered an opening for Welsh writers of drama who chose to write and publish in English.

Another example of the inclusive character of the movement was the fact that plays were quickly translated in order to make them accessible to a wider audience. The language issue was keenly felt by the writers. J.O. Francis’s main concern was to be realistic in his creation of Welsh characters. He was careful not to include Welsh words or dialect merely in order to add local colour or in order to create images of “quaint Welshmen” like his contemporary Naunton Davies. In *Change*, which is set in Glamorgan, the characters speak a believable South Wales English. *Cross-Currents* (1921?), which is set in the North is another matter. Here, Francis explained his choice of language very carefully in the foreword to the play, because the language issue was likely to be a political issue in itself:

More relevant than the question of transience of interest is the question of propriety of language. Written altogether in English, this play must, I know, have now and then an awkward air. My friend, Mr. Silyn Roberts, has placed me under a great obligation by translating the play into the Welsh dialect of his own beloved North Wales, giving my work a Cymric form which my own unyielding book-knowledge of the language leaves me unable to achieve. (7-8)

Francis wanted to write a play about contemporary political issues for the whole of Wales. Therefore, he created characters from the North who have lived in the South for a while, who have then gone back to the North taking their political visions with them to confront those who stayed. In order to be faithful to the linguistic reality of Wales, the play would have had to contain both English and Welsh. Francis comments on this problem thus:

The fact remains, however, that my characters are bilingual people whose customary method of expression is not truly conveyed by one language alone. Sheer verisimilitude would demand frequent changes from Welsh to English and from English to Welsh. Gareth Parry and Gomer Davies, after their association in cosmopolitan Cardiff, would usually talk English to each other. Gareth’s conversations with his relatives at Bronawel would run from one language to the other, according to the topic discussed. Trefnant Jones’s long speech in the Second Act would, in real life, undoubtedly be made in Welsh. To English judgment, it may sound grandiloquent and emotional. The Welsh canon of oratory is, however, different from the English, calling for vivid appeal and drama than for calm exposition and restraint. (*Cross-Currents* 8-9)

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\(^1\) “It will probably come as a surprise to most readers of *The Welsh Outlook* to learn that approximately one-sixth of the population of Wales... is English born.” J.E.T., “Migration to and from Wales and Monmouthshire,” *The Welsh Outlook* (March 1915): 105-109.
Francis's compromise was to write his play in English only. His rendering of Trefnant Jones's *hwyl*-like speech in English without changing Welsh rhetoric is his only attempt at representing authentic Welsh speech. In contrast to Caradoc Evans, who attempted to represent Welsh speech by simply translating it into English without changing Welsh syntax — a process which caused his reviewers to howl in protest at how awkward he made Welsh speech appear (cf. John 83-84) — Francis realised that he could not adequately render Welsh speech in English without such problems. Sensitive to linguistic 'propriety,' he chose to forego 'local colour' rather than risk a representation that could have been misconstrued. Not all authors of the movement have been as sensitive about the language issue as Francis was. Nevertheless, it can be said that for the movement the choice of language was not the divisive political issue it was later to become. Both languages were regarded as equally adequate vehicles for showing Welsh issues on stage.

Lord de Walden, a group of actors and actresses and writers formed the Welsh National Drama Company in 1914 with two projects in mind: firstly, they were going to buy a portable theatre in order to tour the rural areas of Wales and, secondly, they wanted to create a professional company who would perform plays in Welsh and in English (cf. Price "Towards" 20-21). I believe that the choice to forego the pull of the metropolis and not to base themselves in Cardiff, the then informal capital of Wales, was made as a consequence of their conception of their role as a national theatre company. The North of Wales has always had its misgivings about being ruled 'from the South.' The portable theatre would have allowed the company to reach even the remotest parts of Wales. The first tour by the company which took them all over the South including Cardiff and Swansea was very successful and it would have continued to the North had it not been cut short by the start of the Great War. This tour would probably have done its share in connecting the people of Wales — a people who have been described as a "community of communities," whose people have "in the past . . . lacked state institutions of their own" and have been "instinctively tribal" (Osmond 9). Thus, some measure of 'national feeling' may well have been brought to the people through art.

Moreover, the movement produced many short plays and most plays were published in fairly cheap editions by the Educational Publishing Company. It thus gave amateur groups the opportunity of getting easy access to contemporary plays. The celebration of amateur theatre and the suspicion of professional companies especially in rural areas (cf. Price "Towards" 17, Jones 255-256) was taken into consideration by the Welsh National Drama movement and it concentrated on developing the one-act play as a distinctly Welsh literary form. A successful example is J.O. Francis's *The Poacher*. *The Poacher* is a light comedy about a Twm, a former poacher. At the start of the play the audience finds him a converted man. His chapel-going wife Marged has finally succeeded in getting him to abandon the fun of illicit hunting. Soon, however, she realizes that her pantry is significantly emptier than it used to be. Together with the "simpleton Dici Bach Dwl with his innocent native cunning, a stock character who nevertheless acquire[s] a new lease of life through being introduced, for the first time
into a distinctively Welsh context" (Thomas 10), she urges him to go back to his for­mer ways. Twm, though, is not to be moved until it transpires that Dafydd Hughes 'the Shop,' a deacon for the chapel, is a poacher, too. The play thus gently pokes fun at Nonconformist bigotry; it is funny and critical at the same time without the moralizing tone that M. Wynn Thomas detects in much contemporary drama in either language (11). When the company visited Swansea in 1914, The Poacher was regarded as the most successful of Francis's plays. Francis and other writers like D. T. Davies, whose one-act play Ble ma fa? [Where Is He?] caused much controversy, did much for the form of the short play. Larger issues of great importance for contemporary Welsh society were discussed in these short pieces which provided glimpses of Welsh life rather than the whole picture in a full-length play. And the lack of big theatres and of profes­sional companies certainly furthered the creation of a form which could easily be staged in almost any kind of building by non-professional actors.

Another important point is that the movement did not dwell upon an imaginary and greatly romanticized Welsh past in order to define their idea of the nation—something which had become a trademark of the winning essays and poems of the late 19th century National Eisteddfodau. On the contrary, the drama movement concentrated on Welsh current affairs.

One of the distinguishing features of the serious drama, when it appeared, was its preoccu­pation with the present, considered as a period of unprecedented social change. Moreover, the dramatists themselves were agreed that their plays were the complex product of that change as well as the best literary instruments for investigating it. (Thomas 4)

Two of such plays by Francis are Change and Cross-Currents. Both plays deal with the most pressing political and social issues as the author perceived them: namely, the lessening of chapel culture’s influence over Welsh life and culture in general, and the rise of socialism, which set out to replace 'nation' with 'class' as the most important issue for Welsh society to discuss. The very essence of Welshness seemed to be in question, as, indeed, it was.

Francis attempted to give a realistic, fair picture of the changes he perceived. Thus, in Change, a play in which the young generation is driven out of Wales because of a lack of opportunities and the stifling atmosphere created by the petty bourgeois Nonconformism of their parents, both generations are treated sympathetically, as is the young socialist Gomer Davies in Cross-Currents who is allowed to present his case as convincingly as the old nationalist preacher Trefnant Jones. And above all, Wales is not seen in isolation. Francis consciously situated his plays in a European context. He saw Welsh society as a microcosm of the sweeping changes that went through Europe as a whole. Again in the foreword to Cross-Currents he writes:

In its strange admixture of iron realism and wistful sentiment, Wales knows more than England of the contradictions of our times. The mind of Wales is a cockpit for forces whose struggle for mastery sweeps through Europe. It is the peculiar position of England to be nearer to the Continent— but farther from this battle. Of self-conscious Nationalism, England reveals very little, for it is the happy lot of the English people to be so secure of their nationality that they need no clamorous Nationalism to protect it. Wales is much more completely a microcosm of the mod-
ALYCE VON ROTHKIRCH

ern world. The aspirations born of an industrial epoch mingle with the memories of a small nation that fought hard and long to preserve its independence. There are two different key-notes in its life. If the new Red Flag has won a measure of approval, there is also that old allegiance to the Red Dragon of Glyndwr. (5-6)

Francis perceived Wales to be a kind of showcase for the social and political changes of Europe. Without being able to provide answers for the questions of his time, his sensitive plays point towards the path the nation is taking. At the end of Change, the Nonconformist parent generation is left alone and powerless. In Cross-Currents it transpires that the socialist Gomer Davies has, indeed, the better arguments on his side, although he cannot quite command the hearts of his audience. The struggle between the linguistic communities and between Welsh heritage and a socialism, which does not care about that heritage, are at the centre of Francis’s plays.

These central conflicts are staged in a manner reminiscent of Galsworthy: they take place within families and communities. And audience reactions show that he and the other writers of the movement had, indeed, touched a nerve. Llewelyn Williams comments on the extraordinarily successful performance of the company’s first programme which included Change and The Poacher in Cardiff in the following way:

Who would have thought a year ago that an audience of two thousand people would be listening entranced in a theatre at Cardiff to a Welsh drama, spoken in Welsh, acted by Welsh actors and actresses . . . They are masterpieces that offer a challenge to almost everything that has been going on in Welsh life for the last two hundred years. The nation has been developing on strict religious and orthodox lines, and here you have in the first Welsh plays a bold challenge to all accepted standards — and you cannot help feeling that underneath it is a religious tone. (Western Mail 16/5/1914, qtd. in Price 22)

Taking all this into consideration, Francis and the Welsh National Drama movement can be said to have made the effort to create a role for Welsh drama which was not parochial or partisan, half of it the insignificant newcomer to an ancient Welsh literary tradition, the other half swallowed up in the whale of English literature. Of course, some of the plays were less successful in this endeavour than others, but in general the movement presented an inclusive, bicultural and bilingual definition of the national. But from 1914 to 1924 the cultural climate changed and, for the larger part of the population, a British identity had acquired new meaning at the loss of a Welsh identity.

2. Why Did the Movement Fail?

The Welsh national drama movement failed for many reasons. After it had come to a halt during the Great War, an insecurity about its purpose was voiced. Some wanted to use it to awaken “the spirit of nationalism,” others “believed its main purpose was to preserve and revive interest in the Welsh language.” “Since the pulpit was losing its hold on the Welsh people, some writers wanted to see the stage take over the functions of preacher and moralist. Others sincerely hoped that a National Theatre would help to develop the spirit of self-criticism in Welshmen” (Price, “Towards” 24). In these voices the split of Welsh national identity into a Welsh-speaking part and an English-
speaking part can already be detected. If people believed that the main purpose of a ‘national’ theatre was to be the strengthening of the Welsh language at the cost of the English language, the inclusive spirit of the original Welsh National Drama Movement was lost.

Secondly, the spirit of confusion over questions of the nation which can also be seen in the passionate articles debating the issue in *The Welsh Outlook*, seems to suggest an insecurity about ‘Welshness’ as such. The Welsh-speaking part of the population retreated into itself and the English-speaking population identified itself more and more with Britain. Emyr Humphreys notes that “[t]he Labour Party took over the political power enjoyed by the Liberals and the Lib-Labs, and in addition, in the southeast, many of the social functions that had been previously carried out by the hegemonical denomination [i.e. Nonconformism]” (210). This process went on until after the Second World War

[t]he sentiment of internationalism in South Wales was replaced by an unswerving loyalty to the British Labour party. This phenomenon had many curious aspects. Former Communists and fellow-travellers became fervent adherents to the last vestiges of imperial glory. In a behaviour pattern curiously reminiscent of the devotion of the aristocracy to the house of Tudor, they formed a deep attachment to the monarchy and the elaborate ceremonial surrounding the institution. Once again the dominant section of Welsh political and social life could believe that it had virtually invented a new ‘Britishness’ and added the concept of a Welfare State as an additional jewel in the glittering crown. (226)

In this climate, a national drama movement based on ‘biculturalism and bilingualism’ could only lose. For one part of the population it was not ‘national’ enough and for the other part, every suggestion of Welsh nationalism smacked of separatism and was strongly discouraged.

A factor contributing to this newly invented Welsh ‘Britishness’ was undoubtedly the national feelings kindled by the Great War and the political constellations that came to power in its wake which then led Europe into the Second World War. Looking at the *Welsh Outlook* one can notice that from 1914 until about 1921 the question of nationalism and home rule were very important topics for general discussion. From 1922 interest in the topic wanes until probably the last article on the subject with the fateful title “Is Welsh Home Rule Doomed?” by T.H. Lewis appears in the June issue of 1923. The English-speaking population then seems to have gone along with the newly empowered image of ‘Britain.’ Britain had, after all, defeated the enemy and proved itself to be a strong base for a national identity. Socialism in Wales, the Labour Party and the Independent Labour Party, suggested that Welsh nationalism was ineffective, powerless and, frankly, unimportant in the global struggle against capitalism.

The Welsh-speaking part of the population seemed to have channelled their nationalism into the foundation of a Welsh nationalist party. *Plaid Cymru* was founded in 1925 and, from the beginning, emphasized the importance of the Welsh language. Of course, they drew nearly all of their voters from ‘Y Fro Gymraeg,’ the Welsh-speaking, Welsh-identifying population of Wales. Since the definition of Welshness depended so much on culture and language, an increasingly beleaguered ‘Y Fro Gymraeg’ went into
a defensive retreat and ultimately denied ‘Welshness’ to anybody who did not speak Welsh. Gwyn A. Williams speaks of

an exclusion which is becoming rapidly and increasingly, and inevitably a bitter self-exclusion of the English-speaking Welsh from the Welsh people and nation. The adjective ‘Welsh’ is increasingly applied, outside and inside Wales, only to the Welsh-speaking component of the people, which is one-fifth of the actual number. (293)

Williams wrote this in the early 1980s when the bitter memory of the recently lost referendum for some measure of Welsh political self-determination was still fresh. A hybrid, or even a dual identity seemed to be impossible for most Welsh people from the end of the Great War to the 1990s. People chose between ‘Welshness’ (i.e. an identity based on the Welsh language) and a ‘British identity’ (cf. Williams 303). The English-speaking majority of the Welsh population thus disappeared into Britishness, a Britishness, one might add, which in key-aspects was synonymous with Englishness. Likewise, Welsh literature in English was swallowed up by ‘English literature,’ as Raymond Garlick notes:

What our education system in effect says to us is: if you are Welsh-speaking you are Welsh, and Welsh Literature is your heritage; but if you don’t speak Welsh your heritage is English literature, the literature of England. Perhaps this is why so many Welsh-speakers have a wonderful verbal culture, a delight in the use of words, in quoting poems, in reading and talking about books; and why so few English-speakers in Wales seem to care about such things. For Welsh-speakers their language is a direct link with the face of Wales, with places, names, events, stories, traditions, legends, history. For English-speakers their language is presented to them only as a link with England with somewhere else and not with their own daily experience of their own country and life. (n.p.)

This divisiveness was to bedevil Welsh society at least until 1997, and it still creates problems today. The grain of disharmony was sown in the 1920s and 30s – the time when the Welsh National Drama Movement tried to pick up its pieces and failed.

A fourth factor comes into play which exemplifies the continuing split of Welsh society. The platform for Welsh art used to be and still is the National Eisteddfod.

Late in the thirties a long campaign to turn the National Eisteddfod into a monoglot Welsh festival won acceptance for the principle. The rule started to go into effect from 1951. At the time, it was felt to be part of a general revolt by Welsh people to reassert themselves and their identity and, while there was widespread apathy among the people long removed from that kind of world, there was no opposition. (Williams 286)

By the late thirties, of course, the second attempt at creating a National Theatre Movement had failed. And it seems certain that the discussion about making the eisteddfodau monolingual, which must have gone on in the beginning of the thirties already, made it clear, that a national drama movement which included English language plays would have had no room in the only purely Welsh arts festival. I consider this to be strongly indicative of the cultural climate of Wales at the time and also another sign why the drama movement failed to recreate the enthusiasm that had been there in 1914. A disspirited Lord Howard de Walden is reported to have said: “Wales may well leave the matter to rest for a century” (qtd. in Price Professional 40).
In fact, the National Drama Company was never revived. Instead, there has been a different development from the 1930s until today: from the 1930s a certain amount of power in cultural matters has been devolved to, first, the Welsh Arts Council, and, since 1997, to the Welsh National Assembly. In accordance with the Assembly’s principle to abolish all unnecessary quangos, the Welsh Arts Council may even be abolished soon. If this is the case, power over cultural matters will rest solely with the Welsh National Assembly. It seems to me that the recent history of Welsh drama shows the general conflict between the desire to create National institutions like a National Theatre (opened in 1976) and the National Opera and to encourage local and amateur groups at the same time, thus strengthening cultural expression on a localised level. In the 1960s and 70s the Arts Council built numerous arts centres all over Wales while, at the same time, large theatres like the New Theatre in Cardiff and the Grand Theatre in Swansea were purchased (cf. Price Professional 40-48). The big theatres have largely turned to commercial productions and the more interesting, contemporary and experimental productions are staged by companies like the Swansea-based Volcano group, the community group of Theatr Clwyd, Brith Gof (which is associated with the departments of Theatre, Film and Television Studies at the University of Wales Aberystwyth) and numerous other small companies. Perhaps this network of smaller companies is, if anything at all, to be considered the true heir of the National Theatre Movement of 1914. Maybe a network of smaller companies which are usually bilingual are best suited to represent the ‘community of communities’ that is Wales.

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CACE MYA PRS PANKRATZ

Greek to Us? Appropriations of Myths in Contemporary British and Irish Drama

Classical mythical texts have to cross several obvious temporal, spatial and cultural borders. First of all, the ancient pre-texts are translated into another language and thereby into another culture (cf. Johnston for examples). Due to their dual nature – iconic stability on the one hand and openness for variations on the other hand (Blumenberg 40) – classical myths have always lent themselves to fusions with other belief systems and discourses. This allows adaptors and translators to use classical pretexts as apt field of projection for their respective contemporary ‘ways of life’ and their own various myths (in the sense of Barthes).

Nowadays myths provide “cultural capital” (cf. Bourdieu) both for their recipients and producers/adaptors. Appropriations of myths signify universality and an affiliation with the great heritage of Western civilisation. This leads to the crossing of some more borders. Adaptations often use the élite appeal of myths to discuss issues which the mainstream often considers marginal or subversive. Crossing the obvious vertical border between past and present thus serves as a means to cross the implicit horizontal border between centre and margin. The myth becomes a Trojan Horse to smuggle in subversive or at least non-mainstream contents.

Being part of the post-modern “ironic dialogue with the past” (Hutcheon 4) adaptations of classical myths undermine traditional master narratives by rearranging and re-contextualising mythical material. Oscillating between de-mythologising and re-mythologising, comedy and tragedy, past and present, centre and margin the texts question constructions of supposedly natural and commonsensical values and beliefs, rewrite them and/or replace them with alternative mythological narratives (Schmid 363-364). In contemporary British and Irish drama these general trends follow a basic pattern of repetition and variation (cf. Mengel 214) and manifest themselves in four textual strategies – anachronism, fusion, structural analogy and meta-textuality.

Anachronism

Here the mythical plot, the characters and the setting in a distant past are retained, but the text includes sporadic references to contemporary discourses. Seamus Heaney’s The Cure at Troy (1990) follows Sophocles’ Philoctetes rather closely.¹ The pretext describes a double stalemate – between Greeks and Trojans on the one hand, and be-

¹ For the changes in structure, poetical register and the role of the chorus see Meir.
tween Greeks and Greeks on the other. Philoctetes had been abandoned on Lemnos because of a festering wound. Nine years afterwards, Odysseus and Neoptolemus come to the island to get Philoctetes’ bow, according to a prophecy the only means with which the Greeks will be able to win the Trojan War. At first the two Greeks try to achieve their goal by deceit, persuasion and force. But it turns out that only mutual forgiveness and repentance can solve the internal dissensions of the Greeks. Philoctetes desists from taking revenge on Odysseus and Neoptolemus refrains from perpetuating the tactics of dishonesty.

Sophocles’ plot lends itself to draw parallels between ancient Greece and contemporary Ireland (cf. Meir 256-257; Teevan 83; Wilmer 222). Heaney enhances these implicit analogies by means of anachronisms. The chorus, “more or less a borderline between/ The you and the me and the it of it” (2), moves from statements about suffering as part of the universal condictio humana to specific examples:

The innocent in gaols
Beat on their bars together.
A hunger-striker’s father
Stands in the graveyard dumb.
The police widow in veils
Faints at the funeral home.
History says, Don’t hope
On this side of the grave. (77, Heaney’s emphasis)

By explicitly evoking contemporary Ireland (cf. Meir 257; Teevan 83-84), The Cure at Troy creates both the image of a trans-historical past and a present, which seems to be a logical continuation of this past. Ireland’s present attains the status of archetypal tragic suffering. This would substantiate claims to the universality of ancient myths and their unabated topicality for contemporary cultures. The plea for change, however, simultaneously questions the construction of an eternal state of natural, mythical or mythified states of affairs: “So hope for a great sea-change/ On the far side of revenge” (77).

Anachronisms are also employed in more complex versions of myths. The chorus in Timberlake Wertenbaker’s The Love of the Nightingale (1988) asks “Why do white people cut off the words of blacks? . . . Why do people disappear? . . . Why are little girls raped and murdered in the car parks of dark cities?” (349) – thereby connecting the myth of Philomele who was raped and mutilated by her brother-in-law Tereus to contemporary acts of rape and equating this with “the hostility of the phallocentric, Eurocentric system towards all others” (Rubik 182, her emphasis). The anachronisms in Howard Barker’s The Bite of the Night (1988) refer to theatres of war through the centuries from “Turks in Smyrna/ Romans in Carthage” (5) to Hiroshima and Sarajewo (40). They thereby situate Troy as cultural space representing the timelessness of war and the dichotomy between victimiser and victim. Brechtian alienation and the oscillation between past and present created by anachronisms partly intersect with concomitant effects by textual fusions. Partly the fusions go a step further, however, by deconstructing binaries and undermining all trans-historical and essentialist constructions.
Fusion

Taking anachronisms a step further, spatial and temporal fusions combine classical mythic with contemporary characters, settings and plots to a post-modern bricolage. Whereas anachronisms create sporadic alienations, fusions permeate the whole text. This textual strategy simultaneously rewrites the classical myth, shows its connection with the present and remythifies and sometimes ritualises present characters and practices.

Rewriting the Homeric myth of Troy The Bite of the Night presents three levels of demythologising and remythologising. The Prologues relate the Trojan War to other wars. In the Interludes the archaeologist Schliemann and his assistants Yorakim and Assafir excavate Troy. But what is Troy? And, above all, where and when is Troy? Troy is set at the ruins of a British university (and vice versa). The myth is replayed by characters who are simultaneously British, Greek and Trojan, victim and victimiser, subject and object of history. Protagonist Dr Savage teaches, writes and researches on the Homeric myths of Troy. At the same time he also acts as an Aeneas- and Odysseus-figure. Furthermore, he meets and worships his creator/object of studies Homer.

Defying “Clarity/ Meaning/ Logic/ And Consistency!” (Prologue 3-4; Barker’s emphasis), the play undermines all attempts at classification and clarification. The plot of The Bite of the Night – if such a construct exists at all (cf. Cohn 167 and Zimmermann for the general anti-Aristotelian elements of Barker’s “Theatre of Catastrophe”) – focuses on Savage’s search for ‘the’ truth, which relates him to the modern mythical figure Dr Faust (cf. Rabey 214).

During his search Savage lives in and through several versions of Troy – Paper Troy, Laughing Troy, Mum’s Troy, Poets’ Troy, Troy of Cleanliness, Fragrant Troy, Mechanical Troy and Dancing Troy (cf. Rabey 213; Cohn 166). Troy after Troy bases its society on a series of more or less accessible mythologies, which merge absurdities, archaisms and Barthean pseudo-commonsensical myths. The structural fusions are mirrored by the hybrid founding ideologies of Troy. The “seven principles” of “Paper Troy” are a paradox mixture of the Sermon on the Mount, socialist maxims and topi-

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2 The temporal setting “circa 1902” (64) might indicate the fictitiousness and a-historicity of ‘Schliemann’, as Heinrich Schliemann died in 1900.

3 He is married to Creusa, experiences a series of civilisations and outwits his antagonists. The reunion with his wife in the third act replays Odysseus’ return to Penelope. McLoby’s commentary explicitly draws attention to this parallel (“And Odysseus went to Penelope, and slew her suitors, and having washed the blood from his hands, undressed her, and she undressed him ...” 77).

4 Fladder comments that there are eight principles (18). A short count will show that there are actually nine. The same confusion occurs with the number of Troys (cf. Thomas 436).

5 “The poor will apologise. The rich will forgive. The thief will be compensated. The victim accused. . . . All governors will swim rivers at seventy. . . .[t]he sick will dictate morality. The healthy will never be paid. . . . The intellectual will be revered until he speaks. The passionate will be in receipt of pension books.” (17-18)
cal nonsense. "Laughing Troy"'s mass-society effuses racist typologies (42) and maintains order and social cohesion by the ritualised dancing and chanting of a Conga ("Got to be so glad now" 34). "Mum's Troy" idealises childhood as pre-rational, innocent and morally superior (50) and combines these Romantic ideas with orders for procreation and keeping the "sacred trust of motherhood" (51). "Fragrant Troy" develops Puritan principles encapsulated in twenty 'truths,' which promote physical cleanliness ("Five! To suffer is to be without soap! . . . Fifteen! Soap is experience." 73), paraphrase the Bible and rehash truisms ("Three! You have to die some time. . . . Thirteen! Violence is no solution!" 73). Everything is supposed to be static, moralised and naturalised ("Twelve! Swans mate for life!" 73), consequently "The Past never occurred!" (74)

The series of different regimes leads to a progression of mutilations and deaths – of King Fladder, Savage's Father, Gay, Hogbin and, as the main focus, Helen. Savage's search for truth and knowledge is grafted onto her body. Successively Helen's arms and legs are cut off, Epsom throttles her, she returns as anonymous Old Woman and lastly Savage smothers her with earth. Personifying "cunt," "egotism and carnal desires" (Mengel 216), she turns into the most prominent victim of war and becomes the "desecrated muse of pain and knowledge" (Rabey 226; cf. Zimmermann 368-69). Then Schliemann enters and starts to dig everything and everyone up again. A vicious circle and a web of dramatised myths interacting with the creators and interpreters of myths who themselves promote further mythifications.

While Sarah Kane's Cleansed (1995) with its trans-historical setting of university/concentration camp/war zone, its series of successive mutilations and its parodic references to a revengeful Biblical god replicates The Bite of the Night's technique without direct references to classical myths; her Phaedra's Love (1996) rewrites specific classical pretexts by Seneca and Euripides. The play is set both in ancient Athens and contemporary Britain. Mythical and pseudo-mythical characters meet contemporary types and live and die through a tragedy without transporting the values that formed the basis for its conflicts. Senecan stoicism, archetypal ideas of honour, piety, virtue, and reason, (cf. Gérard 20-25) have become meaningless and are turned upside down. The erstwhile chaste virginal hunter Hippolytus now sulks in front of a TV, eats hamburgers, uses socks as handkerchiefs or masturbates into them. Phaedra, who in Seneca’s version kneels down to confess her love to her stepson, here kneels down to perform oral sex on him.

The mouthpieces of traditional (Christian or Western) values – the doctor, the priest, the people and to a certain extent king Theseus – are satirically distorted stock-types. The doctor prescribes a hobby, fresh air and clean clothes against Hippolytus' depressions ("change his diet. He can't live on hamburgers and peanut butter. . . . And wash his clothes occasionally. . . . He should tidy his room and get some exercise" 61-62). The people are infuriated about their waste of tax-payers' money and rant about

6 For a detailed discussion see Stefani Brusberg-Kiermeier's article in the present volume.

7 Priest, Doctor and Theseus were also played by the same actor in the first production.
the promiscuous Royal family ("We pay the raping bastard" 92), which, considering the antics of the Windsors, adds some tinges of ironic topicality.

The myth of Phaedra and Hippolytus is played out against this vacuum of valid values. Phaedra loves her stepson. All the traditional impediments – monogamy, female chastity, the reputation and honour of the monarchy – can be swept aside by a laconic "I know, I know" (68). Hippolytus’ rejection of Phaedra’s passes at him likewise are not motivated by a spirit of noble chastity but by boredom and mistrust. Instead of external impediments, Phaedra and Hippolytus have to cope with interpersonal and intrapersonal obstructions. Love and the communication of emotions, have become impossible. Phaedra imagines a close connection with Hippolytus, "Can feel him through the walls. Sense him. Feel his heartbeat for a mile" (66). She hopes to deepen this understanding, to "climb inside him work him out" (66) and to love him out of his depression. But all she is able to do is to offer him oral sex as a birthday present. Hippolytus “comes in her mouth without taking his eyes off the television” (76), afterwards he denies her anything that goes beyond sex: “No one burns me, no one fucking touches me. So don’t try” (78).

Only death, the last anthropological border, can fill the emotional and evaluative vacuum (cf. Kane in Tabert 10). Hippolytus accepts and believes in Phaedra’s love only after her suicide (84-85). His condemnation as rapist and the subsequent death resolve his world-weariness and disgust of everything and everyone, which before neither promiscuity nor consumerism could cure. After his gruesome execution, Hippolytus opens his eyes, smiles and says “If there could have been more moments like this” (97).

The fusions in Phaedra’s Love and in The Bite of the Night on the one hand expose the ideological constructions of the mythical pre-texts and put them in relative terms. Barker deconstructs the myth of Troy, its mythical characters, its creators and interpreters. The traditional discourses in Phaedra’s Love serve for some grim comic relief, but not for moral, theological or political guidelines. On the other hand, by setting post-modern culture against the mythical foil, the plays throw the contemporary search for meanings into stark relief – characters despair of the void and look for self-inflicted limitations, be it the Trojan founding myths or Hippolytus’ desperate attempts at finality.

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8 Cf. Kane’s comment in Tabert (11): “Es beschreibt eine sexuell korrupte Königsfamilie und war insofern absolut zeitgemäß. Lange vor Dianas Tod gibt es ja in Phaidras Liebe diese Szene, in der das populärste Mitglied der Königsfamilie stirbt und so weiter. Das Stück wäre jetzt viel aktueller. (Lach).”

9 See Stefani Brusberg-Kiermeier’s analysis of the grotesque elements in Phaedra’s Love.
Structural Analogy

While anachronisms and fusions more or less retain mythical characters and plots, structural analogies transfer the basic structure of myths to a contemporary setting with contemporary characters. Some plays appropriate a set of mythemes. Frank McGuinness’ *Carthaginians* (1988) interweaves the mytheme of Carthage with a therapeutic replaying of contemporary Irish myths – e.g. the narratives of Bloody Sunday and its dramatised clichés, which are parodied in the cross-gender-cast, cliché-ridden playlet “The Burning Balaclava.”

Sarah Daniels’ *Neaptide* (1986) uses mythemes about Demeter and her daughters to explore the construction of a gendered normality. When protagonist Claire tells her daughter Poppy the story of Demeter, the direct reference to the mythical pretext (a kind of anachronism in reverse) draws attention to the archetypal model. Afterwards Poppy establishes the obvious parallels to her own family: grandmother Joyce figures as Demeter, the grandfather as Zeus, Claire as Artemis, Val as Psyche, Sybil as Athena, and Poppy herself as “Pepsi-phone”/Persephone (cf. 247-248). The ancient mytheme highlights the conflict lines between men and women and provides the contemporary plot with an archetypal subtext. Val/psyche cannot cope with her life as wife and mother of two sons and suffers from depressions which lead to her breakdown and her hospitalisation. Her sister Claire/Artemis decided to live as a lesbian and fights for the custody rights for her daughter.

At first Val’s and Claire’s problems appear as fight against nature: “Why mourn the natural fate of daughters – to leave their mother’s home, to lose their virginity, marry, and to give birth to children?” (239) The agreement between Demeter and Hades, and the stories of Psyche, Athena and Artemis, however, point to alternatives to this monologic narrative. The respective myths supply divergent designs for living, which are reflected by both grandmother Joyce’s family (Worth 14-15) and by Claire’s choices – her lesbian life is mirrored by Psyche’s idealised marriage to Eros (308) and Artemis’ decision to be consecrated to the moon (308-309; also alluded to in Claire’s name); Athene’s rebirth into a male-dominated world resembles Claire’s professional situation as successful teacher and deputy headmistress. Demeter’s struggle for her daughter Persephone is replayed as fight between Claire and her husband Lawrence for the custody rights of Poppy.

But *Neaptide* does not replicate the compromise formation suggested by the myth – half a year for Hades, half a year for Demeter. The court has to decide between the lesbian single mother and the second family of the ‘natural’ father. The representatives of the “horrendous fairy tale” (294) of normality rule entirely in favour of Lawrence (325); Daniels’ fairy-tale ending, however, overrules the court-decision. With the help

10 “This city is not Rome, but it has been destroyed by Rome. . . . I live in Carthage among the Carthaginians, saying Carthage must be destroyed, or else – or else – . . . I will be destroyed” (17).

11 Other rewritings of the mytheme are Deborah Levy’s *Heresies* (1986), Pam Gem’s *Duca, Fish, Stas and Vi* (1976) and Deborah’s *Daughter* (1990), cf. Sakellaridou 313.
of Joyce, Claire and Poppy flee to New York (327; cf. Sakellaridou 313) and Val is about to find a new life: “I haven’t got a new self to be cast on and off like a winter and summer coat. What I am is me” (325).

Myths provide alternatives to the canonised role models – be it from Christianity or an essentialist normality – and support a more diversified female self-fashioning. The variety of mythemes undercuts the notion of one true form of living, which has to be defended from aberrations. On the macro-structural level, the structural analogies with classical myths imbue the contemporary plot with universality.

Other appropriations rewrite a specific pretext. Euripides’ Bacchae, for example, reappear as frenzied riot in a British holiday camp in Joe Orton’s The Erpingham Camp (1967) and as murder in a women’s toilet in Maureen Duffy’s Rites (1969). The Dionysian ecstasy in the one play is triggered off by an inefficient entertainment officer, in the other by aggressions against patriarchal oppression. The appropriations first of all question contemporary myths. Commonsensical assumptions – “We live in a rational world” (Orton 282), “Only men, only men, only men do that” (Duffy 15) – are defamiliarised and satirised by the grotesque settings and characters.

_Rites_ juxtaposes the complacent belief in progress with static gender roles. Women seem to have gained more rights, more opportunities, more freedom. Toilet attendant Ada and the three office girls relish their relative sexual freedom and their financial independence and look down on the widows Nellie and Dot who cooked, cleaned and lived for their husbands. All of the women believe in and replicate traditional gender roles, though. The seemingly female space of the toilets is dominated by patriarchal norms. The setting does not only indicate ordinariness (Worth 4), it can also be interpreted as metonymy for the nexus between biological sex and the “binary frame for thinking about gender” (Butler viii). Toilets seem to serve a natural need and ‘woman’ seems to be a natural biological category. But the need for defecation can also be fulfilled elsewhere, the separation between toilets for men and women is a cultural construct and the ritualised behaviour of the women is not motivated by their sex or their nature, but by patriarchal norms and power structures.

The toilet, set up by workmen at the beginning of the play, is “framed and controlled by the male world” (Winkler 222). The women mainly talk about men, their lives with and their work for men, they want to die for men, or they want to make it in a male world. “Men are made different” (16), “Men are taller than women... Besides they’ve got more aim in life” (19). That is supposedly why men still rule.

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12 Marleen Gorris’ film _A Question of Silence_ (1984) transposes The Bacchae to a contemporary setting and presents the ritual killing from the point of view of the Baccantes. Caryl Churchill and David Lan’s version, _A Mouthful of Birds_ (1986) fuses contemporary characters with a ritual re-playing of the classical myth and Wole Soyinka’s _The Bacchae_ (1976) follows Euripides and concentrates on the nexus between Dionysian rituals and slave economy (cf. Winkler 227). Duffy has written a companion piece to _Rites_. _Washhouse_ is set in a launderette and tells the story of a love affair between Venus and Diana (cf. Duffy 26).
The mythical analogies at first seem to point to these gender roles as trans-historical and archetypal with the final Dionysian frenzy as temporary solution of the women’s predicament. Prepared by the visit of a boy (actually a doll) in the toilets – the modernised version of the god Dionysus (cf. Winkler 221) – and triggered off by the attempted suicide of a young woman, Ada vents her aggressions against these “Bastard men!” (23). The other women join in a ritual chant and work themselves into a state of anti-male aggression: “We don’t need them” (23). Their violence first focuses on an Old Woman and eventually erupts when a man seems to enter the enclosed space. (“Bastard men! . . . We’ll teach you to come spying” 24). It turns out, however, that the modern Bacchantes have killed a woman.

By means of this rewriting, both the act of resistance and its mythical prototype emerge as predefined by male society, maintaining the initial matrix of binary gender roles and stratified power structures. But also the supposedly archetypal conflict lines between men and women appear as mythifications. Rites exposes the fighting back of the women as implicit auto-aggression, at best a safety valve to get rid of pent-up aggressions but no solution. Within the toilet walls there can be no valid solutions.

Meta-text and meta-drama

In contrast to anachronisms, fusions and structural analogies, which cross the borders between past and present, meta-textual references discover borders to be the result of textualisation. Instead of crossing the borders, they elegantly deconstruct them.

The denouement of The Cure at Troy is not brought about by a deus ex machina as in Sophocles, but by the chorus and by poetry itself, “Poetry/ Allowed the god to speak” (2; cf. Carey 139). It is the means for ambivalent mythifications, but also leads to the ritualised solution of conflicts “hope and history rhyme” (77). The Bite of the Night goes further and problematises the function of theatre and drama – vying between palliative entertainment and a theatre of commitment that does not go beyond stating the obviously banal: “It is not true that everyone wants to be/ Entertained/ Some want the pain of unknowing/ . . .” (2; cf. Zimmermann 365). This pain also encompasses the relationship between creator, creation and the representation of ‘reality.’ Helen meets her maker Homer and berates him for both his creation of her and his aestheticisation of violence: “I hate your songs. . . . The ripping livers and the splash of brains. The prosody is marvellous but. . . . The torrents of intestine and the ravens picking skulls I also am so violent, were you always blind?” (25) Homer’s third book, The Ruinad, focuses on the survivors of Troy and thereby mirrors The Bite of the

13 In my opinion this does not emphasise the “power of agency” of the women, as Hersh (413) claims, but the fact that the women themselves have internalised patriarchal norms and do not need a godhead to re-enforce these norms.

14 The Bite of the Night also contains ironical reflections on Edward Bond’s The Woman (1978), a “socialist rhapsody” on the myth of Troy; cf. e.g. Hogbin’s analysis of the Trojan War as trade war (8).
Night. Phaedra’s Love includes the pseudo-mythical character Strophe, supposedly Phaedra’s daughter, who personifies the strophe of Greek drama, the first part of a choral ode, acting as a dialogue partner to Phaedra and Hippolytus. Strophe’s rape and murder by Theseus then might allude to tradition’s appropriation of myths, to Kane’s rewriting and to reactions to Kane’s rewritings.  

Wertenbaker’s The Love of the Nightingale combines meta-dramatic and meta-textual references with an examination of the nature of representation and reception. The (male) chorus tries to define the term ‘myth’: “What is a myth? The oblique image of an unwanted truth, reverberating through time . . . we cannot rephrase it for you. If we could, why would we trouble to show you the myth?” (315) This would tie in with the poetological passages of The Cure at Troy. But The Love of the Nightingale goes further than that. The play combines contradictory mythemes and thereby questions claims to simple truths and “false anthropological universals” (Middeke 229). The rape victim Philomele is contrasted with Phaedra who instrumentalises a rape narrative to take revenge on Hippolytus. The play ends with a re-playing of The Bacchae. Philomele and Procne taking revenge on Tereus by killing crown prince Ity. Juxtapositions and intertextual references set these versions of incest and rape, of violence by and against women against each other and thereby destabilise them (cf. Winston; Rubik 182).

All of these myths are constantly foregrounded as representations and performances. The contrasts between myth and countermyth and their divergent interpretations are thrown into sharp relief in scene 5 (cf. Dymkowski 36; Soncini). Tereus, Philomele, and king Pandion visit a performance of Hippolytus. The simultaneity of mythic characters watching another myth highlights the constructedness of both. The comments on the play-within-the-play by the onstage characters provide a “parodic framing” (Wagner 234) for the reception of The Love of the Nightingale. Theatre as “hermeneutic source of wisdom” (Winston 516; cf. Pandion’s statement, 301), as dangerous instrument for the spreading of vice (Tereus: “These plays condone vice” 303) or as locus for romantic empathy ending in tearful catharsis all prove deficient. Philomele’s opinions about Hippolytus are instrumentalised by Tereus to legitimate his rape. In the theatre she had sympathised with Phaedra’s plight and stated that “love is a god and you cannot control him” (303). Later on, Tereus, who also identifies with Phaedra, tries to force Philomele to comply with his feelings for her. She falls prey to Tereus’ interpretation of her interpretation of Euripides’ interpretation of a myth: “Who can resist the gods? Those are your words. Philomele” (329; cf. Winston; Wagner 232-233).

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15 E.g. in his review of Cleansed Sheridan Morley recognises Kane’s indebtedness to Jacobean dramaturgy, but he nevertheless denies her play any profundity: “It will doubtless be argued that Shakespearean and much of the Jacobean theater was equally gory, but in all those revengers’ tragedies there was a kind of salvation, a kind of humanity that won out in the end against all impossible odds. Kane offers none of that.”
We do not see Tereus raping Philomele. First Niobe provides a running commentary and then the mutilated Philomele replays the scene in a grotesque puppet play (342-343). Telling or showing the oblique truth is never the truth itself, but an approximation. The reception of this approximation can be distorted and misinterpreted – like Tereus does when he identifies with Phaedra. It can also be actively blocked out. The soldier who secretly watches the Bacchanalia sees what happens to Itys, but refuses to acknowledge and to verbalise it: “I’m drunk. I didn’t see anything. It didn’t happen. The god has touched me with madness. For looking. I’m seeing things. I didn’t see anything” (348). The subsequent scene seems to replay the invisible and unreportable. “Philomele still has the sword. Philomele brings the sword down on his neck. The Female Chorus close in front” (349-350). Afterwards Philomele is discovered with bloodied hands and the body of Itys is revealed to Tereus. Thus the murder again occurs in the eyes and minds of the beholders.

The male and female choruses’ stance not only highlights the constructedness of The Love of the Nightingale as text, it also reflects the different options for the reception of the play. Representing the audience (Wagner 236-237), the (male) chorus claims to detach itself from the action: “We are only here to observe, journalists of an antique world, putting horror into words, unable to stop the events we will soon record” 308; cf. also Niobe’s report, 330). The (female) chorus declares the conventional Ovidian closure of the myth – Procne, Tereus and Philomele metamorphose into swallow, hoopoe and nightingale – “No end” (352). Instead the play ends with a series of open questions – “What does wrong mean? . . . What is right?” (354) On the macro-textual and meta-dramatic level, this reflects that neither telling nor showing can represent truths. What remains are a series of myths, attempts to retell and replay them and a complex model for questioning them (cf. Wagner 250).

Conclusion

Myths seem to be quite attractive for contemporary performers, directors and, last but not least, playwrights. That is not necessarily due to a belief in the ‘eternal truth’ of classical myths. Within the post-modern frame of recycling, rewriting, reconstructing and deconstructing, they just provide rich material for appropriations, successful and well-tried pretexts with the academic seal of approval.

By means of anachronism, fusion, structural analogy and meta-textuality classical myths cross the borders between past and present and centre and margin. Highlighting analogies between contemporary culture and the trans-historical past signifies both the unabated topicality of the pretexts and the universality of contemporary conflicts and problems. On the one hand, Odysseus appears as the archetype of the scheming politician, Philomele as victim of (male) violence. The Trojan War resurfaces as the model

16 An even more blatant example for the chorus’ ability of not seeing unpleasant things is the murder of the captain. They carry off the corpse claiming “We saw nothing” (326, cf. Wagner 239).
of all armed conflicts. On the other hand, topics such as the exploration of gender roles, the Irish question, the search for meaning in a futile culture are projected into the past and attain mythical status and archetypal significance.

By drawing the attention to the textuality of both myths and appropriation and by problematising the patterns of representation, the appropriations simultaneously question constructions of supposedly natural and commonsensical values and beliefs. The rewriting of myths, the juxtaposition of myths with countermyths or anti-myths leads to hybrid oscillations between demythifications and remythifications, comedy and tragedy, past and present, centre and margin.

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Re-writing Seneca: Sarah Kane's *Phaedra's Love*

In view of the historical distance and the different cultural roles that theatre plays in the Renaissance and at the turn of the millennium, it is highly astonishing that plays by William Shakespeare and Thomas Kyd have been seen in the same light as contemporary British drama. In fact, especially criticism of plays by the so-called Young English Wild School, can find counterparts in texts by scholars working on Renaissance and Jacobean authors. In 1951, e. g., G. B. Harrison wrote the following about Shakespeare's play *Titus Andronicus* (1590?; 1594?):

"...It lacks a sense of morality, seriousness and consistency. There is no morality because Shakespeare wrote without feeling, as a play-maker and not as a dramatist. He had therefore little, if any, sense of the essential horror of Lavinia's fate; her sufferings were good theatre for a hard-boiled audience and an excuse for extravagant lamentation, but no more. (Harrison 45)"

And in 1960, Irving Ribner criticised Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1592) severely:

"...It holds its audience by a crude sensationalism, by an artificially stimulated suspense, and by the shocking nature of the events it depicts. Such plays have little moral significance other than as illustration of the degradation of man.... The... play does not really explore the question of human suffering; it is essentially melodrama and not tragedy at all. (Ribner 16)"

Texts by Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill have been reviewed with very similar wording. Within the frame of Kane's and Ravenhill's writing, however, the closeness of their plays to those by Kyd or Shakespeare can be easily explained as both post-modern authors chose Renaissance playwrights as their models. Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking* (1996) is in part a re-write of Christopher Marlowe's *Edward the Second*; Shakespeare's *King Lear* served as an important text for Kane throughout her literary career. The contemporary British "theatre of cruelty" (Peter Brook) is clearly influenced by Elizabethan revenge tragedy. But texts like *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus* are also situated within a literary tradition; they, too, have to be regarded as genuinely "new" creative works and re-writes at the same time. For the text I am focusing on, Kane's *Phaedra's Love* (1996), this means that re-writing on different levels must be taken into account. Kane's *Phaedra's Love* can be described as (1) a post-modern re-write (2) in an Elizabethan light (3) of a Roman re-write (4) of a Greek play. Although *Phaedra's Love* cannot be traced back directly to a specific Shakespearean play, Shakespeare's works must nevertheless be mentioned as important models for Kane, since her view of classical drama is influenced by Shakespeare's adaptations of Seneca. In his Roman history plays Shakespeare mingles Roman morality with Elizabethan religion and investigates into the question of justice. For Shake-
Shakespeare's early tragical writing is highly influenced by the work of Seneca, whose villain-heroes he imitates with Titus Andronicus and Richard III. Seneca's versions of Greek myths were more familiar to the Elizabethans than versions by Greek writers because it was Seneca's work which was most prominently translated into English in the second half of the sixteenth century. Shakespeare might have read Jasper Heywood's translations from 1560 or the ones by Thomas Newton in Seneca His Tenne Tragedies published in 1581 (Liebler 137f.). Thomas Kyd is indebted to Seneca not only concerning the revenge theme but also concerning his prologue, structure and expression. Kyd uses Seneca's technique of stichomythia and generally imitates Seneca's rhetoric style. Most importantly, Kyd re-creates the emotional and political climate of a Senecan play. Seneca's terrifying vision of political collapse and personal waste is re-made for the sixteenth-century audience (cf. Mulryne xvii). I would like to argue that in her version of the Phaedra myth, Kane appropriates the classical versions for a post-modern British audience. As in Seneca's play the topics of political collapse and personal waste are central, and Kane transfers them to the Great Britain of the 1990s. To make my point clear, let me look at the myth and its classical adaptations before I come back to Kane's play.

The story of a married woman who falls in love with a young man, is rejected by him, and takes revenge by accusing him to her husband, is a common folk-tale theme. It exists in Indian and Oriental literary traditions and probably came to China and Japan through translation of Indian texts. In the European development of the theme, the story of Hippolytus and Phaedra proved the most influential. The legend is thought to have originated at Troezen, a town in the north-east Peloponnese, where Poseidon was the most important local god and Hippolytos the central figure of a major cult (cf. Boyle 15). By the fifth century the myth was well established and became the subject of the play Phaedra by Sophocles and of two plays, both called Hippolytos, by Euripides. Sophocles' play and the first play Hippolytos by Euripides survive only in fragments. Euripides' second play Hippolytos is extant. The characters in the classical versions are Theseus, the King of Athens, Phaedra, the wife of Theseus who was born a princess of the house of Crete, Hippolytos, the son of Theseus and Antiope (also: Hippolyta), Phaedra's nurse, and the chorus of Cretan women.

For the contemporary reader, the names Theseus and Hippolyta owe their familiarity to Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, where the two form the royal couple whose marriage provides the frame for the action. Hippolytos is their son, and it is interesting to note that a son is named after his mother, which is unusual in a classical context. After Hippolyta's death, Theseus fights the Minotaur with the help of Ariadne, one of Hippolyta's sisters, who he later deserts or "forgets" through divine intervention. Instead he marries Phaedra, another sister of Hippolyta. Thereby Phaedra, the aunt of Hippolytos, becomes his stepmother. As this short summary of the Greek myth shows, in Greek understanding at the time of circulation of the myth it obviously provided no social difficulties for a man to have love affairs with or to marry, one after
the other, three sisters. The definition of incest does not apply for these relationships according to this understanding. It might have been different at another point of time and also different for a woman to marry or make love to two brothers, even if it was one after the other. Only think of Gertrude in Hamlet, e.g., and the social difficulties her hasty remarrying causes in the play. Her example makes clear as well that even with an exact definition of incest there is quite often a difference between law and the perception of social conventions.

The second play Hippolytos by Euripides from 428 BC presents Phaedra, the second wife of Theseus, in love with her stepson, Hippolytos (Frenzel 607ff.). When Phaedra’s nurse tells him about his stepmother’s passion, Hippolytos gives vent to his misogyny but promises to tell no-one about Phaedra’s love. Phaedra commits suicide by hanging herself off-stage and leaves a letter, in which she accuses Hippolytos of rape. As he is bound by his promise he cannot declare his innocence to his father who takes revenge with the help of Poseidon. But Artemis, the goddess of animals and hunting, beloved by Hippolytos, explains his dilemma to Theseus. So the dying son and his father are reconciled in the end of the play. Seneca’s version of the myth, Phaedra (AD 54?), is based on Euripides’ first play Hippolytos. Seneca shows Phaedra in a more positive light than Euripides does, e.g., by presenting Theseus as an unfaithful husband. Phaedra declares Hippolytus her love herself, which shocks him and makes him fly and leave his sword behind. It is the nurse’s idea to use the sword to accuse Hippolytus of rape. Phaedra and the nurse undertake the slander together. Theseus then calls Poseidon to kill his son. An enormous wave shatters Hippolytus, scattering parts of his body about. When Phaedra sees the mutilated body she breaks down, confesses the slander, and stabs herself on-stage. Theseus remains, mourns the murder of his son, and tries to arrange the limbs of Hippolytus’ body.

Kane’s adaptation proves that the Phaedra myth is suited well for the crossing of cultural and historical borders. Kane tries to free the myth of classical religious ideas. In the Greek and Roman versions Phaedra’s love is motivated by the influence of Aphrodite (Greek) or Cupid (Roman). The love gods try their influence on Hippolytos/Hippolytus because they are jealous of his worship of Artemis (Greek) or Diana (Roman). Within the religious logic one could say that Phaedra serves as a pawn to get revenge on Hippolytos/Hippolytus. In the classical context Phaedra’s passion for her stepson can moreover be related to her mother who also desired a forbidden relationship: Pasiphaë fell in love with a bull, acted on her desire, and gave birth to the Minotaur (Lurker 321ff.). When you take the classical mythological background into account the atrocities of Kane’s play can be placed into a theatrical tradition more appropriately, or as Kane herself put it: “It’s not a tea party. Blame it on the Greeks” (Benedict).

The Gate Theatre in Notting Hill (London) asked Kane to re-write a European classic. Kane decided on Seneca because she had liked Caryl Churchill’s version of Seneca’s Thyestes. She read Phaedra and was surprised that it interested her. She said: “I was struck that it is about a sexually corrupt royal family, which makes it totally contemporary” (Benedict). In an interview with Nils Tabert (11f.), Kane stated that she
had read Seneca’s version before she wrote *Phaedra’s Love* and Euripides’ play only after she had finished hers. This must be a gap in her memory as she clearly knew Euripides’ text when she wrote her play. In fact, she changes some aspects of Seneca’s plot construction back to how they are in Euripides’ play. I will describe these changes since they are very significant. But before that I will show what Kane does to transfer the myth into a post-modern British context.

I have already pointed to Kane’s most obvious strategy, i.e., her repeated reference to the dismal image of the British Royal Family after a series of sex scandals. Kane implies that a royal stepmother falling in love with the princely stepson is a plot construction that suggests itself when the royal family of your own nation can boast of a prospective king with a beloved mistress, a prospective queen who enjoys sex with her equerry in the royal stables and a princess who has her toes licked by a lover in a fashionable seaside resort. In the beginning of her play, Kane shows Phaedra in conversation with a doctor who she consults about Hippolytus’ health:

Doctor: There’s nothing clinically wrong. If he stays in bed till four he’s bound to feel low. He needs a hobby.

Phaedra: He’s got hobbies.

Doctor: Does he have sex with you?

Phaedra: I’m sorry?

Doctor: Does he have sex with you?

Phaedra: I’m his stepmother. We are royal.

...  

Doctor: Are you in love with him?

Phaedra: I’m married to his father.

Doctor: Does he have friends?

Phaedra: He is a prince. (Kane 62f.)

In parts like this, the play shows strong satirical qualities. Kane called *Phaedra’s Love* her “comedy,” and some of the dialogues, like the example quoted, are indeed very funny. But in the course of the play the humour gets darker and darker. Many details which Kane might have meant to be comical are very gruesome and terrifying. When Hippolytus speaks the comical is often also misogynist: “Why shouldn’t I call you mother, Mother? I thought that’s what was required. One big happy family. The only popular royalties ever. Or does it make you feel old?” (73) Aside from the references to the moral standards of the British Royal Family, Kane adds quite a few new characters to the *dramatis personae* to make the myth work in a contemporary context. A priest represents the clergy and changes the field of discussion of morality. Two policemen stand for (corrupt) law and order: their behaviour serves to illustrate that even official representatives rather join in the cruel mob than fulfil their duty. The angry mob that takes revenge on the putative rapist is embodied by two women, two men, and some children. The doctor who talks to Phaedra about Hippolytus partly takes over the role of Phaedra’s nurse. Kane cuts the nurse and the chorus and introduces a juvenile daughter that Phaedra possibly has with Theseus, Strophe, who also talks to Phaedra about her passion:
Strophe: Mother. It's me. Strophe, your daughter.
Look at me. Please. Forget this. For my sake.
Phaedra: Yours?
Strophe: You don't talk about anything else any more. You don't work. He's all you care about, but you don't see what he is. (67)

Strophe is shown as a very gentle young woman who really cares for her mother, her half-brother/stepbrother, and her (step)father. (For the function of Strophe in the play see also Annette Pankratz's article in the present volume). In the course of the play it turns out that Strophe has had some kind of sexual relationship with both her half-brother/stepbrother and her (step)father. When Hippolytus is accused of the rape of his stepmother, Strophe still believes that he is innocent and secretly joins the mob to defend him. As a worldly royal like Kane's Theseus cannot command Poseidon to kill his son, Theseus also hides in the crowd with the plan to cause an uprising and consequently the murder of his son. Like the water from the Mediterranean Sea the mob rises to crush the putative rapist and mutilates his body. A woman cuts off his genitals; they are thrown into the fire, thrown from child to child, and finally to a dog. Theseus cuts Hippolytus from groin to chest. His bowls are torn out and thrown into the fire. He is kicked and stoned and spat on (95f.). In Seneca's play the horrible death of Hippolytus is reported by a messenger. The dismembered body is later brought onto the stage and put together again by Theseus (Seneca 123-5). Whereas much of the violence is imaginary, evoked in the mind of the theatregoer through language, Kane prefers the power, not only of the visual, but the visible. She argues: “I mean, if you're not going to see what happens, why pay pounds 10 [sic] to not see it? The reported deaths [sic] in Seneca are incredibly strongly written, conjuring the image really well, but personally I'd rather have an image right in front of me” (Benedict).

But as many critics have stated, something else may be the result of the display of excessive violence on stage: Edith Hall calls it “Atrocity Fatigue.” In her review of the production at the Gate Theatre, Hall argues that this “Atrocity Fatigue” has affected the cast as well as the audience: “The acts of brutality, which lack both conviction and any sense of timing, are all either tedious or laughable” (Hall). In my view, Hippolytus' death has a great artificiality as he continues talking after all these things have been done to his body, like an opera singer who goes on and on singing after his character has been mortally wounded. From reading Kane's play, I gathered that Kane intentionally alluded to “Monty Python's Flying Circus” and the tradition of black British humour with its gruesome and grotesque aspects. The episode “Hamlet, Act I” (1974), e. g., includes a sketch called “The Killer vs. the Champ.” In this sketch, it is shown how a mutilated boxer’s body is put together again. Then The New York Times announces: “Champ to be kept alive for big return.” After this, we see a group of doctors listening to the broadcasting on the radio, beating patients who disturb them. The radio speaker describes how the champ first loses blood and then his head, which makes the doctors cheer. In my opinion, a play like Phaedra’s Love could not have been written and performed without the strong cultural impact of “Monty Python's Flying Circus.” But, of course, the black humour of the series must itself be located within a cultural tradition of nonsense and black humour initiated by writings by Ed-
ward Lear, Lewis Carroll, and William Schwenck Gilbert. Moreover, Shakespeare’s *King Lear* must be mentioned again in this context, as the grotesque and ghoulish humour (cf. Wilson Knight 167) of the play certainly influenced Kane’s theatrical presentation considerably.

By describing Hippolytus’ suffering in such detail, Kane shifts the focus of the play from Phaedra back to Hippolytus. Hippolytus’ death on stage is at the same time ridiculous and heroic. He survives all the other members of his family, because Theseus cuts his own throat and bleeds to death before Hippolytus dies. In Seneca’s play Theseus is in despair when he discovers that he has killed his innocent son (Seneca 115). In Kane’s play he says: “Hippolytus. Son. I never liked you.” (96) Kane’s Theseus kills himself, however, when he discovers that he has just raped his (step-) daughter, Strophe, who he did not recognise due to her disguise. When Strophe steps forward to declare Hippolytus’ innocence, Theseus raping and kills the young woman with the crowd watching and cheering (95). Obviously Theseus cares for Strophe who, according to Strophe’s own statement, he had a sexual relationship with at some point of time. Hippolytus’ insisting on calling Phaedra “mother” and emphasising the family connection seems totally out-dated in the world presented in the play. Moreover, Western cultural understanding of incest is only interested in blood relationships, in order to prevent genetic mutation and hereditary illnesses. According to this understanding of incest, if Strophe is the daughter of Phaedra and Theseus, Theseus’ sexual relationship with Strophe and Strophe’s one with Hippolytus would be defined as incest, but not Phaedra’s potential affair with Hippolytus. Kane’s representation of a royal family implies that neither incest nor family responsibilities seem to have value any more. The only valid aims for Kane’s characters are to be true to themselves and to pursue their love.

Strophe is clearly a traditional female victim, a gentle character who tries to please everyone and desires nothing for herself but to belong to the royal family. Kane adds a female juvenile woman to the cast and even deprives Phaedra of the central role she was given by Seneca by focusing on Hippolytus. As in Seneca’s play Phaedra declares her love to Hippolytus herself (74). But Kane’s Phaedra tries to prove her love by performing oral sex on him. He is, however, neither satisfied nor impressed and does not interrupt watching television and eating sweets. Afterwards Phaedra cries and begs him “to make [her] come” (77). He reacts by telling her about his affair with Strophe and that he has gonorrhoea. Phaedra asks Hippolytus: “Why do you hate me?” and Hippolytus answers: “Because you hate yourself.” After that Phaedra leaves the stage. In the next scene Strophe tells Hippolytus about her/their mother’s suicide. Strangely enough, Kane does not let this suicide take place on stage. The manner of Phaedra’s death is changed back to the way it was in Euripides’ play, the heroine of the play thereby deprived of her heroic death.

Kane had the brilliant idea to change the presentation of Hippolytus from a spoilt young man who shuns love to a spoilt young man who can get nothing out of television, food or sex any more because he has it all in abundance. I think her contemporary version is appropriate for a member of a social class whose living in affluence makes it
difficult for him to find new thrills that make life interesting. Kane has also been praised for her decision to let Phaedra’s suicide take place off-stage. In my view this weakens the whole play very much and contributes to the shifting of the attention away from Phaedra. Seneca has put Phaedra in the centre of his play by letting her commit suicide on stage: she stabs herself heroically in the Roman fashion to die honourably after having done a wrong (Seneca 119/121).

For Kane’s play it is not Phaedra’s name that provides the title, it is her love for Hippolytus. Her suicide and accusation of Hippolytus show the degree of her love, since by performing the slander she puts Hippolytus in a position to feel something, to feel alive: “Life at last.” (85) The stagnation in affluence is over. Intentionally he admits the rape to a priest, who visits him in his cell, in order to get killed (91). Phaedra’s slander is not a betrayal, it is a sign of love. To lie about the rape becomes Hippolytus’ possibility to exercise his free will. Hippolytus is lying and telling the truth at the same time, because his behaviour towards Phaedra destroyed her life like a raping of her might have done. Kane constructs a phantasm of female love that serves to deliver the loved man from a meaningless life. Hippolytus speaks the last sentence in the play before he dies: “If there could have been more moments like this.” (97) It is Hippolytus who puts emphasis on the freedom of the will in his speeches, however, the character who really exercises her free will through action still is Phaedra, even in Kane’s play.

In Blasted Kane boldly chooses a simple, naïve, possibly retarded girl for the personification of stoicism. Cate is an improbable character to display the stoic virtues of never yielding, endurance, and willpower. In Phaedra’s Love Kane presents another very personal appropriation of Seneca’s stoicism. Here the virtue of exercising one’s free will becomes more important than the virtues of endurance and never yielding. Through the freedom of the will suicide achieves a different quality than death. In Hippolytus’ words it is “suicide, not death” (87).

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The violation of boundaries in the theatre is as old as its dedication to Dionysos and to excess. Such transgression can adopt forms as diverse as the infringement of moral or juridical norms, the violation of taboos, the profanation of the sacred, the subversion of ideologies, or the negation of values. It disregards prohibition and is an act of disobedience. It contests. It is subversive. It provokes a scandal. Yet rejecting the norm affirms the norm. For a limit is meaningless if its transgression is impossible. Transgression opens the door to the unbounded. The play of border and transgression furthers the process of enlightenment. In the Theatre of Social, Political or Religious Revolt it reveals the truth, promises liberation and emancipation. In the Theatre of Cruelty it unleashes the perverse desires and the anarchical passions which drive men to murder, rape, cannibalism, incest or treason. Violence and crime are exalted in order to be exorcised.

Transgression in the theatre is a representational act which abrogates the division between fiction and reality. It has consequences on the level of reality. Historic theatre scandals such as the Playboy riots in Dublin (1907) or political and religious censorship illustrate this.

In absolutist regimes the theatre developed strategies of oblique discourse which enabled it to both reveal and to conceal its subversive message. When the Lord Chamberlain’s Men performed Shakespeare’s *King Richard II*, portraying the deposition of a weak king, in the streets of London on the evening before the Essex revolt, the seditious party who paid them relied on the citizens’ faculty for reading texts allegorically and on the tradition of interpreting portraits of historical rulers as moral examples according to the rhetoric of homiletic texts. Queen Elizabeth’s comment “I am Richard, know ye not this” showed her awareness of the subversive intention. That Shakespeare’s company was not prosecuted, however, demonstrated the protective force of the doublespeak of allegory.

In the period after the Second World War theatre directors in socialist states turned productions of Shakespeare into coded attacks on state power and political repression. The theatrical signs of the *mise en scène* superimposed on Shakespeare’s text or its adaptation suggested a metaphorical reading, wresting from the historical text a critique of the present. The Nazis had already been wary of this strategy of loading classical texts with subversive topical allusions and had consequently demanded that productions of the classics must be faithful to the original, meaning that they had to maintain the classical texts’ historical distance from the present.
Benno Besson’s Hamlet in East Berlin (1977) presented Denmark as a nest of informers, highlighting the struggle of the individual against total control by the socialist state. The political reception of Hamlet in Germany during the 19th century influenced Heiner Müller’s decision to stage this tragedy in connection with his own Hamletmaschine in Berlin during the months before the fall of the wall. The production recalled the Young German poets’ programmatic critique “Hamlet is Germany,” which equated the Danish prince’s failure to take action with Germany’s failure to imitate the model of the French Revolution. While the play was being rehearsed, Ulrich Mühe, the lead actor, commuted between the Deutsche Theater and Alexander Platz where he spoke at mass demonstrations which would eventually lead to the demolition of the Wall and the opening of the prison state. Furness’s 1877 dedication of his variorum edition of Hamlet: “To a people whose recent history has proved once and for all that Germany is not Hamlet” had found a later justification.

In Müller’s production, which opened on the day of the first free elections in the GDR, the beginning of the play was staged as a state funeral – the burial of the utopia of the socialist state. In the second scene the sound of the Russian wireless report of Stalin’s funeral was blended with the dialogue of Shakespeare’s characters. A ‘hell machine,’ uniting the emblems of the surveillance state, – the search light, the loud speaker and the sword, – moved with a metallic rattle over the heads of the audience across the theatre. Monitor screens showed the audience in the stalls and the gallery. Eric Wonder’s stage design enclosed the ensuing action in a gigantic ice cube suggested by strips of transparent milky gauze. It soon began to thaw, however, since the cold war had come to an end (Hamburger).

Revolution is the central theme in Müller’s Hamletmaschine, which his production interlinked with Shakespeare’s tragedy. The play also comments on its author’s position between the frontiers of East and West – between the German Democratic Republic whose Marxist ideals he revered, but whose Stalinist politics he abhorred, and whose political authorities frowned on his work, and the German Federal Republic whose capitalism he rejected, but where his work was applauded. In the fourth part of the play, which refers to the Hungarian rising crushed by Russian tanks in the fifties and which bears the title “Pest in Buda,” the actor playing Hamlet says: “My place, if my drama were still to take place, would be on both sides of the front, between the front lines, above them” (94). Yet Müller felt ashamed of his freedom to cross frontiers which were closed to his fellow citizens. Thus his Hamlet complains: “In the solitude of the airports I breathe relief, I am privileged, my disgust is a privilege protected by wall, barbed wire, prison” (96). After these words he tears the author’s photograph into pieces.

In his early revelations of the Stalinist state’s practice of political torture and murder through the masque of Shakespeare, Müller had used allegorical identifications e.g. of Macbeth and Banquo with Stalin and Trotsky in his “deforming translation” of Macbeth in 1972. (Müller, “Like Sleeping”: 187-189) In his montage of Hamlet, and

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1 Hortmann 428-34; Weigel 212-25; Zimmermann 1994
his *Hamletmaschine* of 1989, however, both texts reflected each other like a gallery of mirrors. This allowed no definite reading. A postmodernist, intertextual play with unfixed meanings replaced the allegorical doublespeak. Müller, however, left no doubt about what his "destructions" of Shakespeare meant to him: "As long as Shakespeare writes our plays for us we will not have found ourselves" (Müller 1990: 106).

In a totalitarian context the liberating, subversive act of exposing the regime’s repressed subconscious is committed with the audience’s connivance. Its obliqueness can avoid censorship, but not always political scandal. Müller’s version of *Macbeth* e.g. roused one of the most heated theatre scandals in the history of the German Democratic Republic and caused the exclusion of his work from the theatre for some years. (Harich 189-214, Linzer 11-20)

In democratic societies theatrical transgression needs no mask. On the contrary, here transgression desires the shock effect produced by the blatant breaking of taboos, by the outrageous cruelty of images, by the brutal revelation of what must not be shown. It provokes surprise, horror, disgust and indignation in order to shatter traditional ways of perception and thought. After a century of avant-garde attempts of "épater le bourgeois" it has, however, become practically impossible to shock an audience’s nervous system, as Peter Sloterdijk recently once more maintained. We are ‘vaccinated,’ immune against shock. (Sloterdijk 1-2) The shock effect can only be produced by performances outside the theatre which obliterate the border line between reality and art, such as Schlingensief’s “Love Austria” container performance in front of the Burg Theater.

This opinion is, however, contradicted by the scandals which were provoked by the productions of Sarah Kane’s plays *Blasted* and *Cleansed* at the Royal Court in 1995 and 1997. The hue and cry seems to have been a British phenomenon though, since both plays have become increasingly admired on the European continent. The London critics’ vociferations equalled the legendary uproar caused by E. Bond’s *Saved* in 1968 or H. Brenton’s *Romans in Britain* in the eighties. Now as then this was also partly a media game in this case kicked off by Jack Tinker from the *Daily Mail* (19.1.95) who called *Blasted* “A Disgusting Feast of Filth.” Anger and indignation grew to hysterical dimensions not only in the Yellow Press but also in the quality papers. Outrage spilled over from the arts pages to the news headlines and burst even into *News at One* and *Newsnight* on television. The controversy lasted for four months and gave the event an importance which theatre seemed to have lost long ago. This alone made the production of *Blasted* a landmark in British theatre history (Rebellato 290). The critics condemned the play’s violence and cruelty, its shameless obscenity, its nightmarish, nihilistic view of society. Most reviews such as Michael Billington’s were mere catalogues of the repulsive events exhibited on stage: “scenes of masturbation, fellatio, frottage, micturition, defecation, ... homosexual rape, eye-gouging and cannibalism” (Billington). They consequently rejected the drama as shameless, immoral and licentious – or as the critic of the *Sunday Times*, 24.1.95 summed up, as a “vision ... of a self-destroying society, aimless, brutish, barren, cannibalistic, prurient.”
The limits of tolerance had moreover been transgressed by the play's form. It lacked a linear narrative. The characters' psychological and social motivation, the causality of their actions was missing. The action could not be related to any believable social reality.

The attacks regularly culminated in a call for censorship such as in *The Daily Express* (cf. Sellar 31): "It cannot be allowed, even in the name of freedom of speech." To this Sarah Kane retaliated: "If you are saying you can't represent something, you are saying you can't talk about it, you are denying its existence, and that's an extraordinary ignorant thing to do" (Bayley). Only a few worthies of British theatre raised their voices in defence of the beginner. Edward Bond countered the attacks in *The Guardian*, 28.1.95: "People who do not want writers to write about violence want them to stop writing about us and our time." And Harold Pinter pointed out in an interview with the *Daily Telegraph* that "Sarah Kane was facing something actual and true and ugly and painful"(cf. Sellar 33). Obviously the young dramatist had broken "through a wall of repressed national consciousness about violence and its sources." Kate Stratton observed moreover in *Time Out*, 25.4.98 that: "Kane had crossed some invisible boundary into 'male' territory." She had disregarded the limits of what can be said by a woman in public.

What was it that the critics refused to reflect on and wanted to spare their readers thinking about? Did the play's shamelessness, its shocking atrocities indeed expose a painful and embarrassing truth? Were *Blasted* and later on *Cleansed* true examples of avant-gardist art which integrated new spheres of reality into drama?

Sarah Kane insisted that she wanted theatre to be as gripping as football "where performance is visceral" (*The Guardian*) and puts the spectator in direct contact with thought and feeling. She emphasized that she carefully planned every cruelty in the play.

*Blasted* (1995) focuses on the relationship between a middle-aged journalist from the tabloid press dying from lung cancer and cirrhosis, and a psychologically disturbed girl of 21 who stutters, sucks her thumb or has cataleptic tits when she is emotionally perturbed or frightened. The action explores the contradictory fusion of tenderness and aggression in male sexual behaviour. The journalist Ian's desire reifies Kate, whom he appreciates as a source of sexual pleasure only. His mechanically repeated, "I love you" is merely the prelude to or excuse for sexual violence. True to her maxim, Kane spares the audience no physical detail of this battle of the sexes in which the phallus and the revolver become interchangeable. Kate who is bleeding from the vagina and anus, takes her revenge by all but castrating Ian with her teeth in a scene of fellatio. She had not wanted a sexual relationship. Her coming to the hotel had been motivated by empathy for Ian's illness.

The journalist is also an undercover operator for a secret right wing organisation. His obsession with order and cleanliness, his racism, his fascist discrimination against homosexuals and disabled persons, make him continually oscillate between aggression and fear. Such a frame of mind mirrors the hatred and fears which ultimately lead to
Theatrical Transgression in Totalitarian and Democratic Societies

the professional torture and serial killing of war. The connexion between the private scene of the battle of the sexes and the horrors of war is suggested through the blowing open of the Leeds hotel room by a mortar bomb and the intrusion of a mercenary. The soldier seeks to revenge his fiancé who was raped, tortured and dismembered. Ian’s paranoid nightmares come true when the mercenary rapes him whilst tenderly stroking his hair and kissing his mouth. Weeping, the soldier gouges Ian’s eyes out and eats them. He cannot, however, endure this exploration of the feelings harbour by his fiancé’s torturers and commits suicide.

The reviewers’ outrage could not have been caused, however, by the offensive quality of the stage images only. Many of them were reminiscent of scenes in Marlowe, Shakespeare or Webster in Renaissance theatre and Bond or Barker on the contemporary stage. They also reproduced events familiar from television newscasts. The denunciation of the play’s “horror scenario,” its comparison to a “horror comic,” reveal that it reminded the critics of horror films, reality TV and other forms of popular culture—or even of contemporary British visual art. These scenes, however, acquired a different quality by their live presence in the theatre, where the spectator as voyeur became a passive participant in the atrocities shown. Their scandalizing effect was produced by their aesthetic presentation and the meaning inferred by their context—as Sarah Kane remarked herself: “The thing that shocks me most is that they (the critics) seem to have been more upset by the presentation of violence than by violence itself” (Independent).

Her offence was not only that she disrupted the glamorous spectacle of the neoliberal, capitalist society by exposing its latent fascism and sexism, pinpointing its abrupt lapses from sophisticated cultural decorum into lurid bestiality. She also suggested a causal relationship between private sexual aggression and postcolonial racism at home, and the systematic violence and serial rape of war. She refuted the conviction that these things could not happen in the U.K. As she put it herself: “The logical conclusion of the attitude that produces an isolated rape in England is the rape camps in Bosnia” and “the logical conclusion to the way society expects men to behave is war” (Bayley). To reveal this she transgressed the limits of shame in the representation of her characters’ intimate sphere and showed what the theatre had not shown before. There was, of course, no war in Leeds her scenes could refer to. By locating scenes redolent of events which happened in Bosnia or Rwanda in the British homeland the drama changed from satirical realism in the first part to a non-realistic, metaphorical mode of expression.

The refusal to relate the play’s cruelties to a definite war and the soldier to a specific nation meant that it focused on war itself. Her critique was concerned with the fundamental flaws in human feeling and thinking of which war was symptomatic. This was a sin against the convention of social realism.2 Blast could no longer be linked

2 Pinter’s Mountain Language was accused of the same offence. He had transformed the play’s critique of the Turkish repression of the Kurds into a general warning of state authoritarianism by having the soldiers wear English uniforms. Both refuse to limit their social criticism to a specific
with a definite historical reality. Kane had abolished the safe distance between the audience and the disturbing events on stage. Her spectators were not allowed the detachment which permits television audiences to watch similar atrocities with composure and pity.

The play insists on its difference from the sensationalism of the sex and crime stories which its protagonist fabricates for the tabloid press. Their recurrent pattern of the innocent, white British girl tortured and raped by aliens or sexual perverts confirms the readers' conviction of their own moral superiority. Whilst condemning sexual violence and asking for revenge, they appeal to their readers' voyeurism and unadmitted sadism. Not so the play. It de glamourises violence and makes it repulsive, disturbingly confronting its audience with their fascist impulses and repressed illicit desires as in Barker’s Theatre of Catastrophe, which Sarah Kane admired. She rejected the idea that her play intended to shock and insisted that she wanted to tell the truth – which is shocking.

It is not surprising that Cleansed, Sarah Kane’s next succès de scandale, exposed the terror of the norm. Nor was it an accident that the play’s protagonist, a Big Brother figure, bore the same name as the Daily Mail drama critic who roused the storm against Blasted. Kane dedicated Cleansed to her fellow playwright and friend Mark Ravenhill.

Compared with Blasted the clamour of scandal which surrounded the production of Cleansed was muted. Critics once more denounced the drama as the most violent play of the season, revolting and vile. Its horrors roused their indignation. Again reviews centered on catalogues of the cruelties and sexual acts represented on stage. But they were torn between condemnation and fascination. They complained that “to watch it (the play) proves something of an ordeal” (Financial Times, 8.5.98). Yet they also felt that its “violence inherits its structure and ferocity from the ancient Greeks” (What’s On, 13.5.98). They specified, however: “A Greek tragedy directed by Dr. Mengele with lighting by Stanley Kubrik” (Express, 10.5.98). The play’s shocking effect was even hailed as giving “established theatre the occasional kick up the fundament” (What’s On, 13.5.98). Sarah Kane was praised for “saying the unsayable” (J. Macdonald, Guardian 23.2.1999), for leaving the limits of traditional theatre far behind and for showing “what theatre might be in the future. Bye, bye naturalism, hi there live art” (Tribune, 15.5.98).

But reviewers also deplored the play’s comic strip technique, the absence of conventional psychological characterisation and the incoherence of this collage of episodes. Most of them were impressed, however, by the powerful physical impact of Kane’s theatrical imagery which was as important as the dialogue. This gave the production the character of an installation. The nightmarish images were explained as

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historical case but focus on the fundamental flaws in human feeling and thinking of which it is symptomatic.

3 She was profoundly impressed by Jeremy Weller’s theatrical installation Mad at the Edinburgh Festival.
projections from the unconscious onto the stage. This justified the absence of a causal, discursive plot development. But critics also denounced the play’s failure to relate to reality. In their eyes its location on a university campus with a gym and a psychiatric hospital which were torture chambers reminiscent of concentration camps made no sense.

The drama starts with the protagonist, Tinker, injecting heroin into the eyeball of an addict who wants to opt out. He kills the ‘misfit’ with an overdose. The all-controlling master of the norm also watches a homosexual couple’s declaration of love and cross examines the lovers about their relationship and their sexual practices. One of them is ‘punished’ like Marlowe’s *Edward II* for his sexual “perversion” by the ramming of a pole up his anus. Under torture, he is made to betray his lover against his will. Every one of his means of expressing his love is eliminated in the following scenes by his progressive mutilation, the amputation of his tongue, hands and arms, his feet and legs and finally of his penis. Rats nibbling at his amputated limbs echo the punishment for individualist nonconformity in Orwell’s dystopia *1984* as well as his painful cry: “Rod not me don’t kill me ROD NOT ME ROD NOT ME” (11).

In a parallel series of episodes Grace, a young woman is in love with her dead brother whose clothes she dons and whom she tries to imitate. Her brother Graham, who later reappears on stage is a projection of her imagination. This is where her passion takes place since its object is dead. Grace’s love is blind for the outward reality. She suffers from the voices of conscience accusing her for her incestuous passion. Tinker, in the role of a psychotherapist tries to “cure” her with drug injections, electroshock and lobotomy. This and her unrelenting love of her brother, her desire to become entirely like him leads her to a complete loss of herself.

Tinker plays in turn a drug dealer, a psychiatrist, a surgeon, a torturer and a would-be lover. His gaze of control is also the voyeur’s gaze. During a sequence of peepshow scenes he masturbates whilst yearning for friendship and love. In a scene reminiscent of *Doctor Faustus* Grace is placed between her brother and him who wants to preserve her femininity. “You are a woman,” he says, “That’s what I’m saving” (28). Finally he admits, however, the irrationality of desire and acquiesces to perform the operation to change her sex. He grafts the homosexual Earl’s sexual organs onto Grace’s body. After this Tinker is granted a moment of happiness and love with the woman from the peepshow whom he identifies with Grace.

Kane insisted on the metaphorical character of the play’s atrocities and wanted them symbolically represented: “If you staged the play realistically,” she remarked, “it would be like walking into your local butcher’s shop” (*Time Out*, 25.3.98). Her aim was the physical representation of psychic experience. She wanted to give bodily expression to desire and mental suffering, to fantasies and phobic fears. The scenic imagery of *Cleansed* accordingly makes the impact of social morality and of the ‘catastrophe’ of love on the human body visible. The play equals the mental repression of ‘abnormal’ desire and behaviour by interiorised norms and control, by anxieties, shame and pangs of conscience with the physical torture by which they are punished in totalitarian societies. Behind this radical protest against the individual’s forced adapta-
The philosophical reflection which underlies *Cleansed* is, however, reminiscent of Foucault’s analysis of the physician’s gaze in *La naissance de la clinique*, his critique of reason and enlightenment in *La volonté de savoir* or of the latent fascism of modern society in *Surveiller et punir*. (Sunday Times, 10.5.98) For him the university is the locus where the human sciences, from psychology and medicine to sociology, law and philosophy create the knowledge which establishes the norms. These allow society to distinguish between sane and mad, sick and healthy, guilty and innocent, moral and immoral. Thanks to them soul and body can be healed but also disciplined. As master of the norm Tinker therefore is a healer as well as a torturer. He finds out the truth about Carl and Rod or Grace by surveillance and cross examination and punishes their deviance. But Grace also implores him to save her and she receives his help as a doctor.

*Cleansed* focuses on the fascist exclusion from society of everyone who does not conform to its idea of ‘normality’: the drug addict, the homosexual, the psychotic, the mentally disabled, the alien. The means are examination, lobotomy, electroshock, chemical therapy by drugs, etc. which are seen as another form of brainwashing, torture and auto café, murder and eugenics used by the fascist state to ‘purify’ its society of dissenters and deviants. In a fundamentalist way the play criticizes and exposes as fascist the order of reason and morality which with the norm creates the deviation from the norm.

But the protagonists in *Cleansed* are tortured, mutilated and killed not only in the name of the norm but also in the name of love. The play takes up Roland Barthes’s scandalous assertion in *Fragments d’un discours amoureux* on the catastrophe of love, pretending that “the conditions of the rejected lover and the prisoner in Dachau are not dissimilar” (Time Out, 25.3.-1.4.98). For Sarah Kane the likeness lies in the lover becoming a prisoner of his/her passion, loosing his/her self in the absolute devotion to the other, it lies in the contiguity of eros and thanatos, in the humiliation of the rejected lover as well as the hopelessness of his/her predicament. She felt the experience “dehumanising” to such a degree that it came close to the negation of the prisoners’ human dignity in concentration camps before they were killed. Tinker’s torture of Carl reveals the weakness as well as the invincible strength of Carl and Rod’s love. Grace dons her brother’s clothes just like Socrates, who – as Roland Barthes quotes from Plato’s *Banquet* – dressed himself up to resemble his lover. She imitates his way of speaking and moving, and changes her sex to become entirely like her revered ideal. The end of the play focuses on the surviving Grace and Carl. She, a resurrected Graham, is the male and the mutilated Carl who wears her clothes, is the female partner in this extraordinary couple. Both are hopeless and unable to help each other.  

4 Like all the reflections in this treatise it is a citation. Here Barthes quotes the psychoanalyst Bettelheim.
Theatrical Transgression in Totalitarian and Democratic Societies

Can we draw any conclusions from this juxtaposition of theatrical transgression in totalitarian and democratic societies? For all the dissimilarity between its aesthetics, its political functions seem to be similar. The veiled critique as well as the public scandal reveal what is repressed by the ruling order. Its authority is confirmed by its subversion. For subversive theatre, like a safety valve, reduces tension. In liberal society theatre scandal reveals the concealed limits of tolerance. In its polyphonic clamour of voices it needs the aggressiveness of the scandalous image to shock audiences through indignation and disgust into perceiving a truth they had repressed and move them to a new way of seeing themselves. Thus the shock effect of avant-garde art enlightens by undermining the power of tradition. Its transgression of the norms expands the scope of art, adjusting it to a continually changing society. Theatre scandal is of course also media-made. It profits those who promote it as much as notoriety profits the dramatist who will have to confront the suspicion of having given offence for publicity’s sake, of coquetry with society’s morbid fascination with violence and voyeurism.

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STUART MARLOW

Pushing at the Limits of Representation: South African and Northern Irish Challenges to Accepted Notions of Dramatic Discourse

On January 25 1989, when a routine series of sectarian murders in Northern Ireland was presented on BBC Two as a teleplay, featuring nothing but a cold-blooded sequence of killings with neither narrative curve, nor dialogue, nor voice-over, Alan Clark's experimental television film *Elephant* angered both critics as well as viewers. In the feedback session, *Open Forum*, which took place the morning after the forty minute play had been aired, *Elephant* was largely condemned as brutal, dull, and confusing. In his attempts to foreground fictional and news media representations of violence, Clark had been generally misunderstood. His ideas challenged the conventional formats of most of the documentaries and teleplays, which have mediated the Ulster conflict, by contrasting standard modes of performance with the radical potential of the televisual art. In the following year, Granada Television screened a highly conventional docu-drama thriller known both as *Who Bombed Birmingham?* and *Investigation: Inside a Terrorist Bombing*. The studied use of filmic convention in this case, however, served a radical political purpose, in that the format and content were selected in order to put pressure on the government, to release six men falsely accused of planting IRA bombs. This docu-thriller project did indeed trigger a huge popular outcry, and Granada Television succeeded in its aim of securing the release of the men one year later.

In 1996, South African playwright Jane Taylor teamed up with director and puppet maker William Kentridge to stage the horrors of the atrocities committed under apartheid, as an expressionist stage play based on Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi*. Here the journalistic documentary was being radically transposed into an experimental mode of stage performance, resulting in a representation of political and physical violence, which won international recognition soon after its Johannesburg debut.

Along with *Elephant* and *Inside a Terrorist Bombing*, *Ubu and the Truth Commission* represents an innovative attempt to challenge the conventional modes of documentary and fictional mediation of the violence of British colonial legacies. In film, television, and stage drama, the task of meeting the demands of fictional representations of violent conflict have produced, not only a large number of highly conventional responses, but also a significant number of experimental works. When creating either fictional or non-fictional accounts of civil war, the pressure of artistic responsibility in broadcasting or staging the suffering and experience of violence, ensures that content will usually dictate form. Both plays and documentaries produced under such compelling influences tend to fall victim to the constraints of difficult ar-
tistic choices. If the representation of violence is too graphic, audiences will reject it. On the other hand, where unconventional methods of creating spectator interest are adopted, accusations of trivialisation, simplification, and exploitation are often levelled at the producers.

Such pitfalls, particularly in the case of Anglo-Irish conflicts, have led to a rich field of meta-dramatic reference, in which not only the paradoxes manifesting themselves in Anglo-Irish history, but also the drama which has attempted to represent them, has lent itself to self-ridicule. More recently however, factors like police corruption, and the realisation that crime syndicates have been operating behind the facades of both Loyalist and Republican extremism, have provoked some particularly iconoclastic forms of representation. Added to this is the challenge of how to represent the more familiar issues of such a long-running conflict, without running the inevitable danger of producing a series of worn clichés.

Being plagued with the similar problems for decades, South Africa, after the dismantling of apartheid, has ceased to be a cause célèbre of the West. Since 1994, international theatrical and cinematic interest in South Africa has receded, and writers from the various ethnic groups have found themselves struggling to find new post-war thematic identities. The white English speaking literate minority makes up less than ten percent of the South African population. Most of the larger theatrical venues have had their funding cut, and have lost their roles as sites that fostered white liberal questioning of apartheid. Furthermore, any South African writers who tackle the fictional representation of apartheid and its legacy today will inevitably encounter a number of difficulties. They may not only be unwittingly reinforcing the social constructs of ethnic and class division by tackling the issues from a particular angle, but also be locating their work within cultural sites regarded by many as elitist. Jane Taylor, in devising and shaping *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, was fully aware of the dangers of being accused of practising avant-garde elitism:

> In shaping Ubu, we were all acutely aware that our goals were to create a space in which to unite a divided people. It was important to research into the culturally relevant modes of performance people from the various communities would be able to identify with. Here in South Africa at this time, this form of dramatic art bears a tremendous amount of social and artistic responsibility. (Taylor, personal interview)

Since the 1960s, television drama has taken over not only as the main spectator forum for serious theatre, but has been able to merge drama into other popular televisial formats. In exposing the controversially unsafe convictions of the group of imprisoned men known as “The Birmingham Six,” the producers of *Inside a Terrorist Bombing*, Granada Television, who championed their cause, decided on the action-movie cum docu-drama format to step up the propaganda war against the legal establishment. The choice was made in preference to having the issues aired as a high-profile documentary, which would attract solid but relatively low prime-time ratings from a concerned minority of viewers.

The docu-drama dealing with “The Birmingham Six” was essentially a continuation of a previous documentary campaign, in Granada’s highly critical and respected
Pushing at the Limits of Representation

current affairs series *World in Action*. Once Granada had decided to go down that road and opt for one of the most popular forms of television drama, director Mike Beckham and script-writer Rob Ritchie were free to create a compelling teleplay, which would make the intended impact not only on the viewing public, but on the body-politic itself. The media challenge was mounted against those members of the political and legal establishments still bent on either covering up for past abuses of the justice system or unwilling to have the status of leading establishment figures undermined. The most prominent of these figures was the notoriously right-wing judge and opponent of any re-examination of the case, Lord Denning.

By 1990, there was a deep sense of alarm within the spheres of both serious journalism and politics over the fact that a very serious miscarriage of justice had been approved at top level, and as such was threatening the integrity of British democracy, the independent judiciary, as well as the very principle of freedom of speech. A long term campaign for the release of the six men and for the public identification of the real culprits had been led by Sunderland Labour MP, Chris Mullin. By the end of the 1980s, Chris Mullin’s mission had received powerful support on both sides of the Irish Sea.

In British terms, television “features” are hybrid documentary reports which explore the subjective angles of events which may have affected people’s lives. Perspectives range in the Birmingham case, from the mind-set of a terrorist to the experiences of innocent men being tortured in police cells and later in prison. Indeed the programme’s main title, *Inside a Terrorist Bombing* emphasises the elements of subjectivity and televisual interiority associated with British television “features.” Despite having a documentary base, “features” have always been classed as fiction as they are essentially subjective. Categorisation as fiction also places writers and directors in a position to be artistically and legally free to relocate documentary material within the sphere of dramatic interpretation.

It was in November 1974, that six Irishmen working in Birmingham were arrested on their way to an IRA funeral in Belfast. The timing of their departure fatefully coincided with a horrific IRA bomb attack on two Birmingham pubs, which had left 21 people dead, and 160 injured. Confessions were extracted from the men by the notoriously brutal and allegedly corrupt West Midlands Crime Squad, which has since been disbanded. To what extent the six could be said to have been mentally tortured as well as badly beaten is a matter of definition. But they all claimed their innocence and withdrew the confessions once they had recovered from the severe mistreatment.

From the initial stages of the arrests and police detention, there had been doubt in some circles about the safety of any subsequent convictions. But by the end of November 1974, the anti-Irish mood in Britain was threatening to get out of control and had set alarm bells ringing through the corridors of power. Experienced anti-terrorist experts doubted however, that the six men had in fact been immediately fleeing the scene of the crime or could have possibly been working as an active IRA unit. IRA operations were unlikely to have been conducted in such a manner that the units would simply run from the scene of the crime and head for Northern Ireland. But the pursuit
and conviction of the real culprits would be time-consuming. Politicians and senior police officers could not afford to be seen as ineffectual, and public anger was intense. "The Birmingham Six" had been in the wrong place at the wrong time, but there had always been doubts that the men would have been able to board the train they took, if they had organised and carried out the bombing. However, it was generally accepted that culprits had to be found quickly and that the police would be under enormous pressure to come up with results. The decision to defuse the public mood by turning a blind eye to unorthodox police methods must have been taken at a top political level. However, nobody to this day has been willing or able to be more precise about exactly who gave the order to allow the West Midlands Crime Squad carte-blanche to do what they considered necessary.

The facts indeed contained all the potential of a macabre crime novel, but the campaign for justice led by the Labour MP Chris Mullin had to wait more than a decade before an effective filmic representation of the case had found a mode of expression powerful enough to shake the foundations of the political and legal hierarchies. The chilling action shots of Inside a Terrorist Bombing, which range from the terrorists planting bombs and the aftermath of the explosions to the sheer terror felt by innocent victims of prolonged police brutality, provide a clear example of content and broadcasting goals creating televisual dramatic form. From nerve-jangling electronic music, to powerful performances by John Hurt playing Chris Mullin, the dramaturgy was designed to give the audience a white-knuckle ride.

If Mike Beckham and Rob Ritchie decided to employ all the familiar devices of an action movie in an essentially documentary project, director Alan Clark took a turn in the entirely opposite direction, in a project designed to challenge the artificiality of both fictional and documentary representation of the Ulster Troubles. With his 1989 television film Elephant, Clark decided to disguise all traces of a conventional plot behind what appeared to be a drawn out series of similar repetitive motifs. This technique challenged the predominant use of the “What happens next? factor” to a degree, that has never been repeated since on mainstream television. The experiment, judging by the reaction of the public during the feedback session Open Forum, had been almost universally misunderstood and rejected. However, Elephant’s ostensible resemblance to purely experimental film, artifice posing as anti-artifice, obscures the fact that there is a subtle form of thematic plot with an ironic twist in the last sequence.

The link in Elephant between ideas and dramatic representation owes much to the work of the Polish dramatist and visual artist Tadeusz Kantor (1915-90), whose notion of compulsive repetition motifs explored not only the obsessive nature of repetitive acts, but worked them into a whole theatrical concept in the 1970s known as “The Theatre of Death.” Kantor worked on the notion that reality was art, and thus any theatrical representation should become part of reality. Built into this theatrical philosophy was the notion that the interdependency of life and death forces drive acts of obsessive repetition. It was here that the structural dynamics for Clark’s project, which he rooted in the representation of the seemingly endless tit-for-tat killing that has plagued Anglo-Irish history for so long, can be located.
During a radio interview on the success of his novellas and short stories located in Northern Ireland, Bernard MacLaverty compared the effect of the Ulster Troubles being similar to having, “an elephant in the living room” (MacLaverty, personal interview). The expression, apart from its associations with Ionesco, reflects various comments, which have regularly alluded to the claustrophobic, pervasive nature of the Troubles throughout the past three decades. Alan Clark used this idea as a starting point from which to deliver a form of artistic shock therapy. The routine killings, with their cold professionalism and cruelly repetitive nature, are meticulously followed by a subjective camera resembling a journalistic voyeur. The plot curve is flattened to a series of repetitive acts with no explanation. The meaning is located in the absence of conventional plot devices. Each murder sequence ends with still shots, in which the undignified poses of the victims resemble crucifixions. The image strategy thus reveals patterns of signification, which are not only deeply ironical, but also represent a clear attack on the role of the media throughout the whole conflict.

Numerous other examples of this pattern of signification can be found in the many empty factory or warehouse locations. In one sequence, arrows, and the familiar standard male toilet icon, are recontextualised as they are placed in far too many doorways to be realistic restroom signs. The hunter-killer then follows these signs, which within the context of the hunter and the hunted indicate “victim this way” as part of a macabre hide-and-seek game. In another sequence, a butcher’s shop sign is placed on the killer’s trajectory, to remind the audience of the notorious “Shankill Butchers” who represented the single most sadistic of the sectarian gangs. But the signs get lost in a context of routine and seemingly pointless, decontextualised killings. In the final sequence, one of the hunters passively turns and allows himself to become the hunted, and is duly shot. This highly ironic gesture occurs at the end of the long series of ironic markers that are subtly distributed throughout all of the shot sequences. Furthermore, the signs and markers resemble the ironically redundant signifiers, associated with elements of the Absurdist movement. Both killers and victims seem to be locked into an obsessive life and death game in an ex-industrial wasteland, which renders them passive to the patterns of self destruction they are immersed in. They have allowed themselves to become both victims and perpetrators in a form of pointless violent dictatorship, which they are unwilling, if not unable to challenge.

Elephant, foregrounding both fictional and non-fictional conventional representations of murder, features everyday noises. Routine, insignificant actions are employed in a general strategy of turning fiction into hyper-reality. These include strangely irrelevant details, such as assassins stopping at traffic lights, and correctly obeying traffic regulations.

Familiar devices of creating dramatic suspense through montage and the use of music or dramatic news voice-overs are conspicuous in their absence. Furthermore, the radical nature of Clark’s project was partially an experimental approach to manipulating the processes of sensory perception. For example, if the viewer absorbs the repetitive sounds of footsteps which pervade the whole forty minutes, there will be a subconscious link to the similar everyday noises he or she is likely to have taken in long
after the end of the play. Consequently, viewers may later experience a sudden sense of delayed alarm at their own footsteps. Thus Elephant’s covert audio-visual application of Kantor’s notion that drama is reality can at least be subliminally perceived as such.

The question as to whether such experiments may be considered successful when rejected by the mainstream public and plagued with low ratings forms part of a much wider debate. John R. Cook explored this debate in his research into the role of Canadian producer Sydney Newman in the success of three innovative television drama projects, which had boosted the cause of radical new material in the 1960s and 1970s. Armchair Theatre, Play for Today and The Wednesday Play were all to become groundbreaking series in the sphere of television drama, which demonstrated how large widely based audiences could be drawn to the dramatisation of a broad range of critical issues. In his own interviews with Newman, Cook was able to focus on the central issue of popular versus elitist definitions of dramatic representation:

I had learned about a clear audience in Canada and the limits of cultural appeal: the ordinary person was interested in his own life, but the language of social class, of say, Ibsen, removed him from immediate involvement. I had a concept of the audience I wanted to reach. (quoted in Cook 122)

The example of Ibsen is significant, as Ibsen drew his first positive responses from a small circle of educated social critics, who had chartered a commercial theatre venue to stage the first production of A Doll’s House. They avoided censorship by having been able to stage the play privately before an invited audience. From that moment on, the arguments raged back and forth between the intellectual educators and the popular entertainers – the first cause often being championed by George Bernard Shaw and the second by Noel Coward, who was no intellectual lightweight. Ironically, it was Shaw who had challenged the class system, and Coward who insisted on the continued domination of middle class culture while espousing the most powerful arguments for drama to be entertaining with a broad popular appeal.

Inside a Terrorist Bombing drew on the potential interest of a wider audience of television viewers who were not in any way a middle class cultural elite, but who couldn’t be written off as being unable to respond to the serious and complex issues and everyday realities of socio-economics, politics, and the environment. Since the introduction of commercial television, the power of working class viewership as an economic force to be reckoned with had empowered the majority population in terms of their own cultural representation. But by the 1980s, BBC Two and Channel Four had been introduced as channels largely dedicated to middle class audiences, who saw themselves as culturally, educationally, and politically aware. Both channels had established a cultural location, which generated a set of expectations amongst this target audience of class viewers. Script-writers, producers, and directors working for either channel have been mainly creating drama for that minority viewership. But this has been seen by many, including Newman, as a ghetto effect which limits rather than fosters the cause of televsual dramatic art. On the other hand, the mainstream channels have tended to cater for mass audiences by refining the predictability and familiarity of the conventional modes of screen performances at their disposal:
In looking at genre and its possible pleasures for an audience, we said that a play often needs to be predictable, at some basic level, for an audience to feel happy with it. Even where they are not always happy, this predictability is something which is managed by the play: it draws on an audience's cultural competence, offers them things they can recognise, and know, and feel, secure with. (Sheperd and Wallis 167)

Ritchie and Beckham exploited this format, in which the forces of liberal integrity would survive the ups and downs of the plot and all the powerful manipulation of a corrupt establishment. Alan Clark aimed his experiment at a much narrower audience, and was free to challenge the whole notion of dramatically managed predictability. Elephant stretches predictability beyond the limit, in conventional dramatic terms, but makes it highly accurate in terms of realistic imagery. Clark's teleplay does anything but reassure the viewers, by offering them a familiar and reassuring world at the end, although the world presented is essentially reality. In this context, drama critic Paul Goodman's comparison of Artaudian notions of predictability with ancient Greek concepts of catharsis provide a useful Caveat. Goodman saw Artaudian post catharsis resolution as delivering the public into anything other than a chaste and cleansed familiar world of normality.

When it had purged the passion, the Greek play restored its audience to a pretty good community, further strengthened by the religious rite that the play also was. But Artaud's play would purge the audience of such vital forces as they have, and let them down into the very world from which there is no escape. (Goodman, Bentley 77)

Apart from the destructive and debilitating effects of sectarian and criminal violence, the long running civil war in Northern Ireland has had a significant effect on the question of post-colonialist Irish identity. Not only has the violence of the civil war led to increased financial support for the arts at community and regional levels, but has on both sides of the Irish Sea occasionally endowed dramatic presentations dealing with violence, prejudice, and post-colonial identities with broad scope for innovation. Several generations of dramatic material which fuse together various strands of cultural expression have formed part of a long process of colonial and post-colonial self-definition between Britain and Ireland.

Despite the colourful multi-culturality of events like the Grahamstown Festival, the situation at the moment in South Africa is very different. The white colonial elite has frequently been referred to as a British country club surrounded by an alien culture, whose land they had usurped. Throughout the British Empire the theatre had been a Eurocentric drama society within an exclusive club, which had simply taken over foreign land and hermetically sealed itself off. In South Africa, despite the efforts of the national Performing Arts Council to foster critical theatre within the European liberal tradition, the imperialist country club association never went away and was a key factor in explaining native African resentment towards white liberal theatre. Indeed, whenever the liberal establishment tried to encompass African traditions within the sphere of its own essentially literary tradition, this was often seen as cultural appropriation. These issues came to a head, in the intense anti-apartheid violence of the 1970s, and the growth of Black Consciousness. Liberal reformists like director Barney
Simon, and playwright Athol Fugard were to feel the divisive effects of the polarisation:

Barney Simon's career is instructive here. During the Black Consciousness period, however, Simon found that black theatre had moved against white directors, he therefore exercised his talents in creating plays intended to conscientize white audiences to the evils of apartheid. (Kerr 225)

The dramatic arts in mainstream venues were European cultural outposts whose cultural domination had relegated urban African theatre to the realm of township clubs. This cultural apartheid effectively prevented any kind of artistic fusion or hybridity from developing throughout most of South Africa's colonial history. Despite the polarisations of the mid 1970s new fringe groups did form with the intention of developing multi-ethnic theatre. The Market Theatre in Johannesburg and The Space Theatre in Cape Town were key venues in this project. Hope was generated by the 1980 performance of the township play *Woza Albert* in the Market Theatre. The political content of any work being staged in venues like The Market would have been restricted to that which the regime may have tolerated. But at least in terms of the fusion of performance traditions progress could be made. Along with the fringe groups it seemed in 1990 as if the work and sheer dedication of leading dramatists like Athol Fugard in developing multi-cultural theatre from the dramatic traditions of the white community and Gibson Kente in the townships, developing performances from African traditions, would bear fruit. Since the end of apartheid however, just when the mainstream venues should have been beginning to enjoy the freedom to bridge gaps, the arts as such have been starved of public funding. Furthermore, much of the support for radical black African political theatre before 1993 had largely depended on its being a site of political resistance. This vital role has largely been lost. White flight, plus the inability of most white South Africans to see themselves as African is also hindering the development of much forward-looking and integrative cultural intercourse.

The Truth and Reconciliation Committee was set up, with much foreign assistance, as part of a peace deal which would maintain Western interests in South Africa and prevent either a white exodus or bloody drawn out ethnic war. However, the violence experienced by both sides of the sectarian divide differed widely. The black and coloured communities had suffered not only violent white repression and degrading racist policies but also crime and violence within the increasingly lawless and factionally divided townships. So called “black on white” violence had been nowhere near as frequent as levels of violence suffered in the townships. In particular, the extremely cruel practice of “necklacing” opponents and suspected informers by burning them alive inside flaming rubber tyres, had been the most deeply feared and resented practice within the black and coloured communities.

As the long series of confessions were made, above the safety net of a political amnesty, grief at the sufferings of family and friends was often overshadowed by the revelations of organised violence and torture coming from within the ranks of the apartheid government. Thus broad scepticism over white liberal guilt increased as police officers and white politicians confessed to a sense of deep shame at their past con-
duct, as if this all could suddenly be whitewashed over once the balance of power had
shifted to the former enemy, the ANC.

It was this partially opportunist duplicity that led Jane Taylor to cast the old white
state in the character of Alfred Jarry's *Ubu* and Mother Africa in the role of his abused
Queen *Ma Ubu* in order to find a dramatic form of expression which would penetrate
the process of reconciliation. The characters are at times almost farcical. *Ubu*
constantly whispers asides to the audience about how he and his apartheid regime betrayed
his wife, representing as she does a kind of Mother Africa who has been far too
tolerant of her husband's misdeeds. *Pa Ubu* 's asides, having the aura of a political
cabaret or university satire, mean that the character thinks he is secretly talking to like­
minded whites in the audience. The actor knows, however, that the audience is op­
posed to the values represented by the character. These ironic structures of mediation
are further complicated in *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, by the relationship between
puppets and live actors:

Through workshops we determined that *Pa* and *Ma Ubu* would be played by live actors with no
puppet equivalents. These characters exist as it were on one scale. The witnesses, who are
represented by puppet-figures exist on the other scale, and a great deal of meaning arises out of
this. The puppet draws attention to its own artifice, and we as an audience willingly submit
ourselves to the ambiguous processes that at once deny and assert the reality of what we watch.

(Ubu and the Truth Commission draws on a number of sources, ranging from Alfred
Jarry to Zulu traditions of ritualised reconciliation. The concepts behind the staging of
Ubu are equally syncretic. The media augmented stage space includes a raised screen,
indicating the locations where atrocities took place, illustrated by sketches projected
onto the screen. There is also a real witness translation booth, where the testimonies of
witnesses speaking in Zulu and Xhosa are spoken by an actor through a microphone.
Otherwise all the roles, apart from *Pa* and *Ma Ubu*, are played by puppets and spoken
by the actors who operate the puppets on stage. A number of puppets represent not
only the witnesses but animal metaphors of the machinery of apartheid state oppres­sion,
including dogs as police and army units and a crocodile as a shredding machine.
Much of the fragmented action on stage takes the form of a series of vignettes, which
in the Brechtian sense, is intended to prevent emotionality and feelings of outrage from
displacing the audience's sense of critical distance. Indeed, the use of puppets and
media images can also be seen as distancing devices within the concept of Brechtian
alienation. But Taylor and Kentridge were also trying to mirror the process, through
which South Africans would receive a highly mediated version of the proceedings of
the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

Much of the information that most of us receive upon the TRC is communicated via the media,
between commercial slots, sit-coms, magazine programmes, and so forth. We are called upon to
respond with outrage, sympathy, or wonder, within a context that includes bewilderment and
dislocation. (Kentridge & Taylor v.)

These staging techniques, including the use of puppets in dual representation and the
syncretic nature of the performance owe much to the pioneering work of the Johannes-
burg based Junction Avenue Theatre Company, which was founded in 1976 at the University of Witwatersrand. Their methods had also been informed by aspects of Tadeusz Kantor’s theatrical art and philosophy, and significantly by the Polish dramatist’s use of puppets. One of the most important forerunners of *Ubu and the Truth Commission* was the Junction Avenue Company’s 1989 production *Tooth & Nail*. The Junction Avenue Company experimented in creating a series of fragmented scenes which looked back on the latter period of apartheid and attempted to dramatise the underlying cultural dislocation. The use of Kantoresque puppetry and the inclusion of traditional African modes of performance were included, but in terms of critical reaction the production fared little better than Alan Clark’s *Elephant*:

The reason for *Tooth & Nail*’s low box office income was due to the difficulty the audience had in understanding the play. The play’s intention to show the chaos of South African reality was represented by a deliberately ‘chaotic’ presentation of the play. Unfortunately this was not understood by the majority of its audiences. (Grosse-Perdekamp 165)

But the modes of performance being attempted by *Tooth & Nail* and its generic successor *Ubu and the Truth Commission* are far more than an attempt to simply graft Western forms of political and social realism as a form of cultural imperialism onto African traditions. Echoing many of the techniques tried out in *Tooth & Nail, Ubu and the Truth Commission* has succeeded in fusing the fragmented expressionist elements into an artistic whole with a powerful dramatic message, which may well live beyond its immediate frame of historical reference.

Much of the imagery used in the play has an uncanny depth and broad field of association. The unseemly figure of *Pa Ubu*, expressionistically sweeping the stage clean of the past in a highly satirical and iconoclastic portrayal, along with his African *Ma Ubu* mocking her own tendency to forgive represent a fusion of various performance traditions. The multi-cultural approach exhibited by some of the 1970s fringe groups is visible in those elements of the performance style used by the actors playing *Pa* and *Ma Ubu* who reflect some of the caricatures found in township satires. These in turn have their own roots in traditional African popular theatre. Despite the wide range of performance conventions adopted, *Ubu and the Truth Commission* has maintained artistic unity and has thus provided another significant example of powerful and innovative performance art being generated by the twin traumas of socio-political and ethnic violence.

The three examples outlined above demonstrate how drama emerging from sites of political conflict and sectarian violence continues to finds its most radical and effective modes of expression. However, the arguments that divide mainstream popularisation from the minority interests of artistically driven production need not prove divisive. Any basic conflicts of interest must be looked at within the context of the commercial and class biased assumptions that fuel them. Furthermore, ratings wars and cuts in theatre subsidies should not prevent experimental work from being evaluated within the context of the multiplicity of performance conventions and innovations which may need to be drawn upon to express increasingly complex political and socio-cultural ideas.
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Index

A

Anzaldúa, Gloria 136, 139

B

Barba, Eugenio 7, 11, 14-16, 39
   Island of Labyrinths 11, 15
   Odin Teatret 14
   third theatre 7, 14
Barker, Howard 8, 152-153, 155, 161-163, 177-178, 197
   The Bite of the Night 152-155, 158, 161
Barthes, Roland 11, 91, 151, 161, 180
Beier, Karin 103, 105-108, 112
   Der Sturm 105, 108-109, 113-114
Bhabha, Homi 7, 14-15, 26, 35, 102, 136-137, 139
   ‘third space’ 14-15, 26, 102-103
black British drama 25-26
bremer shakespeare company (Pit Holzwarth) 103, 108-112
bremer shakespeare company / Kathakali Dance Company
   Der Sturm 108
Brenton, Howard 40, 85-86, 175
   Thirteenth Night 85-86
Brook, Peter 7-8, 39-40, 48, 66, 102-106, 108-109, 112-114, 165
   La Tempête 103, 105
   Mahabharata 40, 113

C

Césaire, Aimé 89-99
   A Tempest 89, 91-97

Une Tempête 89-92, 94-99, 103, 105, 113
Chicano 8, 131-136, 138-139
Clark, Alan 89, 183, 186-189, 192-193
   Elephant 183, 186-189, 192-193
   colonial 13, 32, 34, 39-42, 45-47, 76-78, 84, 86-87, 89-90, 92-93, 101, 109, 110, 112, 137, 183, 189, 190, 193
   coloniser 25, 45, 78, 92-94, 96-97, 111
   comedy 32-33, 42, 50-51, 61, 71, 116, 119, 127-128, 132, 135-136, 139, 144, 149, 151, 161-162, 168
   Culture Clash 132, 135-136, 138-139
   A Bowl of Beings 132, 139

D

Daniels, Sarah 8, 156-157, 161-162
   Neap tide 156, 161
decolonialisation 40
demasculinization 17, 20-21
Demeter 156
diaspora 90, 118, 125, 127
Duffy, Maureen 8, 157, 161
   Rites 157-158, 161

E

Euripides 154, 157, 162, 166-168, 170
   Bacchae 157, 159, 162-163
   Hippolytos 166-167

F

Fanon, Frantz 90, 93, 96-97
Francis, J.O. 142-146, 149, 150
   Change 142-143, 145-146, 149-150
   The Poacher 144, 146, 149
INDEX

Fugard, Athol 8, 17-23
  *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* 17-19, 21-23

G
Garson, Barbara 85-86
  *MacBird!* 85-86
  *Goodness Gracious Me* 8, 49-55, 57-58

H
Heaney, Seamus 151-152, 161-163
  *The Cure at Troy* 151-152, 158-159, 161-162
Holzwarth, Pit (Bremer Shakespeare Company) 103, 108-109, 113
hybridisation 35, 39, 78
hybridity 26, 36, 58, 78, 110, 135-136, 141, 190

I
ideology 14
intercultural theatre 7-8, 39-40, 102-104, 107, 112-113
interculturalism 8, 11, 16, 40, 114, 131
Investigation
  *Inside a Terrorist Bombing* (Granada Television) 183-186, 188, 193
Ionesco, Eugène 85-86, 187
  *Macbett* 85-86

J
Jewish East End of London 115-120, 127-128

K
Kane, Sarah 8, 154-155, 159, 161, 165-173, 175-182
  *Blasted* 161, 171, 175-178, 181-182
  *Cleansed* 154, 159, 175-176, 178-181
  *Phaedra’s Love* 8, 154-155, 159, 161, 165, 168-169, 171
Kathakali Dance Company (Annette Leday) 103, 108, 112
Khan-Din, Ayub
  *East is East* 8, 25-28, 30-31, 33-37, 41
  *Last Dance at Dum Dum* 39, 41-42, 44, 46, 48
Kops, Bernard 8, 115-121, 127-129
  *The Hamlet of Stepney Green* 115-120, 127-129
Kureishi, Hanif 8, 25-36
  *Borderline* 8, 25, 27-29, 31-35
Kyd, Thomas 165-166, 171-172
  *The Spanish Tragedy* 165, 171-172

L
Leday, Annette (Kathakali Dance Company) 103, 108-109, 113-114

M
Market Theatre, The (South Africa) 78, 86, 190
masculinity 17-23
McGuinness, Frank 40, 156, 161
Mnouchkine, Ariane 39, 113
Morton, Carlos 136, 138-139
  *Rancho Hollywood* 136-139
Msomi, Welcome 7, 75-88
INDEX

**U**Mabatha — The Zulu Macbeth 75-83, 85-88
Müller, Heiner 174-175, 181-182
Hamletmaschine 174, 181
multicultural 7, 27, 31, 34-35, 61, 71, 132
myths 8, 67, 132, 151-154, 156-157, 159-161, 166

N
nègritude 8, 89-93, 98

O
Orton, Joe 157, 161
The Erpingham Camp 157, 161

P
postcolonial 8, 16-17, 25-26, 33-36, 39-41, 44-50, 59, 76-77, 84, 89, 91, 94, 98, 102, 109, 113, 139, 177, 189, 196-197

R
Ravenhill, Mark 165, 178
remasculinization 17, 21-23
remasculinize 21
representation 12, 16, 30, 33, 50, 86, 91, 101, 104, 107, 111, 118, 121, 131, 135-136, 158-159, 161, 177, 179, 183-184, 186, 188, 192, 196
resistance 12, 16, 43, 46, 76, 89, 97, 101, 131, 136, 158, 190
Rushdie, Salman 50-51, 58, 196

S
Said, Edward 39, 102, 138-139
Orientalism 39, 139
Schechner, Richard 39
self/other 12, 25-27, 34, 101
Seneca 8, 154, 165-167, 169-172
Shaka Zulu 75, 77, 79-80, 83, 85, 87, 88
A Midsummer Night’s Dream 61, 64-67, 70-71, 73, 106-107, 166
Hamlet 9, 61, 64, 68, 72, 86, 115-120, 127-129, 167, 169, 174, 182
King Lear 72, 165, 170, 172
Macbeth 7, 64, 75-82, 84-88, 174-175, 181, 195
The Merchant of Venice 121-123, 127-129
The Tempest 8, 61, 89-92, 94-99, 101, 103-108, 112-113
Titus Andronicus 165-166
Shoa 126
Shoa (Holocaust) 115, 120-122, 124, 126-127, 129
Smith, Anna Deavere 8, 49, 55-58
Fires in the Mirror
Crown Heights, Brooklyn and Other Identities 49, 56-58
On the Road
A Search for American Character 49
Twilight
Los Angeles, 1992 56
Sophocles 151-152, 158, 166
Phaedra 8, 154-155, 159-163, 165-172
Philoctetes 151
spectator, ‘third’ 14
stage realism 40-41

201
stereotypical 13, 21, 42, 49-50, 70, 107, 135
Stoppard, Tom 9, 39, 41, 44-48, 85-86, 196-197
Indian Ink 39, 41, 44-45, 47-48
Stoppard, Tom and Pavel Kohout 'Cahoot's Macbeth' 85
Syal, Meera 8, 49-52, 55, 57-59
Anita and Me 50, 59
syncretism 31

T

Taylor, Jane 84, 86, 183-184, 191-194
Ubu and the Truth Commission 184, 191-193
teleplay 183, 185, 189
Tesfai, Alemseged 8, 17-18, 20-21, 23
The Other War 8, 17, 20-21, 23
The Other Telling (Uni Krishna and Neil Fisher) 11-13, 15
Theatre of Cruelty 173
transgression 8, 81, 173, 175, 181
translation 26, 29, 61-72, 76, 90, 92-93, 95-96, 109, 111, 143, 166, 191, 196

V

Valdez, Luis 131-133, 138-139
Acto Los Vendidos 132
Zoot Suit 133-135, 139
Virahsawmy, Dev 8, 85, 87, 90, 94, 97-98
Toufann 90, 94, 97-98
Zeneral Makbef 85, 87

W

Walden, (Lord) Howard de 142-144, 149
Welsh Drama in English 8, 141, 196
Welsh identity 141-142, 146
Welsh National Drama Company 144
Welsh National Drama Movement 141-142, 144, 146-148
Wertenbaker, Timberlake 8, 152, 159, 161-163
The Love of the Nightingale 152, 159-161, 163
Wesker, Arnold 8, 115, 117, 120-129, 196-197
Shylock 115, 121-129
Who Bombed Birmingham? (Granada Television) 183

Y

Young English Wild School 165
Yücel, Can 61-72, 74
Bahar Noktasi (Spring Turn) 61, 67-68, 71-72
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